Papers on the Life of Christ and the Gospels

William Kelly

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The Great Olivet Prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ

Wherein are contrasted the Jewish and Christian calling and hope I have taken this portion of the Word of God to set forth “The Christian calling and hope,” as distinct from that of a Jew or a Gentile. There may be some who might demur to this. They are not convinced that it is a question of Christians, for example, in the parable of the Virgins.

There are those, on the one hand, who have been disposed to exaggerate, maintaining that even the foolish virgins are really Christians. There are some, on the other hand, who deny that the parable speaks of Christians at all. These will have it that not only the foolish virgins are not Christians — which I believe to be quite true — but that the wise are not either, but what is commonly called the Jewish remnant. Now, I am of opinion that they are both mistaken; that in this Scripture we have positive evidence, of a clear and cogent kind, which ought to remove the doubts of any dispassionate mind, and to give with certainty the conviction that the Lord had real Christians in view in the wise virgins, and professing Christians in the foolish virgins. In order to demonstrate this more clearly, I will first draw your attention to the context, and then to the contents of the parable.

It is plain that from these two sources must be drawn the main evidence that the Lord Jesus has given by which we may form a sound judgment. That is to say, the Lord has given, in the surroundings of the parable, not a little to help us to understand its bearing and

application. Then, again, what the general evidence of the context would lead to we shall find, I trust, entirely borne out by the specific contents of the parable. The language, the drift, the circumstances, the design all converge on Christendom; all point to the calling and hopes of the Christian; for alas! not only the parable instructs us, but it is a fact that we see now around us many who bear the Christian name with no reality.

The End of the Age

First of all, then, we have the Lord's discourse, founded on the disciples pointing out, with not a little complacency, the grand buildings of the Temple.

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them: See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down."

The Jewish system was tottering to its ruin; the temple, where the glory of God had once been, was itself about to be destroyed.

"And, as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be?"

They were disturbed and distressed by such a thought. Was not He the Messiah? Was not He going to establish Israel? Was not He about to restore the tribes — which had been so long waiting — to the nationality of God's chosen people? What, then, would be the meaning of such solemn words as that all was to be razed to the ground? Jesus meets the questions, When these things

should be, and What should be the sign of His coming, and of the end of the age — not of the world.

The Jews were not so ignorant on this head as many who have less excuse in the present day; they did not confound the end of the age with the end of the world. They knew well that God meant to bless this earth — to bless it as a whole, not merely His children passing through it, but the nations and the earth itself; to overthrow Satan's usurped dominion, and to deliver from the thraldom of the curse the whole creation. The disciples, who as Jews held all the hopes of their nation founded on prophetic testimony, were therefore anxious to know what should be the sign of His coming or presence, and of the end of the intervening time of sorrow and distress; for they were aware that it is only when He comes in power and glory that there can be an end of desolation. So the Lord explains that the time was not yet come; that they would be liable to be deceived about the time when the restoration of their people, and all this introduction of divine power to bless the earth, was nigh at hand.

"Take heed," said He, "that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ; and shall deceive many."

"And ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom."

It is the reverse of the glowing picture of the age of the Messiah's reign.

"He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into

plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2).

The new age is not yet come, nor can it while the Lord Jesus is away. Whatever may be the promises and hopes of men, all their scheming will not avail; all their expectations must be falsified. "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom"; that is to say, a state quite contrary to what is held out for the kingdom. The prophets glowed as they looked forward in the Spirit to the time when "the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills: and all nations shall flow into it. And out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." (Isaiah 2:2, 3).

But the Lord intimates that the time is not yet at hand. There must still be the sorrows that belong to this age.

The New Age

The new age would be characterised, not by the destruction of the earth, but by its renovation; not by the great White Throne, where the dead will be judged, but by the Lord coming to reign and govern the living. "For he shall come to judge the quick and the dead" (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1) not the quick and the dead at the same time, but the quick first, the dead afterwards. The judgment of the quick (or, the living) traverses over a considerable tract of time; the judgment of the dead is at the close of all, before the eternal scene where all judgment will be ended, when nothing will remain but the blessing of those that are of God, such as are of the enemy having been judged for ever. The Lord explains that there must be an earthly time of manifold sorrow

during this age before the blessed time begins for the earth in the new age. Whether it be the present era of sorrow, or the future dispensation of blessedness for the world, the end of “the world,” as popularly held, is a false notion; the end of “the age” is the true thought. Man’s day will close with the end of this age.

The new age will be under the government of the Lord Jesus. The fact that power will be exercised in rule supposes flesh and liability to disobedience. Evil will be put down; it may be kept thoroughly in check; but it needs the reign of the Lord to effect it. The eternal state differs essentially from this age. It will have no evil to be kept in check, but will display the peaceful dwelling of good in the presence of God, when evil has been judged, removed, and punished.

The Lord then pursues His sketch of what the disciples must expect.

“Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

“All these are the beginning of sorrows.

“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My Name’s sake.

“And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” (Matt. 24:7- 13.)

This, again, is beyond controversy the close of what is going on now; not the end of the world in a physical sense, but of the period or dispensation which terminates with the appearing of the Lord Jesus in power and glory. His return to reign will open the new age.

Jewish disciples

Then the Lord proceeds to give some indications of the closing scene of the age a little more definitely —

“When ye therefore shall see the Abomination of Desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, “Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.”

Nothing can be more distinct than this. The Lord Jesus is not here giving us the calling and hope of the Christian, but addressing the disciples in their then Jewish state and circumstances.

Now this is an immense help for the understanding of the prophecy. For many persons now as of old have taken the whole discourse as if it were addressed to Christians as such; they imagine that it all describes the position of Christians at one time or another. But this is a fallacious idea. The Lord begins with the Jewish disciples before Christianity, properly speaking, was revealed. For Christianity supposes the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord: these are the

pillars of Christianity. Without them you have the Lord Jesus still connected with Israel. The essential features of Christianity display themselves on the basis of redemption, and in the gift of the Holy Ghost consequent upon it.

Now, in all we have heard thus far, there is nothing that is essentially Christian. We have disciples: I doubt not believers, but believers looking for the Lord's return to reign over Israel. They are disciples whose expectations are in connection with the land of Palestine and the Temple; whose hopes embrace Israelitish ascendancy; whose fears are based upon the troubles or tribulations predicted for Israel by the prophets. Hence we see the Lord Himself deigns to refer to the prophecy of "Daniel the prophet." Does not this show that He was speaking of the same time, place, people, and circumstances as Daniel? Nothing can be clearer than that He is not describing Christians as such. What have Christians to do with Jerusalem or Judea? What have Christians to do with the Temple? They have no personal interest in those stones; they have no special connection with the grandeur of those buildings. The destruction of the Temple leaves Christianity unaffected, and where it was, in point of fact. We quite understand on the one hand that God saw fit that during Christianity the Jewish people and their Temple should be in ruins soon, if not immediately; as we know it was important on the other hand that Christianity should derive its force from God while the Temple had still an outward appearance.

Jerusalem and the Temple

It was no mere concurrence of circumstances which gave birth to Christianity. It might have been said that

Christianity grew up as a natural development after Judaism had actually disappeared; that there had been an old religion in Jerusalem, and when this perished, then Christianity sprung up. But God took care that the Temple and the Jewish system should still continue for a season. It is true they were spiritually defunct. They remained to the eyes of men alive, but really before God they were dead.

The Lord, then, shows us clearly that He is speaking of disciples' hopes and fears. He, therefore warns certain persons who should be analagous to the disciples of that day; Jews who should be found at the end of the age, disciples in Jerusalem once more when there would be a Temple once more. For it is remarkable that Christ in speaking of the Temple gives it unity: the Temple may be built and destroyed, again built and destroyed, yet it is all counted the Temple, for God deals with things according to the place they assume. He views all that is done in His name as having a kind of moral unity. Hence we find this carried out with regard to Antichrist. The Temple, too, has been destroyed, and may be again, but it is still the Temple of God. In days yet future we know that, when rebuilt, it will be put to the most fearful uses to which any buildings have been applied since the world began; still it is called the Temple of God.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

There will, then, be disciples — Jewish believers — keeping to the words of the Lord Jesus in the latter days of this age, for the Lord is clearly carrying on His thought to that time, this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the nations, and then shall the end come. We know the end has not come yet. We are aware that

this gospel of the kingdom needs yet to be preached as a witness in all the world to all the nations. But how far it will take effect is not said: there may be few believers, but there will be witnesses of the gospel of the kingdom sent out, like the disciples when He was here. It is not telling the people that He died and rose and went to heaven. They preached the kingdom of heaven was at hand before the end of the age. There will be Jewish disciples and believers who will preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, who will take up the testimony which the disciples were rendering in His day and will proclaim this to all nations at the very time that Satan will be prompting the Beast and the False Prophet to bring in the infernal kingdom — when there will be that base usurpation on the earth which Satan cannot longer continue in the heavens.

For a little while he will attempt to secure the sovereignty of the earth, and have a kingdom of his own. Then will be found the voices of faithful men, holding fast the old testimony, and proclaiming it unto all the nations when Christendom shall have gone into apostacy. These kingdoms may have their science and civilisation; but they will fall into the deepest depths of deceit and strong delusion. The mass of the Jews, too, will fall into the dreadful snare that the kingdom of God is come, when it is only the kingdom of the Beast and the Antichrist. Then will be heard those faithful Jews, going forth with power to proclaim that the true kingdom — the kingdom of heaven, not of the Beast that rises up out of the pit, but the kingdom of the heavens — is at hand, the kingdom that comes down from above, and of which the Lord Jesus is King.

The Kingdom of Heaven on the Earth

When that kingdom is at hand, when the Lord is going to accomplish His word which was interrupted by His death and resurrection — for He is now, manifestly, out of the world — what He will then establish will be the kingdom of heaven on the earth. This is the true hope that God has given as far as the world is concerned. But the only One who can accomplish the work, and the only One, too, who deserves the glory, is Jesus: all other men require to be saved and purified. He is the only One who has both a divine and a human claim. He is the Saviour available for all; He alone will have the dominion as of right. Thus, then, these faithful Jews — these disciples — when the mass of their nation are apostate, and when Christendom, too, is apostate, will renew the testimony in the latter day. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world to all nations, a final testimony of the true kingdom, while the false kingdom is set up in Satan's power.

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached everywhere, and then shall the end come. This is not the character of the teaching that is given to us as Christians. If we look at the Epistles of Paul, where does he ever give us anything of this kind of warning? How could an idol in the Temple be a sign to you or me, if we were Christians in England, France, Germany, or in any part of America? How could it be a sign to us if anything new were set up in Jerusalem? But we can perfectly understand that if an idol should be set up to be worshipped in the Temple in Jerusalem, it must be a most solemn sign of Satan's power over that people. And so the righteous will take warning and flee. It applies only to such as shall at that time be living in Jerusalem;

but how could it be a sign to those scattered over all lands thousands of miles away?

It is no use saying that the thing may be communicated rapidly nowadays, for the whole thing is represented by our Lord as a signal for flight to those who saw it.

It is not that others may hear, but “when ye shall see” the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet. Then they are to flee.

It is not then an announcement by wireless that there are these dismal doings in Jerusalem, but persons on the spot, who see evident tokens of the power that Satan is wielding, and that their nation is damnably guilty, who are at once to retire.

The Lord, it is plain by His call to the reader to understand, supposes that some would not understand. He supposes that there would be a very great tendency to mistake about it, and calls their special heed to the word. It is what concerned the Jew, as put down for a season by the Gentile; for Daniel speaks about these facts and not about the church. “When ye shall see” this, “then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.” Clearly this is no sign to the Christians scattered in all countries.

Take it as the Lord gives it, for there is no need to put in any words of our own. I am expounding what no believer can deny; and who can affirm that what I am deducing is not the plain meaning of the Lord’s words, or that they will bear any other construction?

“Then let them which be in Judea flee to the Mountains;”

It is to be an instantaneous flight. There is no time to communicate with others. It is as much as can be done to save themselves.

“Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take anything out of his house;” — it is too late to think about doing this.

“Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.” Immediate flight is the only hope of safety. What sort of safety? It is the saving of flesh — of natural life. Is this what the Christian is expecting? Not so. The Christian is looking for the coming of Christ, not to save his life, but to change and take him up to heaven.

The point here is escape, for it is not safe to remain. There is unprecedented trouble coming; those who refuse to worship the idol will be put to death, and those who worship will be besieged and led into captivity largely. Therefore the Lord warns His disciples to flee in order that they may not be so troubled. It has nothing at all to do with the Christian’s expectation of going up to heaven to meet the Lord “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” For, where would be the propriety of telling the Christian not to come down from the housetop at that time? Would it matter whether at the top or the bottom of the house? Thus it is perfectly plain that the Lord is here speaking simply of the Jew who sees this most startling sign of Satan’s power, and is ordered at the peril of his life to make his escape. It is much more like Lot and his family going out of Sodom, than Abraham from a distance with the Lord.

Christ the Key to the Bible

There is one thing to which I would call your attention regarding the Word of God: there is not a book in the world that has fared so hardly as the Bible. When other books are read men strive to understand them, but when they read the Bible they shut their eyes and give up its interpretation as hopeless. This is due to the blinding power of Satan: he does not wish it to be understood, only read as a task. This is not the way to treat the Word of God. I grant you we need a power above our own. To this end we cannot understand the Bible by forcing the lock; what we want is the key. But if you have Christ, you already have the key. In faith apply Christ to the Bible, and you can understand it. It is not a question of a superior mind or of great learning; — for the most learned have been the most foolish in their mistakes. The simple man who understands but his mother-tongue understands the Bible, if he with true simplicity submits himself to the Lord and has confidence in His love. This is produced by the Spirit of God: it is this only that makes men humble, that gives confidence in God and in His Word by taking away objects which overpower his own mind.

Suppose I am a red-hot Calvinist: I cannot understand the word which calls one to preach the gospel to every creature. Suppose I am a rather violent Arminian: I cannot understand the Scriptures which speak of “being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.” Assuredly then the wisdom of the Christian is to be neither the one nor the other. He should take all the Scriptures simply as they stand.

Those who read the Scriptures carefully but believingly will understand what is infinitely better than anything found in the various schemes of men. It is just the same as regards the interpretation of prophecy as in doctrine. No man should assert that one part of the Word of God is sealed up and the other open. There was a time when it was so: when Daniel was called to have those very communications which we have been reading, he was told to seal up the book; John was called to have the same communications and yet greater ones, he was told NOT to seal up the book. Do you not see the difference and the reason of it? The principle was this — the Jews were incapable of entering into the true and full meaning of the future till Christ came, at least until the end comes. It will only be then, when the last days of this age are come, that the godly remnant will understand (Daniel 12:10). The wicked shall not understand. You cannot separate moral condition from real intelligence of the Word of God. But the Christian already has, not Christ only, but the Spirit in virtue of redemption; and hence he is called and qualified to search all things, yea the deep things of God.

Further Jewish Signs

It has been clearly shown that in all that the Lord Jesus had been teaching in His great Olivet discourse, He was speaking of disciples connected with the Temple, with Judea, with Jerusalem, and not of Christians. Take these further proofs of it.

He says, “Pray that your flight be not on the Sabbath Day.” The Lord’s Day is our day, the first day of the week. The Jew rightly and properly keep’s Jehovah’s sabbaths. As to this, there are languages in Europe more

correct than what we hear more commonly spoken around us. The Pope's tongue, the Italian, keeps up the right distinction; it always speaks of Saturday as the Sabbath Day, and Sunday as the Lord's day. How curious that it should be so, where such blind darkness reigns on almost everything else!

But these Jewish disciples contemplated here are told to pray that the time for their precipitate flight should not be in the winter nor on the Sabbath Day; for the one would be inconvenient from its inclemency, and on the other they could not go farther than a sabbath-day's journey. But how could this affect us as Christians? Even if once Jews, we are not any longer under such restrictions. The Lord is speaking not of Christians but of future Jewish disciples, connected with Jewish ritual, and filled with Jewish hopes.

Further, it is said,

"There shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved."

All this is plain enough. It is not a question of the soul but of the salvation of the body. They should then live and be the subjects of the blessed reign and glory when the Lord comes. It is earthly glory here, not in heaven. For the elect's sake those days should be shortened.

"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

“Behold, I have told you before

“Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold He is in the desert, go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not.” (Matt. 24:23-26.)

It is clear and certain that the elect here are Jewish. What would be the effect of such sayings on your mind, suppose one were to tell you that the Lord was in London or Vienna? You would pity the poor fellow; you would feel that he could not be in his right senses unless he were an impostor. You, as a Christian, could not be deceived by such rumours for an instant.

But it is clear that the Lord Jesus supposes considerable danger for the disciples here. In fact, being Jewish, not Christian, they might be deceived by the cry that He was here or there on earth; whereas no Christian could be in such danger. But the Jewish disciples were exposed to it. They were looking for the Lord’s coming to the earth; they knew that the Lord’s feet should stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives.

Jerusalem and Judea

It is clear, then, that the Jews might be taken in by such deceit. Not so the Christian. He knows that he will meet the Lord in the heavens, and that he will be taken up from the earth into the air to meet the Lord on high. But the deceits in question are addressed to such only as expected to meet the Lord on the earth. The whole of the scene thus far consists of the Lord’s instructions to disciples connected with Jerusalem and Judea, and has

nothing at all to do with the Christians looking to join the Lord above. But here again is the reason why they are not to listen to false Christs.

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

Learned men have applied all this to the Roman conquest. But the Roman army did not come out of the east, as the lightning is said to do here, nor did it shine unto the west: the very reverse would be a more apt figure, had the Romans been meant. So correctly has the Lord Jesus guarded against the misinterpretations of men.

I deny that the prophecy is obscure or ambiguous. There is no uncertain sound in the Bible. I grant you that there is no book so profound as the Word of God, but this does not hinder its clearness for the simplest. It is meant for the highest as well as the lowest. If it were of use only for one class, to the exclusion of the other, it could not be the Word of God; for what is of God must suit men in all conditions. I speak, of course, of believers: but still, even if the soul were in the densest natural ignorance, there is everything in the Bible to enlighten and establish such an one. If he be one who dives ever so much into the depths of God’s mind, like the Apostle Paul, the Bible is still beyond him. “Now we know in part,” said this very man, one of the greatest of its inspired writers. How truly divine is all this! Is it really so with any other book? If you are a man of ability, you may soon fathom another man’s measure, but never the depths of the Bible, though free to search all. The fact is, you only begin to find out how little you know of the

Bible when you are really advancing in the knowledge of it.

There is no discipline so wholesome as this, because, on the one hand, you are strengthened and encouraged, on the other hand you are humbled. This is exactly what the soul needs.

The Lord, then, has given these firm standing points, these landmarks, as it were, in the prophecy, which hinder us from being carried away by every wind of theory. We can see clearly what the Lord has set before us. I have not knowingly passed over anything material. There is no violence done to a word here. I wish to give nothing but a clear, distinct, and positive impression of the mind of the Lord as given in His Own words.

The Eagles and the Carcase

It is next said,

“Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”

Now, if you apply this to the church — to the Christian — what will you be able to make of it? Is the church the carcase? I have heard something still more dreadful. Men have not been wanting who say that the Lord is the reference! Such are the ideas expressed by such an attempt to interpret the prophecy on false grounds. Learned men, including some of the Fathers, taught this; and a great many of the moderns follow in their wake. The last notion I must beg to consider as very great irreverence as well as grossly mistaken. Understand me! I do not wish to fasten anything unfair upon any of them, but it appears to me a crude and unworthy interpretation, no matter how (according to the

Christian scheme) they take the carcase, whether applying it to the church or to the Lord. Is the church a corpse? I believe it to be a. living body. And the Lord is not regarded as a body dead or even alive, but as the Head. But the Lord a carcase! What are they dreaming about?

The whole effort is false. There is no getting a consistent meaning out of the passage when interpreted of the church: the moment you apply it to the Jewish people, it becomes strikingly true. For the mass of the Jews will then be apostate, and the eagles or vultures who come together are figures of the divine judgments executed on the guilty people by the nations of the earth; but whatever may be the instruments, they are judgments of God executed by Him. If the Christians be the carcase, they are the object of the judgment, and there the eagles, or the executors of judgment, are gathered together. But this is not at all the relation of the Lord's coming to the Christian. Nor can the Christians be the eagles or instruments of divine vengeance, any more than the carcase, without abandoning all the truth and character of their calling. The changed saints undoubtedly will go up to meet the Lord; but is He then to be the carcase, and is the church the eagles? Thus, in such a scheme, you have only the choice of one evil less or greater than another; and it is generally thus with an erroneous interpretation. Apply it to the object the Lord had in view, and all is clear. This is the test of Scriptural truth: whenever you press a false interpretation, the general testimony of Scripture is dislocated.

Then the Lord adds,

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn,”

It is not here the believers with joy going up to meet the Lord, but the tribes of the earth mourning.

“And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

“And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Matt. 24:29-31.)

Who are the Elect?

Here many lay great stress upon gathering His elect. But the “elect” do not necessarily mean Christians. If you speak of elect now, it is so; but had God no “elect” before there were Christians? There were elect Gentiles. Take Job for one, and his friends, probably, also the same; were they not elect men? Melchizedek and others, were not they elect? Need I enumerate the elect of Israel in the past? We find clearly elect Gentiles as well as Jews and Christians. When we read about Christians, then the elect must be so explained; if we read about Jews, then the phrase applies to a Jewish election; and so with the nations. We must be governed by the context. As the Lord here is clearly speaking about Israel, the sense should not be ambiguous. When we have “His elect” named, He means the elect of those described, that is, of Israel. This is not at all to bring in

arbitrary rules, but in fact a very plain and necessary principle.

Let us suppose a case in common life. If you go into a crockery shop, and choose out some of the things there, everybody understands how far the choice extends: to the seed shop next door it would not apply. Your choice or the chosen cannot be fairly said to be uncertain because you speak of it in two different places. The word applies equally to the things chosen in both shops. It is all simple enough in everyday matters; and so it is with Scripture.

The Lord, I repeat, in all this context is speaking about Israel and their hopes. Consequently “his elect” must be interpreted according to the object in view. These elect ones are to be gathered “from one end of heaven to the other,” not for blessing in heaven, but on earth. (Compare Isaiah 27)

The Parable of the Fig Tree

Then “learn the parable of the fig tree.” The fig tree is a well known symbol of Israel as a nation. This confirms what has been already said. In the Gospel of Luke, where the Lord takes a view of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, He reverts to this very symbol, but enlarged remarkably. He says “the fig tree, and all the trees.” He does not speak of the latter in Matthew, because He is only in this part looking at the Jew; but in Luke He is looking at the Gentile as well as the Jew, and hence adds, “and all the trees.” (Compare Luke 21. as the authority for this statement.)

“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When its branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

“So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

“Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” (Matt. 24:32- 34; Luke 21:29).

This Generation

Now mark the phrase “all these things” — namely, from the first troubles down to the last, and the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Clearly “this generation” does not mean, what some impute to it, a mere period of thirty years, or a man’s life. The phrase means, what it frequently does in Scripture, a line continued by certain moral features entirely independent of length of time. Hence we find in the Psalms very particularly this use of “generation.” I will give you one text which proves it in the most convincing manner. In Psalm 12:7 we read “Thou shalt keep them, O Jehovah, Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.”

This generation is supposed to go on, and it is an evil generation, a generation which has no faith, a stubborn Christ-rejecting generation. “This generation,” the Christ-rejecting race of the Jews, is not to pass away till all these things be fulfilled. Hence the same generation which crucified the Lord of glory is going on still, and will till He comes again in the clouds of heaven.

“A Generation to Come”

But the grace of God will make them anew, “a generation to come” (Psalm 78). The Lord will judge the unbelievers at last, dealing with them righteously after His immense long-suffering, but delivering a godly remnant in His grace. The Lord has great things in store for Israel. There will be this double action — that is to say, the mass of them filling up the cup of iniquity which their fathers began to fill; and the remnant, who will be the holy seed, the Israel of the millennial day. Of the former He speaks when He says that “this generation “ shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.... Of that day knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (verses 34-36).

The next comparison (verses 36-42) is not to the fig tree nor anything else taken from the physical world. A figure is taken from the dealings of God in the Old Testament, “But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

“For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered the ark, “And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

“Then shall two be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left.

“Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left.”

Taken or Left?

Instead of being an indiscriminate slaughter or captivity such as the Jews had executed upon them by the

Romans, there is a direct contrast to this. Here there is discrimination: one man shall be taken and the other left; one woman taken and another left. The Lord will deal with perfect discernment in each case: not so did the Romans, not so any army that ever took a city. We know there is no time, no thought, no desire for discrimination. It is wholesale bloodshed or slavery. Thus it was when Titus took the city; so alas! it too often is unto this day. But when the Lord Jesus comes, it will not be so.

Then the Lord winds up this part of His prophecy by saying, “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

“But know this, that it the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

There, I believe, closes the portion of this prophecy which refers to the Jews. He began by referring to the Jewish disciples, because the disciples were really Jews then, though believers. He took them up just as they were; and we know they subsequently became Christians. They passed into a new relationship. Not that they had not faith before; but when Christ rose from the dead, and went up to heaven, a new state of things was founded in connection with Him then and there.

The Christian and Jewish Hope Contrasted

Hence the same disciples merged into a new form and power of relationship with God. They were brought no

longer to expect the Lord's restoration of the kingdom to Israel as their proper hope, but, contrariwise, that the Lord would come to receive them to Himself, and take them to the Father's home in heaven. This is the Christians' hope; this is what they wait for. The Lord is calling them out from the earth to Himself. They had been expecting the Lord to come and establish them on the earth up to the day when the Lord Jesus went up and sent down the Holy Ghost. Christianity comes in as an entirely new thing. It is the calling of the Christians out of the world, waiting till Christ comes to take them up to heaven. The Lord Jesus, having accomplished redemption, has Himself first taken His seat in heaven; then the disciples become heavenly, and are being transformed spiritually: finally, at His coming, the Lord Jesus will take them completely out of their natural condition, conformed to His Own glorious body. The state of things on earth since redemption wrought at Calvary till He come to take us to be with Him on high, is truly to be called Christianity.

I do not deny that the saints of old, before Christianity came in, will share in the resurrection, when they, too, are to shine in the likeness of Christ. Only there is this enormous difference meanwhile. We are brought, since His cross, into conscious salvation and new relationships.

From this point the Lord begins to open out a new thing, namely, what the disciples were going to become. And evidently this is the proper order. The Lord had begun with them as they were, and then He leads on to what they were to become, with the new relationships of Christ dead and risen, when also fresh power was given by the Holy Ghost. As a mark of this, you will see that

the Lord drops all allusion to Judea, and all reference to the temple, prophets, and sabbath. The Lord opens out now into parables of a general and comprehensive nature which would be equally as true at Timbuctu as at Jerusalem — it does not matter where. They belong to Christianity; to that which Christ died and rose to establish by the mission of the Spirit. The Lord here shows us this opening out into wider principles of a moral nature, which embrace all the true disciples, wherever they might be in this world, at any time till He comes. Hence we find three parables which apply to this.

The Faithful and Wise Servant

The first parable is the wise servant contrasted with the evil one. It is a question of faithful service in the house, the duty of the highest and the duty of the lowest, not of intelligent activity in trading with goods given as in the parable of the talents, chap. 25. The form is very striking. We have, as you see, a double profession; and this in relation with the Lord, not with Israel as before.

This was not the case in Judaism. There was an enormous unbelieving mass in former times getting into idolatry and all kinds of wickedness, always persecuting the believer. But one of the characteristic marks of Christendom is that all are professors of Christ, whether truly or falsely. The Lord in the parable says the faithful and wise servant is to be made ruler over all his goods. But the evil servant says in his heart, “My lord delayeth his coming”; it is not a mere notion. One may always have his notions; and one is none the better for them. But the Lord refers to what was deep and real, the heart’s indifference to the appearing of Jesus. The evil

servant says in his heart, “My lord delayeth his coming”; he believes what he likes, and what he likes is that the Lord should delay His coming. If you love anyone, you want to see him. The absence of the person you love is trying to you. There may be the wisest reasons for delay, but the delay taxes your patience; and your hope of the speedy return of the one you love is the greatest joy to your heart.

All That Love His Appearing

The Lord gives this feeling and strengthens it. Granted, that it may be hindered by false prophetic notions; yet there is in the heart of all true Christians a desire for the coming of Christ: only, when the soul is not in peace through a full gospel, it is afraid. And those who give them this kind of gospel are responsible for it; those who keep souls in fear do the greatest possible injury to the Church of God. I am not speaking of such as set forth Christ or His work falsely, but even of those who do not preach it fully, who fear to set forth the full value of the sacrifice of Christ, and the perfect deliverance which His death and resurrection have wrought for the believer. The result of this defect in teaching is that Christians are apt to be alarmed instead of rejoicing at the thought of the coming of Christ.

They do not own that the acceptance of Christ means the acceptance of the believer; they do not believe that the Lord by His death has not only put away their sins but also dealt with their sinful nature completely; and this in order to their walking now in the Spirit, to be followed by a perfect conformity to Christ’s image in resurrection at His coming.

You cannot exaggerate what Christ has wrought for the believer; if you are resting on His redemption, all difficulties God-ward are taken away. Then there is nothing left but the duty of serving Him now, and the delight of seeing Him then, as also of worshipping both now and for ever.

He has done all for you to bring you to God, and to take you out of every evil. How can the believer not rejoice in this? I believe with my heart that all Christians, I care not where or who they are, have joy and delight in the prospect of His coming.

Notwithstanding all their imperfect notions, I am sure all Christians love Christ here, and are waiting for Him too. I may shock some of my zealous pre-millennialist friends; but I believe this hope belongs to every Christian.

There may be false prophetic views which hinder; but as the new nature does go out towards Christ, so it longs for the day when it will be ever with Christ. Speaking generally, waiting for Christ supposes longing for His coming; but if put in certain forms and propositions, this may never be found out. If you want to show that men do not look for Christ's coming, you can have abundant grounds for working on. On the other hand, I think God will give you sufficient evidence that all who are His really look and long for His coming.

Only let the children of God get clear of those clouds of noxious and unwholesome vapours that are constantly rising up between the Lord and them.

If you bring in a millennium at the present time, it is hard to see Christ's coming clearly; it acts as a cloud, which dulls the hope of that day. It may not destroy the

hope, but one thus looks for the Lord’s coming in an imperfect manner.

The Great Tribulation Jewish

If you bring in a great tribulation first, this would enfeeble the hope greatly; it tends to produce a depressing effect, and to fill the heart with trouble.

The one puts a mistaken hope between you and the coming of the Lord, giving meanwhile a dreamy excitement in waiting for that day. The other case gives you a sort of spiritual nightmare, an oppressive feeling in the thought that you must go through so dreadful a crisis.

I believe, my friends, that the Scriptures deliver us from both the dream and the nightmare. I believe they entitle the believer to wait for Christ as simply as a child, being perfectly certain that God is true and our hope blessed. Again, I believe there is a tribulation to come, but not for the Christian. When He is speaking about the Jew, you can understand it well: for why does this great tribulation come upon him? Because of his idolatry; it is for him a moral retribution, with which the Christian has nothing at all to do. It is the judgment of God on the Jewish people; they who were called to be witnesses against idolatry at last fall into the dreadful snare of allowing the “Abomination of Desolation” to be put into the sanctuary of God: then the tribulation comes upon them. There is no connection between this and the Christian looking for Christ; and here the prophecy of the blessed Lord drops all allusion to anything of the kind. What He presents is, that when He returns, it is as Son of man, a title which is always used in reference to His coming in judgment, as in John 5:27:

“The Father hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man.”

When He comes as judge, He deals with the evil servant, cuts him asunder, and assigns him his portion with hypocrites.

The Ten Virgins

Then comes the parable read to-night. I call your attention particularly to it. I have been long in coming to the ten virgins; but it is only right to disengage the Christian from the thought that the early part of this prophecy refers to him: such an idea completely perverts his judgment.

But we have also in our day to do with another and opposite error, an error that takes away the parable of the virgins from properly applying to the Christian. Now I suggest, on the contrary, that it has nothing to do with the Jewish remnant directly, who, are not called to go out to meet the Bridegroom, and will not be exposed to the temptation of going to sleep. But many an one might have been a Jewish disciple and then have ceased to be one; practically such became Christians, in the true sense of the term, as Peter uses the word in his 1st Epistle, and Luke in Acts (Acts 11:26).

In this parable, then, the Lord shows the kingdom of heaven to be likened unto ten virgins. They all went forth to bear their testimony to Christ; the lamp was to give light. They were to shine as lights in the world; each taking her lamp went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

The Ten Virgins Christian not Jewish

Now this is characteristic of the Christian. The Israelite did not separate from the world of which he was head. The Christian goes forth to meet Christ, who is gone to heaven. If he be a Jew, he leaves his ancient glories behind. Whether the greatest grandee in the Gentile world, or of the poorest condition, he alike abandons his old obscurity or his old grandeur. He willingly forgets all that is of the world. He is called out of every snare which can fascinate or arrest the heart of man. He has got a new and all-absorbing object in Christ; and Christ in joy and blessedness. It is not the Judge coming to deal with the wicked. If a Christian goes forth to meet the Bridegroom, does such a parable fitly bring images of terror? The Christian knows well that the same Jesus who is the Bridegroom is the Judge; he knows well that Jesus will be the Judge of those who oppose Him; but He is not the Judge and the Bridegroom in the same associations, or to the same persons. Where would be the sense of such confusion? The Lord purposely brings in the bright figure of the Bridegroom to those who are waiting for Him.

But there are other elements of moment. Here are persons true and false. They are not presented as one object: consequently the idea of the Bride is not the thought. When we talk about Christians, real or professing, we do not fix our mind on unity; we think of individuals who go forth. He was about to show profession, and so brings in foolish as well as wise virgins. It is Christ looking at Christians professing the Lord truly or falsely, not as the Bride of Christ. The Christians are all characterised by quitting every object on earth to meet the Bridegroom. Even the Jew, attached

as he was to the old religion (and they had a religion which could boast an antiquity before which all others grow pale) — the Jew leaves all to go forth unto Him, as says the Apostle in Hebrews 13, “bearing His reproach.”

Here you have the same principle. As the Christian, even though a Jew, was called to leave all the old things behind, so here they went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps but no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

The Outpouring of the Spirit

Is it true that the Jewish remnant at the end of the age are to have oil in their vessels? They will never have oil in their vessels till the Lord Jesus comes and pours the Spirit on them. We must remember oil symbolically means the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not merely the washing by the Spirit — even were it vitally: I grant you the Jewish remnant will have that. They will be really cleansed by the Word in the heart. The disciples who will be found at the end of the age will not receive the outpouring of the Spirit till the Lord appears; they wait for that day. It is only when the kingdom comes that the outpouring of the Spirit will be for them. They will go through a very serious process first. When they see the Lord Jesus, they will mourn as for an only child. They will have a fountain opened in Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness; but the power of the Holy Ghost will be given only when they have seen the Lord. So far it is quite different with the Christian, who, as you know, receives the oil or unction from the Holy One while the Lord is away. The Jewish remnant will only receive it when the Lord comes back. Again, they will not go forth

from Jerusalem until the tribulation is at hand. It is a fleeing from the enemy's power and its consequences. It is a flight from the sore scourge in retribution and judgment for their iniquity; it is no going forth to meet in joy.

For the Christian has another course and hope altogether. Whether it be light or dark, the Christian goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. What is the original hope of the Christian? It is our object and calling revealed from heaven. That object is Christ, the blessed One Whose coming he awaits: hence he goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. Not so the Jewish remnant; they expect to see the Lord coming to deliver them by the putting down of their enemies. The Christian waits to be called up out of the world; the Jew waits for the Lord to come into the world. It is a totally different expectation. The parable speaks solely of the Christian. It does not refer to the Jewish remnant.

The Foolish Virgins

We shall see more proof of this. It is said that the wise took oil in their vessels: the foolish took no oil. This meets another error. It has been supposed that the foolish virgins mean Christians who are not pre-millennarians, which gives a very undue value to correct notions of prophecy. I grant you entirely that those who look for the Lord to come before that reign are in my judgment right; and I am quite sure that those who put the millennium before the Lord's coming are mistaken. But I can never sympathise with those who put a slight upon such Christians as have not been taught as you and I. These are self-flattering delusions, and are mere manifestations that bear the brand of sect or school

written on them. I am persuaded that the best blessings we have are those which God confers on the body of Christ. That is to say, all those in whom the Holy Ghost dwells — those who rest on Christ and redemption. These are the men spoken of here. The Holy Ghost is a divine spring for sustaining testimony, as well as a divine power of understanding the Word of God.

The foolish virgins never had oil. Some ask how can they have had their lamps burning. The answer is easy. They could burn the wick: there is no mystery about that. The foolish virgins were not real Christians. The weakest Christian has the oil, as well as the strongest. The apostle John so tells not the fathers, nor the young men, but the babes, the little children. He tells the feeblest they have the unction from the Holy One (1 John 2:20). For those who had no oil could not be Christians. Hence a deeper evil is in question than denying the millennium to be after Christ's second coming or before it. The heart was wrong as to the Lord — a thing more momentous than right notions about prophecy.

If you have Christ, if you know the blood of sprinkling, if you rest on a crucified and risen Saviour, you surely have the oil in your vessels. You are not one of the foolish virgins. Their folly consisted in something much more than in a right or wrong prophetic scheme. The foolish lived despising God and His grace; and, consequently, not having the Spirit of Christ, they were none of His. The foolish virgins have not the Holy Spirit; so the Lord says and deals with them.

We often think of the early Christians with their great advantages, we see that, many of the Scriptures applying to them fully — we can only get the principle of

them. But I will call your attention to the fact here that there are other Scriptures which apply more emphatically to us now. There is thus what I may call a divine compensation. We can only take the general spirit of what was said to the Corinthians. For instance, they had tongues; they had miraculous powers among them. You know that we have them not. There are certain persons who pretend to have them: wherever there are pretensions to such gifts, their falsity is soon found out.

The fact is that God, for the wisest reasons, has not been pleased to continue these miraculous powers. The present condition of the church would make it to be a moral impossibility that God should bestow any of these miraculous virtues. For if the Lord were to restore them now, I should like to ask where? Most people would begin with themselves. If the Lord were to restore them now on Christendom as a whole it would be to sanction, as if all right, a rationalistic Protestantism and an idolatrous Romanism.

The Lord could not thus sanction the broken fragments of His house, or put this honour upon its actual condition. We are ready to be high enough, we are prone enough to think more highly of ourselves than we ought, and the Lord will not help us to be more so.

But He has left what is infinitely better — He continues everything due to Christ and good for the soul which walks with God. He has taken away nothing needful for edification. He still gives peace and joy in believing. Now as of old He puts this inward power in the church; but He marked it of old with a brilliant signature, as it were, before the world. Those who look for the restoration of these powers are not alive to the fallen

condition of the church. I hold it to be most important to the Christian to know what the church was and what it is, and to grieve before God for the difference. I have no sympathy with the Christian now who is not a mourner because of the state of the church. It is well to have joy in the Lord, but we should be humbled about ourselves and the church. You ought to feel deeply this condition for the Lord's sake. In this parable, you will observe, the Lord marks the failure from the original calling, "While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." There is a state of forgetfulness of the Lord's return.

The Midnight Cry

But now mark another thing: it is midnight, and there was a cry made, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go forth to meet Him." Has that been fulfilled? I believe it has, or rather that it is being fulfilled now. The Lord has interposed to break the present slumbering condition of Christendom, doing so not only for the wise, but for the foolish.

Once more come the foolish virgins to the wise, saying, "Give us of your oil"; but this is beyond the Christian, and the wise bid them "Go buy for yourselves." There is One Who sells, but freely, without money and without price: to buy even from an apostle is fatal.

There is only one means of procuring the oil. It is solely through Christ Himself, without money and without price. As the cry goes forth, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh," many realize that they are not in a fit state to meet the Lord. They are troubled with the rumour of they know not what. The consequence, then, of this midnight cry is that a double activity is going on. For the Lord is awakening those who know Himself, who are

wise by His grace, to go forth and meet the Bridegroom. The others, if indirectly, are none the less powerfully affected by the cry and its effects.

The Shut Door

At length the Bridegroom comes, and “they that were ready went in to the marriage, and the door was shut!”

Afterwards come the foolish virgins. Now they cry, but it is with horror and despair. In an agony they cry, “Lord, Lord, open to us.” But the Lord of peace, the Giver of life and glory, has only to tell them, “I know you not.” Do not tell me this is said about real believers. It is said of the foolish virgins who had no oil; of those who bore the name of the Lord, but had not the Holy Ghost. Of and to them it was said that the Lord knew them not. “Watch, therefore,” says He, “for ye know neither the day nor the hour.”

There is no authority for what follows (“wherein the Son of man cometh”). You have heard the names of Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann, and Tischendorf; of Dean Alford, Bishop Wordsworth, and Dr. Tregelles in this country. I am not giving you a peculiar thought in the least, for all biblical critics worthy of the name agree in this omission as required by the best authorities. Copyists added the clause from ch. 24, bringing in the sense of the coming Judge. But this is quite different from what the Lord here urges, which is the delight of meeting, yea, the going forth to meet Him, the Bridegroom. Man, as such, must be judged; all tribes of the earth mourn before the Son of man. But the calling and hope of the Christian is fraught with other and joyous expectations; and this spite of their unfaithfulness during the night whilst He tarried.

If the faithful and wise servant, contrasted with “that evil servant,” set forth the general place of the servant of the Lord, faithful or the contrary, the parable of the talents shows us those who trade with the goods of Christ, and that goodness in this work turns on confidence in Him and His grace. (Verses 14- 30)

Judgment of the Living Nations

Then, from ver. 31 to the end, we have the judgment of the Gentiles, or all the nations, by the Son of man when He returns and reigns. Those who treated well or ill His messengers, “His brethren,” who proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom before the end, are severed to His right hand or left respectively, as the sheep or the goats. It is the judgment of the quick at the beginning of the millennial reign, as far as the nations are concerned. But that judgment is final. It is not the judgment of the dead, or of the secrets of the heart. The one question for decision is their conduct towards His brethren, or the Jewish preachers of the kingdom after the Christians are gone from the scene. Faith only will enable any Gentile to deal with them kindly in that day; and those who do so inherit the kingdom. It is no question here of heaven or resurrection.

This last scene is clearly the third part of our Lord’s prophecy, the principle and nature of His procedure towards all the nations (as distinct from Israel, and, of course, from Christians) after He enters on “the kingdom.” At the beginning, when the Lord was here of old, as well as just before the end of this age, there will be an active testimony to the kingdom: only the final preaching will be in all the habitable world to all the nations, not as at first restricted to the land of Israel.

Now the King is come and judgment of the quick proceeds accordingly. Mix this up with the judgment of the dead (the wicked dead, of course; for the righteous dead are supposed in Rev. 20:4 to be received long before, and the righteous living of the millennium do not die), and all is chaos. You lose the specific teaching both of Matt. 25:31-46, and of Rev. 20:12-15, the one being the Lord's judgment of the Gentiles living on the earth (good and bad), when He comes to reign over the world, the other His judgment of the wicked dead raised after the millennial reign is concluded before the Eternal State.

The true view of the King, judging all the nations in Matt. 25, it will be observed, alone explains, first, why the King's brethren should be regarded as a company distinct from the sheep; secondly, why there should be no scrutiny into all work, or ways of those who stand before the throne, but only the question how they behave to His brethren who are to carry the gospel of the kingdom among all the nations before the end comes.

These envoys being either slighted in hate or honoured in love, the King now repays with interest the astonished Gentiles. Who does not see the contrast with the righteous and the unrighteous in the resurrection state? As the wicked will then feel in all its horrors their just and everlasting condemnation, so for the saints the perfect state will have come, and they shall know even as they are known.

W. Kelly.

The Priesthood of Christ

Hebrews 4:14-16

There is often vagueness found in the thoughts of many a child of God as to the priesthood of our Lord Jesus, as to what its place and proper action is, as well as what it is founded on — what its relation to other truths, more particularly to redemption — what it is that God secures to us by it — what the portion that the saint enjoys in virtue of it, or consequently loses if he have it not. All these various ways in which priesthood may be examined will be found somewhat indefinite, I think, in the minds even of most real believers; and it is wise in general never to assume that a truth is known till we have proved it.

We often take for granted, finding the children of God happy together in fellowship, that they must know this or that truth; but it by no means follows. They may be using language beyond what they have actually learnt from God. The mass are apt to be carried along by others (and this even where their words would give little suspicion) by the faith of others. This is easily understood. They do not doubt in their own minds that it is all quite true, having the general sense and savour, and surely not without some enjoyment of it; but still they have not thoroughly sought out and realized the mind of God for their souls, receiving the truth distinctly and decidedly from God. If exposed to misleading influences they might soon and seriously be turned aside, at the least be perplexed and tried by questions easily raised, and often for the very purpose of confounding those whose general confession puts to

shame such as are walking in the ways of the world. And these are days, brethren, when we need to have everything from God for our own souls.

Assuredly, one need say no more to urge the importance of every child of God, simply and thoroughly, searching into His word; if they do know, having it so much the more happily confirmed to their souls, and if they have not yet ascertained it for their own souls, searching and seeing what God has to show and give them. They have the truth in having Christ, I need not say; but it is well to have it fairly out for our souls. His priesthood goes on for us whether we enter intelligently or not into what our portion is in it and by it. But is it not of the greatest importance that we should know how suited, and rich, and constant the grace of our Lord Jesus is? Indeed it is this which makes it so blessed, because the truth we are about to look at now is bound up with Christ. He is all in it. There may be the reflection of His grace; there may be the working of it, no doubt poorly and imperfectly, in souls on earth who enter a little into their priestly character and blessing; but this is altogether of a different bearing after all from His relation to us; for it is not now simply priestly grace in activity of love for others, but that which our own souls indispensably want in order to be carried through the wilderness.

And I call your attention to this point at the start of the observations I have to make (and you will see how true it is when you reflect upon it): the whole Epistle to the Hebrews supposes a redeemed people pilgrims and strangers on the earth. They are not in Egypt; they are not in Canaan; they are passing through the wilderness. The very same people may be viewed, if not in Egypt, certainly as being in heavenly places even now; but such

is not the aspect in which the children of God are viewed in this epistle. In no case here do we find them invested with that character of blessings which we have, for instance, in Ephesians and in a measure even in Colossians. We do not find anything at all of resurrection with Christ either; although this too, of course, it need hardly be said, has its immense importance, and Romans, Philippians, and other epistles take it up.

But here we have distinctively the Spirit of God starting first of all with Christ at God's right hand in heaven; and this is an essential feature of His priesthood. So long as He was upon earth He could not be a priest. His is an exclusively heavenly priesthood; and those for whom He is acting are a heavenly people. The time was come for God to form and fashion them accordingly. There were saints of old waiting, with more or less light of heavenly hopes, looking for the city above — the saints of the high or heavenly places, as the Spirit of God in the New Testament explains the expression to us. But still they looked up only in hope, and this, too, necessarily with vagueness. Here it is still in hope; but the veil is rent, and heaven opened, and the Spirit sent down because of Christ's redemption and glorification. There all is definite, without the least vagueness whatever. The ground and scene is clear and distinct from the very fact that Christ who purged our sins is in heaven, yet in living relationship with those He is not ashamed to call His brethren on earth. Thus, even if we look at the Christian in this point of view, having a priest and passing through the wilderness, still there is a positive and present imprint of heaven upon all.

Hence, therefore, in chapter 3 those who are particularly contemplated in the epistle are called

“partakers of the heavenly calling.” It was not only that they were called to heaven by and by, but the One that called them was already in heaven, and in heaven on the ground of redemption already accomplished. This is another truth of the greatest possible, yea, indeed, primary importance; for the heavenly place of our Lord Jesus is here viewed as consequent on the accepted sacrifice of Himself for our sins, as in fact it was. It is no question at all of our Lord Jesus coming down from heaven. This, we know, is most true; and this too has its revelation elsewhere in a suited manner. But the point here with which the epistle opens is the great truth that the Lord by Himself purged sins, or our sins, it may be. I merely say this because there is a question of reading; but the question raised has nothing to do with the indisputable truth (and that is all that I affirm now, as it is perfectly certain) that the Lord Jesus went up to heaven, and took His place at the right hand of God, to enter on a new kind of action there, and this founded on the annulling of sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

But this at once clears the way for the application of Christ’s priesthood to the believer. It supposes a people already redeemed. It supposes that the great and absolutely necessary work of grace on their behalf has been accomplished. It supposes that they are resting on it without a question, the main danger being that some may be tempted to give it and Him up, because of the difficulties, the trials, the snares, the persecutions, the dangers of the way. And this we see to be before the mind of the Spirit of God every now and then in the Epistle to the Hebrews. You will find it very early brought up in Hebrews 3, and you may trace it continuously to nearly the last. It was what Satan was

seeking to separate them from; but it was no question of whether the work was done. The whole doctrine of the epistle supposes that the Lord single-handed had finished the work which He undertook on earth. All that God contemplated to be done for sin — that God Himself could do in the way of blotting out sin — was already done before the Lord entered on His priesthood on high.

It is the want of seizing and holding fast that great truth which has thrown such confusion and darkness into the minds of most on the subject of Christ's priesthood, and which has made it vague to better instructed souls, and just in proportion to the weakness with which they hold the completeness of redemption. For, naturally, if the believer is not resting with his conscience purged and perfect now, the priesthood of Christ is thrown in to complete what is deficient. The true grace of the priesthood, therefore, is impaired, yea, lost; it becomes a mere maker up of weight; for the preliminary question must naturally be to know Christ, and one's sins forgiven through His blood. With most nowadays there is but a hope (for it rarely amounts to more throughout Christendom) of being with the Lord by and by. Thus the true place of the priesthood disappears, because redemption has never been received from God in its simplicity and its fulness; and Christ's walk and priesthood are thrown into the scale to make up what His death on the cross has done perfectly.

Certainly the Epistle to the Hebrews leaves no ground for any such hesitation. Before the Spirit of God enters on priesthood, we have, with the greatest precision and fulness, the person of the Lord Jesus brought out, and this in a twofold way. We behold Him as the Son of God; we see Him as the Son of man. And both natures were

necessary to His priesthood. If He had not been God's Son in such a sense as none other was, there had been no such priesthood as that which this epistle sets before us. On the other hand, if He had not been the Son of man, in a sense too that was as real as that of others, but in a character that was peculiar to Himself, there had been no such priesthood available for us. The Lord Jesus was both; and as the first chapter presents Him particularly as Son of God, so the second as Son of man. At the end of this we have the first allusion to His priesthood. In both these chapters we have the fulness of redemption set forth.

We have already seen this in the first chapter; the second supposes the same fact. There we read, "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one."

Here again, then, we have a very important relation to His priesthood. It is a question of the sanctified, and of the sanctified only. None but the sanctified, we shall see, have to do with the priesthood of Christ. They are the persons contemplated. On the other hand, "by the grace of God he [Jesus] tasted death for every man." But after this the apostle begins to narrow the sphere; for he is about to treat of the priesthood of Christ. He shows us certain that are sanctified, or set apart. They are therefore spoken of not merely as the seed of Adam, for this would take in the whole human family, but as the seed of Abraham. Thus it is a less general class taken as the seed of Abraham, not literally after the flesh, but as

it really means, after the Spirit; for none but such are viewed as here sanctified.

Sanctification in the New Testament is not fleshly, as in the Old Testament. If of profession simply, it might be given up by those that take it up of themselves, and are not born of God; but still it is separation to God in the name of Christ. We find persons afterwards spoken of as treating the blood wherewith they were sanctified as an unholy thing. They became apostate, as we know; but as yet He does not contemplate such an issue. He speaks of them as real. “Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” They are His brethren.

In short, then, the priesthood of Christ is in no way a work which looks out to the whole of mankind, as the propitiation of Christ does. That which was represented by the blood on the mercy-seat looked out to all. It was sprinkled on the mercy-seat, and before it. It was not merely a question of those that were in the immediate circle of God’s dealings. That blood was too precious, being infinite in its value, to be thus limited. “By the grace of God he tasted death for every man.” Indeed, the word may go a little farther, and take in “every thing;” but still it includes every man à fortiori. As we approach Him in His actions and sufferings and qualifications for priesthood, we find a special regard to those that had an actual relationship of grace. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise, took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Plainly therefore it is for a delivered people that Christ is viewed as a merciful and faithful high priest — for the sanctified, for the children. “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels.” The real force is, “he does not take up the cause of angels.” It has nothing to do with “nature” here, which was put in very inconsiderately. You will observe some words printed in italics, but others too are ill-rendered. The margin here gives the sense much better — “He taketh not hold of angels;” that is, He does not espouse their cause, which is the true meaning. “But of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest.”

It will be seen, then, how this clears the ground distinctly; for we learn that priesthood follows accomplished redemption, that it supposes the Lord Jesus Himself as He is now, not merely as He was before He came into the world; for He was not priest then, nor yet, when actually in the world, was He priest then either. When He suffered on the cross, and left the world and went to heaven, He is saluted of God as priest then and there, and this for those who see Him while He is there. We see Jesus, as it is said, crowned with glory and honour. It is for such as see Him by faith. It is an office and function He discharges in heaven, then, for those that are separate from the world, severed unto God; that is, for the sanctified.

And here by the way let me express the hope that there is nobody here who mistakes the meaning of the word “sanctified.” The point in Hebrews 2 is not at all the thought of a process going on, though I do not the least deny this to be true practically, as it is taught elsewhere.

In the practical sense holiness is of course a gradual product of grace — a growth into Christ which always should be going on in the saint; but this passage, and others in Hebrews, look at the class so viewed in the abstract; and what made it also the more striking was, that it was no longer true, as such, of Israel. The Jews alas! had profanely refused as far as they could the Holy One of God. They had treated Him as a reprobate and an impostor. They had lost, therefore, their sanctification, and God treats them as profane. And the sanctified here are those who were separated out of Israel; here, I repeat emphatically, out of Israel; for, as far as the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks, we could scarce prove by it that any Gentiles were being called now. From elsewhere we all know that there are, and the principles in the Epistle to the Hebrews apply to the Gentile believer just as truly as to the Jewish; but the Holy Ghost was tenderly dealing with these men of prejudice, whom He is now instructing in the way more perfectly, and thus leading out from old attachments to the best of blessings. There was solemn warning, but also the desire of love; there was the consideration of such thoughts and feelings as might appear weak, and, no doubt, to a Gentile supremely so. A Gentile would have torn their prejudices to atoms, with rudeness perhaps, certainly without much scruple. But the Spirit of God dealt with the utmost care and gentleness, yet throughout with increasing plainness of speech, until at last the truth has been brought out so fully that they are summoned to quit the camp for Christ outside, bearing His reproach. There is much to learn in this; and I am sure, my brethren, every one of us needs the lesson.

But still what I am recalling your attention to is this, that the Lord now stands related as priest above to those who are separated to God in the confession of Christ, and separated out of the people just as much as out of any other race, yea, pre-eminently here out of that people. For the apostle thus implies that those for whom He is acting were not according to the old sanctification of Israel, but sanctified out of that sanctification which no longer had any validity before God. All now turns on Jesus, the rejected Messiah. He was the sanctifier, as indeed He is God no less than man. “He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” “He that sanctifieth” here means Jesus. “He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” It is not God, as such, of course; who does not, could not, call any one “brother.” It is our Lord who is the sanctifier; and the sanctified are those set apart in His name and by His blood.

Then comes the first allusion to Jesus as priest; we find it at the end of chapter 2. He is “a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God” — not exactly “to make reconciliation.” I regret, on such an occasion, to be thus commenting on our common version; but the truth must be spoken, I suppose, and specially on such fundamental and momentous topics as these. It really means propitiation, not “reconciliation.” The great day of atonement is alluded to here, and the expiation of sins on it. Reconciliation is a much larger thought than atonement, and means the making good the whole state of the object of it with God. Therefore, although it is founded on propitiation, it goes farther; and so it takes in creation universally, as we see in Ephesians and Colossians — “all things,” not all men, though the blood was shed in view of all, to be testified in due time.

Everybody can see for himself that there is no very just sense in saying “making reconciliation for sins.” People are reconciled; but can we say reconcile sins? or make reconciliation for them? Expiation, or propitiation, for sins is the exact force. And this is what the word does mean. And it is the more striking, as showing the confusion into which people had fallen, that in Romans 5:11, where “atonement” occurs in the English Bible, it ought to be “reconciliation;” while in Hebrews 2, where “reconciliation” occurs, it ought to be “atonement.” That is, our translators were unfortunately astray in the very points that the Spirit of God was teaching in both. I do not mention the fact as taking pleasure in detecting flaws of the kind, but simply to vindicate the truth of God, holding that it is of much more consequence for His word to be seen as it is, and for souls to be set right, than merely to keep up an unreal appearance in the version we have in our hands, though heartily admitting that providentially we have abundant reason to bless God for so good a translation. It has its faults, however; and these are two.

It is plain that up to chapter 3 we have the introduction; and, the atonement being brought in, we have hence not merely a priest but the high priest introduced. So in the day of atonement the high priest of Israel appears, and none other. This was a very peculiar action on the day of atonement; and it was the only one of the kind. Atonement was done once for the whole year. It thus set forth completeness (as we can now say, for ever), not a continuous process. The action of the priest or high priest otherwise might be going through all the year round; but not the atonement, which was distinct, unique, and absolutely settled for that circle of time. The

high priest on this occasion represented the people, and offered that on which Jehovah's lot fell for the sins of the people, bringing its blood within the veil, and doing with that blood as he did with the bullock's, and thus making atonement, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins. After he came out from the most holy place he laid his hands upon the live goat, and confessed over him all their iniquities, and all their transgressions in all their sins. The whole was wound up by sending the goat Azazel into the wilderness, as the figure of sins thus borne away.

Thus two goats, in fact, were needed to complete atonement, the formal and particular confession being upon the scapegoat or people's lot. Still they were both involved for the type of atonement in its two great parts, the vindicating of God, which was the first thought, and next the allied comfort of knowing that all evil on the part of the people was minutely brought out, laid upon that goat, and discharged to be seen no more. And these two truths are distinctly before us in Rom. 3 and Rom. 4; chapter 3 answering more to Jehovah's lot, chapter 4 to the people's lot, the latter part of both chapters. In the one case it is God just and justifying him that believes in Jesus; and there we have the blood on the mercy-seat. In the other, Christ is said to be delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, which delivering of Him up for our offences is exactly what the scapegoat figured when sent away with their sins over his head.

Azazel does not answer to the resurrection part. There is no type of this in the offerings here, though we find it in that of Isaac. (Gen. 22) There was also a figure of it in the bird that was let loose, dipped in the blood of the

killed one, for the leper; but it is not so with the live goat. For it was to be sent into a land not inhabited; and heaven is anything but that. It is a place already well inhabited, and will be so yet more for ever. Impossible for it to be symbolised by the desert scene into which the goat was sent. What this was intended to set forth was the dismissal of Israel's sin, the visible testimony to all their offences — their positive acts of transgression — borne away. This seems to be all that was meant by it, the evident complement therefore of Jehovah's lot, as it was the people's. Substitution appears no less than expiation.

Atonement, however, though by the high priest alone, does not, strictly speaking, give us the proper ordinary action of priesthood, but the foundation, and hence is intimately connected with it. The purging of, or making expiation for, sins was a prime necessity, but still a foundation for the priest to appear before God day by day on behalf of the people.

We come now to another matter of the deepest interest in the person that could fittingly act as priest. "In that he himself suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Let us weigh it the more because it so clearly concerns, not merely ourselves, but Himself, so often wounded in the house of His friends, as well as by heartless enemies. It is not only the person in both parts, or the foundation work for us, but the gracious provision in His heart, as man tried in every possible way, that He might thus the better succour those that are tempted.

What is meant by the word "tempted"? As you may have observed, not a word is said about temptation till we

hear of the sanctified people. “Tempted” in these cases, then, has no allusion whatever to the inward solicitations of evil. Such is not the thought: it should be needless to say the Lord never had any. But even where priesthood is spoken of on our behalf, it is remarkable that by it God does not make provision for sins or failures. So we see in Hebrews 4, where we learn not a little more. “Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

Here the introduction of the word “yet” into the clause (printed in italics) is a very great blemish, calculated to ruin the sense. If you read it without that addition, you may apprehend what the Holy Ghost means a great deal more distinctly and correctly. As it stands now in the Authorised Version (and I fear in the mind of the translators, certainly of many individuals in our own day), the deduction is that the Lord was tempted, but never yielded, never sinned. This is not at all the point. The Holy Spirit was teaching quite another truth, more worthy of Christ’s glory, and needed by the believer. Of course, it is true that Christ never did sin; but it is far below the truth here intended. What is revealed goes a great deal farther.

Christ “was tempted in all points like as we are, apart from sin.” He had no sin whatever. It was not only that He never sinned, but He had no sin; and this makes all the difference possible. He was the Holy One, and this was manifested, especially in the unparalleled temptations He endured. Assuredly He was all through

the Holy One; but it was all apart from sin. In Him was no sin — not sins merely, but sin. It was not only that He did not yield to sin, but there was no sin there to yield. His nature as man had no evil to be acted on by the devil. There was evil without. He was assailed by every possible, the most subtle, effort of Satan in a ruined and wretched world. There was all that could give pain, not only in men and the Jews, but even in disciples. There was the presenting of what was agreeable to allure at the beginning of His path; there was the endeavour to alarm at the end by what was most tremendous and overwhelming in death, and, above all, in such a death as was before Him.

But whether it was by the pleasant or the painful, at every time, under all circumstances, Christ was tempted like as we are. It is not said that He was not tempted more. “There hath no temptation befallen us but that which is common to man,” i.e. a human one. Could one say this about Jesus? Who does not see that the Lord was tempted above all that man was ever tempted? that there was no temptation to compare with His? While, therefore, it is perfectly true that He was “tempted in all points like as we are,” it is far from being true, as many ill-instructed souls assume, that we have been tempted in all points like as He was.

The wilderness was the marked scene of Christ’s characteristic temptation. Have we been ever tried so? Certainly not. There may be a measure of analogy, and I have no doubt that the three well-known temptations which closed the sojourn in the wilderness are full of instruction in their principle at least. Each one of the three efforts of Satan against the Lord — the natural temptation to make the stones loaves, the worldly

temptation in the offer of the kingdoms of the world on the condition of homage, and the religious temptation in the exhortation to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple according to the promise in Psalm 91 — is full of the weightiest instruction and warning for our souls. But then be it remembered, that before that He had been tempted for forty days without food. Is this a trial that we have ever been subjected to? We may boldly say, I think, that it is one into which the Spirit will never lead us as Him. It was a trial altogether peculiar, and suited to the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus.

While, therefore, our Lord Jesus here below was tempted like as we are in all points, He was tempted in a most important way that was altogether proper to Himself. And it was meet that it should be so; for He was not what I may call a merely natural member or natural head of the human family. Most truly a man He became, by grace made of a woman; but in His own right God, and the Son of God. And soon He was about to take the place of head of the new creation. He was to be the counterpart of the first man — as he in sin, so the Second in righteousness and grace; and just as Adam fell in a place that was peculiar to him in a small way, so the Lord Jesus stood under incomparably more severe temptations, and is now the glorified man in resurrection, as the other brought in death for himself and his race. Thus Adam’s case, here briefly sketched, helps, or ought to help, any soul that wants to know what temptation is; for the common notion that temptation supposes inward evil is a fatal mistake, and shows that there is a leaven of unsuspected heterodoxy in all who think so, and thereby fail to conceive of temptation apart from proclivity or tendency to sin. One

need not do more than just ask the simple questions, Was not Adam tempted? and what was his condition when tempted? Certainly there was no sin, no inward proclivity to evil, in Adam before he fell. Sin therefore is in no way necessary to temptation in the sense of the word here meant; for the first great instance of temptation, and alas! of sin, was the case of a man who was made without sin. So here; so with the Son of God who conquered Satan, the destined extirpator of sin, and this too not by power but by suffering, that it might be by righteousness, and so grace have all its blessed way for and with our souls. How gloriously, here on earth morally, now in fact on high, was not our Lord Jesus the counterpart of that first man, Himself the second man, and last Adam!

I affirm, then, that He, absolutely without sin, was therefore the very and only One that could be a fit object for temptation on the part of Satan. The enemy's aim was to get sin in; but no, even at the very close, the prince of this world came and found nothing in Him. There was neither sin inwardly to excite, nor was there lack of dependence on God which admitted sin. It was not there, nor could it ever find entrance by independence of God. If Satan had only contrived to lead Him to use His own will, there had been sin at once, and all was ruined, every hope gone. It could not be indeed; for He was both a divine person and the dependent, obedient man. The foe was utterly foiled. And there is the great mistake — that many reason from themselves to Him, and conceive it was a kind of virtue or merit in the Lord Jesus that He never sinned. Whereas there never was a question about His sinning, either to God or even to any man who believed in Him.

How could any one born of God entertain for one moment the thought of the Lord Jesus failing? Could such a profane dreamer be really supposed to believe that He is the Son of God? All these speculations of men which lower the glory of Jesus simply show that they do not really believe that Jesus is God while a man. They do not know what they mean by such a confession as that He is the Son of God to be honoured as the Father. They do not truly believe that He is God Himself as truly as the Father or the Holy Ghost; for His becoming a man detracted nothing from it. He took manhood into union with His deity; but the incarnation in no way lowered the deity, while it raised humanity in His person into union with God. Each nature, however, preserved its own properties. There was no confusion. Each was exactly what it was — human nature, and divine nature, each in all its own characteristic excellence, combined, not confounded, in His person. And such was Jesus, who came to glorify His God and Father, and deliver us from our sins to His glory by redemption through His blood.

And such is the priest we have before God. Hence we see the great force of the words, “In that he himself suffered, being tempted.” Truly He suffered. Where you yield to evil, you do not suffer when you are tempted. When there is only evil, it is yielded to. Evil is gratified by its own exercise. The sinner does his own will, pleasing himself without the fear of God. This is sin — the indulgence of one’s own will or lawlessness, than which nothing is more pleasant to any ungodly one. This the Lord never did, never wished, never wavered about for an instant; and this is what we find throughout the whole of His course. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” So it was before; so it was at the end; so all through. He

was the doer of God's will — of all things, to my mind, the most astonishing in the Lord Jesus regarded as God's servant here below. He never did, never once, His own will; He always did or suffered the will of God. It was the perfection of man morally. No miracles, no deeds of power, can be compared with it. God could work wonders by a worm, as He has often wrought by the merest sinners. But there never was that only did the will of God except One; and He was the One therefore that was called to suffer as no one else could; for it is just in proportion to love and holiness that one suffers, not to speak of His intrinsic glory.

Just so with a child of God now. You refuse to do your own will. Assuredly it costs no trifle to cleave to God's will in a world where nothing else is done but man's; for the world lives, moves, and has its being in seeking its own will. The Lord Jesus was just the contrary, and so those that are of Him, the sanctified. For this indeed they are, as the apostle Peter teaches, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." This, I believe, goes very far too, as it means the same kind of obedience as the Lord's; for He here below never obeyed in a single instance as under compulsion or resisting an influence within that was opposed to the will of God. He suffered; but the suffering was because of Satan's devices against Him who always pleased God, refusing absolutely and always to swerve from obedience, besides the holy horror of His soul, not at evil within, because there was none, but at evil everywhere else outside Himself. The suggestions too of the enemy, instead of awakening will, only inflicted pain

and suffering on Him. He was a sufferer just because He was the Holy One, not in the least degree (as with us) from the sense of the mind of flesh; and therefore it is said, “In that he himself suffered, being tempted.” When man as he is yields in anything, it is of course to gratify his nature; it is self-pleasing, whatever be the bitter result. There neither was nor could be aught like this in Jesus. He “suffered, being tempted,” and He is “able to succour them that are tempted.” But the remarkable thing to note here is, that an obedience similar to His is looked for from us: to obey God as sons in the new nature, and by the Spirit of God. In this path there is trial.

In exact accordance are Christians viewed here below in the Epistle to the Hebrews. They are redeemed; they are sanctified; they are children; they are Christ’s brethren; and meanwhile they are in the place of temptation, which the wilderness is and must be. So we find the Psalmist reminding the children of Israel of “the day of temptation in the wilderness.” For us too now, as for them, there is the substantially same trial. The scene around is the wilderness, the time is the day of temptation. We are tried and thoroughly put to the proof. And this our God turns to our good; for we are in a place too where every spring of power, all the food that sustains, the light, the direction that guides, is from above, not from within ourselves, nor from the world without of course. There is nothing here around us, any more than in our own old nature, to help us on; but just the contrary, to impede and defile, to injure and destroy. Above the rest in malice is the great enemy that tempts to evil. Christ knows it, having His wakeful eye on him as well as on us. As the general, who once in a

beleaguered city had to stand and beat off the enemy, though he suffered, is just the one most of all to feel for his friends, who, being besieged by the same foe, have besides to contend with a traitor within: how much more cannot Jesus feel for you and sympathize with you? Never was a greater mistake than the supposition that He must have the traitorous old man within in order to sympathize. Had there been evil within Him, it would simply have destroyed the person of Christ in His moral glory and perfection, as well as His sacrifice and its consequences. There would have been no Saviour at all. This is what unbelief ever comes to — a virtual denial of Jesus, the Son and His work. And hence, therefore, it matters but little whether men deny His Godhead or undermine His spotless and perfect humanity: either way, no Christ remains for God, no Saviour remains for man. It is the merest naturalism to imagine that the perfectness of the Saviour and of His salvation takes away from the perfectness of His sympathy. Love and holiness in our nature tried here below, and suffering to the utmost, are the basis of His sympathy; and He, if I may repeat, that knew what it was to suffer in having to do with the tempter, knows best how to feel for you who, besides the same tempter, have to watch against traitorous flesh within you. If He had it not, does He therefore care for you the less? Nay, but the more and perfectly; for the old man occupies one with self in one way or another: He was absolutely free to love, serve, and suffer.

But then the succour that the Lord renders is to holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. They are “the sanctified.” The priesthood of Christ applies itself only to saints. This is so true that we never find the

slightest raising of the question of sins when Christ's priesthood is discussed by the apostle. It is a common enough thought among believers that Christ acts as a priest for us when we fail by sins from time to time. This you will not find in Scripture. The teaching of the epistle applies His priesthood to succour and sympathy when we are tempted as Christ was; and I have no doubt there was the holiest wisdom in this.

Another opportunity I hope to have for showing what is an admirable and gracious provision for us, whatever may be the depth of our need in failure. We shall then see that, if a believer sin, his sad case is not overlooked, but that God does in His own most merciful and wise goodness provide for it, whatever the want may be.

But your attention is now drawn to the first great truth, which, believe me, ought to be gravely weighed; for not the least unhappy feature of modern Christendom is this, that people have imbibed the notion that we must sin, and that there is no adequate help or power against it. They are apt therefore to regard sin as a small, or at least inevitable, matter, making up their minds for it because we are only "poor sinners:" such is the language constantly adopted, and by evangelicals pre-eminently, whether Anglicans or dissenters.

Now, I do not deny that the Christian may be viewed as a sinner, yea, as the chief, looking back at what one had been, or at what one is in oneself apart from Christ — as the apostle Paul speaks of himself in 1 Tim. 1. But surely he did not mean that he was then going on in his sins? or in constant failures as a believer? This is the way many people use it; and I grieve to think that the object desired is to reduce the holy apostle to their own level

as much as possible. Sad to say, they would like to get a license for a little sin out of the Bible. Hence, one party try to make sin only a violation of known law; others take advantage of the middle portion of Romans 7, and the ineffectual struggle against sin there described in a quickened but undelivered soul, as if it were the ordinary and normal state of a Christian here below. What can I call this but Antinomianism? And yet you will find that these evil thoughts reign most with a great many persons who think themselves the most opposed to Antinomians. But there is no one thing more remarkable in the present confusion than the fact that the very people who most fail take credit for what they least possess, and bandy charges against those too who, through the mercy of God, seek to be as far as possible from affording ground for them.

It is, however, the truth now, that throughout Christendom theology limits sin to flagrant, or at any rate overt, acts of transgression, and teaches men that, human nature being what it is, there must needs be sin on the part of Christians; and one reason of this Christ-dishonouring result is very plain. They agree in general to put themselves under the law as the rule of life. Now, as surely as the flesh is in us, it is utterly impossible that the law should not provoke those under it to sin. Nay, it was what the law was given for. It is not meant to make men sinners, which God could not do, but, when they were sinners, to make the sin evident, and to bring it out unmistakeably. In a certain sense the object was wholesome and merciful in the result, because it was to hinder people from deceiving themselves. It was directly calculated to guard those that had sinned, and really were guilty before God, from being able to gloss over

their sins and pretend they had none. It was to prove them distinctly obnoxious to judgment, and to make them cry out to God for mercy, glad to find the free grace that God has provided in the Lord Jesus Christ and by His redemption.

Such a process it pleased God to carry on before the Saviour came, preparing the way for Him and His work in this as in other respects. But then it is another thing altogether now that He is come, and the grace and truth of God in all its fulness, and the redemption that Christ has accomplished. It is a totally different thing to go back from the gospel and put oneself in that condition of law in which souls necessarily were before, in order to make them feel the impossibility of law availing them and their need of grace in Christ. If it was in due season then, it is unbelief now, when God's word entitles the believer to the enjoyment of what He has wrought and of what He is. Law is not enacted for a righteous man (which and more the believer surely is), but for lawless and insubordinate souls, for impious and sinful (which believers are not); as, on the other hand, the right and intended use of the saving grace of God is to teach us, that, having denied impiety and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and justly, and piously in the present age (or course of things), awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. By grace, therefore, the soul is put as absolutely clean by virtue of Christ's redemption before God, once utterly guilty and lost, but now without a charge on His part.

What more do I want? That the same Saviour who died and rose for me should be now living and active on my behalf in all the gracious exercise of His watchful,

loving, holy care, succouring me in the midst of my trials for His name's sake, and from man's, the world's, and Satan's hatred. He is in the glory, and I am in the wilderness, going on, toiling, suffering, but awaiting Him to come and take me to Himself in that glory whither He is gone. For the present I am here. He was crucified, and, while here, exposed to His various enemies, not only to their malicious power, but to the serpent's wiles. And who and what am I to stand or march through? It is here that priesthood applies to saints, and for such ends. It is to minister to them the suited succour, that we may receive mercy and find grace for seasonable help. It is from One, too, who knows all by His own experience in depths beyond comparison; who knows what an enemy Satan is, and how great his subtlety and his malice; from One therefore not only as divine, but that can succour on the ground of being once tried to the uttermost Himself as man, but then One who is priest as Son of God, and not merely because He has that nature which I have, although I have it in a fallen unholy state which He had not. I have humanity tainted: He was and is the Holy One, not only as God, but as man. Certainly, however, this is no reason why He should not sympathize, but the contrary. For it is selfishness and sin which hinder sympathy, not holiness and love.

But we are told "we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Mark, the apostle does not speak about our sins; nor is there any ground whatever to confound "infirmities" with sins. He supposes a people that have now done with their sins by the grace of God, because by the blood of Christ they are blotted out for ever. They are set, therefore, with

their faces Godward and heavenward; but still they are in the wilderness. And above is the Lord Jesus in all His active love and grace occupied with them individually, and able to sympathize with our infirmities, as One tempted in all things in like manner apart from sin. No doubt one of the sources which commonly pervert the character of Christ's priesthood is from looking in a natural way to our Lord Jesus. Men can not make out how He can be dealing with every one at once according to His word. But this is a simple matter of faith. The word of God is as plain about the suited care of the Lord Jesus in His priestly office, as about the efficacy of His redemption for each believer. And as to the total absence of sin, there is exactly the same phrase used for the one case as for the other, as displayed in salvation when He appears a second time. (Compare Hebrews 4:15 with Hebrews 9:28.)

Accordingly it is in this way that the Holy Ghost treats it. "Having therefore a great high priest who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the profession." For therein lay the difficulty. Their peril was lest they should compromise Christ Jesus or go back. The apostle never hints at the danger of assurance, but insists on holding it firm to the end. That they should doubt the forgiveness of their sins does not occur to the Spirit of God, if I may so speak. Beyond controversy He could not treat the work of Christ with such contempt as to raise the question whether it does not absolutely effect the end for which God had given Him to die. Rather does He call on the children to hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end, resting on their simplicity, which is their wisdom, on the fulness of divine grace in Christ. It is for this very reason

they in their trials want sympathy, as well as to be helped and strengthened; and the priesthood of Christ does this for the holy brethren.

It is not a question here of meeting unholy men, and pardoning those who are taught of God to cry to Him about their sins and ruin. This is the gospel of God's grace found elsewhere, but not here. It is not the point in priesthood, but rather "let us hold fast the confession." Christ was in all points tempted like as we are, without sin. It is not merely without sinning, but "without sin:" temptation in His case was absolutely apart from sin. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

In the next chapter (Heb. 5) this is pursued, and in a manner full of importance and interest, although men often overlook it. "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God." This they apply to the Lord Jesus. "Well," you ask, "was He not taken from among men?" I answer that the Holy Spirit is not giving this as a description of His priesthood at all, but of priesthood in contrast with His. "For every high priest taken from among men is established for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins." The third verse ought to make it indisputably plain to any believer. The same high priest of the first two verses is described in the third verse also; and he expressly requires to offer for himself — not merely for others, but also for his own

need — to offer for sins. Is it not obvious, then, that it is such a high priest as Aaron, or Aaron's son, not such an one as Christ, who, if compared, is accordingly also contrasted with that description? "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called by God, as was Aaron also. So also Christ glorified not himself." He begins with a point of similarity, but it is only to bring out contrast. He did not take it to Himself. He who said to Him, Thou art My Son, said also elsewhere, A priest Thou for ever after the order of Melchisedec. He was addressed by God accordingly. Thus the essence of our Lord's priesthood here, where the root, stock, and fruits are all before us, is this, that He was not merely Son of man, but the Son of God. Most blessed to see, that being Son of God He deigned to become a man, the Son of man; but the ground laid down is what He is essentially in His own right and title, not merely what He became, but what He is, the Son of God, as none else was of men or angels. The high priest, with which chapter 5 opens, is merely a child of Adam like another, who could exercise forbearance toward the ignorant and erring, because he was no better himself. He was himself also clothed with infirmity. It was but natural therefore that he on this ground should feel for his fellows. But all this is exactly in contrast with the place, and dignity, and grace of the Lord as priest.

The priesthood of Christ is in relation to the trials of those who are His, loved in the world and unto the end. It is for the succour of them when tempted, as He was, when suffering for righteousness' or for His name's sake — tried in every way in which they can be here below, unless it be because of their sins. There may be, and is, pity even there; and God's grace may mercifully come

down to such need, and deal with one who is buffeted for his faults. He knew too well that it would be all over with us if it were not so; but it is not what the Spirit of God treats of here. Now this is of all possible consequence for us to be clear about. For we must never put a strain on Scripture. Although the teaching might, if introduced here, seem more compact to one's mind and wishes, and a shorter road to comfort thus open to the children of God if they looked on the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ as dealing with our faults and applying itself in grace to sins; still the path of faith is to read the Bible as God has written it, and the only real power and comfort of the Spirit will be found to accompany subjection to His word.

It will be my business, if the Lord will, when we next assemble for the purpose, to take up the other part of my subject, the provision of grace, not for the weakness of the children of God, nor for their sufferings from the enemy, but when alas! through unguardedness they have been drawn away or slipped into evil, into sin. I shall show that the grace of the Lord Jesus can meet this as every other difficulty. But the sympathy of the Lord could not be with our evil. We can only dwell on this for a moment now.

When we were nothing but sinners, it was not a question of sympathy or of priesthood consequently, but of suffering for sins, as He alone suffered. This was what we wanted, not sympathy for our sins. No right-minded person, no saint of God, could want sympathy with his sins. Suffering for us, the just for the unjust, blotting them out with the precious blood of Jesus, was the way in which God met that need, and met it conclusively. But they being made now a new creation in Christ, washed

not only in blood but also in water by the word (for this is He that came by water and blood, Jesus the Christ, not by water only, but by water and blood), both atoned for and already clean by reason of the word He had spoken to them — being thus on every side and in the fullest sense holy and beloved, then they want and find One that succours in all trials, difficulties, sorrows, and sufferings that befall saints here for His sake.

This is exactly what the Lord is doing for us now, occupied with each believer; for the very point of the blessedness in it is that it is individual. He is not priest for the church: I know no such doctrine in Scripture. Nor is it even for an individual viewed as a member of His body, though of course the Christian is such. But if one think of oneself as a member of Christ's body, then is to be seen only what is absolutely perfect, what is truly of the Holy Ghost. But then I am exposed to the enemy in this world; I am passing through a howling wilderness, a pilgrim and a stranger. There is exactly where I want and where I have the grace of Christ's priesthood.

The children of Israel, it will be remembered, when they were journeying through the wilderness, brought out in a humbling but instructive way the presumption of man, though altogether vanity. They thought one was as good as another; for they were all a holy people, and therefore needed no priest given them by God. The consequence was that a plague set in, and the earth opened her mouth, Jehovah's judgment swallowing up those rebels against His authority. But immediately afterwards they are taught in the most significant way the all-importance of priesthood. He directs the heads of the families to put a rod for each tribe in the sanctuary.

Aaron does the same. When looked at in due time, Aaron's alone buds, blossoms, and bears fruit. That rod of the high priest accordingly becomes the characteristic of the chosen priesthood. There could not but be authority, nor could a saint wish otherwise; for God, not man, must command. But it was not the judicial authority of Moses's rod. It was not a rod marked by judgments executed on wickedness. Such was the well-known rod of Moses, which would have only brought destruction on such a people as the Israelites were; for, after all, how often they were breaking down! There we find this wonderful thought, the rod of grace, of priestly grace, the rod of living power — of the life that was after death, and that bears fruit in the face of it. And so the Lord in this significant way showed that the way to lead such a people through the wilderness was not to be by such an act of delivering power as brought them out of Egypt. This would not suffice for Him or them. Thus had they been by mighty hand led into the wilderness, but what could bring them through the wilderness? The grace of priesthood, in the figure of the power of an endless life, which bears fruit out of death, as set forth by the wonderful token of it thenceforward laid up in the holiest of all, at least in the desert — Aaron's rod that budded.

So we see in our Lord Jesus, as we read in Hebrews 7, set forth in all the precision and fulness of inspired teaching: "He is able also to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him." He saves them completely. How could the Son of God fail as priest any more than as Saviour, or in any other way whatever? It is not here a question of the redemption of slaves, but of His saving the saints of God, of bringing them safe through in

presence of a power opposing itself to God's purpose about them, and from all the consequences of their weakness here below. He is always living to make intercession for them. But they are associated with One who was "holy, harmless, undefiled." There is no allowance of sin, and least of all by priesthood — no such thought as a company of sinners who have a priest that takes care of them in spite of their sins. Such is not the doctrine of Christ's priesthood. They are holy, for God is who has begotten them again to a living hope by Christ's resurrection from the dead. They are consequently not born of God only, but sufferers here below while He is on high, where as priest He is always living to make intercession for them.

Undoubtedly, in spite of such great mercy and privileges, they may, through unwatchfulness, sin; and it remains to be shown that they are not left to perish in the folly of an evil way into which they were surprised. We shall see how God meets all this, and that it is in a somewhat different manner, though it be by the same Christ. But it is Christ in a way suited to that need in His wondrous grace. Enough has been now pointed out from Scripture, I trust, to clear the subject of Christ's priesthood for the Christian: this was all I proposed for the present.

The Advocacy Of Christ - 1 John 2:1, 2

I have already endeavoured to show the distinctive character and object of Christ's priesthood. We have traced how in Scripture it stands in relation exclusively to those who are brought by the work of Christ into the presence of God. It is, therefore, in no way an association of the Lord Jesus with the world. Its aspect is

not to the wants of the sinner viewed as such, but rather to those of the sanctified, whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren. For God's design by it is not to give to any a standing, but to sustain and succour those whom grace has already brought nigh to Him by the blood of Jesus. This makes the matter sufficiently plain for the priesthood of Christ. Grace would thereby maintain a holy people according to that nearness which it has already given them; and hence therefore in the epistle to the Hebrews, as we saw, it is assumed that they have already access to God, which, we must remember, is a privilege that is never taken away.

We are brought to God by the one offering of Christ. This nearness the Christian never loses. We may fail and act with grievous inconsistency; and it is most sorrowful if we do. But for the believer remains access to God (being founded, not on legal conditions, but on Christ's blood), and this too of the most absolute kind; because the measure of it is the value which God puts upon the work of His own Son, and it is impossible that God should slight that sacrifice. In virtue of it then He acts in our favour according not merely to our faith but to His estimate of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in His sight. Hence, we being thus brought nigh, it is for evermore, as Scripture insists with the utmost care and clearness.

It is possible, as we are there assured, that some souls that have confessed the Lord, and been sanctified by His blood too, might give Him up. (Heb. 10) Such is the solemn warning set forth to those who had been baptized from among Israel; and the same danger is of course true of Gentiles also. But evidently this is no question of what we may call failure, but giving up

Christ. It is apostasy, though no doubt the Spirit of God speaks to check the incipient tendency to go away, pointing out the awful result; and the renewed man heeds the word of God; whereas the warning is lost upon the unconverted man, perhaps at best attracted by the novelty or the intrinsic beauty of Christianity as an intellectual scheme; and so much the more in those days when it was entirely new, after the Jews had been accustomed so long to Rabbinical tradition as dry as their own parchments, or the Gentiles to the vain philosophy of the Greeks. We can readily understand what a refreshing power there was in the facts and the theory of Christianity, which could not but exercise an immense charm on certain candid minds as minds. But this of itself never lasts. Neither does affection moved by the mercy of God, if alone, last. Nothing abides short of a new nature, where the conscience is wrought on by the Spirit of God, which brings a man in as nothing but a sinner to find his one resource, remedy, and deliverance in the Lord Jesus. And where this is by grace given to faith, then there is nearness to God brought in by the blood of Christ. And the priesthood of the Lord Jesus is that action of divine grace that is carried on by the Lord risen, living, and interceding for us at the right hand of God, whereby the word of God is applied to keep us up, and to lead us on in the face of all trial, difficulty, opposition, and our own weakness and suffering. This is contemplated and provided for by God in giving us such a Priest as the Lord Jesus is in His presence on high, so that we see it to be sustaining grace and mercy. It is that which meets and keeps, but keeps us a holy people in the midst of weakness.

Again, we must never confound infirmities with sins, or call sins infirmities. The essence of sin is self-will, not necessarily transgression of law; but, whether there be the latter or not, sin is self-will; it is acting without a divine motive; if not against the authority or will of God, without having Him or His word before us as that which prompts and directs the action. When we do not seek Him we are acting independently of Him, and pleasing ourselves. All this is sin, it matters not how fair our ways may be in the eyes of men. But this is not what the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ is meant to meet, but the need of those who suffer in striving against sin.

For, when we suffer for Him, when we have trials just because we are seeking to follow the Lord, we do need His sympathy and comfort. We shrink from trial, and cannot but feel it, sometimes with mixed feelings. Our blessed Lord ever felt it holily and perfectly. There was not an atom of sin in His sorrow and suffering, and all His pathway was full of it; for He was the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. So with us in our measure. It is quite right that we should feel the contrariety of things to God. We wrong Him and yield to the enemy whenever we seem to make up our minds to the awful state that surrounds us now as if it were any adequate reflection of God, or of His moral government either; for although He does govern in secret providence, and this most wisely and righteously too, carrying on His will in the face of the subtlest foes, and apparently insuperable difficulties and the conflict of circumstances, yet the present state of the world is in no degree an adequate manifestation of God’s government. In the midst of such a state, then, His own must suffer: there is our own weakness, and a malignant foe, and a

hostile world. And here it is that the priesthood of the Lord Jesus applies to us — as a people holy but feeble — who feel what is around, and are tried by it, and suffer through it; and the priesthood of Christ is to carry us through in spite of all this.

But now we have to look at another part of the subject. May we not sin, although we are a holy people? And when “we” is thus used, there is meant the family of God — none less; that is, all saints, all those who now bear the name of the Lord Jesus, and love Him in incorruption; all that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. And may not such, then, fail? May they not slip, through unwatchfulness, in such a way as to grieve the Holy Spirit of God? Most assuredly. “In many things we all offend.” This is sin. Call not this infirmity, but rather sin. Do not use “failure’’ in such a way as to imply something between infirmity and sin for what is really sinful. Call things by their true names. Grace emboldens us to be thoroughly truthful and upright, to be honest with God and man, and, above all, to hold the right and title of God against that nature which — whilst ourselves are held for dead to it — not being treated as utterly evil, has been allowed to work out to the dishonour of God.

But should one sin, what is the resource according to Scripture? The advocacy of Christ. And there is just the importance of paying heed to the distinctness of these two dealings of divine mercy and living grace in our Lord Jesus, now at the right hand of God; for they both belong to Him there, and they are both viewed as reaching us here. But they are not the same thing; and to confound them is to lose the characteristic power of each of them, and, as is always the case when you

muddle together truths that are distinct, both are enfeebled, if not lost. You may have, perhaps, a general vague sense of them both, but you have not the precision and full comfort of either.

Yet would the Lord freely give us both, as we need both. In 1 John 2 we find to what the advocacy of the Lord applies, and what it assumes. We are brought not merely into the presence of God, but we have communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. We have a new life or divine nature, and along with the possession of this previously unknown spiritual being, given us by divine love in and by the Lord Jesus, there is the enjoyed fellowship with the Father and the Son. Now it is evident that, when we speak of communion, we have before us that which is very delicate and sensitive exceedingly. For we have only to reflect for a moment, and we must see that it is impossible that God the Father could have communion with sin, or with us in it.

We who understand the gospel know that our being the most wretched of sinners did not hinder God from applying the blood of Christ in all its efficacious power to us. It was for such that His Son shed His blood; nor would there have been sufficient ground for shedding His blood except for such. The sin-offering of the Lord Jesus supposes our utter vileness and distance from God. But now we are, through that one offering, not merely sanctified, but perfected for ever. This has been secured by His death; and, once done, the work for ever stands. But then it is quite another thing when you speak of communion in the practical sense. Confound these, and you destroy either confidence as to your soul, or enjoyment of God, if not both.

What then is the basis of our communion? It is Christ; but, this being so, whatever is not of Him, whatever is of self, whatever is of sin, interrupts the enjoyment of communion. And what can restore it when broken? The advocacy of Christ. It is not therefore, observe, the ministration of that which strengthens, consoles, or gives courage to a holy people who are brought into absolute nearness with God while walking in a world where all is counter to Him and to them because they are His, and it is not yet in fact under His sway, but rather that of His enemy. Here it is a question of the practical state of our souls. And this is just as true in its place, and of the greatest possible moment for the saint. And you will find that the persons who merely dwell on such truth as is in the epistle to the Hebrews, or rather that part of it which discusses the effect of atonement, or the early part of Romans our justification, and make all this, however momentous, to be the sum and substance of Christianity, are apt to be a cold set of people indeed, and in danger of becoming not only formal and doctrinally dry, but also deficient in sensitiveness of heart and conscience for the glory of God.

The work of Christ is not all. When we rest on it, the priesthood of the Lord Jesus first applies to our need day by day. God does call for a people walking separately to Himself. If I am brought into this holy nearness, Christ's ministration of grace does not fail to act so as to conciliate my practical condition with my standing by grace in Christ before God, to maintain me here according to such a title of holy access to Him there. But then may I not sink to, or even allow, what is positively evil — be betrayed into bad feelings, bad thoughts, bad

words, bad ways? It is too true. And what then? Am I to despair because I have sinned after baptism, as a child and saint of God delivered from the guilt and power of sin? Am I to quiet my conscience with the plea that I must sin, as being still in this body and world? Neither the one nor the other would be according to God.

And this let me say, dear brethren: in itself, knowledge does not preserve, but rather, when alone, it endangers; and the Christian that is most liable to slip, yea sure, is he who knows most, but least seeks grace to walk in dependence on God. There is no more critical position; indeed, we may say, that he who ceases to walk dependently is morally ruined already. What worse therefore than where there is a vast deal of truth taken in without the continued exercise of conscience before God? We need self-judgment to be continually going on, and that, too, in a sense of weakness and waiting on God; for as the essence of sin is the desire to be independent, so also that on which godliness practically turns, and of which it consists, is the spirit of constant deference to God in things small and great. There can be no acceptable obedience without waiting on God; and, where this is found, obedience will always follow; and obedience is of the very essence of the practical path to which we are called as sanctified. So the apostle Peter says, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” That is, we are thus chosen by the Father, and thus sanctified by the Spirit, for the purpose of obeying as Christ obeyed. We have all the comfort of His blood sprinkled on us, and washing us clean without a spot;

but we are sanctified to obey, not slaves like Israel under law, but sons under grace as He obeyed.

Where the soul enters into this, tenderness of conscience will be cherished, distrust of self and watchfulness before God, with a spirit of prayer, which is the simple expression of our dependence on God. But one may be easily unwatchful, and open sin ensues ere long. “My little children,” therefore says the apostle John, “these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” This is the word of God to the Christian practically. I am speaking of His word now, of course, as the ordinary rule of our daily ways. His servant writes, “That ye sin not.”

But then, if all are warned against sin, the Spirit of God fully provides for any one that may stray, not as if evil were to be coolly looked for, but in the most guarded terms and careful regard to holiness. “And if any man sin.” He does not say, “If we sin.” How could He say of the family, “If we sin”? Had it been said, “And if we sin,” it would be as good as allowing the thought that all must sin. Never does the Spirit of God say anything of the sort. And if any man — any one — “sin,” it is a lamentable alternative to the Spirit of God; but still such a fact may be. It is, alas! in the believer’s history what one has to face, and feel, and humble one’s self before God for. “If any man sin, we have an advocate.” He does not merely say “he,” but “we.” How perfect is His word, even in that which to a Grecian would be sure to sound an irregular or peculiar phrase! Can one doubt that they of old criticized John’s words, or Paul’s, just as much as or more than anything that we poor creatures might write now? This clause would have sounded harsh enough to Attic ears. Yet the men who flatter themselves

that they understand writing so well know but little about the extreme accuracy of Scripture. I delight in the perfection of that sentence, and I maintain against all comers the perfect accuracy of what the Spirit of God has written there. Not all the world could improve on it; and the very singularity, too, which embarrasses them — which they count so strange in the structure of it — seems to me the proof of its perfectness.

An ordinary man of letters, if writing the sentence, might have said, “If any man sin, he has an advocate with the Father;” or if he had intended “we have,” he would have changed it to “If we sin.” But no; the Spirit of God has exactly given the right thing; because by saying “If any one sin,” He makes it a sorrowful individual case: He keeps up the sense that it ought never to be. It is a contingency that may be, and it is always to be regarded as a most painful humiliation for our own souls, the sense of which we ought to maintain undimmed — in no way making light of sin, or treating it as if it were a common thing that we must all do sometimes. We may fall, doubtless; and we should never lose sight of the danger. On the other hand, we have an Advocate with the Father. There He is; and we have Him as Advocate; that is, Christ belongs thus to every Christian; He acts thus in the presence of God. It is the fulness of love which has given Him there to meet this great and distressing need of the soul. But still we have, not merely he has. If it had been said “he has,” this might have given the idea that it was His need that created the office, so to speak, or that it was this which set Christ to work as an advocate. No; He is always there, not simply as Priest with God, but as Advocate with the Father. “And if any man sin, we have an

advocate." He is the common portion of all in the blessed fulness of the grace that takes up the deepest want of any created by sin. And this is exactly what is expressed best by the language of the Holy Ghost in the sentence — "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father."

Now observe how he goes back to the language of grace. He introduced the coming down of divine love in the person of the Lord Jesus, that eternal life which was with the Father before the world was, to spend Himself upon us, to give us what He alone possessed, what was peculiar to Him; for no man, no angel had it. Neither Adam, fresh created, nor the archangel, had not that eternal life: only the Son of God. "In him was life," and "he that hath the Son hath life." Communion with the Father and with the Son was the consequence. "And these things write we unto you, that your joy might be full." It is not merely a question of peace with God. It is not anything that tends to that end, as I have said, but the great and blessed truth of a communion which flows out of having Christ, the Son of God, and eternal life in Him.

Thus, whatever in our conduct is inconsistent with the action of divine life, Christ, as advocate, takes up. Nor is the result uncertain. The effect is revealed to us. So absolute is the grace that the apostle says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." If any uninspired Christian had written such a sentence as this, can one hesitate to affirm, that men would have called it downright antinomianism? I am persuaded that the only thing which shields many a word of the apostles from such a calumny is because most are as yet unprepared openly to speak ill of the Bible. There are

men that so much the more do so, and not a few, and they are growing; and in this country, as in others, they lose shame and become bolder. In some neighbouring lands, Romanist and Protestant alike, they are practised in modern forms of the scepticism once rampant here but abashed till of late; but now it spreads, the reaction from ritualism — this the religious, that the profane enemy of the gospel, and you must be prepared for it.

Many godly people then, but, if godly, not established in grace, are just such as find most difficulty in the fulness of God's provision. Incredulous minds are not troubled in general by such things, being rather glad to fasten on any inspired words which might seem to give them a loophole and excuse for sin; for so it is that they wretchedly pervert the Scriptures to their own destruction. I speak now of such as love the Lord, but have never been brought to nought in their eyes, nor to rest only in the grace of God; and such are apt to be particularly tried by what exceeds their measure.

For instance, take such a word as this, "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law, but under grace." What can they make of it? For their part they had been diligently trained to think, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, or any others, that, saved by grace, they were now put under that very law as a rule to live by, which the apostle declares they are not under; yea, more, because they are not under law, but under grace, that sin shall not have dominion over them. As it never occurs to them to suspect the prevalent tradition, they are thereby incapable of understanding this Scripture. So lack of appreciating the fulness of redemption hinders souls from attaching any intelligible idea to that

great privilege of the Christian — “no more conscience of sins.”

It is the same here again: “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” Wondrous way of God! In such a connection to tell us that we have Christ in all righteousness, making good our cause with the Father. There is precious assurance of communion in John 14, 15 to such as walk in obedience; but here it is, “If any man sin,” — not if any man adhere to the good, and holy, and acceptable will of God. “If any man sin,” says the apostle; not even “If he be made sensible of his sin;” nor yet, “If he spread it out, and humble himself for his sin.” It cannot be that the holy and true God could lessen one’s moral horror of evil: how comes it then that He should set forth our having an advocate with the Father, and such an advocate — “Jesus Christ the righteous”? There is a confessor of Christ who, we will suppose, has fallen into some deed of unrighteousness; what then does he need? “Jesus Christ the righteous;” not the miserable idea of substituting His own perfect ways for his evil ones. Most precious truth in its own place is the scriptural doctrine of Christ’s substitution, the true Azazel, on the cross. Viewed as a sinful man, I have my substitute in Him there, suffering for my sins, not sympathy then. Even He must suffer for them to the uttermost, Just for unjust. God forbid that any one should look for sympathy in his sins! There we have the substitute. And there, in my sorrow, and trial, and suffering, I have that blessed priest who Himself suffered, and is “able to succour them that are tempted.” But now, after God’s grace to me, is found a sad practical contradiction to my place as His child and saint. Here is that with which God can have no

fellowship — sin. I have sinned, and in the most bitter sense, too, sinning against His grace, because I failed to walk watchfully and humbly in prayer and self-judgment, and so fell to the Lord's dishonour. "If any man sin" — not "he must begin again;" nor "he has lost his blessing;" nor "let him apply afresh to the Saviour for eternal life." Nothing of the sort. "We have an advocate with the Father."

Thus, it is not the poor thought of comforting us because He was righteous, wherein we were all wrong. This is not God's way; but "we have an advocate with the Father." It ought to be plain that the Puritan notion of substituting His rights for each wrong of ours would act as a continual destruction of the conscience. No. "We have an advocate with the Father." We have One that takes up all our business, One that acts for us where we could not, One that enters thoroughly into the case with the Father. Men know what it is to have in court a man of business worthy of all confidence in what they might compromise through many causes, and what would certainly be for them a source of the greatest possible perplexity. Here you, a Christian, are in exceeding trouble through your own fault, and you hate yourself the more, because you know His love against whom you have sinned. Yet, O the comfort of grace! He tells you of One in whom you have the fullest trust, who, knowing all your history, state, and heart, is entirely identified with you, and gives what is more, the perfect certainty that, as He is all prevailing and righteously so before God, so surely He will extricate you to God's praise, if to your humiliation. This, and no less, is what our advocate is; and this He is, too, not with us, though He does wash us every whit clean, but "with the Father."

It is not said with God in this case, as if it were a question simply of our justification. But is all hope of communion gone after such failure? after having so disgraced His name and our own confession of it? No; “we have an advocate with the Father.” It is for the restoration of the communion that had been interrupted. For though the sin of the believer in his walk may not destroy his nearness to God, his access to God being made good by the sacrifice of Christ on which he rests, it does interrupt the enjoyment of communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; and it is the very Son Himself who does set Himself as advocate to enter into this otherwise hopeless necessity of the soul. Nothing shall separate from His love.

“We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” How blessed! His advocacy is as perfect to restore the saint’s broken communion, as the blood to cleanse the once guilty sinner. But it is not simply the fact that He is my righteousness, which remains most true, unimpaired, and unimpeachable. The evil is dealt with, not spared. Not only does the Father feel that His child has so sinned, though there was grace to have kept right through, but I judge myself. And, in point of fact, this is the way in which the advocacy of Christ works. He is an advocate with the Father; but then He deals with my soul also. It is not merely an exercise of what He is for me, and this is quite true and important; nor can one be too firm in holding fast one’s standing. This abides according to its own perfection through Christ’s work; but then it is not His advocacy. So here we have the standing supposed in “Jesus Christ the righteous,” in whom, as St. Paul tells, we are made God’s righteousness. Even as advocate He probes the wound,

and in very love to my soul does what makes me feel, more truly and hence acutely, my failure; for He heals me by the Spirit as well as manages my cause with the Father. He is patron or advocate no less than the propitiation for my sins, and this too abides intact. The work is done by which the sins of the believer are effaced. But such riches of grace only cause the soul, where there is living faith, and so divine life, to feel the more anguish and shame for the sin against God; not because one dreads His judgment of ourselves, but just because we know His love so true and faithful, spite of unfaithfulness.

It remains that I should seek to show a little this advocacy in the application of Christ's advocacy to the saint. We have seen the main fact, the doctrine, and its relation to the truth of Christ our righteousness and of the propitiation, into which, of course, we need not enter now. It is a subject which is more or less familiar to all here. But I shall endeavour to adhere to the special truth that claims a somewhat fuller illustration just now, that is, Christ's advocacy; and now not only the truth in itself, but in its application to the soul. This too we find in the writings of the same apostle John. I do not say that we may not take the principle elsewhere, but we are indebted once to St. John for the brightest presentation. Just as Paul lets us best see the priest, and this in connection with our being a sanctified, purged, and perfected people by virtue of the blood of Christ, so here we have the advocacy of the Lord Jesus for those who have eternal life, and are brought into communion with the Father and His Son.

Here I must direct your attention more particularly to John 13. There it is said of the Lord Jesus, when He was

about to depart out of this world unto the Father, that "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." What blessed comfort for the needy! He loved them unto the end. But when He goes out of the world, it is only to work for His own in another way. On one hand we have the enemy in all the malice of his activity against the Lord Jesus. He had put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him. On the other hand, we have the Son of God in all the fulness of divine love to His own, spite of defiling influences, "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands." That it is not only that He goes back to God in all the purity in which He came from Him as God, but also with the conferred glory which the Father had put upon Him. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself." He is the servant still. It is the task divine love must take up in such a world as this. Man loves to figure and be somebody for a little while; God humbles Himself, and becomes a man, yea, a bondman, in order to deliver from self and Satan, loving and serving to the end, not merely as now, because of wretchedness and sin. It could not be otherwise. It is exactly what Jesus did, and does, and will do. Love serves, and seeks the good of others. We see it not only in the Son, but in the Father Himself also, though in another way. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Such is love, but it was displayed above all in the Son. Jesus would intimate what would occupy His heart about us when He should be on high; especially as it would prove no small difficulty for the Jewish or any other

mind. Further, it was meant to form the heart and ways of the saints in their mutual relations. He shows them in this significant act that He was still to be their servant in divine love. His cross would in no way exhaust the ever-flowing and fresh spring; for it was not a question of expiation only; but, if He was going up into glory, He would work so that they might have part with Him, even while they were upon earth, being dealt with according to that glory into which He was gone, and where they were to follow. Therefore “he took a towel, and girded himself: and after that poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet.”

Carefully remember that all through the context it is the washing of water by the word, and not by blood. In no case, as far as this scene typifies, have we propitiation here. The doctrine of the chapter is exclusively grounded on cleansing by water. No doubt the very same Son of God shed His blood for His own; but this was, observe, to wash us from our sins and expiate guilt before God. There it is the cleansing by water of these when reconciled to God, meeting the failures, the sins of saints, in their daily walk. “If any man sin;” but it is as saints that the Lord here regards them as His own; not those that grace seeks and brings to Christ out of the ranks of a rebellious world, but such as were already His own, and loved accordingly. And this was the way in which He would prove His love. He would cleanse them in divine love when He went up on high. He showed them here what He would do there. He washes the feet of those already bathed — bathed in water, and washed with water. It is the word used at first and then through the believer’s career. The bathing that He supposes as a

ground for washing their feet is water, not blood, although there was blood at first too.

For we must remember this is He that came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the more important to recall, because this is one of the truths that has well-nigh dropped out of the professing Church of God. I never met a man yet in the ordinary profession of Christianity that understood well the washing of water by the word, and but few who had any just idea of it whatever. That no doubt is plain speaking; but is there not a cause? At any rate it is quite evident that the truth intended is most important for saints. It is THE provision of grace against what defiles in our walk. One is far from meaning that the godly persons included in the previous statement have not had some enjoyment of the truth itself, for we may be quite sure grace has secured that. But I am now speaking of intelligence in the word, which rightly applies it, and so avoids utter misconstruction of a really important part of divine truth. Refer it to baptism, and you have absurdity as well as false doctrine; use it as the symbol of new birth, and of the subsequent cleansing by the word of the saints when defiled, and you have most needed truth.

For that which the Lord then and there represented is exactly what the Holy Ghost is carrying on here below in answer to Christ's advocacy on high. It will be seen that another truth is intimately connected with it, the action of the Holy Ghost now sent down from heaven, and this, we know, grounded upon Christ's ascension; for, having accomplished redemption, He went on high, and is glorified at God's right hand, whence He sent down the Holy Ghost here, who, in answer to His advocacy with

the Father, works in us by the word. Hence therefore is readily seen how it applies to the soul. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” Carrying out the purposes of that advocacy, as far as concerns the saints in their need, the Spirit of God brings home the word in power to the conscience and in every detail of our practice day by day.

Let me just refer to a clear instance in another Gospel, which may show that the principle runs through Scripture. We have seen that the doctrine and the application are particularly found in John, as bound up with divine life and communion. But now take an instance from the great moralist among the four evangelists, who was inspired to give us the account how Peter fell into a public and scandalous offence calculated to shake the confidence of all weak believers. For he was a weighty man, and a well-known leader: and the public fall of such an one denying his own Master in the hour of His greatest need, and this with oaths so solemnly and repeatedly and openly as in Peter’s case, could not but necessarily be a tremendous shock to the infant company of the disciples who were then gathering to the name of the Lord Jesus. As this was so flagrant a case, and recorded for our admonition, the Spirit of God shows us how it was dealt with by the Lord. First he had been solemnly warned. When boasting of his love, he was told of the fall that was at hand — told of it in presence of his fellows, undisguisedly, but also with the most tender desire if peradventure he might only be wise enough to profit by it. Alas! it is part of the state of him who falls that he does not realise his danger.

Here it was Peter’s own Master who told him what impended; and he had confessed before that Jesus was a

divine person, for he had owned Him to be the Son of the living God. Nevertheless, our ears are but heavy when we like not to hear, and we do not understand what we do not at the present time feel to be our own need. Unpalatable truths pass over us: what is then said is “a parable,” as we find with the disciples on a previous occasion. Peter therefore had no deep impression left on his soul, no vivid sense of need produced. Indeed such a fall, an aggravated outward evil, is always the effect of inward or secret failure before God. It neither comes alone nor all at once. Before this, Peter’s case, though a man singularly fervent and of earnest purpose, had not wanted certain traces of unjudged forwardness and self-confidence. And this it was that furnished the occasion; for the apostle was so sure of himself and of his own courage that, if everybody else denied the Master, it was impossible to his own mind that Peter could. Yet this was the man that denied the Christ of God through fear of a little servant-girl. So it is: if unbelieving and unwatchful, we fall into the very thing in which we are proudest, and in the way that is most humbling to us.

But look at the merciful ways of the Lord Jesus; for this it is of all things we want most to see — not Peter’s fall, but Christ’s fulness of grace. Before it He had said (Luke 22:31), “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” Satan demanded to have the disciples to sift them in general as wheat; but it was said to Simon individually, “But I (emphatically) have prayed for thee,” not merely “for you.” Ah! did not Peter need it? How sweet soon would be the proof of such interest and deep concern on the

Lord's part about himself, under such circumstances, as if there had not been another to care for, and all His love were concentrated on the one on the point of such grievous dishonour of His name. "I have entreated for thee, that thy faith fail not quite. And thou, when thou hast turned again, strengthen thy brethren." The word rendered "converted" means the turning to God, whether it be conversion originally, or the turning back when one has departed from Him. The latter is, of course, what is meant here. It is what we commonly call "restoration" of soul rather than what people in general understand by "conversion." The word is suitable to either. "Then, when once thou hast turned, again strengthen thy brethren."

But the point I would now press and clear is the grace of the Lord that could so provide for a wanderer, and that would give the certainty of it to the soul in such an hour of distress and humiliation. That flesh and hypocrisy might take advantage is true; but such grace is needed and shown. How comforting is the truth of God! Observe that this rich grace does not appear in answer to a penitent cry. Not for a moment does one doubt that the Lord hears and answers such; but there was in the case before us a reason for speaking otherwise, and, to my mind, of no small importance. If one had only the consolation of the word of the Lord, and of His appearing on our behalf when we begin to repent of any sins and judge ourselves before God, one might perhaps think it was one's own repentance, or prayers, that drew out His grace and awakened His care. And such is the thought of many a soul around us. It is exactly where people ordinarily find themselves in Christendom. That is, they make out that a man's conversion, as well as his

restoration, is in answer to his prayer, a substitution throughout of human merit for grace. Where is Christ in such a scheme?

It is not so Scripture speaks. There God ever takes the first place. It was God that began the good work when the soul sought Him not; as here it is the Lord evidently that entreated even before Peter fell, not the failing man after it, though of course he did pray and weep bitterly. But the stress is thrown on the prayers of Christ, not of Peter, however men may reason. “If any man sin,” we have — not shall have when he repents — “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” It is the settled possession that Christians always have. Sin is inexcusable always in a saint; but if one should be guilty, “we have an advocate with the Father.” His advocacy brings us to repentance. It is not our repentance that makes Him our advocate, or puts His grace in activity.

Have you seized the truth? Thus, as it is grace at the beginning, so it is grace through every step of the way. The spring is grace all through. I am far from saying that there is no righteousness; for, indeed, without it not anything else were good. Without the full maintenance of God’s character and ways, all must be wrong; but this we have in Christ Himself, who is our life, “Jesus Christ the righteous.” And besides, as we know, the fullest account has been taken of all that we were. “And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” It may not be in precisely the same way as for the believer, but still He died for all. The blood is on the mercy-seat, and this is not merely limited to the people of God, but embraces the largest outlook over God’s creation, so that the gospel can go out righteously in His grace towards anybody,

commanding to repent, no doubt, but appealing in love, persuading and warning souls far and wide that they may be saved.

It appears to me, then, that we have the subject distinct thus far in God's word. We are born of water and of the Spirit. It is that action of the Holy Ghost, by the word of God, carrying out the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which first of all the soul is set apart to God. Hence we read that He saved us "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." There we find what is clearly from the starting-point of the Christian's career. For God chose us from the beginning to salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. So also Christ "loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." The disciples were clean through the word Jesus spoke to them.

The truth, too, is often taught without the figure, as where we read in James 1, that we are "begotten by the word of truth." It is the same principle in 1 Peter 1: "We are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible," which is true from the very first.

The same distinction is maintained in the symbolic action of John 13, to which I have already referred. "He that is washed" (or bathed) "needeth not save to wash his feet." "Bathed" also is in the water of the word. It is not in blood, but in water still. Only that is when a man is first converted, or set apart unto God. He is bathed, as it were, all over. Afterwards, when there is a particular case of failure, the word is applied by the Spirit to convict us of that failure, and to humble us for it in self-judgment. So we see, in Luke 22:61, that the Lord

turned and looked upon Peter when he fell. “And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.” It was the washing of water by the word. The words of Jesus were recalled in all their life and power to his soul. “And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”

There is another remark, too, that I have to add as to this. We come to further details in the practical application to this particular instance. The work was not completely done when Peter went out and wept bitterly. This was right and seasonable; it was of God; but it was not complete. And therefore we find that the Lord Jesus afterwards deals with the inmost soul of this very Peter. As far as the apostles were concerned, His first interview was with Peter, with himself alone. But even after this we learn what must be to make the work complete, and this not judicially, but in the perfection of His love. “Simon, son of Jonas,” said He, “lovest thou me more than these?” Simon protests He knew that he dearly loved Him. The Lord repeats the question of his love, and the third time takes up his claim of special attachment; on which Peter was grieved that He said the third time, Dost thou love me dearly? Well he might feel; for it became evident that his threefold denial was before the Lord’s eye, and its root also. And now Peter gets to see how it came to pass. Not but that he had wept over it, and felt already his great sin and the Lord’s great grace; but had he thoroughly judged himself?

It is not a question therefore of merely judging the particular offence. Never do we reach the bottom of that which has misled us if we but look at the outward act. What exposed one to it? And what was it that exposed Peter? He thought he loved the Lord better than

anybody; he could go where the others could not; he could trust himself who loved Him so truly: never should he deny the Messiah. Peter was satisfied that he loved Jesus more than all, and could face prison, death, anything for His sake. The Lord thus brought to light the root of his failure. There, without one harsh word, without even an ostensible reference to the threefold denial, without the smallest needless exposure to others, the root was laid bare and dealt with; and Simon Peter was perfectly restored, and the Lord now could commit His sheep and His lambs to his tending and feeding. "When thou art restored, strengthen thy brethren." He was converted (restored) now, and had the promise in the end, when nature's strength should wither, that he should follow Himself even to the death of the cross.

Nor is it only in the New Testament that we find this truth. We have there, of course, the doctrine and the application, and such a special instance as I have just cited; but I now go farther, and affirm that it is a principle which is no less true of the Old Testament, though it be only the New Testament which gives us to understand it clearly. The water of separation (Num. 19) which the law enjoined on the children of Israel — what did it mean? Water was mingled with the ashes of a heifer that was wholly burnt, skin and all, even what was most offensive. The whole was reduced to ashes, being one of the few sacrifices where this was done completely; and why? For the very important reason of vividly expressing in a figure the consuming judgment of God. In no sacrifice was this more fully carried out than in the burning of the red heifer. The ashes (for that was the point) were kept mixed with running water, and the Israelite, if defiled, was ordered to be sprinkled with this

as a water of separation. There were two sprinklings; the first on the third day, and the second on the seventh day if the defiled one had been sprinkled on the third. The meaning I take to be that he was sprinkled on the third day, not the first, because one does not show a due sense of sin by being over-quick to get through it. You have seen a child who, directly she has been guilty of a fault, readily tells you how very sorry she is. But the same child will fall into the fault again no less quickly. Would you not rather see a child that showed more shame, and remained for a while under the feeling of it, than one so very hasty to ask pardon, and then forgetting the sin the next moment? Alas! we are but naughty children ourselves, and sometimes we have behaved as ill to God our Father.

The only wise God provided this institute for the people passing through the wilderness; for, remark, it appears only in Numbers, the book of the wilderness journey. And there it was and is wanted. It contemplates the people, not in Egypt, or in Canaan, but on their march through the wilderness. Accordingly the Israelite was called to abide under the sense of his uncleanness; he must bear the feeling of defilement till the third day. There must be no haste. The man who was unclean must abandon life to the pain of it for two days, and only on the third day, when there was a full witness (“in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established”) is he sprinkled. Such I believe to be the fire of the third day here. It has nothing to do with resurrection. It signifies, it would seem, an adequate testimony to his having been unclean; and it is when he feels it before God, and abides under it thus, that the seventh day sprinkling takes effect, and the man is

clean. Thus it is the reverse of trying to escape and have done with it, as a man would like to do; just as Saul, when he said, “I have sinned,” and then forgot all. Here the unclean was not sprinkled till the third day, and then afterwards on the seventh. The one case gives us sin in the presence of grace, as the other grace in the presence of sin. Thus all defilement was now judged and gone. The once defiled Israelite is now fully cleansed. Grace triumphs.

How great, then, the grace of our Lord, who, while making the fullest provision in case of sin, nevertheless in no case makes light of it; even in the very provision for restoring, grace turns all to holy account. Thus is the soul made to feel its sin as it never did before, not the particular act simply, but that which exposed to it, so that one may be profited and strengthened, as well as humbled, in a way and degree which had not been the previous experience. Thus, too, where sin abounded, grace yet more, giving a better state to the Lord’s praise alone, which could not be if there were no more than the open evil act seen; for we may be quite as liable to fall again, if not more so. What riches of grace thus meet us! Assuredly it does meet us in the particular act that disgraces and pains us: only according to both Old and New Testament it does not stop there, but would go to the root of the matter, that the defiled might judge self in its roots, and the soul gather strength for itself, minister grace to others, and God be glorified in all things by Jesus Christ our Lord.

May we, then, rejoice in the Lord, and rejoice always. May we know how to hold fast every particle of His truth, in the confidence of His grace. May we look to it, that all the grace and truth we know in Him be used to

maintain and vindicate the revealed will and word of God, that it may deal with our own souls as with others, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

W. K.

Christ Tempted and Sympathising

“For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” Heb. 2:18.

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The sympathy of Christ is associated with His priesthood on high. He sympathises not with sin, nor with sinners as such, but with the suffering saints of God. At the same time the Holy Ghost looks back upon Christ’s own experience when He was upon earth. He was tempted, but then the temptation was not in any way from within. There was in Him no propensity to evil that answered to the trial of Satan; but, on the contrary, all that the enemy found was dependence on God, simple unwavering faith in His word; never a carnal working, as in our hearts.

Hence, as there was in Christ the total absence of self-will inwardly, as He in every respect hated and rejected evil, there was nothing but thorough suffering. The effect of temptation on fallen humanity is not suffering, but rather pleasure, if we can call that pleasure which is the gratification of our evil nature. Christ knew nothing of this in either His person or His experience. Of motions in the flesh, inward solicitations to sin, He had none: He “knew no sin.” Hence, in order to guard against error on so holy and delicate a theme, it is necessary that we should hold fast the truth of Christ’s person as God has revealed it.

It is thus the Holy Ghost introduces the matter in the Epistle to the Hebrews. He begins with the person of the

Lord Jesus. He insists upon that which, after all, is the most necessary foundation - His divine glory (Heb. 1). From Old Testament witnesses Messiah is demonstrated to be the Son (vers. 1-5), object of angelic worship (ver. 6), to be God (ver. 8), yea, to be Jehovah (vers. 10-12). If I do not start with this as my faith in Christ, as the basis on which all His other glory is built up, my perception of the truth of Christ will be soon seen to be radically false. No one thing at bottom can be right with us, if we are wrong as to Him who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Next, having thus fully shown His proper divine dignity, the Holy Ghost takes up His humanity (Heb. 2); but there is the most careful exclusion of all thought that Christ assumed humanity in the fallen and morally feeble state in which it is in us. Because the children (the objects of God's favour in this world) were "partakers of blood and flesh, he also himself in like manner took part of the same, that through death he might annul him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil: and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (vers. 14, 15). It was needful that He should become a man, in order, by His death, to vindicate God, annul Satan's power, and accomplish redemption. But it was in no way incumbent on Him to take into His person here below the smallest taint of the fall. Nay, it was essential that He should not be thus defiled. If it is required of a steward that he be faithful, no less indispensable is it that an offering should be pure and spotless for the altar of God. The Lamb of God must needs be free from the remotest degree of infection. And so Christ was in all respects and to the full. Other scriptures prove this amply in detail, and fully confirm what we have definitely in the

Hebrews - that He took blood and flesh without the very least element of fallen nature in connection with it. As to proclivity, or even liability to evil, there is absolute silence; yea, rather, we shall see that such thoughts are carefully cut off beforehand.

In the Gospels, where we naturally look for the complete, because inspired, historical accounts of the person of Christ, more particularly in the Gospel of Luke, where He is displayed specifically as man, we find the fullest evidence of this. “The angel answered, and said unto her [i.e., the Virgin Mary], the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called [the] Son of God” (Luke 1:35). It is evident, therefore, though truly born of a woman, though deriving human nature from His mother Mary, there was, even in respect to this, a divine action which distinguished our blessed Lord most signally and strongly from all others from His birth. What Rome has lyingly, and as a thing of but yesterday, decreed of Mary, is most true of Jesus: He, not she, was immaculate in His human nature; and this through the energy of the Holy Ghost (as even the most rudimentary symbols of Christendom confess, I thank God), the result of the overshadowing power of the Highest. Hence therefore “That Holy Thing” could be its description from the first. He alone of all men was born “holy;” not made innocent and upright only, like Adam, still less - like Adam’s sons — conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity. He is designated “That Holy Thing,” it will be observed, when the question was not of what was simply divine (which indeed it would be wicked folly to doubt and needless to affirm here), but of what was human.

“That holy thing which shall be born [of thee] 1shall be called the Son of God.”

Matthew had already presented the birth of the Lord suitably to the design of his Gospel. “When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us” (Matt. 1:18-23). He was thus Messiah-Jehovah, called Jesus consequently (for He should save His people from their sins), the virgin’s Son, Emmanuel, according to prophecy. His humiliation, His rejection by His own people, follows; but, first of all, there is the clearest statement that what was begotten in Mary, what was born of His mother, was of the Holy Ghost. It is wretchedly low and even dangerous ground to say, with divines of repute, that Jesus was born holy because born of a virgin. He was indeed so born of the virgin; but the holiness of His humanity, though of the very substance of His mother, turned upon the miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost.

Jesus then was not only Son of God from all eternity in virtue of His divine nature, but He was so called also because of the divine energy manifest in His generation as man, and therefore the unparalleled blessedness of His conception and His birth, immeasurable though the humiliation was for Him to take manhood at all. The Babe of Bethlehem, the virgin's Son, was not born, we may surely say, of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God in the highest sense. It was not merely as we are said to be born again, to see God's kingdom, which Christ is never — could never be — said to be: in His case it would be altogether derogatory, and a denial of His holy humanity,2 to say nothing of His Deity. If we may so express it, He, the man Christ Jesus, was generated holy. "The word was made flesh." God "was manifest in the flesh." But even the process by which He came into the world, though "by the woman," was the fruit of God's power; it was a miracle of the highest rank, differing not in degree merely but in kind from the birth of Isaac, wondrous as it was; or from that of John the Baptist, filled though he were with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb.

There is another most serious consideration which ought not to be forgotten. Fallen humanity calls not for amelioration but redemption, and needed it wherever it might be. Were the notion true that the Word was united to fallen human nature here below, He must have died to redeem it, that is, to redeem Himself! — overthrowing not only His work of atonement for others, but His own person. In every point of view, the idea is as false as it is destructive — an intellectual trifling with the great mystery of godliness.

There was therefore no admixture of the minutest trace of that sad heirloom of inward evil which Adam had handed down to his posterity. Human nature there now was in His person, as surely as He was and is God; but, by God's will and power, it was unsullied and holy. There was secured the absolute exclusion of the poison which sin had instilled into man's nature in every other instance. Hence the Lord Jesus was born of the woman, not of the man, being in quite a peculiar sense the woman's Seed. For thus it was the Holy Ghost was pleased to set aside for the humanity of Jesus every taint of sin inherent in fallen human nature (of course, in His mother herself, as in all others of the race). Being so born, even the humanity of our Lord was "holy," as we have seen. Accordingly, in His person there was the most perfect suitability for the work on account of which He came, sent of the Father. On the divine side He could not but be perfect, for He was the true God and eternal life; on the human side there was miraculously effected the complete disappearance of all evil from the body which God prepared Him. The power of the Highest overshadowed His mother from the outset, and thus only was "that holy thing" born of her in due time. "Who can bring a clean [thing] out of an unclean? Not one," Job 14. This, and far more than this, was "that holy thing" which was born of the virgin. With God nothing is impossible. Thus, long afterwards, the angel disclosed what baffled Job of old and satisfied Mary on the spot. Christ alone is, in every sense, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

With this agree the types of the Old Testament. Take that most conspicuous one in Leviticus 2. In Leviticus 1. Christ is represented as the burnt-offering; in chapter 2

it is Christ as the meal or cake-offering. This (the minchah, a gift or oblation) had nothing to do with what we call “meat”; it was essentially bloodless. In the burnt-offering there was the giving up of life: but in this there was no question of sacrificing animals, or of anything that involved the shedding of blood. It was of fine flour, and thus aptly set forth what the Lord’s state was as connected with the earth (that is, in His body derived from His mother). There was, of course, no leaven or corrupt nature allowed, nor even honey or the mere sweetness of natural affection, pleasant as it is, but unfit for an offering to God. Frankincense was there, and the salt of the covenant of God; and, what is much to be noted in contrast with leaven, there was oil mingled with the flour in forming the cake.3 This answers exactly to the passage in Luke 1. It was the well-known emblem of the Holy Spirit of God, who shut out what otherwise must naturally have sprung from the virgin. Thus her child by His power was absolutely free from sin. Of necessity all the offerings of Israel belonged to the earth. The bullock, the sheep, the goats, the lambs, the pigeons, the turtle-doves, etc., were necessarily of this creation, if man had to offer them. But there could be nothing where there entered less suspicion of evil than in flour. It was expressly also “a thing most holy of the offerings of the Lord made by fire.” It was the growth of the earth, and set forth the Lord’s human nature.

I employ the expression “human nature,” as I presume is ordinarily done, abstractly for humanity, without a question of the state in which it was created originally, or into which it quickly fell. Just so the word “flesh” is used sometimes in scripture for man’s nature simply, as in “the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14), God “was

manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16), Jesus was "put to death in the flesh" (1 Peter 3:18), "Jesus Christ come in the flesh" (1 John 4:2, 3, etc.), etc. The special doctrinal sense of the term, as characterising the moral condition of the race, particularly in the Epistles of Paul, looks at the principle of self-will in the heart. But what believer, thinking of our Lord, would contend for, who does not shudder at, such a meaning in His case? By the context we discern its proper bearing.

Thus, ordinarily, "human nature" is, or may be, used irrespectively of its actual evil state, unless morally contrasted with the new nature. Human nature was in unfallen Adam; it was in Christ; and we of course have it now. But however really in all, it evidently was in a totally different state in Adam before the fall, and in Adam as in us since the fall: in Christ alone scripture pronounces it holy. There are thus three distinct phases of humanity here below — innocent, fallen, holy. Christ's manhood was in the condition of Adam neither before nor after the fall.

Plainly therefore the state of human nature is altogether independent of its real existence. The fall altered the condition of Adam's humanity; but humanity remained as truly after that as before. In like manner the Son of God, the Word, could be made flesh, and did become man, though ever infinitely more than man, taking human nature into union with the divine, so as to form one person; but the condition of His humanity must be ascertained from the scriptures which treat of it. Thus in Luke 1: we have seen that, from His conception and all through, Christ's humanity was "holy" in a sense never said of any other; not merely that the Holy Ghost was

poured out upon Him, but that He was “that holy thing,” born of His mother and called the Son of God.

Is it now asked, what was the object of the outpouring of the Spirit on Christ when He began to be thirty years of age? Assuredly it was in nowise for resisting inward liability to evil, or for any moral dealing with His human nature: for in Him was no sin. The Spirit was poured out for the testimony and display in man of God’s power over Satan and his works. It was the Holy Ghost, not regenerating, nor cleansing (for there was nothing in Him, no, not in His human nature, that needed or even admitted of any such operation), but in power. Thus the Lord Jesus, going forth to be tempted of the devil or in the public service of God, was pleased to act in the might of the Holy Spirit. Enduring temptation, working miracles, preaching, all was done in that divine energy. We alas! may enter into temptation by the flesh, but in the Holy Ghost the Lord repelled evil, yet endured all trial. Hence the anointing with the Holy Ghost was a question of divine power,4 as it is said, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). Ignorant irreverence gathers from this that Christ had fallen human nature, and that, being liable to sin, the anointing of the Holy Ghost was given to keep Him from yielding! All who say this unwittingly blaspheme His person and moral glory. That Adam unfallen was peccable, the fact itself proved; that Christ ever was peccable, denies the truth of what He was and is, both in His Deity and in His Holy humanity.

And here weigh the deeply instructive type of Leviticus 8. Aaron alone is anointed first without blood (ver. 12);

when his sons come into question, he is with them, and then the blood of consecration is put on him and them (vers. 23, 24), as the righteous ground for their being anointed with him (ver. 30). So Jesus alone could be and was anointed (and as man, mark, it was) without blood-shedding. The Holy One of God, He needed no offering to receive the Holy Ghost thus. But if He would have us enjoying the fellowship of that unction from on high, blood there must be and was. So He, first anointed before His death, enters the holiest for us with the virtue of His blood; and being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, shed forth what was seen and heard at Pentecost and thenceafter. What a testimony, first to His holy manhood, next to the value of His blood for us!

The doctrine of Irving in its worst shape was, not that the Lord was ever guilty of sin, nor that He ever yielded to the overtures of Satan, but that, having all the frailties within that we have, His triumph over them by the Holy Ghost becomes the ensample to us that we too should gain the victory over the same evil in our nature by the self-same Spirit dwelling in us. Irving insisted loudly on the holiness of Christ's person. His heresy lay in imputing fallen humanity to Him; and Christ's holiness was simply therefore what any saint's might be in kind, if not degree, through the energy of the Holy Ghost, and not in the speciality of His person!

That Christ was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh," scripture declares; but even this shows that fallen nature, peccable humanity, was not in Him, though truly a man, without anything to single Him before the outward eye from others; a man who could be buffeted, spit upon, crucified, and slain. The Lord Jesus, thus

viewed, had nothing apparently to mark Him out from the crowd. It could not have been said that He was in the likeness of flesh, any more than that He was in the likeness of God; for this would have denied the truth of His humanity and of His Deity. “The Word was God;” “the Word was made flesh.” The one was and is His eternal glory; the other, what He deigned to become in time and will not give up for evermore. But it could be and is said also, that He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, which, as far as it goes, proves that He had not the reality of sinful flesh, but only the likeness of it. Otherwise He could not have been a sacrifice for sin, He could not have been made sin, as He was, on the cross. In “a body hast thou prepared me” the same truth is indicated, as we have already seen. Christ’s body, though as much a human body as that of any man, was not generated and made after the same fallen fashion as ours. Even in this His humiliation God prepared Him a body as for none else, that it should have a specific character, suited for the singular work He had to do (Heb. 10). It is all a blunder to suppose that the reality of the incarnation involves the condition of either Adam fallen or of Adam unfallen.

The dilemma is not only fallacious but heretical that Christ must have been limited to the one condition or the other. I deny the alternative, which depends on the profound mistake of shutting us up to the condition of the first Adam, utterly ignoring the glorious contrast of the Second man. The assumption is that if Christ took neither unfallen nor fallen humanity, He could not have taken man’s nature at all. Fatal oversight of the Christ of God! It is agreed that bare unfallen humanity, such as Adam originally had, is not true of Christ; but what an

abyss of evil is the conclusion, that therefore His was fallen manhood! How plain too that the error goes very deep: for if simple unfallen humanity be exploded, and if Christ, in order to be man, can only take fallen humanity into union with His Deity, it must be fallen humanity still, or He has ceased to be man. This was just the dilemma in which Irving involved himself ("Human Nature," p. 135) in attempting to fix it on those who challenged his heterodoxy. But Christ is contrasted with Adam as a fresh stock and a new head, the Second man and last Adam, not a mere continuation of the first, unfallen or fallen. He is not a mere living soul (as Adam was before he fell), but a quickening or life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15). "I came that they might have life, and that they might have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Was Adam unfallen either righteous or holy'?5 Scripture never says so, and it cannot be broken. But I go farther: what scripture does say is inconsistent with such a standing. Absence of evil, creature good, is not holiness. There was this positive intrinsic superiority to evil in the Lord Jesus even from His very birth and before it. We are conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity; the Lord's flesh was neither conceived nor made thus, but holy by the power of the Spirit.

It is not true that a fallen man has merely flesh and blood; he has "the flesh" besides, as we see in the Epistle to the Romans and elsewhere. All do not distinguish rightly between "the flesh," and "flesh and blood." In us there is both, but Christ never had the flesh in this moral sense of the expression: because He had not, indeed, God condemned it morally in His life — executed sentence on it judicially (but in grace to us) in His death. Not only for "our sins" did Christ suffer, but

for “sin.” He took on Himself, as our substitute, not merely the acts and ways and workings, but the root of evil. Him who knew no sin, God made sin for us, as it is written, that we might become God’s righteousness in Him. Thus it is not all the truth that sins were laid upon Him, but He was dealt with as to the subtle principle of sin. God did what the law could not do. The law could only take up positive transgressions, but the bottom of the evil the law could not reach, still less in grace to us. The law, even the holy and just and good commandment of God, could not do what God did in sending His own Son — could not get hold of this hidden spring of evil to deal with it summarily and for ever, and in mercy withal to us. Christ both manifested the total absence of the flesh in His life (for He never did anything but the will of God, and thus detected the rebellious ruined condition of every other man), and in His death bore its judgment, that we might stand before God in His risen life, free from all condemnation. “God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” This was precisely the impossibility of the law. The law could condemn the sinner; it could work wrath; it could put sin to account; it could give knowledge of sin; but it could neither blot out and forgive sins, nor execute God’s sentence on the root of sin, so as to deliver the believer. God in Christ condemned the whole principle of fallen humanity or “sin in the flesh,” and “for sin,” i.e., sacrificially: the cross was the divine condemnation of it all, root and branch.

Thus in our Lord personally, besides His being the eternal Word, the Son of the Father, there were these two distinct things: first, that which answered to the type of the mingling of the oil with the pure flour

unleavened (Lev. 2:5); next, that which corresponded to the pouring oil thereon. The first is the action of the Holy Ghost described in Luke 1, from the very outset of His humanity, in order that what was conceived and born of the Virgin should be “holy.” The second is what is described in Luke 3:22 and Acts 10:38. It is the force of the former truth that so many in our day, as of old, and doubtless all through, are apt to overlook, confounding it with the latter, which is quite another matter. Consequently they have so far lost the person of Christ. They have (as regards the human side of His person) reduced the Saviour, the salvation of God, into a mere child of Adam, singularly blessed no doubt, but far beneath the Christ of God. They apprehend not the mystery of His person, in itself altogether distinct from the anointing of the Holy Ghost, which accordingly only came on Him when He was baptised in the Jordan before He entered on His public service some thirty years after. His person then is the truth at stake, nor can anything be so truly fundamental.

The anointing in question points not to the formation of human nature in absolute purity (though of the virgin) for the person of Christ, but to the Spirit’s conferred energy over and above that pure nature. It was for His public work; it was with a view to the display of divine power in the humble and obedient Man: “him [the Son of man] hath God the Father sealed” (John 6:27). His own internal experience was not more really holy or acceptable to God afterwards than before. The point was the manifestation of the mighty grace of the Spirit in man to others. No doubt Satan did then come and try our Lord — did set in movement every possible engine of temptation, as we are told in Luke 4:13. But

“temptation” here is used, as scripture ordinarily uses the word, not for the working of inward frailty or evil, but for the solicitations of an external enemy, for the devil’s presentation of objects here to allure from the path of God.

The first of the three great temptations, when the forty days’ exposure to the devil was ended, was the suggestion which appealed to the Lord’s feelings of hunger. “If thou art Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” Why not? He was God’s Son, He was hungry. Surely it was an admirable opportunity to prove His divine mission, as well as to satisfy the natural need of the body. Could He not turn stones into bread? This was what may be called the natural appeal. The second (at least in the Gospel of Luke, who was inspired to present the temptations in their moral order, whether or not the order of historic sequence was preserved) was the worldly appeal — the offer of all the kingdoms of the world on condition of Christ’s doing homage before the devil. The third (in Luke - for Matthew here keeps to the simple order of the facts and shows it was the second historically) was the spiritual appeal, and so not merely on the pinnacle or edge of the temple, but through the word of God. But in all, the Holy One of God defeated the devil, and this through the word used in obedience.

Thus we have seen the Lord entirely refuses the temptation to make the stones bread. It was the devil’s suggestion, not God’s word, which itself, and not bread, is the true food of the believer’s life. With unwavering perfectness Christ lives as man, the Son of God on earth, by the word of God; He does homage to Jehovah His God, and serves Him only, as the Son of man; and trusts Him as the Messiah, not tempting Him as did the people

of old in the desert. And here remark a feature in this scene which distinguishes Christ from others who might seem to approach Him, at least circumstantially. Moses and Elijah fasted forty days; but Moses was in the presence of God, sustained so long on high; and Elijah was miraculously fed by an angel before entering on a similar term of abstinence. It was not so with the Lord Jesus, who was in the presence of Satan, unlike the one, and was without any such previous sustenance as the other had enjoyed.

It is true the Lord Jesus did not come into an earth stainless and happy, but fallen. But to argue thence that He was in a fallen condition of humanity is utterly, inexcusably, impiously false. He could and did suffer, no doubt, from hunger, thirst, and weariness; but these things are in no way the index that human nature was fallen in Him, but of the circumstances through which humanity, holy or unholy, might pass. In his innocence Adam had no such experience; after his fall this and more was his lot. The holy person of Jesus did know these circumstances, and magnified God in them: what have they to do with the state of His humanity? with its holiness as contra-distinguished from a fallen or an unfallen Adam's? Who will venture to affirm that Adam, if kept from food even in Eden, would not have suffered from hunger? The argument is worthless, save to betray the will to depreciate the Lord of glory. The grand vice of it all is merging Him as much as possible in the fallen condition of the race. If innocent human nature had to do with a Paradisaical state, certainly neither fallen humanity nor holy humanity when here below was spared from tasting the bitterness of a wilderness world. This therefore does not affect the momentous point of

the different state of humanity in Adam fallen and in Christ even while living here below. Thus the argument founded on our Lord's suffering hunger and thirst and weariness is a manifest sophism, because it confounds the circumstances which humanity may experience with humanity itself; it assumes from these circumstances an identity in the state of manhood, contrary to the most express teaching of the Bible and to all true knowledge of Christ. God tells us the facts to enhance our sense of the Saviour's grace and exalt His moral glory in our eyes; man, set on by Satan, hastens to pervert the facts so as to tarnish His humanity and debase His person.

To assert that the Lord Jesus was liable to sin is not only to deny His perfect humanity, but evinces, to say the least, the grossest ignorance of His person. It is an insult to the Son because of His humiliation, which no consideration can palliate, which man's unbelief and Satan's malice can alone account for. Certainly He was tried and did suffer to the uttermost; but thence to infer or allow that He had from the fall such frailty and inwardly temptable nature as ours is, I must regard and denounce as a heinous libel on Christ, as a lie most destructive to man. Scripture, while it clearly reveals the manhood of the Saviour, seems more careful to uphold His unstained glory than that of any other person in the adorable Trinity. And no wonder. God is jealous lest the Saviour's unspeakable grace should expose Him to dishonour. How painful that He should be wounded afresh in the house of His friends!

Some doubtless do not go so far or fast as others; there are, too, misled as well as misleaders. But there are not a few who stop short, for the present at least, of the natural consequences of the system they have somehow

admitted into their minds. They may not allow liability to sin, and yet contend for fallen humanity, in Jesus. But will they affirm that He could have fallen nature in His person without touching the unsullied glory of His person? It is hard to see how the person stands if one of the natures composing it be fallen. Let them beware lest the only door of refuge be that of Nestorianism, which divides the Lord's person, virtually setting up a double personality in sharp antagonism (not two natures united in one person), in order to save His divine glory from being darkened by the shade of a fallen manhood.

Take a single chapter of Matthew — the very one from which men have drawn a weapon against the Saviour's glory in humiliation, willing to wound and not afraid to strike in His case — Matthew 8, and let us see the perfect man in Him who was perfectly a man. "Lord," says the worshipping leper, "if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." The hand of man, the power of Jehovah, was there: who else could? who else would? He was come of woman, come under law: had this been all, He must have been defiled Himself instead of cleansing the leper. But as He was thus God, He was open to the need of man, not of the circumcision only, but of the uncircumcision also, were there but the faith that caught a glimpse of His true glory. And there was. For the Gentile centurion confessed Him supreme in His power and authority, so that not His bodily presence only (ever sought by the godly Israelite) but His word would suffice. "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but only speak a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I

also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me.... And on hearing it, Jesus marvelled." He was indeed very man; but how much more! He said to the centurion, "Go; and as thou hast believed, be it done to thee." And his servant was healed "in that hour." Next, He comes to Peter's house and sees his mother-in-law laid down and in a fever; but in divine goodness He touched her hand; and not only did the malady leave her, but, restored to strength, she arose and served them. Nor was it only where a special tie existed. He was here below in grace, passing through a ruined, needy, sorrow-stricken world, ready to help any that came, all that were brought, demonised or sick; and a word was enough for the worst. Thus was fulfilled Isaiah 53:4 (not yet the vicarious work of ver. 5, et seq.). Certainly that was not sacrificial; still less does the application sanction the revolting idea of our Lord's liability to our infirmities and diseases. It was the very reverse; it was the power that dispelled sickness from every patient in contact with Himself; and this withal as One not in unfeeling distance, but who (in love as deep as His power) took all, bore all, upon His spirit with God. Divine grace and human sorrow filled His heart, guided His mouth, and directed His hand. Yet none the less, but the more, was He the outcast Son of man. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but He-! He had not where to lay His head. It was not law; nor was it necessity of circumstances or position; it was His grace in a world gone from God. If flesh offered to follow, it had better weigh whither Jesus goes and leads: for He does claim the heart, even at cost of breaking the nearest ties of nature. The burial of a father must yield to the paramount call of the despised Nazarene, if indeed we know His glory and have heard His voice.

Jesus is Lord of the living. Those who do not follow Him are dead; they love their own. Leave the dead to bury their own dead. Is it not so, O faithless disciples? Do you presume to have greater love than His? to know His mind better than the Master? I do not say that there are not storms, and that the bark in which the disciples follow Jesus is not frail; but the Man who slept in it through all was the Divine person who arose at their cry and stilled their unbelieving fears by the word which rebuked the winds and the sea. Such was the Man who next cast out demons after a sort that could not be mistaken; but the world preferred the swine, demons, and all, to Jesus, unanimously beseeching Him to depart out of their coasts! Such is man; and such was Jesus even here below in the days of His flesh.

If we turn to John 11, we have a different but most instructive display of Jesus on the earth. For what is seen there is no remedial measure in a living Messiah. Nothing of the kind could adequately meet the depth of the ruin even for those who believed in Him and were loved of Him. Death must take its course. It was no use merely to heal: man was too far gone. The Lord therefore remains till all was over, and Lazarus slept in death. Jesus saw things in the light of day: this sickness was not unto death but for God's glory, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. He awaits therefore His Father's will and goes to raise the dead. Martha had no just estimate of the power of death any more than of the Lord's glory: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died; but I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Neither did her orthodox creed meet the case: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto

her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he have died shall live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (vers. 21-27). No; Martha did not enter in, though a believer, and this because she had but Jewish thoughts of Christ. Present resurrection power in Him was beyond her. She went her way and sent Mary, who, if she did not yet anticipate His power better than Martha, at least fell down at His feet, and wept as did the very Jews. Death was there; and now Jesus was there. He was the Son, very God, yet did He estimate death as none could but Himself who, a man, was that eternal life which was with the Father. He groaned in His spirit, apparently with the strongest indignation and pain, at the power of death over the spirit of man, and troubled Himself or shuddered. In divine grace He weighed and felt it all in spirit — wept, too, as they asked Him to come and see where the dead saint lay. Little did Jewish comment penetrate the reality; but the more did Jesus groan in Himself as He came to the grave, whence, spite of Martha's unbelief, the glory of God was seen in Lazarus coming forth at the voice of the Son. Nothing can be more blessed than this sympathy in entering into the sorrow and power of death, Himself all the while conscious of the power of life, but using it only as the Sent of the Father. This introduces into a new scene through the door of resurrection, when death has closed all connection between God and nature. Decent and dull orthodoxy finds its prototype in Martha: value for the person of Christ may be slow, like Mary, but, waiting on Jesus, at length sees light and life in His light.

If we look, again, at the doctrinal statements of scripture, Heb. 2 shows us the singularly honoured place of man in the person of Jesus according to Psalm 8: “But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for [or, on account of] the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every [man].” Incarnation could not deliver, all-important as it is. The person of the Deliverer was thereby manifested, but death was the pivot of blessing, if man was to be brought out of sins according to God: no otherwise could there be a righteous basis, for thus only is there a due dealing with our evil before God. “For it became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (ver. 10). Thus it was fitting that Christ should pass on high through sufferings for the many sons God is bringing to glory. Their state demanded it; grace made it His path. But there is the greatest care to guard against irreverence toward the Lord Jesus. “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (ver. 11). The phrase “all of one” is exceedingly, and designedly, abstract. Still He is the Sanctifier, as risen from the dead; for so the quotation of Psalm 22:22 in Heb. 2:12 proves. Then first did our Lord put the disciples definitely in this relationship (see John 20:17). “All of one” means, not His entering into their state, but His taking them into His. The foundation was laid in His death: as risen, He at once associates them with Himself. They were “all of one” thus. It is not men as such, but “the sanctified” (οἱ ἁγιαζόμενοι). He does not call them His brethren till He

became a man; and only then distinctly when risen, according to the passages cited. The nearest approach before was when He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples and said, “Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Matt. 12:49, 50). But this is vague compared with “Go to my brethren,” connected as it is with His ascending to His Father and their Father, and to His God and their God. It is manifest also that the Son’s incarnation is, in verse 14, introduced as the necessary means for making void through death the power of the devil, and delivering those who were in bondage all their lifetime through fear of death. Alone He wrought this mighty work, by virtue of which, when risen, He gathers the sanctified into association with Himself; but in both as really man, for such the children were.

Power, the power of God, was in Christ. Was it the less bright because it shone through a life of absolute dependence on His Father, and the sorrows of His unfathomable humiliation in pity to man, love to His own, and devotedness to God’s glory? Look at that extreme point of it all, the cross, the foolishness, and the weakness of God. Do they appreciate it who unwittingly slight the rights of God’s person? “I have power [not δύναμις merely, but ἐξουσία, title or right as well as power] to lay it [my life] down and I have power to take it again.” Yet was it exercised only in obedience, as He blessedly adds, “This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:18). That Christ therefore “had in His nature not only a possibility and aptitude, but also a necessity of dying,” is a statement so unsound that the

reputation of a man, able and learned as Bishop Pearson was, will not avail to consecrate it (Expos. Of the Creed, Art. iv.). Had he confined himself to the more guarded language with which the next paragraph concludes, there might be nothing to object; for it is agreed that "by voluntary election He took upon Him a necessity of dying." But this is a very different proposition from having that necessity in the nature He assumed. It is John 10:18 which is cited in the opening of this latter paragraph. Even here, however, the doctrine is exceptionable. The short time in which it pleased the Lord to die (so surprising to Pilate when reported), coupled with the loud voice with which He cried just before (so marvellous to the centurion who heard), points to the practical testimony of His power in death as in life, not to the total exhaustion of bodily vigour as the effect of previous sorrows, to which the bishop refers it — I might almost say more naturalistic than the heathen judge or the heathen soldier. To say that when by an act of His will He had submitted to the death of the cross,... it was not in the power of His soul to continue any longer vitality to the body (i.e., that when He had voluntarily given Himself to die, He could no longer live) is true indeed but very like a truism. But that from the first He had in His nature the necessity of dying, or that at the last His vigour was so exhausted that He must therefore die, is to cloud the truth of divine glory in His person by assigning to it a dissolution necessarily inherent in His humanity. It indirectly touches atonement also; for how deeply is God's grace in His death undermined, if He merely anticipated on the cross a death which must have been in some shape within a generation later? To me, I confess, the scheme ominously symbolises with the taunts of some who

surrounded the cross: “He saved others; himself he cannot save.”

The life of fallen humanity is doomed; but our Lord goes infinitely farther than negativing any such constitutional necessity in His human nature. He claims a power beyond Adam unfallen, or any other creature. None but the Holy One of God, and a divine person withal, could say, “I have power to lay down my life,” etc.

Hence the bishop’s note to the preceding page (though he justly insists in the text as well as note on the reality of the Lord’s death, and, of course, on the separation of His soul from His body) is utterly beneath the intimations of the scriptures which he quotes. For all this eminent man draws from them is, that they teach not a mere λειποθυμία, or deathlike swoon, of which we hear in the later Greek writers, but an absolute expiration; and therefore, he thinks, we have not only the ἐξέπνευσεν of Mark and Luke, but in Matthew ἀφῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα, and in John παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα. Of course, his inference is true; but what intelligent believer will say that it represents the truth here revealed? Who but Jesus, Jehovah-Messiah, could be said to yield up, or dismiss His spirit? Who but a divine person, the Word made flesh, could deliver up His spirit? Only He who had before asserted calmly His full authority: — “I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man [no one] taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” The Nestorianism which divides the person is as dangerous and destructive as the Eutychianism which confounds the two natures to the overthrow of both. From the conception Deity was never

severed from the humanity of Christ, no, not even when His spirit was in Paradise and His body lay in the tomb.

The truth is, that the statements of the great Anglican expositor of the Creed are not trustworthy as to the (if possible) still more essential and critical truth of the Son's proper and supreme Deity. I can well imagine the indignant scorn of the younger clergy, whose impulse is at all costs to defend their text-book. Graver men too among the better sort may be slow to accept such a charge. With such slowness I sympathise, provided there be along with it an honest and open heart to adhere to holy scripture as the sole unerring standard of truth. However this be, the doctrine under Art, i. is, that the Father has the divine essence of Himself, the Son by communication from the Father. "From whence he acknowledgeth that he is from him, that he liveth by him, that the Father gave him to have life in himself, and generally referreth all things to him, as received from him (John 7:27 [? 29]; John 6:57; John 5:26). Wherefore in this sense some of the ancients have not stuck to interpret those words, 'The Father is greater than I,' of Christ as the Son of God, as the second person in the blessed Trinity; but still with reference not unto his essence but his generation, by which he is understood to have his being from the Father, who only hath it of himself, and is the original of all power and essence in the Son. I can of mine own self do nothing, saith our Saviour (John 5:30), because he is not of himself," etc. At the end of the paragraph the bishop repeats the texts (John 5:26 and John 6:57), and enforces the same doctrine in the following paragraphs.

Now it is certain that Pearson misinterprets these scriptures, on which he (following some if not most of

the fathers) rests this strange doctrine — a doctrine which soon turns to the denial of the eternal Sonship of Christ, and, in more audacious minds, to Arianism. The real starting-point in the passages of St. John is the Son, but viewed in the position He took here below: the Word, who was God, become flesh, who refused the very appearance of independence, was come down to do the will of Him that sent Him, did nothing of Himself but only whatsoever He saw the Father do, or what the Father assigned Him only to do. So absolute was His dependence that He could say, “The living Father hath sent me, and I live because of the Father” (διὰ τὸν π., not διὰ τοῦ π., as the Authorised Version would require). Still less difficulty is there in the reference to John 7:28, 29. It is His mission, not subordination in the Godhead, which is in question. I think then that I am warranted in saying, that, throughout, the perversion of these scriptures is gross and perilous to the highest degree. What can be worse than habitually applying to the intrinsic glory of Christ the language which He, in lowly love, uttered in His place of voluntary subjection on earth? Can any man taught of God dispute the fact that Pearson fell into this error? The same John, who in the Gospel lets us hear the Saviour say that the Father has given to the Son to have life in Himself in his First Epistle shows us “that eternal life, which was with [not, from] the Father and was manifested unto us:” not a hint of the Father’s giving Him to have life in Himself save here below.

Hence even some Romanist theologians are in this respect sounder, if not more candid than the “great divines” of the Anglican platform. Compare for instance the apologies for the Ante-Nicene fathers (Justin M.,

Clement of Alexandria, Origen etc.) in Bishop Bull's Jud. Cath. Eccles., with the frank admissions of Petavius in his Opus de Theol. Dogm. I fear that the acute Jesuit did not find the admission painful; for he was thereby enabled to insist the more keenly on that which is the foundation of his own system (and, alas! of many not there yet), that it is the church's function to decide and define what the truth is that man has to believe unto salvation. The Anglicans,6 on the contrary, from the first have ever been under bondage to the earlier Fathers and Councils; and hence their leaders have never freed themselves from the lowering influence of the semi-Platonism which tinctures those ancient writings, and gives their admirers a wrong bias in the interpretation of scripture. For my part, fully allowing that the church (where and what is it now?) is, or ought to be, the pillar and ground of the truth, I believe that the truth is already definitely revealed in the scriptures, and with far greater clearness, fulness, and perfection than in any human formularies, either of the fourth and fifth centuries, or of the sixteenth and seventeenth. To receive, keep, witness the truth is the obligation and joy of the church; to declare with authority what the truth is belongs to God and His word; to teach and preach the truth the Lord raises up and sends His servants. If we mix things divine and human in the faith, it comes to the same disastrous effect as mingling works with grace for justification; being false in principle, the practical issue is, that the divine element is neglected, and the human one becomes an idol. "Our church" usurps the place not of God's church only, but, more or less, of His word.

I observe with regret the influence of patristic or human theology on Dean Alford as to this foundation truth. How

else can one account for the terms of his note on Romans 9:5? “That our Lord is not, in the strict exclusive sense, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων θεός, every Christian will admit, that title being reserved for the Father; but that He is ἐπὶ πάντων θεός none of the passages goes to deny.” I affirm, on the contrary, that no Christian, if fairly instructed, will admit but deny what is here predicated of the Father and of Christ. “In the strict exclusive sense, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων θεός belongs to the Father no more than to the Son or to the Holy Ghost. The Father is supreme God, Jehovah; but so is the Son, and so is the Spirit. It is really true of the Godhead and of each person in it. (Compare Isaiah 6 with John 12 and Acts 28) They are not three supreme independent beings, but One Supreme with a threefold personality: all three persons supreme God, but none exclusively. But it is striking to see that, while the Creator in Romans 1:25 is said to be “blessed for ever” (εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας), while the God and Father of our Lord Jesus is said to be the same in 2 Corinthians 11:31 (ὁ ὢν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας), it is to Christ and to Christ alone that Romans 9:5 applies the still stronger terms, ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. Indeed I am not aware that so forcible and explicit a statement of divine supremacy can be found elsewhere in the Bible. So mistaken is the allegation of the Dean in every particular, that, as we see, the very text under his consideration proves that the strictest and largest form of that title is reserved not for the Father but for Christ; not because the Father and the Holy Ghost are not equally with the Son supreme God, Jehovah, but because the Son, having stooped to become man and die, needed the plainest appropriation of it which scripture gives to any person in the Godhead. The Father will have all to

honour the Son even as they honour the Father. Faith sees it in the word and worships: unbelief stumbles at the word, but must bow perforce in the judgment. Can one but feel with Gregory of Nazianzus: “I am filled with indignation and grief (would that ye could sympathise with me!) for my Christ, when I see my Christ [surely it is not less, I would add, when the soul thinks of Him as the Christ of God] dishonoured for the very reason for which He should have been honoured most. For, tell me, is He therefore without honour because for thee He was humbled?”

I return then with the firmest conviction that the death of our Lord was, in the fullest sense and up to the last, voluntary, though in obedience to His Father. He tasted death by no doom of fallen nature, but by the grace of God. And this is entirely borne out by Philippians 2:8, which clearly shows that in His case death was in no way through the common mortality of fallen flesh. For, “being found in fashion as a man,” He did not necessarily die; but because of the purposes of grace, He “humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” It was for our sins, and therefore, as far as He was concerned, on a wholly different principle and for ends transcendently divine. Adam, failing man, disobeyed and died; Christ became obedient up to that point of death, the death of the cross. He too was made sin for us; He was made a curse for us; He was crucified in weakness. It was from no necessity in His human nature, which libels Himself, and would, if true, destroy our hope. It was the triumph of grace in the Son of man, who was giving His life a ransom for many. God was thus glorified in Him; and “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down

my life that I might take it again." I know not what of truth, or love, or obedience, or atoning efficacy for others, or of moral glorification of God in death, is left standing by the fatal error that makes Christ, from the birth to the grave, necessarily subject to the laws of fallen humanity in His own person.

Again, the Authorised Version of Hebrews 2:16, is unequivocally false. The passage says nothing about taking up a nature or not, which was just settled explicitly in vers. 14, 15. The real meaning is: "For of course (δήπου) it is not angels he taketh up (i.e., helpeth), but he taketh up Abraham's seed." It connects Christ specially with the line of promise as the objects of this special interest to the exclusion of angels. I am aware that some ancient expositors and modern divines go with the English translators; but it is certain that they are wrong. For the connection of the thought is broken thereby, and a feeble reiteration of the truth, already stated more fully, is imported. And the error in sense led to a further error in form; for the translators could not say that He is not taking on Him the nature of angels, but He is taking on Him the seed of Abraham. Hence, in order to make it suit at all they were forced into the blunder of rendering ἐπιλαμβάνεται He took, etc.

"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make expiation [or atonement] for the sins of the people" (ver. 17). Having thus prepared the way, the Holy Ghost did not feel it needful to guard the strong assertion that Christ was in all things made like to His brethren. Those who believed that He was the Sanctifier, as the risen

Man, the Son of God who had by Himself purged our sins, need not to be told that fallen humanity formed no part of His person. The exclusion of sin in nature is added where it was more requisite, when the apostle (Heb. 4:15) states how fully He was tempted like us.

Observe, moreover, in Hebrews 2:18, “in that he himself hath suffered being tempted,” there never was anything else: it is not that He suffered after being tempted, for this a man may do who yields and repents. There was not, there could not be, distress of conscience in the Lord Jesus, any more than the workings of unbelief, such as we may feel. He suffered in the entire moral being the sufferings of holiness and grace. He loathed and rejected all that the enemy presented to His holy nature. Hence He who in human nature knew trial and suffering beyond all is able to comfort the tried saint. This is the real idea and application of temptation here. It does not mean inward susceptibility of, or proclivity to, evil; it does in James 1:14, where it is expressly connected with lust: if any man dares to apply this to Jesus, let him speak out, that we may know what he is, and that the sheep of Christ may flee from the voice of a stranger. But James, in the same chapter (vers. 2, 12), uses the word in its more ordinary scriptural application to trials. The confusion arises from not heeding the difference between such an inward working of fallen nature as is described in James 1:14 and the being tried by Satan without. The true faith of the Son of God ought to have rendered such suggestions impossible in His case. There was no sin in Adam and Eve when they were tempted: hence fallen humanity is not necessary to temptation. But let it be noticed that, when our first parents were tempted, there was no suffering then: they yielded. It is

in contrast with the last Adam, who was incomparably more tempted but in nothing yielded. He met every assault by the word of God, instead of letting it slip and transgressing it as they did. He came to do God's will, not His own. He acted in the power of the Holy Ghost, who brings out the suited scripture for the need, whatever it be. We, it is true, as men, have fallen humanity, which He had not; but then, as believers, we are born of God (Christ Himself being our life), and we have in the Holy Ghost power to resist, especially bearing in mind that Satan is now to us, because of Christ, a conquered enemy. But the old nature in us is still there and no better: victory, as far as we are concerned, depends not on its improvement but on our faith.

This false doctrine is sometimes betrayed by a wrong thought of Christ's state under the law. It is imagined that, from the humanity He assumed, there was moral feebleness, if not a repugnance to the law, as in other children of Adam. This is a fatal error; it degrades the Lord beneath His servants. I deny that the Christian's obedience is to do the will of God because he is obliged. Spite of the old man in us, there is also the new man; and scripture always speaks of us according to that new life that characterises us. Hence it speaks of us, when delivered, as loving to obey, as cleaving to God's word, as sanctified unto obedience — set apart by the Spirit for this very purpose (1 Peter 1). Now Christ never had the wrestling that we know from the old man's opposition in us to the Holy Ghost. In Him there was the absolute surrender of every thought and feeling to the will of God. There was but one apparent exception, where He prayed in His agony, "Let this cup pass from

me.” But how could He, who ever enjoyed the unbroken sunshine of God’s favour throughout His career on earth, desire to be forsaken of God? It would have been indifference and not love, it would have been to despise the blessed fellowship between the Father and Himself. Therefore was it a part of the perfectness of Christ to say, “Let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not my will but shine be done.” His humanity because perfect (may I say?) could not wish for that unutterable scene of wrath: but here too He was, as in all things, subject to the will of God. “The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?”

Looked at then in the light of God’s word, Christ’s humanity was as real as ours (which itself differs not a little from human nature as it came from God); its state was totally different from Adam’s either in integrity or in ruin. In its singularly blessed source and character, as in its practical development, there was that which, even on the human side of His person, contra-distinguished Christ from Adam whether in or outside Paradise. Was the agency of the Holy Ghost in His generation a small matter? And what of the fact that in Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell? There was nothing in Adam innocent that could be represented by the oil mixed with the fine flour any more than by the subsequent anointing with oil; nor was he at any time (as Christ always was) simply and solely in his life an offering to God, from which the salt of the covenant was never lacking. In the type of the Pentecostal saints, spite of their wondrous privileges, in that new meal-offering unto Jehovah, the two wave-loaves were expressly baken with leaven, and hence necessarily had their accompanying sacrifice for a sin-offering (Lev. 23:15-21): first-fruits indeed to be

offered, but not to be burnt (as was the oblation that represented Christ) on the altar for a sweet savour.

We may now glance at Hebrews 4:15: “For we have not an high priest unable to sympathise with our infirmities, but tempted as he hath been in all things alike apart from sin.” There is a notion too prevalent among theologians and their followers that the blessed Lord Himself was compassed with infirmities? Where is such a statement warranted in scripture? Do they call it an infirmity for a man here below to eat, drink, sleep, or feel the lack of these things? Do they or do they not go farther? What do they make of Matthew 2 and 3? of Matthew 8:17, “Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses”? of His anger against the sabbath-perverters? of His walking in Solomon’s porch, not in the sanctuary? of His sleeping outside Jerusalem and other holy cities? of His agony in Gethsemane? Need I dwell now on still more painful insinuations founded on erroneous views of the Psalms, on the types of the law, and on the prophets? Oh! it is grievous to think that these men pass current with heedless disciples, no less than with the blind multitude, as ministers of Him whom they systematically defame. Some may mean nothing wrong by isolated expressions and hasty ideas culled from old divines (not knowing, like Peter, what they said): but others work it out more daringly, little conscious that it is Satan’s scheme for slighting Christ. None assuredly should predicate of Christ what scripture does not; all on such a theme should beware what they draw from a text here or there, savouring of natural thoughts as to Him whom none knows save the Father, lest haply they be found fighting against God.

Christ could be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, nay, was in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted. The word “yet” interpolated into the Authorised Version, makes the sense equivocal, if it be not spoiled; at any rate, “yet” probably helped on the misinterpretation that the words teach no more than that He did not yield to sin — that He was tempted, fully and like us, yet without sinning. But this is not the force. He was tried in all things after a like sort (καθ᾽ ὁμοιότητα) apart from sin (χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας). Tempted as He was in all things similarly, in this He differed essentially that He had absolutely no sin in His nature. This therefore very materially guards the resemblance from trenching on the state of humanity as it was in His person — “without [or, apart from] sin,” and not merely from sins. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). Consequently we have inward temptations connected with sin in us, such as James speaks of, which He never had. The passage then proves the precise contrary of this pernicious doctrine; for it qualifies the resemblance of His trials to ours by excepting sin. With sin He had nothing to do in temptation, though He had all to do with it in suffering on the cross. He had not the smallest tendency to it in His humanity; though a partaker of blood and flesh, He had not what St. Paul calls “the flesh.” There was no liability to sin in Him who was perfect God and perfect man in one person; there was in the first man, Adam, and he accordingly fell. But the Second man, the last Adam, had no such infirmity, though He had it in the sense of a capacity to suffer in body and soul and to die on the cross, if and when He pleased, yet in obedience to God for our sins (2 Cor. 13:4). Of inward moral infirmity He had none.

Miserable comforters are ye all who found your hope of sympathy on His degradation! Had Adam been “born of God” in his entire nature and in the highest sense, he, without being a divine person, could not have sinned (1 John 3:9). When the Christian sins, it is because he, spite of the new nature and of the indwelling Spirit, yields to the old man which is never born of God; he is off his guard, is wrought on by the enemy, and fails. Liability to sin there would not be in a nature exclusively holy. Who would affirm such a liability of Christ when He comes again in glory? Now, the self-same expression — “without sin” (χωρῖς ἁμαρτίας) - is employed about Him then (Heb. 9:28) as when tempted here below (Heb. 4:15). In the days of His flesh He was “without sin.” On the cross God made Him “sin for us.” By and by, when He appears a second time to His own, it is “without sin.” Once for all He was offered to bear the sins of many; soon will He appear for the salvation, not judgment, of those that wait for Him, but appear absolutely apart from sin, having fully done the will and work of God about it through the offering of His body once for all. Without the smallest particle of sin or tendency to it in His humanity, He was assailed to the utmost by the devil; next, He was to put sin away by the sacrifice of Himself. The second time He will be seen apart from sin, having settled all the question and perfectly glorified God about it in the cross. He will come again, therefore, without sin for salvation. No man is heterodox enough to impute to Christ in glory the least exposure to any inward evil; but if they dare so to speak or think of His humanity while He lived on earth, it is formally contradicted by the very scripture they are wont to allege — Heb. 4:15. The Holy Ghost predicates the same thing, χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας, about Him in both cases. He was

on earth, as He will soon appear in glory, wholly without sin.

Indeed had there been an infinitesimal particle of fallen humanity in Christ, how could He be a meet sacrifice to God for sin? Even the typical animals must needs be unblemished after their carnal pattern. No offerings, it is remarkable, were more stamped with holiness, if so much, as the meal-offering, and the sin and trespass-offerings. They emphatically were “most holy” — Christ in His human activity, and Christ made sin for us. The paschal lamb without blemish, the daily lambs without spot, the red heifer of the wilderness wherein was no blemish, and upon which never came yoke (note it well), all proclaimed that in the great Antitype fallen humanity could have no place. Had Christ been, as born of woman, under the yoke of fallen manhood in any sense or degree, had He been born into a relation of distance from God, even without question of a single failure in His ways, He never could have been a due adequate sacrifice for us; because there must have been thus the gravest possible defect in His humanity. For what so serious in such an offering as the signs of the fall, no matter how suppressed or attenuated? None can deny that the fall vitiates the entire constitution, save men blinded into thinking God is altogether such an one as themselves. This doctrine therefore makes atonement impossible, unless God can accept a fall-stained victim; and (what is worse) it undermines and assails the person of Christ, the Son, touching God’s glory in the point of which He is most jealous.

As to the argument which demands how Christ could sympathise without personal consciousness of fallen humanity, it is worthless otherwise, besides evincing the

judicial falseness and profound iniquity of the system. For if Jesus must have Adam's fallen nature to sympathise with mine, alas! I have also yielded to evil: am I then, on this view, to have or to lack sympathy therein? Certainly it is not because the poor sinner, however guilty, does not need pity. If the argument prove anything, it goes much too far; logically, it requires actual failure (and to what amount?) in the Mediator in order fully to sympathise with us!

The sympathy of Jesus is in scripture based on wholly different grounds. I admit that His divine glory alone suffices not; but it does give lustre and infinite worth to His most real suffering as Man tried, and in every way conceivable, sin excepted. He must have the nature of those whose cause He undertakes, though not in the same fallen state; He must have proved the anguish and bitterness of temptation here below; and so He did incomparably more than any other. In holy humanity He could thus feel sympathy with our infirmities, having felt the wiles and power and malice of the enemy, and so much more than we do, as His dignity and holiness and love transcended ours. Never having known sin (which, if known, narrows and blunts the heart), but having suffered infinitely, His affections are large and free to go out to us, in our sore distresses as saints, who have not only the same outward enemy to try us, but also a treacherous nature within.

The truth is that the believer, resting by faith on redemption as a work already and perfectly accomplished for him, does not want Christ to sympathise with his indwelling sin, any more than with his sins; he has started with the divine assurance that Christ died for both. And if Christ be risen, so is the

believer with Him; and is this nothing, or is it not everything as a groundwork of comfort from above against fallen nature and its bad fruits? Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree:7 in Him crucified, sin, the flesh, is already condemned. Am I not to believe it all, and accept humbly, thankfully, the peace of a triumphant suffering so wholly and unmistakeably of God's grace to me?

Not that there is not a wise and holy dealing of God with the believer who has been unwatchful and failed. But it is neither the Arminian plan that denies the permanent relationship of the child of God, and sets him to begin anew with another and another recourse to the blood of atonement, as if we were Jews and not Christians; nor is it the Calvinist idea, that finds a resource in Christ's holy eating, drinking, sleeping, praying, worshipping, etc., for our respective failures in these things, and so in all else. The principle of both errors seems to lie in Simon Peter's hasty words in John 13:8, 9, as the truth which corrects them both shines out of our Lord's reply in ver. 10. "He that is washed (λελουμένος bathed) needeth not save to wash (νίψασθαι) his feet." The bustling earnestness of the one scheme fails to give its true value to the bathing of the person; the hard cold fatalism of the other sees not the need of the continual cleansing of the feet, because the person is once bathed all over. Christianity maintains both, neither weakening the fundamental and eternal character of the new birth nor denying the all-importance of continual self-judgment and confession. The bathing is never repeated; the feet-washing is ever needed here below, if we pretend to communion with Christ. The Holy Ghost carries on the work here in answer to the intercession of

Christ above, and cleanses with the washing of water by the word (Eph. 5:26) him who is already washed from his sins in the blood of Christ, already born of water and the Spirit.

And such is the doctrine of the typical Red Heifer in Numbers 19. On the basis of the complete sevenfold sprinkling of her blood before the tabernacle of the congregation, the rest of the sacrifice was duly reduced to ashes as a standing purification for sin. Then, if an Israelite were defiled, the remedy was, not a renewal of the blood-sprinkling, but the sprinkling of the unclean with the water of separation (i.e., running water mingled with some of the ashes of the burnt heifer). The defiled soul is made to feel by the Spirit, and word of God, what his trifling with sin cost Christ, the Son of God, who bore the unsparing judgment of it all before God when made sin for him. Such is the doctrine of scripture, old and new; such is the holy way of God in actual experience.

But the sympathy of Christ with sin (or even with sinners as such) would be an opiate for sin, to us most perilous, to Him most dishonouring. Not so: His sympathy is with the regenerate in their great weakness, who hate sin, who have to endure the contradiction of sinners, and who are opposed by Satan acting on the flesh and in the world. This therefore is the needed and the spiritual consolation: “We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, without sin.” It is not merely that He did not sin when tempted, but that no principle of inbred evil, which we know so distressingly, was in Him. So, at the close of His career, the prince of this world came once more, but it was the same tale of perfectness, early or

late: he hath “nothing in me” (John 14:30). Socinianism denies the divine nature that was in Him; this scheme imputes what was not in Him, and what, if it were, would ruin alike His person and His work. Everyone, no doubt, is liable to error, especially if self-confident or trusting to human cisterns that can hold no water, to the disparagement of the fountain of living waters. But if any man of intelligence deliberately persevered with such doctrine as this, would it be right to regard him as bringing the doctrine of Christ?

Hebrews 5 may illustrate a little more fully the readiness with which man falls into the snare of despising Christ: “For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity” (vers. 1, 2). This is frequently taken as a description of Christ; whereas it is the contrast of an ordinary human high priest with Him. Ignorant and erring men have a priest like themselves — one compassed with infirmity. Such is not Jesus, the Son of God, who has no need on account of this infirmity, “as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.”8 Doubtless, an analogy with Aaron follows in that “Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but was called of God.” In fact He waited till He ascended, and entered on His priesthood on high. For perfection was not by the Levitical priesthood: the law perfected nothing (Heb. 7:11, 19). Clearly then the passage contrasts Aaron and his sons in this with Christ. They were infirm men. For us Jesus, the Son of God, is the priest in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and

not man. This did not hinder His knowing sorrow as none ever knew, but always the sorrow of righteousness and love: “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he being Son, [yet] learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (vers. 7, 8). He had to learn obedience because it was a strange thing to Him who knew only to command. And being perfected (that is, having fully done the work necessary to secure eternal salvation, not for Himself but for others, and being accordingly perfected on high), “he became the author of eternal salvation, unto all them that obey him, called of (or, addressed by) God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec” (vers. 9, 10).

There is another false doctrine connected with this, that Christ by His incarnation took us into union with Himself. Indeed it was this too common but most dangerous error that brought in Irvingism — the notion that union is with Christ in flesh and blood. This, if pushed out, involves either universal salvation or that we must be saved otherwise than by Christ, thus leading to salvation by ordinances, or by works, or by both. Contrariwise we, Christians, are taken out of our natural condition and made members of Christ through the Holy Ghost: not Christ one flesh with us (in the sense of one common state of fallen humanity, which would subvert both incarnation and atonement), but we made one spirit with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17). All this system of doctrine, it is evident, treats the birth, not the death and resurrection, of Christ as the basis of union, and so puts wholly in the shade God’s judgment of sin in the cross.

Yea, it makes so light of fallen humanity that Christ could have it without harm! Truly, “some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.”

There was no such thing then as union, no membership of His body, till Christ died, rose, ascended, and sent down the Holy Ghost to baptise the saints into one body. “Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24) Again, “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you” (John 14:20). So the three unities in John 17 are prayed for as distinctly future then. Life there was of course in the Son always for him that believed; and this abides still: only now it is in resurrection. “I came that they might have life, and that they might have abundantly” (John 10:10). But to be united to Him as Head of the body is another privilege, which demands not regeneration only, but the baptism of the Spirit. “For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). Scripture is express that not even the disciples were so baptised till Pentecost (Acts 1:4, Acts 5; 2).

Like all error, this tends to lower the person of Christ and to exalt fallen humanity, and therefore man as he is. Real faith in Christ is the secret, in the Holy Ghost’s hands, of all preservation from evil doctrine and practice, which is always, I think, attributable, if not always traceable, to some false view of Christ. The right faith as to Christ, the receiving Him with simplicity on God’s word, is the foundation of all that is good in any soul: looseness allowed here, lowering Him, admitting anything that sullies or obscures His glory, is the gravest sin, the issues of which none can tell. Enough for us to know, fearing as we bear it in mind, that its least

beginning is the beginning of a very great evil; since it sets itself against the main object for which the Holy Ghost is now come from heaven — the assertion of the glory and rights of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Never does scripture represent our union with Christ as before the Advent, or in His life here below, or even in His death, but with Him risen and glorified. It is true that when united to Him thus, scripture does speak of the Christian being crucified with Christ, baptised into His death, dead with Him, buried with Him, as well as risen. But nowhere is such language used of the faithful till after the work of redemption was wrought and He was glorified: then, no doubt, what was true of Him as their great Substitute might be, and is, said of them. It is idle in such a question to speak of the counsels of God. His choice of the saints in Christ before the foundation of the world is a precious truth; but it is not their union with Christ till they are actually called and brought into the membership of Christ by the Holy Ghost. So, again, His purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began, is not to be confounded with our forming part of Christ's body. Were we members of Him (save in divine counsels) before we were converted or even existed? The question is as to living union with Christ as Head, which, I maintain, is invariably in scripture made to follow redemption and the presence of the Spirit sent down from heaven after Christ went on high. If divine purpose be made to decide the matter, one might thereby justify the heterodoxy of those who say the resurrection or the judgment is past already, and the eternal state come; for these equally exist before God's eyes, and we look on them all by faith.

2 Corinthians 5:14-18, again, is a full and bright testimony to the same truth, uprooting all notion of a righteous foundation for sinful man short of the cross. “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” Not till then came out the complete demonstration of God’s love and of man’s hatred, of God’s holy judgment of sin and of man’s hopeless evil and rejection of good. The sorrowful fact, proved in Christ’s death, was that all were dead. But grace gives us not only to pronounce on man morally but to judge what God was doing and manifesting there. “He died for all [nothing less could meet the case], that they which live [Christians] should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.” The conclusion is, that “henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more” — i.e., not in the condition in which error conceives we are united to Him. Incarnation stops short of the proof of total ruin on one side, and on the other of the sole adequate basis for union with Christ, which demands His death as a groundwork, and is actively exercised in relation to Him risen and ascended. A born Messiah was the crown of joyful hope to the Jew; to the Christian, even if he had been a Jew previously, the new place of Christ dead and risen eclipsed all such thoughts, showing him that his Christian ground of relationship is on the other side of Christ’s grave — expressly not “after the flesh,” but in resurrection. Therefore, “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Not even the foundation for this was laid till His death and resurrection; then indeed He arose from the dead, the power and pattern as well

as Head of those that are Christ's. Before that a process of probation was still going on; henceforth He stood in the new and final estate in which He, the first- born, could have many brethren in due time predestinated to be conformed to His image. "And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself," etc. Even "now," as we are told also in Colossians 1:21, 22, "hath he reconciled" us "in the body of His flesh through death" — through death, remark, where alone our evil was judged and righteously put away. By-and-by the world will be cleared and blessed in virtue of His work; for the blood of His cross avails not for our peace only, but to reconcile all things unto Himself whether on earth or in heaven. Meanwhile the unspeakable grace of God has reconciled us by Christ, yea, has united us to Him who has glorified God in His death for us and all things. For Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; the same is He which baptises with the Holy Ghost; first, vindicating God about sin, then uniting us to Himself, not in flesh but in Spirit.

Finally, scripture is everywhere express and consistent that union is not with the Eternal Son as such in His Deity: else we should be deified, and such Christianity would be Buddhism. Neither is it with our Lord in His incarnation simply and as such: else all flesh absolutely must be saved. His being God the Son was His competency to undertake the work of redemption as man for men. But even He was not Head till God (being glorified in Him, not in living obedience only, but in death for sin and our sins) glorified Him in Himself above. (Compare Ephesians 1:20-22, and all the scriptures which treat of His headship.) He was born King of the Jews: only when He is risen and ascended do

we hear of Him as Head. Hence Philippians 2 contrasts what He entered as man with His place of exaltation. Incarnate, He took upon Him the form of a servant; and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him, etc. This is headship, if you will; that was humiliation, and in contrast with it. So, in Heb. 2, His being set over the works of God's hands (all things being put under Him) is unquestionably founded, not on His title nor on His manhood, but on His suffering unto death. Similarly, in Col. 1:18, Christ appears as head of the body, as the beginning, the first-born from the dead; and this distinguished from His being the first-born of all creation, which He was when living here below (ver. 15). Thus too the truth gives due essential prominence to the death and resurrection of Christ, while falsehood shuts it out or makes it an incident by the way, not the turning-point of God's glory in respect of sin nor consequently of our justification.

It is of painful interest to notice, as I do in closing, that the notion here exposed is the chief point of contact between Rationalists and Tractarians. A friend of mine asked a certain dignitary of the Establishment what the essential difference was between his system and his evangelical father's. "This," answered the astute and eloquent prelate; "that the value my father assigned to the atonement, we (the Oxford party) give to the incarnation." This witness is true, and, the reader may be assured, of incalculable moment. The same idea underlies the Broad-church theorists. Reconciliation for them is the bridal of the King's Son with humanity; His taking our flesh, which is a blessed truth, being viewed

as our union with Him, which is the same pestilent error I have been refuting. By this device the enemy contrives to shift the true epoch of full deliverance by faith, to hide the proper character and extent of Christian privilege, and to relegate souls to a state when redemption was not wrought for the putting away of sin, the Spirit not yet given, and Jesus not yet glorified; contrariwise, the legal system, with its carnal ordinances, earthly priesthood, and worldly sanctuary, was still in undiminished force. Through men of sentiments less pronounced, who jumble the birth, service, and death, of Christ in a common vicarious lump, his aim is to reduce all the ways of God to confusion, to destroy the definiteness of grace and truth, and to seal men in uncertainty, half Jews and half Christians, clinging to the Saviour, yet not, as far as happy consciousness goes, either within the veil or without the camp. Incarnation, blessed a truth as it is, was neither reconciliation through the death of Christ nor union through the baptism of the Spirit. Scripture carefully distinguishes them; tradition confounds all three, as does rationalism: — the former in consonance with the sacerdotal system, the latter in the pride of fallen humanity. The judgment of sin by divine grace, in the cross of Christ, and the new relationships in the power of the Spirit, when taught of God, deliver the Christian from both.

1 I bracket these words, not because they do not affirm a precious and essential truth (expressly taught in Matt. 1:16), but because the testimony of the best MSS. (Alex., Vat.. Sinait., Bezae Cant., and in fact all of the first class, save the Rescript of Paris) excludes their title to a place in this text.

2 The root and character of this error will appear from the words of Mr. Irving's treatise on the Human Nature of Christ. "The only difference, therefore, between Christ's human nature and the human nature of a regenerated man standeth in these two things: first, that Christ was in the condition of a regenerated man from the very first of his existence as a man; and secondly, He had the Spirit without measure, and therefore his regeneration was always effectual unto the perfecting of his faith and holiness, and the complete subjection of the natural inclinations of the fallen manhood" (p. 31). "We maintain the clean contrary, that every part of Christ was, in all its actings, Most Holy, yea, and in all its thoughts, yea, and in all its inclinations; and this not through any operation of its own, but through the operation of the Holy Ghost, which the Father gave to Him without measure," etc. (p. 78). Their favourite phrase about Christ was, holiness not of but in humanity by the Holy Spirit. [Three lines from p. 64 of the above treatise are in this edition omitted, as being a quotation by Mr Irving himself rather than his own words.]

3 I am aware that an author, whom I will not name, tells us that this type of Leviticus 2 cannot be applied to the human nature of the Lord Jesus without dangerous error. For the Holy Ghost, he says, was not commingled with the human nature of the Lord, as the oil was commingled with the flour. Divine and human elements were not commingled in either of His two distinct natures, And then, in a note, Hooker's reference to certain heresies is cited in his well-known comment on the ancient formulary ἀληθῶς, τελέως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀσυγχύτως (i.e. truly, perfectly, indivisibly. distinctly, in opposition to Arians, Apollinarians, Nestorians, and

Eutychians respectively). — Now it is evident that this fear of dangerous error is due to his own absolute blindness respecting Christ's person. For the Eutychian error did not consist in affirming the real operation of the Holy Ghost in the conception of the Virgin's Son (which is a truth essential to the faith of God's elect), but in a monstrous blending of the Word with the flesh of Christ. Eutyches, in effect, reversed the momentous words of St. John (chap. 1:14); for, were his doctrine true, we ought to read (not "the Word ἐγένετο flesh," but) the flesh became the Word. This fatal error (which confounded Deity and humanity, and made a new thing which was neither) has not one point of contact with the revealed truth of the Holy Ghost's action in counteracting fallen humanity from the outset of the Virgin's conception, and in so securing by divine power that the fruit of her womb should be holy (not fallen). No sober Christian ever admitted the strange delusion which seems to have originated with certain fathers, as it has been since adopted by some Socinians, that one part of Christ's human nature was framed by the Spirit and joined with another part received from the Virgin. This device was merely to cover their exclusion of the truth of His eternal Sonship, by construing one part of His humanity, thus imagined, as the Son of God and the other as the Son of man. What can one think of the spirit which compares with this Socinian dream the faith that maintains Christ's holy humanity against those who hold it to be fallen? And what can one think of the chief evangelical organ going lately out of its way to commend a doctrinal tract of this man? They used to denounce the same root of evil in Edward Irving, but alas! some of their own friends are now infected with it; and then again zeal for law, and over-strong feeling against some

who condemn them ecclesiastically, lead them to welcome the most heterodox of adversaries.

4 Even Augustine, who is not a whit behind the chiefest Fathers, stumbles, like one in the dark, at the anointing of Christ by the Holy Ghost. He has the temerity (De Trin. xv. 46) to deny that our Lord was anointed, when the Spirit descended on Him as a dove after His baptism. I presume the difficulty was partly owing to the just revulsion of godly minds from the hateful reveries of the Gnostics, which may account for this; partly to a want of simple-hearted subjection to scripture statement as to the difference of the Spirit's action in the incarnation and then at the Jordan. "Ista mystica et invisibili unctione tune intelligendus est, quando Verbum Dei caro factum est (Joan. i. 14); id est quando humana natura sine ullis praecedentibus honorum operum meritis Deo Verbo [sic MSS., at Ed., Dei Verho] est in utero virginis copulata ita ut cum illo una fieret persona. Ob hoc eum confitemur natum de Spiritu sancto et virgine Maria. Absurdissimum est enim, ut credamus eum cum jam triginta esset annorum (ejus enim aetatis a Joanne baptizatus est) accepisse Spiritum sanctum; sed venisse ilium ad baptisma, sicut sine ullo omnino peccato, ita non sine Spiritu sancto." It is curious to perceive the uncertain sound of Bishop Pearson on this head, evidently struck by the plain evidence of scripture and yet swayed in another direction by the jarring notes of Gregory Naz., Ambrose, and Jerome. It is hardly needful to say that none of these divines has laid hold of the simple but weighty difference of the Spirit's work in rendering the humanity holy for its union with the person of the Son; and then in due time anointing Him as man with power for His service on earth.

5 It is all error common to Irving and the theologians in general to confound with the general state of unfallen Adam that which was true of Christ here below and is true of the Christian now as standing in Him. Thus the former says “Manhood in Adam was sinless, set up in righteousness and true holiness by the Creator.” It were invidious to specify the latter, who have made the same mistake; for their name is legion.

6 Think of a professed commentator like Dr. C. Wordsworth committing himself and the Dict. of the Bible (iii. p. 1358) to the stupendous error that God made Jesus to be Jehovah! He refers to Acts 2:36, which really treats of official glory, not of the Deity or Jehovahship of Jesus. The Fathers so erred before him.

7 1 Peter 2:24, in employing ἀναφέρω explicitly shuts out the notion, for which some contend, that Christ had our sins previously and bore them up to the tree. Προσθέρω admits of previous action, but ἀναφέρω never means this in such a connection; it is exclusively sacrificial. What thoughts of God and of sin can these men have! What anguish the mere anticipation of this cost Jesus! “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour “ (John 12:27). So too the horrors that pressed on Him at Gethsemane, when His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death; and an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him (as, when the great wilderness temptation was over, angels had ministered unto Him). But it was for deeper conflict and more intent prayer and His bloody sweat (Luke 22:43, 44). He was in no way forsaken then; on the cross, made sin, He was.

8 It might seem past belief that any man of note among Christians could entertain a thought so deplorable. I must therefore be forgiven if I cite the words of the famous Hugo Grotius to prove that not even the language of ver, 3 sufficed to keep him from applying the entire description of an earthly high priest to the Lord: — ”Sequitur Christum quoque obtulisse pro se ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν, i.e., ut a doloribus illis, qui peccatorum poenae esse solent, et occasione peccatorum nostrorum ipsi infligebantur, posset liberari.”

I am the true vine

Thoughts on John 15 (Manchester Series No. 181.)

There is no place where the selfishness of our nature oftener betrays itself than in the way we look at scripture. We do not ourselves always know how our thoughts of the word of God tell the tale of our state in the sight of God. I do not speak merely of such extreme cases as that of the avowed unbeliever — though he too shows what his condition is — as being not merely bad but unable to appreciate what is good, not only not obedient in heart but rejecting and rebelling against the only light whereby God Himself brings a man out of darkness to the knowledge of Himself. It is plain, therefore, that, rejecting the word, he as good as says to God that he desires not the knowledge of His ways. But then the children of God themselves let us see what their state of mind is, not only by their want of relish for the word, or their want of appetite for every means that will give their souls an increasing enjoyment of the Lord, but, further, by the way in which they take it up, by their understanding or rather misunderstanding of it. For this is the secret of true intelligence: people do not understand the word by brighter minds than others, but by a more obedient heart. It is the single-eyed desire to do the will of God which insures intelligence of His word. And the Spirit of God it is that produces both the one and the other. Assuredly it is the will that darkens the understanding; and, where the Spirit of God gives a soul to please the Lord, there the obstruction in the way of His word disappears. When by grace we want to do His will, the light of God is assuredly not withheld: it is

the will when not judged which produces darkness for us.

In no instance perhaps do we find this more frequently than in the way in which this chapter is taken. When men are not thoroughly happy in the Lord, they use the vine as a means of assurance to their souls, comforting themselves with the thought that they are in Christ, and that they will be kept by Him. They take the vine as the Lord viewed as a Saviour. But this is not the meaning of the chapter; for the vine is not introduced to shew His sustaining grace in carrying us through, but the responsibility of all who bear the name of Christ, the true vine, and the means of producing fruit unto God. Consequently it is not a question of abiding in Christ simply for security, nor of the grace that keeps up the feeble. Where this is required, the Lord presents Himself as a rock; and no matter how feeble one may be, if one rests on the foundation, the feeblest thing cannot be moved. There is indefeasible security for us in Christ. So again, if He tells us that we have eternal life, He shows also that we are in His hand and in His Fathers hand. It is evident on the face that none will be able to pluck us out of their hand.

But when we reach the figure of the vine, there is another truth. It is to show the absolute necessity of fruit being borne for God; and consequently the Spirit of God tells us here what the hindrances, at least what the ways of God with us, are. Now the first and grand point is that Christ Himself is the spring of all that contributes to fruit-bearing in any. It is not good desires only, nor the word of God; and it is not at all our being saved, though all these are precious and blessed and important in their place. Nay, it is not even prayer, nor is it the various

means that God gives for sustaining our souls and cheering us on. But the one secret of fruit-bearing is having Christ before our souls and continually reminding ourselves that we belong to Him as branches to the vine — not merely as the hymn has it:-

For as the branches to the vine,

So would we cling to Thee.

The sense is not at all here one of security, though this be of course most true, but dependence on Christ and bringing Him in responsibility to God The Jews regarded themselves as the only people in the world that God looked upon. Consequently their tendency was always to put inordinate value on the fact of being Jews. It was very important that the Gentiles should own the place of the Jews, but it only puffed up the souls of the Jews themselves to be occupied with it. It was all right for the centurion to feel how precious the Jews were to God; but there is no strength in the Jew continually boasting of his peculiar privileges. We want more than that if we are to bear fruit, and this is what Christ substitutes for it — Himself; to have Him as the One that we are inseparably a part of, wherever we may be or whatever our duty. Supposing I am in a family which puts me to great trial, if I look at either the family or the trial I may give way to a murmuring spirit; but let me remember, in the midst of that family, in my business, or in anything else, the secret that produces fruit is that I look up to God, remembering that I am a part of Christ in this sense — a branch of the only true vine. It is full of solemnity withal, and checks the spirit of finding fault. Does not Christ know all about the family, the business, the bodily health, the snares or the malice of others, the sorrow, all

the things that try me day by day ? What has He put me here for? To bear fruit. Of what kind? The fruit that suits the vine, even our Lord Himself. You are in Christ as branches in a vine.

It is not a question of being members of His body to be cared for by Christ, but of being branches of the vine to bear fruit for God. “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away.” There are times when the Lord so does, as He has ever done. There are times when the work is done, or the Lord sees fit for any reason to take away, whether there has been all the fruit that He looks for, or whether they are not bearing fruit. “And every branch in me that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” We see that every one who is bearing fruit is tried, has dangers, difficulties, and a great deal to break the spirit. We need it. It is all a mistake to suppose that, because a branch bears fruit, He does not purge; whereas that which does bear good fruit He deals with and disciplines, that it may bear more. And what a comfort for us to know that it is all for His glory! It is only a little cup of sorrow by the way, but the fruit is everlasting. Is that very hard to bear — discipline in this world, that the fruit may last for ever?

Now He addresses the disciples, and tells them that they were already clean through the word that He had spoken unto them. He does not say, Through the blood that I am going to shed. This was not a fact yet; but the word connects itself with our responsibility, the blood with His grace. The chapter is full of our responsibility, and it is the word of God that deals with our shortcoming and makes us feel what the will of God is.

But there are two kinds of cleansing true of every Christian. There is the word, by which a man is first converted to God, when he gets a new nature that hates sin, and by the same word he is afterwards cleansed practically. It is the purifying of every day. Besides, the believer is (as all know) washed by blood, the precious blood of Christ, that he may be clear from all question of guilt. The former is connected with our responsibility to bear fruit for God. We must be cleansed first, but already it was true that they were born of God, and now the urgent call was to bear fruit. It is not here connected with the fact that their sins were forgiven. This might be true; but there was more than this true. The believer receives a new and holy nature, and it is in virtue of this that he is called upon, by having Christ before him, and the continual remembrance that he bears His name in this world, to bear fruit for God. For we can only act for the Lord by acting from the Lord; and we cannot act from the Lord except we are abiding in Him, which means the habit of continually looking and referring to Him, of dependence upon Him. Therefore He says, "Abide in me." He does not say, I will abide in you for eternal life, but He exhorts them to abide in Him, that they may bear fruit. There is responsibility throughout.

"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." It is not a question of eternal life, but of bearing fruit for God; and He who best knew says that it is by abiding in Christ. How is it that we do not bear fruit ? It is when we are not abiding in Christ, where something of flesh or world carries us away; wherever we have an object that is not Christ, although the object itself may be right. If we walk in dependence on Christ, continuing in His love,

and not drawn into what is unbecoming and beneath Him, we are kept: it is abiding in Christ. But wherever I have an object, even if it be a right one, I must take care that the way in which I seek to carry it out be right. Now the only thing that can make us either choose the right object, or take the right way, is having Christ before us. The vine does not represent Christ in heaven, but now on earth, and ourselves a part of that which bears His name here below. He knew it well whose words are “To me to live is Christ.” His motive, his object, his life day by day was Christ. Not many of us can say this, or we may say it in very little measure. But there is nothing like it. May the Lord strengthen us earnestly to desire it, looking up to Him for grace to profit by His own word, and thus have it made true of ourselves! It was not because he was an apostle that Paul could so say. He did not lose his Christianity because he was an apostle; and we, though not possessing an official place, should earnestly seek it. Christ is better than all gifts, and better than any position in the church. Yet Christ belongs to the simplest Christian, and the simplest Christian is a branch in the vine as truly as an apostle.

Do not then let us excuse ourselves for our little faith shown in having grown so little. It is dependence on Christ that keeps one right. The strongest, if not dependent, will break down; the weakest will be kept if dependent. Let us then keep Christ simply and solely before our hearts.

W. K.

Fasting - Matt. 6:16-18

(B.T. Vol. N5, p. 70-71.)

It remains for us to weigh our Lord's words on fasting, as the third part of His teaching on "righteousness" (not "alms") in the first verse of the chapter. Prayer holds the intermediate place between alms and fasting, the pious and holy basis to guard the other two, binding them up with faith against formality.

"And when ye fast, be not gloomy-faced as the hypocrites; for they disguise their faces, so that they may appear to men fasting. Verily, I say to you, They have their reward. But thou while fasting anoint thy head, and wash thy face, so that thou mayest not appear to men fasting, but to thy Father that [is] in secret; and thy Father that seeth in secret will recompense thee."

The Lord does not so much enjoin fasting as bring it like prayer under the Christian principle of having to do with our Father in secret. It falls under the individual life of faith. Yet He undoubtedly sanctions and approves of it when so practised; and this independently of the more open and united aim, such as we find in Acts 13:2, 3, Acts 14:23. He also intimates its value for spiritual power. Pious men have ever felt and must feel its appropriateness in chastening the soul before God, where public or private need called for humiliation. But even in Mark 9:29 it is well to note that the two most ancient copies ignore "and fasting," as they with other authorities also the entire verse 21 of Matt. 17, nor is there a word corresponding in Luke 9. The apostle however who more than others was given to stand for liberty in Christ speaks (in 2 Cor. 6:5, 2 Cor. 11:27)

simply and piously of “fastings” and “fastings often” in his service, to the rebuke of that levity which the Corinthian assembly betrayed, and which characterises modern Christianity, save where superstition and self-righteousness give it an artificial moment in very different eyes.

In Matt. 9:14, etc. the Lord shows its true place and time in answer to the disciples of John saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees often fast, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said to them, Can the sons of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them; but days shall come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast.” Neither those who were only disciples of John had any real appreciation of the Bridegroom’s presence, nor still less the Pharisees filled with forms and self-righteousness. It was joy to the believing disciples of Jesus. Feeble as they were, they had left their all for Him, and they Lasted a divine bliss in Him wholly unknown to the others, who were wholly unprepared for the awful purport to them and the Jews of His being taken away, little as the true disciples as yet comprehended that solemn approaching fact with its immense consequence. The joy of Messiah’s presence made fasting altogether inappropriate. Those who tasted none of it were blind to Him whom God’s grace had given and sent. Greater still would be their darkness, when the Bridegroom should be taken away. Then would those that believed and loved Him fast, both spiritually and literally.

It might not be like Jews accompanied by rending of garments or with sackcloth and ashes, but deeper communion with God’s mind than could be known before the Holy Spirit came to make it good. And fasting among

Christians is all the more striking because of the peace, joy, and boundless delight they have in the love of Christ, and fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Still if loyal to Christ we cannot but have the constant sense of His rejection, and of the judgment ever impending and certain to fall on the guilty world, and all the more because it pays Him the hollowest of lip homage. Yes, days are come when the Bridegroom thus ignominiously taken away is still absent, and fasting lends itself to mourners, whatever their even enhanced joy in being united to Him as members of His body, a privilege never dreamt of before, and the joy of grace in the revelation and active working of a Saviour God to lost sinners, Gentile no less than Jew.

But Christendom perverted fasting, through vain philosophy, into a reflection on the creative glory of God. And abstinence from meats, which He created for thanksgiving, was early turned into human merit, and the lie of inherent evil in matter. Grace and truth through Jesus Christ were thus denied; and days of fasting were imposed, as ecclesiastical history records, first by custom, and afterward by legal sanction. In the second century, if not in the first, the fatal error also drawn from philosophy was in full swing not for their life and complete cleansing by His blood, but of a twofold rule, the one for the despised flock of God, the other for the spiritual superior; the one the Precepts for all sorts, the other the Counsels of Perfection for those who aspired to a higher life, which issued in asceticism and grew into monasticism. Who can wonder that God poured contempt on these unbelieving efforts to improve the first man, by letting the flesh with all this inflation break out into the grossest immorality on one side, and

legendary falsehood against God on the other? But this too was just what was found with older Platonists and Pythagoreans, who taught that it was not only lawful but commendable to deceive and lie, for the sake of truth and piety. Hence, even in those early days the large harvest of forgeries which are coming to light in our days, the witness of the rapid departure from the Christianity taught by the inspired apostles, long before the papal system systematised it and enforced it on pain of death.

A Forgiving Spirit - Matt. 6:14, 15

(B.T. Vol. N5, p. 100-102.)

The Lord was not content with this impressive call for practical grace in the prayer prescribed to His disciples: “Forgive us our debts, as we also forgave our debtors.” He immediately after follows it up with emphasis.

“For if ye forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will also forgive you [yours]; but if ye forgive not men their offences, neither will your Father forgive your offences.”

There is such confusion in Christendom as to the forgiveness of sins that the true force of the Lord’s solemn words is lost for the most part. The vast majority have so hazy a view of eternal redemption that they fear to believe in the full and abiding efficacy of Christ’s work. The glad news, or the gospel, of God is thus for them shorn of its power. They are no better off than a Jew who brought his offering, confessed his sin, and went away with the comfort that it was forgiven. As he had to offer often, so the ill-taught Christian talks of his need to be resprinkled again and again with that blood, though expressly said to be shed once for all.

What blindness, if we adduce nothing else, to the testimony of Heb. 10! The perfect sacrifice has caused the imperfect to cease. The worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins; in plain contrast with the Levitical sacrifices, wherein is made year by year remembrance, as the Christian is entitled to remission of sins. Christ came to take away the temporary, and to establish the everlasting. Therefore, when He offered

one sacrifice for sins, He for ever [in continuity] sat down on God's right hand. He had done all perfectly to blot out the guilt of His friends (once His foes); and took His seat as its triumphant proof, from henceforth waiting till His enemies who reject Him and His work be set as footstool of His feet. Then He will come forth and tread them down in their open rebellion at the consummation of the age. But to the Christian the Holy Spirit testifies that their sins and their lawlessnesses God remembers no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no longer an offering for sin: every thing of the kind is superseded and more than fulfilled in that of Christ.

But here faith fails, because God's word is not received in its own divine and conclusive authority; and thus are souls defrauded of peace and joy in believing; and entire devotedness to God is curtailed, bought as we are with a price so incalculable. This unbelief is helped on by confounding things that differ, like our text with that complete redemption which rests solely on Christ's cross. Still more when such blessed institutions of Christianity as baptism and the Lord's supper were made saving ordinances, not figuratively but intrinsically; and a clerical class was made necessary and of divine right to apply them with due effect to the laity: a figment which outdid the highest claims of Jewish priesthood, and in principle denies the gospel.

But while the Lord does not, here or in any part of His teaching on the Mount, refer to that redemption which He was to accomplish, He has a weighty lesson to enforce on His disciples in cultivating a spirit of grace. It the Jew in general could not rise above the law in its distance from God, the fear which made the very

mediator full of trembling, and the readiness to denounce and curse which it engendered, grace is the atmosphere in which the Christian lives and flourishes. No doubt it is through righteousness but withal it is grace reigning.

What was it that drew to the Lord Jesus even from John the Baptist? What was it that in spite of a legal environment at length blossomed and bore fruit so sweet in Peter and John and James and a noble army of martyrs and confessors? What was it that melted Paul's heart of steel and made him the most ardent and suffering witness to the world of Jesus Christ and Him crucified? What else could begin with the proudest, most self-satisfied, stiff-necked, and rebellious race, and transform them into the poor in spirit, the mourning, the meek, the hungering and thirsting after righteousness, yea the merciful, the pure in heart, the peace-makers, persecuted for righteousness' sake, and even for His sake, for whom the nation and its high priest judged crucifixion only His due, and so fulfilled the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets?

As it was the grace and truth which gave the disciples life, and would give it abundantly in the power of Christ's resurrection, so would follow that full and abiding remission which only His blood secures, and this uninterruptedly. But sin indulged does interrupt communion with our God and Father, and needs the advocacy of Christ to cleanse the feet thus defiled, by the washing of water by word. His blood retains intact its atoning virtue; but the word is applied by the Spirit in answer to Christ. on high, and he that sinned repents in dust and ashes. For this is He that came through water and blood. We need and have both, and cannot do

without the water from first to last, as we have had the blood once for all. Whoever ignores, or (still worse) denies, the twofold provision of grace, undermines redemption and muddles the truth of God.

Now the Lord specifies an unforgiving spirit as intolerable to our Father in His daily government of His sons. And no wonder. It is to go back from grace to law, from Christ to wretched self. Hence, as in the prayer, He urges grace toward those who may offend us ever so painfully, and love which He commends to our loyal and tender warning of its lack practically as hateful in His eyes. “For if ye forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your offences.”

O you who keep up your resentment, and brood over the offences (often exaggerated if not imaginary) of others, beware. You, a Christian, if so, are in utter default of this characteristic duty, as unlike Christ as you can be. Need one say that you are as unhappy as you are hard? Is it nothing to your high spirit, degrading as this is to a Christian, that “your heavenly Father will not forgive you your offences”? Trifle not with so bad and proud a state, and no longer grieve the Holy Spirit of God who sealed you. Let not the sun set upon your wrath, nor give room for the devil.

The Birds of the Sky - Matt. 6:26, 27

(B.T. Vol. N5, p. 165-166.)

The Lord appeals to the disciples, in view of the creature subjected to man, against personal anxiety. It is humbling but wholesome for them to draw lessons of dependence thence. And first, He points to the winged class, familiar everywhere to human eyes, as objects of divine care and dependent on His beneficent provision. How much more are not His own in their incomparably higher and nearer relationship to Him! and how powerless too is their anxiety to effect relief!

“Look at the birds of the heavens, that they sow not, nor reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature?” (vers. 26, 27.)

The birds are of a large class and of immense variety; so much so that the famous Cuvier had to confess his dissent from all the scientific systems he had seen. Can any competent naturalist since deny that an adequately true arrangement still awaits its discoverer? He in his “Règne Animal” proposed six orders with far more numerous genera; Temminck, sixteen orders; Latreille, seven, with 252 genera. Though some few excellent observers as Willughby and Ray preceded and have followed since these distinguished French writers, there is no end as yet to that controversy.

But our Lord drew His invaluable lessons, not from the recondite secrets, still less from the uncertainties of the science, but from the patent and undeniable facts of

God’s creation and providence, which none but the perverse can cavil at even in this age when the whole creation groans together, but not without hope that deliverance shall come from on high. All disciples can therefore understand and feel what He meant, and they need. The birds neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your (not their) heavenly Father feeds them. They may share the consequences of a fallen world, as other animals, and man more than any, as being their head, a moral creature, and deeply to blame directly and indirectly. Nevertheless without means and without the least carking care, our heavenly Father feeds the birds, as the plain and beautiful and instructive rule.

Hence of old the Psalmist (104) celebrated Him that sent forth springs into the valleys, that run among the mountains, and not for man only, or for every beast of the field, and the wildest of them, but for the birds that utter their voices among the branches where a dead silence prevails, broken now and then by loud shrieks of anguish so different from their cheerful strains. The stately spreading cedars were planted not for man’s use only, not for taste or pride, but for the birds also to make their nests, unless the taller firs suit some better still. Nor are the creatures of the sea great and wide overlooked. These all look unto Thee, that Thou mayest give them their food in its season: that Thou givest they gather. Thou openest Thy hand: they are filled with good. Thou hidest Thy face: they are troubled. Thou takest away their breath: they expire and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit: they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the earth.

But here the Lord guards His own from anxious thoughts in their daily life. Sparrows, as He taught later,

are cheap enough; yet as not one of them shall fall to the ground without our Father, so He preserves thorn and other birds great or small without foresight of their own.

If such creatures, the unclean as surely as the clean, are the habitual recipients of His beneficence, how much must His sons be? It is an argument from the comparatively mean and distant to those whom grace deigns to bring into the nearest relationship with Himself. And the Lord's aim is to impress on His disciples, so favoured, the obligation of confiding in the love of their Father without a doubt or a fear, Why should they not, instead of yielding to the anxiety natural to such as either know not God at all like Gentiles, or own Him in an altogether lower way like the Jews?

It seems almost needless to say that the words afford not the least ground for those who alleged a discrepancy with Prov. 6:6-8. For the latter impresses the common duty of industry, and therefore reproves the sluggard from the text of the laborious ant. The former calls the believer to cherish faith's reliance on the Father's care, without an anxious thought. The one is as true as the other; but the latter goes deeper and rises higher because of the revelation of the Father's name to those who believe on the Son.

Then again a strange set of fanatics, both in rather early and in later days of Christendom, made abstinence from labour a counsel of perfection. They claimed to be in a peculiar degree men of prayer, and were called Euchites by those who condemned them. Their boast was neither to sow nor reap; but they could not escape the reproach that they liked the barn and to have it well filled. The

germ of this selfishness showed itself among the Thessalonian saints. But it did not fail to receive immediate discouragement and a heavy blow from the apostle, who could appeal to his own work with his hands where it made for the Lord's glory. But he also ruled such a claim as unworthy of Him, and a dishonour to such as were ensnared in cheat. "Now we enjoin you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw from every brother [not rising to superior spirituality but] walking disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For yourselves know that ye ought to imitate us, because we were not disorderly among you, nor did we eat bread of any one for naught, but with labour and toil working night and day, that we might not burden any of you. Not because we have not authority, but that we might give ourselves an example to you, that ye should imitate us. For even when we were with you, this we enjoined you that, if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear of some walking among you disorderly, working not at all, but busy-bodies. Now such as those we enjoin and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ that working quietly they eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3:6-12).

The question in ver. 27 exposes impressively the impotence of anxiety to add to our stature the familiar unit of measure. Yet many moderns incline to length of life, instead of "stature." But this is hardly the place to discuss such a question. The general sense at all events is clear to the simplest.

The Lord's Prophecy on Olivet in Matthew 24-25

(Section 1 of Three Prophetic Gems)

Chapter 1 - The Jewish Disciples

Introduction

In the discourse given in Matthew 24-25 the Lord unfolds, first, the future of the Jewish disciples; secondly, that of the Christian profession; and thirdly, that of all the nations tested by the gospel of the Kingdom before the end comes, and He Himself reigns. Such are the simple divisions of the two chapters of this study, and so it was or will be in fact. The discourse grew in the Lord's wisdom out of the disciples directing His attention to the splendor of the buildings of the temple, from which their hearts were not yet weaned. They believed that Jesus was the Christ and that they were born of God, but their hearts were associated with Israel's hopes, until the day that He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:6-11), though theirs was no small advance when He rose from the dead.

The Lord therefore begins with His disciples as they then were. They fittingly also represent those who are to succeed in the latter day when the work of gathering out the Christian company for heavenly glory is complete, and God begins to prepare His people on earth for the reign of the returning Son of man. It is also the historic order. No other division of the subject matter could be so satisfactory. In this connection the disciples were viewed not only generally throughout the Gospel, but

evidently when He sent forth the twelve in Matthew 10. “Depart not into a way of Gentiles, and into a city of Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather unto the lost sheep of Israel's house. And as ye go preach, saying, The kingdom of the heavens hath drawn nigh.” This was superseded by the Christian testimony, as we shall see still more markedly in the discourse on Olivet, but it is plain from verse 23 that this Jewish mission will go forth again before the end, “for verily I say to you, Ye shall not have finished the cities of Israel until the Son of man be come.” Christianity is a parenthesis.

In Matthew 23 the Lord says to the crowds and to His disciples, “The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all things therefore whatever they tell you, do and keep; but do not after their works, for they say and do not” (vv. 2-3). The disciples clearly are here viewed not as Christians, but as Jews, and this is confirmed by the pointed language of verse 34 to the end of the chapter. Sad as the retribution must be, a change will come to the people before His return. “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate, for I say unto you, Ye shall in now wise see me henceforth until ye say, Blessed [be] he who cometh in Jehovah's name.” Thus the repentance of a remnant will pave the way for His return; some suffering to death for His name, others preserved to welcome the Son of Man when He comes. We hear much of both in the Psalms and the Prophets, as well as in the Revelation.

The first part of the discourse with its various sections suitably follows in Matthew 24:1-44.

The Temple Destroyed

“And Jesus went out, and was going forth from the temple, and his disciples came to [him] to show him the buildings of the temple. But he answered and said to them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say to you, Not a stone shall be in anywise left here on a stone, which shall not be thrown down” (vv. 1-2).

The rejected Messiah pronounces sentence: most solemn to hear for believing Jews who justly regarded the temple as the great external or public witness of the one true God and His worship on earth. It had been destroyed before, after reigning sons of David apostasized and made it the seat of Gentile idols. But had not there been a gracious return (not of Israel, it is true, but) of a Jewish remnant from Babylon to rebuild the city and temple and to await Messiah? Alas! now, He whom they believed to be the anointed Son of David doomed it to another demolition which should not linger, when not the first (Babylon) but the last Gentile world-power (Rome) should executive it. Its destruction was not because of idols, but because the Jews were first to refuse and then by Gentiles, crucify their own Jehovah-Messiah. These were two impeachments which Isaiah so long ago had predicted against the chosen people (vv. 40-48 and 49-57).

When Will The Temple Be Destroyed? What Are The Signs Of The Lord's Coming?

“And as he was sitting upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be? and what [is] the sign of Thy coming, and of the completion of age? And Jesus answering said to them, See that no one mislead you.

For many shall come in My name, saying, I am the Christ, and they shall mislead many. And ye shall be about to hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled; for they must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nations shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in places. But all these [are the] beginning of travails. Then shall they give you up to tribulation and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated by all the nations for My name's sake. And then shall many be stumbled, and give up one another, and hate one another: and many false prophets shall arise, and shall mislead many. And because lawlessness shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall grow cool. But he who endured to [the] end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole habitable [earth] for a witness to all the nations, and then shall the end come" (vv. 3-14).

From Mark 13:3 we learn that Peter, James, John and Andrew were those who thus enquired, When shall these things (the temple's destruction) be? and What is the sign of His coming and of the consummation of the age? In Luke 21 we find the first of these questions fully answered. There we find the overthrow of the city with the temple, and Jerusalem trodden down by Gentiles till their times be fulfilled, running on still since the sacking of Jerusalem by Titus. This is distinctly severed from the Son of Man's coming when the redemption of the godly Jews draws near. Here in Matthew, the answer as to the impending ruin, already given in the parable of the marriage feast (Matt. 7) is passed by and the Lord passes on to the second question which brings together

the sign of His coming and of the completion of the age. Prophecy is not of isolated solution.

It is important to note the error in the KJV of confounding the age of “the age” with that of “the world” (v. 3). The coming age of a thousand years and more is after the age that still is, and before the eternal scene. Even disciples, as yet preoccupied with Jewish hopes and prejudices, and wholly unintelligent of the new, heavenly associations of Christianity, knew better. It is clear in the Greek that they did not say “of the world,” but “of the age.” The Lord in Matthew 13:38, 40 had amply guarded against such a confusion. The field or sowing-place was “the world,” the judgment on the darnel and the display of the wheat would be at the close of “the age.” The new age, the Millennium, will be characterized by the King reigning in righteousness when the Father's kingdom is come on high and the Son of Man's here below, when His will is to be done on earth as in heaven.

The Lord first gives a general sketch of the ruin about to ensue. Moral improvement, truth prevalent, peace for mankind, as yet were misleading dreams against which they should be on their guard. The rejection of Himself would open the door to many false claimants to lead many astray. Wars and their rumors would be heard. Only when He takes His great power and reigns could it be otherwise, as Isaiah predicts. His disciples were not to be disturbed or deceived. Such evil things must be because the King was rejected, and the end is not yet. Instead of learning war no more as when He comes in His kingdom, national shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. Also, there will be providential inflictions such as famines and pestilences

and earthquakes in various places. Yet all these are a beginning of birth-throes. At this time His disciples would be objects of persecution, betrayed and even killed by all the Gentiles because of His name. Worse still, stumbling would befall many and mutual treachery and hatred would be among themselves. Many false prophets would rise and mislead many, and because of the lawlessness that would abound the love of the many would grow cold. But he who endured to the end would be saved.

The Lord in these verses is contemplating people with Jewish expectations, and tried by Jewish opposition and unbelief with the hatred of all the nations. The one who endured is specially assured. The Deliverer will come in due time, but not a word about the Church nor the gospel in its depth. Yet “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the habitable earth for a testimony to all the nations, and then shall come the end.” It is a testimony with fruit everywhere, without a word of effect farther. The change for dead and for living, for heaven and for earth, is reserved for Him who is worthy, the rejected Christ at His coming.

The remarkable and evident fact is that the Lord has here before Him Jewish disciples in early days with their counterpart before the end, but without reference to the Christian light and privilege which would come in. So we have plain enough proof in Acts and James, that in Jerusalem there was persistence in this respect that has often struck Christian readers as strange, not only after the great Pentecost was fulfilled, but to the even of the destruction of the city and sanctuary. Hebrews, written just before that destruction, gave God's final warning and proof that for the Christian, the Jewish system was

now null and void. In this way one can apprehend how the Lord provides instruction for Jewish disciples before the end is come. Still thus far all is general, but from verse 15 we are given much that is precise, He Himself referring to the last chapter of Daniel.

The Great Tribulation And The Lord's Coming (Vv. 15-31)

“When therefore ye shall see the abomination of desolation that was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in [the] holy place (let the reader understand), then let those in Judaea flee unto the mountains; let not he who is upon the house come down to take the things out of the house; and let not he who is in the field return back to take his cloak. But woe to those with child and to those who suckle in those days! But pray that your flight be not in winter nor on sabbath. For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from world's beginning until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been cut short, n o flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be cut short. Then if any one say to you, Behold, here [is] the Christ, or there, believe [him] not; for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall give great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you before. If therefore they say to you, Behold, [he is] in the desert, go not forth; Behold, [he is] in the inner chambers, believe not. For as the lightning cometh forth from the east and appeareth unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered. But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not

give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the land mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from [one] end of heavens to the other" (vv. 15-31).

The Abomination Of Desolation; Historical And Future

Here we learn the awful mark of Jewish wickedness — guilty and fatal alliance with the Gentiles, as Daniel warned. An abomination also had been set up by order of Antiochus Epiphanes long before Messiah's first advent. This idol was set up in the holy place. It brought desolation on all who acted or submitted. It also drew out the uncompromising opposition of the Maccabees. This was predicted fully and plainly in Daniel 11:31, as the pious heroism that rejected the abomination follows. For this reason it is the more distinguishable from the similar but greater future apostasy. For all has been accomplished up to verse 35, where a blank is implied leading to the "time of the end," which we have here also in Matthew. Then "the king" of the last time appears, not "of the north" as Antiochus Epiphanes had been in his day, still less "of the south" (Egypt), but distinct from both. At the time of the end the king of the south will push at him, and the king of the north will come against him (Dan. 11:40). He is thus the object of hostility to both, and has for his sphere "the goodly

land” which is physically between those two powers of the future.

He is also more widely the great religious enemy of Jehovah and His Christ. While reigning over the land of Israel, he will set himself forth supremely in the temple of God. This is the “man of sin” whom the apostle portrays in 2 Thessalonians 2, citing or applying Daniel's words. The Lord refers in Daniel 12:11 to this future abomination of desolation with which is connected a date of 1290 days and a supplement of 45 more, before the blessed time comes which the then-faithful of Israel await. Then the prophet himself shall rest and stand in his lot and the Son of man shall reign over, not Israel only, but all peoples, nations and tongues. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom shall not be destroyed.

The divine design was to present us with the Roman capture of Jerusalem and its results in Luke 21:20-24. But here the Lord passes these over in the corresponding place of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, and dwells only on the unequalled wickedness and tribulation of the future days, expressly said to be followed “immediately” by His own coming in clouds with great power and glory, closing man's evil age and opening the long-desired day of Jehovah. Luke omits that awful crisis.

The Lord makes this public act of apostasy the signal for immediate flight. As the sign for flight is unmistakable, so are those disciples contemplated by the Lord: “then let those in Judea flee unto the mountains.” This could not be Christians who, as we know from other Scriptures, will have been translated to heaven. God,

upon their disappearance, works in souls by His Word and Spirit to also have an earthly people first and especially among the Jews, the mass of whom are then deceived by the Antichrist. The godly Jewish remnant are in question, and the Lord here points out that their danger is so immediate that there is no time to come down from the housetop and go into the house to get their property: they must flee at once. If one is in the field, let him not turn back even to pick up his coat. It touched the Lord to think of women at such a crisis, impeded personally or by their babes. He urges prayer that the flight might not be in the rigor of winter or to the dishonor of sabbath. Can any Christian fail to see that godly Jews are here in view? From “the holy place” in verse 15 to “sabbath” in verse 20, all points to Jewish disciples at that future time and in that limited area.

The Great Tribulation

The tribulation comes next (vv. 21, 22). “In the world ye have tribulation” applies to the Christian in principle, but no specific tribulation is ever held out for him. He should expect it always. All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. The tribulation beyond parallel even for the Jews is during the last three-and-a-half years from the setting up of the abomination of desolation in the sanctuary. It is a judicial dealing of God through their enemies because of their bold apostasy. It has nothing to do with the Christian except that merely professing Christian fully share it. The Gentiles as such play their part in it; so we read in Revelation 7 of “the great tribulation” out of which comes a crowd of faithful ones who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Jews and the Gentiles in that

latter day will be thus visited in their respective measures, when the Christians are no longer here but in heaven with Christ. Those days are cut short for the elect's sake: otherwise no flesh would be saved. Here the Lord speaks of Jewish disciples preserved on earth for His kingdom, not of Christians who endure suffering and then reign with Him when changed at His coming, which is not even supposed in this question.

No less clear are the intimations in verses 23-26. They suppose Jewish dangers and deceits of the most trying kind, but not at all such as Christians are exposed to. We know that when the Lord Jesus comes for us, we shall be changed, dead or living, and be caught up to meet Him in the air. This is so definitely revealed in 1 Thessalonians — a letter written to correct the mistake in the assembly of Thessalonians, just gathered unto the Lord name — that it is hard to conceive of a Christian not now apprised of it. Hence were any to tell him that Christ was here or there, in Rome or in London, he would reject it and treat the alleged as a false christ and the herald as a false prophet. Nor would great signs and prodigies weigh in support of so glaring a contradiction of the word of the Lord. But Jewish believers who have no such promise [as the Rapture] did and will need the Lord's fore-warning to keep them from the snare. Whether some say, He is in the desert or in the inner chambers, they were to believe neither. “For as the lightning cometh out of the east and appeareth unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of man.” This is not how the apostle John speaks of His coming to receive us to Himself. Rather, He comes as the Bridegroom for the bride.

The lightning flash appropriately describes His judicial presence for the Jewish disciples beset with Jewish and Gentile enemies who are animated with satanic rage and hatred. This is fully confirmed by the figure attached: “wherever the carcase is, there shall be gathered the eagles” — the swift instruments of divine vengeance on the dead prey which ought to have been a living witness for God. What a contrast with His coming and our gathering together unto Him! — the blessed motive to deliver the deceived Thessalonians from being troubled by the false assertion that His day was actually there (as in 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2).

The Lord's Appearing

Then the Lord states that “immediately after the tribulation of those days” there would be a total subversion of governmental order above — the sun, the moon, the stars — “and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken,” signs physically of the great change in progress for the earth. “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in the heavens.” His appearing there on high is the sign of His coming to set up His kingdom and judge the living. “And then shall all the tribes of the land” (the context seems to favor this rendering, rather than “of the earth: ” the word means either) lament — a result never expressed with His coming to translate us. “For they see Him coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” He acts on and by more than men. He has His angels, and these “He shall send with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather His elect,” meaning here those of Israel as well as of Judah who are written in the book, “from one end of the heavens to the

other.” We may compare it with the many references in the Psalms and the Prophets, Isaiah especially.

A Parenthesis On Bible Interpretation

To interpret Scripture we need a power and wisdom above our own. We cannot understand by forcing the lock: the key is needed, and grace gives it in Christ as taught by the Word and Spirit of God. If you have Christ by faith, you already have the key. In faith apply Him to the Bible, and the Holy Spirit enables you to understand it. It is not a question of a superior mind or of great learning: many learned men have been foolish in their mistakes. The simple saint who knows neither Greek nor Hebrew may understand the Bible if he with true simplicity submits himself to the Lord and has confidence in His love. This understanding is produced by the Spirit of God: only this makes people humble and gives confidence in God and in His Word by taking away objects which darken, misdirect or overpower one's own mind.

Take the advice of a friend: read the Scriptures prayerfully but believingly, and you will understand what is infinitely better than anything found in the various schemes of man. It is just the same as regards the interpretation of prophecy as in doctrine. No person should be able to convince a Christian that one part of the Word of God is sealed up and the other open. Once it was so. When Daniel received those very communications to which the Lord directs the reader, he was told to seal up the book. When John was called to have the same communications and yet greater ones, he was told not to seal up the book. Perhaps you have seen the difference and the reason of it: Jewish saints could

not enter into the true and full meaning of the future till Christ came at least until the end arrives. Then, when the last days of this age are here, the godly remnant will understand. The wicked shall not understand. You cannot separate moral condition from real intelligence of God's Word. But the Christian already has both Christ and the Holy Spirit in virtue of redemption. Hence, he is called and qualified to search all things, yea the deep things of God. They are now, including the things to come, revealed fully and finally.

When the grace of God gives faith and the desire to do the will of God, then people become able to understand both doctrine and prophecy. They learn that all the revealed mind of God centers in Christ, not in the first man. When you are not bent on finding in prophecy England or America, some epidemic, or your own time; when you are delivered by grace from all such prepossessions, then with Him as your Object you have a fit moral condition because the absorbing ideas of unspiritual people no longer govern and blind you. Hence the only way to understand any part of the Bible is just by grace to give up for Christ our own will and prejudices. Thus we can face anything. We are no longer afraid of what God has to reveal. We don't try to read anything of our own into the Bible, but are content to gather God's meaning from it. May this be truly our desire and endeavor..

The Sabbath And The Lord's Day

It has been clearly shown that thus far the Lord Jesus speaks of disciples connected with the temple, and Judaea and Jerusalem, but not of Christians. Take these further proofs of it. He says, “And pray that your flight

be not in winter nor on a sabbath day.“ The Lord's day is our day, the first day of the week. The Jew rightly and properly kept Jehovah's sabbaths. As to this, there are languages in Europe more exact than English. The Italian keep sup the right distinction; it always speaks of Saturday as the sabbath day and Sunday as the Lord's day.

In our own land there has been a great deal of confusion as to the sabbath and the Lord's day. The Lord' day differs from the sabbath by a higher degree of sanctity, not by leaving Christians free to do their own will on other days, but by calling them to do the Lord's will on that day in a complete separation to His glory, the holy services of divine honor in works of faith and labors of love. In short, the Lord's day differs essentially from the sabbath in that it is the day of grace, not of law, and the day of new creation, not of the old. The consequence of seeing this will be important differences in heart and practice.

Suppose a Christian had the strength to walk 20 miles on the Lord's day and to preach the gospel six or seven times. Would he be guilty of transgressing God's will? It is hoped that not a single person would think so; yet if really under the sabbath law it would be a violation. What can absolve from the obligations of that day? All under the law are bound within defined limits. Are Jews free to use the sabbath in indefinite labor even for what you know to be the active purposes of goodness? We must obey in our relationship.

Granted that the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath, but are the Jewish disciples also lords of the sabbath? You cannot do freely what you count ever so good: Jews are

under stringent regulations as to that day. If the sabbath is your day, you are required to keep it as such. Likewise, you, a Christian, have to do with the Lord's day, and seek to understand its meaning and be true to it. Without question the Lord's day is a day of consecration to worship and to the work of the Lord. It is not the last day of a laborious week, a day of rest. It is a day that is devoted to the Lord Jesus, especially to communion with His own in the world. Nor is there sin in the most strenuous labor for souls: on the contrary such labor in the Lord is good and blessed wherever it is found, if He guide in it (and we need this).

The Jewish disciples contemplated here are told to pray that the time for their precipitate flight should not be in the winter nor on a sabbath day. The one would from its inclemency seriously impede, and on the other they could not go farther than a sabbath-day's journey. But how could this affect us as Christians? Even if once Jews, we are no longer under such restrictions. The Lord is speaking not of a Christian, but of future Jewish disciples, subject to the law and its ritual and animated by Jewish hopes.

The Jewish Elect Disciples

Further, it is said, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not even from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would be saved.” All this is plain enough. It is not a question of heavenly things, but of His Kingdom. They sought to live here and be the subjects of the blessed reign and gory when the Lord comes. It is glory on earth, not in heaven. “But for the elect's sake those days should be shortened.”

“Then, if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is the Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great sings and wonders, so as if possible to mislead even the elect. Behold, I have told you beforehand. Therefore, if they say to you, Behold, [he is] in the desert, go not forth: Behold, [he is] in the inner chambers, believe [it] not.”

It is clear that the elect here are Jewish. A Christian would unlikely be deceived by such rumors for an instant. But the Lord Jesus supposes considerable danger for such disciples as are here. In fact, being Jewish (not Christian), they might be deceived by the cry that He [the Messiah] was here on earth, whereas no Christian could be in danger, who awaits the Son of God from heaven. Yet the Jewish disciples were exposed to it. Looking as they were for the Lord's coming to the earth, they knew that the Lord's feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives. They might thus be taken in by deceits. Not so the Christian. He knows that he is to be with the Lord in the heavens, being for this taken up out of this world into the air to meet the Lord on high. Thus the deceits in question are addressed only to those who expect to meet the Lord on the earth. The whole of the scene thus far consists of the Lord's instructions to disciples connected with Jerusalem and Judaea, and has nothing to do with the Christians looking to join the Lord above.

Here again is the reason why even Jewish disciples should not listen. “For as the lightning cometh forth from the east and is seen even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.” This is not the Roman conquest. The army of Titus did not come out of the east, as the lightning is said to do here, nor did it shine

unto the west: the very reverse would be a more apt figure, had the Romans been meant. So distinctly has the Lord Jesus guarded against the misinterpretations of men! The Son of Man's coming will be quite different and will surprise all like the lighting. There will be no question of going here or there to seek Him.

The Lord then has given these disciples landmarks in the prophecy, which hinder us from being carried away by every wind of theory. We may see clearly what the Holy Spirit has set before us. Nothing important has been knowingly passed over, nor any violence done to a word. The desire is to give a clear, distinct and positive impression of the mind of the Lord as conveyed in His own words. The disciples furnish occasion for others in the main like themselves in Judaea at the close of the age.

The Carcase

Then it is said, “Wheresoever the carcase is, there will be gathered together the eagles” (v. 28). Apply this to the Church or to the Christian, and what can you make of it? Is the Church “the carcase”? The Church united to Christ by the Holy Spirit is His body: it is a wondrous privilege and a blessed truth, but is the Church a carcase? Surely not: it is His living body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Nor is the Lord ever regarded as a body dead or merely alive, but as the risen and glorified Head.

The moment you refer “His carcase” to the Jewish people, it becomes strikingly true. The mass of the Jews then will be apostate, and the eagles or vultures who flock there are figures of the divine judgments executed on the guilty people by the hostile nations of the earth.

Whatever may be the instruments, they are judgments of God executed at this time. If the Christians were the carcase, they must be the object of the judgment, for there the eagles, figures of those who execute judgment, are gathered together. But this is not the relation of the Lord's coming to the Christian. Nor can any Christians be the eagles or instruments of divine vengeance, any more than the carcase, without abandoning all the truth and character of their calling. The changed saints will go up to meet the Lord, but is He then to be the carcase and are the Church the eagles? In such a scheme, there is only the choice of one evil less or greater than another, which is generally so with an erroneous interpretation. Apply it to the object the Lord had in view and harshness disappears. This is the test of scriptural truth: whenever people press a false interpretation, the general testimony of Scripture is confused and dislocated or contradicted thereby.

Jerusalem's Last Crisis (With The Emphasis Of Each Gospel)

Then the Lord adds, “But immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken” (v. 29).

A popular view makes this verse the Lord's beginning to speak of His return personally. This destroys the force of “Immediately after the tribulation of those days” and breaks the connection with the true transition to the last days in verse 15 which introduces precise details of that epoch in their order. They are synchronized with the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom in all the

habitable earth as a witness to all the nations in the general history, “and then shall the end come.” Thenceforward it is, and we have what happens in the temple, Judaea and strictly Jewish concerns at the end of the age. This is shown clearly by the reference to Daniel 12:11. The prophet there tells us that “from the time that the continual [holocaust] shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolation set up, [there shall be] 1290 days,” with a supplement in verse 12 of “45 days” more to complete the incoming of the blessed time. Now count as men like from the siege of Titus, 1335 years for days. Nothing of the sort is brought in. The starting-point is wrong, and all modes of rectification are vain.

In reality we have here the last future crisis in and round Jerusalem, though it seems the gospel of the Kingdom goes on by godly Jews outside over the earth about the same time, the days in the prophet being literal days as here in verse 22. What has misled most is confounding the different language and truth in Matthew 24:15 etc. (who both give us what is entirely future) with that of Luke 21:20-24 which is entirely past, except the treading down of Jerusalem by Gentiles while Gentiles times last, etc. These verses cover exclusively the Roman sack and its consequences to this day. Luke's future reference commences with verse 25 and onward. It is an error to mix up this Roman episode in Luke with the pointedly different description in Matthew and Mark which omit this, and then converge on the future only. They speak of the abomination of desolation and of the unequalled tribulation, on which Luke is silent. Rather, Luke tells of the Romans investing Jerusalem and of that desolation, of which Matthew and Mark are silent. Luke

is silent about the tribulation without parallel, speaking only of “days of vengeance and great distress upon the land and wrath to this people.” The other Evangelists are silent on the extreme slaughter of the Jews by the Roman army and their captivity into all the nations, with the notable prolonged fact that Jerusalem should be trodden down by Gentiles till their times are over, as they are not yet. All this is as carefully presented in Luke in exact consistency with the Spirit's design in his Gospel, as the other two omit it, being devoted to the unprecedented horrors of the future which Luke omits.

All three Gospels take up the closing scene. Luke doesn't say “Immediately after the tribulation” etc., since he had not alluded to it, but he joins the other two about signs in sun, moon and stars, though as usual noticing moral state beyond the others. Next, all speak of the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Luke then alone adds, “But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads because your redemption draweth nigh.” Can any Christian fail to see that the heavenly saints are not here in view? We already have in Him redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our offenses whereas those here represented have yet to enjoy it in His Kingdom.

Luke's presentation is valuable for settling the true force of “this generation shall in no wise pass till all things have taken place” — among them, the end of Gentile supremacy over Israel and Jerusalem. The desire to limit “this generation” to the destruction of their city by the Romans, is thus precluded. Further, at the consummation of the age the revived Roman Empire will not be against the apostate Jews. It will be an ally of the Antichrist or willful king of Palestine, when the king of

the north at the time of the end comes against him like a whirlwind, with chariots and with horsemen and with many ships. But each power shall perish successively and horribly under the Lord of lords and King of kings.

The Events Surrounding His Appearing

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn” (v. 30). The Son of Man appearing in heaven is the sign of His coming to enforce His claim on earth. It is not here the believers with joy going up to meet the Lord, but the tribes of the earth, or at least of the land, mourning when the sign appears. “And they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (v. 31). Here too, light is given to decide that the coming of the Son of man is in view of the land, Israel (or at least the chosen), and not to receive the heavenly ones for association with Himself in the Father' house.

He is seen coming on the clouds of heaven before He sends forth His angels to gather together His elect from the four winds. Now it is a matter of positive revelation by the apostle Paul (Col. 3:4) that “When Christ our (or, your) life shall be manifested then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory.” It is not the moment when we are changed and caught up to meet Him in the air, but the time when we are with Him manifested in glory. The heavenly saints are already with Him when He comes judicially as Son of man, for to execute judgment is His given office as such (John 5:27). They

are with Him already, not then translated, called and chosen and faithful. They are not angels (who are not “called” nor said to be “faithful”), but saints (Rev. 17:14).

We learn from Revelation 19:14 that the armies that are in the heaven followed Him upon white horses clothed in white pure byss, the righteousnesses of saints as interpreted just before, whereas angelic clothing had been said to be pure bright linen (Rev. 15:6). The elders, who represent the saints as chiefs of the royal priesthood, are seen on high from Revelation 4 to 19. Here they first appear in the quality of bride for the marriage of the Lamb above, and next accompany Him as armies when He goes forth from heaven to judge and war in righteousness. Hence it is in the teeth of Scripture that we can be on the earth and see Him appear as the glorious Son of Man in heaven coming to judge the living. On the contrary we shall then be manifested together with Him when He is manifested in glory.

The Lord had already intimated it before Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians 15 and Colossians 3. Though spoken it was long after Paul had departed to be with Christ that John 14 was written, and still longer for Revelation Revelation 4-19. These Scriptures reveal that Christ will come to change and translate to heaven the heavenly saints. Enoch (Jude 14) and Zechariah (Zech. 14:5) say they come with Him: a truth repeated by Paul in 1 Thessalonians (1 Thess. 3:13, 1 Thess. 4:14). Then in verses 15-17 Paul gives a new revelation to explain that this will be by His coming for them by His descent from heaven with a shout of command which gathers them in a moment to Himself. Clearly then “the elect,”

subsequently gathered after the Lord appears, are not heavenly saints, but rather His restored people, the nucleus of godly Israel, in harmony with the context.

His Elect

Too many lay great stress upon gathering “His elect.” Don't be too quick, my friends. The “elect” may not necessarily mean Christians. If one speak of elect now, it is so, but had God no heavenly “elect” before there were Christians? And after these are taken to heaven, will there be no elect on earth? Was God precluded from showing mercy on earth because His sovereign grace had given us and the Old Testament saints our respective places in heaven? There were elect Gentiles in patriarchal days and later too. Take Job and his friends: were they not elect men? Melchisedek, Jethro, and others; were not they elect? Need one enumerate the elect of Israel in the past? We clearly find elect Gentiles as well as Jews and Christians. When we read of Christianity, then the elect must be so explained; if we read about a Jewish state, then the phrase applies to a Jewish election, and so with the nations too. We must be governed by the context. As the Lord here is simply speaking about Israel, the sense should not be ambiguous. When we have “his elect” named, He means the elect of those described, of Israel. This is not to bring in arbitrary rules. It is in fact a very plain and necessary principle of exposition.

The Lord in all the context is speaking about Israel and their hopes. Consequently “his elect” must be interpreted according to the object in view. These elect ones are to be gathered “from one end of heaven to the

other," yet not for heaven but on earth. (Compare Isaiah 27, Isaiah 65, Romans 11:5, 7, 28.

The Parable Of The Fig Tree

"Now learn the parable from the fig tree." The fig tree is a well known symbol of Israel as a nation. In Luke, where the Lord views both Gentiles and Jews, He employs this very symbol, but enlarged remarkably. He says "the fig tree and all the trees." The latter are not spoken of in Matthew because this part only looks at the Jew, but in Luke, referring to the Gentile as well as the Jew, He adds, "and all the trees." The latter are not spoken of in Matthew because this part only looks at the Jew, but in Luke, referring to the Gentile as well as the Jew, He adds, "and all the trees." Compare Luke 21:29.

"Now learn the parable from the fig tree. When its branch is now become tender and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh; even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know that it (or, he) is near, at the doors. Verily I say to you, This generation shall not pass away till all these things have come to pass" (vv. 32-34).

Mark the phrase "all these things," from the first troubles down to the last, and the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Clearly here "this generation" cannot mean a mere period of thirty years, or a man's life. The phrase signifies, what it frequently does in Scripture, a line characterized by certain moral tokens entirely independent of a brief limit of time. Hence we find particularly in the Psalms, this use of "generation." One text is enough to prove it. In Psalm 72:7 we read "Thou shalt keep them, O Jehovah, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever."

“This generation” is supposed to go on, and it is an evil generation, a generation which has no faith, a stubborn and Christ-rejecting generation. “This generation” or the non-believing race of the Jews is not to pass away till all these things have taken place. Thus the same generation which crucified the Lord of glory is going on still, and will, till He comes again in the clouds of heaven. They are still the same proud, self-righteous, Christ-rejecting race as they were then.

The grace of God will make them anew, “a generation to come.” The Lord will judge the unbelievers at last, dealing with them righteously after His immense patience, but delivering a godly remnant in His grace. The Messiah has great things in store for Israel. There will be this double action, that the mass of them will fill up the cup of iniquity which their fathers began, while the remnant will become the holy seed, the Israel of the millennial day. He speaks of the former when saying that “this generation shall not pass away till all these things have come to pass.

“The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of the heavens, but the Father only” (vv. 35, 36).

The Days Of Noah

The next comparison is not to the fig tree or anything else taken from the physical world. A figure is taken from the dealings of God in the Old Testament.

“But as the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man; for as in those days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and

giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women [shall be] grinding at the mill, one is taken and one is left" (vv. 37-40).

Had heavenly saints been in question, Enoch would be the appropriate Old Testament type, but as the Lord meant non-raptured saints who are carried through the waters of judgment, He justly chose Noah as the pattern for the remnant to be on the earth.

Again, instead of such an indiscriminate slaughter or such a captivity as was executed upon the Jews by the Romans, there is a direct and plain contrast. Here is unfailing discrimination: one man taken and one left, one woman taken and another left. The Lord will deal with perfect discernment in each case: The Romans did not, nor any army that ever took a city. Notoriously if not necessarily at such a time, there is little thought of, or time for discrimination. The rule is wholesale bloodshed and often slavery. It was especially so when Titus sacked Jerusalem. But when the Lord Jesus comes in judgment of the living on earth, it will be otherwise. One, whether of men or of women, is taken for judgment, one left for blessing in the land.

Conclusion

"Watch therefore, for ye know not on what day your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the house-master had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have suffered his house to be digged through. Therefore, be ye also ready,

for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh" (vv. 42-44).

These verses close the portion of the prophecy which refers to the Jews. It began by referring to the Jewish remnant because the disciples as yet were such, though believers. Christ took them up just as they were, though they subsequently became Christians. They then passed into a new relationship. They already had faith in Him, but instead of His reigning and blessing them on the earth, another order of things was founded in connection with His ascension to heaven. Hence the same disciples merged into a new form of relationship with God, of which the Holy Spirit sent forth was the power. They were taught no longer to expect the Lord's restoration of the kingdom as their proper hope, but, contrariwise, that the Lord would come to receive them to Himself and take them to the Father's home in heaven. This is the Christian's hope; this is what they await. The Lord calls them out from everything on earth to Himself. They had been expecting the Lord to establish them on the earth up to the day when the Lord Jesus went up to send down the Holy Spirit.

Christianity thus comes in, as if a door had been opened and let them into an entirely new circle. The disciples at the beginning were on one side of the door, the disciples at the end would be on the other side. The door opens and the new thing, the Church, passes through. It is the calling of Christians out of the world, of those called in one body, waiting till Christ comes to receive them to Himself and take them where He is. The Lord Jesus, having accomplished redemption, has Himself first taken His seat in heaven. Thus the disciples become heavenly (1 Cor. 15:48) and are being transformed spiritually (2

Cor. 13:18). Finally, at His coming, the Lord Jesus will take them completely out of their natural environment, conformed in body to His own glorious body. The state of things on earth since redemption, till He comes to take us to be with Him on high, is called Christianity.

It is not denied that the saints of old, before Christianity came in, will share in the resurrection, when they too will shine in the likeness of Christ. But there is an enormous difference meanwhile. We are brought, since His cross, into salvation, with new relationships in union with Himself. Then the Holy Spirit gives a fresh and incomparably greater power to those who are now gathered to His name. It is possible that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were more faithful than many, perhaps than most of us. We cannot take high ground, but we boast in God and of what Christ has given us. He brings in "grace and truth" which makes our unfaithfulness me manifest, for the greater the Christian privileges, the more strictly is our unfaithfulness measured. But the hope does not make us ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.

Very striking is the fact that the title "the Son of man" is not mentioned again until the third section where all the nations come into review. The clause containing that title in "the Christian portion" (Matthew 25:13) is spurious in the KJV. In Daniel 7 we see this title used when He comes to deal with the Gentile powers (the last in particular) to the deliverance of the Jewish people and His universal dominion over all peoples and tongues.

It has to do with His presence for the earth, but does not rise to His heavenly glory nor to our association with

Him there. Hence the need of the intermediate part of the great discourse, in which the Lord communicated as much as those addressed could then bear, leaving it to the Holy Spirit when sent from heaven to lead into all the truth. It is here that failure in faith and hope is found even among true saints, especially when they lean on that frail reed, human tradition, against which the Lord directed the keenest arrow.

Chapter 2 - The Christian Profession

Matthew 24:45 - 25:30

Introduction

From this point the Lord begins to open out a new thing — that which the disciples were going to enter. Evidently this was the proper order. The Lord had begun with them as they were. He then leads on to what they were soon to become, with the new relationships to Christ dead and risen, when fresh power would be given by the Holy Spirit. As a mark of this, you will see that the Lord drops all allusion to Judaea and any reference to the temple, the prophets and the sabbath.

The Lord widens out now into parables of a general and comprehensive nature, which would be equally as true at Timbuctu as at Jerusalem — it does not matter where. They bear upon Christianity. What Christ died and rose to establish by the mission of the Spirit is not one of the narrow systems of men, or of their broad worldly associations. Christianity is only exclusive of sin. It is the practical expression of Christ, not only in grace and truth, but in resulting practice. The Lord definitely marks this opening out into wider principles of a moral nature, which embrace all Christian disciples, wherever

they might be in this world, and at any time till He comes. Hence we find three characteristic parables.

The First Parable

The first parable is the prudent servant contrasted with the evil one. It is a question of faithful service in the house, the duty of the highest and the duty of the lowest, not of the excellent activity with variety of spiritual endowment in each for trading with his lord's goods as given in the parable of the Talents (Matt. 25). The form is very striking. We have, seen as one, a profession carried out and ending very differently, and this in relation with the Lord, not with Israel as before.

“Who then is the faithful and prudent bondman whom his lord set over his household, to give them their food in due season? Blessed [is] that bondman whom his lord on coming shall find so doing. Verily I say to you, that he will set him over all that he hath. But if that evil bondman shall say in his heart, My lord tarrieth; and shall begin to beat his fellow-bondmen, and shall eat and drink with the drunken, the lord of that bondman shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour that he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth” (vv. 45-51).

It was another case with the nation. In Judaism there was an enormous unbelieving mass in former times falling into idolatry and all kinds of wickedness, and hence persecuting the faithful brethren. But one of the characteristic marks of Christendom is that all are professors of Christ, whether truly or falsely, and it is therefore presented here as one whole. The Lord in the parable says the faithful and prudent servant shall be

made ruler over all His goods. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he comes shall find so doing. It is the responsibility of all in the house. Hence He goes on to say, “But if that evil servant” etc. They are surprisingly joined. On what does his ruin depend? “In his heart” the evil servant says, “My lord delayeth.” His coming is not a mere idea: man likes to have his notions and no one is the better for them. This refers to what is deep and real — the heart's indifference to the coming of the Master. The evil servant says in his heart, “My lord delayeth.” He believes what he likes, and what he likes is that the Lord should delay His coming.

The Effect Of The Lord's Coming Misunderstood

It is most affecting to see that the Lord treats the putting off of His return as leading to assumption within and laxity without. That evil servant, when he says in his heart (for so it is), My lord delayeth, shall begin also to beat his fellow servants and shall eat and drink with the drunken. What a contrast with Christ, and what a practical denial of Him! It led the professor back to the world in self-exalting oppression and in allowed intimacy with the ungodly and immoral. He is therefore appointed, when the Lord comes, to have his part with the hypocrites. The Lord does not treat him as a Jew or a Greek, but according to his responsibility.

How different it is with the faithful and prudent servant! He waits and longs for the Lord because he loves Him who first loved us. Hence the hope of Christ is quite distinct from prophecy. One might be greatly versed in the prophetic word and wholly lack that hope; one might be filled with the hope and be altogether unacquainted

with prophecy. Next to believing in Christ for life and redemption, with worship and service and walk following, the Christian needs and is called to wait for the Son of God from heaven. Now if you love anyone, you delight to see him. The absence of the beloved person is trying to you. There may be the wisest reasons for delay, but the delay taxes your patience, and the hope of the speedy return of the one you love is the greatest joy.

The Lord gives this feeling and strengthens it toward Himself. It is the proper hope of the Christian — not the kingdom, but Christ. Grant that it may be hindered by the influence of prophetic notions; yet there is in the heart of all true Christians a genuine desire for the coming of Christ. But when one is not in peace through a full gospel, one is afraid. Those who give them an uncertain gospel are responsible for it. As they thus keep people in dread, they do the greatest injury to the grace of God. We do not speak of those who falsify Christ or His work, but of those who preach it partially, who fear to set forth the full value of the sacrifice of Christ in the perfect deliverance which His death and resurrection have wrought for the believer. The result of this defect in teaching is that Christians are apt to be alarmed instead of rejoicing at the immediate hope of Christ's coming.

Such Christians do not understand that the acceptance of Christ is the acceptance of a Christian. They have not learned the truth that the Lord by His death has not only effaced their sins, but that their sinful nature condemned completely so they can walk now in the Spirit, to be followed by a perfect conformity to Christ's

image in resurrection at His coming (Rom. 8:1-4, 11, 29).

Who can exaggerate what Christ has wrought for the believer? If you rest on His redemption, all difficulties Godward are taken away. Then there is nothing left except the need of daily self-judgment for every inconsistency, the duty of serving Him now and the delight of being with Him and seeing Him then, as also of worshipping both now and forever by grace. He has done all to bring us to God, taking us out of every evil. How can the believer not rejoice in this and in Him? Therefore all Christians, wherever or whoever they may be, are entitled to have joy and delight, though for many, dimmed by the prospect of His coming due to improper teaching.

Notwithstanding all their imperfect notions, it is certain that all Christians love Christ and in principle await Him too. This may not please some pre-millennialist friends, but surely this hope belongs to every Christian.

There are false prophetic views which hinder, but as the new nature goes out toward Christ, so it longs for the time when we shall be forever with the Lord. Waiting for Christ supposes waiting for His coming. If the object be to prove that many Christians do not look for Christ's coming, abundant grounds appear for working on. But if you are child-like, God gives sufficient evidence that those who are Christ's, notwithstanding obstacles, do look and long for His coming.

The children of God need to get clear of those clouds of noxious and unwholesome vapors that constantly rise up between the Lord and them. Let them cherish the hope He gave them. If you bring in a millennium first, it is

hard to see Christ's coming clearly: it acts as a veil which dulls the hope of that day. It may not destroy the hope; yet one cannot help but look for His coming in an imperfect manner. If you bring in a great tribulation first, this also lowers the outlook and greatly enfeebles the hope. It occupies one with evils as they rise, produces a depressing effect, and fills the heart with that judicial trouble and its corresponding desolations. These are the mistakes of theorists. The one puts a wrong expectation between you and the coming of the Lord, kindling meanwhile a dreamy excitement in waiting for that day. The other case produces a sort of spiritual nightmare, an oppressive feeling in the thought that the Church must go through the dreadful tribulation.

Be assured, my brethren, that the Scriptures deliver us from both the dream and the nightmare. They entitle the believer to wait for Christ as simply as a child, being perfectly certain that God's Word is as true as our hope is blessed. There is to be God's glorious kingdom, but the Lord Jesus will bring it in at His coming to earth. The great tribulation shall come, but not for the Christian. When it is a question about the Jew, you can understand it well, for why does the greatest tribulation come upon him? Because of idolatry — the worship of the Beast and the Antichrist! It is for him a moral retribution with which the Christian has nothing directly to do. The predicted trouble falls on the apostate nations and the Jews. Those who ought to be witnesses of Jehovah and His Christ will at last fall into the dreadful snare of allowing the abomination to be put into the sanctuary of God.

What connection is there between this and the Christian looking for Christ? Here the prophecy of the blessed Lord drops all allusion to anything unique to Israel. His coming will be for the solemn judgment of all who pervert grace and indulge in unrighteousness, receiving a sentence so much the me stern because the gospel reveals God perfectly in light and love, which they abuse to fleshly license. Scripture teaches the Christian not only to wait for Christ as his proper and dearest hope, but also for His appearing and kingdom when wrong will be redressed and righteousness rewarded and evil put down forever to His honor and glory. Yes, we love His appearing and His kingdom when the proud shall be abased, the meek inherit the earth, Satan be set aside and the Lord exalted publicly without a rival or a foe. It is a blessed hope, but we have the better and higher hope of being with Him where He is, that we may behold His glory which the Father gave Him because He loved Him before the world's foundation.

The Second Parable (The 10 VIrgins)

Then comes the parable of the ten virgins. It is needed to disengage the Christian from the thought that the early part of this discourse is about him: such an idea completely perverts his judgment. Rather, as we have seen, it presents the Jewish people distinctively. Here we have a then future comparison of the kingdom of the heavens.

“Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be likened to ten virgins, the which took their torches and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish and five were prudent. For the foolish took their torches and took no oil with them, but the prudent took oil in their

vessels with their torches. Now, the bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight a cry was made, Behold, the bridegroom! go ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their torches. And the foolish said to the prudent, Give us of your oil, for our torches are going out. But the prudent answered, saying, Peradventure there be not enough for us and you. Go rather to those who sell and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and those ready went in with him to the marriage-feast, and the door was shut. Afterward came also the rest of the virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answering, said, Verily I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour" (Matt. 25:1-13).

In our day we have another and opposite error, an error that takes away the parable of the virgins from applying to the Christian. On the contrary it has nothing directly to do with the Jewish remnant. They are not called to go out to meet the Bridegroom. They could not have oil in their vessels, and lastly they will not be exposed to the temptation of going to sleep. The Jews ought to abide where they are, or only flee to escape death in their refusal of idolatry. Those who survive for the Lord's appearing and their own deliverance, only receive the Holy Spirit after He appears. All is in contrast with the Christian position.

In this parable, then, the Lord shows the kingdom of heaven will be likened to ten virgins. They all went forth to bear their testimony to Christ: the torch was to give light. They were to shine as lights in the world. Each virgin taking her lamp, they went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

This is characteristic of the Christian. The Israelite did not separate from the world of which he was head. The Christian goes forth to meet Christ who is gone to heaven. If he had been a Jew, he would thus leave his ancient associations and hopes behind. Again, if the greatest person in the Gentile world, or if of the poorest condition, he alike abandons his old obscurity or his old grandeur. He willingly forgets all that is of the world. He is called out of every snare which can arrest or fascinate the heart of man. He has got a new and all-absorbing object in Christ — Christ in heavenly joy and blessedness.

It is not the Judge coming to deal with the wicked. If the Christian goes forth to meet the Bridegroom, does such a parable bring an image of terror? He well knows that the same Jesus who is the Bridegroom will be the Judge; he well knows that Jesus will put down all those who oppose Him, but He is not the Judge and the Bridegroom to the same persons, any more than both will be true of Him at the same precise time. Where would be the sense of such confusion? The Lord purposely brings in the bright figure of the Bridegroom to Christians who are waiting for Him.

There also are other important elements. Here are persons true or false. They are not presented as one object: consequently the idea of the bride1 is not the expressed aim. When we talk about Christians, real or nominal, we do not fix our mind on unity; we think of individuals who go forth. Christ was about to present profession, and so introduces foolish as well as wise virgins. He therefore looks at Christians professing His name truly or falsely, not at the Church, the bride of the Lamb. The Christians are here characterized by quitting

every object on earth to meet the Bridegroom. Even the Jew, attached as he was to the old religion (and they had a religion which could boast of greater antiquity than any others), when become a Christian, leaves all to go forth unto Him, as we read in Hebrews 13:13, “bearing His reproach.”

Here you have the same great principle. As the Christian, even though once a Jew, was called to leave the old order behind, so the virgins went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five foolish. Those who were foolish took their torches, but no oil with them. The prudent took oil in their vessels with their torches.

Is it true that the Jewish remnant at the end of the age could have oil in their vessels? They will only have such an anointing when the Lord Jesus comes and sheds the Spirit on them. Oil symbolically means the power of the Holy Spirit. It is not merely the washing by the Spirit, however vital: the Jewish remnant will have this. They will be cleansed in the heart by the Word. The Jewish disciples who will be found at the end of the age do not receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit till the Lord appears. They wait for that day. It is only when the kingdom comes that the power of the Holy Spirit will be upon them. They will when converted welcome Him, saying, Blessed be He who comes in Jehovah's name. They then will go through a serious inward process: when they see the Lord Jesus, they mourn as for an only Son. They have a fountain opened in Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness, but the power of the Holy Spirit will be given only after they have seen the Lord. The Christian receives the oil or anointing from the Holy One while the Lord is unseen and on high.

Again, with the Jew there is no time when, as we see in these virgins, a class goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. The Jewish disciples will not disappear from Jerusalem until the idol is set up and the great tribulation is at hand. Then they flee from the enemy's power and its dread consequences from God. It is a flight from the overflowing scourge in retribution and judgment for the people's iniquity. It is no going forth to meet the Bridegroom in joyful hope as here.

The Christian has another course and hope altogether. Whether it be light or dark, the Christian goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. What is the original hope of the Christian? It is our object and calling revealed in, from and for heaven. That object is Christ, the blessed One whose grace has been proven and whose coming is awaited. Hence, he goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. The Jewish remnant rather expect to see the Lord coming to deliver them by putting down their enemies. As Christ ascended, so the Christian waits to be caught up out of the world; the Jewish saint waits for the Lord to come judicially into the world, which also is our later expectation. The parable speaks solely of the Christian and in no way refers to the Jewish remnant.

We shall see other proofs of this. It is said that the wise took oil in their vessels: the foolish took no oil. The best blessings we have are those which God confers on His children, on the body of Christ — on all those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, who rest on Christ and His redemption. These are the persons spoken of as wise. The Holy Spirit is the divine spring for sustaining testimony as well as the divine power for understanding the Word of God and for communion with the Father and the Son.

The foolish virgins never had oil in their vessels. Some ask how they can have had their torches burning. The answer is easy. They could light the torch: there is no mystery about that. The foolish virgins were not real Christians. The weakest Christian as well as the strongest has the oil. The apostle John so tells not the father nor the young men, but the babes, the little children. He tells the feeblest that they have an anointing from the Holy One. Thus, those who had no oil could not be Christians, in any real, full or divine sense of the name. They were strangers to the Lord's grace.

If you have Christ, if you know the blood of sprinkling, if you rest on a crucified and risen Savior, you have the oil in your vessels. You are not one of the foolish virgins. The foolish lived a life of religious levity, not necessarily hypocritical, but of self-deception, ignoring God and His grace. Consequently, not having the Spirit of Christ, they were none of His.

We often think of the early Christians with their great advantages, with many of the Scriptures applying to them fully, while we can only get the principle of them. But your attention is called here to the fact that there are other Scriptures which apply more emphatically to us now. There is thus what one may call a divine compensation. We can only take the general spirit of what was said to the Corinthians. For instance, they had the gift of tongues and other miraculous powers among them, while we have not. Alas! wherever there are now pretensions to sign gifts, their falsity or worse is soon found out.

The fact is that God, for the wisest reasons, has not been pleased to continue these miraculous powers. The

present condition of the Church makes it a moral impossibility for God to presently bestow these extraordinary virtues. If the Lord were to restore them now, one might ask, Where? Most people would begin with themselves. Were the Lord to confer these powers upon the various sects of Christendom, it would be putting His seal of approval upon what His Word says is wrong. How could He thus contradict Himself? How could He thus sanction the broken fragments of His house or put honor upon its fallen condition? Without this we still are ready to be self-satisfied. We are too prone to think more highly of ourselves than we ought, and the Lord will not help us to be more so.

He, however, has left what is infinitely better: He continues everything due to Christ. He has taken away nothing needful for edification [building up]. He still gives peace and joy in believing. Now as of old He puts this inward power in the Church, but He once marked it with a brilliant signature before the world. Those who look for the restoration of these powers do not understand what befits our fallen condition. It is morally important for the Christian to know what the Church was at first and what it is now, and to grieve before God at the difference. What sympathy ought there to be with the Christian who is not a mourner because of the state of the Church? It is well to have joy in the Lord, but we should be humbled about ourselves and the Church. Ought we not for the Lord's sake to feel deeply the actual condition of ruin?

In the parable the Lord points out the failure from the original calling. “While the bridegroom tarried, they all nodded and went asleep.” What a state of departure, resulting from forgetfulness of the Lord's return! It was

a general and total insensibility to the blessed hope. When sleepy, they happily turned in here or there to rest. They no longer went forth to meet the Bridegroom. The wise who had the oil in their vessels slept like the foolish who had none.

Mark another thing. It is midnight, and there was a cry made, “Behold, the bridegroom, go forth to meet him.” Has this been fulfilled? It is being fulfilled now. It is a cry made by divine grace. No sign appeared, no outward warning, no seeing of a prophecy accomplished, as for the Jewish remnant in chapter 24. God works in us invisibly by His Word and Spirit. The Lord intervenes to break the long slumbering condition of Christendom for both the wise and the foolish.

There have been times when men were impressed with the fear that judgment-day was coming. They yielded to sore panic at the cry that “the end of the world” was at hand. In the year 600 they were sure it would be then. But time passed on, and the end of the world did not come. They slumbered again. Then, in the year 1000 there was yet greater alarm all over western Christendom. The clergy took advantage of this and got the barons and people to give their gold and their labor, lands and possessions to build grand cathedrals and religious houses, some of which exist to the present day. This fear passed away when the end of the world did not come. Then followed a long and deep slumber.

In past ages there was alarm, sometimes to the utmost degree. This state is represented in the mediaeval hymn or dirge, “Dies Irae,” the extreme expression of Catholic terror. Such was the feeling of the middle ages. Since then, Protestants have tried to get power into their

hands. But this means seizing the earth at the present, not quitting all to meet Christ.

The momentous fact is that two spiritual characteristics, distinct from ancient or mediaeval or modern views, mark off truth from error as to this. Are we not to be humbled because of the evil that has been done in Christendom? Are we not practically to take our stand on what was the Lord's will from the first? If the Lord at the outset called all Christians to go out to meet Him, they always should cherish this as their calling and joy. The consequence of a revival of the Christian hope of meeting the Lord is resumption of the original position of going forth to meet the Bridegroom. How could believers continue in what they know to be false and unscriptural, if they look for the Lord to come back any day? Thus the practical effect is immediate and immense where heart and conscience are true to Him. Compare Luke 12:35-37 for the proper moral posture.

Awe-stricken, the foolish virgins come to the wise, saying, “Give us of your oil,” but this is beyond what the Christian can do. The wise bid them “Go, buy oil for yourselves.” There is One who sells, but freely, without money and without price: to buy even from an apostle is fatal. The cry was given to revive the hope: it also had the effect of recalling to the original and only right attitude of the saints toward Christ. It was enough to sever the wise from the foolish, as ones alone ready to act accordingly. It was too late for the foolish: who but One could give what they wanted?

All the machinery of religion does not change people's state or suppose real renewal. The decking of ecclesiastical buildings, the costumes of clergymen, the

modern taste for church music, simply show that the foolish virgins are at work. They are not in a fit state to meet the Lord, and fear it themselves. The consequence, then, of this midnight cry is that a double activity is going on. The Lord is awakening those who know Himself and are wise by His grace, to go forth to meet the Bridegroom. The others, if indirectly, are also powerfully but in their own way affected by the cry, but its effects do not rise above nature and the earth.

Utterly ignorant of the grace of God, they are trying to make up by “earnestness.” They do not know that they are far from God, dead in trespasses and sins: their superstitious trust in religious forms such as baptismal regeneration blind them. So they think, or hope, that being “earnest” they may somehow or other get right at last. What delusion! If you ask them whether their sins are blotted out and if they are saved by grace, they count it presumption. They are as ignorant of the true power and privilege of redemption as the heathen or the Jew. They have no Spirit-taught certainty that the Son of man came down to save the lost.

As sinners, we need a Savior and a divine salvation; as saints, let us seek a calm but complete devotedness to the name, word, and work of the Lord Jesus. But man prefers his own works. To win the world he finds that pictorial representations of Christian facts or forms act most on the masses and attract the light, sentimental, despairing and even profane. Individuals in the midst of such religion may use a certain measure of the gospel to win people, but they subject Christ Himself to the “church.” But the movement as a whole is just the activity of the foolish virgins who do not have the oil and in vain try to get it as best they can.

The Bridegroom finally comes, and “they who were ready went in to the marriage, and the door was shut.”

Afterwards come the foolish virgins. Now they cry, but it is with horror and despair. Their religious energy is seen to be of the old man. In agony they say, “Lord, Lord, open to us.” But the Lord of peace, the Giver of life and glory, can only tell them, “I know you not.” This is not said to faulty believers. It is said to the foolish virgins who had no oil — to those who bore the name of the Lord, but did not have the Spirit of Christ. “Watch, therefore,” He says, “for ye know neither the day nor the hour.”

There is no authority for what follows in the KJV: “wherein the Son of man cometh.” Copyists added the clause from Matthew 24:42 and brought in the sense of the coming Judge. But this is incongruous with what the Lord here urges, which is the delight of going forth to meet Him the Bridegroom. Man as such must be judged: all the guilty tribes mourn before the Son of man. But the calling and hope of the Christian is filled with other and joyous expectations in spite of their unfaithfulness during the night while He tarried, for all slumbered and slept.

This middle parable is a similitude of the kingdom of the heavens. Here only is found a dispensational view of the state of things among those professedly Christ's on earth while He is on high. Here accordingly, the constant expectation of those who took the place of entering into the interests of His love is treated, with the issue at the end for such as were “foolish” and had no share in the anointing of the Spirit, for this alone could enable any to be “ready” to go in with Christ to the

marriage. The “then” of the comparison (Matt. 25:1), when judgment is executed on the evil servant of Matthew 24, carries us up to the foolish virgins shut out and disowned by Him: a complete proof that they were not saints. Indeed, the theory that any member of Christ's body will be left behind when He comes to receive His own to Himself and translate them to the Father's house, is opposed to the clearest testimony of Scripture, and unworthy of a spiritual mind. Think of Christ's body without an ear or an eye or a finger or a toe — the Bridge of the Lamb mutilated and deformed in glory! “They who are Christ's as His coming,” not some who have some external mark or believe some subordinate truth, will be raised to share the kingdom when He reigns and to be with Him before the kingdom and during it and after it. All such will have His presence and love in a glory deeper and higher. The scheme that denies this revealed certainty as in John 17:24, Romans 5:17, 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (last clause) and Revelation 22:5 is not only anti-scriptural but repulsive and destructive of all sound judgment and of the best affections.

The Third Parable (The Talents)

In the third parable we do not have the collective responsibility so strikingly depicted from other objects and attaching to the Bridegroom's coming, as in the second, but a kind of pendant on it.

“For [it is] as [if] a man going abroad called his own bondmen and delivered to them his goods. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his several ability, and went his way. Straightway he who received the five talents proceeded

and traded with them, and made other five talents. Likewise also he [who received] the two, and he gained other two. But he who received the one went off and dug in the earth and hid the money of his lord. After a long time the lord of those bondmen cometh and settleth account with them. And he who received the five talents came forward and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst to me five talents: behold, I gained five other talents [besides them]. His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many: enter into the joy of thy lord. And he also who [received] the two talents said, Lord, two talents thou deliveredst to me: behold, I gained other two talents. His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many: enter into the joy of thy lord. And he also who had received the one talent came forward and said, Lord, I knew thee, that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering whence thou didst not scatter; and being afraid I went off and hid thy talent in the earth; behold, thou hast that which is thine. But his lord answering said to him, Wicked and slothful bondman, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not and gather whence I scattered not. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have got mine own with interest. Take away therefore the talent from him and give [it] to him who hath the ten talents. For to every one who hath shall be given, and he shall be in abundance, but from him who hath not, even what he hath shall be taken away [from him]. And cast out the useless bondman into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (vv. 14-30).

Here it is the Lord working by diversity of gifts. As He is sovereign, so confidence in Him is what severs the “good and faithful” bondmen from the wicked and slothful one, as it was in Matthew 24, a question of prudent or wise fidelity. Zeal according to that confidence was followed by blessing and fruit. Here we have marked variety and individual responsibility in faith, in contrast with unbelief and blindness to grace. When we know Christ (and the unprofitable bondman professed this) such unbelief is profound wickedness, and none in general worse than with such a nominal Christian. When confidence in Him is wanting, all is wrong. It may be shown in fear to use what He had given for profit. Had he truly known the Lord, he would have served Him gladly, especially as he had a gift of power. He thus was judged according to his distrust and the falsehood which unbelief readily yields to. Unbelief receives what flesh says, according to what the evil heart suggests when it listens to Satan's lie.

The Lord deals with the wicked man as his slander deserved. While those who work on in confidence of His grace enter into the joy of their Lord, those who would not work in distrust of Him, shall be consigned to the outer darkness with all its horrors and misery. Bliss with Christ is beyond rewards, though this too has an important place.

The Parable of the Ten Pounds (or, Minas) in Luke 19:12-27 is also instructive. It is unique to his Gospel and was given before the Lord's last visit to Jerusalem, whereas that of the Talents was given when the visit was drawing to a close. In Luke there is the same gift entrusted to each of the servants, and their responsibility and right use in some was strongly in

evidence, yet to have authority over so many cities is the reward of the Kingdom, not entrance into their Lord's joy. But how profound the mistake to set a place of outward honor above sharing the Lord's joy with Himself! The good and faithful also will receive that, both being in the Kingdom. There is responsibility in active service.

If the faithful and wise servant, contrasted with “that evil servant,” set forth the general place in the house, whether faithful or the contrary, the parable of the Talents shows us those who trade with the goods of Christ, and that blessing in this work turns on confidence in Him and His grace.

Chapter 3 - The Gentile Portion

Matthew 25:31-46

This is the third and concluding section of the Lord's prophetic word on the mount. No part of it has been less understood, yet it is clearly defined as distinct from the other two by internal marks which ought to have carried conviction to every believer. But such has been the fate of Scripture, not that God's Word fails in plainness of speech and certainty of meaning, but because it crosses man's will. Man therefore seeks to interpret it according to his own thoughts. Every Scripture is for us, and being of God, is also profitable for man, but it is not all about us. We can only learn from itself concerning whom it speaks.

1. We have had a believing Jewish remnant, but without the full privileges of Christians, as the Lord addressed those Jewish disciples who then represented it down to the end of the age. Then He appears as the Son of man

and in that day delivers not only such, but all the elect of the nation, the “all Israel that shall be saved,” immediately after unparalleled tribulation.

2. Then (without any allusion to Judaea, the city, the temple or any association local or temporal) the discourse takes up what applies directly and exclusively to the Christian profession, sound and unsound, in the three intermediate parables which were therefore couched in general terms. Here “the Son of man” disappears according to the overwhelming testimony of the best manuscripts of Matthew 25:13.

3. Only the Gentiles remained. Every reader is aware that the mass of mankind is devoted to idols and impostures and has to this day resisted the Christian testimony. But the Lord had intimated in the first part (Matt. 24:14) that “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the habitable world2 for a witness to all the nations, and then shall the end come.” Here He lets us know the fruit of this preaching by the believing Jews of that day, as its place intimates, just before the ends comes.

Hence the last section has its suited uniqueness which differentiates it from both the preceding ones. The specific ground for the King's decision turns on preaching the glad news of the kingdom which only came through His brethren (evidently converted Jews) before “the end,” and is here shown to result among all the nations in some heeding the message and in others despising it. It is therefore unique in its circumstances as a whole; though no principle is involved which cannot be justified from other Scriptures.

“But when the Son of man shall have come in His glory and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit down upon His throne of glory, and all the nations shall be gathered before Him; and He shall separate them from one another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats (or, kids); and He will set the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to those on His right, Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the world's foundation. For I was hungry, and ye gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee hungering and fed Thee; or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? and when saw we Thee a stranger and took Thee in; or naked, and clothed Thee? and when saw we Thee sick or in prison and came unto Thee? And the King answering shall say to them, Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] to one of the least of these My brethren, ye did [it] to Me. Then shall He say also to those on the left, Go from Me, accursed, into the everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and ye gave Me not to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me not to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in; naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited Me not. Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and ministered not to Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of these least, ye did [it] not to Me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life everlasting” (Matt. 25:31-46).

The Son of man will have already come. His war-judgments are over — not only what He executed by the appearing of His presence (2 Thess. 2:8), but when He put Himself at the head of His people as in Isaiah 53, Ezekiel 38, Ezekiel 39, Micah 6 and Zechariah 14.

Judgment Of The Nations

Now the “King” (found here only) enters on the sessional judgment of His throne, before which all the nations must appear, for then all the peoples, nations and languages must serve Him. It is part of that judgment of the living and of the habitable earth by the risen Man whom God appointed. The judgment of living man on the earth, in the midst of his busy, selfish, sordid, and sinful life was much pressed by the Lord and the apostles, as it is in Old and New Testament prophecy, but it has been lost to the living faith even of saints in Christendom. Yet even the creeds confess it, however little it was realized when they were written. As the Jews let slip the judgment of the dead, so Christendom practically forgets the judgment of the living. Here we have judgment applied by the Son of man judicially when He enters on the exercise of His world-kingdom. Hence it is a question of people at large, not Jews and of course not Christians, but of “all the nations” when the Lord is come and sits on the throne of His glory.

This is not “the judgment at the great white throne.” Then the earth and the heaven flee from His gaze and no place is found for them. The “the dead,” the great and the small, stand before the throne. Then “the dead” (none else are spoken of) are judged according to their works out of the record of all done in the body, the

book of life sealing it by its silence. This white throne judgment is not the coming of the Son of man to reign over the earth (as in Matthew), for the nations are destroyed and the earth fled and even the heavens. On the contrary, Matthew shows the Son of man come to the earth and all the nations gathered before Him. Here they are all living, to whom alone “nations” could apply; there, the wicked dead alone are indeed, for the righteous dead had been raised long before for the first resurrection. After that, no righteous ones ever die.

In the judgment of all the nations there is no such scrutiny as Romans 2 speaks of for the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by our Lord Jesus before the great white throne. Then it will be that as many as sinned without law shall also perish without law and as many as sinned under law shall be judged by law. Still more terrible will be the doom of those who rejected the gospel or even neglected so great salvation, as other Scriptures declare.

But here it is a simple and single issue which applies only to that living generation of all the nations: how did you treat the King's messengers when they preached this gospel of the kingdom before the end came? The end was now come. The test was an open undeniable fact, but it proved whether they had or had not faith in the coming King. Those who honored the heralds of the kingdom showed their faith by their works, and likewise those who despised them manifested their unbelief. The test was both just and gracious. The King pronounced accordingly. The form was new, as were the circumstances, but the foundation is the same for all the objects of God's mercy on the one hand, and for the objects of wrath on the other. So it was before the

deluge, so it will be when the Son of man on His throne of glory on earth shall deal with all the nations. Apart from faith it is impossible to be acceptable, for he who approached God must believe that He is, and becomes a rewarder of those who seek Him out.

So it will be with the blessed of these nations. Their conduct to those who preached the coming kingdom evidenced their faith. The King's grace accepted to their astonishment what they did to His brethren, even to the least, as done to Himself. The trials and sufferings of these “brethren” gave the Gentiles occasion to show their faith working by love, or to show the total absence of it. Rahab the harlot likewise was justified by works when she received the messengers, but her faith is as carefully stated by the apostle Paul: without faith her works would have been evil. She rightly judged that Jehovah and His people were above her king and country. This was a turning point for her; not then only, but to eternity. So it was with the sheep; and the sad reverse was no less true for the goats.

There is another element overlooked by those who confound Matthew 25:31-46 with Revelation 20:11-15. In the judgment of the dead only one class is stated — the dead who were not in the resurrection of the just. Hence only the unjust appear, and they are judged according to their works in all their life. Here appear not only the sheep and the goats, but the King's brethren, a third and highly honored class, none of them dead or risen, but all alive. Can there be a more striking contrast? The resurrection-state must exclude what we find herein. With the judgment of the living, and in particular of “all the nations,” all here is harmonious. At the end “of the age” He comes; at the end “of the world”

He does not. There is then no world to come to. It is all gone, to appear afterwards made new for eternity.

The decision is final. The decision of Revelation 20 also is final. But the one is at the beginning of the thousand years' reign, and the other at its end.

The righteous, though they had faith in the kingdom and therefore treated its preachers as became the truth, were evidently poorly instructed. We see how little their intelligence rose above that of their unbelieving countrymen. But their heart was right by grace, as the King knew perfectly, who from the first separated these to the right and the others to the left. He allowed this ignorance to come out that He might give to all a profound lesson never to be forgotten. This is quite compatible with the righteous as alive in their natural bodies. But is such lack of intelligence consistent with the risen condition? When that which is perfect is come (and it surely comes at the resurrection of the just), that which is in part shall be done away. This was not at all the state as yet of these sheep, the righteous Gentiles; and the King only communicates to them before His throne what every Christian may be assumed now to know, with much more quite beyond them. Yet was the kingdom prepared for these, as for the righteous generally, from the world's foundation.

Noticed also that the everlasting fire to which the unbelieving Gentiles of that epoch are consigned is said to have been “prepared for the devil and his angels,” not for the goats, except that they fitted themselves for it by their evil ways. Compare also Romans 9:22. The devil and his angels were not yet cast into the lake of fire. This will only be after Satan's last effort at the end of the

Millennium, as Revelation 20:10 tells us. But here the goats have now their portion, as the Beast and the False Prophet had a little before them, as we read in Revelation 20, and that while alive too.

It must be borne in mind that stupendous events had just taken place before all the nations are gathered here; facts all-important for understanding the position. The vast hosts of the west will have been destroyed from above at a stroke when the Beast and the False Prophet meet their doom. Soon after the eastern hordes led by the Assyrian of the prophets (Daniel's king of the north) will have been dissipated like the chaff. Edom will have met its final judgment (Isa. 63) and so will Gog with his numerous allies (Ezek. 38-39). The Jews and Christendom will have been judged, as we see in this discourse. Hence “all the nations” here summoned are composed of what remains after these other executions of judgment. From the nature of the case, they must needs be exclusively living people who were placed under the responsibility of having heard “this gospel of the kingdom” preached by God-fearing Jews, whom the Lord sent for that express purpose before the end come.

This alone explains the unique criterion by which “the righteous” were marked off from their unbelieving fellows. It was His grace that blessed those who received these glad tidings, and now they hear of their blessed portion from the lips of the King. They were as amazed to learn His estimate of their faith working by love, as the hardened were to meet their awful end. We have no reason to believe that either the sheep or the goats ever heard the full gospel of God such as was preached by the Christian witnesses, or that the converted Jews knew it as we do. We must leave room

for the sovereign ways of God, dealing variously in His wisdom with the future as with the past. But for every sinful person there must be faith for eternal life, and faith is from a report and the report through God's Word. Thus only can any fallen person be brought into living relation with Him. The measure has differed greatly at different times, as it will, but the principle is the same. This of course applies only to those who hear.

Particularly note that there is no allusion to resurrection here for either “the righteous” or “the accursed.” On both sides they were Gentiles living in their natural bodies, for they are expressly said to be “all the nations” when they were gathered before the glorious throne of the Son of man.

He had said that this gospel of the kingdom should go forth “in all the habitable world for a witness to all the nations.” Some had shown, not merely benevolence or self denial or moral excellence in any marked degree, but love in varied ways to the servants who preached in the King's name the same truth which He had preached at the beginning of His public ministry. But it was faith which wrought in their love. If the King and His coming Kingdom only had been a myth in their eyes, they would have at least ignored His messengers as impostors. They believed the message to be of God and therefore treated its preachers with kindness, and are to enjoy the gracious result. It was not good done even to the sheep, but specifically to “My brethren,” even the least of them.

So the King puts the difference of the two classes on the only ground that could apply to “all the nations” then before His earthly throne, after such a preaching as had by grace reached them before the end. Now it had come:

the new age had begun. The King had done what none else could: He separated them all individually and with unfailing discernment. Instead of their giving account to Him, He recounts to them why He set some on His right and some on the left. It turned on faith that it might be according to grace, or sadly, on unbelief where there was no grace, but only self. Hence He said to the wondering righteous, “Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it to Me.” How awful on the other hand for the unjust to hear, in answer to their more hurried summary, “Inasmuch as ye did[it] not to one of these least, neither did ye [it] to Me.”

Thus all rests on Christ, though His grace makes the most of what to others might seem trivial. The faith working by love in the one class, and the utter unconcern of the other, laid bare respectively their fitness or unfitness for inheriting the kingdom. In all cases of saints, works are the evidence, faith of the Word the instrument, Christ's work the ground, and God's grace the source.

The King does not call them adopted sons, as is the portion of Christians (Gal. 3:26) nor do they exhibit the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which is characteristic of Christians. He calls them “blessed” of His Father, but does not say “your Father” for this was not their privilege to know, as it is ours. Nor does He speak of the blessings according to God's counsels for us in the heavenlies, to which He chose us in Christ before the world's foundation. The King bade them inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the world's foundation. They are elect and born of God, as all saints must be, but they do not reign with Christ in that day, any more than even “His brethren” among the Jews who survived

the tribulation crisis before the kingdom, whereas those slain for His name at the “time of the end” will be raised to reign with Him as shown in Revelation 20:4. But those saved of Gentiles like the saved of Israel will have a distinctive place of honor over those born during the millennial reign, as we may gather from Revelation 7 and 14. As elect Jews will have known “flesh saved” from the tribulation which is to befall the rebellious people, so elect Gentiles emerge out of “the great tribulation,” distinguished from the Church which the Lord declares He will keep out of the hour of trial that is about to come on the whole habitable world to try those who dwell on the earth (Rev. 3:10).

During the many years that precede this extraordinary mission to all the habitable world, the ground of statement as stated in Romans 2:12 is for mankind generally wholly different. There is no respect of persons with God, who will then judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, which can scarce apply to this scene. Hence, while there is a resurrection of life for such as (hearing the word of Jesus and believing God who sent Him) have eternal life, there will be at length also a resurrection of judgment for those who, believing not, produced only evil works. This is the judgment in Revelation 20:11, etc., where all had been dead but were raised and judged according to their works, and are therefore lost. But it is a total contrast with the King's decision about the living Gentiles, to whom His brethren (the converted of the Jews) are to preach before the end, and who will be proved righteous or reprobate as to how they behaved to words the bearers of “this gospel of the kingdom”

Clearly the test here employed by the King suits only the living Gentiles who had treated well or ill His brethren with whom they are confronted, because of their faith or unbelief in the King who pronounces on both. The character is unique and necessarily determined by the brief* mission of “this gospel of the kingdom” before the end. It was in no sense the end of the world, but of the age, when the King had not yet come to reign over the earth. This appraisal of all the Gentiles is when He shall have come in His glory and shall sit on His throne. It will thus be plain that Revelation 20 in the two resurrections exactly agrees with the Lord's discourse in John 5:21-29; while Matthew 25:31-46, though equally true, widely differs from both.

We may see an interesting link between Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 25:40,45. “His brethren” were those who at the time of the end carried “this gospel of the kingdom” to all the nations, which are blessed or cursed by the King's decree according to their behavior toward those who thus and then brought the word of God. It was not brethren of the intervening Christian character, but of the converted Jews to the Gentiles. And as these brethren are thus honored by the King, so are the Gentiles blessed who received and treated them well, the Son of man being come and reigning over both. It is the age to come, not the judgment of the dead. The ground on which the solemn decision depended fits into no time or circumstances of the Gentiles, except the eventful mission by a future remnant of godly Jews who preach the gospel of the kingdom just before the Son of man comes to enforce and establish it.

Thus we have here a deeply interesting and momentous judgment which the Lord is to execute over all the

nations who only heart “this gospel of the kingdom” before the end comes and He returns to bring in His kingdom. Applied as it often is by the theologians, it enfeebles and darkens what Scripture declares of the judgment before the Great White Throne in Revelation 20. And its own true application is effaced. A gap is thus created in the revelation of God which no other Scripture can fill, while the attempt to fit it into the last judgment after the Millennium is over, and the subsequent destruction of the insurgent rebels, causes nothing but confusion. Give this judgment its place at the beginning of the Millennium a fresh light shines without obstruction.

Chapter 4 - The Future Tribulation

The Christian is to expect suffering, scorn, injury, persecution and tribulation of every sort in and from the world, as that grace has given him the richest privileges in Christ. “These things I have spoken to you,” says our Lord, “that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye have (not merely “ye shall have”) tribulation, but be of good courage; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Also in Acts 14:22, for establishing the disciples and exhorting them to abide in the faith, the word is that “through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.” So the great apostle could say on the one hand, “I ask that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory” (Eph. 3:13) and on the other, “to you it was granted in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which ye saw in me and now hear of in me” (Phil. 1:29, 30). “Faithful the word [is], for it we died with [Him], we shall also live together, if we endure

we shall also reign together" (2 Tim. 2:11, 12). We may not all be called to suffer for Him, but if we do not suffer with Him, can we look to be glorified together? (Rom. 8:17). It is here that we differ essentially from the saints born in the millennial age who are reigned over instead of reigning with Christ.

Who then are the saints who pass through and come out of the great tribulation? The answer can only be given by the light God has given us in the prophetic word. The answer is plain, not only on the positive side, but even on the negative.

First, and chiefly, the Old Testament is explicit that "at the time of the end," when "Michael shall stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy (Daniel's) people," "there shall be a time of trouble (or, tribulation) such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." It will far exceed even what accompanied the idolatrous effort of Antiochus Epiphanes of whom Daniel 11:31-32 speaks. We do hear of an "abomination that maketh desolate" then set up, but not of the tribulation without parallel which Daniel 12 predicts for the end when the abomination that maketh desolate will be set up again and for the last time. Here it is incontestable that we hear only of Daniel's people, the Jews, who "at that time shall be delivered, everyone who shall be found written in the book" — the future elect and godly remnant.*

In Matthew 24 our Lord refers to this abomination standing in a holy place for those in Judaea to flee to the mountains, and to the great trouble that is to follow, in even stronger terms than used by Daniel. The context is just as plain and certain as that of Daniel. The Lord also

contemplates Jewish disciples whom He will deliver by appearing in glory as the Son of man to the discomfort of their enemies, but also to the discriminating judgment of Israel. His elect, not merely of the Jews (v. 22), but of His entire people Israel (v. 31), shall be gathered together from the four winds (where are still scattered these of the ten tribes undiscerned), from one end of the heavens to the other. The Lord addresses His disciples here in a personal way, which does not apply to the intermediate part, still less to what He tells us of “all the nations” in Matthew 25:31-46.

The same fact is observed in Mark 13 which give sin substance the first section of our Lord's prophecy as in Matthew's Gospel, but with those characteristic additions of Mark on the service of His name. See verses 9-12 and 34. But there is no difference in the relevant intimation that in the future crisis only “those in Judaea” are concerned and that it is a question here of “flesh” being saved and of “this generation,” etc., not of resurrection and rapture on high. Jewish disciples only are in question, and deliverance coming down to the earth in displayed power and glory, instead of saints caught up by the Lord and to be with Him as in 1 Thessalonians 4.

Luke 21:20-24 contains unique truth not found in Matthew or Mark — an explicit prediction of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem and resulting great distress upon the land and upon this people. Only Luke mentions their being led captive into all the nations as also the remarkable and still continued sentence of Jerusalem to be trodden down by Gentiles until their assigned times be fulfilled. He speaks of “days of vengeance” as indeed they were then, and he leaves

room for more at the close when he speaks of distress of nations and men fainting for fear. This is in character with the design of the third Gospel which entirely omits the abomination of desolation and the unequalled tribulation, so prominent in the two preceding Gospels. From verse 25 Luke coalesces with his predecessors in what belongs to the time of the end. Verses 20-24 are special to him.

Secondly, Revelation 7:9-17 presents the vision of a great crowd which none could number (distinguished from the 144,000 sealed out of the twelve tribes of Israel). The crowd was out of every nation and of tribes and peoples and tongues. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb. They have a wholly different position from the crowned and enthroned elders and the four living creatures; so much so that one of the elders explains to the prophet who they are and from where they came. “And he said to me, These are they who come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Here we have clear evidence that grace will deliver a vast crowd of believing Gentiles out of “the great tribulation” at the time of the end. They are therefore, as a special gathering out at the close, distinct from those heavenly saints of all times symbolized in the same scene.

The extreme severity of the future tribulation will fall in and round Jerusalem, but there is no reason to doubt that it awaits all nations, if in lesser measure. It is “the great tribulation,” perhaps implied in Luke's description of “distress of nations” at that very time. Gentile saints, as well as Jews, will emerge from it in that day, not forming one body as now in the Church, but expressly

distinct from it and from one another, as Revelation 7 plainly attests.

Thirdly, there is the promise, most appropriate to the overcomers of the church in Philadelphia (Rev. 3:10), though surely not for them exclusively, “Because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I also will keep thee (not during, but) out of the hour of trial that is about to come upon the whole habitable earth, to try those who dwell upon the earth.” That hour may include more than “the great tribulation”: no intelligent Christian thinks it covers less. The promise is to keep the faithful, the Christian saints, out of that hour. The refuge is not simply geographical because that hour of trial will befall the whole habitable world. The heavenly saints (1 Cor. 15:43) will be caught up before that crisis comes, which is retributive for the lawlessness of the Jews and the Gentiles — a wholly different kind of trouble from what is our portion as Christians.

There is no evidence that the Church, the Christian body, will pass through the great coming tribulation before this age ends. The proof-texts concerning that time apply expressly and exclusively to Jews and Gentiles, with the striking exemption from that hour of those who keep the patience of Christ. Though pledged to the Philadelphian overcomers, no prophetically intelligent saint would limit Revelation 3:10 to such, any more than other words of comfort similarly promised to the various seven churches.

Some argue that because all Scripture is for us, for our edification and use, it is therefore about us. Any serious consideration must assuredly shatter such an assumption. Is it then left to uncertainty or guesswork?

In no way. Nor is time the great interpreter, or history: it is the Holy Spirit. Inasmuch as He inspired to write it, so does He give understanding of God's mind to those who wait in dependence on the Lord for it. Therefore, weigh well not only the text but the context, and all other Scriptures converging on the same point.

Suffering for righteousness' sake and yet more for Christ's name is a high privilege. God has given it in the fullest measure to the members of Christ, though in spirit to all saints from the beginning. Our Lord was here as in all else supreme, and as He said, The disciple is not above his Master, but every one perfected shall be as his Master. Yes, adds the great apostle Paul, and all who will live piously in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted. Hence the faithful, not of the world as Christ is not, should be prepared for persecution beyond all, throughout their pilgrimage.

But the future tribulation has a very different source and character. In its most terrible form it will be a penal infliction of God on the consummation of Jewish apostasy when the abomination of desolation is set up in the holy place. Those who rejected and by hand of lawless men crucified their own Messiah, the Son of God, will worship the Antichrist in the temple of God, showing that he himself is God. If without parallel for severity of judicial woe, it is because of his unparalleled audacity of lawlessness, and Satan's power in the Beast of the west joining the False Prophet of the east in contempt of Jehovah and His Christ. What has this specific crisis to do with our being granted to suffer for Christ's sake?

Indeed the Lord Jesus (instead of calling on the godly Jews to stay and suffer when God is thus visiting His guilty people, because of their final apostasy and their bowing down to the man of sin as the true God in His house) bids the godly remnant to immediately flee, regardless even of clothes or anything else, to save their lives. So in the minor case of the days of vengeance that befell Jerusalem when the Lord's murderers were destroyed and their city burnt, it was no question of suffering as a privilege, but of a retributive dealing of God. The Lord therefore directed those who heeded His words to escape when they saw Jerusalem surrounded by armies.

It will be a short time of unexampled trial. We also know that there will be martyrdom once more, and a later group answering to a former one, as Revelation 20:4 concisely assures us. Those who died for rejecting the Beast, like the earlier faithful (cf. Rev. 6:9-11), shall rise in the blessed resurrection and reign with Christ. Those whose lives were spared shall enjoy the kingdom under Christ. Daniel (Dan. 7:18, 27) had already pointed out the distinction of the saints of the high places (or, the heavenlies) from “the people” of those saints: the one receiving the kingdom in an absolute way and possessing the kingdom for ever; the other having simply the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdom “under the whole heaven” given to them. They both consist of godly Jews with converted Gentiles at the time of the end, but there is no union in one body like the Church, which at this time of the completion of the age, is only seen symbolically and on high.

1 It is a strange fact, however, that two uncial MSS. (DX), eight cursives, several ancient versions, including

the Itala and Vulgate, and fathers Greek and Latin endorse this addition, and represent the virgins as going to meet the "Bridegroom and the Bride." Of course, it is a mere gloss. Had a bride been named, it would have detracted from the perfect finish of the parable and brought in confusion, as Christians real or in name are meant by the ten who go forth to meet the Lord.

2 Even those who try to limit "the inhabited world" to the Roman Empire are obliged here to abandon it; for they admit that at this very time the Beast and the False Prophet will have banished it hence. We can understand the term employed by the Romans in pride of power, and so cited in scripture as in profane historians, and loosely used by the speakers in Acts 17:6, Acts 24:5. But it is not possible so to confine it in Acts 17:31, Rom. 10:18, Heb 1:6, Rev. 3:10, Rev. 16:14, any more than in Matt. 24:14. Compare also Matt. 4:8 with Luke 4:5.

Christ Washing the Feet of the Disciples

John 13:1-10

Our Lord had terminated all question of testimony to man whether to the Jews or to the world. He now addresses Himself to His own in the world, the abiding objects of His unwavering love, as just about to leave this world for that place which suits His essential nature, as well as the glory destined Him by the Father. Accordingly our Lord, as thus going to heaven (new to Him as man), would prove His if possible increasing love to them, fully knowing what the enemy would effect through the wickedness of one of their number, as well as through the humbling sin of another. Hence He proceeds to give a visible sign of His new care which they would understand later. It was the needed service of love that He would carry on for them, when Himself out of this world and themselves in it; a service as real as any that He had ever done for them while He was in this world, and if possible, more important than any they had yet experienced. For He was not yet lifted up. But this ministration of His grace was also connected with His own portion in heaven. Accordingly it was to give them part with Him above outside the world. It was not divine goodness meeting them in the world, nor yet on the cross where God had to be glorified even as to sin. But as He was leaving the world for heaven whence He came, He would associate them with Himself where He was going. He was about to pass, though Lord of all, into the presence of God His Father in heaven, but would manifest Himself the servant of them all, even to the

washing of their feet soiled in walking here below. The point therefore, was not here as on the cross suffering for their sins as sinners, but the service of love for saints, to fit them for having communion with Him, by cleansing them from defilements by the way before they join Him in that heavenly scene to which He was going at once. Such is the meaning suggested by the washing of the disciples' feet. In short, it is the word of God applied by the Holy Ghost, to deal with all that unfits for fellowship with the Father while Christ is above. It is His advocacy, to which the Holy Ghost answers here. Christ intercedes for us on high as identified with our every need here below, and the Holy Ghost meanwhile carrying it on by the work applied to us here to purify one by restoring him to the communion interrupted by a sin.

Ver. 10 explains the case clearly: "He that is bathed needeth not wash save his feet, but is wholly clean." There the initial bathing, the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which is never repeated. But there is the need of having the feet washed whenever defiled by the way. Neither refer to blood but to water, indispensable as it is to be washed from our sins by Christ's blood for redemption.

W.K.

Christ the Life - John 14:6

He that spoke these words was the lowliest of men. How then did He come to utter them? Did ever a man since the world began take such a place? No man cometh unto the Father, but by me even as just before He had said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” There was not a word of boasting; it was never the way of Jesus to boast. Transparency was the thing that especially marked Him, and Him alone; and His love was as real as His lowliness. His was a self-sacrificing life continually. As a child it was the same; in the then single fact recorded of Him we have His own words, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” And who was He that so spoke? and what entitled Him so to speak? It was not only that in Him was perfect wisdom and perfect goodness, and that He was the truth, but if He were not God (and I use the word in all its strength), how presumptuous His words!

But He was Son as no one else is son. The word of God speaks of many sons, but Jesus is the only-begotten Son of the Father. He became Captain of salvation. Was He a sinful man? He was the Saviour of sinners. How could this be if He were not a divine person? Every one else is a sinful man, every man born into the world; for Adam never had a child till he was fallen. Even Enoch was a sinful man, although in due time translated. Elijah was caught up; but of Jesus it is said that He ascended up. Now, He that ascended first descended; and He that descended is the same also that ascended up, far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. Of whom else could this be true? Of none but the Lord Jesus Himself.

In Christ the full truth broke in. He came not to display the glory that He had with God; this would not at all have met the need of sinners. He who had the glory gave it up; He first emptied Himself, and then humbled Himself. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, to make good the glory of God and the salvation of man. He showed in the world what it was to be here, in the face of all opposition and suffering, only to do God's will; and thus God's will was fully done by a man on the earth, and this not by power, but by obedience in suffering. Adam in Eden was not called to suffer. Jesus was the only holy man that suffered for sin. If you leave out that, you leave out the other grand pillar of the truth, that Jesus is He who was manifest in the flesh. He might have come in divine or in angelic glory, and need not have taken upon Himself the form of a man, by being born of a woman; but then how should the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be? And, further, if He had not, how could there have been salvation for us? It is of all importance to weigh and hold fast this truth, simple as it is. Man is a sinner, away from God, and knows it in his conscience, and owns it when he is brought face to face with God.

It is not the Bible that makes man a guilty sinner; but the Bible is the only key to all, and explains it fully and worthily. This book alone carries conviction for every heart that is willing to bow to God and be saved; but the truth is that people do not want to be saved in God's way. They prefer the full activity of life to be their own, and to enjoy the world as long as they can. They may wish to be saved at the end, but there are many things that they feel unprepared and unwilling to give up yet. They will turn to God on their death-bed. But they feel

that if saved, they must be saved to do the will of God, and not their own will; and, if saved, they are the servants of Christ. But do you want to be Satan's servants? Remember, you cannot be your own master. You must either be the servants of God or the slaves of Satan; for a man who does his own will is the slave of Satan. You may not believe this, but it is true; and a time will come when your own conscience will make you feel the truth of it, and that too when it will be the distressing harbinger of still worse distress; perhaps, in the moment of dying. What a terrible reality to wake up then with the awful words ringing in your ears — Too late, too late, too late! But I bless God that I have the happier task of pressing on you now the way that God has opened in Jesus for you, and the truth that God proclaims to the simplest soul.

Into the midst of this world's activities, when the fourth empire was in its power, came Jesus. How did He treat this book, the Bible? As none other; it was the book of books to Him. Scripture was His food and His weapon always. It was not the New Testament yet, for this was not written then. It was the very part that high and low most try to get rid of. Men say it is the writing first of one man, and then of another, sometimes put together by a third one or more. What folly! How then has it such astonishing unity of purpose and mind? It is madness and impiety for men to speak against the book that Jesus treats as the word of God.

He who raises the dead and quickens, does not (as some think, without love) let men slip unwarned into all superstitions. The true God is a God of active love. Scripture allows no such thing as God not caring for what is going on. But you say, "Does He not allow evil?"

Certainly; He let angels and men fall; but this in both was the fault of the creature only. Have you not all known, at some time or other of your life, a season when you resolved to repent and to do good? How has it turned out? Did you succeed? or have you not proved that you are bad, and can do no good thing? How comes this? Did God make man so? God made the earth and the race without one evil in either; God pronounced every thing to be very good; and evil would have been kept out if man had looked to God. But man fell; and since "the world by wisdom knew not God," the wisdom of the world does not want God. Man wants his own way and will; whereas the glory of one that knows God is to do His will. But how is God's will to be known or done? I am a sinner, know nothing, can do nothing pleasing in His eyes. The Bible read in faith explains, not merely how evil spoilt all, but how Jesus came as the way, the truth, and the life, and how He justifies God in receiving poor sinners. Grace alone can meet the need; and as He came in love to win us, so He died in the fulness of love, to give us a purged conscience, that so, reconciled to God, we might worship and serve Him. If He had left man in rebellion, it would have been a strange proof of love. Where would be grace in giving man food and all things necessary for this life, and then to let him perish for ever at last? But no; He gave His Son that the believer should not perish.

The very least thing that God made bears the stamp of His hand; and not only so, but of His mind, of His beneficent goodness. From the first God looked into man's condition, and graciously met it all, unsought and unexpected, in His grace. He sent His Son, His well-beloved, His only-begotten, the One who thought it not

robbery to be equal with God. This is the One God gave for your salvation. No effort of your own avails. You have neither power nor fitness to get rid of your guilt. Have you not tried? and have you not found out that you cannot? If you have what they call an elastic conscience, you may think that God is not going to be too nice about sin. But such a thought is really a most fatal blow at His holiness and His truth, for He has declared the contrary. But God has done what is far better than slurring over your sins; He spared not His own Son.

And mark the manner of it. The Son became man, the obedient One, the only man who never sought to do his own will. Where was there ever such a sight, such a reality, before? He could say, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me.” The very idea of such obedience was as far from every heart till Jesus came, as was God’s love to lost sinners. Nor this only. Jesus, when asked, “Who art thou?” could answer, “Absolutely what also I say to you “ (John 8:25). Who could ever say this but One? Jesus always was just what He also said. Blessed truth, and how suited for God and for man! He Himself was the truth, the perfect truth, sent down to poor sin-blinded man; so that he has the truth, not only detailed in a book, but embodied in a Person, and this a man in the world tried as nobody ever was. It is everywhere the same truth, and all is perfect harmony with the utmost variety. No doubt there are shades of distinction in many different books of the Bible, but it is surely our ignorance when we find them irreconcilable.

The mere handiwork of God is beyond the wisest of men, and the wisest are precisely those who are most ready to acknowledge their ignorance. The more men really know, the more deeply they feel and own how little they

know. just so with the word of God. What are difficulties to me may not be so to some one more spiritual; and when by faith I see more clearly, the difficulties not only vanish but turn into the strongest confirmation of revealed truth. One person puts everything into its proper place — Christ. If He were not God, He could not bring into relation with God; if not a man, He would have no point of contact with me. Both are necessary for His work. It is He who says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Man feels his weakness, his unworthiness, his unfaithfulness, when he judges himself before God. What life is this that Jesus is? what life did He manifest? Was it the life of Adam? Adam, we read, was made a living soul; but who and what is Christ? A quickening Spirit. “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.” Was it of angels? No; of men. It was not merely for Israel; the pride of the Jew did not like such grace.

But let us go back to a Sabbath-day at Nazareth, when our Lord went into the synagogue, and the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him, and He read those blessed words of Isa. 61, “The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me, because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor,” etc. He declared that this prophecy was that day fulfilled in their ears, stopping short in the middle of our verse 2, the point then accomplishing, as distinct from the future “day of vengeance of our God”; for when He had read so far, He shut the book and sat down, with words of grace to all. Did He speak the truth? A great deal turns on this for your souls. Was He really the One foretold by the Spirit of Jehovah, the One that God the Father had sealed? If so, your salvation turns on Him. Do not say that words of grace are hard. What? hard to be saved by God,

according to the fulness of His mercy in Christ! The same Lord that saves now will be the Judge by-and-by. God “hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained,” the same Jesus whom God hath raised from the dead. It is proof to all. Either you are in Him now, or you must stand before Him then as your judge.

Remember that, when you stand before Him as your judge, there will then be no salvation. He went down into death to bear the judgment of every one that believes on Him. Was not this infinite love? Yes; but it was more, it was righteousness. It was not by power that He met the judgment due to sinners; it was by suffering. He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. This explains the way, certainty, and fulness of salvation, which would be all a myth if He were not God as well as man. There is nothing that binds all the truth together if He be not Emmanuel, God with us. The Jews will by-and-by be gathered in a different way, but it will be faith in the same Person. There is no gospel that is not grounded on Him as the sacrifice, yet a divine Person; for if He were not also a man, He could not reach me. Jesus, then, came and lived a man that He might do the will of God. What was that life? He lived on account of the Father (John 6:57). It showed itself in unwavering subjection and constant obedience. No man ever has capacity for obedience until he becomes a partaker of that life. Without this life no man can please God in the walk of faith now, or stand in the presence of God; therefore it is of the deepest necessity.

“In this was manifested the love of God.” Is it because He gave the law? No; for this brought in nothing but condemnation on guilty man. Although the law was in

itself righteous, at best it made men feel their state. Love was “because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him,” and this brings out the glory of His person. He was the Son of God, above, outside, and beyond all else, both the Increate and the Creator, the eternal Word of God; and the Father would have it known. It was necessary, that the testimony should go forth, if man was to live God-ward and be blessed.

And what was the purpose for which this only-begotten Son was sent? “That we might live through him.” We were hateful, and hating, serving divers lusts and pleasures, disobedient, living to ourselves. It was nothing but sin; whenever we do our own will, we sin. Being born thus, we go on accordingly; and what will be the end of it? God’s glory? or exclusion from Him, eternal punishment? Ah! we want a new life. Where shall we find it? Not in Adam, but in Christ.

Adam only transmitted his own fallen nature; but in Christ we have One who only did His Father’s will, and He is a life-giving Spirit — the Head of a new family. Look thus to Him and live. God declares, that whosoever believes in Him hath everlasting life, and shall be saved. What grace! And this is the sure but the only way. “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

The question, then, resolves itself into this, Do I prefer my own thoughts, or the word of God? Are you now trusting in yourself, or confiding in Him? You ought to know; for if depending on your efforts, you are trusting a most miserable and broken reed. God bids me believe on Him, the only-begotten Son. Is Christ not worthy? Is God not true? He sent His Son into the world for the express

purpose that we who believe might have life. Even supposing I show a desire to read His word, to pray to Him, and to do His will, what is to become of all the evil I have done, and the evil which alas! even as a believer I still feel within, and I may still fall into? For I have within me, that is, in the flesh or old nature, the tendency to pride, vanity, selfishness, self-will, temper, etc. How is a soul to be kept from yielding to these? Have you the power because you are converted? Conversion means the turning to God in your heart, mind, and ways, instead of to yourself. But what is to be done with these evil things, not only before, but after conversion, if we fall at times into them? The new life shows itself in dependence on God; and is there anything more suited to man than to look up to God? But with a bad conscience, how can one do so? In the misery of such a state, one is glad of anything that shuts out God — that keeps one from thinking of oneself and of Him.

But the grace of God has provided a remedy in the blood of Christ. The atoning work is done; but the truth is that naturally people do not want to be saved all at once. They would like to go on with the world a little longer. How deeply we need the life of Christ, in order that we may live to God, just as much as His death that our sins may be blotted out! If it were your death for your sins, you were lost for ever; if His, and you believe in Him, how blessed! He, the Eternal Life, came to die atoningly; He became a man in order that He might die for our sins. “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” He became a man, not only that I might partake of this life, eternal life in Him, but that He might die to take away my sins. It is God’s testimony about His Son; it is His declaration

of Himself, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” Life is given me now in this world that I may live the life of Christ, and not according to my own old life.

The moment we have life in Christ, we have a divine sense of our sins as hateful and intolerable. You know that all you have been doing has its spring in self, in nature. But if you receive the new life, you have also in Him the efficacy of His death to meet your sins; and this is salvation. It is sad shortcoming to preach only the death and not also the life of Christ, to be satisfied with merely showing how sins may be forgiven by the blood, without a word about life in Him. It looks like man taking only what man wants; the negative relief of what clears conscience, not the positive devotedness to God. But this is not enough for the saint, still less for the glory of God. We cannot have part of the blessing, but a whole Christ. God’s will is, that every believer should live in and of this new life; that is, the life of every soul who is born again. God is better to Him than his own thoughts. The truth is that it is Christ, and not his own notions, or even conscience, that he must rest on by faith. Endued with natural life as a son of Adam, the believer has just as truly a new divine life in Christ. Is it possible to lose this new life? It is eternal life. What does “eternal” mean? But it is possible and easy to lose the joy of this life.

It is of all moment for a believer to distrust himself; but it is a wrong to God and His word, as well as weakness to self, to doubt His faithfulness, or that Christ’s life does not stand for ever. If the new life in any way depended on himself, he must soon fall away into irreparable ruin. People talk of “the perseverance of the

saints," as if it were they who held fast, whereas it is really they who are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." It is not then my perseverance, but divine power, that keeps me through faith.

Do you think that God does not look in compassion on the guilty sinner? Come then in the name of Jesus to Him, and confess your sins without extenuation or palliation as you could to none other. Already does He know the very worst of us. I can tell it all out to God, and even this is no small blessing to my soul, for then, for the first time, one becomes really honest, "without guile," as says Ps. 32. I need have no reserve, I can or would not keep back anything from God. Why should I wish it when there is this precious blood and water from the Saviour's side, a Saviour for all that come, who "suffered once for sins, just for unjust, that he might bring us to God"? This is the word that I would leave with you. How plain it is that the whole practical walk of believers flows from life in Christ, and is based for their peace on the blessed fact that they have been brought to God. The death of Christ takes away my guilt and bonds; but what is to be the spring of new life? How am I to mortify my old life? You may tell the old man to die, but it does not wish to die. God declares that He has given me, if a believer, another nature, new life in Christ. Nicodemus had to learn that he needed to be born afresh, not only to hear what Jesus had to teach. You may be sure that, when a soul really goes to God for its wants, he always receives through the Lord Jesus. Whenever a soul asks in faith, God fails not to give. Grace never sends empty away.

Where is the man who looked to Christ and did not find Him? Does He not say, "I am the way, the truth, and the

life”? He is the only way of deliverance from all danger, evil, and sin; His blood, if you believe, brings You now to God without a stain upon you. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” If you have Him you have life in Him. Mere nature is incapable of pleasing God. Faith is the means of life, pardon, peace, strength, everything for the needy; and faith lays hold of what God says and does and gives in Christ, and it is the Spirit of truth which produces faith by our hearing the word. Thus we see the importance of the Spirit applying the word to our souls. But all-important as both the word and the Spirit are, neither could avail for the soul without Christ for life, and Christ’s death to take away our sins.

W. K.

Christ the Truth - John 14:6

I have already endeavoured to show the meaning of the Way; that Christ, and Christ only is the Way. But there is another thing, Christ is not only the Way to the Father, but He is also the Truth. Where is truth to be found? In Him alone. He Himself is the Truth. Thus the man who has taken the way, possesses the truth. He who has bowed to Christ does not want some new resource. Truly God is wise, and as good as He is wise.

Let me now try to unfold what truth is. Man in his natural state may ask, but eludes the answer. How is this? Because he is gone away from God, serves Satan in whom is no truth, and likes Christ less, the more he knows about Him. When He came into the world, people seemed to value Him at first; for they did not then know that He was the Truth, and were not yet proved by Him.

They were all looking for, and expecting the promised Messiah. The time spoken of by Daniel was fulfilled, and men were in a state of expectation. The famous prophecy of the weeks pointed to those days, and the Jews all knew, or might have known, that the time was quite near when the Messiah, the Prince, was to appear, though none understood that He was to be cut off. The very heathen were moved by the rumours of a coming Deliverer; they heard that the time was at hand that a mighty king should reign, and most remarkable changes happen for the world. Wise men came from the East to see the born King of the Jews. More than one hundred and fifty years before Christ, the Old Testament had been translated into the Greek tongue, which was at that time the usual means of communication, as French

has been in modern times. This translation of the Bible was a sort of preparatory testimony. Thus the Jews were not the only people who were looking for the Messiah.

But He is much more. He is the Word, He is God, He is the light, which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. And men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. Hence the early attraction soon faded, and gave way to fear and hatred; and as they desired not to know God or themselves, they sought to get rid of what convicted them by killing Him. They might kill, but they could not get rid of the Son of God; and as we have seen Him the Way, so He is the Truth. What is meant by it? Let us compare the law with Him.

The law is holy, just, and good; but still it is nowhere called the truth. The law is the standard of divine requirement from man; it declares what God demands from him who takes the ground of his own obedience as his standing before Him. The truth is the revelation of God, the manifestation of everything else, in Christ. It is therefore not requirement, but revelation. In fact, God Himself contrasts them; as it is written, “The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Was it not God’s law? Yes; but it was given by Moses, who was the channel of communication. But Christ was and is the Way; and this not only for God to come down to man, but for man to go to God — nay, to the Father. Besides, He is the Truth. He makes every one and every thing known as they really are; and when we weigh what the truth is, we can see that Christ only could be the full presentation of it. God is thus revealed; and Christ, being the revealer of God, is Himself said to be the Truth. As Son, He brings out what the Father is. But He, the Holy One of God, shows me what sin is,

what I am. In short, He manifests every one and every thing exactly as each is.

God is never said to be the Truth, but Christ, being the image of the invisible God. Man is not capable of fathoming God; no man hath seen God at any time. Who is competent to know God? No man, nor even angel. The creature does not know God; but God can make Himself known to the creature. How? In Christ by the Holy Ghost. This is the reason why the Holy Spirit is also called the Truth in 1 John 5. Christ, the Truth, is the object presented in whom I can learn everything as it is; the Spirit of God is the inward power that makes the truth enter into my soul that I may have and enjoy it. Hence the necessity for the Holy Ghost to be the Truth as well as Christ. The spirit of man in itself is no more capable of knowing God than a beast of understanding the mind of man. The beast has its own creature instincts; but no beast, no creature of that order, can pass its own limits. No lower creature is capable of understanding man, and no man, as such, can rise to what is above his nature.

Yet, without the truth, how wretched one must ever be! I have sinned. How do I stand, and in what relation, to God? Are we doomed to be in utter uncertainty of the only thing that is of supreme importance? There are things that a man can come to, left to himself — dread and horror, hardness or indifference. But these fears are only the premonition of what, far more terrible and unending, will befall him if he lives and dies as he is. What is to become of his soul? My answer is: Christ is the truth; and Christ was here expressly on an errand of love, to glorify God, to save sinners by faith, to meet this

dark and awful void, and give life and peace, with certainty, to the believer.

Do not take the ground of an unbeliever, and say that it is impossible to have certainty in this life. Perhaps it might be impossible for a Jew, no doubt it was for the heathen; but if God tells me anything, and I believe, is it certain or not? If God tells me His mind, does this give no certainty? Christ is God's revelation of Himself to me. Do you say, I am a sinner? It is true, as far as it goes; but even so you do not know what a sinner you are, else you could not take it so quietly. You go to God about your sins then. Will He leave you in a state of uncertainty? No; Christ has come, the sent One of God, to do His will in the offering of His body; and by Him came grace and truth, not merely truth. And what grace it was! The Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, becoming a man; and not only so, but born of a woman! Adam even was not, never having been born, but made. He was not a son of man therefore, though son of God in a certain sense (Luke 3). He came into the world mature and formed to be its head; he had attained his full proportion when he came from God's hand. Jesus was not merely a man, but the Seed of the woman, as no one ever was save He. He became a servant — all that man is — except sin. It is not only that He did not sin, but He never in His life knew what sin was; He could always say that His meat was to do God's will. "Lo, I come to do thy will." But He was made sin on the cross; He suffered the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

Do I learn what sin is by prayer, or by looking into my own heart? No; but I see it in His cross. What did my sin cost Him? It brought upon Him, the Holy One, the horrors of divine judgment; and now He is become

captain of salvation, having obtained eternal redemption. The same Jesus who gives me the truth of a sinner in myself gives me the truth of a Saviour in Him. Where shall I find what a holy man is? Can it be Adam? The man who could not keep his hands off the fruit of the tree that God had told him not to eat — he a holy man! Why did he not listen to God? He disobeyed, and became unholy. Not that he was made so; for God made him innocent, and innocence supposes absence of evil, with liability to fall into it. But when Jesus was made flesh He was not only sinless, but holy — holy not in ways only, but in nature. “That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” There also do we read, “A body hast thou prepared me”; and this is never said of anyone else. Why was this body so specially prepared? Because there could not be the least relic that defiles in the Holy One. The smallest taint of evil would spoil the sacrifice; the lamb for the burnt-offering was to be without blemish and without spot. When Jesus was born, although He was the Seed of the woman, there was no taint of sin in His nature; He is called that holy thing, for He was born by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus He could take upon Him not merely all our sins, but sin itself. This is the truth.

If I want to see sin, I can see it by contrast with the Lord Jesus. He came and showed out all its darkness. “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin.” Christ is the Truth; so all is brought out in its own character.

But there is just the same result about God; Christ as the Truth clearly shows what God is. It is never said that Christ is the likeness of God, though with the greatest emphasis said to be His image. It would not be true to

say of any man that he is like a man, although you might say so of an angel. Just in the same way Jesus is not said to be like God, because He is God. Here was One who was perfectly able to show what God is. It is the Absolute deigning to become relative. As long as God is only God, He is unapproachable by man; man cannot understand Him. But I must know God, or I cannot have eternal life; and this cannot be apart from Him whom He has sent, even Jesus Christ the Lord. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, and He has brought me exactly what I want. God is the One who loves me, who comes down in the person of Jesus, Son of God and Son of man, to meet the need of a poor sinner. If, again, I want to know what the devil is, it is the same Jesus that brings it out. He, a murderer from the beginning, and a liar, is the one being who stands always opposed to the Lord Jesus. Jesus therefore brought out what the devil was as it had never been manifested before; but the Son of God came that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Now, have you got the Truth? You have heard the truth in Him; what is the effect on your soul? “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.” The law makes me feel my shortcomings, but the truth makes them even better known. But if I am willing to know how bad I am, I want to be delivered. Will the law do this? When the law was given, it put man at a distance. Moses was to set bounds to the mountain; and if a beast so much as touched it, it was to be slain. This, no doubt, was a wholesome righteous warning; but the truth is, that the Lord Jesus came down from heaven to seek and to save the lost. And how are you to be saved? By submitting to the Truth; by coming as a sinner to the Saviour of

sinners. I cannot be saved except by the Truth. It is the Lord Jesus Himself who brings it all out to the soul, and in confessing Him Lord, I believe God, and set to my soul that He is true. By the grace of God my soul bows to the truth, and I can say in my heart, this is just the truth for me. I abjure my unbelief; I bow to what God says of His Son. It is God proclaiming what is true; and I believe He is as good as He says. I believe that He is forgiving my sins and making me His child on the spot. I have no desert; but Christ is my plea. I am willing to be nothing, that Christ and His cross may be everything for and to me.

But we must remember that the Holy Spirit is the Truth just as truly as Christ is. May He bring the truth home to your souls! Were you to live ever so long, and learn ever so much, it is only knowing better the Truth you receive at the start. Confess Jesus Lord, the only Saviour, the Son of God. Confess all that grace has given you to know, and look well to it that your ways be a living confession of that Blessed One who is the Truth.

W. K.

Unto my name - Matt. 18:20

(BT. Vol. N5, p.296.)

It is humbling and grievous when a servant of the Lord gives up any truth of God which he had not only held but advocated publicly, then doubted, and finally denies, from mere sentiment wresting scripture to popular error. Such is the character of “Gathering in the Name of the Lord Jesus.” The friend who sent me the tract regards its writer as the best-taught man in their circle. Yet here he has sunk lower than many of his associates, even on his own showing in the first paragraph of p. 7; for they, if mistaken in their claim to be gathered to that Name, at least own it to be the only right aim for true worshippers. So sadly has he lost this truth as to stigmatise it as “the Corinthian school of ‘Christ’“ (p. 8) “against all the names of Paul, Apollos and Cephas!” “This is carnality,” he says! Is it not deplorable to see a Christian become more unbelieving as he grows older? carried away by the Laodicean spirit of the day beyond many who probably know less, and blinded to excuse and spread utter laxity under cover of grace which is not grace? Can one honestly say less?

T. N. knows that those who in faith regard it as a special privilege and duty, to be gathered together to the Lord’s name, are the farthest of any on earth from setting it against Paul, Apollos and Cephas. It was therefore wholly different with these frivolous Corinthians; who, whilst abiding in the same fellowship, did really and irreverently from their old philosophic habit set up in rivalry not those blessed servants only but the Divine Master as heads of opposing schools! Is there the least

approach even to superficial resemblance? We dread all schism; we disclaim denominations or sects. These are what the apostle calls “heresies,” and warns, in 1 Cor. 11:18, 19, as the sure issue of unjudged schism. Yet the gist of this tract is to make light even of that graver evil, and goes so far as to rebuke the better desires of his own companions who left the sects, in order (as they judged) to be gathered to the Lord’s name.

According to his present view, and “the Keswick motto,” whether maintaining sects, or abjuring them, all Christians in the existing disorder and confusion, are alike gathered to His name! If he said that, as members of Christ and walking consistently, they are entitled to be received in His name and are free to take their place, it is true. But what if they ignore it and prefer a gathering according to their own views, or an organization that sets aside God’s? Can it be that standing to this looseness, go where he will among orthodox denominations, he and other believers honour that precious privilege as truly as in apostolic days? There was an early man among Brethren (A. N. Groves.) who seems to have entertained or slipped into a similar negation of all divine principle. To simple and intelligent souls this was ever abhorrent. For it stultifies all scripture which treats of the church, and in particular this Epistle which T. N. perverts to his aid. Can he honestly believe that, when the apostle addresses the church of God that is in Corinth, “with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours,” he sanctions separate sects, and accepts what he calls a heretic (Titus 3:10, 11) as all the same gathered to the Lord’s name? This is beyond doubt

what the argument involves, as foolish a thought as it is faithless.

It is therefore mere evasion of “gathered to the name of Christ” if we pretend that when gathered as “Presbyterians and Episcopalians, Baptists and Methodists, and those who refuse all separating titles” (to take his own phrase in page 8), Christians, however earnest, are nevertheless gathered to His name. They are never so gathered whilst they abide in religious corporations framed on these extra-scriptural lines. Nor is the refusal of “separating titles” enough. There must be the positive gathering to His name as the divinely given, only, and adequate centre for God’s children, to the exclusion of all that is incompatible with it by the word and Spirit of God. Matt. 18:15-20 supposes but one communion, no matter in how many places even in the same city they may meet. The church or assembly here and everywhere else in scripture implies inter-communion, and never allows of a fellowship independent and differing one from another. As the Head is one, so is the church according to God’s will, who has sent forth the Holy Spirit to act as the power and bond of union for this end. “For also in one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all given to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). See also Eph. 4.

But it is a delusion to fancy that if souls break away from divine unity for divers doctrines and governments of man’s device, they are notwithstanding gathered to the Lord’s name. Sect or heresy is insubjection to the Lord, whatever the plea to vindicate such a departure. The same apostle who laid down the principle of one body is the one to pronounce the man guilty of such self-will as

perverted and sinning, being self-condemned. Heterodoxy or strange doctrine is quite another evil, which may go so far as to deny God's everlasting judgment of sin, or His glory who bore it away from all who believe. Surely great is the sin if one deliberately seeks to make light of the evil of denominations which directly oppose that for which Christ died: not, it is true, to save the lost, but to gather together into one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11:51, 52). How bold to assert, that if Christians set up new limits of fellowship which narrow or broaden the divine will, they are to be notwithstanding condoned, and no less gathered unto His name than those who are faithful and obedient! Some may flatter themselves that this amiability is growth in grace; whereas it is increasing looseness, and the unwitting desire to excuse themselves and other careless Christians at the cost of Christ's honour and word, to say nothing of the personally present Spirit.

As to a junction of such believers to supplicate God the Father in the Son's name, they surely may, and never in vain for what is His will. But any union for the nonce falls far short of being gathered together unto His name. For this is nothing less than the constitutive principle of the church, abides always (even when not assembled) in its relation and its consequences, and has its "within" and "without" with incumbent duties permanently. He who refused subjection to righteous judgment of his manifest wrong, even to the extreme point of equitable and gracious desire to win him, was to be for a passing season as one of the outside Gentiles. He must, till repentance, lie under the stigma; as the rest would enjoy the standing privileges of their common

relationship. For “the church” was to take the place of Christ- rejecting Israel on earth, of Jerusalem and the temple, though in living association with heaven far beyond Moriah or Zion. This is to read in faith what the Lord put into these verses; the tract forgets and tries to blot it out. Neither first nor last was the church to be a rendezvous for casuals. To be believers is not the point but to have His presence as the sanction of acts when gathered together to His name. To have the bishop as the centre with presbyters and deacons was the device of the second century and onwards; to have nothing but believers of all orthodox sects or of none is an abuse; to own the Lord in the midst of those (were they but two or three) who own no centre but the Lord is the sound and sole principle of God’s church. But if it came to “two or three,” what grief and humiliation became them, and utter refusal to arrogate to themselves “the” church, though eschewing all sects but taking their stand upon that ground of grace and truth and nothing else!

To assume that to be saints in the denominations makes them notwithstanding truly gathered together to the Lord’s name opens the door to nullify the church, for which it substitutes a mere rope of sand. It is the device of latitudinarianism, and the abandonment of the Lord’s promise to those who are gathered together unto His name. And what can be plainer, to those who have learnt from scripture the impending ruin evident already to inspired eyes and revealed in the Epistles and the Revelation, than that the Lord before the beginning here as elsewhere intimates that the falling away might be so great that only two or three here and there might be thus gathered in faith of God’s will ecclesiastically for fidelity here below? Yet does He deign to provide the

sanction here promised to those who obey His word in face of trial and ill report, instead of following the multitude in pride of antique error, or turning to indifference, novelty, and what not.

In earlier days believers were freely received as Christ's members who, having no right notion of the church, were hardly to be counted guilty of departure from what was of God. Yet those who personally departed could plead for no such favour. But there is now an ominous change foreboding "the apostasy." No saint in those days tolerated the sacerdotalism of Christendom with its lie of apostolic succession as the warrant, its saving ordinances, and its idolatry with the real presence of a demon. Still less had we to challenge those who countenanced the gross scepticism of the Higher critics, though we had to refuse such as fell into the denial of God's judgment of sins or the soul's natural immortality. We are now bound to apply the later tests of scripture.

When giving up in principle that blessed privilege, how self-deceiving it is to say, "Oh let me ever be gathered, when gathered at all, in that Name! And what I prize so much myself let me not refuse to any saint of God." Some at least of his own company will not deny that he has himself falsified the Lord's mind, and that what he has just written does not come from God but can only mislead those who heed it. It is no question of refusing to any saint of God his true place and privilege, but of convincing the erring that to be of a denomination contradicts it, and that to claim both is unfaithfulness and folly. As I have no wish to expose bad reasoning and misapplied kindly feeling, I refrain from doing more than, for the help of souls, pointing out the writer's

radical mistake and sad declension, with much regret that it is a plain duty to do so.

Thoughts on the Lord's Prayer

I propose to examine the Lord’s prayer as briefly as is consistent with a plain perspicuous exposition: first, looking at it as it is given in its most comprehensive form in the Gospel of St. Matthew; next, comparing the form which St. Luke presents; and, in the third place, seeking, as far as the Lord enables me, to gather His design, touching its use, whether at the time it was given, or afterwards.

1. — The first thing I desire to point out is the accordance of the Lord’s prayer with the place it holds in the first Gospel, and with the object the Lord Jesus had then in view. It occurs in the sermon on the Mount, where He is addressing Jewish disciples, and leading them out of their previous thoughts and feelings and ways into the new principles of the kingdom of heaven, which He was about to introduce. This is important to remember for understanding either the meaning or the object of the prayer. It does not contemplate, as it was not addressed to, the whole human race indiscriminately; it does not express the state, wants, and feelings of every person who has certain desires after God or a fear of coming wrath. Thus, when the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, realizing his sin and unworthiness, he does not venture to say, “Father,” or “Our Father, which art in heaven.” He has no thought of taking up the profound and lofty petitions with which the Lord’s prayer opens, nor has he leisure of heart to think of the full supplies and the tender mercy counted on in God, which the latter portion

breathes. “God be merciful to me a sinner” was the just and becoming cry from his contrite heart. Here was a man under the guidance of the Spirit of God, contrasted by our Lord Himself, not with disciples of course, but with the Pharisee who trusted in himself that he was righteous and despised others, whose prayer, if prayer it is to be called, betrayed his self-gratulation, and whose thanks were not for what God, but for what he, the Pharisee, was. The publican, on the other hand, might be dark as to the riches of divine grace; but at least, so far as his conscience was enlightened, he really felt and owned his condition as a sinner before God. “He who is mighty despiseth not any;” and the publican went down to his house justified rather than the other. At the same time, it is not to despise a man if we call his attention to the actual condition of his soul, and remind him that the Lord’s prayer supposes discipleship and the relationship of children with a Father. Sincerity can never change wrong into right, and ignorance, though less guilty than the conscious utterance of language which goes beyond our state and experience, is a sorry excuse before the full blaze of God’s revealed light in His word.

If asked how we are to know for whom the Lord’s prayer was meant, I would answer that there are two ways of ascertaining, which, if rightly applied, lead to a right conclusion. First, we have to observe whom the Lord had in view in the prayer or the context in which it occurs; and, next, we must consider the nature of the petitions, separately and as a whole, which, if duly appreciated, will be found in harmony with the true wants of those for whom the prayer was designed.

Now, it is obvious that, when the sermon on the Mount was pronounced, there was an immense crowd listening,

but it was not directly addressed to them. They heard the Lord, and were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. Wherever confidence in man usurps the place of the truth, uncertainty before God is the never-failing result; and hence the craving after tradition, official and successional authority, and such-like props of conscious weakness. This was the case with these scribes in a very large degree. Their employment even of scripture had no power in it, neither flowing from nor producing simple happy-hearted confidence in God. They were a class who handed down a measure of scriptural knowledge, crusted over with a coating of tradition which often obscured and perverted even what was true in itself. Such is the inevitable effect of tradition: it always brings in foreign ingredients, which so mix themselves up with truth as to put a blind between the soul and God. The Spirit of God, on the contrary, uses the word to detect and expel all hindrances, and thus to place the soul without disguise in the presence of God, there to learn His thoughts. And if what God thinks of me as a poor convicted sinner crushes me, what He reveals of His own perfect love towards me calls me from the dust, sets me firmly on my feet and bids me fear not. It is so now where the Holy Spirit works in any power by the vessels whom He deigns to use; how much more when Jehovah-Jesus was there! “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.”

In that discourse, then, the Lord had His own disciples immediately before Him. For their wants, as having been Jews, and not yet taken from under the law, He was providing. “And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a

mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him; and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit," etc. The disciples were a class, who (excepting Judas, or any other special case of the kind, if such there were) had truly received Jesus as the Messiah by the Spirit of God. They had not chosen Him, but He had chosen them that they should go and bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain. They were gathered around Him as His witnesses, and separated from the rest of the nation even now in a measure (i.e., in faith and affection to His person), soon to be so far more fully by His death and resurrection and in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. These were the persons to whom the Lord addressed Himself in the sermon, and of whom He thought in His prayer.

Hence, while the discourse consists of an admirable exposition of the principles of the kingdom, and announces great and precious truths of God which must ever abide, the actual circumstances of the disciples were not overlooked by their gracious Master. On the contrary, the proper application and only full meaning of many parts in detail are found in their necessities, and adapted to their condition. And most blessedly He did provide for them, as One who, though a divine person, was made of a woman, made under the law, and thus by experience, and not omniscience only, knew what they lacked most and where their real dangers lay. "For though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." For Him obedience was indeed a new thing, assuredly not because He had a rebellious nature as we have (for He was God, as well as with God, and even as born of the Virgin He was "that

holy thing"), but because from everlasting He was the Word who had spoken into being all things, all creatures, heavenly and earthly, visible and invisible. Therefore had He to learn obedience, and learn it He did, in a pathway of such suffering as none but He could know. What, then, was His first, last, and constant thought as He walked and served in perfect grace here below? It was His Father's name: as He says elsewhere, "the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father." Viewed as man, it was the power of His communion, as it was the aim of His work. And it is as the One who was thus familiar with the Father, whose heart was ever overflowing with the sense of His glory, that He puts forward His own heart's feeling as the first and prominent thought for His disciples in their intercourse with God. Some of the petitions He was about to put in their mouths were only suitable for them (e.g., that about the forgiveness of their debts or sins); but He would have them begin with their Father, not with themselves.

Accordingly, viewed in its structure, the prayer naturally divides into two sections. The first portion is made up of the desires proper to righteousness in the largest and highest sense — the atmosphere, I think I may say, in which our Lord Himself lived and moved here below. The second part is composed rather of supplications suited to those who were needy in every way, but withal the objects of grace.1 The three first petitions form one division, and the last four the other.

The very opening title or address to God appears to me in beautiful keeping with the Gospel and the then position of the disciples: "Our Father which art in heaven." It is a phrase which constantly occurs in

Matthew's Gospel and there only. It is true that the authorized Bible has in it the corresponding passage of St. Luke (Luke 11:2); but it is known to every person of competent acquaintance with these matters, that there are weighty reasons for reducing the clause there to the single word "Father." My own conviction is that the larger form which appears in the common text of Luke was borrowed from Matthew, and this probably either through the mistake of some ancient copyist who trusted to his memory, and thus introduced confusion, or through the graver fault of designedly making as exact a harmony as possible in the language of the two evangelists. It is unnatural to suppose that, if an open enemy tampered with the sacred text, his corruption would gain currency in Christendom. On the other hand, no friend of revelation could possibly justify to himself the deliberate introduction of a discrepancy with another Gospel. The tendency, therefore, and more particularly in the Gospels, has always been, on the part of misguided professing friends, to interpolate words or clauses from one into another, so as to give not only concurrent testimony but as much as might be of verbal resemblance. I need hardly say that it is grievous and presumptuous thus to meddle with a word or letter of that which the Holy Ghost has inspired; that such a step, even if well meant, invariably spoils, so far, the beauty and perfection of scripture, though of course the substantial truth remains; and that they are the truest friends of the Bible who seek to go back to the earliest and purest sources, relying on the abundant evidence which the goodness of God affords in order to arrive at a just decision.

Assuming that this difference is well founded, what does it teach us? or why, we may reverently ask, is it thus written? In Matthew, I think, the disciples are regarded according to their connection with God's ancient people Israel, accustomed therefore to look on or hope for the earth as the sphere of their exaltation as a nation. Here the Lord is gradually breaking their merely Jewish links by the revelation of a Father in heaven with whom they would have to do. It is not now "the Lord of all the earth" causing the Jordan to be not a barrier but a highway for His conquering people to pass over and take possession of the land. Neither is it "the God of heaven" conferring imperial power, in His sovereign will, on a heathen when His people had utterly, shamefully, sinned away, for a season at least, their heritage. But, again, it is no such fulness of blessing as was conveyed in our risen Lord's message to the disciples through Mary Magdalene: "Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

The address, in Matthew, wears to my mind an intermediate or transitional character. It supposed certain elements in the ancient oracles which Israel had; but there was an accession of light in accordance with the state of disciples, who were associated with a Messiah whom the people did not receive, and who were thus in process of weaning from their former prejudices and of training for yet higher privileges. "The heaven, even the heavens, are Jehovah's; but the earth hath he given unto the children of men." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him." These sentiments from the Psalms, or sentiments akin springing from the Lord's divine wisdom, seem to me

the basis of the address, though there is (naturally, when we think Who the speaker was) that degree of progress in it which exactly met and reflected the due place of the disciples at that time. The Father is regarded as in heaven, and those who look up to Him were on earth,2 far from Him as it were, and in circumstances of weakness, want, and danger, though with hearts in a measure yearning for His glory. The Lord, in the address, would fix their first thought on the Father above, would familiarize their spirits with looking up to Him as infinitely blessed and benignant as well as most high. There was not, nor could be at that time, the sense of nearness which was afterwards their privilege: nevertheless, the Lord Jesus assumes them to be real believers from among the Jews, and, while maintaining the authority of the law and enlarging its scope, leads on their souls to higher things.

But there is not an allusion to redemption in the prayer, nor indeed throughout the whole of the sermon on the Mount. Those who are taught to pray are in no way regarded as worshippers once purged, having no more conscience of sins: indeed, far from having and enjoying such a place, they would scarcely, I think, have understood then what such language meant. There is no thanksgiving to the Father “who hath made us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” All this and more could not be so said; because the work of redemption was still a promise merely and not accomplished. This gives its tinge to the whole prayer; for there is no haste in the ways of God, nor would He so far slight the suffering of His Son, nor the mission of His

Spirit, as to anticipate in the experience of the saints the precious results which were to follow from these two glorious facts when once they had come to pass. God forbid that I should insinuate any thing imperfect as to the Lord's prayer or His sermon! For any one to speak disparagingly of either would be, in my judgment, blasphemy.

The Lord takes up the disciples where they were. If He had uttered the as yet undeveloped truth which was revealed when redemption was wrought and the Holy Ghost thereon given, His language would have been unintelligible to the disciples. If anything had exceeded what was suitable to their then state, if the standing, experience, or worship proper to accomplished redemption had been supposed, it would not have been the perfect prayer it was for them.

Take the instance of a person in prison. A petition is framed on his behalf to the sovereign. If the documents were rightly drawn up, two things at least would characterize it; a full owning of the majesty offended against, and a humble but thorough acknowledgment of the prisoner's guilt. Such would be the only language becoming one under such painful circumstances. He might have such grounds to hope that the petition would find favour in his sovereign's eyes and that its prayer would be granted. This would not be by ignoring the actual circumstances of the case, but rather by a frank confession: to adopt the tone of a freeman would be false ground.

Now, the condition of those under the law was, in the main, analogous to this, till redemption, when accomplished, changed all. Confidence in God that He

would save they had, and it was right; for it rested upon a believing estimate of God's character, and upon His positive promises, spite of what they knew themselves to be. He had announced over and over again, by word and oath, in type and prophecy, that He would, through the Messiah, accomplish the deliverance of all who trusted in Him. Still, they were not yet set free, however certainly they were to be, because this depended on His faithful goodness and truth; and "God is not a man that he should lie." But as yet it was a thing desired, not possessed — a privilege longed and prayed for, but not bestowed and enjoyed as a constant settled portion, till the death and resurrection of Christ made it to be God's righteousness so to deal with the believer.

This consideration, by the way, explains much in the Psalms, and in particular the alternations of conflict found there. Sometimes the speakers are hoping, sometimes fearing; one moment confessing themselves the sheep of God's pasture, and the next moment afraid of being consumed in His hot displeasure. All this was the experience of the saints, before the cross of Christ made it possible for the Holy Ghost to bear witness to the soul of a complete and eternal putting away of sins. It was well and of God that they should feel their state, without presuming to run before the dealings of God, and thus it was with the disciples also. Many prophets and kings had desired to see what they saw and to hear what they heard; but redemption, with all its fruitful issues, was still a blessing in prospect only. And the Lord's prayer was the perfect expression of their desires and wants before that mighty change came in as a fact. It is essential, I believe, to an adequate understanding of the prayer, that we should realize the position of those

to whom primarily it was given; and it will always be misapplied, if we do not appreciate the new ground on which accomplished redemption sets the faithful.

It is well to observe also that the prayer is the expression of individual wants. I do not mean that the disciples may not have used it together as well as singly, but it nowhere supposes the Christians formed into one body. A prayer for the Church, therefore, as such, it is not; for it never passes beyond an aggregate of individuals, irrespective of the uniting bond of the Spirit who baptizes into one body. But this may appear more distinctly as we look briefly at its several parts.

“Hallowed be thy name” is the great foundation of all, the first and strongest feeling of a renewed mind. Flowing from the sense of the holiness due to the Father’s name, and obligatory on every soul that has to do with Him, as well as on His house for ever, there is also in the following clause the desire of the glory in which all shall answer to the Father’s heart and character.

“Thy kingdom come.” It is not exactly Christ’s kingdom, but the Father’s. The Gospel of St. Matthew, if examined with care, shows the Father’s kingdom is distinguished in scripture from that of the Son of man. Thus, in Matthew 13:41-43, we are told that the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals, and them which do iniquity.… then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. At the end of this age the Lord will take the world as His kingdom, and must have evil purged from it, sooner or later, by His judicial power. But the

Father’s kingdom is another and heavenly sphere where only the righteous shine.

But it does not satisfy the heart that the Father’s will should be done in heaven only. Accordingly, the third petition runs: “Thy will be done on earth as in heaven.’’ When the Father’s kingdom comes, this will be the moral answer to it, if I may so say, though in a lower sphere. The Father’s will, instead of being despised or resisted, is yet to be the guide and ensurer of all blessing in that which was still but a rebellious province. The disciples were to pray that it might be done on earth, where there was nothing like it yet, save in His ways who thus led their desires Godward. This closes the first division of the Lord’s prayer.

Next, comes what was suited to the disciples, as the objects of divine compassion, in circumstances of sorrow and trial here below. First, their bodily need is confessed, then that of the soul. “Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive”3 the first calling for no comment here (but see Appendix B, on the word “daily”); the last being put on the ground or pattern of the merciful spirit which had been so strongly inculcated on the disciples at the close of the chapter before. It was no longer to be “ an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,” no longer evil for evil, but good only, good always. The model for their imitation was their heavenly Father, and not merely God as God. As the latter, as God, He has vindicated Himself from time to time, and He shall yet deal most righteously with all that demands judgment in man. As Father in heaven, He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust, not to speak of His intimate and everlasting relations with His

children, who enjoy the overflow of all His love. So here the Lord teaches His disciples (not as a question of remission as sinners, but of divine government as children) to say, “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” That is, we have this principle of forgiving mercy to others not only enjoined on the disciples as the will of the Lord, but solemnly interwoven with their own habitual need of it when they lifted up their hearts to their Father. The application and value of this to such as had been Jews must have been manifest; because as a nation they were responsible to walk according to the law, the character of which was not mercy in case of wrong, but the infliction of just punishment on the guilty. Thus it was that Israel of old was employed to purge the land of Canaan of its defiled and defiling inhabitants. And therefore it was that they themselves, when they and their kings thoroughly apostatized from God, fell under its terrible lash. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.” But now another principle was about to govern — not earthly retributive righteousness, but heavenly grace, which has power to transform as well as forgive the guilty. The Jews who believed were to be taken out of their previous standing and set in a new place as children, having to do with their Father in heaven, and responsible to reflect His character on earth.

Again, we do well to remember who they were that the Lord instructs thus to plead with their Father. They were disciples, who were thereby shown the continual necessity of dependence upon Him and of confession. Nevertheless, it is the Father besought to forgive the debts of His children, not a poor sinner in an agony

about his iniquity and without the knowledge of Christ. Scripture provides for such an one elsewhere but it is not the question here; and if the Lord's prayer were applied to, or appropriated by, an unrenewed soul as the prescribed means of blessing for his case, a real injury would be done. Does God make the forgiveness of an unconverted man depend, in any sort or degree, upon his forgiveness of others? By no means. That were to ask a very high practical requirement from a person in the lowest possible condition; it were to impose a new law more fatal to the sinner's hopes than that of Sinai: in a word, it would ruin and deny the gospel, which in that case would be of works, and no more grace.

Thus, this very petition, which ignorance would cite to prove that men indiscriminately were provided for here, is enough to show the utter inapplicability of the Lord's prayer to their condition. It supposes a living link with God by faith, and proves that the nature of the petitions is an additional ground for affirming that the prayer was not meant for men in their natural unrenewed state. Those whom the Lord was instructing how to pray were persons ignorant, it is true, of redemption and of the new rights its accomplishment would usher into, but possessed of real faith in the Lord Jesus — persons who would assuredly have gone to heaven, had they died then. They were, so far, on the same footing with the Old Testament saints; they were all alike forborne with by virtue of a work not yet accomplished but sure; they were safe in God's mind, because He was looking on to that work. The disciples had the privilege of the Saviour present with them; but the rich, blessed, perfect salvation which He was to bring in by His death and resurrection was still vague and dimly understood, if at

all. In and for this condition of things the Lord's prayer was given.

Then they were to ask their Father not to lead them into temptation, which cannot therefore mean sin here. With temptation in the sense of lustful evil, as St. James says, God tempteth not any man, as He, of course, cannot be Himself. But scripture uses the word in the same chapter and in other places, from Genesis to Revelation, for a man's trial and sifting in a greater or a less degree.

Take Peter's case in the Gospels. It was no sin that he should be put to the proof, whether he would in the face of shame confess his Master. The Lord had already warned him of his weakness; but the too confident apostle heeded not the word, slept when he should have been praying against the temptation, and consequently, when it came, he fell — fell miserably, repeatedly. It was quite right, therefore, for the disciples, conscious of their own powerlessness, to ask that they might not be led into circumstances so sorely trying. Knowing their liability to fail under its pressure, they ought humbly and earnestly to deprecate such a sifting. No such prayer is or could be in the Bible as, Lead us not into sin; for this would be to impute moral evil to God. The temptation here was the putting a person thoroughly to the proof, and the consequence of it would be that, if there were unjudged evil in the heart, it would come out to his humiliation. The undetected mischief working within would be brought to the surface and the light. The Lord Jesus Himself passed through every kind of temptation, first in the wilderness, and again, at the close, in the garden of Gethsemane, when the power of darkness assailed Him to the uttermost. But He had nothing in Him that could be touched by Satan, as He

said, “The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.” In us there is something that is brought out by the temptation, and then, if we do not lean very simply on the Lord, we break down in sin against Him.

Therefore it is added in the next and last clause, “but deliver us from evil [or the evil one];” because the effect of temptation, where the flesh is not judged, is that evil is manifested, and he who is its source and prime mover acquires advantage over the soul.

I do not enter into the doxology which concludes the prayer in the received text of St. Matthew; for while everybody agrees in leaving it out of St. Luke, it is well known that its authority, even in the other Gospel, is, to say the least, doubtful. Probably it was an accretion derived from ecclesiastical usage in the fourth century, or perhaps earlier. Chrysostom comments on the doxology without a note of distrust; but previously to him not a trace of it appears in any exposition or citation, in either the East or the West. It would appear that the prayer began to be, or at least was, spoken of in the third century as “oratio legitima et ordinaria.” But this seems scarcely to have been the case in the days of Justin Martyr,4 who speaks of the ruler offering up prayer and thanksgiving ὅση δύναμις αὐτῳ (that is, I presume, extempore). But I trust I have shown that which we started with — the special suitability of the prayer to the class with which our Lord was thus dealing. I do not go farther now; for the question of His will, as regards later times, must be inquired into before I have done. But it is well to bear in mind, that, everlastingly true as is every word which our Lord spoke, we have to take care that all be rightly divided and applied. I yield to none in reverent admiration of the

most sublime and the most pregnant form of prayer ever written. The question nevertheless remains, not of its intrinsic value, but of its due and intended use after redemption and the descent of the Holy Ghost.

2. — We must now turn for a few moments to St. Luke's report of the prayer, which differs in several respects from St. Matthew's, though both I hold to be of equal (i.e. divine) authority, and the points of distinction therefore to be not the slips of the evangelists, but the result of a different object in the mind of Him who inspired them. Difference there is unquestionably even in our common and excellent English version; but that difference is considerably greater if we adopt the text which flows from the combined testimony of the most ancient and best witnesses (manuscripts, versions, and Fathers). It is notorious that there has always been a tendency on the part of copyists to assimilate the language of the various portions of scripture as much as possible; and clearly from their nature we might expect, as we find in fact, that no part has suffered so much in this way as the synoptic Gospels. These copyists seem sometimes to have assumed that, if they found the same truth or fact variously represented in Matthew and Luke, there must needs be an error: and then they sought, by marginal glasses and even by textual changes, to make the corresponding passages almost a verbal repetition of one another. This of course has entailed trouble on those of our day who desire in all cases to know the very words of the Holy Ghost; for if they, resting on the weightiest authorities, recur to a better text than the vulgar one, they are open to the charge of innovation — at least from the ignorant or the prejudiced. Most groundless charge! for they are in

truth those who alone vindicate the oldest vouchers for the word of God against comparatively modern change and corruption.

To return, however: the place or connection in which the prayer is given in the two Gospels may be noticed with profit. In Matthew the Lord speaks as Jehovah-Messiah, not neutralizing the statutes of His servant Moses, but with the conscious authority of the Master. And hence, I think, it is that whether or not the questions of the disciples drew out any part of that instruction, nothing is permitted in the first Gospel to break the onward continuous flow of its sententious wisdom and lofty discourse. Hence such notes appear as “ye have heard that it was said to [not ‘by’] them of old time.... but I say unto you,” not annulling the law or the prophets, but giving fresh heavenly light on some things, and opening the way for other things far higher. Hence, too, the prayer is introduced by St. Matthew in pointed contrast with Jewish or Pharisaic love of publicity and lack of pitifulness. It is one of the three examples of the righteousness (not ‘alms’) in Matthew 6:1, which was not to be done before men to be seen of them.

By Luke, on the other hand, the Lord meets the condition of man here below — if there was any difference, of the Gentile more emphatically than the Jew. Therefore it is that here only we have the scene of the woman of the city that was a sinner (whom there is no good reason for identifying with Mary Magdalene or with the sister of Lazarus), the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, the preaching at Nazareth, the Samaritan leper, Zacchaeus the chief publican, etc. Facts and parables like these plainly indicated the affections of God about to burst the

barriers they had been pent up in under the Jewish dispensation, and soon to overflow wherever there was need created by sin and wretchedness. At the end of Luke 10 the Lord shows us the all-importance of the word of God — of His own words indeed. This had tested the two sisters, Martha and Mary, both of whom we know He loved. (John 11) While Martha was cumbered about much serving, and her love, most true in its way, went forth in actively providing for the Lord's outward need, Mary, unconsciously perhaps, proved her stronger faith and deeper love by sitting at His feet and drinking in His words. The thought of Martha's heart was, What a feast I must give the Messiah when I receive Him at my house! Mary, on the contrary, felt that the best feast for Him, as for herself, was to receive and treasure up all she could from Him — to see, and hear, and be with, Himself. If we are learning thus from the Lord Jesus, we honour and please Him incomparably more than by any thing we think to confer upon Him. In the long run, too, it is the listening at His feet which best fits for the most acceptable worship and service. (Compare John 12:1-8.)

But, besides the word of God, we want another element and exercise of spiritual life. By that word we were begotten again, and then nourished (1 Peter 1, 2): by it we are cleansed and instructed, kept from the paths of the destroyer, and set apart to Christ in heaven. But withal we need something more, and this is prayer. Without prayer the word, not being received in dependence on God, may be used as new material for mere mental activity, and thus the soul may find a positive and grave snare. Really to thrive in the things of God is from hearing the word, not with the ears or mind only, but with a conscience quickened and freed by the

Holy Ghost's presentation of Christ. Now prayer is the great means by which we are practically kept in God's presence, and the word is made welcome, profitable, and sanctifying. It is the proper expression of our weakness to God and of our confidence in His love and care day by day and evermore. Instead of presuming, as men, to enter into the deep things of God, or to take and pursue the path of the cross of Christ, we confess in prayer our constant need of dependence upon God. And hence it is that throughout Luke the Lord Himself; "born of a woman," is so often brought before us as One that habitually walked thus with God. (Luke 3:21; Luke 5:16; Luke 6:12; Luke 9:18, 28, 29; Luke 22:41-45; Luke 23:34. See also His exhortations there to perseverance in prayer — Luke 11:5-13, and Luke 18:1-8 — besides the following parable.) It was indeed His own praying which gave occasion to the request of the disciples in Luke 11.

In comparing the prayer in Luke with that in Matthew, it will be observed that, though the manner of its introduction be somewhat different, the application to the disciples is, if possible, more precise in the latter Gospel. "And it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father." It has been already noticed that the formula, "Our Father which art in heaven," was in all probability an interpolation from St. Matthew. A scribe, from habit of using the longer address, may have written it down by mistake in Luke's Gospel, or he may have designedly assimilated the two reports of the prayer.

“Father, Hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come.” These two petitions are alike in both Gospels. It did not matter under what circumstances the Lord spoke, or with what special aim or outlook. That the Father should be exalted in His holiness, and that the bright scene and season may come when His love and power shall establish it without dispute or effort, must always be the prime desire of a true heart, and the necessary condition of unalloyed and changeless blessing.

But it is remarkable that the next clause in the ordinary text was foisted in, probably in the same way as the address has suffered. “Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth” is a petition peculiar, I believe, to St. Matthew. And I wish to state once for all that, in these questions of the true text, I never give a mere conjecture, but a judgment founded on a full survey of the extant evidence, and one which is generally received by those who are best informed and most able to pronounce on matters of the kind. If the omission be allowed here, it becomes us to ask why it is that the Spirit drops that clause in Luke which He had given in Matthew? What are we taught by the omission?

It is well known that, throughout Luke, God has Gentiles in view, and not Jews merely. Therefore such words of Christ and such circumstances as bear upon the uncircumcision, both in their natural outcast condition and in the character of their privileges when brought in, are recorded there with care and precision. With this agrees the very genealogy of the Saviour; for He is not, as by Matthew, traced down from Abraham and David, the heads of Jewish promise and glory, but traced up beyond all such limits to the first man, the head of the whole human family — “Adam, which was the son of

God.” What then would the poor heathen have known about the righteous expectation of Israel as regards the earth? To the latter it was an ever present desire of faith, whatever their temporary degradation through their own sin. “For Jehovah loveth judgment and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell therein for ever.” Then and thus would God’s will be done on earth as in heaven. This expectation is kept up in the sermon generally as well as the Lord’s prayer in Matthew, while other and brighter hopes accompany it; but from Luke it disappears in the wisdom which ever marks the Holy Ghost. Peculiarly familiar to the Jew, it was foreign to the Gentile’s proper hope even when converted; his outlook was to be exclusively heavenly.

Then we have a perceptible difference in the language of the next petition. Luke says “Give us day by day our daily bread;” Matthew had “Give us this day,” etc. The believing Jews looked simply at the one day, it might be, before them. It was a definite request for the present exigency. How soon the trumpet of Jubilee would sound, and the true liberty and final return and everlasting possession would come, they knew not; meanwhile they say “Give us this day our daily bread.” But the Gentile believer, for whose instruction the Lord was specially providing in Luke, is characterized by a more constant spirit of dependence — “day by day” is the word.5 He was never to expect rest, or establishment on the earth, as the other might. His inheritance lay elsewhere; his portion here was to be always that of a stranger. I think that this is strengthened by the mode of its introduction here. The prayer is much later and nearer the close than

in Matthew. All hope of Messiah's reception by the Jews was manifestly at an end. Thus, in Luke 9, He had His rejection and death ever before Him, and repeatedly names it to the disciples, both before and after His transfiguration. (cf. 1. Peter 1:11.) In Luke 10 the mission of the seventy follows, as a sort of final message, in which He pronounces woe on the cities which had seen His mighty works but had despised Himself. Grace is then shown as replacing law, and doing what law could not do. The prayer in Luke 11 partakes of the progressive character of the circumstances which surround it.

But that is not all. In the next petition — "Forgive us our sins" — the expression is worthy of note. The always sound principle for interpreting God's word is, that God never changes without reason. It is our own ignorance if we do not see the bearing of different words used in Scripture. Thus, if in Matthew it is said "debts" and in Luke "sins," there is a slight shade of difference that ought not to pass unnoticed. What is the distinction? I believe it to be this: that "sin" expresses, in all plainness of speech, the depth of the soul's moral need. The simplest Gentile would understand the word "sin." The Jew would feel what a debt was in his responsibility to God: it supposes a known relationship in which he had been placed and had failed. To the Gentiles who had not been in such a position the idea of "debt" was not so obvious or applicable, unless the word "sin" prepared the way for it and made it more intelligible. The word "sins" has a more evidently moral meaning, being equally true whether people were without law or under it. "Debt" is figurative rather, though perfectly understood by a Jew. The parable of the merciless

servant in Matt. 18 sets forth the Lord as dealing with Jew and Gentile in a way substantially similar. The servant that owed his lord ten thousand talents is the Jew guilty of the rejection of Christ. How deeply was he involved? Forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, etc. But moved with compassion, he forgave him the debt. Then the same servant went out and found one of his fellow servants which owed him one hundred pence. The Gentile was certainly indebted to him, but found no mercy (1 Thess. 2:14) for a debt small indeed compared with that which had been forgiven the Jews; and therefore wrath is come upon the Jews to the uttermost. (Compare also Matt. 5:25, 26, and Luke 12:58, both of which refer to Israel's position in our Lord's time.) There is another expression which confirms this, the Gentile dispensation being one of full grace; "for we ourselves also [poor as we are] forgive every one that is indebted to us." It is a stronger broader word than the expression in Matthew.

The conclusion in Luke appears to be, "Lead us not into temptation," what follows ("but deliver us from evil") being probably copied into it from the first Gospel. No motive can be assigned for leaving out this clause, like the former one, if it had been originally inserted; whereas it is natural that men, observing that they undoubtedly are found in Matthew, should hastily conclude that they ought to be in Luke also. Nor is anything lost thereby, but the contrary. For the omissions in an inspired book, as well as the things declared there, are meant to arrest attention and to instruct.

The last clause is most appropriate in Matthew, where it has special reference, I think, to the power of Satan

which, beside what is ordinary, is directed against Israel as God's great earthly witness, and the severity of which is yet to fall upon them in the last days. (Cf. Zech. 3) Luke, as usual, brings out general moral principles, and hence retains the petition "lest we enter temptation."

3. — Having stated these points of distinction, I come now to a question of great practical importance: What was the Lord's intention in regard to the use of this prayer? The answer is involved in my first statement. I showed that, while intended for disciples, it exactly suited the condition they were in before Christ had finished His work. It therefore follows that, when redemption became a fact and a known basis of relationship with God, prayer suitable to those who stand in the enjoyment of its full results would be formed according to their new circumstances. In other words, referring to my former illustration, the man's prayer when out of prison would not be the same as his prayer in prison, unless he were under a delusion. If he had afterwards to do with the sovereign, he would owe, not a petition for deliverance, but a memorial of gratitude and a lifelong service of devoted loyalty.

But, besides this, we shall find that the accomplishment of redemption was the foundation of another and a most exalted privilege — the gift of the Holy Ghost, in a way of which the Old Testament saints had no experience. It must be remembered that there are certain operations of the Holy Ghost, common to all saints in every age, such as the new birth, conviction of sin, holy obedience produced in the heart and ways. These ways of the Spirit are not peculiar to any time; they were always true of every saint of God from the first — true of Noah, Abraham, David, etc. They were all born of God, and

believing men. But while this is matter of common knowledge, there is another thing equally true, but not so generally acknowledged. When the Lord Jesus Christ was about to finish His work on earth and ascend on high, He promised His disciples that the Holy Ghost should be given in a way never before known.6 The disciples were certainly believers then, and possessors of eternal life. Yet we find that, when the Lord was about to depart, He says: “It is expedient for you that I go away.” What could make it expedient that they should lose their best Friend and Saviour? Why was it not rather preferable for them in every way that He should stay with them? The word is plain: “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.” Does not this imply that there was to be some further and immense blessing imparted to them that they had not enjoyed before? Clearly so. But more than this. There are persons who confine the gift of the Holy Ghost to tongues, miracles, ministerial gifts, etc. But “the Comforter” is not to be confounded with the various powers that the Comforter produces. It is the Holy Ghost in person whom the Father would send in Christ’s name. This was the grand truth that the Lord was teaching His disciples. All saints had had the Holy Ghost operating upon them from the beginning, but besides and beyond that, after the departure of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost Himself was to come down, in a personal and more direct and immediate way, to be in the disciples and with them unto the end. The Son of God had come down in a special way and become incarnate. The Holy Ghost would come, after Christ had accomplished redemption and gone up to the Father.7 Therefore it is said in Acts 2: “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." The powers that were conferred on the day of Pentecost drew attention to this blessed divine person, whose presence these powers indicated; they were valuable chiefly as the outward evidence and effect of that unprecedented gift, the Father's promise.

This, then, is the great truth that lies at the bottom of the question as to the Lord's prayer. It was intended for those who were true believers, but for whom redemption was yet a prospective thing, and to whom the Holy Ghost had not been given in this fuller and unexampled way. In the very context in Luke the Lord says, a little afterwards, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" That was their condition. They were already children, and yet were to ask the Father to give them the Holy Spirit. It could not mean the Holy Spirit to make them believers: such they were already — "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." But there was still the Holy Ghost to be given personally, to bring them into all the full consequences of the redemption of Christ, when this should be effected, and to form them into union with Him as the glorified man at the right hand of God, members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. These privileges, which were neither known nor possible to be enjoyed by the saints before the cross, are nevertheless the essentials of Christianity, properly so called. Therefore, I do not hesitate to say that, while the Lord's prayer was the perfect expression of the disciples' requests to God in their then circumstances and actual condition, for this reason it was not intended

to be the expression even of the same men when their whole standing and condition was changed: when the work was done, and all trespasses were forgiven; when all that believed, whether Jews or Gentiles, were by one Spirit baptized into one body, and were all made to drink into one Spirit.

The change indeed was so momentous and complete, that our Lord Himself prepares the disciples for it solemnly in John 16, when, after having fully brought out the mission and presence of the Comforter in and with them, He says, “In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”.... “At that day ye shall ask in my name,” etc. What did our Lord mean when He said, “In that day ye shall ask me nothing?” This was what they had been doing while He was upon earth; they always went to Him as the blessed and gracious Messiah, and were quite right in doing so. Yet He adds, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, etc.... Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name.” What! asked nothing in His name? Had they not been using the Lord’s prayer for some years? Certainly they had; and yet they had asked nothing in Christ’s name.8 Now, He says to them, you are going to be put upon a new ground; no longer to be merely coming to Me and asking Me, but asking the Father, and asking in Christ’s name. What is meant by asking in Christ’s name? Is it merely saying “for Christ’s sake” at the end of a prayer? No. The meaning is no less than this: that, by virtue of redemption when accomplished, and by the Holy Ghost uniting them to the Lord Jesus in heaven, they would be put in the same

position as Himself. Therefore it is said in 1 John 4: “As he is, so are we in this world.” And so St. Paul, in 1 Cor. 6, “he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” This may illustrate the meaning of asking in the name of Christ, or rather of the ground on which it rests. It is to ask the Father in the consciousness of all their sins being put away, and of their being in Him brought nigh to God, and in the full enjoyment of His favour, without a question or cloud between God and their souls: going to God and making supplication to Him as standing in the possession of the full blessing to which Christ above, and the Holy Ghost below, should entitle them in that day: this is asking the Father in Christ’s name.

The Lord had given the prayer already, and the disciples had been using it. Yet He intimates to them here that there was a new position into which they had to be put, and that the old ground would no longer suffice. Their circumstances being changed by the gift of the Holy Ghost, prayer must now take its form from the new standing, the full grace into which they were brought. What is the effect of believers now putting themselves back into the position of disciples before redemption was accomplished? They never can know what it is to have real settled peace; they cannot take the place of worshippers once purged, having no more conscience of sins. In a word, they forfeit, as far as enjoyment goes, the vast and entire sum of blessing which Christ’s death and resurrection have procured.

Still more manifest is the mistake for a company of believers, alas! of believers and unbelievers mixed together, to take up the Lord’s prayer, as the expression of their common need and worship. There is no such thought in the passage as a body thus using it. Indeed,

just before, the Lord had told them, when each prayed, to enter his closet; and then follows this prayer as the suited language of an individual's wants. But whether it be a company or one alone now expressing wants to God in the Lord's prayer, I have only to repeat, You are putting yourselves back into the state of the disciples under the law and before the Lord had done His work of reconciliation, and thus you are doing, unconsciously, great disrespect to the will of God the Father, to the work of Christ, and to the present witness of the Holy Ghost. (Compare Heb 10.)

If a soul, converted indeed, but still under bondage of spirit and ignorant of the Lord's ways and of the full extent of His redemption, were to kneel down and pour out his heart in the words of the Lord's prayer, I could, for my own part, quite sympathize with the feeling; for I believe that such a condition of heart and conscience as nearly as possible approaches that of the disciples whom the Lord actually had before Him. Still, under the gospel of God's grace, the state I have described is altogether anomalous. It is themselves who go back — not God who puts them — as it were, before redemption. Though they believe in Christ, they are not quite sure that they are justified from all things, or whether they do not fall short of the full favour of God. They certainly do adopt and use a prayer given to disciples who could not know what every Christian since the cross ought to have his heart filled with, and what his prayers should assume and more or less express to God. So that, without questioning the final security of such believers in Christ, I dare not withhold my conviction that they do not see their most precious privileges, and thus, without

intending it, are guilty of real dishonour to the Lord's sufferings and glory.

The fact is then, that saints on earth are contemplated and provided for in the prayer before Christ died and rose, and before the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven, the witness of perfect acceptance in the Beloved. True honouring of Christ is to apply His words as He intended. If our souls have entered into this, that we are brought nigh to God, that our sins are all forgiven; that we have got the Holy Ghost sealing us, and uniting us to Christ in heaven; we are on altogether new ground, and our prayers should savour of it. This would be to ask the Father in the name of the Son.

It will be said, How was it that the Lord gave the prayer in His word, if it was not intended for the permanent use of all His people? I answer that the Lord said much which did not and could not apply to all. Look, for example, at Matt. 10. While many principles are found there which abide for our instruction, who will deny that the mission of the twelve was Jewish? Supposing a person were to quote verses 5 and 6, and to say, "These are the Lord's own words: we are not to go into the way of the Gentiles, nor to enter any city of the Samaritans, but rather to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," the absurdity would be manifest. We ourselves, poor Gentiles9 and yet saved, are proof enough that such an application of our Saviour's words must be false. It would set a few words here against the great mass of the New Testament, which supposes special mercy to those very Gentiles. As the Lord was then sending out the disciples on a special errand, so He had previously provided for their then state in the prayer. The death of Christ, in my judgment, necessarily interrupted the

prohibition of testimony to the Gentiles, deepened and extended the ground of prayer, and laid the foundation for the introduction of another order of things. Therefore, after His resurrection, the Lord, at the close of the same Gospel, charges them to go and make disciples of all the Gentiles; as in the Gospel of St. John He, anticipating His ascension, tells them that at that day they were to ask the Father in His name. Hitherto they had not done so.

Much, therefore, as I desire to sympathize with those who continue to use the Lord's prayer now, or at least to feel for their difficulties, I must say that we ought to understand His word and will, besides having upright intentions. And what intelligence can there be if it is not seen that the redemption of Christ and the gift of the Holy Ghost have wrought a total revolution as to the conscience, communion, worship, and walk? They have brought us out of bondage into liberty, and consequently put our prayers on a different footing from what would have been right and comely before our deliverance.

Hence, in the Acts of the Apostles, not a trace appears of such a use of the Lord's prayer as has become the traditional practice of Christendom. And when you read the various prayers which the Holy Ghost inspired in the different epistles, such as those in Romans, Ephesians, etc., everywhere the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ form the great substance and basis. The petitions were founded thenceforth upon the great and glorious facts, on which rest alike our faith and hope; they were not made and were inapplicable before.

Evidently this is a question of no small importance for the child of God who desires to know his full standing in

Christ since the Holy Ghost has been given. We all believe that the Lord's prayer was divinely suited to the actual state of the disciples. But for this reason it could not fully express their subsequent relations nor the outgoing of affections proper to them then. Those who appreciate the extent of the change can profit by every clause of the prayer, even if they do not repeat it literally. But to ignore the results of redemption is not to the honour of Christ, but rather a slight on the presence of the Spirit, and voluntary poverty in the midst of the riches of grace which are now lavished upon us. The humble and obedient heart will seek to know and do the Lord's will in this, as in all else.

May we receive things as the Lord puts them in His word. May we rise above our natural thoughts and be thoroughly rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith as we have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Appendix A.

It may interest some to see the text of the Lord's prayer, as presented in the two Gospels, according to the readings of the most ancient and valuable Greek MS. extant — the celebrated No. 1209 in the Vatican Library of Rome: so also the Sinaitic with slight errors. The Alexandrian approaches the latter text in some respects, as the Dublin rescript of Matthew does the former.

ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΘΘΑΙΟΝ, 6:9-23.

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου, ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου, γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου ὡς ἐν οὐρανῳ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς. τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον, καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ

ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν, καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

Our Father, who art in the heavens, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, as in heaven, also on earth; our necessary bread give us today; and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors; and bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil [or the evil one].

ΚΑΤΑ ΛΟΥΚΑΝ, 11:2-4.

Πάτερ, ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου, ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου· τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ᾽ ἡμέραν, καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν (καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν), καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν.

Father, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; our necessary bread give us day by day; and forgive us our sins (for we ourselves also forgive every one if indebted to us); and bring us not into temptation.

To show that this difference was well known of old, we need only summon two witnesses, of distinct country, time, language, school of doctrine, and ecclesiastical position; but both of them unusually acquainted with Scripture, and, of course, thoroughly trustworthy as to matters of fact. 1. The ablest critic of Christian antiquity, Origen, expressly says (De Oratione, p. 240) that Luke, after “Thy kingdom come,” passes in silence over “Thy will be done;” etc., and sets down “Give us day by day,” etc. Διόπερ ἃς προετάξαμεν λέξεις, ὡς παρὰ μόνῳ Ματθαίῳ κειμένας, κ. τ. λ. And again, as to the end of the prayer, he observes (p. 256), Τὸ δέ, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ, παρὰ τῳ Λουκᾳ σεσιώπηται. 2. Just so

speaks Augustine, the greatest theological light of the Western Church: “Evangelista vero Lucas in oratione Dominica petitiones non septem, sed quinque complexus est.” Enchirid., cap. cxvi.) He tries, like Origen, to solve the difficulty on the plea that the two clauses omitted by Luke are virtually contained in the petitions that preceded them; a plea which, in my opinion, hardly consists with the perfection of either Gospel, especially the apostle Matthew’s, even if it could account for the other points of difference, which it does not so much as touch.

The process of corruption is very palpable in the famous Codex Bezae. (now in Cambridge), which contains several patches obviously borrowed from Matthew, which are repudiated not only by all critics, but even in the Textus Receptus. But the same thing is true of MSS. better in every way than that venerable document.

This being so, what are we to infer? Let Dean Alford answer. “It is very improbable that the prayer was regarded in the very earliest times as a set form delivered for liturgical use by our Lord. The variations... in Luke, for the corresponding clauses in our text, however unimportant in themselves, are fatal to the supposition of its being used liturgically at the time when these Gospels were written.” (Greek Test., vol i., p. 52.) So say I, for reasons of greater weight perhaps than these variations. We are next referred to the notes on Luke 11:1; but there, singular to say, the Dean seems to question his own deduction in the remarks on Matt. 6:9; for he quotes from Meyer an argument identical in sense with his own, and then asks, “If the Apostolic Church did not use the Lord’s prayer as a form — when did its use begin, which we find in every known liturgy?”

The liturgical application of the prayer at no great interval from the apostolic days I admit, but what is that to the purpose? The true question is as to the Lord's intention, when the Holy Ghost was given. What was the apostolic practice then? The Gospels of Matthew and Luke were not written for years after Pentecost; and the Dean admits that there are reasons fatal to the supposition of a liturgical use when they were. Was the Church wrong under inspired men, and right under guides so erring as Tertullian and Cyprian, or Fathers later and more mistaken still? In a word, "when did its use begin?" after the inspired writers passed away, may be an interesting inquiry, but it is of no consequence to our faith and practice. But is it not strange to be remanded from Matt. 6 to Luke 11, and then to find a strong and positive statement, in a note to the former, sought to be undermined by a query in a note to the latter?

What a mercy it is, in the midst of human uncertainty of old or now, have the sure unfailing word of God, the sole standard of truth, and the Holy Ghost, the sole applier and interpreter of it, to the glory of the Lord Jesus!

Appendix B.

Τὸν ἄρτον ·ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον.

Few words in the New Testament have given rise to more discussion, and with less satisfactory results, than the adjective ἐπιούσιος. It occurs only in the Lord's prayer. (Matt. 6:11, and Luke 11:3.) Origen is the first ecclesiastical writer who discusses the question of its derivation and meaning; and certainly, whatever was the eccentricity of his dogmatic views and the frequent extravagance of his interpretations, none of the Fathers

was his equal in matters of language. According to him, the word had not been employed by the Greeks, learned or unlearned, and it appeared to be a coinage of the evangelists. (De Oratione, Ed. de la Rue, vol. i., pp. 245,6.) He compares ἐπ. with περιούσιος, deriving both from οὐσία. Καὶ δοκεῖ μοι ἑκατέρα λέξις παρὰ τὴν οὐσίαν πεποιῆσθαι· ἡ μὲν τὸν εἰς τὴν οὐσίαν συμβαλλόμενον ἄρτον δηλοῦσα, ἡ δὲ τὸν περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν καταγινόμενον λαόν, [alluding to Ex. 19:5,] καὶ κοινωνοῦντα αὐτῇ, σημαίνουσα. He was, of course, aware of the alternative derivation from ἐπίεναι (or its participle); indeed, he expressly alludes to it to affirm his preference of the first source and sense. Ἐρεῖ δέ τις τὸν ἐπιούσιον παρὰ τοῦ ἐπιέναι καὶ ἔσχηματίσθαι, [which is evidently corrupt, and to be corrected with Bentley into κατεσχηματίσθαι,] ὥστε αἰτεῖν ἡμᾶς κελευέσθαι τὸν ἄρτον τὸν οἰκεῖον τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος, κ.τ.λ. (ib. p. 249). The Greek Fathers seem to me, in general, to have agreed with Origen's derivation of the word, though they diverged in interpreting or applying it; for he held it to mean Christ, Chrysostom (Homil. xxx,) Theophylact (Comm. in loc.), etc., applied to the necessaries of life. Hence in Cyril we read, ἔστι γὰρ ἔτι διὰ τούτων ἰδεῖν ὅτι τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς ποιοῦνται τὴν αἴτησιν, ὡς ἀκτήμονες δηλονότι· ἐπιούσιον δὲ τὸν αὐτάρκη ποιεῖσθαι χρή.

The Latins were, for the most part, indifferent judges of such a matter; and, until Jerome, seem to have acquiesced in the reading of the Itala, all the copies of which, as far as I know, had quotidianum (cot.). But the learned secretary of Pope Damasus did not improve upon the old versions, as far as ἐπ. is concerned, but rather increased the confusion. For even in the Vulgate

he gave “supersubstantialem” in Matt. 6, and “quotidianum” in Luke 11; while in his Commentary on Titus (2:14) he says, “Melius in Graeco habetur panem nostrum ἐπιούσιον, id est, praecipuum, egregium, peculiarem, eum videlicet qui de caelo descendens, ait: Ego sum panis, etc. Absit quippe ut nos qui in crastinum cogitare prohibemur, de pane isto qui post paululum concoquendus et abjiciendus est in secessum, in prece Dominica rogare jubeamur. Nec multum differt inter ἐπιούσιον et περιούσιον: praepositio enim tantummodo est mutate, non verbum. Quidam ἐπιούσιον existimant in oratione Dominica panem dictum, quod super omnes οὐσίας sit, hoc est super universas substantias. Quod si accipitur, non multum ab eo sensu differt quem exposuimus. Quidquid enim egregium est et praecipuum, extra omnia est, et super omnia.” What can one think of the consistency of all this? What of its philology or its logic? Who would have guessed that the author does not adopt his own “melius” in either of the texts where the word occurs? Who could expect that in one of them (Luke 11:3) he so translates as most naturally to convey the sense of needful food for the day which; in one of his sentences he sternly denounces? And as to the idea that there could be no great distinction between the two words, have I to convince the merest tyro that composition with a preposition may effect a far more decided change in the sense than if many a totally different word were used? Again, will it be credited that among the “quidam” who think ἐπ. in the Lord’s prayer means above all substances is — Jerome himself, not only in his version of Matt. 6, but in his vacillating comment on the passage in that Gospel? (Ed. Migne, vol. vii. col. 43.) In his Dialogue against the Pelagians (lib. iii. 15), I may also observe that he seems

to take for granted another view — not daily supplies, nor Christ, but the Eucharist. “Panem quotidianum sive super omnes substantias, venturum Apostoli deprecantur, ut digni sint assumptione corporis Christi.” This last was a favourite and early notion especially in Africa, as may be gathered from the treatises of Cyprian, Tertullian, and a host of successors. They took care, however, not to err on the score of deficiency, for they appear to have held all three senses of the phrase. Augustine, in due time, added the meaning of the word of God, sacred lessons, and hymns, to the force of the expression, already burdened enough; though I have not found that any of these writers deduced them save from the old Latin “panem quotidianum.”

On the other hand, a large body of modern scholars, though with shades of distinction among them (as Grotius, Scaliger, Wetstein, Wahl, Winer, Meyer, Bretschneider, etc.), incline to the derivation from ἐπίεναι, or ἐπιοῦσα, and therefore to the sense of “our coming (future) bread,” or “our bread of tomorrow.” But this is obviously awkward, whether one considers Matthew or Luke, and hardly reconcilable with Matt. 6:34. If ἐπιοῦσα were certainly the parent of ἐπιούσιος, it might mean “sufficient” or “necessary,” on the same principle as ἐπηετανός is used for “abundant,” as well as for “year by year.” Dr. John Mill (Prolegg. lxxxii.) derives it from ἐπιοῦσα, and yet thinks that it means “diem qui jam advenit, instantem, praesentem;” but this is resisted by the plain fact that ἐπιοῦσα is never used in Scripture, or elsewhere, for this day, but for the next (or following) day. And as to the objection that from οὐσία it must have been ἐπιοῦσιος, the most learned of the Greek Fathers did not so feel. In fact, too, we have ἐπίοπτος and

ἔποπτος, ἐπίουρα, etc. But “of tomorrow” is unquestionably ancient, in spite of Salmasius’s assertion to the contrary; for, besides the Coptic and Sahidic versions (supposed to be of the third century), Jerome so understood the reading of the old Hebrew or Nazarene Gospel of Matthew. And this Gabelentz and Loebe take to be the meaning of the word “sinteinan,” which answers to ἐπ. in the ancient Gothic version of Ulphilas.

There remains to be noticed another signification, grounded upon οὐσία and giving ἐπί a more distinct force in composition than Origen’s suggestion. Instead of being equivalent to περιούσιος, as Jerome assumed, it is distinguished from it and even in contrast. Περιούσιος is, in ordinary Greek, used for “abundant,” “superfluous;” being derived from περιούσια = that which is over and above necessary expenses, and hence wealth, luxury, etc. Ἐπιούσιος, from analogy of many words similar in formation (as ἐπιβώμιος, ἐπίγαμος, ἐπιδεικτικός, ἐπιδίφριος, ἐπιδόρπιος), and from the requirements of the prayer, would naturally mean necessary, or proper for subsistence. There is no doubt that οὐσία, besides its metaphysical usage for the essence or true nature of a thing, and the Stoic application to matter, was commonly used both in Attic and Hellenistic Greek for “what is one’s own,” “one’s substance,” etc. (cf. Luke 15:12), the transition from which is easy to the sense required, as I conceive, by the evangelists. The reader may compare the last clause of Prov. 30:8, the beginning of which verse, I see, Augustine had already connected with it (Epist. 130 alias 121:22): also Matt. 6:25-34, and James 2:15. It was thus Suidas understood the word — ὁ ἐπὶ τὴν ἡμῶν οὐσίαν καὶ τροφὴν ἐπαρκῶν, or ὁ ἐπὶ τῃ οὐσίᾳ ἡμῶν

ἁρμόζων. “Quae interpret.” (says H. Stephens, Thes. Ling. Gr. iii, col. 3584, Ed Valpy) “aptissimum quidem sensum habet, sed similis signif. τοῦ οὐσία exemplum desidero.” But is not the comparison with περιούσιος a sufficient answer to the great lexicographer’s demand, especially bearing in mind the absolute newness of the word ἐπ.? On the whole, then, I am of opinion that the mystical references, “substantial,” “peculiar,” etc., are forced and unnatural; that the sense of “tomorrow” is inconsistent with the context; that the meaning “daily,” though followed by many and weighty names, ancient and modern, has no probable source in the word itself, and is tautological in its connection in both Gospels; and that “our necessary (or sufficient) bread” has the best claim to be received, as in fact it is, in the oldest known version, the Peschito Syriac.

1 The old and common assertion that the Lord borrowed most of His prayer from existing forms is now confessed by competent authorities to have very slender proof. Lightfoot and others, to have a show of making out the case, have been forced as much to exalt these Rabbinical relics as to depreciate the Lord's incomparable prayer. I cannot but feel that such an hypothesis is as irreverent as it is unfounded.

2 How different is the measure of blessedness conveyed by the phrase in St. Matthew, from what we find in Eph. 1:3, Eph. 2:6! In these last scriptures the Christian, even while in this world, is regarded as at home with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, seated together in Christ in heavenly places. It is an immense step forward.

3 There is very good authority, Greek and Latin, for “forgave.” The aorist here, if well founded, certainly

makes the sense more specific. Our forgiving is viewed as summed up in one and complete. Its spirit agrees well with Matthew 5:23, 24, of which it is the converse.

4 Pro Christianis Apol. I. § 67, p. 270, Ed. Otto, 1842.

5 The word for “give,” though the same verb, has a slightly different form and force in the two Gospels. In Matthew it implies a bare transient act; in Luke the continuous habit, which naturally accompanies the phrase “day by day.”

6 It was from not distinguishing these two things that, if I remember rightly, Professor Olshausen and the late Archdeacon Hare fell into no slight error as to the Old Testament saints; for they actually taught that the new birth is a peculiar blessing of this dispensation! Dean Alford is also confused on the subject. The new birth, though of the Spirit, is entirely distinct from His baptism.

7 “The gift of the Spirit at and since the day of Pentecost, was and is something TOTALLY DISTINCT from anything before that time: a new and loftier dispensation.” — Alford’s Greek Test. I., p. 783; cf. p. 706. (Second Edition.) The emphasis is the author’s.

8 The late Dean of Canterbury had the intelligence to perceive and the candour to own, in his comment on this passage, that “it was impossible, up to the time of the glorification of Jesus (ἕως ἄρτι proleptical, as before), to pray to the Father in His name. It is a fulness of joy peculiar to the dispensation of the Spirit to be able so to do, Eph. 2:18.” The reader will hence infer how he is to estimate Wheatly’s assertion that the Lord’s prayer” is so framed, that it is impossible to offer it up, unless it be in the name of Christ.” (Rat. Illust. of the Book of

Common Prayer, p. 6.) It is singular, however, that Dr. Alford was guilty of the contradictory remark on the preceding verse, (John 16:23,) that “that day,” in its full meaning, cannot import this present dispensation of the Spirit, but the great completion of the Christian’s hope when he shall be with his Lord. His own note on 24, already quoted, sufficiently refutes him, not to speak of verse 26 and his note thereon. — (Greek Test. pp. 788, 9.)

9 Some have objected the fact that one form of the prayer is given by Luke, the evangelist, who treats all in view of the grace of God and the call of the Gentiles. But this in no way proves that it was meant to be used by us of the Gentiles; for this Gospel tells much that was said and done then, though with a special design to instruct us who are called, not to be said or done by us.

Peter's Denial of the Lord

(B.T. Vol. 15, p. 35-40.)

Flesh in the saint is no better than in any other man. Peter did not know this more than most do now. He did not believe our Lord's warning: if he had, he had not entered into temptation, but would have watched, prayed, and been kept through faith. He must therefore by bitter experience learn what the flesh is, as the word was not mixed with faith in his soul when the Lord warned him so solemnly. He was confident in himself. It was not the vulgar confidence of an unbeliever, no doubt; but still it was confidence built on his own estimate of what his love for Jesus would enable him to do or bear. And this it was which, as it is an illusive and mischievous egoism, grace must expose, as it does pardon, and would turn to profit and blessing, not only to Peter, but to his brethren through him. For now and thus he was humbled and had learnt what man is on the one hand, and what God is on the other. If Peter was to be used of the Lord more than all, it was meet that he should more than any learn experimentally his more than nothingness.

The other disciples forsook the Lord and fled. John slipped in, as an acquaintance of the high priest's. Peter followed afar off. Wherefore this? Asleep when called to watch and pray, he awoke to draw the sword and strike, all-through out of communion with the adorable Master. If, bolder than the rest, he ventured into the circle of those who smote the Lord, it was only to sink lower than any and to dishonour Him by a denial which a few hours before seemed to him impossible, by a repeated denial

with imprecations and oaths. Only Judas went farther in iniquity. Jesus alone shone in perfection; yet never was His shame and humiliation more complete, save when He hung on the cross, rejected of His people, despised of men, and forsaken of God. It was sin on man's part, and for sin on God's: what a climax of reality for both, as the believer knows, in Christ the Lord!

There and then it was that Peter heard a cock crow twice immediately after he denied his Master thrice. How insignificant such a sound ordinarily! Then how pregnant with the deepest consequence, not to the penitent apostle only, but to his brethren whom he soon began to strengthen, and to the multitudes whom he was honoured of God in bringing by the word he preached, out of darkness into His marvellous light! But it was the Lord's look upon Peter, and the remembrance of His words, which gave it all the force that wrought in conscience and heart, the look and words of the Saviour brought home by the Holy Spirit where there was life Godward. But alas! flesh had shrouded all and the believer, having slept, had cursed and sworn as if he never knew the Master. Now in bitter grief he learns himself humiliatingly, and what the world is in its highest religious pretensions; yet what would all else have been, had he not learnt the grace of Christ and His moral glory, and God Himself in the cross of Christ and the purpose and ways of redeeming love?

But, in that light grace gave Peter to discern the worthlessness of the flesh alike in its weakness and in its energy, in its unbounded self-confidence and in its dastardly fear and falsehood. Yet was he a saint, thoroughly sincere and most truly loving the Lord; but a saint not yet broken before God, with self but little

judged, who slighted really if unwillingly His word and neglected prayer and so entered into temptation, instead of being upheld in the dependence of conscious weakness and the power of faith by grace. But Peter, (brought down in self-judgment to own that, far from boasting of his love for Christ more than any, only omniscience could know that he dearly loved Him) is then fully re-instated in what might otherwise have seemed forfeited for ever, and hears the blessed Lord in the presence of the brethren committing to His care His beloved sheep and lambs, and promising that he should in very deed be enabled at length to go to prison and death, yea the cross itself, for Christ's sake. Grace thus ensured to him when old and weak all that which in his natural vigour he, a saint withal, had failed in so foully, and with every possible aggravation of dishonour to his Lord.

Now we are told that the accounts exhibit discrepancies, but these, it is said apologetically, owing to the disciples' perturbation of mind! Let us read them: here they are:

Matt. 26:69-75.

"But Peter followed him from afar off unto the court of the high priest, and entering in was sitting with the officials to see the end" (58) "Now Peter was sitting without in the court, and a maid came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus, the Galilean. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he went out into the porch, another [maid] saw him and saith to those there, This [man] also was with Jesus the Nazarene. And again he denied with an oath, I know not the man. And after a little those that stood came up and said to Peter, Truly thou also art

[one] of them, for thy speech too maketh thee manifest. Then he began to curse and to swear, I know not the man. And immediately a cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus as having said, Before a cock crow, thou wilt thrice deny me. And going forth without he wept bitterly" (69-75).

Mark 14:66-72.

"And Peter from afar off followed him, even within, into the court of the high priest, and was sitting with the officials and warming himself at the [fire] light" (54). "And as Peter was below in the court, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked on him and saith, Thou also wast with the Nazarene, Jesus. But he denied, saying, I know not [him], nor understand what thou sayest. And he went out into the fore-court, and a cock crew. And the maid seeing him again began to say to the bystanders, This is [one] of them. And he again kept denying. And after a little again the bystanders were saying to Peter, Truly thou art [one] of them, for also thou art a Galilean. But he began to curse and to swear, I know not this man of whom you speak. And immediately a second time a cock crew. And Peter recalled to mind the word, how Jesus said to him, Before a cock crow twice, thou wilt thrice deny me. And as he thought thereon he kept weeping" (66-72).

Luke 22:54-62.

"But Peter followed afar off. And when they lit a fire in the midst of the court, and sat down together, Peter sat amid them. And a certain maid, having seen him sitting at the [fire] light, and looking steadily at him, said, This

[man] also was with him. But he denied, saying, I know him not, woman. And after a short [while] another saw him and said, Thou also art [one] of them. But Peter said, Man, I am not. And after the lapse of about one hour, another affirmed strongly, saying, Of a truth, this [man] also was with him, for also he is a Galilean. But Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he was yet speaking, a cock crew, and the Lord turned and looked on Peter; and Peter called to mind the word of the Lord, how he said to him, Before a cock crow this day, thou wilt deny me thrice. And going forth without he wept bitterly" (54-62).

John 18:25-27.

"But Simon Peter followed Jesus, and the other disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the court of the high priest; but Peter was standing at the door without. The other disciple therefore, that was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the portress, and brought in Peter. The maid, the portress, saith therefore to Peter, Art thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. Now the bondmen and the officials, having made a fire of charcoal (for it was cold), were standing and warming themselves; and Peter was standing with them and warming himself" (15-18). "Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said therefore to him, Art thou also [one] of his disciples? He denied and said, I am not. One of the bondmen of the high priest, being a kinsman of him whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Again therefore Peter denied, and immediately a cock crew" (25-27).

1. It will be noticed in this corrected version of the various accounts that it is a question of the high priest's "court," not palace, which more properly applies to the governor's residence or praetorium (Matt. 27; John 18), which no doubt had its court also, as is also intimated in Mark 15:16. In Luke 22:54 the "house" of the high priest is distinguished from the "court" or open yard. Confusion on this head has obscured the truth; for Peter was not where the preliminary enquiry was held, but "without" and "below" in the court-yard. There at the light of the fire the maid that kept the door (John) taxed him with being a disciple of the Nazarene (Matt., Mark). It has been assumed by some that John puts the first denial in the porch or forecourt; but this is quite to overrule the import of ver. 18, which seems to me appended for the special purpose of guarding against such an error, and adds a correction in the characteristic manner of our Evangelist; just as ver. 24 is meant parenthetically, to correct the hasty assumption that the first general interrogatory was before Annas to whom Christ was led first; whereas it really was before Caiaphas to whom Annas sent him "bound," though it may probably have been only across the same court. Luke adds the distinct shade that the maid spoke of him, and not only to him.

2. Unbelief, if it cannot torture an additional fact in the first denial into a discrepancy, thinks that there is a plain contradiction in the second denial. For Matthew speaks of another maid, Mark of the same maid as before (the portress of John), Luke of "another" but a "man." To all this however John gives the key with moral certainty by his use of the plural — "they said therefore." For thus he clearly shows, even to a doubter,

that what each of the three Synoptists says may be all and equally authentic; as the believer is entitled to accept unreservedly without any such demonstration. The two maids and a man may have taken part, in what the fourth Gospel thus sums up. It is plain from Matthew and Mark that the second charge was, in presence of several bystanders on the spot, probably the porch or forecourt whither Peter had gone out, and that Peter's denial was then repeated (ἠρνεῖτο), and not a single act like the first (ἠρνήσατο). Is it not then humiliating to find a scholar like Grotius saying, παιδισκή τις. quomodo articulum interdum sumi certum est? And J. Piscator one of the most learned of the early Protestant commentators had said (iii. 143, ed. third) pretty much the same thing before, as others since down to J. G. Rosenmüller, to avoid naming more. But the Greek article is never even pleonastic, neither can it interchange with the indefinite pronoun. The only natural if not necessary reference is to the same maid as before, though we know from Matthew of another maid also, who joined in the same second charge. Prof. Michaelis is represented in Bowyer's Conjectures on the New Testament (Ed. iv. 176) as asking, "Is there no MS. where the article ἡ is wanting?" To this Dr. H. Owen answers, "No MS. yet known omits the article, nor is it necessary that any should. It is apparent, from their own mode of expression compared with that of St. John's, that the three first Evangelists never attended to the order; their point being only to assure us, that Peter denies our Saviour thrice. Hence it appears to me that the maid here meant is not the same with her that is mentioned in ver. 67, but the principal maid;" etc. No statement can be more rash and baseless as to the neglect of order here in any one of the Gospels, nor had

John any superiority over the rest. And as to MSS. the fact is, that out of the vast sum of N.T. Gr. copies, Lambeth 1179,1 a cursive of the tenth century, is the only manuscript known to omit the article here. But the object is as plain as the mis-rendering in the Memphitic of Wilkins and the Diez cod., as well as in some of the old Latin copies. The omission therefore must be regarded as a mere slip or, if intended, a fraud; for no sane mind of competent knowledge can question that it is inserted in the genuine readings of the Gospel. Dr. Owen's alternative is even less sound; for there is not the smallest reason to doubt that every one of the Synoptists tallies in the order, and that the points of difference do not clash with the perfect accuracy of each. Fresh facts are in no way an inconsistency,

3. Not less must one deplore the misguided efforts of Grotius, Wetstein, as to force Luke into a reluctant repetition of the same thing with Matthew, instead of believing what each says. No scholar doubts that not only in poetry but in prose the masc. is used where one might expect fem., if an indefinite expression be desired as in Acts 9:37. The object seems rhetorical. What has such a principle to do with the case before us? Nobody would think of any but a male in 58, were it not taken for granted that the third Gospel states afresh what is in the first; but as we have seen, the second differs, and why not the third also? And to conceive that to the maid Peter says γύναι (57), and to "another" or different person he says Ἄνθρωπε, and yet means as before a woman is surely a harsh interpretation for most, if not in ambiguous eyes. The true answer is that the language of John describing the second appeal to Peter is such as admits of all three taking part to the same effect.

4. How painful then to think of sentiments so disparaging to scripture from one who so sincerely sought to understand, explain, and defend it, as Dean Alford in his Commentary (i. 283, ed. 5)! — “It would appear to me that, for some reason, John was not so accurately informed of this [the third] as of the other denials.” What notions of inspiration a man must have formed to allow himself the use of such language! God is excluded from the scheme, or at least inspiration does not mean His conveying the truth perfectly through chosen instruments. The Holy Spirit who empowered John to write could not but be cognizant of all; and if He undertook to reveal the things of God in words taught of Him, was it left to the precarious will and uncertain mind of the writers employed, or carried out according to His known wisdom? An imperfect standard misleads, so much the more because a standard from God cannot but be accepted and applied with the assurance that it is perfect. That an enemy should impugn the truth of God’s word is natural; but if its friends unconsciously yet really undermine its character and authority, by misusing the human channel so as to ignore and deny its exemption from error and the divine purpose which makes it what it is, what can one do but mourn as well as warn? The statement here (and alas! how common it is in our day) assumes that the differences in the Gospels are the effects of man’s weakness and want of accurate information, instead of their variety being the fruit of the Spirit’s wisdom in each contributing to a fulness of truth the more wonderful in result.

Even if one only considers the accounts of bare facts, it is John who alone tells us of the leading of the Lord before Annas. It is from him we learn that the maid who

first charged the apostle was the portress, and that it was through the other disciple that Peter was let in to the scene of his fall. It is to him we owe the remarkable link which reconciles at one stroke in the simplest and surest way the diverging accounts of the three Synoptists as to the second denial. And he alone lets us know the interesting connection of the slave, wounded of Peter and healed of Christ, with him who was the most pointed of those who drew out the third and most aggravated denial. And this even on human grounds, is the one who "was not so accurately informed!" Never were accounts so evidently above the just imputation of one copying another; never was harmony demonstrably more perfect, without hiding or diminishing but fully unfolding the difference, of each succeeding account. Nor can any fact be more triumphantly apparent, not withstanding discrepancies to the superficial glance, than their really consenting testimony, the more minutely investigated the better, to the full truth of the story as a whole.

Matthew and Mark alone name Peter's going out into the porch or fore-court. How weak and absurd, not to say irreverent, is the reasoning that John does not seem possessed of this detail, which Luke mentions no more than he! Mark speaks twice of Peter's "warming himself," as John twice of his "standing and warming himself;" but how does it demonstrate that Matthew and Luke knew not this detail?

II. But let me now proceed to draw out the indications that the characteristic manner, in which each of these inspired accounts differ from the rest, has its peculiarity impressed on it by God to serve His distinctively aim, no

less than as a whole, without which, it may be added, we could not have the truth as now.

1. In the first Gospel the Spirit traces the Lord as Emmanuel, Jehovah-Messiah, but rejected of the Jew; and consequently the change of dispensation, which brings in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and the assembly, but associates the rejected Messiah meanwhile with the despised poor of the flock in Galilee, the pledge of resumed associations with such in the latter day, before the Son of man comes on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Conformably with this, the unquestionable design of the Gospel, we may notice that the account of the denial here brings into prominence Jesus “the Galilean” (69) and “the Nazarene” (71), in the first and second denials, as is implied also of Peter in the third (73). Nor do the other Gospels (save Mark for another reason) so bring out the Messiah disowned by His own disciple before the feeble lips of women, or with such aggravation when others pressed it on the third occasion. Was this coincidence an accident on Matthew’s part? or the fruit of the inspiring Spirit’s purpose? The last without doubt, the peculiarities of form being due to divine wisdom and truth.

2. Every one at home in the second Gospel knows how devoted Mark is to unfolding the service of the Son of God here below, and the effect of this governing design on all that is omitted as well as inserted from first to last, inclusive of the closing verses which B do not exhibit (to the serious detriment of the true conclusion of the book). The total failure of Peter as a servant is drawn out minutely, as Christ’s grace toward him shines on to the end so much the more brightly. Here we see as

in John his selfishness and his “evil communications” or “company,” and the effect on “good manners.” Here as well as in Luke is mentioned the taunt of his Galilean dialect as fixing an unwelcome association on Peter. Here his failure repeated under the pressure first drew out his shame and fear of confessing Jesus the Nazarene. Here only is noticed the warning of the Lord in its most specific form (Mark 14:30), and here too its no less specific fulfilment (68, 72). How gracious of the Master! how base in the servant, only to find His goodness still more abundant! Truly, where sin abounded, grace over-abounded! What a contrast the terms of the third denial with his public preaching shortly, to such as these bystanders, of Jesus as a known Saviour and Lord! So is he a self-confident servant to learn of the only Perfect Servant, and by grace become faithful at length. Is all this defect and chance? Or is it divinely purposed? If it can be only of God, learn and cavil not.

3. In Luke we see the Son of man who is Son of God. Perfectly a man He is, the Man in whom the Father delighted, whose delights were with the sons of men. He is the Mediator between God and man, who came into the world to save sinners, Himself the Pattern not only of all that pleased God in dependence and obedience, but of all grace toward all men, Gentiles no less than Jews. Hence, in approaching the case before us, this Gospel alone tells us of Jesus touching the wounded slave’s ear and healing. him, though all set forth the disciple’s misguided zeal. Luke also finishes the account of Peter’s fall before he speaks of the preliminary indignities put on the Lord by the priests and elders with their servants, hastens to the council when it was day,

and while fully speaking of Pilate, as the rest do, alone lets us know Herod's part in these scenes of cruel impiety.

A maid's steady look and charge sufficed to scare the bold man who failed to believe the word and watch unto prayer. A man takes up the second charge, leaving John alone, it would seem, and setting on Peter, "Thou also art one of them," as indeed began the maid who certainly knew John; for we may reject utterly the assumption that the high priest was too great a personage to have the son of Zebedee for an acquaintance. "A mean fisherman" John was not, though Calvin says it (ignobilis erat piscator, Opp. vii. 161, col. i); and even had it been so, how strange to ignore that the proudest may have intimate relations with the lowly for reasons too numerous and patent for a word more to be needed! This notion might justly be called "levis conjectura;" and Heumann's hypothesis of Judas Iscariot is, as Alford remarks, too absurd to deserve confutation. But Luke, as all the rest, only supposes this; John alone tells his own tale of shame, as often without naming but the very reverse of concealing himself. Lastly, another unnamed man taxes Peter stoutly (which only receives its explanation in John's Gospel), and, the third denial follows in terms peculiar to Luke and characteristic of him only, who makes "man" so prominent. "While he was yet speaking," says Luke (another touch of his), "a cock crew." But there is added a fresh trait, which could be nowhere else so appropriately as in the Gospel which pre-eminently gives us grace dealing with the heart: "the Lord turned" (for He was in an elevated hall facing His accusers and His back toward Peter in the courtyard), "and looked on Peter, and Peter called" etc.

The mind that could conceive these differences to be mistakes, or even thrown by hazard into the Gospels where they are, might consistently imagine the world to be the result of a concourse of atoms. And yet Dean Alford is but one of a class of well-meaning men who have so little faith in scripture as to say, without the least thought of impropriety, that “the trial he (Luke) omits altogether, having found no report of it!” What “report” had he of the agony in Gethsemane, though he alone tells us of an angel appearing to strengthen Him, when His sweat became as great drops of blood? He might have had Matthew’s Gospel and Mark’s long enough before Him without that of which there could be no reporter; for who of men was there to see or hear? Oh! how grievous is the unbelief of believers.

4. But surely believers are not blind to the divine character of John’s presentation of things here as everywhere. Alas! it is not only Dean Alford who, we saw, apologises for John’s lack of accurate information; nor is it only men like Olshausen, Wieseler, Tischendorf, speak of a contradiction! between the Synoptists and John as to the locality of the denial. Living writers of eminence hint at a confusion in our Evangelist’s account owing to the excitement of a popular ferment. Happily inspiration, though it may use, is independent of, sight or hearing as well as report and information. And what evidence of divinely impressed design can be plainer or more conclusive, than that John, nearer to the Lord than any of the Synoptists during His agony, does not relate it; and that, none of these, not even Matthew, tells us how the band all went backward and fell to the ground before Him who was the Son, as surely as Jesus the Nazarene.

It is a pleasure to cite Calvin here, more right than he, is sometimes on the difficulties of unbelief: even here one might wish a stronger faith and a deeper reverence. He says (ibid.) that John was not too eager ("curiosus," which Mr. Pringle, in the Edinburgh Translation Series, was not justified in rendering "very exact") in drawing up the history; because he is satisfied with framing a brief summary. "For after relating that Peter once denied Christ, he intermingles other matters, and then returns to the other two denials. Hence inattentive readers inferred that the first denial took place in Annas' house. No such thing however do the words convey, which rather state clearly that it was the high priest's maid who drove Peter to deny Christ." And Calvin reads ver. 24 as a parenthesis, correcting the idea that the narrative in 19-23 was of what took place at Annas', and explaining that it was before the high priest, Caiaphas. This is the inattention that led Dean Alford after others to deny the bearing of ἀπέστειλεν "sent" in 24; for its quasi-pluperfect force is contextual simply, which is quite notorious in temporal subordinate sentences, and not only in relative, but independent sentences if they contain some supplementary notice, which is exactly the fact here.

Annas, the ex-high-priest, soon high-priest again (for all was out of course), is very briefly introduced to mark how completely the Son of God was rejected. Before, Caiaphas was the interrogator while Peter denied his Master; and the tone is here no more different as compared with the other three Gospels than is always found. There is no solid ground for imagining the portress to have charged Peter immediately after entry. It was really at the fire, as in other Gospels. All is open

and general in the account of John. And the second denial, so far from being a difficulty, we have seen to be the solution of the difficulties which hasty minds found in the Synoptists; as the third sheds an important light on Luke and indeed all the rest, in the keen asseveration of Malchus' kinsman, who with the rest might yet more alarm the guilty apostle's mind. Oh! the sad spectacle of Peter, and even John drawn by his own hand in the power of the Spirit, where Jesus stands alone in the majesty of grace and truth, immeasurably superior to all who presumed to judge Him, where His own who ought to have received Him are manifestly and immensely worse than the most hardened of Gentiles, and seal God's judgment on their infidel declaration that "We have no King but Caesar." Now which of the Evangelists has the function of bringing this out habitually? John, who here does so above all.

Unbelief then is as inexcusable as it is blind. "By faith we understand."

1 It was a MS. brought to England by Prof. J. D. Carlyle at the beginning of this century, who died less than three years after. As Dr. H. Owen died nearly six mouths before the Cambridge Professor of Arabic got back from abroad, he could not have known of this peculiar reading, which is curious rather than important.

The Sinner Saved - Luke 7:36-50

(BT Vol. 20, p. 68.)

Immediately before the deeply affecting interview between our Lord and the woman that was a notorious sinner in the town into which He had passed, we have Him pronouncing on the moral state of mankind — more particularly of those that had the word of God, the Jews. For we must remember that among such our Lord was manifested. They were not, like the heathen, ignorant of the scriptures. They were entrusted with that great privilege, and professed to prize and preached the word. They had no excuse on the ground of sitting in darkness. All the word of God then revealed was theirs; and yet what could compare with that generation, as the Lord says? John the Baptist they did not like: he was too strict for them. And when the Son of Man, the Saviour Himself, followed, they called Him by still more shameful names: — He was too loose for them. Thus, it does not matter what may be the testimony God gives, man has always some reason for refusing.

“But wisdom is justified of all her children.” In the Gospel of Matthew wisdom is justified of her children, because the Lord there welcomes the weary and heavy-laden that come to Him, and gives them rest. But Luke was led to specify in the Pharisee’s house the guilty woman of the city. It is in truth the Lord anticipating what God was going to do in the gospel everywhere. So he says, “Wisdom is justified of all her children.” Who could have expected that henceforth a child of wisdom was to be found in a notorious child of folly? This was her known and evil character; but when God drew her to

the feet of Jesus, all was changed. Such is the power of His grace in Jesus. And He has taken care that this admirable fountain shall not be closed, having employed Luke thus to point it out in His word. Who else would have thought of a robber reconciled to God on the cross? who of a sinful woman picked out from the mass of human beings? a reprobate character saved by faith and sent away in peace?

“But wisdom is justified of all her children.” The robber vindicated the wisdom of, God; for he confessed the Messiah when the High Priest, the Roman Procurator, and the Tetrarch of Galilee, in that day, mocked, rejected, and condemned the Lord and Saviour. That robber gave the lie to the wisdom of the world.

People thought not a little of education in those days; and they think a great deal more of it nowadays; but where were the “cultured”? Not on. the side of Jesus, but against Him. The robber had nothing to boast on that score; but he justified the wisdom of God against all the pride, knowledge, power, and glory of man. They all rejected the Lord to their own everlasting shame and ruin. The robber at the last moment was saved; only then he became wise, for he had been Satan’s dupe all his life before; but how gracious that divine wisdom which can take up its abode in the breast of a hardened criminal at the last!

And here was a woman that no decent person had the smallest acquaintance with, who had sunk into the depths of depravity; here is this woman brought forward to vindicate divine wisdom in another way altogether. There are two characteristics of human wickedness. The one is violence; the other is corruption. The woman

clearly was a sample of corruption, as the robber of violence. But the distinctive truth of the gospel is, that redemption depends not upon what you bring to the Redeemer, but on what God gives in and from Him. There is not a single quality in your heart or life that could commend you to God; nay, if you read them in the light of God, you would yourself condemn all. “But God commendeth His love toward us [not ours towards Him], in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

It was impossible to give a greater proof of love than dying for His enemies, and enemies in mind by wicked works, not merely through some mistaken cause or misunderstanding. Sinners, because powerless, are the very persons God takes up and saves; therefore let no person whatever, man or woman, aged or youthful say, “I am too bad to be saved.” It is just because you are so bad that you need such a Saviour. Therefore does Jesus bring God’s saving grace to you. He does not expect any good from you as you are. You must first receive the blessing; then, as Luke proceeds to set forth, when the grace of the Saviour is applied, when the heart bows to Him, His grace transforms the man or woman so that he or she becomes a totally different person. Yet not the transformation saves, but only Christ; and this gives the entire glory to God. If it were the good the Christian afterwards does that saves the soul, it would be man reaping the glory But it is not so. Since the fall, man is altogether bad, as well as guilty. God no doubt works a great change in the heart that receives the Lord Jesus; but it is not his new moral qualities, not the difference of his life practically, that procures salvation, nothing but Jesus; and therefore by believing on Jesus. For only the sovereign grace of God, coming down to man in Christ

His own Son, could save the sinner from his sins and from the judgment of God. This we are here given to know; as God has written it for the purpose.

If the story of this woman were quite exceptional, we should not have it presented as it is. Many things of great moment took place that were not historically recorded in Scripture. For instance, at the beginning of the Bible, we have not a single word about the creation of angels. Man would have put it there if he had written a Bible, instead of God alluding incidentally elsewhere as to an already accomplished fact. For God, in writing the Bible through inspired witnesses, does not state when He made angels. Why not? Because it does not fall within His design to disclose it as history. And to this faith always adheres. Let us then not doubt that what God reveals is at the right time and place, not otherwise. So here we do not find the new and blessed effects of grace in the woman, real as they were, enlarged upon. It must have done souls harm. They would fall from grace in seeking to first acquire good qualities. Even as it is souls too often strive to win for themselves a good character in order to be pardoned, and thereby Christ and His work are annulled.

Scripture simply presents the Saviour, and in the background the host that invited Him into his house, a man without faith, though a Pharisee. A woman also came there uninvited, the last person seemingly to be attracted by the grace of Jesus. But God showers grace on souls that least deserve it. What a witness is here of the way of grace with one that had been altogether abandoned to evil! Is it not enough to enlarge our thoughts of God and to humble the pride of human nature? Where in the Gospels did grace produce more

beautiful and deep effects, or more immediately, than in this poor woman without a character? What produced it will produce it again. The woman was the object of mercy; the transforming power was Christ. Indelible was the impression that the Saviour made on that woman's heart, and the consequence was that His reflection shone out in her ways. It would be hard to find greater humility, a clearer repentance, or a more devoted heart. And this all wrought so soon! How great must be, therefore, the efficacy of the Saviour's grace! This is what God commends. It is indeed His own love to the sinner; and faith can commend it not only to any hitherto unconverted, but to the converted that hesitate. What a reproof for any, converted or not, to be left behind by such a woman!

Let us then look into the Holy Spirit's account of this transaction. Simon, the Pharisee, asked the Lord to his house. No doubt he thought he was acting in a generous manner. But while the Lord and the company were there, a stranger entered — "a woman in the city that was a sinner." Those terms are sufficiently emphatic. They do not mean a sinner in the ordinary or broad sense that we all sinned, but in that peculiar force which made the woman notorious in the town; and everybody knows what this is. What drew her? Jesus, nothing but Jesus.

The first thing for your attention is that God does not make the path of faith an easy one. His word is truth, His call is simple, so far as the message is concerned. He uses all plainness of speech to sinners, no matter where they be. But there are always difficulties for the soul. There is a lion in the way of every one that believes in the Lord Jesus. The Destroyer tries to hinder, just as

much as there is a Saviour that loves to save. The “lion” in the way of the woman was that Jesus was “at meat” in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Such a man, having no faith in God’s grace always stands upon morality or forms or both. The man that prided himself on his religion would be exceedingly disgusted with an immoral woman coming into his house, especially when he had company.

What emboldened the woman to go there and then? Apply it to your own case. Supposing a party invited to dinner, what would you feel at the intrusion of a worthless character, especially a woman of scandalous life? There is not a single man from a lord to a labourer but would feel that his castle, great or small, was invaded. Would not the labourer be as indignant as the lord? Nor was the intruder insensible in the least; yet grace drew her notwithstanding, and gave her the needed courage to go at all cost. Whose grace? Her own? It was Christ’s — entirely and exclusively the attractive power of His goodness. She felt herself so much in distress about her sins, so much in earnest to cast her burden on the Saviour, that she said as it were to herself, “There is only One that can aid me; He who has been giving sight to the blind, and strength to the lame; He who cleanses the leper, and bids the paralytic rise; He who has been blessing even a Gentile and healing his servant; He who quickened a dead man as he was carried to the grave, might perhaps deign to speak pardon to a depraved and wretched woman like me.

What was the way of grace with her soul? The good news of Him by the Holy Spirit touched the springs of her heart, so that her awakened conscience could not but go with guilt to His feet. When it is but an idea or a

feeling, there is not such earnestness of purpose. Shame, fear, pride, etc., outweigh and turn aside. Naturally the woman might have thought the difficulties insuperable, the moment most inopportune. What would the Pharisee say and do at such a liberty on her part? And the holy Saviour! How could she venture to go near Him, especially in such circumstances as these? “Ah, but” (whispered the still small voice to her) “there may never be another opportunity. You may never see or hear Him again. Go now; seek Him at once.” Sense of need in herself and of grace in Him silenced every doubt and refused yielding to any fear. Not a moment must be lost. Her sins, her grievous sins, drove her to Him. He was there; Pharisee, disciples, all the world, could not keep her back from the Only One that availed her. She was in good earnest. Are you, my dear friend? Yet you know you have sins on your conscience warning you of God’s judgment for evermore? How awful to put off, to make excuse, to trifle with His grace! For is not the Saviour always passing by when you hear the gospel? Do you neglect so great salvation? Is He not near to everyone of us? You are called to go neither to the heavens nor into the depths to find Him. “The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart which we preach.... that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

I remember a friend that was saved by these very words, and a remarkable man he was, one most acceptable in a certain city in the north of England. Private and public dinners were not quite complete in the place without him. He was the man for a good story and a bright song, able to enter genially into all that occupied the company.

But he was utterly without God, living only for this world, pleasing himself and other people, but with no sense of sin, and no care for God. He had a friend who was rather an imitator of this. You know there are many imitative wits, but not many original ones. Now this friend was regarded as of the former class and passed off jokes like the latter in his humble way. The lesser had a grave brother who was the constant butt of the greater's pleasantry.

One day the greater met the grave man, and asked him "How is your brother"? The grave man looked graver still and said, "He is saved." The effect was as though a chasm opened at his feet. He was astonished at the answer and the fact alleged. He had never heard of such a thing in his life before. A man saved! particularly a man he knew, who had no more thought of God than himself, not the least concern for his salvation, but living in pleasure and vanity! When he recovered his breath, he asked how that was. Why, said the grave man, do you not know the scripture? quoting the words from Romans. "You do not mean to say that is in the Bible," said he. Some that do not read the word of God, when once arrested, are much more affected than those only reading it as a duty. This shows how carelessly men read: it ought not to be; but it is a common fact. The words seemed to him wondrous. He apparently had not heard them before, though of course he had; he did not remember the words because he knew nothing of the truth conveyed by them. Asking where was this passage, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved," he was told the epistle, chapter, and verse. As soon as his public position

permitted, he got alone with God, and did not leave his retirement until he by the faith of Christ was brought to Himself.

That man lived a devoted Christian, an excellent and earnest preacher of the gospel, and departed to be with Christ but a short time ago. The story may show that what God describes in the Bible is going on day by day. Do not think it is something out of your reach, or not urgent on you now. Why should this man and that woman be saved, and you not? Why should you turn a deaf ear to those gracious words of God, mighty to save? Why not follow the converted robber, or the abandoned woman, brought out of all their iniquity to God? Alas! there are men and women too proud, as themselves say, to be saved in the same way as either. But, my friends, have you no fear of being lost with the other robber? There are only two ways, like the two robbers, the one lost and the other saved. Are you then too proud to be saved with the believing robber, but not too proud to be lost with the impenitent robber? What is this but supreme folly, madness, and sin? Is it not the blinding power of the enemy, God's enemy and yours?

Think of their endless doom who thus live and die; think now of that awful companionship through all eternity. Think on the other hand of the blessed on high, many no doubt taken out of the gutters of this world, out of all their wallowing in open wickedness or selfish frivolity and pleasure, yea out of darkness and evil and ungodliness even when veiling themselves in a vain mantle of religion. Oh what a blessed portion "to be with Christ" in the blessed throng! The word declares that the Lord Jesus gives eternal life for heaven, and will adjudge to hell. All depends on how you treat the Lord

Jesus. Those who believe God honour His Son. See how this woman bore herself toward Him. She was aroused in conscience, drawn in heart, and so filled with good courage that she appears not to have thought of the Pharisee or of any one else in the house but the One on Whom her soul was concentrated. She sought only the Saviour, caring not for aught else that she might be saved. She went because of her sense of her sins and utter ruin. She knew how unable she was to resist temptation and refuse sin; she. knew that, having sinned habitually and in the face of shame, she would go on, sinning to the end. Without Him she could do nothing.

But what about you? It is not a question what kind of sin is committed. It is very encouraging for the soul that the Saviour does not disdain the grossest sinner, the most unworthy man or woman. This ought to encourage you. If you say, “I have not been so bad a sinner as that,” remember that it is not the gross sinners merely that are cast into hell but sinners, whatever the sort or degree of sin theirs may be; and without doubt you are not saved, unless you receive Christ by the Holy Ghost for your soul. This is what the woman did; and mark her conduct. Assuredly she showed her faith by her works: this is always God’s way. It is not that works could save of themselves for a moment; but faith working by love is most acceptable to God. This is the kind of works the epistle of James speaks of. Therein are specified two examples, Abraham, and Rahab.

Now it is plain that the work of Abraham, if it had not been of faith, would have been the worst possible. Can you conceive an act so evil as for him to have offered up his son Isaac with his own hands, unless it had been a trial of his faith in the words of God? And what does the

Holy Spirit tell us of Rahab? She received the spies that came to destroy her king and country. This would have been another execrable work, if it had not been bowing to God in faith. The one and only thing that made it acceptable to God, was that He was leading His people, and she knew it and was obedient. This was the difference between her and every other in Jericho. Rahab alone had faith in the living God of Israel, and this saved herself and her family. As Abraham gave up to God's will the resistance of all natural affections in the sacrifice of his son, assured that God would give Isaac back, so with Rahab and her feelings of patriotic duty. She would have been shocked at the idea of entertaining the spies if she had not seen the authority of God at stake. Was she to fight against God? It is the same God fully revealed in Christ Who has to do with you now.

God in view of eternity is calling on you to hear Christ's word, even commanding to believe the name of His Son (1 John 3:23), yea commanding men everywhere to repent. And how can one truly show repentance? By turning away from all sins and self in the sight of God. The attempt to avoid evil and get good by watching and praying, by reading the word of God and taking the sacrament, is not repentance. It is a religious but unbelieving abuse of scripture and of those institutions of God. What is there more blessed than the word of God and prayer, than baptism and the Lord's supper, in their proper places and for their right ends? But if one make them the means of salvation, putting them in place of the Saviour, it is only less evil than the worship of the mass, and prayer to the virgin and the saints, or anything alike idolatrous.

But God, rich in mercy toward sinners, drew the woman that was a sinner, to the Lord Jesus. Who else could meet her guilt and shame and misery? And we are told that she brought with her an alabaster box or flask of ointment. It is better to say unguent (for when men speak of “ointment,” not a few think of provision for a wound or sore). It was a precious unguent fit for a king’s use. But those unhappy women, living by their shameless ways, often spend recklessly on their faces in order to recommend their persons. It is not said she bought the unguent for the purpose, but that she “brought” it. One can scarce doubt that she bought it for her own purposes. All was now changed. It was the most precious thing she had in the world, and therefore she brought it with a full heart for Jesus. She did not consult the apostles nor ask the virgin Mary. Yet nothing could be more comely, or appropriate, than her conduct. Who taught her? The Spirit of God. It was because her heart was opened to the power of the grace of Jesus. She needed no tongue of man to tell her now. In the depths of her soul she knew by the teaching of God’s Spirit that there was none to compare with Jesus; and she was right.

This entirely changed all her thoughts and affections. Christ was now her life, however little she understood it, transforming accordingly her character, and forming new ways. Instead of being as formerly the brazen-faced woman, henceforth she became modest and humble. Christ made her forget herself altogether — a thing otherwise impossible to any; and how in contrast with all her life before! Why should we wonder? Such is the true and spontaneous effect of Christ on the soul that believes on Him. Who could fail to observe the marked

change? and all the more because she forgot the others and hid herself behind the Lord Jesus.

Up to that day she sought the eye of men; now she thought of none but that Saviour. What now were any other eyes to her? Time was when she planted herself boldly and tried to catch if she could get the least admiration from anyone; but now for her soul “Jesus only”! And when she ventured in with her cruse of unguent, she stood behind at His feet weeping. What an unexpected marvel of moral beauty! It was the life of Christ manifesting itself in suited ways. She was standing as a penitent behind Him. Never did she think of coming before His face? She did not reason on it; but in truth He could give peace behind, just as readily as in front. Behind was her place. She knew by a divinely given instinct that He Who gave eyes to the blind and raised the dead would understand her need and distress and repentance. Yes, and she understood him better than by any human intelligence.

Alas! that any should wish to reduce the Lord Jesus as much as possible to the level of an ordinary man. “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also.” The woman knew better, as she stood behind at His feet weeping. It is known, of course, that they did not sit on chairs as we do, but when taking their meals, lay reclining on couches with their feet stretched out for their convenience behind them. Thus the woman could reach Christ’s feet readily, because they appearing without would be accessible to her as He lay reclining at table. Not only did she weep, but “began to wash His feet with tears.” Who would have thought of this but a woman deeply feeling and changed from all her old

ways? She also wiped His feet with the hairs of her head. Ah! how often had those hairs been like nets to catch loose and foolish men: now they were used to wipe the feet of Jesus. “And she kissed His feet, and anointed them with the unguent.”

There were those who looked upon that scene with very different eyes. First of all turn to Simon: he had little estimate of the Lord when he asked Him to his house. This was plain enough in that he did not kiss Him (which was the usual mark of kindness in a host); nor did he give water for His feet, which was only common courtesy. He perhaps said to himself, “A man like that ought to feel highly honoured, if he is asked to my house, and I give him a dinner.” But now that he saw a loose woman thus engaged, he was sure that Jesus could not be what he was thought. A prophet to his mind must be more rigid than a Pharisee; and assuredly a Pharisee would have walked on the other side of the road with a scowl at the woman, if he deigned to notice her at all. All turned in his mind against the Saviour. “He spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner.” How far from the blessed truth that Jesus came for sinners, not for little only but for confessedly great sinners! Who can be conceived worse than “the lost”? What does it mean now, what by-and-by when God enters into judgment? Simon entirely missed the mind of God in his thought. He was like the Pharisees generally in the darkness of nature, whilst flattering himself that he was a guide of the blind and an instructor of the foolish.

The Lord proved that He was a prophet and infinitely more than a prophet. He read the man’s heart as well as

the woman's, and, yet more, He revealed God's love. Not that Simon uttered a word but thought his evil saying within himself. "And Jesus, answering," i.e., the unuttered judgment of Simon's mind, "said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee," giving the parable of the two debtors, the great and the small. "And when they had nothing to pay, he [the creditor] frankly forgave them both. [Tell me] which of those therefore will love him most" (ver. 42). "I suppose," said Simon, "he to whom he forgave most." Thus did Simon unconsciously condemn himself and vindicate the grace of God. There was a man without real sense of sin, with no sense whatever of forgiveness and consequently without fear of God (Ps. 130:4), to say nothing of love. There was the woman who truly acknowledged her enormous debt in presence of grace. Her love was real and great; in faith she came to Him Who will in no wise cast out, and did not doubt that the great Saviour would look on the great sinner, compassionating even her; and so He did. "She loved much," Simon not at all. As our Lord said, Simon had rightly judged the truth in the abstract, but, having no faith, he hated and despised the Lord.

It was equally plain that the woman loved after a new and divine sort. What produced this? Faith in Jesus. Love without faith is of no account with God, absolutely worthless, merely human. Faith is the root, and love is the fruit as here. "And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss

my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment" (vers. 44-46).

O my friends, why not go and spread out your guilt before Him? Why tarry longer in willing bondage to Satan, when the Deliverer is near to save you? He knows all already, so that you may honestly confess all to the Lord. And how did she tell it? By her tears, her ways, her heart. Nor was she wrong. For He recognised the faith His own grace produced. The word of God speaks of doing the truth, as she did now. Words of truth are good; but acts are more powerful sometimes than any words of man. And there was the only Man that could read the heart and interpret it justly, truly, and graciously. This was everything to the woman, now turned from darkness to light, sanctified to God by faith in Christ, a jewel that will shine in His presence for evermore.

Dear souls, are you to be one of His to receive forgiveness and inheritance among.he sanctified like her? The only way is to be at His feet now, taking the place of the lost sinner at once. Doubt not His salvation by grace. It is not exactly saying that from a lost sinner you may be a saved sinner, but a sinner saved. There is no small difference between the two. A "saved sinner" is a common phrase, which might lead a man to think that he may sin after being saved without any ado; that God allows him quite naturally to go sinning and sinning. But the word to the family of God is, "we write unto you that ye sin not" (1 John. 2) For the sinner, when he obeys the call of God, becomes the saint, in other words a man separated from sin, the world, and Satan, unto God. Nobody denies that the old man is still there as a fact,

but to his faith crucified with Christ, that he should not serve sin. But in himself what weakness, and how exposed to snares, and his path full of dangers! He is like one going through a furnace with his pockets full of powder. He needs a mighty Guide and Protector; and this and far more is Christ, on Whom God calls him to hang as a child clings to its mother. Without Him the Christian can do nothing acceptable to God — can bear no fruit.

We need, therefore, all through the journey to depend on the Saviour. So the Woman was doing — looking to the Saviour and to Him only. As she listened, what must have been her joy when she heard the Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of the world, vindicate her and God's wisdom with that erring child of folly, now by His grace a child of wisdom evermore! Whatever may have been your folly, it is high time now to become a child of the wisdom that comes down from above. Beware of the earthly kind, earthly, sensual, devilish. What He was to the woman once so depraved, He will be even to you in the midst of your sins to deliver you from them. Do not wait to get a better character, but go as you are to the Lord. We do not know that this woman had been even the day before brought to hate herself and her sins. Even at the moment she entered the house, she was known only and significantly as "a sinner." What time or means or power of reform had she? No, it was Jesus attracted her; grace, yea God, she found in Him. It is the grace of the Lord Jesus that produced faith; and all that is good and holy follows: grace sees to it. Beyond doubt I am called to believe. If I believe not, I neither judge my sins and sinfulness, nor know the true God. Jesus is nothing to me. If I believe in Him, it is all mine; and all

yours if and when you believe in Him. How good is our God! He has sent His own Son to do the work of redemption, to suffer for our sins. So Christ applies the parable.

Do not confound this woman with Mary in John's Gospel (not named by Matthew and Mark). The one anointing took place at the end of the Lord's ministry, the other far earlier which Luke here records. The one was the anointing of Himself by a saint devoted to Him; the other by a sinner without a character, just being brought to God. They were wholly different facts. We do not find Mary of Bethany weeping over the Lord, or any sign of penitence there. If you speak of some resemblance, how could there but be, if divine love worked in the heart of either the lately abandoned woman or the long proved child of God? Some have supposed her to be Mary Magdalene. This is another of the fallacies of tradition, and irreconcilable with scripture. Mary of Magdala comes forward first in the next chapter (Luke 8) as a stranger. "And certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others." These are brought before us as altogether new persons. This Mary is nowhere spoken of as having been a woman of loose life; hers was the dreadful lot of having seven demons dwelling in her — an extremely awful case as a prey to the power of the devil, whether men believe it or not. Such is the difference that scripture makes between the two women.

To confound the penitent with Mary of Bethany, or Mary of Magdala, is one of those moral blunders theologians make with regard to the Bible, of which none would

dream if dealing with any other book. Men let loose their fancy when they read or write on the Bible. They betray far less with other books. They like to lower God's book. Take up the Bible as a mere divinity student, and you will never understand it. You must approach God and it as a sinner. The scribe of this age, the "higher critic," is insensible and lost to all its blessing. The Bible judges man; but if I set up for such unworthy criticism, I am judging the Bible, which is the essence of infidelity; for who and what is man to judge God and His word? Yet this spirit of infidelity was never so rife as now in Christendom, and never before so abundant in Great Britain, to say nothing of less favoured lands, whatever some prophesy of a good time coming. It is a day of rebuke and blasphemy. It is an hour of many antichrists. The Word personal is humanised, no less than the written word. May grace give you who believe the love and reverence of the new born penitent!

The person who reads this divine story in faith gets a true and holy and profitable view of God's way with a sinner. The grace of the Lord does not tell us who the woman was. There are men and women curious to know all about her. What the Christian wants to learn is just what God reveals. The Lord threw a gracious veil over the woman's name. It is enough for us to know that, bad as she had been, grace saved her for ever; and this means a new life given, as well as propitiation made in due time. What edification for you or me or any to hear her name? We shall know her in heaven; we ought to see and admire the holy love which withholds her name, while disclosing her misdeeds sufficiently. We hear that her sins were "many." The Christian has not a good word to say about himself; and if you were known as God

knows you, who would have a good word to say about you? Oh, let us have the very best word to say of the Saviour, as He warrants me to say His good words to you. Indeed the Lord is a Saviour in earnest and a friend in need; a Saviour to the uttermost and above all price. The love of Christ, how rich and true! It was His love which, by the action of the Holy Ghost, reproduced its like in the woman's heart.

To His host the Lord turned and said, "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much." The word "for" is sometimes a reason why, and sometimes an evidence why. In this case it is the evidential "for," not the causative. It was not because she loved much that the Lord forgave her. It was His grace that caused her love.

But there is more. "And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." Without this declared to herself, how much would have been lost! It was a great thing to hear Him tell those that judged her and misjudged Him (which was far worse), "I say unto thee (Simon), Her sins, which are many, are forgiven"; but how much more when He deigned to turn round even to her and say, "Thy sins are forgiven!" And you think all this quite extraordinary; and so indeed it is. But let no one think himself a real Christian till he is in the enjoyment of this primary blessing of the gospel. For what is it but the Lord saying to you, not of course in a dream or in a transient feeling, but by the precious word which you receive from God, "Thy sins are forgiven?" How can you sing and praise with joyful heart if your sins are not forgiven? There can be no genuine thanksgiving, no cry to Abba Father, unless you know your sins forgiven. Until then, you dread God; and fear has torment; but when consciously

forgiven on divine testimony, you rest on God's love to you in the Lord Jesus. Thenceforward, what matters anything the devil can insinuate? what man or woman say? or the world may frown?

It is impossible, some affirm (nay many a minister constantly teaches), that anyone can tell whether his sins are forgiven. Really one might think from such unbelieving ignorance that people had gone back to heathenism. Were there no Saviour, they could truly say it; and so they might, if there were no divinely inspired record of the Saviour. But for what is the written word given, but that we may know that forgiveness is as much for us who believe as for her?

What was the effect on the Jews that had the law and the prophets, but disbelieved Jesus? Very much the same as on those who, having the scripture now, hesitate to receive forgiveness at His word. "Who is this," they said, "that can forgive sins also"? They had heard of His healing the lame, feeding the hungry miraculously, performing all wonders of power and love; but now He had gone so far as to forgive sins also: who had ever heard the like of that? Was it not God's prerogative? Undoubtedly. How does the Lord answer them? He said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace." How simple, suited, and beautiful! It is not, "Thy love hath saved thee." She did love and much; yet not this but her faith saved her. You recollect, perhaps, a natural philosopher (once a missionary) who flooded the country with a little book crying up love as the greatest, thing in the world. It is the greatest thing where there is living faith; without faith it is not divine but merely human and of the creature.

Now God accepts not what is of the creature as between Him and the guilty soul. But His saving grace has appeared to bless the soul, however guilty; and the entrance of blessing into it is and must be through faith; and love and hope follow. Hence the Lord says, “Thy faith hath saved thee.” Listen not to deceivers, who are self-deceived; listen to no words of charm, no matter how sweet they sound. Friends of error maybe by your side; enemies of the truth may rise up against you. Jesus, the Son of God, is more and nearer to a needy soul than all beside. We shall all give account of ourselves to God. We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. Those. who mislead will not answer for you, nor avail you. Can you say, with that manifestation in view, that you are “always confident”? Does the Lord look you in the face and say to your spiritual ears, “Thy faith hath saved thee”? It is not in heaven He says this first, but here on earth; and what we have received from Him on earth, we will not lose in heaven. If we have not heard His voice here, do not expect to hear it there. A resurrection of judgment awaits you, if you believe not.

To the woman He said more: not only “Thy faith hath saved thee,” but “go in peace.” Think what a blessed word and passport it is, “go in peace” from the lips of Jesus! Whatever may come, let the trying circumstances be as they may, — adversity, poverty, sickness, or death; opposition, detraction, persecution, or aught else — whatever changes be in the course of this life, His word to every believer is, “go in peace.” Look therefore to God now, rest on the name of Jesus. You are about to return to your home, and to partake of the food that is needful for the body; but is not His message of forgiveness far

more than food? Is not He infinitely more than any earthly good? You hope to enjoy a refreshing rest tonight; but what is this compared with “go in peace” from the Saviour? Think of him who fared sumptuously every day; with his purple, and fine linen, and every luxury that wealthy selfishness could command; but he died and was buried, and in hell, or Hades, “he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.” May this never be your portion! The only security against it is Jesus. You require nothing good to bring. Bring your sins — yourself with all your sins on you. If you come confessing your sins, but believing on Jesus, He will blot them all out. When told to wash and be clean, do not say as Naaman, “Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel”? When the sinner comes to the fountain opened for all uncleanness, he is purified. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin.” “This is He that came by water and blood.” The grace of the Saviour can and will bless you as you are. May you not put God’s assuring word from you, nor neglect so great salvation!

Alms - Matt. 6:2-4

(B.T. Vol. N5, p. 22-23.)

The Lord takes for granted that His disciples would walk righteously before God in alms, prayer, and fasting. He is not satisfied with bidding such give to him that asks, as in the preceding chapter (Matt. 5:42), and from him that would borrow not to turn away. It is by the grace of Christ in contrast with legal narrowness. Here we have the single motive of pleasing our Father that is in the heavens. Thus would their light shine in Christ as believed and confessed by them, not their righteousness be done before men to be seen of them, which is the object expressly forbidden. As in alms we have the needy and distressed of mankind directly brought before us, we have this followed up by prayer to our Father in the closet, fasting subjoined to set aside self-indulgence for the body and leave room for humiliation before Him: thus dealing with man, apostles, self and God, in ways suited to the Father revealed by the Son.

“When therefore thou doest aims, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be glorified by men. Verily I say to you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; so that thine alms may be secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay thee.”

It is not the habit of giving or lending in liberality of heart, unstintedly and unselfishly, but that merciful consideration of the wretched and suffering, which becomes those who serve God in a fallen world (James 1:27). Each duty has its place. Both, adorn the teaching

that is of our Saviour God, as we are called to do in all things. Prudence may question, common sense hesitate; but faith acts on His word, and without faith it is impossible to please Him. It is no question of doing another's will, but of Christ's will.

In all cases the snare is ostentatious, doing our righteousness before men to be seen of them. Otherwise, says our Lord, ye have no reward of your Father that is in the heavens. He lays the utmost stress on the manner and the motive with which the act is done. Display in the doing of alms He compares to sounding a trumpet before the doer, and denounces it as what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, within and without where people meet and pass. Can anything be conceived baser than a son of God playing a part to win the notice and approbation of men? How solemnly He adds, Verily I say to you, They have got their reward!

How elevating it is for the soul, in having to do with the relief of distress among men, to act in secret, and in the sight of the Father that seeth in secret as the One to repay! It is not enough to exclude other men. To bring Him in and in secret is essential to the purity of the case. It is He who is above all, and through all, and in us all; and the least of His gifts to us is what enables us to help the suffering and the needy. To leave Him out is the essence of unbelief. To bring Him in is what we as His children owe Him in love and honour, the witness of our dependence, of our gratitude, and of our loyal service.

We have only to look at the ways of men in Christendom, in order to learn where neglect of the Saviour's teaching leads His disciples, and the influence of self, not only on

the world but on the godly swayed by the spirit of the age. What notoriety! What emulation! What boasting or pride, and even ambition! What a contrast with Him who being rich for our sake became poor, that we by His poverty might be enriched! And how striking that not in rich Corinth but in the poor churches of Macedonia, scripture tells us of the grace of God bestowed in this way; how in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their free-hearted liberality! It was not even according as the apostle hoped, but beyond; and the secret of it was, that they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us by God's will. Thus is genuineness of love proved.

But there is another invaluable word of the Lord as to this which calls for our heed. "But thou when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; so that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay thee." It is not only from others but from ourselves that such doings should he hidden. Self is a subtler evil than men. The action of grace is defiled and becomes a poison to me and a dishonour to God when I think of it with complacency. If rightly done, it was passed to our Father for His remembrance, not ours.

Here lay Job's failure, which no inflictions of Satan, nor unsympathy, nor yet suspicion, of friends even touched. He was a most gracious man, but he thought of it, and not of God only who wrought in Him. To this he must be and was brought: to boast only in God, judge himself, and submit with all his heart. Part of the lesson was that his left hand should not know what his right hand did. This on the contrary, up to the end of his appeal (Job 31),

he knew only too well. But all was changed when, instead of looking at fruits of grace in himself, he saw God in very faithfulness withering up all self-satisfaction. “I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6).

Thus we hear that even in alms the Father in secret must be the motive in order to make it acceptable to Him. The Lord insists on inward truth. O my fellow-sinner, how can this be while you are dead in trespasses and sins? “Ye must be born anew;” and life, this new life, is in Christ only. But He is the object of faith set for this purpose by God. “He that believeth hath life eternal;” and as Christ is the source, so is He the strength of that life. “I live; no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.”

Giving - Matthew 5:42

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 340-341.)

In this verse we have a grand principle for the Christian. It comes in at the close of the exhortation to resist not evil, but rather to suffer it, privately, by perversions of law, or from public demand. Christ is the pattern for the disciple; and no sound exposition can explain His word away, however distasteful to flesh and blood. The new nature goes along with it loyally as the perfect law of liberty. Only the fleshly mind seeks evasion by every disingenuous means.

“To him that asketh thee give, and from him that desireth to borrow of thee turn not away.” The disciple learns from God that he is a debtor to grace, not only in the outward mercies of every day which he shares with all mankind, but in that still deeper love which quickened him from moral death, death in offences and sins, when a child of wrath by nature. Here a Jew or a Gentile made no difference: as far as we all were concerned, it was a hopeless case of irremediable evil. But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love wherewith He loved us, quickened us together with Christ, raised us up together, and made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus; that He might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness upon us in Christ Jesus.

Those whom the Christ then addresses had tasted already that the Lord is good; but they were soon to be brought into its full compass when He died, rose, and ascended on high, and sent forth the Holy Spirit in glorifying Him to guide them into all the truth. The Lord,

having before Him such fulness of grace which we were to receive, looks for our appreciation of it by faith and the action of the Holy Spirit on our souls correspondingly. As He said elsewhere, Freely ye received, freely give. It is the mind of heaven reproduced on that earth which was full of sordid selfishness. None were more characterised by covetousness than the Jews, who, having for the time lost their place as Jehovah's witnesses, sought a vent and excuse for their energy in heaping up wealth; to which end cheating their Gentile masters only gave a greater zest. No wonder that souls so blessed by grace should be called to an entirely new walk and an equally new worship, unintelligible to such as do not enter into the Christian calling and hope. Yet the apostle says plainly that we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.Which God before ordained that we should walk in them.

But Christ came to save not only from wrath but ruin, not only from penalty but from sin, and to form a new character in those that hear His voice and follow Him. It was and could only be His own character. For what was that of Socrates, or of Antoninus Pius, of Gautama Buddha or of Confucius? Shades of vanity or pride, in. comparison with Him who never did His own will but that of God the Father who sent Him, His only-begotten. It was His to come into this world of sin and self to give Himself up as a sacrifice, thus bringing God into it to put sin out of it, as He assuredly will in power as the glorious issue of what He has already done and suffered.

Therefore, as a part of the spiritual process, He would impress on His own the character of grace, and not mere law like a Jew, in which He was the constant

witness and blessed perfection. Was there ever a need, a want, a suffering presented to Him without an answer of divine grace and power, and in all human tenderness? He that was about to give Himself up to God for us, what of good did He ever withhold? Money was too small and mean to give, save as meeting the temple-tax. “Take that [from a strange bank!], and give it to them for Me and thee.” Hence the words in Luke 6:38, “Give, and it shall be given you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall be given into your bosom; for with the same measure with which ye mete it shall be measured to you again.” It is literally “they shall give,” but so often in Luke impersonally stated, and really pointing to God. Thus as His grace produces its like, so will He never forget it, however man may.

Now, my dear reader, you know that this is far beyond your heart and life; and that, if you strove to emulate such giving, you would soon weary, and find it a law more fiery than the ten words of Sinai. Only Christ set the example; only Christ gives the power. But you must first be at His feet as a lost sinner, casting your soul with all your sins on Him for life, for pardon through His blood, and peace. It is in vain for you to think of giving of your means, till you have come to Him as the neediest of all to receive of His fulness. Only then, when you have Him as your unfailing treasure, will you have the faith and love to make to yourself friends with the mammon of unrighteousness. Only then will you, with single eye and liberal heart, “give to him that asketh of you, and not turn away from him that would borrow of you,” be he of the world, or of the household of faith; only then not grievingly, nor of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. And He is able to make every grace abound

toward you, that, having in every way always all sufficiency, you may abound to every good work. When grace has saved you by Christ to God’s glory, then it will be your joy to follow Christ; and you will shun and hate what is inconsistent with Him, both from your new nature, and in obedience to the word of God.

Love Your Enemies - Matt. 5:43-45

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 355-356.)

This word of our Lord demands our earnest heed; for it is as foreign to the feelings of men in Christendom as to Jewish disciples. But here is nothing that goes beyond the word of the beginning of Christ, nothing that supposes the work of redemption accomplished, or the Holy Spirit given to the believer. Yet the presence of the Lord brought in no little change.

“Ye heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father that is in [the] heavens; for he maketh his sun to rise on evil and good, and sendeth rain on just and unjust” (vers. 43-45).

In vain some essay to impress those words of Christ on men in general, on such as are not born of God. Now the language assumes that those addressed did believe in Christ, and had a new life of the Spirit as being born anew. But this is not so in our country or any other, even if as favoured in the possession of an open Bible. Yet the divine speaker takes for granted, what was true then and is still, that the mass of men, the nations (and the Jews are at least as bad), seek after what pertains to this life, eating, drinking, clothing, money, ease, honour: baptism, or the profession of Christ, in no way delivers from or lessens it. Therefore He warns that wide is the gate and broad the way that leads unto destruction, and many are they that enter through it; that narrow is the gate and straitened the way that leads unto life, and few are they that find it. It is therefore a total and dangerous

misconception thus to overlook man's existing state of ruin.

But others, who seem aware of human inability to obey the law of God, and are accustomed to regard even believers still, as like Israel of old, doomed to failure under law, naturally conclude, that such requirements as the Lord urged on the mount are to man impossible and more condemnatory than the Ten Words of Sinai. They therefore settle down, like the believer in Rom. 7, overwhelmed as he sees himself struggling against the evils of his old nature, and ignorant of emancipating grace in the power of a dead and risen Christ, who can only cry, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death? Hence the tendency to tone down our Lord's words in these three chapters, or even to deny that they have a living claim on the saint now. Others again contend that they are Jewish and had only to do with the disciples when the Lord was here in the days of His sojourn. They are really His words to men taught of God, and with a new life which desires and delights to walk according to His revealed will.

To love our enemies, to pray for those that persecute, is wholly above the law or the duty of a people in the flesh. An Edomite or an Egyptian was not to be abhorred, and their children might enter into the congregation of Jehovah in the third generation; an Ammonite or a Moabite only in the tenth generation, like a bastard. But Christ brought in grace and truth. In the light of the Son of man all were lost, even the sheep of Israel. As He was come to seek and to save that which was lost, those that were His were to love their enemies and to pray for their persecutors. It was the mind of heaven for His saints on earth, applicable to them and to none but them. They

receive life, His life, in receiving Him, and are called to show it thus. It is as incumbent now as when the Lord thus spoke; and His resurrection made it clearer and stronger, as the Holy Spirit when given made it of power. Thus were the disciples to be sons of their Father in the heavens.

What renegades, if not from Christ, at least from His words and will, if any bearing His name seek to fritter away so plain a call! This they cannot avoid, if they justify the ways of Christendom, where the world rules and the language is of Ashdod, where men fail to show their Father's name, and boast of their comprehending all the mixed multitude. For it is now a question of a far higher than Israel and of a separation deeper and nearer to God. It is a true and present calling of grace, inalienable from the Christian if loyal to the Lord. For we are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26). If we have the relationship and title, we cannot be absolved from the responsibility. Yea, it would be violence done to our new and divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

Let us therefore be in earnest to keep up the family character. Does not our Father that is in the heavens make His sun to rise on evil and good? does He not send rain on just and unjust? If His sons, it is not presumption to cherish feelings above human nature; it is our new status, and should be our delight. Grace alone can make it good. But Christ has procured all that is needful and efficacious to this end; and the Holy Spirit is here to see to it and guide us to Christ's glory.

Be not deceived, brethren beloved in the Lord. The enemy is sleeplessly active, and only too successful. This is My beloved Son, says the Father: hear ye Him. What

is the chaff to the wheat? It is not enough to have life in Him, and our sins forgiven through His blood. We are called to hear His voice and to follow Him, separate from the world that crucified the Lord of glory.

Remarks on Matthew 18

In chapter 16 we had two subjects connected with the revelation of the Lord's Person to Simon Peter — one of them entirely new, or for the first time divulged; the other the familiar subject of the kingdom of heaven. We shall find in the chapter before us that these two topics are again brought together, but of course not confounded or identified. We are called to see the kingdom and the Church in their practical bearing. We heard already that the Lord was to build the Church upon the rock of the confession of His Person — "Upon this rock I will build My church." Afterwards, He promised to give the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter. Now we find — and I think connected with our Lord's showing the practical principle which actuated Himself with the consciousness of glory, and of the absolute command of all that He had made (for He was the Lord of heaven and earth, if He paid the tribute of the temple) — it was not a question of rights. Had it been a mere matter of right, the children were free: He was the Lord of the temple, so that there was no claim possible on that ground. But "lest we should offend them," etc.

Grace, you see, gives up its rights; at least, it does not seek to claim and exercise them for the present. And in the very consciousness of the possession of all glory, it can bend in this evil world. But, then, carefully observe that what it leads the soul that understands it to, is never to yield God's rights, but our own. We must be as unbending as a flint wherever God is in question. Grace never surrenders the true holiness, the claim or will of

God; in fact, it is the only thing that, as far as man is concerned, strengthens any soul to value them, or assert them, or walk in them: and grace does this. It is God's own way from the gospel upwards. "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." The practical lesson follows: "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." That which the law claimed, but never produced, is accomplished by the power of grace acting upon the heart of man. Christ does not so much demand as give the power. It is all of His goodness.

And grace consists not merely in forgiving sins, but in giving power to be and to do that which is entirely contrary to nature and above it. The law never even sought this. The law addressed itself to man as he was — supposed him to be a sinner, to have evil lusts and passions, and forbade them; but what more could it do? It claimed the heart of man, the very last thing he would or could give. He might give his body to be burned, and all his goods to feed the poor, but never his heart to love God. I am speaking now of man as man. When you speak of a Christian, what makes him a Christian? Not the law, which never made a Christian since the world began, nor ever was intended so to do. It condemns a man because he is a sinner, and does not like to obey God: but it does not even hold out what a Christian ought to be. It never proclaims that a man should forego his rights, and be willing to suffer: a Christian is one who does this, being called to go far beyond what the law asked; and if he does not, he is not walking as a Christian. So that, in both ways, looking at the law

whether as dealing with an ungodly man, it cannot save him; and in dealing with a godly man it never puts before him the full character of the holiness Christ enjoins. What, then, is it that God has given the Christian? If he is not under the law, under what is he? He is under Christ, under grace; under Christ as the very fulness of grace and truth.

This is what comes out here. And it is a very beautiful feature of the chapter which we are about to look at just now. We find that the grace of the gospel is the pattern of the spirit that is to actuate the Church and its members in everything that merely concerns ourselves. There is often a great practical difficulty that people do not understand. While you are called upon to walk in nothing but grace, as to your own relations with God, it is a misuse of grace to suppose it to be an allowance of evil or indifference. Grace, on the contrary, while it meets a man in his ruin and forgives him, spite of his sins, imparts a power that he had not before, because it reveals Christ, strengthens the soul, gives a new life and acts upon that life so as to carry him forward in the obedience as well as in the enjoyment of Christ. Our Lord shows that this ought to govern everything. But, first, we have the spirit that befits us: “At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” This furnishes opportunity for our Lord to indicate the spirit that becomes the kingdom of heaven. “Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Now this is what is wrought in a soul when it is converted: there is a new life given, even

Christ. Hence there is much more than entire change. That would be very far short of the truth as to a Christian. Of course the Christian is a changed man, but then the change is because of something still deeper. A Christian is a man born again, possessing a life now that he possessed not before. I do not mean merely that he lives after a new sort, but that he has a new life given him, that he had not as a man. It is in this way that he becomes a little child. Then this new life has to be cultivated and strengthened. Our natural life as men grows up, or it may be checked and hindered by various circumstances. So it is with the spiritual life, though it be external.

Our Lord shows here what is the characteristic moral feature that suits the kingdom of heaven; and this in opposition to Jewish thoughts of greatness. They were still thinking of the kingdom of heaven, according to Old Testament delineations of it. When David came to the kingdom, his followers that had been faithful before, were exalted according to their previous worth. You have the three great chiefs, and then thirty other warriors, and so on; all of them having their place determined by the way in which they had carried themselves in the day of trial. The disciples came with similar thoughts to our Lord, full of what they had done and suffered. Peter gets rebuked for that very thing afterwards. The same spirit broke out on many occasions, even at the last supper. Our Lord here uses it for showing that the spirit He loves in His disciples is to be nothing — to be without a thought of self, in a spirit of lowliness, dependence and trust — that does not think about itself. This is the natural feeling of a little one. It may be spoilt; but naturally it looks up to its parents,

and thinks there is nobody like them; and as long as the child is unsophisticated, so it goes on. In the spiritual child that self-forgetfulness is exactly the right feeling.

The little child is the standing witness of true greatness in the kingdom of heaven. In our Lord Himself this was shown fully. The wonder was that He who knew everything, who had all power and might, could take the place of a little child; and yet He did. And indeed you may be sure that the lowliness of a child is in no wise incompatible with a person being deeply taught in the things of God. It is not a lowliness that shows itself in phrases or forms, but the reality of meekness that confides not in itself but in the living God: and that has the respect which God Himself loves that there should be towards those around it. Perfect humility was just as much a feature of our Lord Jesus as was the consciousness of His glory. The two things may well go together: and you cannot have becoming Christian humility, unless there be the consciousness of glory. To behave ourselves lowlily, as children of God, is the beautiful thing the Lord is here putting before us. “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

It is not merely the becoming like little children, as begotten of God, and brought into the family, but there is here the practical work of humbling ourselves. But then comes another thing: not only the humbling ourselves, but how we feel towards others. “Whosoever shall receive one such little child in My name, receiveth Me.” Whatever may be the lowliness of the Christian, he should be viewed with all the glory of Christ, which is meant by receiving him in the name of Christ. It is a person that does not defend his rights, nor assert his

glory in any way, but is willing to bend and make way for any one; and yet conscious of the glory that rests upon him. There may be the very opposite of this — “Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me.” What is meant by this? Anything calculated to shake their confidence in Christ, to put a stumbling-block in their way. It does not mean anything said in faithful love to their soul.

People may take offence at this: but that is not what is spoken of here. It is what shakes the confidence of the little one in God Himself. “Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” These things are constantly occurring in the world. Therefore, says the Lord, “Woe unto the world because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.” What is to be done? The Lord shows in two forms the way to guard against these stumbling-blocks. The first is this — I must begin with myself. That is the most important means of not stumbling another. “Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee.” It may be in one’s service, or in one’s walk; but if hand or foot become the occasion of stumbling (something in which the enemy takes advantage against God), deal resolutely and at once with the evil thing. “It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire.” The Lord always puts the full result of evil before the soul. In speaking of the kingdom of heaven He takes into account that there may be persons in it false as well as true. He therefore speaks generally. He does not

pronounce upon them, and say, “If you really belong to the kingdom you have nothing to fear.” But He looks at the kingdom of heaven; and there are persons who apparently enter that kingdom, some of whom may be truly born of God, others not.

The Lord solemnly puts before them, that such as are indifferent about sin are not born of God at all. It is impossible for a soul to be regenerate, and habitually careless about that which grieves the Holy Ghost. Therefore He puts before them the possibility of such being cast into everlasting fire. Of no one who was born of God could this be said. But as there may be in the kingdom of heaven a false profession as well as a true, so a grave thing for the believer to look well to is, that he do not allow sin in any of his members. “And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.” It may cost ever so much, but God is not a hard Master: none is so tender and loving. And yet it is God giving us His full mind by the Lord Jesus, Who shows us that this is the only way of dealing with that which may become an occasion of sin (cf. Eph. 5:5, 6).

The first great source of offence to others, which must be first removed, is that which is a stumbling-block to our own souls. We must begin with self-judgment. But there is also the despising the little ones that belong to God. “Take heed,” therefore, our Lord says, “that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” A beautiful word; specially as here it is evidently so broadly stated by our

Lord, as to take in a real literal little child as well as the little ones that believe in Him. I believe that this chapter was meant to give encouragement touching little ones. The plea on which our Lord goes, is not that they were innocent, which is the way in which they are so often spoken of among men; but that the Son of man came to save that which was lost. It supposes the taint of sin, but that the Son of man came to meet it; so that we are entitled to have confidence in the Lord, not merely for our own souls, but for the little ones too.

But our Lord goes further. “How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? and if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, He rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” No doubt we can embrace all those that are saved on the same principle, and St. Luke does so in another chapter. The Gospel of Luke shows us (chap. 15) this very parable applied to any sinner. But here the Lord is taking it up in connection with the foregoing, namely, the right feelings for one who belongs to the kingdom of heaven. Starting from a little child, whom He sets in the midst, He carries the thought of the little one all through this part of His discourse. And now He closes with the proof in His own mission, of the interest which the Father takes in these little ones.

But more than this. He now applies it to our practical conduct. Supposing your brother does you wrong, something that may be very hard to bear, perhaps; an evil word, or an unkind action done against you —

something that you feel deeply as a real personal trespass against you; the man has done it deliberately, and of course it is a great sin. Nobody knows it but himself and you. What are you to do? At once this great principle is applied. When you were ruined and far from God, what met your case? Did God wait till you put away your sin? It never would have been done at all. God sent His own Son to seek you, to save you. “The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.” That is the principle for you to act upon. It is not merely that this is the way in which God acted. You belong to God: you are a child of God. Your brother has wronged you; go you to him and seek to set him right. It is the activity of love, which the Lord Jesus now presses upon His disciples. They are to seek the deliverance, in the power of divine love, of those who have wandered from God. It is not the flesh feeling its wrong, and resenting what has been done against itself. The law would enable even a Jew to judge this.

But now it is grace, and grace does not shroud itself up in its own dignity, and wait till the offender has come and humbled himself and owned the wrong. The law executes punishment upon the guilty. If I have to do with the law at all, I am a lost man. But now another has come in — not the law, but the Son of man, the Saviour of the lost. Nor is this all. I want you, He says, to be walking after the same principle — to be vessels of the same love. As you have received your life from me, so I want your walk to be characterized by grace, going out after that which has sinned against God — grace to seek the man that has gone astray. This is a great difficulty, unless the soul is fresh in the love of God, and enjoying what God is for him. How does God feel about the child

that has done wrong? It is the loving desire to have him right. When the child is near enough to know the Father's heart, he goes out to do the Father's will. It may have been a wrong done against him, but he does not think about that. It is his brother who has slipped into evil, and he sorrows over him. It is a real desire of heart to have the person righted who had gone astray; and this, too, not in order to vindicate self, but that his soul may be restored to the Lord. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone."

He could not bear that another should know it. It is not here the case of a sin known to a great many, but some personal trespass only known to you two. Go, then, to him and tell him his fault between you and him alone. A thing, no doubt, very contrary to the flesh, which would ever demand that the offender should first come and humble himself, or that would act on the worldly ground of not troubling itself about the man, but let him go from bad to worse. Love seeks the good, even of the one who has done ever so wrong. "If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." Love is bent upon gaining the brother. It is always so to him that understands and feels with Christ. It is not the offender, but thy brother that is the thought before the heart. "Thou hast gained thy brother." "But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." Is it possible for him to resist one or two who come to him, witnesses of the love of Christ? He has refused Christ pleading by one, can he refuse Christ now that he pleads by more? He is sought again. Will he refuse? It may be, alas! that he will. "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto

the church." The Church means the assembly of God in the place to which the man belonged. "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

It does not mean what people call "a" church now; there is no such thing in the word of God. Scripture never knows anything but God's Church; the Churches Scripture recognizes were simply His assembly in each city or analogous place. And therefore all the terms of men that have been brought in through departure from His thoughts, are entirely unknown in Scripture. "A church," separate from others and independent, has no warrant except in the will of man. Every Christian person is bound, not only to have done with these names, but with the thing itself, because God is looking for reality, and we are bound to act upon the truth of God. His will is that we should not belong to a church of the world or to a voluntary association of our own. Nothing is more simple than for a Christian to act as a Christian. It is only pleasing the flesh whenever we depart out of the path of God. It is evident that this passage contemplates a known assembly to which these persons belonged. It was the Church — the only assembly which we are called upon to acknowledge.

The assembly, then, are told of the guilty person's fault. The thing has been solemnly investigated and pressed home; and the Church now pronounces upon it. The Church warns and entreats this man, but he refuses to hear; and the consequence is — "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." A most solemn thing! A man who is called a brother in the verse before, is like an heathen man and a publican now. We are not to

suppose that the man was a drunkard or a thief; but what he has shown is a hardness of self-will and a spirit of self-justification. It might have arisen out of small circumstances; but this unbending pride about himself and his own fault is that on which God may pronounce him to be regarded as an heathen man and a publican; that is, that you no more acknowledge him in his impenitent state as a Christian. And yet it may spring mainly from the spirit of justifying ourselves when we are wrong. In the case of drunkenness, or anything of that kind, there would be no necessity for adopting any such mode of dealing with it. If there were not the least question on the mind of any one as to the sin, the duty of the Church is clear: the person is put away. He might not have been seen by a number of persons: there is no absolute need for that. Nor would there be reason in such a case for going one at a time, and then one or two more. This is only where it is unknown to any one but the individual against whom the trespass has been done. But the Lord shows here how, out of a little spark, a great fire may be kindled. The end of this personal trespass might be that the Church are convinced that the man displays not a trace of Christian life about him. "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." It is not a mere question of agreement. What gives the validity is that it is done in the name of the Lord (see 1 Cor. 5:4). "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together

in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Whether for discipline, or for making requests of God, the Lord lays down this great principle, that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He is in the midst of them. Nothing could be more sweet and encouraging. And I am persuaded that the Lord had in view the present ruin of the Church when there might be ever so few gathered aright.

No company of saints is thus gathered unless it assemble in obedience to the word of God and nothing else — founded and carried out according to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. Any sect may contain good people, and have good preaching; but these things do not make it to be the Church. Unless it be upon the foundations of the word of God, subject to the Lord by the energy of the Holy Ghost, it is not such. But a person may ask, "Do you mean to say that you are upon that ground?" I can only say that we are taking an immense deal of trouble for a delusion if we are not. We are very foolish in acting as we do, unless we are sure that it is according to the mind of God. I have no more doubt how Christians ought to meet together for worship or for mutual edification, and that we are doing so, than I have about any other directions in the word of God. Not being restrained by rules, there is nothing for it but the word of God; and there is the most entire liberty to carry out that word. But while I speak thus confidently, I feel, on the other hand, that we need to take a very low place. Where members of Christ's body are scattered here and there, humiliation alone becomes us, and this not because of others' ways, but our own. For what have we been to Christ and the Church? It would be very wrong to call ourselves the Church; but if we were only two or

three meeting in the name of Christ, we should have the same sanction and blessing as if we had the twelve apostles with us. If through unbelief and weakness the Church at large were broken up and scattered, and if, in the midst of all that confusion, there were only two or three who had faith to act upon the Lord's will, for them the word would still be true, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." The whole thing is wound up with this grand truth. It is the presence of Christ that gives sanction to their acts. If the Church has fallen into ruin, the business of those who feel this, is to depart from evil; to cease to do evil, learn to do well. We always come to first principles when things get astray. This is the obligation of a Christian man. He is never to go on doing what he knows is wrong. Where a man makes up his mind to do even a little wrong, he is an Antinomian. If people think they may sin in the worship of God, they deceive themselves. "God is not mocked."

There is one other thing that I must close with. Peter says to our Lord, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?" We had the case of how we were to act in the case of a personal trespass. But Peter raises another question. Supposing my brother sins against me over and over, how often am I to forgive him? The answer is, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." In the kingdom of heaven — not under the law, but under the rule of Christ — forgiveness is unlimited. How wonderful! To think that holiness, the deeper holiness that Christianity reveals, is at the same time that which feels with the deepest possible love, and which goes out with it to others. So we find here. "I say not unto thee,

Until seven times," which was Peter's idea of the largest grace, "but, Until seventy times seven." Our Lord insists that there really was no end to forgiveness. It is always to be flowing out. But remember this: it is a sin against you: it is a person that does wrong to you. We are not to forgive a wrong done to the Lord, till the Lord has forgiven it; and the Lord only forgives upon confession of sin. I am now speaking, not of the grace that meets a man in his unconverted state, the case here is that of a brother. When a man is converted, he has to confess his sins day by day. It shows a wretched state of soul if a person breaks down in his daily path without confession to God. But what we learn here is, that if it is some sin done against you personally, and it is a question how often you are to forgive, the answer is, "Till seventy times seven." God will never be outdone in His perfect love: but even a man upon earth is called to forgive after this wonderful and divine pattern.

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants." Then we have two servants brought before us. The king forgives one of them who had been very guilty (who owed him ten thousand talents; practically, a debt which could never be paid by a servant). The king forgives him. The servant goes out from the presence of the king after the debt was remitted, and he meets a fellow-servant who owes him a hundred pence — a small sum indeed in comparison with that which had just been forgiven to himself. Yet he seizes his fellow-servant by the throat, saying, "Pay me that thou owest." But the king hears of it through the sorrow of the fellow-servants, and summons the guilty man before him. What is taught by this? It is a comparison of the kingdom of heaven; and

these comparisons refer to a state of things established here below by God's will. While we may take the principle to ourselves, much more is taught than this. Taken in the large way, the servant that owes the ten thousand talents represents the Jew who was peculiarly favoured of God, and yet had contracted the enormous debt that he never could pay. When the Jews had completed this debt by the death of the Messiah, a message of forgiveness was sent them: — "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." The Holy Ghost presses on them a message of repentance. They had only to do so, and their sins would be blotted out. God would send the Messiah again, and bring in the times of refreshing. The Holy Ghost answered the prayer of our Lord upon the cross, and Peter was entitled to tell them that they were forgiven. "I wot, brethren," he says to them, "that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers"; even as the Lord had said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." That does not mean a personal forgiveness, but a national one, which required their faith and repentance.

Thus the servant had heard the sound of forgiveness to himself, but he had no understanding of it. He goes out, and casts a fellow-servant into prison for what was comparatively a very small debt. This is the way in which the Jew acted towards the Gentiles. After rejecting the message of mercy for themselves, the Jews followed the apostle Paul wherever he went, in order to stir up hatred against him. When the apostle told them that he was sent to the Gentiles, the word was, "Away with such a fellow from the earth." That answers to the catching of the fellow-servant by the throat.

It was the hatred of the Jew toward the Gentile. And thus all the debt that God had forgiven them became fastened upon them. The lord says to the servant, “O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.” You may apply this to an individual who has heard the gospel, and who does not act according to it. The principle of it is true now of any mere professor of the gospel in these days, who acts like a worldly man. But taking it on the broader historical scale, you must bring in the dealings of God with the Jews and the Gentiles. The Gentile had, no doubt, treated the Jew badly; but what was all his debt compared with that which God had forgiven the Jew ? The Jew therefore is cast into prison; and he will not leave it until he has paid all that was due. The day is coming when the Lord will say that Jerusalem has received of His hand double for all her sins. Jehovah in His grace will count that Jerusalem has suffered too much. He will apply to them the blood of Christ which can cleanse out the ten thousand talents and more; but the unbelieving generation of Israel are cast into prison, and will never come out; the remnant will, by the grace of God; and the Lord will make of the remnant a strong nation.

Meanwhile, for us the great principle of forgiveness is most blessed, and a thing that we have need to remember. We have specially to remind our souls in the case of anything that is against ourselves. May we at once look stedfastly at what our God and Father has done for us. If we can, in the presence of such grace, be

hard for some trifling thing done against ourselves, let us bethink ourselves how the Lord judges here. Sometimes a soul goes on well for a time. But if there is not life from God, a slight circumstance happens, which brings out a man's true state, and then you have such a turning back from Christ, as proves that there is nothing of grace in the man's soul. For where there is life, the warning of God is heeded.

May the Lord grant that His words may not be in vain for us, that we may seek to remember the exceeding grace that has abounded towards our souls, and what God looks for from us.

W. K.

Christ the Way - John 14:6

This was a momentous word for man — for every man, woman, and child. No words more encouraging were ever uttered, even by the Lord Jesus Himself, for such as felt the need of divine direction.

I have no doubt that there was more in them than the mere answer to the question. They meet the need not of one man only, but of all. Yet our Lord was not addressing a multitude of hearers, but the perplexed disciples; and this gives a definiteness of application. He is addressing a believer under Jewish prejudice, not an unconverted man. Not that I am going to confine myself to its strict bearing on the enquiring disciples, for there is in it the fullest answer to the darkest heart. There is divine help for those who know really but very partially. Their knowledge was scanty; they were not the wise and prudent of the earth; and Scripture takes pains to show this. They were not chosen for anything in themselves. It was manifest that they could add no lustre to the gospel. “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

Thus does God confound the pride of flesh, and show the utter folly of any pretension on man’s part to worth in the things of God, seeing that he is really nothing but a

lost sinner. When Thomas asked the question about the way, the thoughts of the disciples were still hampered by the earthly expectation of Israel. But how different was their condition in little more than a month afterwards! We do not hear again of Thomas. May it not have been because he was going on well? In that case there is not much to talk about. It is people's intrigues and ambitious designs, their quarrels and fights, that make up the most of history, man's attempts to circumvent or repel evil, sometimes successful, more often failing. It is the constant conflict of evil with good; and evil but too often prosperous. The time will come when good will always triumph; but it is not come yet. A poor thing truly is man — the world. No wonder that God's thoughts find their centre in one person; and He is the object of God here and everywhere.

One person was always before the mind of God, and this was expressed thousands of years before He became a man. He was not only perfection, but He was the perfect Man, as well as God come down to deliver those who were most opposite to Him in every way. Here we see divine good in a man, and nowhere else. No man can be a Christian who refuses Him, or takes any other way. On the one hand, were He not God it would take away from God's glory as well as destroy man's hopes. He could not else have been the perfect Saviour and Deliverer. On the other hand, it would have taken away all the means of our blessedness if He had not deigned to become man. But He who was God became man, is so now, and ever will so abide, though infinitely more than man. It is just as true that He is always God, even on the cross; and this is the pledge of sure and stable blessing for every

soul who would hide himself by faith in Him, spite of all his sins.

Have you fled for refuge? Have you thus come to Him? Or are you thinking to try and make yourself a little better first? But remember, salvation is for sinners. He does not want people who are good (not that He could find them if He did); He is come to seek and to save the lost. It is they who need Him. Are you willing to take this place? It is a solemn thing to tell out all our sins to God; it is as much as to confess that one deserves hell-fire. Do not draw back when I press this. Does it make any difference to God's thought of you? He knows it all before; but for you it is all-important to take the place of good-for-nothingness in His presence. Thomas was slow to believe; and so are very many. No man likes to tell out what he really is, but when he does he finds out what God is, and He is love. Indeed grace, and grace alone and exactly, meets the need of him who finds out that he is nothing but a sinner. It will not do to say in a general way, "Ah, yes, we are all sinners." I must have to do with God about my own sins, and that in a particular way. It is neither faith nor conscience to deal with them all in a lump as it were. Do not tell me that you have done so; that you have been to God about your sins and come away empty. You deceive yourself as to this.

You have not been simple or truthful in telling out what you are, else you would have found all you want to meet your need in the Lord Jesus. His fulness meets all our wants. Could I say less when it is about Jesus? He did not come to limit Himself to any one people, or country, or age. His grace flows out freely to all. It is no longer only Israel, but any sinner at any time. When John said, "Behold the Lamb of God," what was the effect? He tells

us: “which taketh away the sin of the world.” Accordingly this is what the work of the Lord Jesus will accomplish; no particle of sin or of its effects will be left in the world. But that day is not come yet. Before it can come the wicked must be banished, that they may go to their own place. No man will be condemned merely because he is bad, but because he refuses the grace of God as shown in Christ. Wrath then comes on him for all his sins. The promise of salvation is to him who hears the word of God — the gospel; and man is condemned because he refuses God’s remedy in it. Do not you then lose your time, and it may be your soul, in troubling yourself about God’s dealings with the heathen. The Lord will judge them; and He will do His work perfectly. What you want yourself is mercy, forgiveness, salvation. Therefore, I pray you, banish all thoughts of your own on such a subject; you do not and cannot yet understand God’s ways. Venture not to sit in judgment on Him.

There is nothing so presumptuous and inconsistent as unbelief, nothing so humble as faith. So those who would not scruple to discuss and condemn God’s dealings with the heathen, count it the height of presumption on a believer’s part to say, “I know I am forgiven, washed perfectly white, and free from all stain.” Yet this confidence is from nothing in themselves; it is founded simply on faith in the efficacy of Christ’s blood. It is due to what Christ has done, not to what we are. A man who knows he is a sinner gladly owns the Saviour. His first desire is that he may be brought to God. How is he to get to Him? Here is our Lord’s answer, “I am the way.” Let us consider then a little what “the way” means in Scripture.

When man was first made, he was not as he is now. God made man upright. He was the most wonderful being that God had made. An infidel may talk (and there is plenty of such talk in these days) of man having grown gradually to the state he is now in, that he came into existence of himself, nobody knows how, out of nobody knows what. And this is science! Nothing is so utterly foolish as unbelief. But supposing the protoplasm was seaweed, we have still the difficulty, How did the seaweed come? and how did it so change? The very least object could not have come into being without the will and power of God.

But wonderful as the power of God in His works may be, and the more as we think truly of all He has made, much the most wonderful is man even now, though fallen; for he is still responsible as the image of God, if not His likeness. And this is why murder can only be wiped out by death; for man has destroyed the image of God in another. Yet there has never been a good man born into this world.

Man was originally made in the likeness of God, but Adam was fallen before his firstborn child appeared. Thus sin had come in, and so even Seth was born in Adam's "likeness," though in God's "image" still. A brute has not a reasonable soul. Man is the only one of all God's creatures here who is thus endowed. We therefore see that God did not make the world or man as we see them now; for, when they came from His hand there was not a single thing that He did not pronounce good, or very good. Then there was no need of a way, for whether man turned to the right or to the left, all was good; and there could be no need yet to say, "This is the way; walk ye in it."

The use and importance of a way would be when that which may have been good everywhere is so no longer. Evil has come in, and the world has become a wilderness. Such being the case, there is no way; and we need one. The world is nothing but a waste and howling wilderness, through which we cannot pass without a way. There is no rest here, nothing to satisfy the heart of man. He may seek to take his fill of the pleasures of the world; it is but a dram to render him insensible to the fact that he is miserable at the thought of facing God. Having a bad conscience through his sins, there is no one he would so like to get away from as God. He has perhaps some fear of Satan, but he is not so afraid of him as he is of God. What does this tell? That he is a sinner away from God. It is the sense of sin that makes him afraid. The same terrible being (Satan) first entraps a man into sin, and then whispers that he is done for; first entices, and then gives a sense of God's judgment against him. Man then tries to drown his fears in pleasure. He will go anywhere, do anything, to get rid of the pressure of sin; he will occupy himself with, it may be, his family, his business, even his duties, as he calls them — anything that will keep him away from God. Then, it may be, he is laid on a sick bed, and he feels, "I must meet God in my sins"; and some especially come up to mind that had been long forgotten, but ah! none forgiven. For you cannot be forgiven a little here and a little there. Sin is not to be got rid of in this fashion, one at a time, perhaps when you feel sorry about it. Whatever they may say who sell masses, it is not so with God. But when and how does He meet this ruined condition? Man is lost, and the world is as much of a wilderness as the sands of Arabia to a traveller who has missed his way. Man has absolutely no resources as

regards his sins. What then is to meet him in his need? Trying to make amends will not avail. Your sins are upon you, and what can you do when they confront you in the light of God's throne?

But how does God meet your need? Jesus says, "I am the way." Jesus is the Way, the only way to God the Father. Jesus is the Way in this world of utter alienation and departure from God. Man is the head of all the ruin as he is the head of the creation. Adam was the head of all before Eve was given to him; he had called all the creatures by their names. Eve's place was in association with him. So the church has no claim but by association with Christ. He is the way; and can this way fail? Christ fail! What folly! He is the Way. I have nothing to do but to take the way. Crowds of different cases come, and no wonder; for no one that came ever went away as he came. Nor did Christ ever send a soul away unblessed — none that came as sinners and lost.

This is what man really is, a sinner ruined and lost. He has no resources towards God; he cannot diminish one of his sins. What is to become of him? Jesus says, "I am the way," and it is sure, unfailing. The Son of God became a man in order that He might be the Way. He came to be a Saviour, but a Saviour only to those who believe. He will be Judge of those who reject Him. He has other offices too, but they are mostly connected with salvation. A man who will be saved is not brought into judgment. Men who have life and are saved have no sins upon them. How then and for what are they to be judged? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). The word

really is judgment, not “condemnation,” as it is translated in the A.V.

I do not wish to find fault with our translation, but let me prove that the word ought to be “judgment.” “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment.” Here the very same word that is translated “condemnation” is used. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” Here it is another word; and there is just as much difference in the words used in the Greek as in the English. What God declares is, that he that hears His word has everlasting life. It is a present thing. The believer again is passed from death unto life. What would be the sense of judging life, of judging what God has wrought?

But all men will give account of their deeds. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.” This is a very different thing from being brought into judgment by God. To be judged, a man must be a criminal. It is not always the case when there is an earthly judge, for if the grand jury bring in a true bill, the man, even if innocent, must be brought before the judge, and might even be condemned; but this would be caused by man’s infirmity. There could be no such thought in connection with divine judgment. No believer ever comes into judgment, speaking now of the judgment of the great white throne; and this because he has eternal life, and his sins are forgiven now. Are you rejecting this salvation?

God is now in Christ beseeching, entreating you to be reconciled on the ground of His acceptance of Him who was made sin. Your rejecting Him proves that you are not willing to be saved. He is ready to save you, to pardon here and now. But you have some secret reserve,

something you are keeping back from Him. You either wish to serve sin a little longer, or you do not believe that God is as good as He is. You prove that you judge yourself unworthy of eternal life.

No man is saved because he deserves it. I implore you, put it not off, wait not for anything. Christ will not be more of a Saviour tomorrow; and are you sure that you will hear His voice tomorrow? Is it not to be feared that you will be less and less inclined to receive Him? He is the Way and the only way. When we get to heaven we shall not need a way, any more than it was necessary in Eden. All is right there, and no way will be required above. When in heaven there will no longer be responsibility. Here it brings danger, failure, ruin; for now, on the' ground of responsibility, as a man, you are lost altogether.

Henceforth it is really a question of faith. Do I rest on Christ, believing in Him? I learn that He has undertaken for me, that God has given me a Saviour, and that He commands me to repent and take the place of one that is lost. When a man tries to become religious, he is denying that he is lost; he sets himself to read and pray, to work out righteousness for himself. He says, David prayed three times a day, and I will pray four times; but will it help him? Do I think lightly of prayer? By no means, but when a man acts like this, he shows that he does not know his sinfulness and lost estate.

Suppose the case of one guilty of high treason and condemned to die. The king might say, “I know the man is guilty, but in my sovereign mercy I grant him a free pardon if he will only come and avail himself of it.” But the man obstinately refuses to come out; he will not

credit such goodness, and the king orders the sentence to be carried out. So it is with man. He refuses to believe that God is willing to save, and why? Because he judges of God by himself.

Faith is sure of God as He reveals Himself; and He is not only willing, but He can afford righteously, to save. God saves on the ground of Christ's redemption. It is not mere mercy. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, for Christ was judged for our sins by God Himself on the cross. Hence He is righteous to forgive; for Christ has paid the penalty. God is not merely justified in forgiving, but glorified also. It brought far more glory to God than if He merely punished all as sinners; for every attribute of His is satisfied — His majesty, His love, His truth, His holiness. All the grace of His character shines out for every soul that comes, bringing out more of the infinite worthiness of His Son.

Be afraid then to stay away from the Saviour of sinners, lest tomorrow find you in a more hardened state than today. All delays are dangerous; but what is so dangerous as to put off bowing to the Son and accepting God's free salvation?

W. K.

Christ for the Saint and Christ for the Sinner

Rev. 22:17

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

There is a great deal more in this verse than most are apt to find, even though they may be dear, and even intelligent, children of God. Yet it is also remarkable that, although the depth is uncommon in presenting the brightest hope of the church, as well as encouraging the simplest individual believer, there is likewise the most ample expression of sovereign grace to the neediest of sinners, in whatever state he may be found. What can be more open than saying “He that will, let him take the water of life freely?” There is no more unrestricted invitation to perishing souls in any part of the Bible. Yet what grace shone when the Lord spoke to the woman of Samaria and announced — what man’s hard heart is so slow to believe — the Father’s love in seeking worshippers to worship Him. And the Son was there to manifest that He did not disdain, but even sought, that poor woman without a character. Some may have thought she avoided going at the hour when other women went to the well. If she had obvious reason for shunning them, they had not a kind word to say about her. But Christ made God known in love, even to one so wretched through sin. Yet He who thus loves is holy, whereas those who despised her were not.

Those who set up and cultivate sanctimonious expression of speech and ways have rarely any real sense of sin in themselves, any more than of grace in God. They make a fair show in the flesh, and have never learnt their own ruin as sinners. They desire to feel and appear holy, and fear to find out and own what they really are in God's sight. But is it not always the greatest weakness to wish to appear anything? The believer has no reason to hide when he is assured of the grace that forgives all his sins. If God justifies him, who is he that condemns? He can afford to appear what he really is. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from every sin." "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God," says the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, who had been amongst the most dissolute of mankind. Greece as a country was full of immorality; and there was no city in all that land so proverbially bad as Corinth. Yet the Lord, to encourage His servant in the face of opposing and blaspheming Jews, said, "Be not afraid but speak, and hold not thy peace... for I have much people in this city." It required a word by a vision at night from the Lord to the apostle to keep up his courage in continuing in a place so full of corruption as Corinth.

Ever bear in mind that in the gospel it is what the Lord brings to us, and not what we offer to Him, when received in faith, which is the turning-point and the substance of the soul's salvation. God has, and freely, given a perfect Saviour in Christ for the lost. Does any one of you doubt that His heart is so ready to forgive, even you, notwithstanding your sins which are many and great? You do Him a heinous wrong in doubting His

word and His love. Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, not only can He afford to save you on believing, but He gives all with the freeness and fulness that becomes the God of all grace. “He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all: how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

The figure employed, in the Revelation, is “the water of life;” as the Lord spoke of giving “the living water” in John 4:10. The two books, the Gospel and the Revelation, are as different in character as can be; but who does not see how thoroughly the words tally, and how one Spirit reigns throughout Scripture? The book of Revelation is as full of judgment, as the Gospel of John teems with grace; but it is the same Lord Jesus Christ, whatever the distinctness of design may require in each case. The prophetic visions vindicate His rights over all the universe, and therefore over all nations as well as Israel. Before they begin in Rev. 6 we are given to see the bright result of grace in the glorified saints gathered on high around the throne, under the symbol of the twenty-four crowned and enthroned elders in Rev. 4, and Rev. 5. But the book could not close without the words read in the text, which put the church and the believer in their present place of hope, and which continue to invite the sinner, whatever his state, to receive His grace as freely as ever. First of all, we hear “the Spirit and the bride” saying to Christ, “Come.” For He loved the church and gave Himself for her; and she knows from His own lips that He is coming to receive her to Himself. Therefore we can understand how proper are the words, “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” To whom does the Spirit animate the bride thus to speak?

To the Bridegroom. It is indeed much to be noticed, and full of instruction.

Earlier in the book (Rev. 3:11) the Lord says “I come quickly”; but the Spirit and the bride do not add “quickly” now — they join in crying to Christ, “Come.” Those who compose the bride had already each submitted to the righteousness of God; they knew for their own souls that they were saved by grace through faith; and they were waiting in assured hope of Him to bring them into the Father’s house, where He Himself now is, and whence He had promised to come and fetch them there. Remark then how important and how suited are the words, “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” Men, and even saints, are all liable to mistakes. Who, that knows himself or others, could rest his hope on the creature in its best estate? As we need Christ’s work for saving us, so we cannot do without God’s word for any appearance of solid worth, whether for faith or hope, for walk or worship. Therefore does the Spirit — that is, the Holy Ghost — prompt the word. He and the bride are represented as saying, “Come.” Can anything be more comely or in character?

The Spirit of God has His place as directing and strengthening the heart of the church, the bride. He dwells in the believer as well as in the church. As this privilege never was enjoyed before redemption, so it never will be given in the same power and way again. Ample blessing awaits Israel and the nations by and by. The Spirit will be poured out again when the Lord reigns. It will be “the regeneration” for the earth, as the prophets predict, in the millennial day. But Scripture indicates again remarkable differences as compared with His presence now. And no intelligent soul can be

surprised; for on the bright day that approaches for the world, there will be sight; and no such tests of faith as there are now. Everything will be joyous, peaceful, and prosperous in righteousness. Satan will be shut out from tempting and seducing; and Jehovah shall reign over all the earth without a rival or a rebel, His name one. But now the present is the evil age from which grace has delivered the Christian who has to make his way by faith and suffering for his Master's sake.

We ought to be like the fish swimming against the stream as living fish do: the dead ones are carried along with it. The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that ever works in the sons of disobedience is still directing the many evil currents of the world; but every one is dead against the Lord Jesus, as Scripture warns us. Constantine did not alter that; and the Papacy only added another evil. There cannot be a better proof of the world's enmity to God than that it all, civil and religious, cast out and crucified His Son. For who were those who did the deed? Not Hottentots or Tartars, or Chinese. The Roman power of that day was misled by His own ancient people, the Jews. Herod was content with mockery. Even the ruthless Pilate wanted to let the Lord off, because he knew it was for envy, He was victimised; and by whose envy? The priests', the High Priest's — the very men set up of God to intercede for others. How evidently they were fallen under the power of Satan, and were interceding for his will and victory when they crucified the Son of God! Such was the real character of their persistent outcry. And so it is that the world treats His name and truth. It may go on in apparent quiet for a time; but what brings its enmity to a head? Christ. As

then, so ever and so now, it is Christ that Satan always opposes, drawing in his train the enmity of the world.

The judge of quick and dead is a reality they cannot stand. And so they gnash, not perhaps with their teeth, but in their hearts. They accordingly cannot, as they are now, but hate those identified with His truth, as they will hate you if you are faithful, but not if you compromise. Compromising is an insidious and especial danger for a Christian. The new nature he has in Christ makes him abhor sin, and just because he is born of God, he turns away from it and prays to God His Father to be delivered from all evil by virtue of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. The Holy Spirit was sent from heaven in manifested power after our Lord died, rose, and ascended. It is well to remember the words in John 7:39, "The Holy Ghost was not yet [given] because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Is this the doctrine you usually hear? Alas! very commonly it is not, and this among the saints and the excellent of the earth. Let me speak of one no longer alive, an eloquent and celebrated preacher, a pious and prayerful man (a former dean of Ripon), who wrote a book to prove that the Holy Ghost's presence and action did not differ at Pentecost from what it was before. But this idea contradicted flatly the words cited and the truth generally in the New Testament. For the Gospels all look forward to that great gift as an immense and new privilege. When Jesus took His seat on high, the Holy Ghost came personally, and came to abide for ever. This had never been before, and never will be again in the same peculiar way. For the kingdom by and by there will be a larger work. The Spirit will be poured on all flesh; so that the extent will be far greater. "My people (Israel) shall be all righteous" in that day; and vast too

will be the blessing among all the nations of the earth. How striking and how general the work of divine grace when the idols shall utterly pass away, and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day!

But what the Holy Spirit occupies Himself with now is a most special work of concentration, rather than of world-wide action, though the testimony of the gospel is preached to every creature. And why ? Because He is gathering souls in spiritual power round the true centre, the Lord Jesus. And this survives all man's failure and defection. "For where two or three are gathered together to my name, there am I in the midst of them." Christ's name was the centre at Pentecost when the church began; and so it is still. When the Spirit is poured out at the coming of the Lord's world-kingdom (Rev. 11), He will adapt Himself to the work in hand. He will, for instance, enable God's people to walk according to God's laws under the new and divine government of the earth. For Israel it will be the new covenant, and a Messiah reigning in open power; and the Spirit will strengthen in that way. But what an enormous difference there will be when the Lord visibly governs, reigning as a king in righteousness, with princes that rule in judgment; and the vile shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful! How will not the presence of the Lord as a priest on His throne make everything to be in holy order and peaceful happiness in that day!

So He says, in the verse before the one read, "I [Jesus] am the root and the offspring of David." He will then assuredly accomplish all the old and glorious predictions for the earth. He will bless Israel to the full, and, after Israel, all the nations in general. Israel behaved

shamelessly, and the other nations (previously rebellious) found no deliverance, no help, in a people that sinned along with them. In due time the gospel came in and lifted the believer above nationality, whether Jewish or Gentile. The gospel has for its aim to save the believer, and unite him to Christ in, and for, heavenly glory. Thus is the church formed by the present Holy Spirit. It is the richest expression of divine grace. Those who believe are called to be, and even now are, God's children, as they also are by one Spirit baptised into one body.

Do you ask, What of ourselves and our sins? I ask in reply, For what did Christ die? Did not His death effect for the believer what God intended? Was He not offered for the remission of sins? Does He not blot them out before God for each believer, as in the type of the scape-goat (only a great deal better) they were borne away to a solitary land, where nobody would hear of them more? Remember there were two goats. There was one goat for Jehovah, and the other was for dismissal into the wilderness. The first was sacrificed for a sin-offering. The essential thing where sin is in question is, first of all, to vindicate God. If we are to have His grace, He must have His rights in order that His grace may flow without a jar or an obstacle. The first goat was therefore offered as a sin-offering to Jehovah. The second goat could have no efficacy save in virtue of the first; but after that offering, how invaluable its testimony that "all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins" were sent away expressly to a land of forgetfulness! Such was the solemn type on the day of atonement (Lev. 16). And the Lord Jesus more than made it good, as all can find who

receive Heb. 9, and Heb. 10 from God. On His work are founded the blessed words, “their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

Do we, my friends, for ourselves believe these words? How few comparatively in this land of religious profession really believe? How many flatter themselves that they do, while manifestly unconverted! If you believe God’s testimony to you as a guilty person, it would mark that His grace has awakened your soul. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Have you bowed in faith to the truth and the grace so plain in the gospel? Do you not see that God could afford to justify you righteously through Christ’s blood, and in no other way? Till our Lord died, not a single sin was taken away; when He died and rose, a work was accepted by God which would leave not a single sin on any believer. But even God’s children for the most part are only half-believers. They have generally slipped back to the condition of Jews before the Lord came. They think the efficacy is lost every time they break down, and that they must begin over again.

How sad to be in a measure always learning, and never coming to a knowledge of the truth! The Jew, under law, could not avoid this constant need of renewal; but what are Christians about, who so forget the gospel? It is unbelief of what grace now gives through Christ Jesus. What can more evidently weaken and darken the glad tidings God sends us? All spring is gone for a holy walk; and you cannot worship in the Spirit unless you know that all is clear between Him and you. Far am I from saying that you are to gloss over any failure. Confess all fully, and at once; but go to Him with the certainty that He welcomes you to His presence which you must have

slighted when you sinned. But are you not in living relationship with Him, and with the Lord Jesus, His Son? You have dishonoured Him; but if He denies not your relationship, you should not, who need it more than ever for the restoration of your soul. Perhaps you may have said, or done something, wrong this morning. But is there no appointed remedy, no adequate way, of getting practically clear? Certainly there is. Retire into your closet, shut the door, and have it out with God. It is not that He revokes His grace, and that you are back in the world, but that having partaken of His grace in the gospel, you should humble yourself deeply for any sins into which carelessness has let you slip.

The apostle told the Corinthians that, “if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” They then had not judged themselves, and the Lord was chastening them. How did He then deal with the Corinthians? “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and not a few sleep.” This did not prove they were unbelievers, but rather the contrary. It was just because they bore His name that the Lord chastised them. He does not execute condemnation on the world yet: it will be judgment in strict unsparing righteousness. There will be no mercy (which men despised) mingling with the just award (which they did not fear). Now there is grace without judgment. Why? Because Christ undertook the judgment and bore it on the cross. Nothing is more righteous, if He undertook it; nothing more gracious, nothing simpler than the gospel; while nothing is deeper, nothing surer, and nothing more blessed. Therein God gives complete rest for your conscience in what Christ has suffered for you, and in His love perfect rest for your heart. You are then free to have Christ Himself to enjoy.

What can compare with the privileges of the Christian? It is not merely hearing sermons, were they master-pieces, nor is it prayer individual or common, although you are sure to fall into sins if careless as to prayer and the word of God too. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” It is through the washing of water by His word. It admonishes and warns, corrects and rebukes, feeds and directs, revives and encourages us; yet how seldom one hears ordinarily about this cleansing by the word. All who believe do speak of Christ’s blood; its need is too absolute for such souls to forget it. But children of God for lack of honouring the word must seem to be lingering about the door, as if they were not free to cross the threshold of forgiveness. There they are and there they stick; which tends at length to the forgetfulness of the purging from their old sins. It is the more sorrowful because we all are called to go forward in enjoying Christ, and to be filled with thanksgiving and praise.

Therefore, my dear friends, I cannot but press this upon your earnest heed, so that you who believe may be enabled to take in faith your due place. Never mind what man thinks; hearken to what the Lord says. Men count it strange if you go back to the standard of the only, the best, way. It looks eccentric when compared with modern thought or practice ever so old since apostolic days. But your wisdom is never to let such talk deprive you of the blessing of walking obediently in the truth. “As ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk ye in Him.” Delivered from a bad conscience and guilty fears, see that you move onward, dependent and confiding. Be assured of His grace whether you fall asleep, or live till He comes, when He will receive us all together to

Himself and for the Father's house. Unless you know yourselves purged by His blood, and yourselves the objects of His love, how is it possible to be in a fit condition to worship the Father and the Son? You may fairly be described as no more than lying on the threshold, instead of entering into the joys of God's habitation in the Spirit; for He surely has pleasure in the happiness of His children. As things are, how many Christians are but borderers, whereas Christ suffered for our sins, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," and has given us the Spirit that we might enjoy the presence of God fully even now and here.

Is not this condition sanctioned in the New Testament? What did the apostle mean in desiring that the Colossians should be thanking "the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light?" Are you thus thanking Him now? You, if a believer, have eternal life, your sins are forgiven, and yourself are a child of God, with the Spirit of His Son enabling your heart to cry, Abba, Father. To be a "door-keeper" now is falling short of what God bestows on you. Christ not only meets us where we were, but brings us even now in faith where He is — into the holiest. The salvation God gives, not to some, but to all that believe, is worthy of Himself and His Son. He leaves not a single spot or stain upon us; and we are thenceforward called in the strength of the heavenly meat of Christ to enjoy God's love unstinted and perfect. Christ's work may well banish every doubt on that score.

But what does He mean by saying, "I am the root and the offspring of David"? To be David's offspring not even an unbelieving Jew could deny to the Christ. But how could He be David's root when He was born more than a

thousand years after David? Yet He says so, which is enough; as the Old Testament scriptures said the same, centuries before. Yes, He was David's root just as surely as, if more wonderingly than, He was David's offspring — the Son of David as well as David's Lord. Compare Psalm 110 and Matthew 22:45. In one person now is He both God and man, as He loved to call Himself the Son of man, yet of David's lineage, and thus, inheriting Solomon's title. If He had been only of His mother, this, though absolutely needed, would not have been sufficient. For, as is known, she was, through her father Heli, descended from Nathan, who had not the promise of the kingdom. It must be through Solomon's line. Here, therefore, Joseph furnished the missing link, being not only of David but through Solomon.

Hence, plainly as in Luke 3 we have His mother's line, so in Matt. 1 we have Joseph's title, and how it became His indisputably, on Jewish principles. Both met in Himself the Messiah, "Who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen." He was thus, and only thus, by any possibility, David's root as well as offspring. And yet if He had been Joseph's son in His humanity, as He was Mary's, all would have been sin and falsehood. For He could not then have been God's Son, His Only-begotten; He could not have been God, as truly as the Father is. But Joseph's son He was legally alone, because Joseph was affianced to the virgin Mary, though they never lived together till the wondrous Babe of Bethlehem was born, as scripture carefully states, and the prophet Isaiah had no less carefully foreshown.

Truly we may exclaim

"How wondrous the glories that meet

In Jesus, and from His face shine

His love is eternal and sweet,

'Tis human, 'tis also divine."

Yet, with an incomparably higher claim, He never had a kingdom here below from God, like David, or Solomon. He came to suffer for sins to God's glory, and thus lay the basis of redemption, not only for sinners and the church now, but for the kingdom by and by, and for all things, God being thus infinitely glorified. Oh, what a wonderful combination of glory, divine and human, past and present, future and everlasting! He died, not for that nation only, the poor Jewish people which had Him put to death on the cross. Yet He died for them. He prayed for His murderers, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." On that very ground they had the gospel preached, and many believed; on that very ground they will have forgiveness in the age to come.

And why are not you forgiven today? The word of this salvation is sent to you that you may believe it now. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Put not the word of reconciliation from you, but receive it into your souls. Believe that God made Him that knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him.

But my task is to show that there is another and very distinct character in which the Lord next presents Himself. He will verify and make good all that David's root and offspring can impart in His coming kingdom. Yet He is also the "bright, the morning star." This is never said in the Old Testament about the Lord Jesus. The only morning star we hear of there is His enemy,

foreshadowed by the haughty king of Babylon in Isa. 14, the last holder of the imperial power which began in "the golden city." "Thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God... I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the uttermost parts of the pit." It is because of his great words at the close that he will be given to the burning of fire. This appears to be the true identification of the "day-star, son of the morning," in the prophetic word of Isaiah. It is not Satan, as many have hastily thought. He is described as a great king, this king of Babylon. Thus the first king of Babylon is a type of the last who succeeds to the world-power which began then. It is not Nebuchadnezzar whose last appearance in scripture (Dan. 4) is as different as possible, both in humiliation and restoration. Nor did any other fully meet the terms of the prophet; but it surely will be in the little horn of the West (Dan. 7) He is the final holder of this world's imperial power. Such is the man whom Old Testament prophecy describes as the "son of the morning, or the day-star" (Lucifer).

But the Lord for whom we wait now, the hope of the church and of the Christian, reveals Himself accordingly as "the bright, the morning star." Nor is it the first time. For, in an earlier part of this very book of Revelation, it is said of Him, "I will give him (the overcomer) the morning star." Here too the Lord distinguishes it from giving him power over the nations; just as we have His own title as "the root and the offspring of David" distinguished from His being "the bright, the morning star." Authority or power over the nations will be when the Lord takes the kingdom of the world, rising as the Sun of righteousness. But when He adds "and I will give

Him the morning star," it is association with Himself when He receives His own to Himself before that day of outward universal power shall dawn. He thus promises to the overcomer something more, and higher, and more intimate than that. He is going to give us Himself in heavenly blessedness and in love truly divine before that day.

Such will be the morning star. This lovely harbinger is before the day breaks. The sun is not yet risen to dispel the darkness of the night. The morning star, oh! how it cheers those who watch while others sleep; and to watch now is what Christians are called to — to wait for Christ, sure that He is coming for His own, not knowing when He comes. This is the precious object for our hearts as we pursue the pilgrim path. It is the hope given us by Himself (John 14) If day by day we make it by the Spirit a living reality, what a power of raising our souls from toil and moil, from snares and troubles, to that which is before Himself! For He particularly awaits that moment. Impossible to be peacefully directed thus in heart, and to be also absorbed with earthly expectations, and clouded with worldly cares.

Whatever be the duty of the Christian, he is bound to do it thoroughly and with thanksgiving to the Lord. But he is not troubled if others run before him as they like; and whatever the trial, he can trust the Lord unqualifiedly. Where "the bright, the morning star" fills the heart, as its outlook, what comparable is anything you can win by labours night and day? The Gentiles seek after meat and drink and clothing; and the world holds out as prizes, gold and silver and precious things; but what are these compared with "the bright, the morning star"? To behold Christ at His coming to share with us His heavenly

glory! to be in a moment, and for ever, associated with Him, before His judgments fall on the nations! Yet, in substance, it is the same hope He gave His own whilst He was here — the hope of His coming again to place us where He is in His Father's house. It is a quite different thing from His earthly glory as the root and off-spring of David, when He reigns by and by. He is in His Father's house, whither He went to prepare a place for us. He is coming to give him that overcometh the Morning Star.

Is this then your hope, my brethren? Or are you only occupied with the Jews and their movement toward the land? Many are expecting the world to get better by education and temperance, by art, letters, and science. But all such expectations are vain. Others with better feeling trust to the preaching of the gospel as the panacea in the hand of the Spirit. Have they forgotten that Pentecost has been fulfilled without any such effect on the nations of the earth? Did the world improve when the twelve apostles laboured here below, and the apostle Paul beyond them all? Can you imagine that the present generation of Christian preachers or any one else approaches within a measurable degree those whom God set "first in the church?" He who could tolerate a thought of comparison with them could only be a person as ignorant of himself as of them. Yet were they men filled with an abiding sense of their own insufficiency and with a like spirit of dependence on the Lord. They accepted, and held unflinchingly to, the path of pilgrims and strangers, as it was Christ's path. Yet even in their own time, though lingering at first in Jerusalem, they went forth and preached the gospel everywhere, practically through the known world of that day. But nobody then dreamt of its improving the world. The true

object and right effect of the gospel is to gather believers out of the world for heavenly glory with Christ. It is quite another thing which, if we believe scripture, will change the face of all here below on the earth according to the purpose of God. It is the coming of the Lord in power and glory. Then He shall chase away its darkness as the Sun of righteousness. Then “every eye shall see Him.” But here He announces Himself as “the bright, the morning star.” Only believing eyes shall see Him thus. It is the Christian’s hope; and this is what we are awaiting now — Himself our hope.

Do not tell me that only some choice and intelligent Christians are to be caught up to meet Him. Read 1 Thess. 1, and learn how these young disciples “turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven.” Here was living reality. They were waiting by faith for the Lord Jesus to come, and receive them to heaven out of the world, not to improve the world by them. The genuine bettering of the world will be first by divine judgments, and then by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, when Christ rules the universe manifestly. The wicked will be smitten, and Satan for a thousand years shut out from the world. This has never been as yet. Think you that sermons, and tracts, and all the preachers that ever were could shut up Satan for even an hour? But the Lord will do it with ease, whatever the means He deigns to employ. He shall bruise the serpent’s head, yea, under the feet of His saints. Satan during His reign is to be shut up in the bottomless pit, before he is let loose for his last temptation, and flung for ever into the lake of fire.

Scripture describes the present in one aspect as “night.” Well might it be so! since our Lord was crucified. It is

the night of man's day. But the light of God's glory in Christ has shone into our hearts, once utterly dark; and we can look up into the heavens, and by faith behold the One who is coming. And this hope brightens the heart before He comes, and makes us long for Him. The first object of the Christian's heart is Christ. This only the better fits us to seek the perishing, that they may be saved; as we have a yet nearer call of love toward brethren in Christ. But the first and deepest affection is and ought to be toward Christ. Our constant and due attitude is to be patiently waiting for Him, that is, for "the bright, the morning star."

Now, let me ask, Is it so with you that believe? What is the use of any truth if you do not make it your own, and live in it? It will otherwise only condemn you. Who can be said to set a just regard on God's truth if he does not earnestly act on it? We owe all to His love; and in fact it was His love that sent Christ to die and bring us salvation. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). So also just before, we were yet without strength, when "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." This is God's gospel; and the proper hope of him that has received the gospel is Christ coming for us, when also we shall reign with Him. The Old Testament saints shall also share His reign; they suffered in faith. But none had the Bright, the Morning Star revealed, as Christ does it now. Hence see the force of "The Spirit, and the bride say, Come." For the Holy Ghost is in us now, and leads the church to say, Come; as he that hears, the individual believer, is invited to bid Christ come. But how could anyone ask the Lord to come, the Judge of quick and

dead, unless he were justified by faith, and had peace with God?

Beware of the too common view which mixes up the coming of the Lord for the saints, with His appearing to judge the world. Shall I tell you what such a theory is like? It actually makes the Lord, when He comes to receive His bride, array Himself as it were with the black cap of the Judge. To him who knows the symmetry of God's word there can scarce be a sadder perversion of the truth. The Lord coming with a black cap to meet His bride! Oh, what folly man can conceive when he slips from Scripture into his own thoughts!

There are two parts in Christ's coming. First, He will receive His saints and take them to heaven. There is the great importance of the fourth chapter of the Revelation. None can find the church on earth after Rev. 3; for the concluding word in Rev. 22 goes back of course, and is no exception to the fact named. The second and third chapters of the Revelation show the churches in seven different types, which furnish a somewhat prophetic view of what it seemed good to the Lord to notice therein until He comes. The next chapter (Rev. 4) lets us see all the saints glorified in heaven. How did they get there? The Lord had translated them. It does not belong to the purpose of the Revelation to give a vision of the Lord's coming to receive them to Himself. The vision we have in Rev. 19 is of the Lord coming from heaven with the saints following Him when He executes judgment.

Confessedly, the only way (and how happily!) believers can be caught up to heaven is by Christ's presenting them there at His coming. The fullest revelation of it is in 1 Thess. 4, in 2 Thess. 2:1, and in 1 Cor. 15. In these

three scriptures, which ought to more than suffice, we have the proof that in this way only are the saints to be taken in a moment together out of the world; as they will at a later season leave heaven — at the time of His appearing to execute judgment. There is thus not the least mixing of the Bridegroom's coming for the bride, and of the Judge's execution of judgment on the world. This enforcing of judgment might suit such a cap of condemnation (at least in human style). But think of so grotesque an array for one meeting and marrying a bride, even though he were a judge! Yet this reflects symbolically what such a system of confusion makes of our Lord's coming. It is as contrary to Scripture as to the nature of things. Distinguish the two parts, and you have, Christ coming for His saints, and in due course His other act of coming with them to judge the world.

The distinction preserves the hope in its constant power. We may always wait if there be no revealed events to intervene. Such is the unquestionable impression formed by the Gospels and the Epistles, and confirmed, not impaired, by the Revelation rightly understood. Still more profuse again are the references to His appearing to judge the world, before which important events must necessarily be fulfilled. Then in the Revelation we have the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven vials, to say nothing of signs and solemn facts which the Lord and the apostle declare must be before that day. But the coming for His own is carefully apart, that it may be a simple hope, and not an event of providence or of prophecy. They are both true, but distinct, parts of His Second Advent.

Hence the moment the bride hears of Him as the Bright, the Morning Star, she answers, "Come." She knows of

no revealed delay; she asks for no tokens; she thinks of no preparation further in this world. The church alone (and so the Christian individually) has the Spirit thus guiding in perfect peace and confiding affection before the Lord comes. Whatever outpouring of the Spirit the Jews receive is after He appears. It is therefore eminently characteristic of the bride, the church, that the Spirit is shown here leading her to say, Come. It is not a mere expression of her own feeling (which might be enthusiasm), but a Spirit-given and sanctioned call to Christ, as the fruit in her of His grace and truth. And what has ever wrought in saints effects more acceptable to God than the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ? The bride is, without doubt, the church, longing for Christ to come, and rightly interpreting by the Spirit His way of revealing Himself.

It is not at all doubted that Jerusalem will be in a similar relation comparatively on the earth. Jerusalem is the bride referred to in the Canticles, as well as Ps. 14 and elsewhere in the Old Testament. There the associations are all earthly. Of course it is a figure in either case, meaning the one dearest to the Lord respectively in heaven or earth. There is no real difficulty; only we must not confuse the two. When we have as here, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come,” the words can apply only to the church waiting for Christ. But the words that follow are of much moment, and serve to guard us from over-valuing knowledge in comparison with the possession of Christ by faith.

I have seen people rather proud of their knowledge, which then bred worms and stank; but grace never despises those who may not know as much as others. We ought to love dearly Christ’s own who know but little —

to cherish them all the more because they are short. Do you not see this in the mother who has a child not so pretty or bright as the rest? She tries to make up for its defect by the most marked affection. She knows that the beauties of the family can get on very well for themselves. Most people like a handsome boy or girl; but the plain one is apt to fare ill with strangers. Not so with the mother, who cleaves to it, so that sometimes even the poor little soul is in danger of getting a little conceited or selfish, because so much love is showered upon it. But without question grace would lead one to care especially for the feebler among God's children. Those who are strong do not well to overlook the weak and please themselves. It is according to Christ that we help the needy in this way, and take pains to lead them on.

Here we have a special addition that illustrates His grace in a practical shape. "And let him that heareth say, Come." There are not a few who have never understood, never enjoyed, the pledged relationship of the bride. Are they then to be silent? Are they forbidden to welcome Christ's coming? Not so. If one has really heard the voice of Christ, without appreciating the bridal place, let him not hesitate. He believes in Christ and His work, he knows His love already, and that He is coming to consummate His love; for He will change the body of our humiliation, so as to be conformed to the body of His glory, and have us thus like Himself, and with Him where He is. Here the word warrants the weakest one "that heareth" to say, Come. This is grace indeed, as it disproves the theorists who slight the deficient in knowledge. They are more to be blamed than those they

look down on. “Let him that heareth say, Come,” is an encouraging word to the feeble believer.

But this is not all. Having now set in their place those who answer with bridal love, and such as hear Christ but know not that relationship, the revealing Spirit is careful even here to insist on zeal for the gospel, and warm interest in souls who are strangers to Christ and in danger of perishing. There are those of the world or such as look like the world, as the publican did to the Pharisee in the temple. For the publican, not the Pharisee, bitterly bewailed his condition and cast himself on God’s sovereign mercy. Far different he who despised and hated him with a hard and haughty bearing, most hateful to God. But the Lord entered into the publican’s need; and just because he did not justify himself, he is declared to have gone down to his house justified rather than the other. Some such state seems described in the next words of our text, “Let him that is athirst come.” It is an address to one who is no longer indifferent, but thirsting for what would relieve his soul. He could scarcely be athirst if unawakened to feel it; but a sense of want, a craving for the blessing he does not yet know, there is. And here is the invitation of grace — “Let him that is athirst come.” He is not told to say, Come, as in both the former cases. How could a man in his misery ask the Lord to come? He is just realising his wants and his ruin; and the question for him is how to assuage his burning thirst. “Let him come.” For the water of life is here to be taken freely. Nothing but life’s water can refresh the thirsty soul. Let him come and drink then without money and without price.

W.K.

The Gospel of God

When our first parents transgressed and fell, God appeared in the paradise of Eden, and after hearing and convicting each, traced the evil to its source and pronounced judgment on the great enemy. To effect that sentence, wondrous to say, He proclaimed the coming Deliverer, who should suffer for sins but crush the power of Satan. And what grace, that He who should accomplish this divine work was to be the woman's seed, Emmanuel, the virgin's Son, as the prophet would fill in the sketch, long after Moses, and long before the Incarnation and Redemption! Scripture speaks of glad tidings in Abraham's case (Gen. 12, Gen. 22; Gal. 3:8) and in that of Israel (Heb. 4:2); yet these and all else were but typical and preparatory. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Christ is all; and the efficacy of all He won comes to the sinner by faith. "And therefore is it of faith, that it might be according to grace." So still more plainly is it written, when the glad tidings came fully out, "by grace ye have been saved through faith, and that, not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

This is what God proclaims. Man thinks otherwise, and prefers his "view" to God's word. The Romanist nullifies the truth by his supplement of works and rites and ceremonies, by priests and prayers and masses, by penance and purgatory, by spurious mediators angelic and human. It is dishonour to God and His Son, to the atoning work on the cross, to the Holy Spirit and to the written word. But the grace and truth of God in Christ remains intact for faith.

Calvinism clogs and obscures the gospel by teaching that Christ suffered to reconcile His Father to us, and by its decree of reprobation. For God so loved the world that He gave His own Son, not only that the believer might have eternal life, but that his sins should be effaced by His sacrifice. And Rom. 9:22, 23 is conclusive, that while He before prepared vessels of mercy for glory, He endured with much long suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. They were fitted by their own sins and unbelief, not by God, who is not the author of evil and is righteous in judgment.

The Arminian scheme necessarily fails by making man guilty and sinful, to go as partner with God in his own salvation. But if it be true as scripture plainly declares, that man is dead in trespasses and sins, not the Gentile only but the favoured Jew too, that question is decided. Arminianism is farther from the truth than Calvinism.

What does “Zion’s Watchtower” consider to be “the true gospel”? Blind to God and the Saviour, to sin and its judgment, to the infinite work on the cross, and the wickedness of neglecting, despising, and rejecting “so great salvation,” it looks only at the awful issue for the great majority of men perishing and punished for ever. Scripture, which proclaims the gospel, in no way hides but warns of the tremendous doom that awaits those who refuse it. No fanciful or specious reasoning, no profane denunciation, can alter what God says. And it is Christ, and the N. T., that are so clear and solemn in letting men know that God’s judgment is eternal. Nor is any blasphemer worse than such as gives them the lie. It is Jesus, not Moses, who speaks of “the unquenchable fire,” of the future Gehenna, where (unlike the earlier

and temporal one) “their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48) in the absolute sense.

How then runs their new gospel? It is that in the millennial age all come forth from the grave to be tested again! by the gospel, and to be either accepted to eternal life, or destroyed i.e., extinguished, as unworthy of life, in the Second Death!!

Now our Lord has pronounced already as to this in John 5:21-29, as well as in Rev. 20, “Verily, verily, I say to you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that heard shall live.” This hour is still going on, and life for the spiritually dead depends on hearing Christ’s voice in the gospel. “For as the Father hath life in himself, even so he gave so the Son also to have life in himself.” Christ is the life-giver for those that believe, the one Mediator between God and man. This however is not all, if we believe our Lord: “And he gave him authority to execute judgment also, because he is Son of man. Marvel not at this; for an hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs (the literally dead) shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto a resurrection of life; and they that have done ill, unto a resurrection of judgment.” In this future hour (the millennial age, as it is loosely called) shall be those two resurrections of wholly different character; even before the millennium begins, “of life,” for the “just,” who believed and bore good fruit, to reign with Christ; the other for the “unjust,” who did not believe and are raised for judgment. This judgment is the second death, the lake of fire, where the Beast and the False Prophet were long before Satan, and shall be tormented day and night for all ages. The after extinction is a fraud. The

word says tormented for ever, and in the most explicit terms.

Such then is this fabulous hope, one of Satan's many false gospels. There is no more ground for this millennial resurrection of mankind than for a preaching in Hades, to give a fresh test and a further opportunity, to those who had died in their sins. Not a word of scripture, O. or N.T., gives the least colour to it. Men audaciously dictate it to God, as what He ought to do. But, as we have just read, the Lord, the Judge of quick and dead, has authoritatively precluded it. The Revelation is in entire accord with the Gospel, that (before the thousand years begin) the blessed and holy dead are raised up to reign with Christ. When this is over and the little space that follows, another resurrection follows of the dead, who are judged and cast into the lake of fire. Not a hint appears there, any more than in the Gospel, for the dream of raising the masses of unbelieving mankind for that probation, which belongs to this life. Raising them again for it contradicts all scripture and can emanate only from the father of lies. It would be more upright for these dreamers on behalf of the unbelieving and wicked to write a Bible out of their own reveries, instead of wresting the scriptures to the destruction both of their own souls and of such as heed them. Alas! this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil.

W.K.

As Having Authority - Matt. 7:28, 29

(B.T. Vol. N5, p. 228-229.)

From first to last of the words of righteousness on the mountain, the Lord had spoken as none but a divine person was entitled to do.

“And it came to pass, when Jesus concluded these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his doctrine, for he was teaching them as having authority, and not as their scribes.”

The Lord, alone on earth, was qualified to speak with authority peculiar to Himself. Beyond all others He knew what was in man (John 2:25): He alone here below knew what was in God (John 3:11). On one side He is the Man whom God raised from out of dead men, marked out by God as judge of living and dead, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts. On the other hand no one hath seen God at any time, the Only-begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father — He declared Him. He is thus in every way qualified to speak with authority; yet who so lowly?

But the Jews ware used, now that the Prophets of Jehovah for four centuries had ceased, to lean on their rabbis. Indeed they had shown the same unbelief in the days of prophets of the highest character; as Isaiah bears witness (Isa. 29:13). It was with them in Israel, as afterwards in Christendom, a sea of uncertainty, and a conflict of learned or rash opinions. How could it be otherwise when they were thus cheated to give up God’s word for man’s ideas? So our Lord cites this very oracle

in His day, “In vain they do worship me, teaching as doctrines men’s precepts.”

But not so the Lord Himself as He sat on the mount, and taught the disciples, within the hearing of the crowds. This Matthew was inspired to present continuously and in orderly relation for permanent use. He began with the characters, the blessed characters, of such as enter the kingdom of the heavens. Four are righteous, three gracious, each class with its consequent persecution, as being in the age where evil still runs on (Matt. 5:3-12). Their position follows, righteous and gracious, toward those outside (13-16).

Then from ver. 17 to the end of the chapter He proceeds to show that far from coming to make void the law or the prophets, He was here to give the fulness of God’s mind therein, the light of the kingdom before it is established in any for those who bow to Him. The unbelieving and unsubject shall not enter on the new privileges. Not a tittle should in any way pass from the law till all come to pass. To enter the kingdom a real and inward righteousness, of which Christ is the perfection, must be, far exceeding that of the scribes and Pharisees.

Next He goes farther, not merely “for verily I say to you” (18) and “for I say to you” (20) but with all the emphasis of superior divine light, worthy of God’s Son, “Ye heard that it was said to the ancients, Thou shalt not kill… But I say to you” (21-26), and “ye heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you” (27-30); and incomparably more searching commandments are applied to the law’s prohibition of violence and corruption only in their extreme forms.

After that the Lord deals with divorce, and oath in ordinary converse (not judicial), putting all in the same highest place of God's light, with no allowance of human weakness (vers. 31-37). These were matters of righteousness.

In what follows He looks at the higher and deeper claims of grace. Instead of retaliation as in the law of "eye for eye and tooth for tooth," we hear "But I say to you, not to resist evil," etc. (38-42); and instead of "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy," He urges "But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father that is in the heavens," to the point of your being perfect (i.e. in grace), as your heavenly Father is to evil and good, just and unjust (43-48).

In Matt. 6 He points out the true spirit of the life in alms, prayer, and fasting toward God (their Father that seeth in secret before them) (1-18); again in calm confidence above the world's anxiety in ordinary things (19-34): righteousness and grace are here also.

Lastly, in Matt. 7 He guards against evil thoughts of brethren, and communion with the unclean world; and He counsels confiding dependence on their Father, acting toward others as they desired from them, and holding to the narrow gate and the straitened way (1-14). He solemnly warns against false prophets, whose fruits betray them notwithstanding their fair speech (15-20). The vanity of profession without vital reality is pressed even where service and gift are pleaded. It is finally compared to the folly of building on the sand, instead of on the rock of genuine obedience to Christ's words (21-27).

To any anxious soul let me say, Do not mistake. The Lord is not here showing how the sinner is to get pardon and peace. He is teaching His disciples how they are to walk and please their Father. Confusion here denies salvation by grace, is itself mere error, and can only endanger and ruin souls.

Teaching of the Twelve Apostles

The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, etc. By Canon Spence, Second Edition. London: Nisbet & Co.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 95-96.)

Such is the title of a recently discovered Greek MS.; or perhaps, more literally, the longer and more pretentious form, “Teaching of the Lord, through the Twelve Apostles, to the Gentiles.” Meagre and incorrect, it serves to manifest the melancholy and rapid decline of the second century from revealed truth. The MS. is of the 11th century, and was found a few years ago by Philotheos Bryennios, who afterwards became Metropolitan of Nicomedia, in the library of the Patriarch of Jerusalem in Constantinople. Any scholar can see the strong analogies between it and both the Epistle of the Pseudo-Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas, which have been generally referred to the beginning and middle of the second century. Some have argued for its priority even to the former; but even the enthusiastic discoverer does not contend for so early a date as either. The sole value of them all is their united yet unwitting evidence how grievously the church had fallen through Judaism. The exaggerated estimate of the late discoveries, formed by men of various schools in our day, demonstrates the same thing now. In the whole treatise of sixteen chapters, if we except the Lord’s prayer and a few texts substantially drawn from scripture, there is not one sentence of weighty truth, not out, which indicates the enjoyment of the liberty of Christ, no distinctness as to redemption, not an inkling of the presence of the Holy Spirit sent down from

heaven, nor of the heavenly relationship of the church, nor of the special privileges of the christian.

It is worse than defective, as may be shown by a brief notice of chap. 1 only. In it the law usurps the place of the gospel from first to last. Clearly the writer bad before him, besides the Old Testament the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, the Gospel of John, the Epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians, and that of James; but where is true intelligence of any thing? All is letter, and not spirit. There is no testimony how souls receive life, so is to take its way and refuse the broad road of death; no right sense expressed of that grace which alone keeps by the power of God through faith. What a contrast with Rom. 5 or 8, which last shows us how the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in those that walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit 1 So it is with Rein. 13 where love, in us impossible apart from faith and life in Christ, is truly said to be the fulfilment of the law, which the law itself never did make good. Still less is the doctrine an approach to that in the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians and in the First of John.

The writer interpolates “fasting” unwarrantably into his citation of Matt. 5:41, and holds out a false promise to those that love such as hate them (“But love ye those that hate you and ye shall have no enemy”). Had the author never weighed the death of Stephen, or of James the son of Zebedee, or of others who were slain for Christ’s sake, to say nothing of Himself, the substance and test of all truth? It is amazing that any christian should think that this weak and even false expectation could be a probable oral tradition of the Master’s words, No doubt as an ordinary rule those zealous of good disarm the injurious, as 1 Peter 3 shows from Ps. 34. But

the, same apostle teaches that our place is to. do good, suffer for it, and take it patiently, which is certainly not law but grace; as Christ also suffered for us, leaving an example that we should follow His steps. Even this Teaching goes on to cite words quite incompatible with his preceding comment; but when he adds “for thou canst not,” he exaggerates, unless he means consistently with grace. Indeed his remarks are singularly poor everywhere and in no case suggest a single oral tradition worthy of the Saviour. How strange, in the face of Matt. 5:42, to fancy some traditional commandment of the Lord on the subject of giving! And it is really too bad for any sensible christian to say of the closing sentence (“Let thine alms sweat into thy hands, as long as thou knowest to whom thou givest”) that it clearly refers to some unwritten saying of authority spoken by our Lord! or by one of His near followers. Most men instructed in the truth and at home in the scriptures will rather judge it as vulgar in style, as beneath inspired sentiment. Indeed it is hard to reconcile with what goes before or with our Lord’s words.

There is little or nothing noteworthy in chaps. 2, 3, save perhaps the sentence which Clement of Alex. quotes as scripture from this treatise, “My child, be not a liar, for a lie leads to theft.” It would be as true to say, “Be not a thief, for theft leads to lying.” Neither sentiment is scriptural, but wholly beneath its tone. But chap. 4 opens with a call to honour him that speaks God’s word as the Lord or Jehovah (for it is anarthrous) and for the strange reason, for, when the lordship is spoken of, then the Lord is. Soon after, in urging liberality, comes the word, “If thou professest, by thy hands thou shalt give ransom, or redemption, for thy sins.” What sort of

doctrine is this? Not God's but man's. It is in vain to refer to Dan. 4:27, where the prophet exhorts the vain and self-willed king, not to ransom, but to break off his sins by righteousness (the LXX say "by alms"), and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor (or afflicted), "if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility." How sober is the divine word, as man's is wild and false! I am aware of the effort to make the Chaldee version utter a similar error, and how Greek and Latin and other superstitions minds seized it, But De Dieu and others long ago refuted the heterodoxy, and on linguistic ground. The A. and R. Vv. are right. It is useless to pursue the review into less weighty questions; but in these, too, the treatise departs from scripture.

Christ - the Door of the Sheep

Notes of a discourse on John 10:1-10

It is on the latter words of the Lord Jesus in the passage just read I wish to say a little at this time. What did He mean the souls who then heard, or those who afterwards should hear, to gather from the remarkable clause, “I am the door of the sheep”?

There is a change in the employment of the words. In verse 2 He represents Himself as the Shepherd, but does not yet call Himself the good Shepherd. He takes up a well-known figure of the Old Testament in which the kings of Israel were frequently designated their shepherds, the Messiah of course pre-eminently.

In this part of the chapter accordingly He speaks of the sheepfold. There is not as yet an allusion, as in verse 16, to the sheep which do not belong to the Jewish nation: “Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one flock [not, as is familiarly known, “one fold”], one shepherd.” Those who conceive (and it is a general error) that there is now a “fold” go back in heart and mind to Judaism. The Lord has really a flock in immediate relationship to Himself. The Jewish sheep, as He tells us, He would lead out, others not of it He would join with them; and these should form not two companies, but one flock round the one Shepherd.

The chapter begins with telling us how the Lord first in the case of Israel showed He was really the Shepherd. He had come in by the door, in the appointed way, at the proper time, and subject to all divine ordinances. So when to be baptized by John He says, “Thus it becometh

us to fulfil all righteousness." Afterwards He performed the miracles and manifested that character of mission which the prophets had predicted. He had come in by the door as the Shepherd, He only; others might claim it, but they were thieves and robbers. Not that some before the Lord Jesus had not sought the good of Israel. Josiah, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, David, were far from being thieves and robbers; but they were witnesses to the coming Messiah, not usurpers. But those who had claimed the sheep as their own while in truth they were God's, what could they be called but thieves and robbers? And the Messiah was very jealous, as was Jehovah, over Israel, His people reserved for His Shepherd.

But now Messiah was come, and they alas! refused Him. The blind man had been cast out, because he, no longer blind, confessed Him. Some in the same hatred had before this taken up stones to stone the Son of God. In spirit He, rejected Himself, was now leading His sheep out. That murderous prelude on the part of His people was but an anticipation of His own death; and as with him once blind who now saw, so it would be with all who worshipped Him. Jesus would lead His own outside the world's religion. It was no question of staying to improve or reform, as think the infidel school of progress in every age; grace was calling out from what is sentenced to judgment. He was not going to work now as they expected. Israel's blessing and the glory of the earth await another day. A yet deeper task was in hand to be sealed in His blood. Therefore He would lead the sheep out and go before them Himself. He shows Himself as the Shepherd come in the due and long-predicted manner which God's word had let them to expect, as the

Seed of the woman and of Abraham, as the Son of David and of man. He had seen their hatred of Him and His Father, and this would be soon apparent in His cross. There was no course but one open to Him; and He was not only going outside the fold but about to lead His own out too. The blind man who now saw, was cast out by men blinder than himself, to be with Jesus.

The sheep follow Him; for they know His voice. A stranger will they not follow; for they know not the voice of strangers. The ears of Israel were heavy; they could not understand. Yet there is not a hard word in what the Lord uttered. Why is it that people, then as now, do not understand the Scriptures? Not really because of difficult expressions. It is the truth that grates on the reluctant will of man. This is the source of all unbelief. It is resistance of the will to face the terrible fact of man's ruin; it is the pride that rejects God's grace and will not bend to one's own need of it. Hence the guilt of unbelief. not because man has a feeble understanding, but because he fears not God and believes not His love. Yet is not the truth good in itself, and full of goodness to man, spite of his evil? Is it not the only means of blessing, or of salvation? Is it not by the word of God that he is begotten, and nourished, that he can serve, enjoy, or worship God? be happy with Him now and for ever? Why then does not man love it? Because he has departed from God and refuses to return in God's way. He indulges himself in the fond delusion that he would like, some time if not now, to serve God; but he really likes nothing but His own will. Yet if God is to be served at all, it must be according to His will, which alone is holy and good.

But there is a deeper question than of his serving God. Some souls before me may flatter themselves that they would rejoice to serve God; but are they willing to take the place of having no good thing in them, of being lost and not merely in danger? Not merely that they have done evil in the sight of God, but that they are all wrong before Him? It is a serious thing when the heart of man bows to the solemn sentence of God, when one stands and confesses oneself lost before the God whose love and will have been slighted habitually. What then is to become of the soul? What of the body when resurrection to judgment comes?

Such then was the state of Israel, the fold; the Shepherd was obliged to go outside. The test that any were His own was that they heard and knew His voice. The crisis was at hand; when He has put forth all His own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him. It was the sentence of death on the best religion of the earth. The only persons who can boast of divine religion for their nation are the Jews; but here, solemn to say, the Lord virtually sentences the Jews and their religion. In the fullest love to them already had He gone into the fold, and they would not hear Him; so He goes out and leads His own out after Him. He always takes the first place, in sorrow as in all else; in the deepest of all He suffers for them, Just for unjust. Then He goes before His own sheep, whom He knows by name and leads out.

In truth all is in ruins, the world and man; the true Light has been put out, as far as man could. God Himself who came in love is gone. They felt not the sin. They believed neither His glory nor His grace. They could not understand His words; nay, how few did even the disciples then understand! It was not merely the Jews

who were blind and deaf: the disciples were half Jews and half blind still. Men do not understand what they do not like, not because there is not adequate, yea, abundant, light vouchsafed of God, but because their own will is at work, producing darkness in the heart. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” It is an unerring test: with Christ the object, our soul is full of light. Have I darkness as to this or that? If so, and so far, my eye is not single. Why do I say it but because it is the truth, and that you and I may look to Him who alone enlightens and makes us light? In vain to look for divine light till you receive Him, and rest on Him, who will shew what He is for you and to you in the smallest need of every day, as in the greatest for eternity.

But there is more than this that follows (ver. 7): the Lord Jesus takes an entirely new place now outside Israel. He introduces this truth in the same solemn manner, not the sentence of death on Judaism, but the opening out of life and salvation to sinners. “Verily, verily [says Jesus], I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.... by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” How blessed! He speaks to the same souls. What love! to the souls who could not understand Him! If the true Messiah was going outside His ancient people He would save sinners. Ah! they were sinners, and till the sinner feels that he is a sinner, he feels nothing aright, least of all as to God or His Son.

This is the beginning of wisdom. The first lesson of goodness is that I know and confess my badness. Nothing a man likes so little as to know and own that he is good for nothing before God; the grace that came by Him who is full of grace alone effects it in any. It is most true that I cannot have true faith in Christ unless I repent toward God. Never seek to divorce the one from

the other. It is not only a human error but a snare of Satan for simple souls, where they are severed, for God has joined them in receiving the gospel. God would have souls feel and confess their sins. Repentance is when a soul no longer ignores God, cheating itself as to its own evil; he repents who by grace is willing to receive God's sentence on his own sinfulness in the sight of God. What a change! It is a man who abandons himself, because of his evil as judged by God, and looks with horror on himself as before Him.

Christ is the test of this as of all else. Thus in the case before us what could be worse in His sight than the self-will that refused to receive the Messiah? They did not like Him when they knew Him after a sort; they would have liked one to flatter them, and give them power and glory, making them the most exalted people on earth and crushing all their enemies. This will all come in due time from God, who will yet raise Israel from their fallen estate and put them on the pinnacle of greatness. But they, as we, must be put down first in their own eyes as sinners. By-and-by they will be brought to God; they will then own that they pierced Him, that it was their guilt though by lawless hands of others. In fact no man can have the blessedness of the truth or the grace of God unless he bows to Jesus as himself a sinner. This is the necessary controversy of God with every soul of man as he is. It is not faith to confess truth in an abstract manner, though in this way Satan often cheats souls. They own the forgiveness of sins in a creed, or as a dogma; but are they forgiven? They do not pretend to any such thing; it would be presumptuous on their part! O senseless souls in the face of God's express message! Faith feels the truth about itself more deeply than about

others. Unless I believe the reality of God's grace and truth for my own soul, it is worse than a form. It is the hour when God will have reality (John 4). The Lord had come to the fold, the place of forms; but He has led His own out, and He must have them in the truth. True worshippers, they must worship God in spirit and in truth.

The reason souls are not really saved is that they are not in the truth for their own soul's need. I must meet God about my sins in this world or at the judgment-seat. No man can be saved in the day of judgment. It is in the place of my sins I must find salvation; where I am lost, I must be saved; where I have been an enemy of God, I must be reconciled to Him. The Saviour is come, yea is gone again, and the work is done. What would not Israel give to know it! Their eyes are blinded and they see Him not. They are strangers to Him; not His sheep, they did not know His voice. There they remain outside, waiting for the Messiah who is come. They know not that the Victim has been offered, and is accepted on high. We by grace have believed without seeing, and know that, His blood having been shed for sin, He is gone into the holiest of all.

Thus, if the Lord opens a new figure, it is for a new truth. "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Whosoever pretends to bring man to God, to step between God and souls on earth to claim Israel. the church or any souls as his own, as his people and his flock, is a thief and a robber. What! man stand between souls and God! Is he not himself a sinner? Does he not need salvation? "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers." Jesus is the door. He gives us to see what He was about to do after leaving the fold. He

would save sinners. Now, accordingly the door is open to any. “By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” Grace and truth came by Him; man has neither. And the law can only condemn him; for he is a sinner. He needs salvation. It is no longer a question of being schooled even by the law of God; man is too far gone. As long as there is life, he will tell you, there is hope. But man has not life toward God. Earthly religion may try to remedy the disease by keeping up hopes before mankind; but it is all vain; for the patient is dead. There is no hope, no life, for man in his natural state; and he has proved it by rejecting the Son of God. But if His death be the great sin man has done, it is the infinite grace of God there to meet him in the gospel. “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” There is more than hope now, there is present salvation in Christ. There is in Him everlasting life. Those who believe, as He declares, shall never perish.

Do you draw back fearing this is too great grace? Who then, and what, are you to give God the lie? If you are a great sinner, is not the Son of God a far greater Saviour? Are you afraid to trust Him? Afraid to trust your soul in the hands of Him who died for sinners and rose again? It is the express mission of the Son of man to seek and to save that which is lost. Granted that man is dead; but is not Jesus the quickener of the dead. By-and-by He will raise the body. Now it is the hour of quickening the dead who hear His voice. He quickens the soul, and brings salvation. When He comes again, He will change the body into the likeness of His glorious body; now He blesses the soul. How proper is the order! How blessed for those who repent and believe the gospel; but how dreadful for sinners to be raised sinners, raised for

eternal judgment, raised to be cast into the lake of fire! But He is now come to save, having done the work needful for it.

Thus is Christ the door; and now, thanks be to God, you are invited to enter. Will you not come in? He is calling: do you not hear His voice? He may have much for you to do when you enter. He gives each of His servants his work. He leads even now into more and deeper blessing. But if you have not come in, this is not what you want. The sinner cannot serve-the Lord till He has served the sinner — till He has saved him. Why then do you hesitate? To delay is most dangerous. It is now loss incalculable; it may be ruin irretrievable.

I do call on you to weigh with all seriousness these words of Jesus which evidently apply after He left the Jewish fold. He speaks as the rejected Son; He was going to the cross. He knew all that was coming, He required no prophecy about Himself, or God, or man. “Lord,” said Peter, “thou knowest all things”; and so He did — all things; excepting only, where as servant He waited for the word of His Father (Mark 13:32).

I invite and urge you then to believe in His name on God’s testimony. He is the Saviour, the only Saviour of sinners; and you need a Saviour. Believe Him to be what He is. Rest on the work He has done. The Saviour and His work will perfectly suit your need, as they do the glory of God. Were He one hair’s breadth less than He is, I could not trust Him for either. He could neither have glorified God nor save sinners. But the truth is that there is an infinite distance between Him and the highest of creatures, were it Gabriel and Michael themselves. For they are creatures and He is the

Creator. He is God, even as the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead; whatever be the difference of person and of function, Scripture is plain. Man is blind and unbelieving; and the worse, the less he suspects it.

Such then is the Saviour: can you trust Him? Seeing that the Creator of all the world came to save from sin, yea became Himself a man to save them righteously by His death for their sins on the cross, do you hesitate? Had it been only man, there could be no salvation, as far as such an one was concerned; but He that was God became man in order to it. No doubt He was Messiah and rejected. But God turns His rejection to our salvation, and opens the door to sinners. It is no question now of a Messiah for the Jew, but of a Saviour. And are there not some here awakening to His voice, some souls that answer to Jesus? Is He not now saying, "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved"? For what is He as the door? Does He refuse any? Not one. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." He invites you. By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved. "He is not looking for qualities of which He approves, but for sinners that need Him to save them; and there is no man now who hears His voice and remains outside but because of the self-will that refuses to bow to His word. Salvation and every other needed blessing are in Him. The first call of God, the first obligation of man is to believe in Him; the first blessing for my soul is to have life in Him and be saved.

Shall I tell you why men say no man can know that he is saved? They think that God is such an one as themselves. They attenuate Christ's glory, seeing neither His person nor His work. When He bore God's judgment of sin on the cross, did He procure an uncertain

salvation? Let none say so who fear God or honour Jesus. How could a divine person fail? It is His glory, at all cost to Himself, to bring in perfect salvation and this He now gives freely to the believer. To bless is what God loves. Only sin made Him a judge. He does not judge His counsels, nor salvation, nor the saved. Judgment has been borne by Christ for the believer. And the Spirit seals them, instead of doubting them. Thus does He fill the heavens even now with due praise and adoration. God is love and light, not a judge, in His own nature; but He will deal with all that is contrary to His nature, and so much the more solemnly with those who prefer self and sin to Christ. Judgment will be Christ's vindication on the unbeliever and ungodly, whatever grace may do at the end of this age.

In point of fact, if you, an unconverted man, were brought to heaven, no place would be so irksome to you. It is so now to be where others sing of Christ and pray, and you are anxious above all to get away and have done with it. What would heaven be to you with not one feeling in harmony with Him whom all praise there? No place could be so unsuited to the sinner.

How can one then be fitted for heaven? "By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved." What is implied in salvation? Two things at least, whatever more may be: a new and eternal life, and a propitiation for my sins. That life you cannot win, and no creature can give it you. Shame on those besotted enough to say, even if they do not believe, that water sprinkled on one can give life? Do they not accept a fiction as baseless, and if it be rested on quite as ruinous, as his wafer-god is to the poor papist? If the one trifles with the Lord Jesus, the other surely does with the Holy Spirit. But no: in Christ is life.

Here is the Shepherd, here is the door, here is salvation. The only boast then is in Him and His cross. And no wonder; for He is the alone worthy One and your Saviour. We hear and know His voice; we know not the voice of strangers, nor follow them. The propitiation too is once for all in the Saviour's blood. The mass, or anything equivalent, is Satan's cheat for it.

Oh, fear not, doubting one, to trust in what He has shed to blot out very sin. Are you not hindered by those around you who believe not? Do you not slip into their thoughts and words? To have the dead with the living is dreadful combination. It was so in the Jewish fold; but Jesus led His own out. Go not back to that which He has left for ever. You that have come out to Him, cleave to Him; know that the only security is Himself, the one joy of saints is to be with Him. He not only has life in His own person, but He died that He might give that life to sinners. Sin must have been an everlasting barrier, but He died for it. Here is the One to look to and confide in; and He invites you. "By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved." There is no question as to the result: you have the positive word of Jesus for it. Do you believe in Him? Can you not trust the testimony of God who sent Him and raised Him from the dead? This is the One I commend to you. Rest all your weight on what He is; you may trust Him. He has suffered once for sins, the Just for the unjust (without this all were vain), that He might bring us to God. This blessing comes not when we die but now in this world when we believe the gospel.

Ineffable blessedness — to be brought to the God I dreaded, left, and was cast out from! And is every barrier removed? It is. God says so, and who knows as He? But again, if I believe, there is nobody that I know

like God, not even my wife or my child. He alone has told me all His heart; and I am sure of God, not of any other: my best friend may fail me, He never will. And Christ makes Him known. He is the One God calls me to confide all to. He gives life to me; He died for me; the moment you believe, life in Him is yours. It is altogether wrong to think life-giving is a process, though the conviction of it may be. But to have life eternal is the simple consequence of faith in Christ. How do I know? He says it Himself, and there is nothing so good or true or sure as the word of Jesus. It is most humbling too, for it makes everything of Him and nothing of me or of any other child of Adam. Is not this as it should be? Or are you not prepared for it? Beware of dishonouring Him.

Man likes to be occupied with himself. If I receive life, propitiation, salvation, yea, all in Christ, is it not the annihilation of self? He is faithful too, and will make all real and living in the soul of the believer. Let your heart then be occupied with Him. It is a false gospel that sends you to look at yourself for proof of life. If God tells me to look at myself, it is to humble me. It is reversing the gospel to judge of His grace or of my standing by myself. If God gives blessing, He wishes it to be enjoyed. People in this world seem to grudge what they do for others. Indeed it was the Greek or heathen idea of God that He was jealous of man’s happiness. The true God delights in the happiness of those He has called; and though men have sinned irreparably in the death of Christ by their lawless hands, it is by that death He blesses any in His own mercy, and this righteously. The moment I look to Jesus and His blood, at God’s word, my sins are gone. And this is only the beginning of the Christian’s career.

But, besides salvation, there is another rich blessing — “he shall go in and out.” The truth makes free, the Son makes free. It is the essence of Christianity — liberty to do as God likes. It supposes responsibility to Christ. I am Christ’s bondsman, but free to serve Him. You who look to Jesus, are not you at liberty also? Do you say that you are still tied and bound with the chain of your sins? Such is not the christian state but rather a denial of it. “He shall go in and out.” This is the liberty in which we ought to stand fast: so says the apostle to the Galatians who had let it slip. Anything short of it is not Christianity, though it may be the state of souls born of God. It is not merely your gain or loss that is in question, but the Lord’s glory. For God has Christ before Him, and He blesses you by leading you to think of Christ as He does. Nor can you duly serve as Christ’s bondsman unless you know what it is to be His freedman. It is liberty to please the Lord, no longer like the Israelite under law, still less bound to the world or its conventionalities, its hopes or its fears, its pursuits or its pleasures. We are free to serve Christ, delighting in Him now. Having heard His voice, we shall serve Him in a changed body on high, as well as here in these bodies made the temple of God by the Spirit dwelling in them.

But the Lord adds that the believer shall “find pasture.” He will feed us according to His own heart. “For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” We need to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But He will surely see to it and does. What a blessing to have such an One to care for us! This is the Saviour I call on you to believe in and to confess. You that confide in the Christ of God, will you not confess Him? There is not for a starting-point a sound from a

man’s heart so sweet as a poor sinner’s confession of the Saviour when he casts himself upon His grace and God’s free justification through His blood.

May the Lord make it yours even now. His for ever, may we serve Him, seeking only to do His will: He will show you how, for you will hear His voice, as you follow Him. He will care for you, as He binds Himself to give not only salvation but liberty and pasture. “He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” “Therefore let no man glory in men; for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours; and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

W. K.

F. E. RACE. 3 & 4, London House Yard, Paternoster Row, E.C.

The Fulness of Christ - John 1:29-51

The glory of Christ is the central truth of the Bible. Anyone could see His humiliation; Pilate and Herod and the unbelieving Jews, the Roman soldiers, all the multitude did. But the sight of His humiliation was nothing without His glory; and when His glory was discerned, it was the humiliation of the Lord Jesus that filled the heart with shame and with abasement. This always deepens in presence of the love which made One so high to stoop so low; and whatever humiliation was seen in the days of our Lord was only the prelude of a deeper humiliation.

“Himself bare our sorrows and took our sicknesses,” says the evangelist Matthew, looking on the wondrous grace of His earthly ministry; and it was true. The quotation, which is from Isaiah, does not refer to the atonement, I admit; but His path was one that led straight to the atonement. The bearing of our sorrows and sicknesses is quite a different thing from the bearing of our sins; but it was the same person in grace. Jehovah-Messiah was of course a divine person; but partaking of blood and flesh, He took the place of man in weakness. He drew from God the Father as a dependent man for every need that came before Him. it mattered not what it was; a sick body, a disordered soul, a mind filled with all that Satan can infuse of fear and terror and all that is most hateful to God and man; nay, death itself — nothing stood in His way. Whatever He needed, He drew down from God to meet each case; but He always bore the sorrow on His heart. He never was like those we may see any day who get rid of an importunate

beggar with a sixpence. He never did so; but He bent under the weight of every sickness and sorrow He relieved. This is perfection. It was the perfection of His life as a man here below, even in doing miracles. Signs and wonders might be wrought by people that have no communion with God, and no compassion for man. He wrought them in grace peculiar to Himself.

The Lord Jesus was always in an unbroken bond of perfect relationship with God and of perfect compassionate pity towards man. Yet He well knew that all this was but preliminary to the great work that lay before Him. And what was that? His death as the Lamb of God — a work not yet seen in all its effects, and never to be so seen till not only the kingdom — which is a grand display — be established on the earth, but full perfection be reached; the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. No longer will even government be needed — righteousness will dwell in peace, when evil and wretchedness are gone. There will be the full fruit, not only of grace, but of grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord, already enjoyed by faith.

Therein is a great ground of confidence for a poor soul that is anxious about its sins. I do not say that the Lord Jesus has taken sin out of the world yet. This may not be quite true; but He is the One who is to do it. There is but One, “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” Without saying that all is done, He is the Person; and if you ask me where is the work through which that infinite result is to be effected, on which it rests, and in virtue of which it will be done, I answer unhesitatingly, It is the cross. Love could not banish sin. Power could not banish sin according to God. Power might act, but

where then love and righteousness? Had the Lord Jesus appeared merely to put away all evil from before Him, what must become of us? Where could sinful souls find refuge? If I am to stand and lift up my head in the presence of God, it must be on the ground of His righteousness. And this is exactly what the Lord Jesus provided on the cross. On the one hand, there was God in His love and holy nature, in His righteousness and majesty; on the other, there was man in all his sin and ruin; and the Lord Jesus comes between both. He goes not from man to God; but He comes from God to man, and God was glorified in His cross about man's sin. "For God so loved the world that he gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The Lord Jesus did not produce one atom of love in the heart of God that was not there before; by the atoning work on the cross He removed all hindrance for every soul that bows down and owns his sins, but for none other. No one will receive the blessing of grace without faith and repentance; and it would be no blessing to man or glory to God without it. There must be the work of the Spirit in our hearts to produce self-judgment with confidence in God through that which the Lord Jesus has borne for the sake of sinners. If the heart be unaffected, if conscience be harder than a millstone, how could such a soul give praise to God in heaven?

God is not merely working for heaven, He is raising a testimony for Christ in human hearts on the earth before they go to heaven. The best robe for the prodigal does not mean only in heaven. When heaven comes, will there be an elder son out in the field? No murmuring is heard there — if possible less insult to the Father. Nobody in

heaven will act thus. It is here and now, alas! that it is done. But there is where people very often stop. They think the only thing that is now true in the gospel is the Father coming out to kiss the son, the order to take away his rags — to invest him with the best robe, and to put a ring and shoes on him. Would to God that even this were better known! There are many who would lessen the guilt of sin and wrong Christ still. Men are not ashamed of this, and do not see it is deep dishonour to Christ, defrauding Him of His just reward. That which God delights in is to make men righteously happy now and in this world; and this not in the smallest degree because of any merits on the sinner's part, but entirely as the fruit of divine grace in His own Son and His redemptive work. But then the heart must bow to it; and this not only by the faith that receives it from God, but by the repentance that judges self, not one's evil works only, but the nature.

Now the feast is given; the calling of the friends and neighbours together is what follows; but it follows here — not merely in heaven. When in the heavenly city, there will be the tree of life with its twelve manner of fruits, and every month. But what the parable of the prodigal son shows us is a feast begun on earth — God's joy (for it was not merely the prodigal's joy) in having back His erring son safe and sound.

Beloved reader, what meaning has that to you? Has it none ? Are you, first of all, in the delivered condition of the prodigal? and secondly, are you entering into the joy and love of God, which goes out and shares your joy? This is what God looks for now in this world. In heaven no doubt, we shall have it in perfection; but the christian man is called to enter into the love of God and joy of God

while on the earth. He is not merely a forgiven man. He is not at all a man who is forborne with: this was the case before the death of Christ on the cross. When God was dealing in Old Testament times with His people, He forbore to press the debt; and they were then, as men are now in their natural state, liable to punishment. But then the work of Christ was not done, and God, looking on to it, would not exact the debt. He passed over the sins. There was a praetermission of sins; now there is a remission of sins. Not only does the Lord not judge the sins — they are completely gone.

You can conceive a wise, indulgent creditor who knew that you were greatly tried, but who thought proper to pity you, whatever might have brought about your straitened circumstances. He was merciful to you, and did not press the debt. But is this all the gospel? The gospel goes farther, and says that your sins on believing it are completely gone. Remember too it is only the first step — the threshold of the gospel; and this is what brings me to the next truth which I wish to present to you.

He that is the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, the same is He who baptises with the Holy Ghost; and it is of importance to see it all. He has gone up to heaven, but His interest in His people is none the less; if possible, He is in a better position to show it. All power, all authority, has been given to Him in heaven and on earth. And what is He doing now? Many things, of which one is here singled out by inspiration, His baptising with the Holy Spirit.

What is this? Baptism regularly means closing one condition in which you have been, and introducing you

into an entirely different one. Such is the meaning of baptism in every case. It represents a closing of the past, and the introduction into a new position. It may only be a given place, and so only an external one. A man might be baptised, and none the better for it as far as regards his soul. This has been the case with thousands — nay, millions. But when a man is baptised even with water only, a solemn responsibility is placed upon him. A baptised person stands in a new and grave position. He is no longer a mere heathen. He is no longer simply a Jew. He confesses the name of the Lord Jesus. For we are supposing that the man adopts it — that he stands to it — that he does not apostatise openly: I am not at all raising any of the controversial questions of the time. I am only speaking of the thing itself, baptism; and I assert that it is not so small a matter as some people imagine, any more than the regular and indispensable means of life, as so many others dream. Christ gives life, not baptism: so to say is false and superstitious. But it does at any rate change one's status; and the baptised person, by the very fact of being baptised as much as says, I own Him Who died and rose again; I own Him Who is the only Saviour of sinners; I own Him Who has already accomplished redemption.

Now the baptism of the Holy Ghost is the power that brings us into heavenly privilege, and still goes on in its effect. It is not a question of outward profession, of which baptism with water is the sign. The baptism of the Holy Ghost is a new and divine work. But what does it bring to us? Not merely the remission of sins, which baptism with water represents. The baptism of the Holy Spirit associates livingly with Christ at the right hand of God. For this reason the Spirit comes from heaven. Our

Lord, even after He rose from the dead, baptised not then with the Holy Ghost. He said before He went up to heaven — “Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” To whom did He say this? To the disciples. They were not unbelievers: there were only believers then present. But they needed to have wrought another work in them that had not been wrought in one however favoured in the whole world. Never since the world began had there been baptism with the Holy Ghost. It is a work that followed Christ’s ascension to heaven, uniting us with Himself and one with another., I call your attention to this, because all great vital truths are founded on facts. They are not ideas only. They are not mere reasonings hammered out of the intellect of man. They are the drawing out of the person of Christ the grand truths that follow from all the great facts about the Lord Jesus. Thus, as you have the work of atonement depending upon — His death, and the liberty and brightness of the Christian’s life upon His resurrection, so His ascension has to usher in a fresh blessing. I do not say it is the only blessing, but a very great one — that now the Lord Jesus from the right hand of God sends down the Holy Ghost to associate livingly with Himself every soul that believes the gospel. The Son of Man indeed was sealed in His own moral perfectness (John 6:27), as was meet; we, only in virtue of His redemption, Who is gone on high and has sent down the Holy Spirit to seal us.

And what is the result of that? A heavenly character is impressed upon every Christian. “As is the Heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” We are not earthly men. We were, and indeed worse than that — we were lost men. A Jew at the very best is only an earthly man

as such; but a Christian is characteristically not so. He has to learn what is spiritually discerned. He rests upon a Person. Grace to him flows down from that one Man, the head of the new family — the Man Who is in heaven, and Whom all heaven worships; for all the angels of God worship Him. And further, wondrous to say, Christians are not merely born anew and forgiven, not merely justified and children of God, but they are associated with Christ. They are united to Him at the right hand of God.

Suppose the greatest lord in this land were to select some person in this room to be his wife. What would he the result of that relationship? If a young girl became the object of his affections and were married to him, what would be the consequence of that union? Why, for her at once a total change. She enters into all his dignity, and receives a new name from him. There is a new relationship; and if he has possessions without bound, he shares them, as we know, with her. All that is exactly what is true of the Christian. The union of the Christian with Christ is founded on the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus: he is by the power of the Spirit even now united to Christ at the right hand of God.

And so it is that we find the apostle opening out the consequence in chapter 15 of First Corinthians — “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the Heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly” (1 Cor. 15:48, 49). Is it not very striking that the apostle wrote thus to the disorderly Corinthians? Every tyro has a slap at the Corinthians. They were indeed very faulty; but there are

few saints now who are not really far below the Corinthians. Yet these were the persons to whom the Holy Ghost addressed these words. Had they been predicated of the choicest saints on earth, one might have said — “Oh, yes, these are heavenly men.” It does not, however, rest on personal merit. It is not a question of superior intelligence or of higher endowments spiritually. Of course, there ought to be intelligence, and there ought to be practical spirituality; but we must never forget that the maiden’s exaltation to be a duchess, or a princess if you will, does not at all depend upon her deserving it, nor because she had a sweeter character or a prettier face than other people. Perhaps it was not so at all. A far more important thing decides: it depends on the Duke, or Prince; and he was pleased to choose her.

This, I affirm, is what is pre-eminently true of our blessed Saviour. We know that all is accomplished according to the sovereign grace of God, and. that He looks watchfully that they who are called by His grace should comport themselves suitably to it. It is a question of conforming them according to Christ; and if they do not carry themselves according to the Lord Jesus, you know the Lord has His way of dealing with them. Why did some of the Corinthians die? Why were many of them troubled? Why were many sick? They had walked as men, as Greeks. But were they then heavenly? To be sure they were; and this is the very thing that made their conduct so bad. The more we see of the grace of the Lord, the greater ground for self-condemnation, if we behave ourselves unworthily of the Lord Jesus.

But the first thing is, let us leave room for the grace of Christ. Let us without hesitation rest upon the word of

God — the word of His grace, inviting us, encouraging us, removing obstacles out of the way, bringing the full tide of blessing into our souls. Then when we have got the blessing, let us sit in judgment upon our souls, the Holy Ghost being in us a spirit of power, of love, and of sobriety, and bringing us into a new association with Christ at the right hand of God, which stamps us as heavenly. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall bear the image of the Heavenly. How perfect the description! All see that we do not yet bear the image of the Heavenly. We bear the image of Adam still. Who, then, are heavenly? The title is conferred upon us, although we have got very little to show for it in present appearance. But still there it is: Christ has made us heavenly. He has brought us into that relationship of glory, and will ultimately conform us to the image of Himself, when we shall shine in all the beauty and glory of Christ. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly. So declares God’s word.

This, then, is the double work of our Lord Jesus — the mighty work He wrought on the cross, and the mighty work He inaugurated from the right hand of God. Indeed His glory is set forth in other ways, though we are unworthy of all. He is in heaven, but we are on earth, and consequently here exposed to difficulties, dangers, and snares. We require, therefore, a friend on high, and the light of the grace of Christ for all the difficulties. God may employ others; but the true test of any ministry is the bringing of souls to know Christ in a way He was never learnt before. If I get fresh glimpses of Christ with renewed confidence in His love; if I have the truth and the grace of the Lord brought before my soul in a

manner which I had not previously realised, my soul receives a strength it never yet possessed.

Now, in this way it is that the Spirit of God shows us the immensity of Christ, and that the whole practical power of Christianity lies in His person and work. Every one admits that the great subject in the scripture is Christ, and that the object of faith is Christ; but it is not so generally seen that Christ is all." I have endeavoured to illustrate that in deed and truth Christ is all. When we are delivered from the burden of our sins; when we are brought into association with Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost, we want a centre for our hearts. Man cannot be without a centre. Only God is self-sufficient; we are not except in sin; and even where we pretend to be self-sufficient, we always sink low down. Now, man was made to look up, not to look down. A brute looks down, but man does not. Often, however, he only looks up as far as the stars and the sun, and worships them. You must look above them all up to God — not to the sun or to any other objects man has always been ready to deify.

We need a centre for our hearts. There is an energy in the heart of man, which otherwise denies God or deifies the creature. Man was made by God to rule; an angel was not. You never hear of an angel sitting on the throne or governing. On the contrary, the saints are to judge the angels. So that nothing can be more certain than that man was made to rule. For that reason, with others, we in our weakness require a centre to work to: for want of this people injure themselves or dishonour God. If a man has a consciousness of being unfit for it, he sets up another man and trusts to him. It is the same amongst scholars. They set up schools of opinion, of philosophy,

of sciences, of languages, according to their tastes or their habits, and they make the school of their choice the practical centre, to which they are gathering. All their energies, their labours, are for the promotion of that central aim towards which they work. We also require one — the simplest Christian as much as the greatest; the greatest because he might otherwise set himself up, and the simplest because he feels the want of it. God gives us one, and this is taught in a very remarkable way here.

The first man we read of who officially had disciples was John the Baptist: I do not at all mean that he was wrong. Far from it; but still he is the only mere man in the New Testament, whose disciples God distinctly sanctioned. John had his disciples, and it is evident that he was a man singularly honoured (Matt. 11:10, 11). "Again, the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples [having testified to the Lord the day before]; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! and the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." Surely this is very striking. Now there was a Divine centre on earth; and John the Baptist, who had disciples strongly attached, so speaks of Jesus that his own disciples leave him to follow Jesus. How rarely we find that. It is not what men like. Even the good are too often jealous if men leave them, but John the Baptist showed the power of God. He manifested a simplicity of faith most seasonable.

No wonder the people took John for a prophet; for God was before Him. What is it that marks the prophet? The man that sees God's mind and makes it known. Other people may make known the truth, may preach the gospel; but the man that puts your conscience in the

presence of God is the prophet. So the woman of Samaria, when her conscience was awakened to her sin, said, “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.” It is the consciousness of God given to the soul that is the true test of a prophet. And so it was here. John the Baptist so speaks of our Lord that his own disciples turn from him to Jesus. He was right, and they were right. He was right to bear his heart’s testimony to the Lord Jesus; and it is remarkable enough that it was not a long effusion that he spoke, but a few words that told. “Behold the Lamb of God!” In the delight of his soul John rendered that testimony to Christ, and the moment that his disciples heard it, they followed Jesus. They heard John, they followed Jesus, and the Lord invited them to remain with Him that day.

Now there is exactly where you find the needed centre. One of the two that heard John and followed Jesus was Andrew, who first goes and finds his brother Simon Peter, and tells him, “We have found the Messiah,” and he brought him to Jesus. Jesus is the true centre for men on earth. Not merely a Saviour is meant, but also a centre to work to. What am I doing, now that I am washed in the blood of Christ, and, what is more, associated with Him in heaven? Am I serving the world? I do not question the duty of carrying on my occupation in a Christian manner. This is all right, and in its own place most important. It is a bad job for any man who has not something to do: such a one is generally in the way. But the Christian that has an occupation by which he lives is called to stick to it, and do it thoroughly. It is my opinion, a Christian man ought to do his work a great deal better than any other; nay, it would be a real shame to him if he did not, because his carelessness

could not but bring a stigma on the name of Jesus. Only senseless men run down a man for cleaving to his honest occupation. Let us heed the apostle Paul, that if a man will not work, he ought not to eat.

But in this case, where Christ and the soul are concerned, it is another thing altogether. Have I now a divine centre that fills my heart? What I want is not to make money or a name, nor yet that I should accomplish this purpose or that. Farther, it is not the mere service of my country or of my sovereign, or anything of the kind (although, of course, I am bound to honour the Queen); but there is made known, another centre to which we work, infinitely higher and more commanding, which does not really end when you have done your work, but which abides beyond all time. The one thine, that God wants is, that whatever you do should be to Christ, with a happy heart; no murmuring here, no complaining, nor striking for more wages. The one who helps you to meet and overcome all these aberrations, who puts your heart at rest, is Jesus. There was a time, no doubt, when men set up what they called a city for Jesus — a commonwealth for His name. But this was a kind of religious monomania, for after all the city was only for themselves. There was no reality in it for Christ. It was a mere outburst of fanatical folly. But I am speaking now of simplicity and assiduity in the sight of God, of guidance by His word and Spirit.

Faith is not just to be limited to believing in Jesus for salvation, or subjection to Him as to this duty or that duty. It is more. It is a cleaving to a Living Person as a centre that commands my soul in all the work I am set to do. The disciples went to Jesus, and one of them goes and finds another and brings him to Jesus. How was

this? Had Christ been only a man, they never would have left John the Baptist. Why should they? They were John the Baptist's disciples, and of all men born of women there had not been a greater than John. Why did they leave him? Because they found the Messiah — One surely to be preferred before him — the Eternal One.

Are you conscious that in all your religious life you refer to the Lord Jesus — that He is really and truly your centre? Most people you know go by where they were born or bred, christened or converted, by their country, by their connection, or something of that sort. But these disciples did not. They for the first time in their lives recognised a Man of divine glory and authority Who had absolute claims on their affection and allegiance. I leave that to work in every breast here. Be sure whatever you do, more particularly in religious things, that you have no superior authority to Jesus. Look alone to Him then, whatever dark questions may perplex you, and He will give you light.

That is not all. We are going through a wilderness. We have to pass through a world where there are manifold and subtle snares. We want, therefore, not only a centre to work to, but a path to follow. Where shall we find the true path for our souls? Not surely when we get to heaven. There we shall need no way, because all is good and bright there. But where all is wrong, when you are surrounded by enemies of every kind, you want an unerring way. Where shall such a path be found? I answer, in the Saviour. The Lord, therefore, in the next place brings out that truth. "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me." He Himself is the path, the only true way for the Christian. Whatever comes — whatever

difficulties or trials — search and see what the will of the Lord is; and the moment you are subject to His will, you follow Him. He was always doing the will of God, as He reveals the will of God in His word. To obey His word in faith is to follow Himself.

There is another blessing. We are in a world where there are false paths of all kinds, and men are ensnared by them. Some have their tastes here, some have there their predilections or their prejudices. One requires, therefore, to have an object before the soul to keep it right; and what do we find to be the declared object in the end of the chapter? The Son of Man. Remark that He is not spoken of as the Son of God. Just before He is. But He Who is the Son of God is also the Son of Man, and it is as Son of Man that He is brought before us here. “Hereafter (rather, henceforth) ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” Thus the highest angels of God waited upon the humbled Man — the One who came down so low that, while all saints follow Him, none really approaches. Such is the object for the Christian, no matter what he does. If I look at the foundation of my soul, the Lamb of God is this. If I think of the power that lifts to heaven, the Spirit He gives is the power. If I seek for a centre to work to, Christ is that centre. If I want a path to follow through the intricacies of the world, He and He alone is the One to follow. If I look for an object for my soul, He is the only one God gives me.

Do not treat even Scripture poetry as mere poetry. I grant that even from the poetic point of view nothing is like it, and that all Shakespeare or Milton ever wrote so grandly is poor indeed compared with what is therein. Take even Milton, who had the benefit of using Scripture

expressly. He puts all wrong where, if I listen to him, the devil is reigning in a very fine palace. What a vain dream! Satan has never reigned in hell. The devil will be the most miserable object in hell through all eternity. This is not reigning. So evident is it that the effect of the Miltonic picture is to disorder men's minds about the truth. The devil is reigning in this world now and here, not in hell. What is still more important is the erroneous impressions he. gives of God and especially of His Son. For Christ is ever the test whether one is taught of God, or only glories in man. I press this for the purpose of securing the truth to settle our souls — to give us true objects as seen in the light of God — to make us firm and constant in His grace and truth, His light shining down upon our every step through this wilderness world. May God in His rich mercy grant that these remarks may help to lead some weary wayfarer out of the darkness of the enemy into the marvellous light of God. Amen.

The Heavenly Hope - John 14:1-3

(Section 3 of Three Prophetic Gems.)

Introduction

Another aspect in which Scripture presents the coming of the Lord is part of that immense change intimated in the Gospel of John when the public testimony was closed and the Lord unbosoms Himself to the family of God before He gave Himself up to apprehension and death. He had already and publicly announced His crucifixion (John 12:32). The time was come to leave the world.

John 13 introduces the new subject. It is a distinct transfer from earth to heaven. Messianic hopes are wholly eclipsed. The chosen nation is no more in evidence than the city or the sanctuary. We do not have the Lord correcting the earthly expectations of the disciples as they drew His attention to the buildings of the temple, or predicting that not one stone should be left upon another, but be broken down. Nor is it the chief disciples coming privately to Him on Mount Olivet and asking, When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of Thy presence and of the consummation of the age? Here we breathe a wholly different atmosphere. The Lord by deed and word leads on His own to unprecedented dealings of grace soon to dawn on them in proper Christian privilege and responsibility, for which the cross as seen in the light of God laid the basis.

Washing The Disciples' Feet

"Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus (knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father) having loved His own who were in the world, loved them unto the end. And supper being come, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot Simon's [son] that he should betray Him, He, knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands and that He came out from God and goeth to God, riseth from supper and layeth aside His upper garments and took a linen towel and girded Himself; then He poureth water into the basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples and to wipe them with the linen towel wherewith He was girded. He cometh therefore unto Simon Peter. He saith to Him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said to him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know afterwards. Peter saith to Him, Never shalt Thou wash my feet. Jesus answered him, Unless I wash thee, thou hast no part with Me. Simon Peter saith to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He who is bathed needeth not to wash save his feet, but is wholly clean: and ye are clean, but not all. For He knew His betrayer: on this account He said, Ye are not all clean" (vv. 1-11).

What could be more impressive? and all the more, if Peter who expressed what all felt had only known that the Lord's washing their feet was in view of His departure to be with the Father in heavenly glory. This was the truth they all had to learn. The earth was now to be left behind for things above; not of course absolutely, but now for the Christian, as for Christ. Thus to stoop was a wholly unexpected and unrealized exercise of His

love. He was conscious that the Father had given all things into His hands and that as He came out from God, He was going back to be with God, the rejected Holy One of God. He was passing from the earth and from the earthly people who were about to consummate to their own ruin that rejection which their state had implied. He was going to the Father who ever loved the Son, and now all the more because the evil was only the occasion of proving His entire devotedness at all cost to the Father's will and glory.

If He thus left this world, He would demonstrate His love to His own who were in it, in a manner beyond all thought even of those who had been learning it in every form they then needed and could bear. Associating them while here with Himself for that glory into which He was going, He must and would counteract every defilement of their way inconsistent with that association. Such defilements were incompatible with heaven where He was going as their forerunner. They had learned much of the kingdom from the Old Testament, and yet more from Him who added so much that was new to the old things. But the Lord here provides for them a fellowship with Him on high, transcending all previous thoughts, when He should ascend where He was before. His love would carry them through every need, obstacle and danger. No wonder that Peter who had confessed His personal glory (revealed to him by the Father who is in the heavens) was lost in astonishment at Christ going down so low as to clear away their soils as saints. Yet he was to learn soon afterwards that the reality in heaven would enhance the wonder beyond measure.

The Lord on earth sets forth by His action towards the disciples what He was about to do for them in heaven.

We have an Advocate with the Father if we sin. Such advocacy is expressly not for the unclean as such, but for those already washed, if the feet get defiled. Those “washed all over” need to have any subsequent impurity removed. The washing of regeneration abides in all its value, but demands the cleansing of the soiled feet.

It is the glorified Jesus who assures His own of His persistent and effective love in carrying on this most needful work at God’s right hand, acting on His people here below by His Spirit and Word, as it is said in Ephesians 5:26, purifying by the washing of the water by the Word, consequent on giving Himself for the Church on the cross. The restoration of our communion when interrupted by sin is as essential as the new birth or as justification. He has set Himself down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, having made the purification of sins. However, this finished and accepted and abiding work, instead of dispensing with further work, makes Him the more anxious to clear away every inconsistency that would otherwise mar its lustre and displease our Father and leave ourselves in unavailing shame and grief. It is His action of grace on high which gives us to confess the sin and prove how faithful is the God of all grace. “He who is bathed needeth not to wash except his feet.” The blessed relationship of the Christian abides intact, but the Lord, even in the glories of heaven, occupies Himself to remove every failure and to turn it to our needed humiliation and to fresh blessing in His infinite love.

Why is this wondrous grace here enlarged on? It is part of the characteristic blessedness of the Christian. It was completely new to the disciples when the Lord so vividly set forth its type before their eyes. It was a necessary

provision for them during His absence, which they would soon learn is full of far higher privilege than could be possessed or known during the days of His flesh. It would endear Him yet more when they knew it shortly afterwards, as they did not and could not know it then. They were aware of His exceeding condescension, and deeply moved that He should do the work of the lowest slave on their behalf, but only after His death, resurrection and ascension would they learn by the Holy Spirit what His mystic washing of their feet really meant.

God Glorified In The Son

There is another and still more stupendous communication which the Lord made in this thirteenth chapter. It also is part of our Christian heritage, going far beyond any prophetic account of our Lord's atoning death in the Old Testament, such as Isaiah 53, precious and bright as it is in itself and as it will be to the generation to come of Israel. The going out of Judas (after Satan entered in) on his awful treacherous errand gave the occasion. "Now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God also shall glorify Him in Himself, and straightway shall glorify Him" (vv. 31-32). No greater revelation of the Saviour's death as made sin on the cross is anywhere found, nor one so distinctly illuminated with Christian light and result for God's glory now that it is fulfilled.

As Son of God He had glorified His Father in a life of unwavering and absolute obedience. The exit of Judas was the signal of death on the cross. Would the Holy One of God bow to bearing our sin at God's hand, whatever it might cost? He had vanquished the living

temptations of Satan by obeying the written Word. Was He willing through death to annul him who has the might of death, and thus deliver all those who through fear of death, were all their life subject to bondage? Would He take upon Himself the sins and iniquities of God's people, the most loathsome of burdens, to make propitiation for them? Would He by the grace of God taste death for everything, and thus break the yoke of bondage under which all the creation groaned? Would He bring many sons to glory as the Author or Leader, of their salvation, perfected through sufferings?

The Lord here reveals the deepest and most marvellous contest ever engaged in, wherein the otherwise impossible was achieved and the insoluble as plainly solved to God's glory and the everlasting deliverance of those who lay under guilt and judgment. Good and evil here strove for decision, and at the very place where evil seemed to have all its way, good triumphed to all eternity. Man was seen at his worst, hating the Father and the Son, hating God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Satan here swayed, not the heathen only, but most fatally, God's earthly people and above all their religious leaders — scribes, doctors of the law, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, chief priests — and the high priest himself. Roman justice proved shamelessly unjust. Jesus was condemned for His good confession and for the truth counted as imposture and blasphemy. The disciples forsook their Master and fled, one betraying Him for the price of a slave, another denying Him repeatedly and with oaths. And in the shame and agony of the cross, His God hid His face and forsook Him — the bitterest of all His sorrows, the most intolerable of His sufferings. But so it must be. He was

made sin and bowed to what it deserved at God's hand, that the divine majesty and holiness might be perfectly vindicated and salvation come to sinners through their judgment falling on Him. Grace then could issue in God's righteousness, justifying the ungodly who now believed. There and thus only, all the attributes of God are brought into mutual harmony. Otherwise, if love pleaded, justice opposed, for sin was not cancelled. But here mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other, and this not for earth only, but for heaven and all eternity. In the Lord's own words, the Son of man was glorified and God was glorified in Him in the very place where unbelief saw only failure and ignominy. What was the result? God shall glorify Him in Himself and shall straightway glorify Him. It is Christ's work seen in God's light, estimated and honored by God Himself on high.

Christianity is based on this, while Israel passes into its long eclipse. Hence flows the gospel of grace to the lost; hence, according to God's secret purpose, the call of the Church for union with Christ by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven to baptize the saints into one body, Christ's body. Even the apostles were then and afterwards full of the earthly hope of restoring the kingdom of Israel. Not so; instead of the throne of David or even the dominion of the Son of man over all the peoples, nations and languages, Christ was to be glorified. His glorification was to be not only in heaven entirely separated from the world, but in God Himself, and this "straightway," in emphatic contrast with the future kingdom which He eventually will receive. Then, He will return to put down all adversaries in power and

glory. Christianity has heavenly and eternal things revealed to faith now.

The Hope Of The Coming Of The Lord For His Saints — The Contrast To His Appearing

With this, the hope revealed in John 14:1-3 is in perfect keeping. Here the land and the city, the people and the temple, vanish into nothingness. Not a word is said about misleaders, false Christs or false prophets. We don't hear of wars or rumors of wars, of nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom, of famine, of earthquakes, of tribulation and murder, of hatred from all the nations for Christ's name, of internal discord and treachery and hatred as the love of the many decayed, or of the glad tidings of the kingdom preached in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony unto all the nations. Still less is there room here for the special and awful sign, according to Daniel's prophecy, of an idol standing in the sanctuary, the harbinger of speedy desolation when the godly in Judaea must flee immediately to save their lives or yet worse. There is not a hint here of the tribulation beyond parallel to fall at the close on the nation of Israel.

In chapter 14 we have a wholly different state. We see people about to be severed from such anxieties and elevated by incomparably higher associations, who have no fears of flight in winter or on sabbath and are in no way warned for themselves against the cry of Messiah here or there, or the great signs and wonders which Satan will be allowed to work in the hour when God retributively sends an energy of error that they all might be judged who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Still more complete and manifest is the difference of the Christian hope in John 14 from the Presence of the Son of man in Matthew 24, “As the lightning goeth forth from the east and shineth to the west,” especially with the accompanying words, “wherever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered.” This latter is the Lord coming in the accomplishment of His judgment, not of His love; His coming for the earth, not for the Father’s home above. The figures employed point only to His judicial dealings, with which sun, moon and stars sympathize. For “immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened and the moon not give her light and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the land (or earth) lament, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of trumpet and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Here in Matthew 24 is no gathering of saints to Christ in heavenly glory, but the coming of the Son of man to whom all judgment is committed; and His appearing is as sudden as the lightning flash. The governing powers, supreme, derivative and subordinate, no more fulfill their office; all shall be shaken. The sign is not as before of apostate religion for the godly to flee and escape, but of their Deliverer to destroy those who destroy the earth. The Son of man appearing in heaven is the sign of His speedily coming to the earth to judge the living and the dead. Hence it is no longer those in Judaea, but “all the tribes of the land” (or earth) that lament and see

Him coming; whereas Christians at that time are manifested, neither after nor before, but in glory with Him. While He is hidden, so are they; when He is manifested, so are they, having been previously caught up. It is His elect of Israel accordingly who are gathered together when He sends forth His angels with a great sound of trumpet and comes in His kingdom.

It is plain that when the Lord presents Himself for the earth and for the earthly people, the traits which characterize the solemn event are the apostasy and the man of sin usurping God's prerogatives even in His temple, the desolation and the tribulation that ensue beyond all that ever had been or that is to be, and the Son of man appearing to take vengeance on the portentous and blasphemous lawlessness, and to deliver Israel by the destruction of their enemies.

Our position is the completely distinct one of His coming to receive us to Himself for the place which He is gone to prepare for us in the Father's house, that where He is we may be also. It is the consummation of the sovereign grace which has associated us with Him, so that we are risen with Him even now, one spirit with the Lord, and can say with the beloved apostle that "as He is, so are we in this world." We await His coming to be caught up together with the dead in Christ risen first, in clouds to meet the Lord, into the air, and thus to be ever with the Lord. We are not of the world as He is not, and we look for Him to make it a reality by taking us up to heaven as He Himself ascended there. Here, we do not have judicial dealing with our enemies to make the earth the scene of His righteous rule, but giving us part with Himself in His joy and glory on high, though we shall

also reign over the earth when He takes His great power and reigns.

John 14:1-3

These are the words of the Lord and they are worthy of all heed.

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe on (εἰς) God, believe also on (εἰς) Me. In My father’s house are many abiding-places; were it not so, I would have told you, because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you unto Myself that where I am ye also may be.”

Simpler words there could hardly be, but what depth of feeling and height of glory! Jesus was departing, despised of Israel. He was His disciples’ beloved Lord, yet one was the traitor, another His denier. Who could wonder if all of them were troubled? Let them be assured that grace would turn all for good and to God’s glory. “Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe on God,” though you never saw Him. “Believe on Me” when I depart unto the Father, and you cease to see Me. Let your faith rise from its Jewish form to its Christian character and fullness. Compare John 20:29.

Even my earthly people shall yet say, Blessed is He who cometh in Jehovah’s name. Meanwhile I am re-entering heaven to give you who have fore-hoped in Me, the Christ, a better portion, even a part with Me on high. Instead of abandoning you, I will as your divine Savior both prepare you for the place as already set before you, and prepare the place for you by going to the Father’s house. My heart is fixed, as is the Father’s will, on

bringing you there. “In My Father’s house are many abiding-places.” No doubt you have never aspired to such a home. You have expected Me to abide forever with you in your house when I have purged it of all adversaries and evils by the power which I have even to subdue all things to Myself. But there is ample room for you as well as Me in that intimate home of divine love and heavenly glory. “If it were not so, I would have told you, because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you unto Myself that where I am, ye also may be.”

This is a hope far beyond that of the fathers, though they waited for the city that has foundation, whose artificer (builder) and demiurge (maker) is God, and were eager for a better country than Canaan, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. But to Christians or saints now being called, God is not ashamed to be Christ’s Father and our Father, His God and our God. Since redemption, this is our association with Christ.

No truth is more sure or important than the love the Father has for the Son, and all the more when for the glory of God He became man and died atoningly that the salvation of the lost might be of both grace and righteousness — God’s righteousness — and that the same death of Christ might be the basis for all blessing and glory forever in His universe, His unbelieving enemies alone excepted. “This is My beloved Son in whom I found My complacency” (Matt. 3:17, etc.). “The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things [to be] in His hand” (John 3:35). But the Son Himself tells the

Father later before the disciples that He (the Father) loved the saints as He loved the Son (John 17:23).

This love accounts for their future display in the same glory. But it also accounts for that which was in His hidden purposes, still deeper, more tender and intimate — the hope of Christ's coming for the Father's house and fetching us into the place He prepared for us there, that where He is, we too might be. That is where He went, out of this world which crucified Him, unto the Father. There God, who was glorified in Him here at infinite cost, glorified Him in Himself. There our life is hid with Him in God. There is where we go when He comes and takes us unto Himself. How bright is the glimpse of it in John 17:24! "Father, I will (or, desire) that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me, for Thou lovedst Me before the world's foundation." To those who love Him, this far transcends the glory that He gives us and that we share along with Him before every wondering eye of man at His appearing. Then the world shall know by the fact that we appear with Him in the same glory, that the Father sent the Son [for how else could we be thus blessed?] and that He loved us as He loved the Lord.

The facts that He deigns to prepare a place for us in the Father's house, so much above the hopes of saints and prophets, and that He personally comes into the air for the wondrous meeting to fetch us into His heavenly house, speaks of love unmeasured. We know how to show honour to our friends when we do not let them search for our homes, but send some trustworthy person to guide them. If greater attention were called for, the wife might go. But if the utmost honor were intended,

the head of the family would set aside every hindrance and come to meet the beloved and honored guests. How wondrous, that for us, the Son comes! This is love beyond all thought or comparison for this supreme moment, and all that follows is in keeping with it. Sovereign grace lays the ground. Unfailing grace in its faithfulness, notwithstanding every human failure and malice of our — of His — great enemy, guards and preserves us all the way through. Triumphant grace at length consummates the love of Christ. “I am coming again and will receive you unto Myself, that where I am, ye also may be.”

The Holy Spirit Sent

There is the context which follows the hope and confirms the essentially Christian character of these communications the Lord was then giving. He proceeds to explain to His disciples that the gift of the Holy Spirit which is unique to the individual and the Assembly, as says the apostle Paul, is the distinguishing privilege and power since His work of redemption and ascension to heaven. “For the Spirit was not yet because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Nowhere is the divine personality of that gift more clearly asserted or implied than in John 14-16. It is the other Advocate whom the Father would give and send in His name, whom He Himself would send from the Father to be forever with them and in them. He is the Advocate who was to come because Jesus went away to heaven and sent Him unto them to be abidingly with us and in us.

This is the new and characteristic provision for the Christian and the Church while the Lord Jesus is at the right hand of God. It is in the Spirit that we cry Abba,

Father, and each are guided in right dependence. By Him one enjoys the deep things of God, otherwise beyond all comprehension. By Him we walk, witness and worship. So it is that one is enabled to preach the gospel or teach the truth. Through Him we by faith wait for, not righteousness which we have in Christ, but the hope of righteousness in the coming glory. Again, it is by or in virtue of one Spirit that we were all baptized into one body; as we are also built together for God's habitation in the Spirit.

Only part of what we now owe to the presence and action of the Holy Spirit is here alluded to, for He covers and gives a new and divine character to every exercise of the new creation, by the Word revealing and glorifying Christ to us. The Spirit was sent forth from heaven to honor Christ. Therefore, it was expedient for us that Christ should go away, great as the loss seemed to the sorrowing and troubled disciples. If He didn't go away, the Advocate who was to be expressly our Helper in every need (and this in the recall of all Jesus had said and been and done, as well as in the revelation of all His glory on high) would not come unto us. But Christ went up, and sent Him unto us — the two essentials of Christianity.

When the Spirit came, it was the demonstration to the world of its sin in not believing on Jesus. It also was a demonstration of righteousness because Christ is gone to the Father, rejected by the world that will see Him no more as He was, but as the Judge. Lastly, it was a demonstration of judgment because this world's ruler who led to His rejection has been judged. The Spirit's presence, outside this world which does not behold or know Him, can (now that redemption is made) guide the

believers into all the truth, taking of Christ's things and reporting them to us, and also the things that are to come.

All this wondrous manifestation of the truth to the Christian depends on three things: the Son as come in manhood here below; the accomplishment of His work of reconciliation on the cross; and His ascension as the risen accepted Man according to divine counsels, who has sent the Spirit that we might have this divine Person dwelling with and in us forever, to make good subjectively what we behold by faith objectively in the Lord, the blessed image of the invisible God. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Now that He is dead, risen and gone on high, we have not only the unique hope beyond all others of His coming again to receive us unto Himself, to be in the Father's house where He is, but further by the Spirit, the unfailing power of communion with the Father and the Son. This is a fountain of blessing within, fresh and perennial, and rivers of living water flowing out through that Saviour living above for them, as they live because He lives.

All is new and Christian truth; the foundation as here made, not merely in view of our need met, but of God glorified as such to our immeasurable blessing. We have the necessary purifying from every defilement in our walk which Christ effects all the way through for us associated with Him for heaven. We see the heavenly hope for us destined to be with Him where He is, altogether outside and above the world, whatever else we may share. In the meanwhile, we have all the gracious help and power suitable for those so blessed and with such a hope, while we wait for Him in the world which with its ruler is already judged.

Judas

The allusions to Judas Iscariot in the middle and to Peter at the end of chapter 13 were important for the Christianity about to replace Judaism, as well as to strengthen and comfort those who were to labour, suffer, and share its privileges. The Lord made known to His disciples, in the presence of the traitor not yet indicated, the awful course he was about to take, so that their faith in Himself might be more established instead of being shaken. He followed it up with His very solemn statement: “Verily, verily, I say to you, He who receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he who receiveth Me receiveth Him who sent Me” (v. 20). No mistake was made either in His sending the guilty Judas or in others receiving him. He was one sent by the Lord. It was a divine message heard from his lips, though he himself had neither saving faith nor life eternal, but was the son of perdition. Judas was the sad witness that the greatest external and official nearness to Christ, without eternal life, only exposes to the worst sin and ruin. And John could add later, “Even now are there many antichrists.”

Peter

There was another lesson yet more needed by the Christian. It is the most humbling case of Peter. The Lord, in view of His soon going where they could not as yet come, presses that new commandment which was an old commandment that they had from the beginning, and was to become true in them as it was in Him — love, love one to another, the love not of a neighbor only, but the deeper love of God’s family. Then Peter, having confidence in his love, expresses his readiness to follow the Lord into the unknown, to follow Him now, to lay

down his life for the Lord's sake, however others might hang back. Peter truly loved Him, but he was utterly wrong to have confidence in his love. Self-confidence is the feeblest of reeds. He was soon after to learn this and then to walk entirely dependent on Christ as a Christian. But now Peter must prove to all that flesh is no better in a saint than in a sinner. "Verily, verily, I say to thee, A cock shall not crow till thou hast denied Me thrice." And so it was that night, not for Peter's profit only, but for every Christian's.

The Mystery In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

Let us turn to other Scriptures and see whether the Holy Spirit presents the heavenly apart form earthly admixture, and distinct from the events of prophecy. Does He present a hope dependent only on the secret of the Father's purpose and the Son's faithfulness to His Word and love to us? In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 we read, "Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in an eye's twinkling, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

The resurrection of the dead is not "a mystery," or even the resurrection of the righteous as a distinct act from that of men generally. Of the latter we read in Job 14:1-12. "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not. And dost Thou open Thine eyes upon such a one, and bringest me into judgment with Thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee,

Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass; turn from him that he may rest, till he shall accomplish as a hireling his day. For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof grow old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the spirit, and where is he? The waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up; so man lieth down and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

The more familiar a believer may be with God's final revelation of things to come unto eternity itself, the more he will see the exact agreement of this early disclosure of resurrection with the resurrection of the unjust. It is man, the prey of sorrow, decay and death, without one ray of divine light till all ends in utter gloom, but not of actual extinction. Yet it is a "sleep" only broken when "the heavens are no more." How striking the agreement with Revelation 20:11! This resurrection is not only after the resurrection of the blessed and holy to reign with Christ, but when the thousand years of their reigning are over, after the last insurrection of released-Satan's deceit has ended in total destruction. Then comes the Great White Throne for the judgment of guilty unbelieving man. The portion of men is to die, and after this judgment; in contrast with the believers' portion which is Christ, once offered to bear the sins of many, appearing a second time apart from sin to those who look for Him unto salvation. He is the Savior of the body also.

The resurrection of the saints, which is called “the first resurrection,” was not in those early days unknown to the much enduring Job. “O that my words were now written! O that they were inscribed in a roll! That with an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock forever. For I know that my Redeemer (or Kinsman-vindicator) liveth, and that He shall stand up at the last upon the earth (or dust) [while the earth and still more the heavens continue]; and after my skin hath been destroyed, yet from (or in) my flesh shall I see God, whom mine eyes shall behold and not another” (Job 19:23-27). The orthodox Jews in New Testament times also confessed that there was to be a resurrection both of just and unjust (Acts 24:15).

As this was commonly believed except by the skeptical Sadducees, we may observe how properly the apostle does not speak of a mystery when he discusses the resurrection of the faithful in the earlier part of 1 Corinthians 15 and proves it to be the complement of Christ’s own rising from among the dead. He tells them a secret or “mystery,” a New Testament truth now revealed, when he speaks of our being changed without dying at Christ’s coming. “We shall not all be put to sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in an eye’s twinkling, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” No intimation of this change of the living saints had ever before been made, though now that it is, we can see a gleam preparing the way for it in the translation of Enoch in the antediluvian world, and in that of Elijah in the world that is now. And we can also read the words of the Lord in the days of His flesh, which were only written down in John 11:25-26 after the

Epistles of Paul. “I am the resurrection and the life: he who believeth on Me, though he have died, shall live; and everyone who liveth and believeth on Me shall never die.” Here we have the grand result at His coming — the dead saints raised, the living believers changed without dying; as the Lord then enunciated, but left to be written and understood at a later day.

See how completely earthly objects are outside the description in 1 Corinthians 15. Nothing is named except the resurrection of those who are Christ’s, except the living Christians who are changed, if possible more gloriously, at the same time. This last “change” involves “the mystery.” It is a mistake to think that the last trump has any reference to the seven trumpets of the Revelation which are the loud warnings of divine tribulational judgments in providence, after the seven seals of more reserved dealings have been opened. At length the last vials of God’s wrath are poured out before the Savior appears in personal display of judgment.

The Last Trump

“The last trump” seems to be a picture drawn like others here and elsewhere from the familiar facts of an army at the moment of leaving its encampment. Previous soundings were the known and necessary preparatory signals usual among the military. But the Spirit of God avoids more here and concentrates anything answering to them in the “last trump” when the instant arrives for those who are Christ’s to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren.

Blessing Of Living And Dead Saints

The gracious power of His resurrection is now proved to be the resurrection of the dead saints and the life of those alive, and to be on a scale and pattern altogether transcending the raising of Lazarus or any other during the days of His flesh. The unclothed will be clothed as never before and the surviving saints clothed upon, that mortality — the mortal in them — might be swallowed up of life (2 Cor. 5:1-4). There is therefore an evident contrast with the awful sound of the trumpet at Sinai, and but one plain link of connection with “the great trumpet” of Isaiah 27:13 and Matthew 24:31; in that, the loud sound accompanies the gathering together of His chosen people on the earth, “the holy mount at Jerusalem,” as the trump of God is to gather the changed to the Lord for heaven.

One readily understands that the aim, when God was about to speak His “ten commandments” to Israel, was to fill sinful trembling man with overwhelming awe by thunders and lightning and thick cloud, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, and by Sinai covered in smoke because Jehovah descended upon it in fire with blackness and darkness and tempest and a voice more terrible than all. But here, it is exclusively the one fashioned, even in the body, according to the likeness of Christ’s glory, loved of God as He was loved, and about to be with Him in the Father’s house. Solemn grandeur will be there, but not an atom of fear before His perfect love as befits God’s glory and ways.

Magnificent results will follow for the earth, for Israel and for all the nations when Jehovah will destroy “in this mountain” the face of the covering cast over all the

peoples and the vail that is spread over all the Gentiles. But the resurrection of the just — the glorification of the family of God for the heavenlies — must precede even the taking away the rebuke of His people from off all the earth. Then indeed Jehovah's hand will accomplish what His mouth promised. A woman may forget her sucking child and have no compassion on the son of her womb, yet Jehovah will not forget Zion. Behold, He has graven her upon the palms of His hands, and her walls are continually before Him. And kings shall be Zion's nursing fathers, and princesses her nursing mothers; they shall bow down to her with face toward the earth and lick up the dust of her feet.

But the heirs of God and the joint-heirs with Christ have a place as elevated in the heavens as Israel will have on the earth. God's everlasting purpose must be made good in sight of the principalities and powers in the heavenlies, before the dealings of God begin to awaken and lead on into blessing the nucleus of His firstborn for the earth and to put down their Gentile foes in every form and degree. The secret of His will, now made known to the Christian according to the good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, is that, for the administration of the fullness of the seasons, He will head up together in one, all things in Christ, both those in the heavens and those on earth, in Him in whom we were also allotted our inheritance. We are to share this with the Heir of all things.

The final touch He will put to fitting His joint-heirs will be done when He receives them to Himself on high for the Father's house, before the judicial measures of Daniel's last week begin to chastise the usurpers of the inheritance, and the gracious measures concurrently to

prepare a people for the Lord when He with His heavenly ones appears in glory to possess Himself of the earth and fill it with the blessings of His reign.

Opposition To The Truth

Before entering on the examination of other testimony, I take the opportunity of noticing the blighting effect of only seeing an earthly or Jewish position in John 14:1-3. But notice that the Lord spoke of their being with Him, "that where I am, ye also may be." This is quite different than being in Him. We do hear of this in the different intimation of verse 20 where He said, "In that day ye shall know that I am in My Father and ye in Me, and I in you." This beyond question is realized today, as the context also shows both before and after, where the Lord says, "I will not leave you orphans (or desolate), I am coming unto you" (v. 18), and "If one love Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him" (v. 23). But in verse 3 there is distinctive care to preclude the confusion, as the word is "I am coming again and will receive you unto myself." It is not the spiritual coming of the Father and the Son to abide with the obedient saint here, but Christ's personal coming again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is (that is, in His Father's house of many mansions, in which He even then speaks of Himself, as in chapter 17:11), we also may be.

Can one conceive of greater havoc done through Judaizing the hope? Never have I known any truth as to which the least taught had more hearty communion with the most deeply instructed than in looking onward to be with Christ on high according to this promise of our Lord.

The mischief does not end with unbelief as to John 14:1-3. It is equally marked when Zechariah 14:5 is cited to show that the Old Testament recognizes the coming of all the saints at Jehovah's advent and day. Admitting that the holy angels will be there, it seems strange to question what is so distinctly taught in 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Jude 14; Revelation 17:14 and Revelation 19:14, in some of which texts the accompanying terms exclude angels, though elsewhere these may really be meant. It is sad to see how a partial apprehension of the truth works to obliterate what is heavenly. Yet Daniel the prophet does not fail to discriminate the saints of the high or heavenly places (Daniel 7:18, 22, 25, to whom judgment was given as in Revelation 20:4), from their "people" who have the greatness of the kingdom given them "under the whole heaven."

Christ is the power of resurrection and life in His person, as being the Son of God. He was therefore able to raise Lazarus to life in the flesh, as He will at the due time raise the dead believers and change the living ones. In order to do so, at the last day, consistently with God's nature and our sins, He must Himself die and be raised again. For as John 12:24 tells us, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." Life in resurrection power is to have life abundantly. Hence since He rose, believers are now quickened (made alive) who were dead in offences and sins — quickened together with Christ and raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Him.

This in no way supersedes, but is rather the ground of our being changed, even our bodies of humiliation

transformed into conformity with His body of glory when He comes from the heavens as Saviour in full, not of the soul only as now, but of the body also at that glorious hour. Life and resurrection are not inherent in the human race. The believer has life, but it is in the Son. All depends on Him. We live because He lives; and the life as a believer that I now live in flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20). But though heavenly as of the Heavenly One, we still bear the image of Adam, the man of dust. When the body is raised in incorruption, glory and power at His still future coming, we shall bear the image of the Second Man, the Last Adam.

Satan shall then be crushed under our feet and the power of the Lord so established that not an idol shall remain, nor a blade of grass that shall not flourish under His glory. Then God heads up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, and we shall share with Him all the inheritance, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Though the Lord is received up in glory, He is hid in God; whereas then He will be manifested, and we too in glory. The “world to come” is not come, but is surely coming.

It is all well to quote John 5:25, “Verily, verily, I say to you, The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they who have heard shall live.” This is the faith that must be now, if souls are to be quickened and not perish. The further truth is added in verses 28-29, “Wonder not at this; for an hour is coming [which now is not] in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth: those who have done good unto a resurrection of

life, and those who have done ill unto a resurrection of judgment."

No one rises again independently of Christ, for as He is the giver of life eternal, God also gives the prerogative of all judgment to Him as the despised but glorious Son of man. It is His voice that expressly calls for resurrection, for "all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice," just or unjust, well-doers or evil-doers. Hence there are to be two bodily resurrections, as we read in the prophecy of Revelation 20:4-6 and 11-15: a resurrection of life and reigning with Christ, and a resurrection of judgment and endless woe. We need not wonder at the quickening (making alive) of the spiritually dead, when the Lord will call from their tombs the physically dead to come forth — the godly and believing who have life in Him now unto a resurrection of life, and the worthless unbelievers unto a resurrection of judgment, ending in the lake of fire.

Christ is not on His own throne to reign as yet, but as the world's despised and crucified is on the Father's throne. "In the world ye have tribulation," said the Lord; not a special tribulation as retributively for Jews and Gentiles at the end of the age, but constantly during our pilgrimage. The very apostles the last, though in the Church the first, a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. It was the volatile and worldly-minded Corinthian brethren who took the place of being filled, and rich, and reigning "without us" (the apostles): "and would that ye did reign, that we might reign with you," said the large-hearted Paul. But it was a mere delusion.

If we died together with Christ, we shall also live together; if we endure (or suffer patiently), we shall also

reign together. As Christians we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him. “For I reckon that the sufferings of the now-time are not worthy to be compared with the glory about to be revealed to usward.” Christ is not reigning yet, still less is He directly administering the affairs of the world. Even the last time or hour (1 John 2:18-27) is marked by the prevalence, not of Christ, but of many antichrists, the sad harbingers of the Antichrist whom the Lord Jesus shall appear to destroy, as 2 Thessalonians 2:8 tells us. The Father’s kingdom will not arrive for the heavens, nor the Son of man’s for the earth, till He shall come to judge the living, and all lawless ones are cast out of His kingdom into the furnace of fire, and the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Luke 12:35-39

In these verses we do not have the bridesmaids outside with their torches going forth to meet the bridegroom, but servants within the house with their lamps alight. “Let your loins be girded about and lamps burning, and yourselves like men waiting for their own lord whenever he may leave (or return from) the wedding, that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open to him. Blessed those bondmen whom the Lord on coming shall find on the watch. Verily I say to you, that He will gird Himself about and make these recline, and coming up will serve them.” Believing merely in the Lord’s second coming in no way meets what our Lord here impresses on His bondmen, but their hearts fixed on His return is the first of their duties. He craves their watching. Servants are not to seek their own pleasure when their Lord is away. But He in the most earnest way

lays it on them to be as people who wait for their own master whenever he may return from the wedding feast, that when he comes and knocks they may without delay open to him. They are to be on the look-out, by the door as it were, that, when His knock is heard, they may immediately open to Him. “Ye,” yourselves, waiting for Him, characterizes their whole outlook.

This account is eminently in keeping with the place assigned by the Spirit to Luke, who, as he conveys the grace in Christ, demands also the proper answer of the heart in the saints. The return from the wedding feast was the best possible figure on the Lord’s part, the sympathetic occasion of festive joy, yet when the night might be more or less spent. His return from the wedding as a prophetic event does not suite the marriage of the Lamb on high, still less the day when Zion shall be called “Hephzibah” and the land “Beulah.” But as a figure, expressive of a duty suitable to His loving fellowship, filled with bright joy and excluding all associations of judgment and sadness, what is so appropriate? What could so well call out the warm affections of the bondmen to their own Lord? If words were to put the saints into the constancy of waiting for the coming of Christ, surely none could more powerfully set that hope as the proximate and immediate object before their hearts.

But there is more. What could strengthen that hope so much as the wondrous assurance He solemnly adds! He shall gird Himself about — yes, in the glory of heaven — and make them recline at its feast, and come up and serve them. It was the humiliation of love we only conceive faintly, that He who subsisting in God’s form deemed it no object of seizure to be on equality with

God, emptied Himself when He took a slave's form and came in likeness of men. Yet He went farther, as love's need required, and when found in fashion as man, He humbled Himself in becoming obedient as far as death (and what must it have been to Him) yea, the death of the cross. It was in that divine love which would secure God's glory and man's blessing at all cost. Now glorified in heaven He continues the work of a slave in intercession for us, which was symbolized by the washing of the defiled feet of the disciples. Here again His love is to assume a renewed form when we are there glorified; when, as His mark of honour for His bondmen who have watched for Him, He will cause them to recline at the heavenly feast and will come up to serve them.

Let us consider the joy it is, that this the apostolic hope is ours now no less than the apostolic faith and fellowship, if one has ears to hear. "And if he shall come in the second watch, and if in the third, and find [them] so, blessed are those." It is thus evident that expecting the Lord at a distant and defined moment is not what He impresses. The object is that His bondmen should be always on the watch.

The Lord's Coming In Thessalonians

If the teaching of the apostles is sought, none can find a more direct supply than in the two Epistles to the Thessalonians. From 1 Thessalonians 1, we learn that the great apostle Paul instructed those saints from their conversion to God, not only to serve Him as a living and true God, but to await His Son from the heavens, whom He raised from out of the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath. This waiting is quite general, and

wisely so as a first outline for believers just brought out of heathenism. It was enough for them to be put into this happy condition of waiting for Him who so loved them and had wrought so effectively for them now and forever. They would have details in due time: many were given in these early letters from Paul.

Nor was it less on Paul's side who, as he wished no selfish advantage nor present power nor worldly honour, but to be the ready servant of Christ's love and will, looked for his reward in no object of earth's vain glory. "For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting? Are not ye, too, before our Lord Jesus at His coming? for ye are our glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2). But he also most carefully urged them to love one another and all, as was his own affection toward them, in order to confirm their hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints (1 Thess. 3). The unbelieving idea of any members of Christ being absent at that coming was about to be effaced from every heart.

Disallowing another old idea that a saint's death is Christ's coming for him, the apostle in 1 Thessalonians 4 adds to the scene of bereavement the joyful certainty that God will bring with Christ all those put to sleep through Jesus. And he explains, as a new revelation, that the Lord Himself will come for His saints, the dead in Christ and ourselves then alive and remaining, in order that all thenceforth will be forever with Him.

Paul also points out in 1 Thessalonians 5 the awful character of the Lord's day when sudden destruction comes on the sons of night and darkness whom that day shall overtake as a thief. Every Christian ought to see

the distinctness of the Lord's coming to gather His own unto Himself above, from His day of judicial dealing with His and their adversaries: the first is a fresh revelation of sovereign grace, the other a well-known theme of all prophecy.

The second Epistle follows the same truth, but particularly to guard from the delusion that the day of the Lord had actually come. Hence they are shown that their persecution was not at all the feature of that day. Then, the Lord shall be revealed from heaven, awarding both tribulation to their troublers and rest to His future saints. It will be the time of His vengeance in flaming fire on the evil; while He shall have come, not to receive the saints to Himself for the Father's house, but to be glorified in His saints and wondered at in all who believed, before the world. Therefore in 2 Thessalonians 2 he begs them for the sake of (or by) His coming and their gathering together to Him, not to be shaken by the false cry that the day of the Lord was present. For before that day (not before His coming for us) two fearful evils must be: the apostasy and the man of sin revealed who is to be annulled by the appearing of His coming in that day. Lastly, in 2 Thessalonians 3 he prays the Lord to direct their hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ. He waits patiently, and so should we.

1 Corinthians 1:7

See how the blessed hope is meant to cheer, elevate and strengthen all the practical life! No wonder Satan labours incessantly to dim, weaken and destroy its light and power. Take 1 Corinthians 1:7. There we have in strict propriety not exactly the "coming," but the

revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, in verse 8 “the day” because only then will be manifested how the saints acquitted themselves as to the use of each gift of grace entrusted to their charge. Whereas in the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:26) they were to announce His death until He come, bringing the affections into the deepest play between the beginning and end of Christian existence and pilgrimage — Christ’s death and His coming.

2 Peter 1:19

Nor should we fail to note Peter’s words, which bear on our theme, especially as they are generally misunderstood. Peter counts the scene on the holy mount as confirming “the prophetic word, to which ye do well in taking heed, as to a lamp shining in a squalid place, until day dawn and [the] day star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19). “Ye” were the same Christian Jews of the dispersion who Peter had addressed in his first Epistle. They were already familiar with the law. They did well in paying attention to the prophetic word which he compares to a lamp shining in a squalid place (as this world truly is), over which hang the unsparing judgments of God soon to fall. Like the Hebrews to whom Paul wrote, they were slow in appropriating the fuller light and better hope of Christianity. How few know of themselves, that “the worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins”! The apostle accordingly adds, “until day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts”; i.e. till in your hearts shall have dawned heavenly gospel light, and Christ as morning star arisen there in hope, as now made known by the apostles.

The believing Jews were prone to be satisfied with “the word of the beginning of Christ” — that Jesus in truth was the Messiah, God’s Anointed. They believed the fact of His death, resurrection, ascension and return, but they feebly apprehended the blessed results both for God and man, and especially for the saints. They were truly born of God and converted, but how little they entered, if at all, by the new and living way into their own nearness, far beyond that even of the Aaronic priesthood! How slow also to cry Abba, Father! With the light of the gospel goes also the hope of Christ as morning star coming before the rising of the Sun of Righteousness. Thus it is not merely His rising in the day of Jehovah with healing in His wings for Israel and with treading down as ashes for the wicked.

Here it is the hearts of the saints fully receiving heavenly light as well as the proper Christian hope. But men, and none more than Israelites, were proud of the old wine and unwilling to believe in the superior value of the new. They thus said, “The old is good.” Hence (as this was a serious wrong to Him who was infinitely more than Messiah), the apostles painstakingly led them onward from Judaism into the depths of God now revealed. God did this by Paul showing the better things of Christianity in the Epistle to the Hebrews, by John in the mysteries of his Gospel and the Revelation, and by Peter in the fervent appeals of both his Epistles.

Many dear Christians unconsciously betray their total misapprehension of the apostle’s drift by stopping short of what he says and quoting only “until the day dawn and the day star arise,” as if the words “in our hearts” had never been written or had no meaning, whereas they are essential to the true sense. The apostle does

not here speak of the day of glory come for the earth, of Zion's light arrived. On the contrary he desires that the believing remnant of Jews to whom he writes, should not be content with the lamp of prophecy, good as it is for the murky world under judgment with divine wrath impending, but have gospel daylight dawning and the morning star arising in their hearts. This is the special Christian privilege, but many never rise in their anticipations beyond the kingdom and reigning with Christ. It is the realization in their hearts of what Christ entitles to, both as to their present standing and the hope of His coming. If any already understood this privilege, they would know the vantage ground it gave them; if not, he would have them seek it from Him who blesses by faith according to the word of His grace.

Revelation 2:28 — The Morning Star

A confirmation of considerable weight appears in other references. Thus Revelation 2:28 holds out to the overcomer the precious promise of the Lord Jesus, "I will give to him the morning star." It is presented as distinct from the authority which the Lord will also give to him over the nations, "and he shall tend them with an iron rod, as vessels of pottery are they broken in pieces, as I also received of my Father." On the one hand there is the public display of association with Christ when the nations are shattered like potter's ware; on the other, our receiving from Him the privilege of having Him before that day of glory breaks, when He is compared to the star that precedes the dawn, and none see except those who wait for Him and watch in the night before the morn.

It is more interesting when we view the context more closely. This passage occurs in the message to the angel of the assembly in Thyatira, the first of the letters which speak of the Lord's coming again, and therefore in principle go on till then. Here, the change takes place when the expression "He who hath an ear," instead of preceding the promise, follows it, and thus gives the more emphasis to the individual who overcomes. In what is written here one easily discerns the prefiguration of the mediaeval state, not only the adulterous and haughty iniquity of Jezebel or extreme Popery with its claim of infallibility ("who calleth herself prophetess"), but others also of wholly different mind — "My servants" whom she misled into uncleanness and communion with idol sacrifices, as notably the worship of the host, etc. There is also the striking intimation of a distinct remnant, "to you I say, the rest in Thyatira as many as have not this doctrine, such as know not the depths of Satan as they say," that seem to designate witnesses of the pre-Reformation era, like the Waldenses who were remarkable for their endurance and works of faith: a people singularly simple, devoted and suffering.

Can we not discern the fitness of such a quasi-prophetic picture drawn by Him who knew the end from the beginning? The great corruptress, with her children, that sat a queen and should in no wise see grief, is to be cast into a bed, and with her lovers into great tribulation, to be killed with death. She, by falsely claiming His name, usurped authority over the nations in His absence and reigned where and when the true Church was called to suffer yea unto blood, wrestling against sin. Faith follows Christ as He walked here, content and bound to wait till He takes His world

kingdom (Rev. 11:15). Faith refuses, as He did, Satan's offer of the habitable world, the reward of paying him homage. Faith waits to share all with Him at His coming. It is not only that the Church will reign with Him over the earth, but that He will come to have her with Himself before (as the Sun of Righteousness) He shall arise with healing in His wings for those who fear His name, when as an oven the day comes to burn the proud and the wicked as stubble and to leave them neither root nor branch. In a certain sense all His saints have this honor — the risen reigning with Him, those on earth reigned over.

For the overcomer who keeps His works to the end, there is another privilege yet more precious, if not such a display of power. "And I will give to him the morning star." It is actual association with Himself on high before that day! It is quite an advance on what the apostle Peter desired in his second Epistle (1:19) for the Christian Jews of the Dispersion. There, he distinguishes the lamp of prophecy shining in the world's squalid place, over which judgments impend, from the superior daylight of the gospel, and the morning star of Christ as the heavenly hope arising within. It was well to heed that lamp, but they should not rest satisfied till they had what was far better even now in their hearts. In Revelation 2 it is not merely realizing the Christian hope as in 2 Peter 1, but the positively fulfilled promise when Christ will "give" the morning star. Then shall we who watch be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. But as yet the world slumbers and sleeps for it is still night, and they who sleep, sleep by night, and they who drink, drink by night. But we being of day, let us watch and be sober.

Revelation 22:16-17

In the last chapter of Revelation there is another application of the same figure when a similar distinction reappears in the closing words of our Lord. “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the churches” (Rev. 22:16). It is our privilege to have the Spirit reporting to us what is coming, as well as what glorifies Christ both here and on high, guiding us into all the truth. “I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star.” Here we have the witness of His twofold glory. The Old Testament bears clear witness as in Isaiah 9, 11, etc. that He is the Root and Offspring of David, the Mighty God, and the Child born, the Son given. The New Testament alone tells us of Him, whether in hope or in possession, as the Morning star. It is not the sun rising and calling the sons of men to their functions in the day when all shall be ordered aright under the great King. It is not the day when Israel will be at the head of the nations, and they in their place of subjection as Jehovah ordains for the world to come whereof we speak.

The passage conveys much more. The declaration from His lips is that He is the bright, the “Morning Star.” This elicits the prompt answer of the bride, the Lamb’s wife in title; and not her’s only, but that of the Holy Spirit who had anointed and sealed, and here fittingly guides her. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” It is Christ announcing Himself as the Morning Star which draws out the heart’s answer. His bride, the Church, animated and directed by the Spirit, thus responds to His love and bids Him come according to His promise. Long had she waited for Him, and watched earnestly more than those who long for the morning. His coming will be her

crowning joy of love and her instant change into glory forever, though not yet the appearing before the world.

In John 14 the Lord had said, I am coming again and will receive you unto Myself that where I am, ye also shall be. He was crucified by the world, but on the cross He glorified God as He never had been and never so needs again, glorifying God even as to sin and thus furnishing to Him a new glory. He was therefore glorified by God and in God as the basis of the gospel at its fullest, as well as of the Church of God, Christ's body. In order to do this with other purposes pertaining to the heavenly and new state of things, He departed out of this world unto the Father. But far from abandoning the feeble objects of His grace, it is there and then strenuously declared (John 13:1) that having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end. His love was complete. Besides both He and the Father sent the Advocate, the Holy Spirit of truth, to abide with and in them forever. But He also assured them of His own coming again to fetch them into the Father's house, that they may be with Himself in those many mansions.

When the Lord says that He is "the bright, the morning Star," it is no mere wish or enthusiastic emotion of nature that bursts forth. The Spirit Himself takes the initiative in the heart of the Church. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." The earthly bride does not receive the Spirit till the Lord has appeared in glory. There will be true conversion of a godly remnant of Jews long before, in days of sore trial and growing evil and danger. Some will be slain for righteousness' sake and for truth as far as known; others preserved to be the nucleus of the generation to come. But the great privilege of the outpoured Spirit from on high is when the King is come

and the wilderness becomes a garden and a garden is counted a forest. It is the day of Israel's full blessing and of the restitution of all things concurrently. But here in Revelation 22 every solid reason points to that heavenly bride who alone has the privilege of the indwelling Spirit* to give her present communion with Christ in all things before He comes, and here in His coming for her. The simple form of speech has striking beauty, and is full of grace, for He speaks and she replies intelligently in the love that at once answers to His love.

First, there is recognized the normal relationship, and the Spirit as competent and graciously prompting the bride. Many a child of God is uninformed and unconscious of his proper association with Christ after this intimate pattern. He does hear His voice and does not know the voice of strangers. The reality of his divine birth is thus fully owned, while ignorance of the bridal relationship is graciously provided against up to (we may say) the last moment that intervenes: "and let him who heareth say, Come." What is there to fear in the coming of Him who died for us and rose and comes again? What love, joy and honor are couched in His coming again to receive us unto Himself and to set us with and like Himself now in the Father's house! Therefore "let him who heareth say, Come."

To the last, the outflow of divinely given compassion for the wretched and lost has its place. The gospel has its glad and urgent message for souls. Hence the distinct turn in the closing half of the verse. The difference is made clear by the omission of "say." It would be out of the question for any except the bride and the Christian to bid Christ come; those who know Him by faith and are assured of His love can and are called to say so. But

it would be madness for any others to join in such a call. Because of their ruin and their sins, they need Him first to save them. Till they believe, He could only be their judge. But it is still the day of grace. The word for such accordingly is, “And let him who is athirst come and let him who will, take life’s water freely.”

The thirsty one is invited to come. The Church has the spring within and rivers flowing without, but she calls to Christ. It is His name that avails for all the sinner’s need before God. There is no obstacle on His side in the way: God gave and sent His Son for this express purpose. His death, however wicked and destructive might be man’s part, only the more met his wants in God’s surpassing grace. Let him in all his need “come,” but not say “Come.” Yea “he who will,” however feebly he as yet feels his evil state, shall the more truly feel it as he by faith apprehends divine love. “Let him take life’s water freely” God’s grace gives it to him who is only willing, to him who comes just as he is. Is it not indeed a wondrous verse? And it emphatically applies till Christ comes.

O the darkness which fails to see that the bright morning Star is the Lord’s coming in fullness of grace to associate the heavenly saints with Himself, without the smallest sign of judgment if we accept the Word of God! How sweet a hope now to arise in our hearts! How glorious and what joy of love when He thus comes to receive us unto Himself for the Father’s house! Yes, He announces Himself as the bright, the morning star; and the Spirit and the bride say, Come. Destructive judgments! unknown worlds! No! Rather, we have the consummation of His love and ours as one with Him, and this realized in the Father’s house. If it were not so, He would not have raised our hope so high. Did He not say

that the Father Himself dearly loves us because we have dearly loved the Son and have believed that He came from God, yea the Father?

God will do more than display us before every eye in the same glory with our Lord, that the world may know that God loved us as He loved Him. He will gratify His own desire that we shall be with Him above the world where no earthly eye can penetrate, so that we may behold Christ's glory, for the Father loved Him before the world's foundation. This spiritual joy is far beyond any manifestation before the world, however glorious. Weigh it, brethren, that you may learn how much your earthly preoccupation robs you of what should be your proper portion in fellowship with Him above.

The Secret Rapture

In John 14:1-3 the rapture is implied in our Lord's coming again and receiving us unto Himself. Neither time nor season, neither contingent change nor prophetic date, neither general state of the earth nor specific sign of any sort, finds the least place. Infinite love of the Son in communion with the Father elevates us above all such thoughts into an incomparable blessedness above with Christ. It is inconceivable that any Christian mind fail to discern the rapture in what the apostle Paul announced in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, with details as to the dead saints and the living ones. Philippians 3:20-21 and Jude 24 sustain the same heavenly truth. In all it is the same translation of the saints to be with the Lord above.

Not one word in these different Scriptures teaches visibility to the world. It is the making good that

sovereign grace which without a displayed signal to the saints, still less to those who are not concerned, has given us the promise of heavenly association with Christ. Here we shall have the hope blessedly accomplished. In all these intimations there is the most marked absence of others beholding what the Lord is effecting. It flows from His special love for His own, which excludes strangers from intermeddling with His joy. But the day of the Lord duly follows when the world shall see both Him and His Church appearing in glory (John 17:24).

What has misled people is the confounding of the revelation or manifestation with the rapture. The manifestion distinctly calls for “every eye” to see it, as the rapture excludes every eye. The Lord will come for His own, will raise those who were put to sleep through Him, will change us the living who remain until then, both in an eye’s twinkling at the last trumpet, and thus gather us together to Him, not only into the air to meet Him, but so received to set us in the Father’s house before the presence of His glory with exultation. All this is above and apart from the understanding of man. But the public vindication of Christ and His own before the universe is when He will come forth after the marriage of the Lamb on high (Revelation 19), as well as the final judgment on earth of Babylon the great harlot to which God under the seventh vial gave the cup of the wine of the fury of His wrath (Rev. 17, 19). Only then is the visible display of the Lord and of the glorified saints who follow Him out of the opened heavens, when He smites the nations, shepherds them with iron rod and treads the winepress of His wrath.

It is called, not His presence merely, but “the appearing of His presence” (compare 2 Thessalonians 2:1 with 8),

by which the Lord Jesus shall annul the then-revealed lawless one as well as the apostate imperial chief, who shall both be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. Thus does God render tribulation to the troublers of the saints and rest to the troubled, not at the rapture of the saints, but at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with angels of His power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and on those who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. This would have been quite out of place with all that is said of His coming to change His saints and translate them to heaven. But it is entirely in keeping with His appearing, His glorified saints being with Him, for the double purpose of their enemies paying penalty of everlasting destruction from the Lord's face and from the glory of His might, and of His coming (not to receive, but) to be glorified in His saints and marvelled at in all who believed in that day. It will be the day of the Lord then truly present, the saints having been gathered to Him previously.

This perfectly agrees with Revelation 17:14 which is ignored by those who oppose what they call the "secret rapture" and no wonder, for it is utterly incompatible with their hypothesis. Those with the Lamb, when the Beast and the vassal kings make war with Him, are called and chosen and faithful, the first and the last. These terms can describe only His accompanying saints, not angels. This is confirmed by the later description in Revelation 19:14 where the symbolic clothing points to the saints, not to angels (compare verse 8 before), and yet more by the previous marriage of the Lamb. All agree in proving that the rapture of the saints, unseen by the world, whatever the astonishment produced by

the disappearance of the living saints, must have preceded the revelation of the Lord and His glorified saints which is associated with the manifest and awful judgments He will execute on their enemies.

It has already been shown that Colossians 3:4 concerns the manifestation, not the rapture of the saints when the Lord is manifested in glory, which is more than His coming or simply presence. They are then, and not before, manifested in glory. Christ is therefore not seen in glory before they are caught up. They shall be manifested together. The Scriptures on which people have thought differently refer to the Jews, not to Christians. These godly Jews will be gathered in the land to Him as their glorious King instead of being first caught up, and then at a later time will appear with Him in the same glory. Compare Matthew 24:31-41, Mark 13:27-31, Luke 21:27-36, Isaiah 24:21-23 and Isaiah 25-27.

Though none of the Scriptures which apply to this subject speak of visibility to people, we do hear of the Lord's "shout," of the archangel's voice and of the trump. But why should any attach loudness of sound to these expressions, solemn and impressive as they undoubtedly are? These verses fully speak of the personal and gracious intervention of the Lord Jesus for His own, the faithful summons of God, the acclaim of the archangel and in 1 Corinthians 15 the immediate and final notice to depart, but none of these goes necessarily beyond the persons interested. They directly concern only the household of faith and only the glorified.

People have compared the Lord's descent for us with Exodus 19. But thunder and lightnings were then, and

the voice of a trumpet “exceeding loud,” so that all the people trembled. And Mount Sinai was altogether covered with smoke and Jehovah descended upon it in fire, and the smoke from it ascended as the smoke of a furnace and the whole region quaked greatly. And the voice of the trumpet became louder and louder. All thus was alarming, and awful, as became the ministry of death and condemnation in the law.

When the Lord comes in restoring mercy for Israel, we read that in that day a “great” trumpet shall be blown and that His angels will be sent with a great trumpet, or a great sound of trumpet. This expresses what is wholly absent when Scripture tells of His coming in love and majesty to make good His love to the heavenly saints. His appearing to Israel is bound up with the infliction of judgments on the apostates, Jewish and Gentile, and the punishment of the enemies of His people and of the wicked in general. As with His own ascension, our rapture will be the triumph of grace which leaves the world unmolested for the moment, though the providential inflictions of God soon begin to follow in measured order and increasing degree, till all culminates in the day of the Lord at their close, as detailed in the Book of Revelation.

When Does The Rapture Take Place?

The glorified saints must be caught up to heaven for some time before they with Him emerge from heaven, for they follow the King of kings who descends to smite the nations with a sharp sword and to shepherd them with iron rod, as well as to tread the winepress of God’s exceeding wrath. Some only allow the saints to have been there from the destruction of Babylon under the

seventh vial. Since all God's vials precede Christ's appearing, He cannot appear before they all are poured out. If therefore Christ destroys Babylon and takes up the saints then or before its destruction, so that God is praised above for His judgment of the great harlot, He must have come for them before the day of His revelation from heaven in Revelation 19 for His still more awful judgment of the Beast, etc. This clearly overthrows this system.

The main question for those who value the truth is, Where or when according to Scripture are the saints translated to heaven? It is beyond question that the book of Revelation opens with the Lord seen in the prophet's vision judging the seven churches in Asia. This is what John "saw." "The things which are" is a notable description of the seven churches as judged by the Lord in His letters to each respectively. "The things about to be after these," are the visions of the future to follow up even into eternity itself. These are the three divisions of the book according to Revelation 1:19. The third division is the strict prophecy, consisting of two portions (Rev. 4-11 and Rev. 12-22:5), for each opens with a prefatory introduction and goes on to the end.

Here then may be found adequate evidence when the rapture of the saints takes place. The condition of the Church is prefigured in the seven churches — "the things that are": not the actual Asiatic assemblies only, but what they prefigured successively as the things would be to the hearing ear by what the Spirit says. Revelation 4 and Revelation 5 indicates the glorified saints already symbolized as in heaven, twenty-four elders, chief-priests of the fully numbered courses, crowned and enthroned around God's central throne.

This is definite; and they are no longer disembodied souls but changed, resurrected people. Any saints, Jewish or Gentile, called afterwards (as many are), add nothing to them: they are complete. During the period that follows no church-state is seen.

Revelation 7 shows a numbered complement out of the twelve tribes of Israel, and after that a countless crowd of Gentiles, objects of divine choice and blessing, but they are separate from each other. There is no fusion into one, as the nature of the Church requires. God keeps each distinct from first to last: it resembles His work in the Old Testament. Only grace largely works outside Israel and so far like the New Testament. But church-state is closed. It is a new condition with abundant mercy in the face of idolatry, apostasy, persecution, tribulation and divine judgments. A people is prepared for the earth under the reign of the Lord personally present and His glorified saints: a reign of righteousness and peace, Satan wholly excluded and the Holy Spirit poured on all flesh for 1000 years.

That the existing Church-state closes on earth at the end of Revelation 3 is as demonstrable as that the overcomers out of it, with all who were Christ's before them, are thenceforth seen as glorified in heaven from Revelation 4 and 5. Nothing but the coming of Christ to gather those who believed to Himself can account for the new company above, the disappearance of recognized churches here below, and the formation of separate companies out of Israel and the Gentiles thenceforward for the earthly purposes of God during the crisis of evil and His judgments, till the Lord comes from heaven to put down Satan and his agents and to establish His world-kingdom. It is therefore between

Revelation 3 and 4 that the time for the saints' translation best suits. A transition period then ensues when the Church disappears and grace works, in presence of solemn chastenings of men, to get ready a nucleus for the Lord's appearing and for the millennial earth, as well as for martyrdom meanwhile.

This conveys the general preview of the steps God takes in judgment, though with dealings of concurrent mercy, to chastise the world, and especially its more favoured parts, and to pave the way for investing the Lamb at the proper time with its direct and supreme government. This ends with Revelation 11:18 for the earthly and the eternal kingdom.

In the next section we do not see a central throne with enthroned heirs of God and Christ's joint-heirs around, but the temple of God in heaven is opened and the ark of His covenant is seen, not on earth, but still above and yet with added signs of present displeasure. The first great sign seen there is of God's sure promise for Israel's glory. It is not the bride, but the travailing mother of Him who is to tend all the nations with an iron rod, arrayed with the sun, the moon under feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. Supreme authority is to be her's, the sun that rules the day; the changing and reflected light of the old covenant, no longer guiding but under her feet; but also the fullness of human subordinate authority. Meanwhile the child who was born, the Son of might, was caught up to God and to His throne. The great dragon, another sign, was seen there, having seven heads and ten horns, emblematic of the Roman empire in deadly opposition to both. War in heaven ensues. The dragon, the devil, is cast out with his angels; woe to the earth and to the sea

while the heavens and those who dwell there (for so it will then be) rejoice greatly! The devil has great rage, knowing he has a short time — and he vents it against the woman and the rest of her seed, the godly remnant.

These conflicts are regarded in a far deeper way than in the earlier visions. The counsels of God centering in His Son are seen, and the hostility of Satan in his last efforts during the half-week which has still to run out, before the Lord in person crushes him and his lawless instruments as in Revelation 19 and 20. It is the import of the woman's seed caught up on high that is insinuated. For in the manner of the prophetic word the apostle intimates in mystic style the translation to heaven of the saints before the dates begin.

We are thus viewed as in Christ who was caught up there, while the woman and the remnant of her seed are objects, not only of Satan's hate, but of God's providential care on the earth. As we shall share Christ's authority when He takes His great power and reigns (Rev. 2:26-27), so we are symbolically wrapped up in Him in His being caught up out of Satan's way. We are one with Him in this foreseen rapture, as the apostle Paul in Romans 8:33-34 applies to the Christian what Isaiah 50:8-9 says of Christ.

Thus we again, and in a very different form suited to this part of the prophecy, come round to the still higher promise in Revelation 2:28. We are associated with Christ as the morning star before the Sun of righteousness introduces the day for all the world, and we too share the glorious reign with Him. If, instead of groundless fancy, we listen Scripture, the bright, the morning star shines not for the slumbering world, but

for those who watch during the dark night. It is essentially spiritual, visible to saints only, not to the world which will have to do rather with the Sun of righteousness.

The Holy Spirit had first to be poured out and the gospel preached to all the creation. But the New Testament attests that this was done during that first generation, and that the saints were then taught by the apostles to wait for Christ habitually and constantly with no revealed event to precede or intercept.

Reviewing, we have seen that after Revelation 3, churches in the book of Revelation disappear from the earth and that a new sight of glorified saints are soon in heaven. The fresh action of God follows, concurrently here below, of a secured complement of Israel and a blessed and far larger crowd out of all the nations. They are kept apart instead of being baptized in the power of the Spirit into one body as we are, and as the nature of God's Church characteristically demands.

Revelation 22:16 is no exception. From verse 6 to the end we simply have appeals to John and the churches that then existed, however permanent the profit might be, as the suited conclusion to the visions previously revealed. The Lord would have all that preceded testified in the churches. But this affords no ground for imagining "churches" in the New Testament sense during the entire period of the crisis, or any part of it, from Revelation 6-19, or indeed any longer as on the earth.

The closing words of the last chapter of Revelation are impressive. They corroborate the essential difference between the Christian hope and the wondrous

communication that comprises the unfolded visions of what is to befall the earth in judgment as well as mercy from Revelation 6-19 inclusively. This latter is in the richest way the prophetic word which in God's wisdom and goodness, completes the New Testament.

There are to be two successive series of judgments, of a general and then of a special character, as in the seven seals and the seven trumpets. A general securing to Himself out of Israel and from among all the nations, accompanies the one; and if the Jews in unbelief seek to establish their polity and religion, God begins within the other to recognize a godly remnant during those days of sin and sorrow, with an adequate testimony like that of Moses and Elijah, which none can hinder till their work is done. And the Beast is first seen in his deadly antagonism. Martyrdom ensues. The apparent triumph of the enemy is answered, not only by God's power in raising the slain and taking them up to heaven in view of their foes, but by a defined overthrow of man's pride on earth. Then follows the end of man left to himself, and the world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ is come.

Next, we go back to let in details of the deepest importance, of which enough has been said. And the kingdom of glory follows, the great white throne and the eternal scene.

Many saints contend for a certain part [of Daniel's 70th week] to intervene before the Lord comes for us. However, none can show any legitimate Scriptural evidence. Proof to the contrary has already been given. The only consistent point for the removal of the saints to heaven is when the churches are no longer seen or heard of on earth and a new symbolic company is

presented in heaven. After this, the steps are revealed by which God chastises the guilty world. In the midst of the great tribulation He calls and forms, not in one body as now, but separately, a twofold nucleus of blessed people — Jews and Gentiles — for the earth under the Lord's future reign. At that time He had already taken to Himself on high those destined to reign with Him when that glorious time arrives, as we see in Revelation 20-22:5.

The fulfillment prophecy awaits the time for the earthly question to be answered. Now, the Lord is occupied with a heavenly work which does not have the distinction of Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman, but Christ being the all and in all. This work is quite independent of earthly change because the end of that work is to be with Him where He is. And thus He concludes, "He who testifies these things saith, Yea, I come quickly. Amen, come, Lord Jesus," is the divinely supplied reply. The constant waiting, apart from times and seasons, is kept up to the last for those who have an ear to hear.

It is striking to see how careful the Lord is to exclude prophetic events from mingling with our proper portion in His coming for us; and all the more because Revelation is in the main the great Christian book of prophecy. Hence, while giving solemn warnings in these concluding appeals in Revelation 22, He fixes our hearts on His coming in sovereign grace without a revealed earthly event to intercept it. He precludes any delay on the basis of governmental dealings with people on the earth. He allows no room for confusion with intervening changes in the world. "He who testifieth these things saith, Yes, I come quickly," to which our graciously

provided answer is, “Amen, come, Lord Jesus.” Can any words be simpler or more effective for the heart?

The gospel was sent to save sinners and to associate them when saved with Christ, the glorified Head, and thus to constitute them a heavenly body, His body. Its aim is not to gather into one the world, but the children of God who were scattered abroad. The gospel was to be preached everywhere as a testimony, but with no such thought as winning all Israel or the nations while He is on high. It is reserved for the Lord, not for the Church, in judicial authority to take His great power and reign when His world-kingdom is come: a future and total change from His present seat on His Father’s throne. That occurs at His appearing and His kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1). It is “the blessed hope” of what God will do for man and the world, and we rejoice anticipatively. There will be no general blessing for the human race till then. We await it with assurance and love it as redounding not to the blessing of man only, but to the glory of our Savior God. In the Pastoral Epistles, Christ’s appearing alone is pressed because responsibility rather than distinctive privilege is the point, and then, not before, “that day” will the issues appear of fidelity or of failure.

Before that day of manifestation the awful apostasy must come, as well as the audacious uprising against God of the man of sin whom the Lord Jesus will destroy by His appearing (2 Thess. 2). Before that day, as is made evident in Revelation 19, the predicted blows of divine chastisement must be fulfilled as revealed from the seals of Revelation 6 to the last vials of God’s wrath in Revelation 16, of which the judgment of Babylon in the descriptive appendix of Revelation 17-18 is a concluding part and explanation. Then follows the day of

the Lord in Revelation 19 when the glorified saints follow Him out of heaven to the destruction of His enemies, the binding of Satan, the thousand years' reign of Christ and the risen saints over the earth, as in Revelation 20. God's Word makes all this clear, whatever the doubts and difficulties of the learned, or the unbelief of the worldly-minded.

But the still more intimate and proper hope of the Christian is Christ's coming for those who love Him and watch during the night for Him as the Morning Star, before the day.

As the apostle corrected the errors of the Thessalonian saints, yet confirmed the constant waiting for Him, carefully joining himself with them and all saints in the same attitude, so here does the Lord guard us from confounding His coming with that day, and God's necessary antecedent dealings of infliction or of mercy on Israel or the nations.

Meanwhile may "the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen."

Born of Water and Spirit - John 3:5

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, owned Jesus as come a teacher from God, and this on the ground of such signs as convinced him that God was with Him. It was a sound inference, based on good evidence and sure; but it was only intellectual. It was not conscience searched by divine truth, nor a soul crying to God because of his sins. “Rabbi, we know,” etc. (ver. 2), says he vaguely; not, “What must I do to be saved?” He was unconscious of his personal ruin, and was what Scripture calls “dead in sins.” The Lord takes higher ground than of a rabbi, and puts Nicodemus on lower ground than a disciple’s. In a form extremely solemn, yet more than that of the great discourse on the mount in the first Gospel, He laid down the prime need of fallen man. His words breathe nothing short of divine authority. He speaks not as the scribes, nor even as a prophet with “Thus saith Jehovah,” but as consciously God: — “Verily, verily, I say to thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (ver. 3).

As a distinguished rabbi, Nicodemus was familiar with the washing of a proselyte, and with the high-flown platitudes of its effect rife in the schools. But he was no proselyte any more than other Jews. Dull as he might be to the truth, and as all naturally are, he saw that much more was insisted on for everybody who was to see the kingdom of God. Figures were all well to elevate common-place; and to this he was used; but if a new and real quickening were meant, how to get rid of the absurdity for a grown man to be born again? The answer is in terms no less peremptory than before: — “Verily,

verily, I say to thee, Except one be born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (ver. 5).

Now Nicodemus was no more converted to God at this time than the woman of Samaria when she first came to the well; he no more believed to life eternal than the crowd which came to Capernaum in quest of Jesus, or any others in their natural state of whom we read elsewhere. If the Lord in plain language invariably called on such to believe on His name, is it an intelligent interpretation that here only He prescribed an ordinance? Even when those who heard the preaching at Pentecost were pricked in their heart, and said, "What shall we do?" the apostle did not so interpret his Master's words. He said, "Repent, and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit " (Acts 2:37, 38), a gift therefore over and beyond birth of the Spirit. But repentance toward God implies faith as surely as faith in Christ implies repentance. Compare Acts 16:31 and Acts 20:21. If it be an honest interpretation to suppose Christian baptism here set before an unrenewed Jewish teacher, it can only be in minds prepossessed by tradition and negligent of the unmistakable teaching of the New Testament.

Such men assume that "water" in John 3:5 must be plain fact; but they overlook the mystic or allegoric style in which this Gospel abounds. What is the "water" in John 4:10? Is the "water" plain fact in John 7:38? Nor did the Lord Himself interpret the figure in these cases, any more than in the momentous teaching of John 13:10, founded on His previous action. But in John 15:3 He gives a key to His meaning, if any needed one: "Already ye are clean by reason of the word which I have spoken

to you." We are expressly told that He baptized none (John 4:2); but His words were spirit and life (John 6:63); and they received Him, believing on His name (John 1:12). They were thus born of God. Water is the figure for His word.

There is a difference discernible in the use of the figure. In John 3, as in 13, it is "water" to deal with the unclean or defiled. In John 4, and in John 7, it is "living water" to drink, as the power of communion in the one chapter, and of testimony in the other, the gift of the Spirit to believers. There it is not new birth in its cleansing power on him who only now believes as in John 3, or the grace of restoration founded on it as in John 13. It is the purifying power of God's word when received in faith, as we may see laid down in the plain words of Acts 15:9; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:26; 1 Peter 1:22. Hence "water" alone, figuring the word, needs the addition of "and Spirit" to convey the Lord's mind fully as to new birth. The soul in bowing to Christ is born of water and Spirit. Had this divine work taken place in Nicodemus, he would have been by repentance a fit subject for Christian baptism, the sign of identification with Christ's death (Rom. 6): thereby were we buried to His death.

This is confirmed, as the genuine character of the birth here meant, by the earlier words of our evangelist in John 1:12, 13: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He right to become children of God (even) to those that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The possession of spiritual life everywhere in this Gospel hinges on faith, as may be seen not in chap. 1 only, but in John 3:15, 16, 18, 36; John 5:24, 25, 39, 40; John 6:27, 29, 32-35, 40, 47, 51, 53, 54; John 7:38, 39;

John 8:12, 51; John 10:9, 10, 26-28; John 20:31. What can be clearer than that the Lord attaches life eternal to faith in Himself without one word about baptism? So true is this, that it is merely the effort of superstition to bring baptism into John 3:3-5 as it does the Lord's Supper into John 6, with the utmost violence to both chapters. Indeed it is a Gospel which avoids outward forms expressly, so as to lay the stress on Christ's Person and the gift of the Holy Spirit — its grand topics. If we misapply John 6:54 to the Lord's Supper, the inference would be that every partaker of it has life eternal, and shall be raised up in the blessed resurrection at the last day. It is therefore manifestly erroneous. If one again misapply John 3:3-5 to baptism, the words must shut out from the kingdom every unbaptized person. But the Lord, in the most touching and effective way, teaches us the contrary by the converted robber — a sample of many souls since that day.

Nor need we confine our view to those saved by the gospel since. The Lord tells us in Luke 13:28 that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob shall be seen in the kingdom of God. Are we to doubt the same of Abel, Enoch, Noah, to say nothing of "so great a cloud of witnesses" after those elders, that time would fail to enumerate all? Yet not one of them was baptized.

In short, the truth of Scripture thus requires us to believe that all who are born of God shall inherit the kingdom of God. It is not a fresh New Testament privilege of which the Lord here treats, like "the hour cometh, and now is," in John 4:21-23. On the contrary, it is for all time a truth of vital moment; it looks back as well as forward, it concerns every converted soul

without a single exception. The Lord solemnly insisted on it to Nicodemus, not only as his then need, but because it was buried at that time under the darkness of Jewish self-complacency; as it is now under the corrupting sacramentalism, which the tiniest sect may share with the proudest and most prevalent that pretends to be the church.

The inevitable effect is to set up ordinances, dispensing saving efficacy, through officials arrogating a sanctity which is unreal, and mysterious powers which are not of Christ but a delusion of the enemy. For his aim is to hinder the sinner from finding life eternal in Christ, to Whom the Holy Spirit points in the gospel as its only source to faith, “The Son of man, who came to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Yea, Satan’s aim is to dishonour the Son of God, and to ruin man. Nor have any of his wiles been more mischievous than the antiquated lie that baptism is here meant as the divine means of new birth.

It has been already shown that to put baptism before one of ripe years, and still in the darkness of nature, is contrary to the tenor of all Scripture. The error and even absurdity of such a thought proves the impossibility of applying John 3:3-5 to baptism. Besides, people forget that Christian baptism (not John’s of course, nor yet the disciples’, which was analogous) did not exist till Christ died and rose, which indeed gave the special force to it. Our Lord did not institute it until after His resurrection (Matt. 28:19). “Know ye not that as many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized unto His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism unto death,” etc. Not one of the disciples, neither John nor Peter, could have understood the truth

of it in the least degree at that time. How strange then to imagine that a distinctively Christian privilege, the sign of Christ's death and of our identification with Him in it, was or could be set before an unreconciled Jewish teacher! Col. 2:12 must have been still less intelligible then ("buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with [Him] through faith in the working of God," etc.).

Even Acts 22:16, Gal. 3:27, and 1 Peter 3:21, though simpler perhaps, could only have mystified real believers till the finished work of Christ set them all in the light. But every scripture referred to furnishes its own special and overwhelming proof that John 3 speaks of divine quickening, the necessary work in every soul that ever was born of God. This is not at all the truth that is signified by the "one baptism" of water, the initiatory privilege of Christian profession. For baptism is nowhere made the symbol of the new birth, but of Christ's death; and thus it is said to be for remission of sins and of death with Him. In short it is a figure of salvation, as in 1 Peter 3. Hence we perceive the consistency of Scripture, singularly lost sight of in Christendom. For our Lord only instituted baptism to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (the Trinity), when His mighty work of redemption was accomplished, not from the day of fallen Adam when grace gave believers to be born anew by faith in the woman's Seed.

Beyond controversy God uses His word in converting souls now as ever. So the apostle tells the Corinthian saints, "In Christ Jesus I begot you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). Not otherwise, but speaking of the source, James 1:18 teaches, "Of His own will He begot

us (or brought us forth) by the word of truth," not by an ordinance. 1 Peter 1:23 lays down the same doctrine: "Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through God's living and abiding word." Nor is John less distinct in his First Epistle, declaring (1 John 5:9-13) that for life eternal all turns on receiving the witness of God about His Son; while he that believes not God has made Him a liar, and has not life.

Now when God's word enters the soul by faith, it deals with conscience in a purifying way; it awakens to a sense of sin, and produces repentance toward God. Therefore Peter speaks of cleansing our hearts by faith (Acts 15:9), and wrote to the elect sojourners of the dispersion what is equally true of all believers, that they had "purified their souls in their obedience to the truth" (1 Peter 1:22). So the Lord told the disciples (John 15:3), "Already ye are clean, because of the word which I have spoken to you." The atoning work was not yet done, nor was Christian baptism enjoined or even possible. It was God's word which wrought in His grace, being received not as men's word, but, even as it is truly, God's word, which also effectually works in those that believe (1 Thess. 2:13).

In accordance with this the Lord spoke of being "born of water and Spirit." Thus the truth of a spiritual cleansing was presented in the most forcible way as the beginning of a new life not before enjoyed. "Water" was the appropriate figure of the word of God, which has always been and is and must be the means invariably used to quicken a dead and unclean soul. But this can only be when the Holy Spirit gives the word efficacy. The soul bows to God, recognising and hating his sins; there is

faith no less than repentance. “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight.” This was always true in principle; but the gospel of God’s grace adds, now that Christ is come, “Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring forth the fatted calf, kill it: and let us eat, and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found” (Luke 15). A soul is justified by faith as well as born anew; and that, not this, is what baptism symbolizes.

The allusion in John 3:5 is to such passages in the Old Testament as Psalm 51:7-10, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.... Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Again, Isaiah 1:16, “wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes.” So speaks Jeremiah 4:14, “O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.” But fullest of all is Ezekiel 36:25-27, “And I will 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,” etc. Here we have beyond legitimate doubt “water” used figuratively, yet the Spirit is put with it in plain and direct terms as the divine agent in the work: the very objection raised to deny the true sense of John 3:5. And this Old Testament scripture is the more pertinent because it seems to have been chiefly before the Lord in speaking. But He clothed the truth with a fulness and

precision, proper to Himself, making it, as the first reception of divine life, absolutely requisite for all that enter the kingdom of God.

In verse 6 this is cleared and strengthened by His words, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Not a word is said about the remission of sins or any other fruit of Christ’s death. It is a question of a new and spiritual nature from the Spirit as the source. Here water is left out. The object was to explain that the nature given is according to the character of the divine agent, as it must be to qualify sinful man, now believing, for God’s presence and kingdom, His service and worship. Baptism has its importance, and the Lord’s Supper yet more, as being the constant feast of the church. But neither one nor other could do what the Spirit effects in making the believer a partaker of the divine nature, as 2 Peter 1:4, or born of God, as it is often said by John. A new nature is communicated by the Spirit, a nature similar to His own: the word, without the Spirit, could have no such efficacy.

Then the Lord exhorts Nicodemus, in verse 8, not to wonder that He insisted on the new birth as indispensable, not for heathen or Gentiles only, but for Jews like himself. “Ye must be born anew.” A Jew might readily enough have acknowledged the necessity for some radical change in those that were aliens from the polity of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2). But was it not a hard saying of those whom Jehovah called His chosen and holy people, His peculiar inheritance?

In fact, Nicodemus was not so childish as those who fancy the Lord meant here Christian baptism. An ordinance would have been easy for a Jew to comprehend and to submit to even then, if prescribed by one he owned as come from God, a teacher furnished with credentials of power indubitably divine. His construction may be as wild as the view of the fathers is weak and heathenish; for they imagined it to be a religious ceremony, wherein the Spirit accompanied the water of immersion, pouring, or sprinkling (as the case might be), so as to make it the vehicle of life spiritual. One cannot say "life eternal," for the great majority of those who entertain that superstition deny its everlasting virtue, and are obliged to own that by far the most of their baptized live and die in their sins. Nicodemus, mistaken though he was, did not understand that any rite could meet the Saviour's words. He was so far not wrong in thinking that a supernatural operation was implied. He did not fall so low as to dream of literal "water" invested by God with quickening energy. His mind reasoned on being "born anew." What he suggested is quite short of what grace does effect, as it has ever done. For what work can be more evidently and exclusively of divine operation than for a sinner, in a true, living, and eternal sense, to be born of the Spirit — "born of God"? If somehow born again of his mother, it must be the same "old man" over again.

Yet that is the good work which God has been doing throughout, man's sad history, and in the gospel it was to be far more widely wrought than ever; and therefore the moment was most fitting for the Lord here to set it out in His own striking manner. Hence He adds in verse 8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and its voice thou

hearest, but knowest not whence it cometh, and where it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." As the wind is above man's comprehension and control, so is the Spirit sovereign in His activity, and the blessing is thus not limited to any people or land. Open to everyone, it might be made good to any; as Paul claims for the righteousness of God preached in the gospel.

More and more perplexed by that which broke up the superficial and narrow system of Jewish tradition, Nicodemus in verse 9 asked, "How can these things be?" when the Lord answered, "Art thou the teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Nicodemus as a Jew, and familiar with the Old Testament scripture, ought to have known "these things" of which the Lord had spoken thus far, and of which all that Nicodemus said proved his total ignorance.

Here again we have the plain and strong inference from our Lord's words that there was not the least allusion to the institution of Christian baptism, and that all which He had announced was no more than a learned Jew should have known. The law and the prophets say nothing of Christian baptism, but treat of the same need, and press it on Israel. Not even a Baptist would be disposed to own that God's sprinkling clean water on a defiled Jew means Christian baptism. He must own that it is a figure of a spiritual blessing promised to the ancient people of God, and not literal water; and he has to face the fact that the Spirit of God literally is in the same place connected with the figurative water.

But the Lord, not contented with setting Old Testament truth in a brighter light, next intimates a character of knowledge and testimony such as no prophet, however

gifted, could propose. They were borne on by the Spirit beyond their comprehension. They had to confess their ignorance of their own inspired utterances (1 Peter 1:10-12). They had to search what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them pointed out, even when they said, Thus saith Jehovah. But the Lord knew things as they are, being the Son, a Divine Person; He knew them in the communion of the Godhead, of which His becoming flesh had in no way deprived Him. He had seen and could testify what was above man's or creature's ken. "Verily, verily, I say to thee, We speak that which we know, and testify that which we have seen; and ye receive not our testimony. If I told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?"

Here again we have proof upon proof that the Lord had not passed beyond what was needed even for the "earthly things" of God's kingdom. Therein is Israel to be blessed and honoured pre-eminently on earth. But when God is thus truly "good to Israel," their own law carefully restricts it to such as are of a "clean heart" or pure in heart (Psalm 73:1). Then only will they be received to (or with) glory (ver. 24). For then as surely as His salvation will be for them that fear Him, so will glory dwell in that land beyond every other (Psalm 85:9). Yet will it be the day when, through Israel restored to favour and blessed, God's way will be known on earth, His saving health among all nations (Psalm 67:2) Then, indeed, shall the peoples, all the peoples, praise God as they have never done; for the kingdom of God will have come in manifested power under the King of kings and the Lord of lords. His people at last are under the new

covenant (Jer. 31:31- 34), and will be all righteous (Isaiah 60:21).

These predictions of the Old Testament are the “earthly things” to which the Lord here refers, and distinct from the “heavenly things” revealed afterwards to us in the Epistles. And the Lord insists that, even for the earthly things, to be born anew, born of water and Spirit, is an absolute necessity. How much more for the “heavenly things “ now revealed to the Christian! He and He only was their suited witness, whether directly or through the Holy Spirit Whom He was to send them from the Father (John 15:26; John 16:7, 13-15). For, as He said, “No one hath ascended into heaven, but He that descended out of heaven, the Son of man that is in heaven” (John 3:13). Thus, when the context is examined, it becomes certain and evident that the notion of Christian baptism here is untenable; as we have seen it to be refuted by the actual text itself.

Again, there is the moral impossibility that it should be set before one who is as yet treated by our Lord as of those not receiving “our witness”; and there is also thc actual impossibility that Nicodemus could know an institution only enjoined after our Lord’s death and resurrection; whereas the Lord censures him for not understanding these things as “the teacher of Israel.” For it would not only attach an exorbitant place to a form of the truth, and a meaning wholly different from what Scripture does attach, but it would assert what is confessedly false, which is not and cannot be in Scripture.

But if we now turn for a moment to what Scripture says of Christian baptism, the incongruity and the danger of

impressing John 3:5 into that service are transparent. Thus the apostle does not hesitate, when writing to his children in the faith (1 Cor. 1:14), to thank God that he had personally baptized so few in Corinth, though no doubt all were baptized there (Acts 18:8) as elsewhere. But how can we conceive such a thanksgiving if baptism be the means of new birth? Were it so, he that loved God and man must the more thank Him the more he baptized. He thanked Him that he had baptized none there save Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas, lest any should cry up his name in it. For Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel. Of the gospel he had no fear or shame; for it is God's power unto salvation for everyone that believes. And he declares later in 1 Cor. 15:1-11 that the gospel of salvation was what he preached and they received — Jesus and His work — unless they believed in vain, without one word about baptism. What do these men know of the gospel or of baptism compared with the apostle?

We may also observe the plain fact that where our Lord does enjoin baptism, the order wholly differs from that which the misuse of John 3:5 involves. Thus in Matt. 28:19 He says to the eleven, Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them, etc. Discipling the Gentiles was of course to precede their baptism. So in Mark 16:16 He says, He that believed and was baptized shall be saved. The essential turning-point lay in the first; the due outward order in the second; which is strengthened by what follows, "and he that believed not [without a word about baptism] shall be damned." Baptism without faith only aggravates the

condemnation. How easy and perilous it is to corrupt the word of God!

Take an instance from a tract on the New Birth, published by the author at Margate. The main point urged is a distinction between being “begotten” and “born,” which he professes to draw from Scripture. One is begotten by faith (says he), as shown in John 1:12, 13 (though John says “born”), 1 Cor. 4:15, Philemon 10, James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:23, and 1 John 5:1. But when he wants to prove that we were not spiritually “born” when we believed and were “begotten,” he has only human reasoning. There is not a single word to show that we are born by baptism, nothing save the worthless tradition which so interprets the text in question, John 3:5, 7. Physiology is quite out of court.

But let me tell the author that he is throughout under mistake as to the words and meaning of Scripture. For it is exactly the same word in John 3 translated “born” as in John 1:13, where he deserts thc revised text for their margin. The Revisers knew, which he does not, that the Greek expresses no such difference. Hence in 1 John 5:1 it is the same Greek word for “born” and “begotten” (“begat” being the active form of the same also). And so it is elsewhere. The alleged distinction is not the truth of Scripture. To be “born” or “begotten” is the self-same word and fact, at any rate in the spiritual realm; therein to pretend the difference argued for is deplorable ignorance.

The believer is, according to the New Testament, not only “begotten” but “born” by the same life-giving work of God’s grace, or rather, the same word employed by the Holy Spirit demonstrates that the alleged distinction

is a mere blunder to defend the heterodoxy that by faith we are only “begotten,” but not truly “born” till we are baptized: a flagrant contradiction of plain Scripture. The author’s own use of James 1:18 ought to have dispelled the error, which is refuted alike by John, Paul, and Peter also. There is not a shadow of support from God’s word. The divine truth is quite certain and clear, and so is the falsehood of men.

W.K.

The Doctrine of Christ, and Bethesdaism

We are bound to receive one another, but only, as Christ received us, to the glory of God. Rom. 15:7. Does this mean to receive one who brings not the doctrine of Christ, or those that receive such an one to the dishonour of the Father and the Son?

The principle of welcoming every christian, walking as such, is consistent with the resolute refusal of all who dishonour His name, whether morally, doctrinally, or by association. 1 Cor. 5 is no plainer for rejecting an immoral professor, than 2 John is for refusing those that do not hold a true Christ. Their alleged good qualities ought not to accredit them: the word of God as clearly bars it, as Christ's person and work demand our subjection. To be neutral where the truth is at stake is to partake of the evil deeds of His adversaries.

2 John is decisive that it is not enough to be sound personally in the faith. Even a woman, the elect lady, and her children, are carefully warned by the apostle of their direct responsibility, if they received one who did not bring the doctrine of Christ. "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting; for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (ver. 10, 11, R.V). Thus distinctly is the principle laid down by the Holy Ghost, that the simplest saints who countenance the confessor of a false Christ partake of his evil deeds, even without imbibing the evil doctrine. A spiritual mind would feel that, dreadful as it is to fall into such heterodoxy, in a certain sense more guilty is he who,

professing the truth of Christ, consents to fellowship with one that denies it. “Now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.” Neutrality in such case is heinous sin, and this proportionate to knowledge.

Thus 2 John proves that absolute refusal of this worst evil is due to the Son of God. The evil admits of no hesitation or compromise. Had the elect lady, spite of the apostolic warning, obstinately received into her house one who brought not the truth of Christ, she must have identified herself with the deceiver and its consequences. Vain the plea that she had been a dear child of God, both in faith and walk: the written word nevertheless pronounces her a “partaker of his evil deeds;” and God’s word is better than all our reasonings and all our feelings. Whatever the motive, she had knowingly disobeyed and committed herself and her house to high treason against Christ. She had more or less sanctioned that which to the last degree denied and dishonoured the Lord of glory. Hence, till she cleared herself from the sin, in the sight of God and His saints, she had sunk morally into complicity with it. The better her light, the worse to behave as if she had none. To receive her in such circumstances would be to participate in similar wickedness, however men may ridicule it to their own foul shame. Indeed to receive her thus would be receiving her not to God’s glory but to His shame, because it is barefaced indifference to the affront put on His Son. “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.” “He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which sent Him.”

From the first those called “Brethren” have proved that they do not make light of ecclesiastical evil, by separating from all unscriptural associations, even if

christians join. But they have hitherto refused to put indifference to the Christ of God in the same category with offences against the unity or the discipline of the assembly. Party spirit on either hand may seek to class all together. But it is as unscriptural as it is unholy so to exaggerate ecclesiastical offences (of which all sects are guilty), or so to extenuate deep and damnable denial of Christ, which characterises only the worst antagonism to God. His word warrants and demands this distinction, which no sober saint used to doubt, and none would now unless carried away by worthless theory or straits of false position.

The evil doctrine against Christ, which has given us most trouble for thirty years, is that, apart from imputation or vicarious suffering, Christ came as a man and an Israelite into a condition of distance and inflictions from God, in which "He was made experimentally to prove the reality of that condition in which others, but more especially Israel, had sunk themselves, by their disobedience to God's holy law, a condition out of which He was able to extricate Himself, and from which He proved that He could extricate Himself by His own perfect obedience" (B. W. Newton's "Remarks on the Sufferings" etc. p. 12). "And Jesus, as man, was associated with this place of distance in which man in the flesh was, and He had through obedience to find His way to that point where God could meet Him as having finished His appointed work — glorify Him and set Him at His own right hand, in the heavenly places; and that point was death — death on the cross — death under the wrath of God" (ib. pp. 31, 32). "He was exposed, for example, because of His relation to Adam to that sentence of death, that had been pronounced on the

whole family of man" (B. W. N.'s "Observations" etc. p. 9). "The mission of John must be regarded as an all-important era, not only in the life of the Lord Jesus, etc..... Indeed unless grace be the same as law, and destruction the same as salvation, the infinite importance of that era cannot be denied" (lb. pp. 10, 11). "Moreover, the exercises of soul which His elect in their unconverted state ought to have..... such exercises, yet without sin, Jesus had" (ib. p. 26). "The anointing of the Spirit would never have come on Him at Jordan, unless He had been fore-ordained and certainly known as the victim to be slain at Calvary" (ib. p. 32).

It is true that, when this deadly poison was analysed and the godly stood aghast, Mr. N. printed an "Acknowledgment of Error" in applying Rom. 5:19 (first clause) to Christ. But this did not satisfy even his most trusted associates, who owned solemnly in print that it was an elaborate system, permeating their views of scripture generally, and quite as fatal as any one had charged on them. One indeed warned that souls resting on what they had taught for years could not be saved. For Christ was thereby made by birth to be in man's distance from God, and especially in Israel's by a broken law! obnoxious therefore to the two-fold penalties, not vicariously, but by association as one of them!! But He extricated Himself by obedience, faith, and prayer, out of some of those inflictions by which He was threatened, passing by baptism into grace — from Sinai to Zion! But the exercises which the elect when unconverted ought to have (!) if possible were His!! Yet He had, notwithstanding, to find His way to a point where God could meet Him — death under God's wrath! If this be not a systematic and complete overthrow of "the

teaching of Christ " in scripture, words are meaningless. No heretic more thoroughly or subtly debased Christ; some like Irving taught more truth than B. W. N. It is a denial, not a confession, of Christ coming in the flesh: which truth does not mean the bare fact, but the divine person of Him who came in flesh. He, and He alone, born of woman, might have come otherwise; but thus He was pleased, for God's glory and the reconciliation by His death of man and all the universe heavenly and earthly, to come in flesh. Had Newtonism been true, Christ must have died for Himself — could not for us, for creation or for God's own glory. Again, if He be supposed to extricate Himself by good works and ordinances, the truth is overthrown in this way too. And if His death were still needful for Himself to be saved (error usually being incoherent), as well as to get the anointing of the Spirit, His person is denied, and all hope of saving others wholly and necessarily destroyed.

I am grieved to add that the blinded author of this fundamental heterodoxy printed "A letter on subjects connected with the Lord's Humanity;" in which, after the so-called Acknowledgment of Error, he re-affirmed the principles of both the "Remarks" and the "Observations" which had horrified even his own oldest friends and most of his partisans. Arianism etc. on the one side, and perhaps Irvingism on the other, deny the Lord's glory more openly; but does any false system more thoroughly than his make Jesus anathema? Compare 1 Cor. 12:3.

When the meeting at Bethesda (Bristol) admitted several partisans of Mr. N. and thus occasioned a separation far and wide among "Brethren," it had been for years fully owned as enjoying intercommunion. Hence, there is no

honesty in comparing that meeting with individuals coming from the national body or from dissent. How far Bethesda really coalesced, it may be hard to say: still it was an accomplished fact, and no question was raised till the crisis of 1848 came, when reasons were sought to palliate the fatal deed of receiving the known followers of a convicted heretic. Now we have always excepted cases of real ignorance. But what could justify receiving persons of intelligence who came straight from his party, eulogising and circulating the very tracts which contained the anti-christian doctrine already described? Bethesda received them in the most determined manner, driving out not a few souls, some of them among the most enlightened, spiritual, and devoted there, who refused to sanction such indifference to a blasphemy at Bristol, from which at all cost they were apart at Plymouth and elsewhere. Not satisfied with letting these persons in, ten of the leaders at Bethesda put forth a too famous document, in which they laboured to defend their refusal of investigation before receiving the incriminated. The first thing insisted on was that the Bethesda meeting should clear those who signed it: else they would minister no more in their midst! Was it surprising that the mass fell into the snare, and consented to vote the leaders right, before the tracts were read, or comments allowed, in presence of the meeting? After the breach was consummated! they held meetings in which Mr. N.’s doctrine was condemned, especially by Mr. M.,1 as strongly almost as by any outside Bethesda. God however took care to test its moral value ere long, if a few were deceived at first.

Partly by this, and partly by other means, Mr. N.’s partisans were got to retire from Bethesda, expressly

not waiving their claim to be there, but desiring to release the leaders from some of their difficulties. Could this yield a moment's satisfaction to a sober christian? Bethesda was bound to clear itself openly of a sin of the gravest kind openly done: mere words would not avail, nor getting rid of souls in an underhand way. Subsequently a party was formed, a public building was taken, Mr. N. was had there, two of "the Ten" (Messrs. A. and W.) being found in their midst. The movement failed; and these two leading men, to speak of no others, after Bethesda's loud denunciation of the Newtonian blasphemy and after their own public association with Mr. N., were permitted to return to Bethesda, without the smallest confession of their notorious and flagrant sin! All they owned was the wrong of leaving Bethesda; but they were not asked, nor did they give, an expression of sorrow for the wickedness of fraternising with one who still retained the main parts of his heterodoxy as to Christ. And this after the seven meetings!

Now because we renounce all fellowship with such ways and persons, we are covered with the bitterest reproaches possible! We are taxed with "new tests," and I know not what. Whereas, on the face of the matter, it was the beloved apostle, not we, who wrote 2 John. And if he introduced no new test when he insisted on uncompromising rigour wherever a false Christ was in question, how charge us with it who are very simply carrying out the word of God given through him? Those who plead for laxity in such a case, would be more consistent if they denied the authority of this Scripture altogether.

This then was the origin of the Neutrals, or Open Brethren as some of them prefer to be called. They more or less sided with Bethesda, some going farther, others not quite so far, but all on substantially the same principle, if not of receiving the partisans of an antichrist, certainly of palliating those who so received and making “one lump” with them. Not one meeting ever ventured to reject the most guilty leader in that neutral result. To refuse such an one would be to give up their evil line of things.

For it is no question of receiving christians in Christ’s name, graciously dealing with ecclesiastical ignorance. This we have always held (save a few who played an unhappy part in the late disasters) to be thoroughly of God; and I trust we shall ever so continue, believing and acting on it as due to Christ. With Open Brethren it is a wholly different case from welcoming a godly person, in spite of his sect. For they were once with us on common ground of scripture; they owned the “one body and one Spirit,” as gathered to Christ’s name. Their origin, the reason of their existence, was to defend and maintain the reception of men tainted with the worst sin — indifference to the truth of Christ. That they may have liked independency before, that they walk in it and enforce it since, is true enough; but he that puts forward independency of principle, as the plague-spot of the O.B., is blind to their characteristic and most serious evil. And if he goes so far as to reject individuals for independency, he must, to be consistent, abandon all the largeness of heart which marked Brethren from the first, and the principle which their best and wisest leaders cherished to the last, — our title of grace to welcome godly saints out of an orthodox denomination, though

independency is stamped in various forms on all. No denomination, as such, great or small, does or can stand on the “one body and one Spirit” of scripture for principle and practice alike. It demands living faith ecclesiastically, and an entire superiority to the world and flesh, which must have independency open or latent but real.

We have ever allowed that in the ranks of Open Brethrenism there might be individuals wholly and honestly ignorant that it is founded as a society on indifference to a true or a false Christ. Where this is certain, one would seek to deal pitifully with them; and no one was freer to receive such with a grave caution than the late J. N. D., as almost all others of weight have done. Timid men, ever prone to sectarian barriers, have alas! refused even such. But no upright neutral brother would seek, wish, or submit to, such terms: only those who have neither faith nor principle, who are ready to break bread at Bethesda, and at Park Street, and with us too who refuse both systems, if they were allowed. These are the worst of all and can only corrupt, as they are already corrupted.

Is it asked, How do Open Brethren stand now? The answer is, As they began, or rather worse. Indeed evil may grow or spread, but does not get better or die. Scripture requires that it be judged, which is its doom, if we are faithful to Christ. Not only did Newtonians get in and were never put out, but some are known as Mr. J. Beaumont can testify, to play fast and loose with the denial of everlasting punishment, in as respectable a company as they have in England. The conduct of the leaders and meeting was flagrant; but no meeting nor even individual seemed to mind it, beyond a protest,

which was put in the fire, and all went on together — in love so called! but where is the truth? Where is Christ?

Granted that in some places under strong pressure they put away a clique of these offenders; such vigour may be now and then, here and there. But, where it is not so (and nothing is harder than to get necessary care against error), they maintain intercommunion all the same. They are on a free-and-easy ground, which admits of every one's will and tries nobody's conscience. An "assembly-judgment" there too over-rides truth and righteousness, to the deep dishonour of the Lord and His word.

In one of their recent "Appeals" C. E. argues that a true platform contemplates all the saints of God, as we have often said and still say. But the O.B.'s abuse of this godly plea is to accredit, not only christians guilty of sin, but yet more their society got up by the determination to shelter such from scriptural judgment. This was not the case with any orthodox sect known to us; and therefore O.B. have no title to the same gracious consideration. Others began for good according to their light. Open Brethren began by palliating evil or screening evildoers, in departure from the light they once had. To receive saints in Christ's name was never meant to let in such as dishonour His name; which is as mighty to detect those who treat Him lightly, whatever their pretensions, as to encourage the godly who may be ever so ignorant. An honourable man among O.B. ought not to wish fellowship with us, if he believe in his own policy, and ought to resent the plea of ignorance, which, when ever true, would not be used in vain. And as to "thirty years," what difference does this make, if the same old principle abides?

That it does abide is plain from J. R. C's "Exclusivism" (Glasgow, 1882); who, though wholly unknown to me, is reported to be as sober and conscientious a representative as could be desired. Here we have the error as lively as ever. 1 Cor. 5:6 is perverted (p. 8) just as of old. He mocks the idea that the whole Corinthian church was leavened, and seems to think it absurd, if it were, to call upon them to purge out the leaven. Thus does he convict himself and his party (for in this they have always been alike) of guilty opposition to the word of the Lord. It was exactly because they were as a whole leavened by the little leaven allowed in their midst, that the apostle commanded them to purge out the old leaven that they might be a new lump, "even as ye are unleavened.'' This was their standing in and by Christ; and, because they were thus unleavened before God, they must purge the leaven out; for it leavens, not the one offender only, but the whole lump. The reasoning of Mr. C. is wholly false, but it betrays the unholy principle common to them all. It is a question not of every individual in the Corinthian church becoming incestuous, etc., which is truly absurd, but of the whole assembly being defiled by the evil they knew and did not judge. Hence the restoration was, not merely through discipline nor only self-judgment of the wicked person, but by a deep work in the assembly also: "in all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." (2 Cor. 7:11.) The Open Brethren are thus fundamentally at fault. Their distinctive difference is corruption in principle now, as more than thirty years ago. I should not, I confess, turn to an Anglican divine to find spiritual instruction on such a theme, considering how the National Establishment stands condemned in practice by its own Homily for Whitsunday (second

part). But it is painfully instructive to see how Dean Alford disproves and rejects the same unholy lack of intelligence as in the Open Brethren's argument for their party. "Are you not aware that a little leaven imparts a character to the whole lump? That this is the meaning, and not 'that a little leaven will, if not purged out, leaven the whole lump,' is manifest from the point in hand, viz. the inconsistency of their boasting: which would not appear by their danger of corruption hereafter, but by their character being actually lost. One of them was a fornicator of a fearfully depraved kind, tolerated and harboured: by this fact, the character of the whole was tainted." (The Greek Test. ii. 507, fifth ed.) What Mr. C. assails unwittingly through his false position is the apostle's "theory" as well as practice as to defilement. Equally below the Anglican are his unfaithful remarks on 2 John. We do not say that the lady, if she had received him who did not bring the doctrine of Christ, was to be treated "exactly as you would treat" the anti-christian teacher himself, but that she thereby became a partaker of his evil deeds. So Bethesda and the Open Brethren have fallen in similar cases.

Their point of departure is so anti-scriptural, that their most recent and cautious apologists cannot but expose their party badge to the withering condemnation of scripture. Having left God's word, their prudent course (humanly speaking) would be, like their delinquent antipodes, to attempt no self-defence but wrap themselves up in silent pride.

Scripture is not silent as to their great sin. "Come out," therefore, brother, that you partake not of the sins and so receive not of God's strokes.

1 As much is made of J. N. D.’s visit to G. M. after these meetings, it may be stated that Mr. D.’s hopefulness was not shared by his brethren, who knew that Bethesda never owned its sin in receiving Mr. N.’s partisans, and never repented of the false principles in the Letter of the Ten (adopted by a formal vote of its constituents). It never so much as noticed the sin, after the seven meetings, of receiving back two of the Ten who had gone out and publicly supported Mr. N. before all Bristol! In the face of grave facts like these, what was the value of theoretic censure of the doctrine? Mr. M.’s rude repulse only compelled Mr. D. to feel, as others felt, the hollowness of Bethesda throughout. Mr. D’s power lay in expounding the word, not in disciplinary action, as he used to own freely throughout his life. As he once said to me long ago, “my favourites turn out scamps.” This was never more applicable than in his later years, when they carried him away.

The Mystery of Godliness

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God (or, He who, R.V.) was manifested in flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, believed on in the world, received up into (in) glory” (1 Tim. 3:16).

That which introduces “the mystery of godliness” is well worth considering. The apostle had spoken of the church in a practical manner. He is not unfolding its heavenly relationship nor entering into particulars as to the presence of the Holy Ghost dwelling there; but he speaks of it as the “house of God.” And it is the only house of God that is now recognised on earth. The church is the assembly of a living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. The church is never called the truth: Christ is the truth; but the church is the pillar and ground of the truth. The church is that assembly which has the truth, as it were, inscribed upon it, and presents it on a firm basis as well as in a distinct manner. The church, at any rate, is responsible to present the truth of God stably and impressively before man. The world has not got the truth — on the contrary is under the power of error; and error as to God is of all things deadly for the soul. The heathen never had the truth. Even the Jews, although they had the law, could not be truly said to have the truth, which goes altogether beyond the law. For this is the expression on God’s part of man’s duty to God as well as to his neighbour. The truth is the revelation of what God is, and of what man is, as indeed of every other subject-matter of which it speaks. It is not like the law a claim of what ought to be, but a declaration of what is.

Christ is the One Who brought and was the truth: “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;” and that, in express contrast with “the law” which “was given by Moses” (John 1:17). Now when the people, who were entrusted with the law, so fell away from it as to lose their position before God, and did so flagrantly and finally, not only by idolatry, but by the rejection of their own Messiah, then it was that God was pleased to bring truth in the person of the Lord Jesus into the world, as He subsequently set up His monument of it inscribed so to speak livingly. This is the church here below. It was not to be a question merely of so many individuals, but of the assembly, the body of men in the world who possessed the truth from God in the Lord Jesus on Whom they believed, and witnessed it practically through the Holy Spirit Who made them to be God’s habitation, His house on earth. So it is declared here.

There is no other representative body that He owns, as “the truth” from God save the Word personal and written; but the truth of and from God is not only for the life that now is but for eternity. Christ, being the Word, the Son, was exactly the suited person to declare God the Father, Whom none saw at any time (John 1:18). He was Himself God, the Eternal, the Only-begotten Son. None but He Who was God and in the beginning with God, through Whom all things were made, was competent, as being the way, the truth, and the life, to reveal the truth. But the Lord having been rejected, and thus accomplishing redemption on the cross, sent down the Holy Ghost from heaven, in order that there might be here below the assembly of believers united to Him in one body. “For in (or by) one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or

free, and were all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

Life, it is of moment to note, never unites, but the Holy Spirit of God, the baptism of the Spirit present on earth. There was life for all saints before; they were born of the Spirit. Some of them were Jews, and some of them were Gentiles; but as yet there was no union in a single body. The Gentile remained of the nations, and the Israelite was kept apart as such. But Christ is our peace, Who made both one, and broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments in ordinances, that He might create in Himself of the twain one new man (making peace), and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross. Thus the rejected and crucified Messiah became the effectual sacrifice for sins; and those who believed in Him had redemption in Him as well as life eternal. Thereon the Holy Spirit was given from above to unite in one body all the redeemed who had in Christ the truth, — to unite them in every place (separated necessarily from all others who remained Jews or Gentiles in the refusal of Christ), yet them also called to testify grace, as Israel of old to represent God's law.

But we are also Christians individually; and therefore are we called, each one, to be a witness of practical grace, and to suffer with Christ and for His name. For grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; and the attempt of any Christians to present the truth without grace can only end in total failure, — pride, self-righteousness oppression, and every evil way. Nothing but grace and truth will God acknowledge in the Christian; and this we have in Christ. Let us see to it, not only in faith but in

our ways. And the Spirit is life because of righteousness — a Spirit of power and love and a sound mind. He it is Who is also called the truth (1 John 5:7), having made it known to us in power. If it were not that He is given for the Lord's sake, He would have left us long ago. But the Holy Ghost came down, not in honour of the Christian or the church, but in virtue of Christ and His redemption. Therefore the Holy Ghost abides for ever; and He it is that makes the church to be Christ's body and God's house, as we read here. He is that divine Person Who, when Christ was glorified, came down and dwells there. Thus it is no mere figure, as of old with the Jewish temple, but a great reality, God's habitation in the Spirit. And here it is used practically; here, not Timothy alone in his place, but each one in his own, has to know by the written word how he ought to behave himself in that holy place. For the church, thus founded and formed, furnished and characterised, is the pillar and support of the truth, presenting and maintaining the means by which the truth is held up before the world.

Having stated this plainly, the apostle next gives us to know what in very deed the truth is, and why it is called "the mystery of godliness." The truth inscribed as a whole consists of that great mystery. It goes far beyond the accomplishment of Old Testament prophecy. "Mystery" does not in scripture mean something inexplicable or unintelligible, but that which could not be understood without God's revelation in the N.T. The O.T. scriptures properly speaking do not contain mysteries, though alluding to them (as in Deut. 29:29). It is in the New Testament from its first part to its last, where we hear of mystery — so much so, that those who are ministers of grace now are called stewards of the

mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1). Some people have long been disposed to make mysteries of the sacraments: but such is never the meaning of the word in scripture. It was a spurious force put upon it when the truth got perverted, and men turned to fables. Mysteries are New Testament revelations — truths which God in the Old Testament reserved to Himself, but which are now revealed in the New Testament. So in this chapter, ver. 9, the apostle speaks of the mystery of faith, — “Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.” What God has revealed through His own Son by the Spirit is for faith now to receive. The test is not the past but the present call of God.

The Old Testament in general treats of a state of things when people would see and know what God says and does: so it was of old, and so it will be in the glorious days to come. Far beyond is the case now. As Christians we are called to believe and confess what we do not see and can not know by our mind merely, but what God has revealed by His Spirit (1 Cor. 2:6-12). It is therefore called “the mystery of the faith.” But here is another remarkable expression. It is called “ the mystery of godliness:” “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.” How is it then that the Spirit of God calls the truth the mystery (i.e. secret) of godliness (i.e. practical piety)? “The faith” and “godliness” are thus bound up indissolubly with “the mystery” here revealed. There is nothing so practical as the truth of Christ; and all practice which flows not from it is vain. The law demanded, but gave not power any more than life. Christ is the life as well as the truth; and the Holy Spirit honours faith in Him risen with power.

Again, the mystery is no longer “hid in God;” it is divulged. You must always bear this in mind when you read about the mystery, that it is now revealed and nothing left in the dark. The secret is set forth in the light of God, and the simplest Christian is expected to receive it. So Christ said to His disciples, “To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” All other mysteries of God are given to be known in a similar way. Can words more completely dissipate the prevalent idea that mystery means something incomprehensible, which piety dares not to pry into — at least while here on earth in time? By the Lord and the Spirit acting through the apostles in the N.T. the mysteries of God are given for us to receive and understand and enjoy them.

Further, what more indispensable for practice? For we may observe that being here called “the mystery of godliness,” it is inseparable from true proper christian piety. How can truth be “the mystery of godliness?” You can easily understand the mystery of the “faith;” but why is it called the mystery of “godliness?” Because the Holy Ghost will not allow that “godliness” or christian piety can be without the truth, nor that the truth can be received in the love of it without producing godliness. The truth implies living Godward.

I am aware that unconverted men can read and admire the Bible, and have done so. But the Bible is addressed to the conscience, and to the heart also when the conscience is reached and purged. It is not addressed to the mere understanding; and whenever it is thus intellectually taken up by men, the issue is that such men become heterodox, or infidels. How is this? For the simple and sufficient reason that the understanding as a

matter of course judges God's word; whereas God gives His word to judge man thoroughly, as he is indeed a sinner, none righteous, none that understands, none that seeks after God. Hence God gives the word to convict of sin, and to establish His own authority, which always exercises, as it ought, a moral judgment over the soul. This therefore raises the question, in the person who reads it, as to his own practical state of ruin through sin; and there is no greater calamity for a man than to read the Bible without that effect.

The absence of this is the reason why in our day what is very absurdly called "higher criticism" is the fashion. Unconverted men presume to judge the Bible in the vanity of mind and learning: hence they turn out, not real critics, but blasphemers of God's word. Ignorant of the mystery of the faith, what real intelligence of a spiritual kind? For God is always God in light as in love and authority, where the truth is received, and man is put in his own true place of dependence and subjection. This never was so until Christ came (for the O.T. saints had promise, which left much in the dark); and this is exactly what Christ did, and always does when the truth is received by faith. God has His own absolute authority over the soul, and he who receives the truth is subject to God.

Now the only way in which a person is brought into subjection is by receiving Christ, because it is Christ Who makes God known to the soul. If we know the only true God and His sent One, this is life eternal; if we do not, we shall find ourselves lost. But when we receive Christ and His redemption (and we needed it deeply), we know ourselves justified and saved, as well as brought into the certainty of the presence of God. When

people are vague and hesitating, it is quite plain that, darkened by tradition, the law, or some other means, they have received the truth in a manner feeble indeed. The effect of the truth is that we walk in the light as God is in the light. How can He be uncertain? His word is the word of One Who, knowing all, communicates the truth to produce the certainty in our minds which is due to His communication.

Hence therefore “confessedly great is the mystery of godliness.” And surely it is a wonderful fact that the truth taught of God should produce godliness as by grace its simple and unfailing effect. Wherever Christ is received in faith, godliness follows; and, further, as there is no truth anywhere else, so also no real godliness.

Clearly then the question is, what the mystery of godliness, the truth inscribed on the church, is. Can any other subject be of greater importance? Now, in a most striking verse, we have the answer set before us. The truth is presented here as Christ from beginning to end; and Christ in a way peculiar to N.T. revelation as a whole. There is nothing more explicit than this. It is not a body of doctrines, still less is it an exposition of Christian duty. He is the truth: the essence of all Christianity is that all doctrine and all duty is embodied in a person, and that person is the Saviour. What is there that a simple soul can understand better than a person? Even a child can believe in Christ, can find Him life, and can feel His love. Christ then is the blessed truth according to (or after) godliness. Indeed it is stronger than this: it — He — is the secret of godliness; Christ First and Last, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End; a great mystery or secret, but a secret now

revealed of God with consequences commensurate for souls that believe, and for those that believe not. For God is not mocked.

And what, coming to details, is the first view as it were that is afforded us? What is this first presentation of Christ in the verse? “God (or, He Who) was manifested in flesh.” It is not as we find in the Prophets, mighty God, Father of the age to come, God revealed with fire before Him. The God of the Old Testament was God in the exercise of power and judgment; God bringing His reward with Him, and dealing with men according to their works. But in a wholly different aspect is He shown here. God was manifested in flesh, in human nature. If ever there was a mode of manifestation in the universe where we should not have expected Him Who is true God, it was “in flesh.” The flesh had been busy from of old in pleasing itself, in rebelling against God, in yielding to evil lusts, and, from the flood at least, in religious abominations. Who could or would have looked for Him manifested in flesh or human nature?

No more solemn history than man’s: even Satan or his angels never practised anything like the evil that man does habitually. One single sin, and angels lost their place — lost all for ever. But man, oh, how active and pertinacious, and how futile in evil! How audacious and provoking against God! Again how ready to seduce his fellows into moral evil! and with what love of proselytising into error and falsehood! Such is man: yet God bears with him. How astonishing the long-suffering of God with the race! Now this was the nature in which God was to be manifested. It was not in angelic nature; nor was it to be simply in divine nature. The mystery of godliness was thus to be far deeper and larger; yet is it

ineffably sweet and intimate to us. The foundation of it is the Son of God incarnate; and not merely this, but manifested here below in flesh, albeit the Holy One of God, in Whom was no sin (not merely He never sinned). Never was any one manifested like the Lord Jesus Christ: in obedience, dependence, devotedness, humility, patience, righteousness, holiness, zeal but self-abasement, majesty yet love, unswerving truthfulness, beyond measure. It was He that was manifested in flesh. He was the Word, He was God, He was the Son; and if none had seen God at any time, He was now manifested in flesh, and He declared God the invisible perfectly, that man might know Him. Man wanted it, oh! how badly; God's people had the deepest reason to feel their lack. Never had there been seen the like before; never will there be the like again. For at His appearing He will be displayed in the exercise of judgment: how different was His first coming! For the first time in the ages and generations was He thus manifested when the world was old in falsehood and iniquity.

In the Revised Version they do not say ''God," but "He Who." It matters practically but little, though one would not say there is not a shade of difference. If we take the reading "He Who was manifested," there is but one person that can answer to it, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. It could not be either the Father, nor yet the Holy Spirit of God. Without dogmatising, we may say that the best authenticated reading is ὅς, that is, "He Who" (cf. John 1:1-3). If it be so taken, the person of the Son is implied; whereas if we read "God," this would look at the Godhead as such. But as the Son was God, and Christ the image of the invisible God, it is substantially true, no matter how it be taken, whether as

in the Authorised or as in the Revised form. Here certainly is predicated a manifestation such as was meant for faith at this time; and as it was “in flesh,” so also in this world when most evil, and flesh utterly corrupt (save in the Holy One of God). So that reason judging morally would conclude that God had nothing to do but to execute His most solemn sentence, if He sent thus His only-begotten Son.

But here is a sight altogether new and unexpected. He came in pure grace. The Jews who had the prophets had no such expectation. They looked to the great King to set up His kingdom in Zion. This is what is largely and often proclaimed in the Old Testament. But as it predicted also His rejection even by the Jews, the Lord was to introduce in the first instance a kingdom of the heavens, which was altogether a mystery to them. For He is ascended on high, and sits on the Father’s throne, not yet on His own throne (Rev. 3:21).

Accordingly the Lord’s position is a most peculiar one. Rejected by the Jews, crucified by the Gentiles, He bore all shame and suffering and is seated, risen and glorified, at the right hand of God, till His enemies be made His footstool, when He will appear in glory to their confusion and take His world-kingdom (Rev. 11:15). There He is waiting, to take His place by and by on His own throne; and when He does come, the Jews will be broken down before Him, made to say by the Holy Spirit, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah.” And in that day all nations will follow the Jews. “God (as Ps. 67 says) will bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.” Compare Ps. 68:26-32. When the time comes to bless the world, Israel will be redeemed from the enemy’s hand and gathered out of

the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. The Stone the builders refused they will recognise as become the head of the corner; and they will take a place on earth as God's son, even His firstborn, at the head of all peoples of the earth. Nor can there be universal blessing for the earth until that day.

God is now calling out of the world to Christ in heaven. And the reason is plain. His Son, the Saviour and Head, is there. Christ is the centre of all God's dealings; and as Christ rejected on earth is exalted on high as the heavenly centre, God is now forming a heavenly people, the body of that glorious Head. The Christian is therefore by calling a heavenly man (1 Cor. 15:48), and is unfaithful to the will of God and his relation to Christ, if he value and sink into an earthly man. But flesh likes to be important here below, to be busy in the world. Man counts it hard now to forego ease and honour, wealth and power. Yet according to the N.T. the pursuit of such objects is altogether foreign and opposed to Christianity. "God forbid (wrote the apostle) that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). How can a Christian, who appreciates Christ and the gospel — who enters into God's mind about him — seek to be on common terms with that world which cast out his Master, the Lord of all?

The only becoming path therefore for a Christian now is to walk consistently as one with Christ above. Now we know that He walked entirely apart from the world, and declared that we are not of it as He was not. And how did Christ appear to the world when here? Was He not

despised and hated? Did He not prepare His disciples to expect the like? “If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before [it hated] you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:18, 19). A heavenly man must be content to be as His Master, persecuted for righteousness’ as well as for Christ’s sake. Consequently this is grace, as the apostle Peter says, if one for conscience toward God endure griefs, suffering wrongfully. “If, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is grace with God” (1 Peter 2:19, 20). When the time comes for the display of Christ’s glory, then all that are His shall appear with Him in glory. Meanwhile, having died and risen with Christ, we are exhorted to seek and mind the things above where He sits, not the things on the earth; for our life is hid with Him in God.

Evidently all turns on the mystery of godliness, or the mystery of faith, as we read also. It is bound up with Him Who was manifested in flesh and received up in glory. The New Testament presents mystery from its first book to the last. But it is given to the believer to know these secrets; for all is now revealed. The believer is inexcusable for misunderstanding the word. The Lord’s way of giving us to understand the truth is when the eye and the heart are fixed on Himself. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light.” The grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ gives light as well as life; and as God has now revealed through the Spirit what of old was hidden, so the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

Of course we do not enter into all in a moment, but we do get the indispensable and all-important sum and substance even so by the faith of Christ. In receiving Him there is a divine capacity created in every believer; and when he submits to God's righteousness in Christ's redemption, the Spirit of God is given to him. I do not mean the new birth, but the gift of the Spirit. This gift is far more than being born anew. New birth or awakening is in order that one may have Christ's redemption, even the remission of sins. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. We are brought to God through Christ once suffering for sins, Just for unjust. When begotten by the word of truth, we look out of ourselves and find rest for our conscience in Christ's work on the cross; and thereon we receive the Holy Spirit. First we are born of water and the Spirit, as we read in John 3:5; and when we have heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise; and not before (Eph. 1:13).

It is the more important to urge this now, because if we have the unction from the Holy One (1 John 2:20), we cannot deny that grace has imparted to us spiritual power to understand the word. If the Holy Spirit given to us does not carry with it such power, what does? Do you think all the learning in the world could enable a soul to understand one truth of scripture? It never did and it never will. Learning of course has its use if you are not proud of it; and a chief use of it, I believe with John Berridge, is as a stone to throw at a dog. Thereby one may confound the mischievous pretensions of such as know not the truth. Truth the Holy Spirit alone can communicate in the written word. There we must take the place of children, nay, become fools, in order to

become wise. A learned man naturally does not like to stoop so low, and therefore is slow to learn of God. Satisfied with his external lore and ignorant of every good giving and every perfect gift coming down from the Father of lights, he can only as a blind guide lead the blind into a ditch. Truth it is that stands for ever, and this the Holy Ghost shows us in Christ through the word of God.

More particularly here is “the mystery of faith” — “the mystery of godliness,” which the apostle brings before us. The foundation of it all is “He Who” was manifested in flesh. Before the Son of God was sent from heaven, born of woman, born under law, no such manifestation was possible. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of an Only-begotten with a Father) full of grace and truth (John 1:14). He was thus also mediator unique of God and men, Christ Jesus a man, man as truly as any, but altogether different from any even in respect of the nature He derived from His mother. God prepared Him a body (Heb. 10:5). “The holy thing that shall be born shall be called Son of God.”

Adam’s was not a holy nature, but innocent at best. Innocence is easily lost: the first sin destroys it; and so it was with Adam and Eve. Jehovah judged where ever sin showed — it was not allowed before Him. But Christ was the Holy One. Not only He did not sin, but in Him was no sin; He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners. He repelled all evil and was absolutely uncontaminated by sin. That was a state of humanity altogether peculiar and proper to the Son of God. All was perfection; but if anything here below specially marked our Lord, it was His obedience. “Lo! I am come

to do Thy will, O God." There was never a man but needed pardon before, never a man who, if God had been strict to mark iniquities, could have escaped judgment. He was woman's Seed come to be bruised indeed, but to bruise Satan and to save the believer. And here the wondrous intervention on God's part came to light, "He Who was manifested in flesh." And what was manifested? A divine person: and that divine person "the Son." We have not to go up to heaven to find what God is, Who is best and only known aright by the manifestation in flesh of His Son, the Lord Jesus.

There are hasty souls who fancy that the manifestation in flesh only means that Christ was a man. But the true wonder is Who He was that became man. It would be devoid of force or even sense to speak of Moses, Elijah, or of Julius Caesar or any other man, as manifested in the flesh. For there was no other way for any mortal man to be manifested. But for Him it is not so, for the Son of God might have come as He pleased. Here is the marvellous fact that He came in flesh. He Who made all things, and without Whom was not anything made that has been made, — He was manifested in flesh, Who could command all glory. But the Creator God is the Redeemer God. And one of the most momentous objects of this Epistle is to identify the God, Who created all things and is now the Preserver of all, with the Saviour. God is the Saviour God. And He deigned to be manifested in flesh. None other was He than the Son of God, but the Son of God "man" in this world.

The next fact stated as to Him in the mystery of godliness is "justified in Spirit." But when was that? In the Holy Ghost Christ walked and testified all through the days of His flesh. The very demons bore witness to

Him with abject terror. But man reviled Him with impunity and shamelessly. When was He irrefutably justified? They called Him a winebibber, a Samaritan. They said, He had a demon. There was no end to the wickedness that was spoken of the Lord Jesus. How then did His justification come? When He was raised from the dead. This was the standing justification of Him Whom man crucified. If lawless hands slew the Lord of glory, God raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death: such was His answer to man. And this seems to be what is referred to in the words, ‘‘justified in Spirit.” In the first Epistle to Peter He is said to be “quickened in Spirit,” being in contrast with “put to death in flesh” (1 Peter 3:18). The quickening in Spirit expresses the divine power in which He rose. This fell to the province of the apostle Peter; as the apostle Paul is the great witness in bringing out, not only life and resurrection but, justification. No doubt justification has a different sense as applied to the Lord Jesus compared with any other person; for every other man is a sinner. Still there is a common point in all; and justification in every case means that the person is proved or pronounced righteous — here inherently so. Man had spoken contumeliously against Him, and none more so than the religious people of the day. The scribes, Pharisees, and the chief priests were educated enough, but the worst of the Lord’s adversaries when He walked the earth. Surely that is a very instructive fact. Consequently it became God to mark His sense of what Christ was. And He was “justified in Spirit.” The same Spirit of God, Who had led “Jehovah’s righteous Servant” in all His course of unswerving obedience and love during His life, now justified Him against the world that treated Him as the

worst of malefactors. How true the prediction Christ cited from their law, “They hated Me without a cause!”

And what follows? What is the next part of the mystery of godliness? “He was seen of angels.” It is a notable fact. No doubt angels saw Him throughout every step of His path here below. But on earth Christ was the light of men, not of angels. So the angels proclaimed at His birth: the good pleasure of God, His complacency, was in men, not in the celestial beings who are here spoken of. His Son became man, not an angel. Therefore are men, though not without redemption, associated with Christ, as angels are not, in those glorious counsels of God for gathering together all things heavenly and earthly under Christ’s headship, and displaying the result before all the universe.

He is “seen of angels” after He went to heaven. There is no doubt that angels ministered to Him first and last here below, as the heavenly host praised God at His birth. They are now sent forth to minister to those who are to be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1).

But it is not the attendant angels who are spoken of here. Our Lord, after being justified in Spirit, is presented next where the angels are what we may call indigenous inhabitants, and where men have no natural place. Earth is given to the children of men, but heaven is filled with myriads of angels; there too is the risen Lord gone. He has passed out of this world and entered on a condition suited to heaven, where He is “seen of angels.” Men who had the far nearer interest no longer see Him, angels do. This was a fact outside the expectation of Israel as to the Messiah. They ought to have known that the Son of man would come with the

clouds of heaven, and be invested with everlasting dominion over all peoples, nations, and languages. But there was no intimation that the Lord would be rejected by the Jew while the church was being formed in union with Him on earth. Besides, and in order to this, the Lord has a body now, just as much as when upon earth. Thus the resurrection and ascension are capital truths of Christianity. ‘‘Seen of angels” falls in with His seat on high, where we know Him no longer according to flesh. When He comes to reign over the earth, of which the prophets chiefly speak to Israel, “every eye shall see Him.”

Is there not anything going on meanwhile with regard to the world? There is a very admirable work of God. “Preached amongst Gentiles.” Never could be conceived a fact more repulsive to the Jews as they were. Even Peter was exceedingly astonished, although the Lord before He left the earth had prepared them all for it. The communications in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are plain enough to all now. Yet Peter did all he could to avoid going; and afterwards he behaved ill about it at Antioch. Here then we find that instead of the Lord Jesus, Jehovah of hosts, reigning in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before the ancients gloriously (which was what Isaiah and the other prophets taught to look for), He was “preached amongst Gentiles.” It was a new and unexpected work “till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom. 11:25), while blindness in part is happened to Israel (for there is ever a remnant). It is Christianity, flowing from Christ as now made known in the mystery of godliness, “preached amongst Gentiles.” Can anything be of deeper interest and moment to us who are not Jews but Gentiles? For God now makes such

as we are His express object of appeal. The rejected but glorified Christ is now preached “among Gentiles.” How great is our debt to His grace revealed in the mystery of godliness! Nor have we heard in vain. We have received Christ and are already brought into relationship with God Himself; for there is no other way.

And “this mystery” the apostle explains to the saints in Rome, who in time to come would forget it, and become wise in their own conceits, and fancy Israel hopelessly abandoned, that the Gentile might take his place for ever in a kingdom that shall not be destroyed. Vain delusion! Romish corruption! — corruption soon to end in the fall of “Babylon the great.” True Christianity, the result of Christ “preached among Gentiles,” is witness of His coming again in judgment of all enemies and evil, Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away.

Notice how the next statement is beautifully in place, as indeed all are. They are in regular sequence, so that you could not put one of them out of its place without damaging the order of the truth. Hence, after saying that He was preached among Gentiles, there follows, “believed on in the world.” Nor can any assertion be more accurate. It is not the reign of the Messiah in Palestine or “King over all the earth”; still less does it mean that there is going to be a reign of the gospel, though there is the gospel of the reign. The Lord will come to reign by-and-by in power and glory, as none can mistake when His day arrives. He is now occupied with His heavenly work. Soon He will ask and have the nations for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. And He will inaugurate His kingdom by ruling them, rebellious as they are, with a

rod of iron, and dashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel. It is His kingdom over the earth; and that is the truth, and a truth that earthly men indeed like not, because they prefer something pleasant for themselves, instead of suffering with Christ now and reigning with Him in that day. But the first duty of the Christian now is to follow Him as He walked, and not to be above his Master, but to be perfected as He.

Our prime business is unequivocally to accept His rejection here, the very reverse of seeking earthly ease or glory. The Corinthians saints got a severe rebuke from the apostle (1 Cor. 4), when that error began in their midst. "Already ye are filled, already ye are become rich, ye have reigned without us." They were taking their ease, reigning as kings without us, said he. "And I would that ye reigned, that we also might reign with you," that is, at Christ's appearing. Instead of that, God set forth the apostles, not in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day, but last of all, as they were first in spiritual power and authority, as men doomed to death, a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. Ponder vers.10-13; see how in 1 Cor. 11:1 he exhorts the saints to be his imitators, even as he also was of Christ. Christendom alas! has followed the erring Corinthians, not the blessed apostle. Nor need any doubt that the Christian is strengthened so as to endure with joy the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake, as also of the gospel. Read Col. 1, 2.

Certainly in these sufferings the apostle rejoiced and set the pattern for all who would be faithful. Glory now to suffer with Christ. It is the snare of the enemy, that we should court or allow the world. We are set in express contrast with Gentiles who know not God and seek

present honour; whereas our true object of hope is the coming of the Lord Jesus, for Whom we wait. Christ's work makes us meet for glory. The very gospel says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." And those who believe will in due time join the Lord on high, conformed to His image: not some choice saints, but every one of them. Beware of the newfangled idea of superior Christians, who alone are to be caught up. Such preachers always give themselves credit for that superiority. When the Lord comes, He will translate the entire church, His body. In His body there are differing members, some "more feeble," as the apostle says (1 Cor. 12), some "less honourable." But the grace of God tempers the body together, giving more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. In the face of such a principle, how sad to indulge in reveries so fantastical, which leave room for personal vanity and slighting of one's betters! There is not the least room for doubt that "they that are Christ's" will be translated to meet the Lord at His coming. Such is the positive teaching in 1 Cor. 15:23, and such is the plain force of 1 Thess. 4:14, 16, 17. Nor does any other scripture qualify either. There is no ground for such a delusion in all the Bible.

Lastly comes the clause "received up into (rather, in) glory." It marks Christ's permanent condition on high — received up in glory. There He abides: why is that last? It seems arranged in this order, to present a contrast between Christ and what "demons" or deceiving spirits were to do in latter times, as says the next chapter. Christ ''received up in glory" puts shame on the efforts

of men that give heed to evil spirits at work in the hypocrisy of legend-mongers that despise marriage, and cry up abstinence from meats which God created to be received with thankfulness by those that believe and know the truth.

You may ask for any other instance in the word of God of a special departure from order. Take the first chapter of the Revelation, vers. 4, 5. Every one knows that the usual order is, as we find in the apostolic commission (Matt. 28:19), Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But in the benediction or prayer of 2 Cor. 13:14 the apostle for good reason begins with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Rev. 1:4, 5, with equally good reason the order is reversed, and the Lord Jesus is given the last place. "John to the seven churches which are in Asia. Grace be unto you and peace from Him which is and which was and which is to come." Next we have "and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne." Lastly, we have "and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth." This again is clearly a departure from putting the Lord in the second place. But the reason is not far to seek. The Lord Jesus is presented in His earthly glories only; and so as to be followed immediately by a parenthetical strain of praise from the saints; and then by the testimony of His coming judgment of the earth. This would have been frustrated if "the seven Spirits" had occupied the third place. In every instance contextual grounds account for the special order.

So it is here. Christ "received up in glory" would historically have followed His being justified in Spirit; but had it been put in there, contrast would have failed with the power of Satan in helping on departure from

the faith. For “believed on in the world” would then stand against that departure. But the true contrast being found in “received up in glory” explains the order required. In Him thus regarded is the delivering object. These seducing spirits, these false-teaching demons, energise men who are the instruments of leading away from the faith, fair spoken but false and hypocritically undermining the truth. Religious lies and pious frauds are but the worse work of the enemy. In this case they deny the creation rights of God through the pretension of superior sanctity.

But Christ “received up in glory” refuted them. Those that gave heed to the evil spirits were misled through the hypocrisy of men speaking lies, branded in their own conscience, forbidding, etc. And this sense is right; because demons have not a conscience to be thus cauterised, whereas their lying agents have. Otherwise one must, if adopting the ordinary version, identify the liars and the spirits, as is beyond doubt found elsewhere in the N.T. account of demoniacal possession.

How singular that the claim of holiness superior to that of the gospel should go with and depend upon despising the creatures of God, and therefore impeaching His glory as creator and sustainer of all! But so it was: the early germ of Gnosticism led later on to the bolder speculation of Manicheism, that is, the imaginative impiety of an evil God of creation and a good One of the N.T. Hence the dream of matter as essentially evil, of food (animal at least) as immoral, of marriage as degrading to the spiritual. Hence the denial of all lawful use of the law and contempt of the O.T. and of the elders who obtained witness of pleasing God. “He Who was manifested in flesh.... received up in glory” dissipates

the entire system as a lie of Satan. As there is but one God, so but one Mediator of God and men, a man Christ Jesus, yet never more manifestly God than when He deigned to become man to glorify God and save men. And He Who came down in love, to a depth unfathomable as a ransom for all, is the same Who was justified in spirit by resurrection; He received up in glory is as truly man as when He was born or when He died. Thus the Creator God is the Saviour God, and the Man that suffered on the cross is the glorified Man on high. And the believer called to have part with Him now will be conformed to His image at His coming. To disdain what God sanctioned from the beginning, and what He gave for man's use since the deluge, is to prove oneself His enemy and Satan's slave; and all the worse, if one claim also a sanctity superior to Christ and the gospel of Christ.

So it is with all schemes of higher life, absolute sanctification, or perfection in the flesh. They are not of God but of the enemy; they offend against the gospel, and destroy real holiness. The fuller, the full truth of God, now enjoyed in the church, is meant to deepen reverence for God's authority in the world as well as in the earthly relations of this life; which Satan seeks first to dissolve under the pretence of higher principles, in order later to overthrow Christ's person as well as the church, all real privilege, and the truth itself.

For, as this scripture remarkably illustrates, it is in Christ's person that the truth is centred; it is He that no less secures all godliness; not alone as come down in love, but as glorified in God's righteousness. It is the One Who counted it not robbery, no object to be seized, to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself and

took on Himself the form of a bondman and was made in likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, yea death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him. Thus the personal glory of Christ, the Son of God, gave occasion to His moral glory when incarnate, going down to the uttermost in love, obedience, and suffering for sin to God's glory at all cost. Now He has heavenly and indeed universal glory conferred on Him by God as Man "received up in glory." It is the exercise of a new righteousness, God's righteousness as His answer to Christ's infinite sufferings; as it is also the ground of blessing and glory for all that believe on Him.

So in John 13:31 the Lord Himself says, when Judas went out to betray Him, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God also shall glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him.

And such is the scope of this wonderful summary, as we have already seen, in perfect accord with the other scriptures just referred to, each of which has its own special object and character in harmony with the design of the book in which it occurs. For such is the invariable stamp and proof of divine inspiration. Some have called it the apostle's creed; others have conjectured that he has here incorporated a formulary more or less generally so used. But such guesses are as unfounded as unnecessary. It is a requisite and essential part of this epistle to Timothy and of no other; it expresses the writer's special line of doctrine, and of no other apostle, though it also display the inspiring power of the Holy Spirit, as every and all scripture does.

W. K.