Lectures on the Epistle of Jude

William Kelly

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Introduction.

We are arrived at those days now of which the Epistle of Jude speaks. I might say we are further, for the Epistles of John, although they are put before this Epistle, imply from their own contents that they were after. The order of the books in the N.T., we know is entirely human, and, in fact, is not the same in all Bibles. In English ones it is, but abroad it is not so, and in the more ancient copies of the Scriptures there was another order, in some respects even less correct than that which we have; because these Epistles of Jude and John are put before the Epistles of Paul. I need not say that there was no divine wisdom in that. I only mention it for the purpose of emphasising the absolute need of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is no matter what it is. The people in early days, it might have been thought, would have had a good sound judgment of how to arrange the books of Holy Scripture, but they had not. I am speaking now of a time long after the apostles, and we are still more distant. But we are at no disadvantage because of this, for the reason that the Holy Ghost Who was given, still abides. The ruin of the church does not affect that gift. It is a very solemn fact, and it does greatly bear upon the practical answer of the church to the glory of the Lord Jesus, and it makes not a small difference for the members of Christ. But the Lord provided for everything when He sent down the Holy Spirit; and He made known through the apostles that this was the sad history which awaited the church. It is the apostles who tell us what disasters were to flow in with a strong tide — nobody

more so than the apostle Paul, who says, “I know that after my decease shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.” Oh, what characters! What successors! Apostolic successors! — there are none. The successors were to be grievous wolves and perverse men. Nevertheless, he commended the saints none the less confidently “to God and to the word of His grace.”

Well, we have this; and I do not think that the word of His grace has ever been so deeply enjoyed, as it is now, for many hundreds of years. But then, Who is it that enjoys the “word of His grace”? We cannot say that all the saints do. All saints ought to do. Can we say that all our dear brethren and sisters enjoy the word of His grace as it becomes them? I would to God it were so; and it is of all moment therefore that, knowing the need, we should be most earnest not merely about work — I allow that this has a great place for all true workers, and I admit that many can help the workers who are not exactly workers themselves — but, beloved friends, the first of all duties is that God should have His rights. This is forgotten, even by saints of God. The first-fruits belong to Him always, it does not matter what it is; and we are never right when it is merely love working outwardly. The first thing is that love should work upward. Is not God infinitely more to us than any converts — as could be said to poor Naomi, who had lost her sons — “better to thee than seven sons”? Is not He worth more than a hundred thousand converts? What a poor thing it is, merely to be useful to other people and not to be growing ourselves in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! How can this be done except by God and the word of His grace? How does God act now? By His Spirit. Time was when the

great truth was God manifesting Himself by His Son. Well, that abides; the word and Spirit of God abide for ever. But now the Holy Ghost is sent down from heaven. He is that divine Person with Whom we have to do habitually, and we are either honouring Him, or failing to do so. The great test of honouring Him is that Christ becomes all. This is a truth that got greatly clouded even in apostolic days. It may be a very small comfort; it is a very solemn and saddening comfort, too, if I may use such a conjunction of thoughts, but so it is when we think how everything tends to failure and towards decline, not excepting the testimony of God which was committed to His children.

It is a very solemn thing that the apostles had the very same experiences themselves. The last of them had to face the fact that the very best of the churches — that which had been the brightest — became the object of the Lord's warning, and the last of the churches of the Lord's threatening; a warning of what soon came to pass, and a threatening to be surely executed viz. — to take away the candlestick of the one, and to spue the other out of His mouth (Rev. 2, 3).

Now, is that meant to weaken confidence? It was revealed in order to enforce the need of dependence upon the Lord, to encourage us to look up from the earth and things that are here — but not to give up. We are never free to give up anything that is of God. We are never at liberty to plead the state of ruin for carelessness about any expression of God's will. The ruin of the church has nothing to do with weakening our responsibility. It brings in the necessity of greater watchfulness, of more prayer; and particularly the necessity of God and the word of His grace to deal with

the difficulties altogether above man. But are they above the Spirit of God?

Now, it is in this very spirit that Jude writes — “a servant of Jesus Christ.” For he does not appear to have been the apostle Jude. Most take it for granted that it was only an apostle wrote this or any of the Epistles. This is a mistake. Many of the apostles never wrote any inspired writing, and some that were not apostles wrote both Gospels and Epistles. It is a question of inspiration, a question of a particular work of God. of which vessel the Holy Ghost would use. Out of the four who wrote the Gospels, two were apostles, and two were not apostles; so with the Epistles, as it appears to me, for I should not wish to press a thing that is so very much doubted by many persons. But then it is well to remember that almost everything is doubted now-a-days!

It is of interest to consider who is speaking to us in this Epistle. We are told it is “Jude, servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James.” He is not the brother of James the son of Zebedee — John was his brother. That James was cut off from very early days indeed, and John was left latest of all; so different was the issue for these two sons of Zebedee. There was another James (as also another Jude or Judas, besides the Iscariot), “son of Alphaeus,” who is named “James the Little” (Mark 15:40). I do not think that this is the James referred to here, but rather that he is the one who has been called “James the Just”; and I presume that this title was given to him because of his practical pre-eminence. He was a hater of evil and a lover of all that was morally pleasing to God. He comes before us too, in Acts 15, though not for the first time there. In that chapter he takes a great place. He, as far as one can so say, presided, and that is

a very proper scripture word. Those “that rule well” means those that preside well. There is nothing wrong in presiding if a man can do it; it is a mistake if a man cannot, and assumes to do it; and it is one of the worst things possible when done now by an official, whether there is power or not. But there is such a thing as “ruling” or “presiding” recognised, though it is never confined to one person, “them that have the rule (or, preside) over you” (Heb. 13:17): there we have several.

But we are not anxious about the matter. One might be more prominent on one day, another on another day, but James seems to have been prominent habitually, and this appears to have been quite recognised by the elders at Jerusalem. We find Paul going up to see James, and all the elders were present (Acts 20:18). This is the man who wrote the Epistle, who also calls himself “a servant of... Jesus Christ.” Of course, this is true of all, and is said by almost all. The apostle Paul calls himself that continually, and of course so do Peter and John, although the latter calls himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved” rather, but still he calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ in the Revelation (Rev. 1:2) — “to His servant John.” So you see that it is only a question of the propriety of the case where this word is put forward; and it certainly was very appropriate in the book of the Revelation, and there accordingly it is. Elsewhere, in his Gospel especially, John dwells rather on the Saviour’s love, and in that book he does not call himself anything. We only know by internal evidence that he must be the man whom he describes, not as John, but, as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

But James was not a “disciple”; he was one of the Lord’s brethren who did not believe all the time the Lord was

living here below; “neither did His brethren believe on Him” (John 7:5). “His brethren” were sons of Mary after His own birth. Of course we can understand that Romanists have been anxious to make out that they were sons of Joseph and not of Mary. But they were sons of Mary and of Joseph. They would like to make them out sons of a former marriage of Joseph. We do not know anything of a former marriage, nor do they. We do know that scripture is quite plain.

Take Mark 6:3 for instance, and there you will find that what I have just stated is fully acknowledged: speaking of our Lord, it says, “Is not this the carpenter the son of Mary, and brother” (not the cousin, you see) “of James and Joses, and of Juda and Simon?” We do not know what particular place God gave to Joses and Simon, but we do know that James and Judas, or Jude (it is the same name), were both called to an eminent service.

Now if we look at the first of Acts we get more. It appears there were sisters also, but we need not now pursue that subject. In Acts 1:13 we read, “And when they” (i.e. the apostles) “were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter and James” (that James is the son of Zebedee), “and John” (his brother), “and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James [the son] of Alphaeus” (that is, James the Little) “and Simon Zelotes” (to distinguish him from Simon Peter and from Simon the Lord’s brother), “and Judas [the brother] of James.”

Now, in my judgment, the last two names are brought before us in the opening verse of our Epistle, “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.” But we

further read in the same chapter of the Acts, “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren” (ver. 14). Who these “brethren” are, we have already seen from Mark 6 James and Jude were two of the Lord’s brethren. Simon and Joses were two others. But we do not need to dwell on these, because Scripture does not do so. Yet it says a deal about James; not so much about Jude. As already noticed, although they were unconverted all the time the Lord was on earth they were evidently converted after the Lord died and rose; so that there they were with Mary their mother, and the eleven, all living together and given up to prayer, and waiting for the promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is certain they were not unconverted now. Nothing would have been more contrary to their mind had they not been believers, but now they are believers for the first time. And very beautiful it is to see that God broke them down by the very thing that might have stumbled them for ever. The crucifying of the Lord might have entirely hindered, but God used that and the Lord’s resurrection, not only to awaken their souls, but to bring them in, so that they were there, full of the same expectation of the Holy Ghost as the apostles themselves.

Consequently, when James, the son of Zebedee, was killed (Acts 12), we find another James, who is not described as the son of Alphaeus, and who is the one that has evidently stepped forward, by God’s guidance, into a kind of foremost place. For when all the apostles were there, Peter and John amongst the rest, they did not take that place, much less any other of the twelve. James did, and to show you that I am not incorrect in

this, I will give you another scripture, (Galatians 1:15-19), which is very convincing and satisfactory. The apostle Paul is showing how he had been kept from mixing up with any other of the apostles in particular, at the time he was brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. “But when it pleased God, Who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called [me] by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James, the Lord’s brother” (not the Lord’s “cousin”).

Apparently, James, the son of Alphaeus, was the Lord’s cousin. Now we all know that the word “brother” is sometimes used loosely, but in that case it is always corrected by some other parts of scripture. But this is not corrected by any; and I do not see any reason why — if the Spirit of God calls Mark, not exactly the nephew, but cousin of Barnabas (the word there used is “cousin”), — James should not be so called here, if he were not really the “brother” of our Lord.

It is true James does not call himself “the Lord’s brother,” but “the Lord’s servant”; and this is very beautiful. Had there been any self-seeking he would have been the one to say, “I am the Lord’s brother! You must not forget I am the Lord’s brother.” But that would have been anything but of the Spirit of God, because when he was the Lord’s brother, he was an unbeliever. He had been an unbeliever during all the life of our Lord. Indeed, he was so until His death and

resurrection. He, therefore, with beautiful grace, never brings up that which was his shame — that he was the Lord's brother after the flesh. The Lord Himself put all that sort of thing down, when He declared that it was not so much the blessed thing to be the woman that bare Him, as it was to hear the word of God and keep it. This is what the writer of this Epistle had done; he had heard the word of God and kept it. He had received the truth of Christ's Person not as son of Mary but as the Son of God, as the Messiah, the Lord of all. Here then Jude was glad to say, not that he was the Lord's brother, though he was so, but, "a servant of Jesus Christ," and he adds, to make it perfectly clear who he was, "brother of James."

So we have here the plain fact that this James was not the son of Zebedee, who had been killed many years before; neither was he James the little. We may call him rather, James the great, because he takes such a foremost place wherever mentioned. Acts 15 puts it in a very striking manner which I had better not pass over. After Peter had given his very important testimony, and Paul and Barnabas their evidence, about the reception of the Gentiles, we come to another person (ver. 13); "James answered, saying." You see the others are regarded as speaking, but James answers, "Men, brethren" (that is the proper way to read it; "and" has nothing to do with it). They were not merely men, but men who were brethren. "Men, brethren, hearken unto me. Simon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name... Wherefore my sentence is..." (vers. 13-19). No one can doubt the place that he took, and that the Spirit of God sanctions his taking it. James was the one who, after

having heard all the facts, summed up the mind of God, and quoted a decisive scripture. And this is a very interesting thing that, though they were inspired men, they did not do without the scriptures. When you have facts in the light of scripture, you are then entitled to draw therefrom the truth — what he calls here “my sentence,” and what was written in the nineteenth and following verses.

The other striking place where James appears is in Acts 21 where Paul goes up to Jerusalem. “And the day following” — that is after the arrival — “Paul went in with us to James; and all the elders were present” (ver. 18). It is evident that this was the great central place of meeting for strangers at Jerusalem, and that the elders also were accustomed to be present on those occasions. These facts give it evidently a very official character, which was perfectly compatible with the position of James at Jerusalem. Tradition makes him the bishop of the church in Jerusalem, but scripture never speaks of “the” bishop, but of “bishops”: and scripture also shows that there were more important persons than the bishops; and James had a place of evident superiority to any of the “elders” (these were the bishops), a place that none of the elders possessed to the same degree. And this James is the one that wrote the Epistle that bears his name, as that of Jude was written by his brother.

It is instructive to see how God allowed the unbelief of the family of our Lord Jesus. It was not like people plotting together. If you look at the great leader of the Eastern apostasy, Mahomet, it was so. His family were persons whom he induced to take their place along with him, to defend him and stand by him. But in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, God allowed that His own

brethren should not believe on Him all the time that His mighty works were being done. But there was another work, the greatest of all, and God made that work irresistible. Not indeed the works of His life, but that of His death and resurrection; and these brethren that had stood out so stubbornly against Him were brought out to believe on Him through His work of sin bearing. There was a reason for their unbelief. There are always moral causes, which act particularly in unconverted persons to prevent their reception of the truth. Sometimes it is the fleshly mind, sometimes the worldly mind, sometimes both. In the case of these brethren, their worldly mind came out strongly in John 7:4, 5, when they said, “If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world. For neither did His brethren believe on Him.” The Lord was infinitely far from doing this. He was not of the world, and tells us we are not. He never sought the world in any form. He only sought to do good to souls in it by delivering them out of the world to make them know the true God, and Himself equally the true God and Life eternal.

Well now, we have this fact so full of interest — that James gives us, according to the spiritual character that was formed in him, a most complete setting forth of practical righteousness in everyday life, in our tempers, in our words, as well as our ways. All this is unfolded by James more than by any other, and it is only from want of understanding it, that some do not like his Epistle. Sometimes great and good men have kicked at the plainness of speech in James. They have not liked it; but it was a great loss to them, for had they heeded what he wrote it would have corrected many a fault in themselves.

Now in Jude there is another subject altogether. Righteousness is not the point in Jude; not even the way in which Peter brings it in. Jude does not look at it for personal walk simply, apart from the ruin of those that give it up. He merely shows righteousness to be a necessary thing for every saint. If a man has not got it, he is not a saint at all. But Peter in his Second Epistle looks at it in a large way among the people of God — whether they as His people walk righteously, and more particularly whether the teachers are indifferent to righteousness and are favouring unrighteousness. Therefore his Second Epistle is levelled most strongly at these the false teachers who, not content with being personally so themselves, encourage others to similar lack of righteousness. Now, this is not what Jude takes up at all, though there is much that is common to them both. It could not be otherwise.

Jude looks at grace. There is nothing like grace; but what if grace be abused? What if grace be abandoned? What if grace be turned to licentiousness? Now that is what Jude takes up. Consequently, his Epistle is one of the most solemn in the word of God. There is only one writer who is more so — John. John looks at not merely the departure from grace, but the denial of Christ, of the Father and the Son. Well, it is impossible to conceive of anything worse in scripture than denying the glory of Him unto Whose name I may have been baptised, and through Whom I have professed to receive every blessing that God could give. After all that, for a man to be induced by his intellect, or from whatever cause, to deny the Lord, to deny that He was the Christ and the Son of God — there is nothing more deadly — there is nothing more terrible than the state of such a one. And

it fell to the lot of him who loved the Lord most, to John, to write about this denial. So that you see that there is a beautiful propriety in all the Epistles.

Jude 1

“Jude, servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are (not exactly, ‘sanctified,’ but) beloved.” This may surprise many who have been accustomed to the Authorised Version, but it is not a question of what we have been accustomed to, but of what God wrote. The Authorised Version is an admirable one. Our translators did not mistake the meaning of the Greek word in the text before them; but the text which they had was the common text, and this text is as faulty in its way as the common English Version. This text was transcribed by a number of different hands, and if the writing was not very clear there was always a tendency for the copyist to make mistakes.

I have had a deal of writing pass through my hands, but I hardly have seen any, where there is not some mistake made. Particularly when the writing is a copy of another, it is almost always so, and more particularly when the man whose thoughts and words are copied is above the common people. The way to find out the best Greek text is to go up to the oldest of all, and to compare the oldest of all with the different translations made in ancient times, and if these agree, then you have the right one. But they often disagree, and then comes the question, Which is right? Here the all important question is the guidance of the Spirit of God. We can never do without Him, and the way in which the Spirit of God leads persons who really are not only indwelt by Him, but led

by Him, is, — does it express the current of the Epistle? Does it fall in with the line of the apostle's writing?

Well, you see the word "sanctified" may be correct in itself, but the word here should be, "to those that are called, beloved," etc. You observe that the word "called" occurs at the end of the verse. This word "called" is very emphatic. Then he describes them in two different ways. First, here, in the A.V., it is "sanctified," but as now generally accepted by those who have studied the text fully, it is "beloved1 in God the Father." "In" is very often equivalent to (indeed, it is a stronger expression that) "by." But I now give it literally, "beloved in God the Father." I confess myself that not only is this reading the most ancient, the best approved by the highest witnesses that God has given to us of His word, but it is beautifully appropriate to the Epistle. The assurance of being "beloved in God the Father," or "by God the Father," comes into special value under two sets of circumstances. If I am a young man very young in the faith, when one is proving the persecution of the world, the hatred of men, Jews full of jealousy, the Gentiles full of scorn, and both animated by hatred against the Lord and those that are the Lord's — what a comfort it is to know that I am beloved "in God the Father." This is the way the apostle Paul addressed the Thessalonians as a company, the only one that he ever addressed in this way. They were experiencing persecution, not in a gradual way as most of the other assemblies had done, but from the very start, from their conversion. We know the apostle himself had to flee because of the persecution that had set in there. "These men that have turned the world upside down have come here also," and a deadly set was made upon them, and so the

apostle had to escape. The church there had to bear the brunt of it, and in the very first Epistle that Paul ever wrote, the First to the Thessalonians — that was his first inspired writing — you will find that such is the manner in which he describes them. “Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus to the assembly of Thessalonians in God [the] Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 2:1). And that this was studiously meant is shown by the same presentation of the truth in the opening verse of the Second Epistle, where we find there was still the persecution and the danger of their being shaken by that persecution and the error that had come in through false teachers taking advantage of it to pretend that “the day of the Lord” was actually on them, making out that this persecution was the beginning of that” day,” and so greatly alarming the young believers there.

Hence the apostle had to write a second letter to establish them clearly in the bright hope of Christ’s coming, and in the lower truth of the day of the Lord. Well, in that Second Epistle we have “Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus to the assembly of Thessalonians in God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:1). Now I conceive that the object of the Spirit of God there, by the apostle, was, that as they were so young and so exposed to such an assault upon themselves, which reminded the apostle of the assault which had been made upon himself and his friends, that they should be comforted by the reminder that they were “in God the Father.” What could harm them if this were the case? The apostle would not have ventured from himself to say such a thing. None upon earth would have done so. It was God Who inspired the apostle to let them know that wonderful comfort. There are many people who read

this and do not get any comfort from it, because they do not apply it to themselves. They have no idea what it means. You will remember that John, writing in his First Epistle, separates the family of God into three classes — the fathers, young men and the babes (for I give the last word as it should be, literally). They are all “children” of God, but the babes are the young ones of the children of God. The young men are those that have grown up, and the fathers are those that are mature and well established in Christ. Well, it is to the babes — and this will help us to understand what I have been saying — he says, “I write unto you babes” (the proper full force of the word), “because ye have known the Father” (1 John 2:13).

Well, so it is with this young assembly in Thessalonica. It is described by the Holy Ghost as being “in God [the] Father and in [the] Lord Jesus Christ.”

In Jude we have the other side. They are not young saints now. It is addressed to comparatively old saints. There might be young ones among them; there would be such, undoubtedly. But he is looking at them as having gone through a sea of trouble and difficulty, and he is preparing them for worse still. He, as it were, says things are not going to get better but worse, and it is to end in the actual appearing of the Lord in judgment, and what is more, the very kind of people who are to be the objects of the Lord’s judgment when He comes have crept into the church already. This is a very solemn thing, and it might be alarming unless people were well read and grounded in the truth, and in love. So, therefore, writing at a comparatively late time (not early as in the case of the Thessalonians, but late), Jude writes in these terms — “to them that are called.” You observe

that I transpose that word, which is a little spoiled by the interpolation of the conjunction “and” before “called.” “To them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and preserved.” It is not exactly “preserved in.” It may be “by” or “for.” These are the two alternatives for that word. I do not see how it can be “in”; so that you see it little differs from what we read here. It brings in another idea, and it is perfectly true either way. We are preserved by Christ, and we are preserved for Christ. I have not made up my mind which of the two in this instance is right, because they cannot both be the intention of the Spirit of God. One must be right rather than the other, but I cannot say that my judgment is yet formed as to the choice of these two prepositions, whether it should be “preserved for Jesus Christ,” or “by” Jesus Christ, He being the great One that does keep us. But in either case, how beautifully it is suited to a time of extra danger, and of danger too that he was not warranted to say would pass! We say the storm rages now, but the sun will shine shortly. No; it is to be that blackness of darkness of evil which is now coming in among the professors of Christ to get denser and darker until the Lord comes in judgment on them.

Well, how sweet is the assurance, “beloved in God the Father, and preserved by (or for) Jesus Christ” (either way is full of brightness — and the Lord may give us to learn some day which of the two thoughts is His meaning). But there it is, and full of comfort and sweetness, and eminently suited to the circumstances portrayed in this Epistle beyond any Epistle in the New Testament — an Epistle that shows the departure of Christians, i.e., of professing Christians — of those who were once thought to be as good as any. Sometimes, the

people who turn away are those that have been very bright. We should not be surprised at that. It is not always the best fruit that ripens most quickly. Sometimes the earliest becomes rotten very soon. This is often the case with those that seem so bright all at once.

I remember being struck with this in the case of a young woman in the Isle of Wight, some forty years ago. Charles Stanley, our dear brother, in his zeal for the gospel was somewhat in danger of fancying people were converted when they were not. At times of revival, people are often apt to slip in; their feelings are moved, they are quickly affected. According to the word in the Gospel, “they hear the word, and anon with joy receive it; yet have they no root in themselves, but endure for a while: for when trial or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they are offended” (Matt. 13:20, 21); so that we ought not to be surprised. The young woman of whom I speak was employed in a shop, and I was brought to see her as one of these conversions. In a moment she assured me that the old man was all gone, “dead and buried,” and other such language she used. This would have been all very sweet had there been any real spiritual feeling; but she had merely caught the truth in her mind, at best.

Now, a real convert having confessed the truth of Christ for the first time, would be greatly tried by many things, failings, shortcomings, and the like. The soul of such a one would be greatly alarmed to think that, even after having received Christ, he found so little that answered to His love, so easily betrayed into levity or carelessness, or into haste of temper, and ever so many difficulties that a young believer is tried by. But the young woman of whom I have been speaking had no

conscience about anything at all. All she had was merely an intellectual idea of the truth that seemed delightful to her, and, indeed, it is delightful. It is like those described in Heb. 6:5, they “have tasted the good word of God,” and there they are, “enlightened” by the great light of the gospel, without being truly born of God. There might be a powerful action of the Spirit of God, and there may be all this without being truly born of God. People who are really born of God are generally tried, and there is a great sense of sin, and they have to learn their powerlessness. All this is a very painful experience; and it is to this state that the comfort of the gospel applies the knowledge of entire forgiveness and clearance from all that we are; not only in spite of what we are, but because of what we are, because of all that God has given us — a new life where there is no sin. There never is anything like this true comfort except in those that have felt the need of it, and that sense of need is what goes along with conversion to God. The Old Testament saints were in that state; and they never got out of it. The New Testament saints began with conversion and came into blessing that was impossible with the law — because the mighty work of redemption was not done. But now it is done; and can we suppose it does not make an essential difference for a New Testament believer? Well! “if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.” Here you have this invaluable comfort for those that have passed through such serious experiences and who have proved their own weakness in meeting it — the liability to be affected by appearances which come to nothing. Fair and smooth words where there is no reality at all — this is what is so trying. And the Epistle shows that people are going to get worse than this.

Jude 2, Jude 3.

Then (ver. 2) we have, “mercy unto you, and peace and love be multiplied.” This is the only place where mercy is wished to the saints generally. When writing to individuals, to Timothy and Titus for instance, the apostle says “Mercy,” but when to the saints generally, “Grace and peace.”

Why does Jude bring “mercy” in here? Because they deeply needed the comfort. An individual ought always to feel the deep need of mercy, especially in the face of danger, and also in the sense of personal unworthiness; and now Jude gives the comfort of it to all these saints because of their imminent danger. I do not know any saints more in danger than ourselves, because grace has given us to feel for Christ’s honour and name, and to have confidence in the scriptures as the word of God. We should not look at a single word in them as a dead letter. I do not suppose that there is a single person here present — brother or sister — that has a doubt of a single word that God has written. It would be difficult now-a-days to find yourself in such a company generally. People think inspiration is a very lively term, and that we must allow for the errors of those good men who wrote the Bible. What could we expect from such men even if learned? They judge by themselves, not by God, nor by the Holy Ghost. Many of these men have not, I think, abandoned Christianity; but they are darkened by the spirit of unbelief. The spirit of the present day is as bad or worse as in any age since the Lord died and rose. There is one thing that marks it, and, that is lawlessness. A want of respect for everything that is above self, and a determination to have one’s own way — that is lawlessness. I do not know anything worse. It

is what will characterise the whole of Christendom. Now it works in individuals, and it also works largely in whole companies, but it will soon become the reigning spirit. And that is the distinctive name of the anti-christ, “the lawless one.” Christ was the Man of righteousness, Christ is the Man that gives everything its place according to God, and Christ is the One that gives God His place. As to everything and every person, He was the Man of righteousness; lawlessness has nothing but self as its great ambition, a fallen self — man fallen from God. The danger is great in the present day, and so it was when Jude wrote his Epistle. Therefore it is “mercy,” not only “peace and love,” but “mercy” be multiplied. It is a very emphatic word.

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints” (ver. 3). It is addressed to those that have learned the value of “the faith.” He does not refer to personal faith but to the deposit that the faith holds. It is the thing believed, not merely the spiritual power that believes the testimony. It is therefore called “the faith,” distinct from “faith.” When did that faith come? The Epistle to the Galatians shows us when faith came and redemption and the Holy Ghost. It is found in Gal. 3:25: “For after that faith is come.” “I live by the faith of the Son of God.”; “Received ye the Spirit by the hearing of faith?” is a distinct thing (Gal. 2:20; Gal. 3:2). “The scripture hath concluded all under sin” (Jews or Gentiles — the Jews under transgression, but all under sin) “that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came we were kept

under law," (Gal. 3:22, 23). The law was there until the cross of Christ, but then it was affixed to the tree; not only was Christ crucified, but the law came thereby to its end, as far as God's people were concerned. We are now placed under Christ. We are now regarded as being "in the Spirit," for Christ is our life and the Holy Ghost is the power of that life.

Well, here then he says that it was needful that he should exhort them to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." This is what is on my heart to speak about. How great is, not only "conversion" such as the O.T. people knew before faith came but, the "salvation" which is now, as the apostle Paul says in Ephesians (Eph. 1:13), "the word of truth, the gospel of your (not conversion but the gospel of your) salvation"! This is what was added consequent upon redemption. Nobody could have been delivered from hell without being converted; but the "gospel of our salvation" is to make us perfectly happy on earth, to bring us into cloudless peace and liberty while here in this world. It is this that is new, from the cross of Christ. Why, beloved friends, it is new to many children of God now! They are not sure at all, even those that are most real; with many it is only a "humble hope." But through God's mercy, I take it for granted that we have all learned this, more or less, the more the better. I do say that this is an all-important thing. Sometimes, when persons are seeking to come into fellowship, there is an idea of the importance of their understanding the church. How they are to understand the church I do not know. I did not understand it when I first began to break bread. I never saw any that did. I have seen persons that thought they did, and they had to correct their thoughts

afterwards. We should not expect this knowledge. Possibly, of the saints in communion who have been in fellowship for forty years, there may be many who have not even yet arrived at a true knowledge of what the church is. But to ask it from a dear soul that has not long been saved! Ah, that is the point — not only "converted," but brought into liberty and peace. I do say we ought to look for that before we get them to the table of the Lord; and we are not on proper Christian ground till we know that we are saved. This is what the gospel gives. It is not a hope of being saved, but knowing it in a simple straight-forward, intelligent, Christian manner. However, the word "intelligence" might leave room for our active brethren to find difficulties! I do not want to put difficulties in the way of any, still less in the way of a soul that is trembling and uncertain.

The great requirement for souls seeking fellowship, and, I think, the only requirement, is that they should be settled firmly on Christ and Christ's salvation as a known present thing. Perhaps we find a person that cannot stand that. I recommend them to hear the gospel. There are plenty of saints who want to hear a full gospel. I do not say a free gospel. A full gospel does not convert many souls. A free gospel may do so. A free gospel may be used to awaken many, to cause exercise, but a full gospel will bring the answer to all these difficulties. Peter, I may say, preached a free gospel, and Paul a full one. Most of the children of God have not got a full gospel. It is essential that they should, before they can take their place as members of the body of Christ. Suppose they come in without it: perhaps the first hymn that is given out is an expression of thanksgiving that every question is settled for ever, and they are thus

called to sing about themselves what they do not believe, and do not know about. They sing (in, what I call, a slipshod manner, without any conscience) what may not be true of their state, what is too much for them. Well, all that is a very unhappy state of things, and ought not to be. But if they are brought into the liberty of Christ, before they are received, not expecting from them clearness of intelligence, but knowing that their souls are set free (and nothing less than that should be looked for), then things go on happily. They learn quite fast enough when they come in, provided they have liberty in their souls. The lack of it is the barrier against learning. If I have difficulties about my soul with God for ever, it is no good to tell me about other things; and, therefore, wherever that is passed over lightly, there is a barrier. But as to everything else, well, one thing at a time is quite as much as we can bear, and people who grasp everything at the same moment, I am afraid, grasp nothing. All is apt to be cloudy in their minds, and that is not “the faith that was once delivered to the saints.”

“The faith” is not a mere mist. Mysteries are not mists or clouds. Mysteries are the firmest things in the Bible. The N.T. is full of mysteries — mystery “concerning Christ and the church,” “the mystery of God,” “the mystery of the gospel,” “the mystery of the faith.” Mystery means what was not revealed in O.T. times; now it is. That is just our privilege. Even Christ Himself, in the way that we receive Him now, is a mystery. Do we simply believe on Him as the Messiah? “Great is the mystery of godliness; God [or, He Who] was manifested in flesh, was justified in Spirit, seen of angels, preached among Gentiles, believed on in [the] world, received up

in glory” (1 Tim. 3:16). This is Christ as we know Him now. Everything is mystery in Christianity, even the way Christ is received. He was not known so before. It takes in the gospel, “the gospel of our salvation,” the clear riddance from all hindrances. Is not the assembly a mystery? Is it not a truth of the greatest moment for every member of the body of Christ to know? And when you have your convert, when the soul is there brought to know the gospel, then show him what the church is, as best you can. Take trouble with him. Do not imagine he knows what he does not know. Where is he to learn if not inside? He will never learn by staying away. The church of God is not only the great place of incomparable blessing and enjoyment, it is also the great school. Well, the soul wants to go to school. Will he find a better school outside?

Even the best of those who are outside — that is, those that are not gathered to the name of the Lord, they are mostly occupied about salvation for themselves, or if not that, about work for others. What can you expect better? They do not know the relationships into which they are brought. Take the question that is now so uppermost in people’s minds — priesthood. What an Evangelical would say to meet priestly pretension is, that it is all a mistake to suppose that there are any priests but Christ. Is that where you are? The truth that God has shown us is, that all Christians alike are priests. When you are only on Evangelical ground, it is not the assertion of positive possession of privilege, it is merely denying an error, a negative way of looking at things. Many would indeed admit that we are all priests, but they do not see how it is applied. If they are all priests unto God, they should be allowed to express their praise, and others

join (Heb. 10:22) “Let us” (not you, he puts himself along with those to whom he was writing — let us) draw “near” into the holiest. Were this really applied, people might want to express their audible praises to God sometimes, and this would be considered disorderly. Do you think that we are always as careful as we ought to be? There are two words of moment in the First Epistle to the Corinthians — the first is, “in order,” the other is, “to edification.” All things should be done “in order,” and “to edification” (1 Cor. 14:26, 40). How are we to judge of what is done? It is laid down in this very chapter. Why do we forget it sometimes?

A question was put to me, whether it is according to scripture that, at what is called an assembly meeting, or other meeting of a similar character, more than two should speak. What is laid down as to this? That two, or at most three, might speak (1 Cor. 14:27, 29). Where there are more, I should be disposed to get away as fast as possible. You are mistaken about your liberty. We have only liberty to do what the Lord says; and I can see the wisdom of this limitation. There might be plenty of time for half a dozen speakers, but still the order is clear, “two, or at most three,” There can be no question about the meaning. It certainly does not mean that there might not be half a dozen prayers by different people, but that formal speaking, even of prophets, had its limits. And surely the lesser gifts have not a greater liberty than the greater ones! The prophets had the highest gift, and yet it is said, they were only to speak two or three. The plain meaning of it is that there never ought to be, under any excuse, more than two or three. Too much of a good thing is as bad as too little. If you have too much of what is even good, it is apt to make

you sick: you must leave room for proper digestion. Hence the wisdom in the restriction as to numbers.

So it is — what seems to me to be so very plain — that we have not got merely the facts given and the commandment of the Lord, but good reason given. There is perfect wisdom, there is not such a thing as an arbitrary word in all the Bible. All the rules and regulations, commandments and precepts, are pregnant with divine wisdom.

It is a long while since “brethren” first began; but there never was a time when we are more called to see whether we are really “contending earnestly for the faith once for all (not “once on a time,” but, “once for all”) delivered to the saints.” May God forbid that we should ever swerve in the least degree! We are not competent to say what a little beginning of divergence may lead to. It might be apparently a little beginning, but alas, a little beginning of a great evil.

The Lord give us simple fidelity, and in all love to our brethren. I never think of my brethren being merely such as are gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus; and I feel most deeply the undermining that is going on everywhere of things that were once undisputed.

Jude 3

Jude, then, was in full expectation of a departure from “the faith,” and that it would be necessary to defend the faith. He evidently had had it on his heart to speak to them of comforting things, things that are always bright and sweet to the believer; but the circumstances called for alarm, for solemn warning. This is never very acceptable to people. They prefer things smooth; but the

apostle himself, or the writer, whether an apostle or not — the writer's whole heart would have delighted in dwelling on all that was comforting and strengthening to the soul. But, my brethren, what is the good of that if the foundations are being undermined? This is what you must look at. Therefore he draws attention to the fact that the faith was "once for all delivered." "Once" is an equivocal word. It might mean "once on a time," once at a particular moment; but this is not the force of the word here at all. It means "once for all." And what a blessing it is that we have in this book (and more particularly in the books of the New Testament), the holy deposit which we are called upon to believe, given us in full, "once for all." There is not a truth to be received that is not revealed in the word of God. There is not a difficulty nor a departure from the truth which is not in one way or another there guarded against. We, therefore, never require to go outside the revelation of God; and this explains why God permitted, in the early apostolic days, that there should be a deal of evil. Does it surprise us that there should have been gross disorders among the Corinthians, for instance, even at the table of the Lord? Well, one is naturally struck at first sight by such a fact. How was it that when there was such power of the Holy Ghost, that when there were miracles wrought, that when there were prophets prophesying (the highest form of teaching), that at the same time and place, the saints that gathered on the Lord's Day, broke out into a disorder that we never find even in the present day, or very rarely? How could God more guard us than by allowing it then? It is always a very delicate matter to deal with evil, either of doctrine, or practice, or service, or government, or worship, or anything that you can speak of. It was of the very

greatest moment, therefore, that God, in view of the evils that would, some time or another, appear in the church, should allow the germ of the evils to appear then; and, for this reason, that we might have divinely given directions for dealing with the evils when they did appear. Consequently, we are not taking the place of setting up to legislate; but we are not at liberty to depart from the word. This has been given us by the Holy Ghost. We are called to find therein everything that becomes us as saints, and for every part of our work to find a principle, and example too, sufficient to guide us; so that we may never set up any will of our own about a matter, and that we may always find God expressing, in one form or another, His will. What we have to do is to seek to learn from Him, and to apply the result, either to ourselves for our own correction, or to other people for their warning.

Now that is the reason why there is such great moment in Jude's calling to mind that the faith was "once," and "once for all," delivered to the saints. And, as a point of fact, I do not think we shall ever find in scripture such a thing as a mere repetition. Sometimes you may have scriptures that approach very closely, and in the New Testament you could hardly have it more than in these two Epistles of Peter and Jude. But I am about to point out to you, what will appear as I go along still more completely, that, while there are resemblances between these two writers, who are both speaking of the terrible evil that was about to flood the church; and who naturally approach each other, yet there is a marked difference between them. It is always the difference that is the special lesson for us to learn. Where the two approach, it confirms. We can say, "In the mouth of two

or three witnesses shall every word be established." But where there is a divergence, and a distinction is to be seen in the lessons that they convey, we have evidently more than we might have had if we had only had one of the writers. The same thing is true, not merely in these two Epistles, but in Ephesians and Colossians for example. The resemblance there is so great that a favourite theory of the Rationalists is that the Epistle to the Colossians is the only one that Paul ever wrote, and that the one to the Ephesians is only an enlarged and inflated copy (written, perhaps, by a contemporary of the apostle); and, accordingly, that the latter has not the same divine (though I ought not, perhaps, to use that word) value — that it has not Paul's value. These men do not believe in divine value, they do not believe in God having written these Epistles; but some of them do believe that Paul wrote that to the Colossians, but deny his having written the one to the Ephesians. A very learned man, who translated all the Bible (and, indeed, his is one of the best of the German translations), is one of this school. So that you may learn from this, that there are persons who have laboured all through their lives on the Bible, who nevertheless did not believe the Bible — i.e., really and truly. He, of course, would have entirely objected to such an account being given of him. But what matters what people object to, if it is true! He was a leading man in his day, and I hope that he was not without looking to Christ before his decease. But at any rate, what he did during his life was a sad departure from the truth of God, from "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."

Having then already dwelt a little upon what is one important and primary element of "the faith," I add,

further, that believers are brought into great relationships. Not only are we “converted” and “saved,” being brought into peace and liberty, but we are called to realise also that we are no longer merely English persons or French, Jews or Gentiles, but that we are children of God, and that we are such now. We, therefore, turn our backs on our boasting in our nation and our city, and our family, and all these various forms of men’s vanity, which is merely boasting of something of the flesh. We are called out of that now. This is also part of “the faith once delivered.” In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free (Gal. 3:28). What does this mean? It means just what I have been saying.

Well then, again, we are made members of Christ’s body; and this is a relationship which so many of God’s children are so slow to believe. They think and talk of their being members of the Wesleyan body, or Presbyterian body, or Baptist, of this body, or that body, no matter what it is. Well, they say, to be sure we are members of Christ’s body, too! Yes, but if people valued the truth of their membership of Christ’s body, what would the other be in their eyes? Simply nothing at all. Where do you find the Presbyterian body, or the Episcopal body, or the Congregational body in the N.T.? Where do you find the Baptist body in the N.T.? There was an approach to this party spirit in the very earliest days — “I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas” (1 Cor. 1:12). Well, there you have the germ of it. And these germs never perish. It is not only that blessed germs of truth do not perish and are meant to take root and bear fruit, and consequently they are perpetuated here and there; but alas, evil germs do the same. And what is more, another thing is not a germ exactly, but is a leaven

— a corrupt and a corrupting thing that is very palatable, making the wheaten bread to be lighter to the taste and pleasanter for some palates to partake of. And, at any rate, this leaven, whatever may be the case with the bread, is the corrupting influence at work among the saints in two forms. In Corinth it was the corruption of morals; in Galatia it was the corruption of doctrine. There you have it at work. When our Lord was here He confronted the same thing in the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Sadducees were the great corruptors morally; the Pharisees were the great religionists, or rather were strong for doctrine. But the Sadducees were sapping all doctrines by denying the truth. There you have the two things again — doctrinal leaven and corrupting leaven; at any rate there was “the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees,” however you may describe it. There were also the Herodians — a worldly leaven, a pandering to the Roman court, not merely accepting the Romans as having power and authority from God, but trying to please them in order to make their own position better and their circumstances easier. So that you see what a very weighty truth is this, calling for earnest examination, to take care that we do not infringe upon or weaken our certainty in that faith which was “once delivered to the saints.” Are we indifferent about it? Have we an interest in it? Have we only partially received it, and are we content with that? Or are we resolved by the grace of God to refuse everything that is not the faith that was once for all delivered? Are we resolved to receive and maintain that faith in all its integrity? That is what we are called to do.

Jude 4, Jude 5.

Now this attitude was the more important; “for,” as he says, “certain men have crept in unawares.” Jude is not quite so advanced, in point of time, as John. When John wrote his First Epistle, the bad people went out — the antichrists went out (1 John 2:19). But the danger here was that they were within. Certain men had crept in, as it were, unawares. That is, they had fair appearances at first, of course. “They, who before of old were ordained to this sentence” (“condemnation” is not exactly the meaning of the word — “to this judgment”) “ungodly men turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness and denying our only Master2 and Lord Jesus Christ” (ver. 4).

This, you see, is the prominent thing in Jude’s mind: so that, under fair appearances, they were undermining moral principles, they were turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. This was the worst evil, as far as morals were concerned, that Jude warns them against in this Epistle; but then this evil is connected with a doctrinal error. They denied two things. In Peter they denied only one. There they denied the Sovereign Master that bought them (2 Peter 2:1). Peter does not say that they were redeemed. It is a great mistake to confound being “bought” with being “redeemed.” All the world is bought, but only believers are redeemed. Universal purchase is a truth of God; universal redemption is a falsehood. Redemption implies that we have the forgiveness of sins. You see that clearly in the Epistles. Take, for instance, that to the Ephesians, “In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7). Now it is clear that the great mass of

mankind have not redemption through His blood; but they are all bought, and the believer is bought too, and we are constantly exhorted on the ground, not only of our being redeemed, but of our being bought. For instance, the Corinthians are told that they were bought. That is the reason why they should not act as if they were their own masters. We have not any rights of our own (1 Cor. 6). We are not at liberty to say, I think it quite right to go to a Court of Law in order to maintain my rights. No, I am bound, if I am summoned as a witness, to go; I am bound, if people go to law with me, to go. But on the contrary, to insist on my own rights! why do not I rather suffer wrong? That is the way the apostle Paul looks at it. And who is the apostle? The voice of God, the commandments of the Lord.

So that you see I come at once to the question of the faith, if really I believe what I may talk very glibly about as if I did. The difficulty is to find faith on the earth. As the Lord has said, “When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” Evidently, therefore, this departure from the faith is supposed by that very question of our Lord Jesus. Only here, the solemn thing is, that it is pressed on those who once bore the name of the Lord. They may go on for a while, for years; and there may be only some little things that one feels here or there, or their departure may not take anything like so terrible a form as here, but the question is, Where will it end? When once we get on the incline of our own rights, our own will; when once we abandon His Sovereignty, and, more than that, that He is not only Sovereign Master but our Lord; who can say what may not ensue?

Now here we get a closer relationship. Peter, in his Epistle, only supposes that universal place of our Lord. Why does Jude add, “denying our... Lord Jesus Christ”? Because he looks at that special following of those that are called by His name — on whom the name of the Lord is called. Here, therefore, we find a subtler and a deeper denial than the denial of the Sovereign Master in Peter. That of course was very far outside and very gross — “sects of perdition, and denying the Sovereign Master that bought them.” But here, in Jude, it is not only denying the Sovereign Master of the world, of everything; but “our Lord,” the One to Whom we belong, the One to Whose name we are baptised, the One Whom we profess to value and acknowledge to be our life and righteousness, and our all — denying Him!

You must not imagine that these things all come out in a short time. There is a little beginning of departure; but when your back is turned to the Lord and you follow that path, where will it end? No man can tell; but the Spirit of God can and does, and He shows that these little departures end in a fearful ditch of the enemy; and so He says:

“But I would remind you, though once for all knowing all things,3 that [the] Lord having saved a people out of Egypt’s land, in the second place destroyed those that believed not” (ver. 5). Here we have again the same word “once,” which as we have already seen is equivocal. It might mean formerly; but that is not the meaning at all, no more than that the faith was formerly given. It means given “once for all.”

Well, he says, “once for all knowing,” not only “this,” but “all about it.” The word “this” is now in critical texts

changed into “all things,” and this is exactly the position of the believer, which is the reason why we are so very responsible. Do you recollect what the apostle John says to the “babes” of the family? “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (1 John 2:20). How did that come to pass? We are not in the habit of regarding babes so wise as this; yet what the apostle says must be true. The only question is — In what sense did he mean that they knew all things? I think the meaning is this. The babe has got Christ just as much as an apostle. Having Christ, he has the truth — all the truth. There it is; and he has also got the Holy Ghost — an unction from the Holy One. Therefore, he has got power in the gift of the Holy Ghost; for a babe has this gift. It is not the privilege only of the advanced learners in the school of Christ. The babes of the family of God have got Christ perfectly. They may draw it out very imperfectly. They may be able to look upon Christ, and speak of Christ in very hesitating terms as far as their intelligence goes, but such is their place and their privilege. Accordingly, Jude presses here their privilege of “once for all knowing all things.” Where were they now? They were in great danger. You often see this in the early beginnings of saints. They are very bright at first; they are not easily stumbled by anything they hear from the Bible; they receive it with simplicity, and delight in it. They, then, are knowing all things, in the sense in which the apostle speaks here. It is not a question of intelligence, but of simplicity and of a single eye, and when the eye is single the whole body is full of light. Thus they had it by the power of the Spirit of God, and it was not at all a question of their being great adepts in controversy, or showing a wonderful knowledge of the types, or anything of that kind. I call

that intelligence. But this is the singleness of eye that looks to Christ and sees the truth in Christ, and is not troubled by the difficulties that people are always apt to feel when they begin to reason, when love gets cold and they have questions of duty. Then they cannot see clearly; then a trial is made on their faith to which it is not equal; then they begin to get dark, as well as to doubt. This is just where these saints appear to me to have been, whom the writer is here addressing as “once knowing all things.” They knew not only the faith, but these terrible things that are coming in.

However, Jude recalls them to their remembrance: “I will therefore put you in remembrance, though once for all knowing all things, how that [the] Lord, having saved a people out of [the] land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.” That fact is a very solemn thing for the writer to bring before them; and it was meant to solemnize them, to deliver them from that careless state of soul which takes for granted that, because we have all been so blessed and led into the truth, no harm can happen. Why, on the contrary, beloved friends, for whom do you think Satan has the greatest hatred out of all on the face of the earth? Why, any that are following the Lord with simplicity; any that are truly devoted to the Lord. His great object is to try and stumble such, to turn them aside, to bring difficulties into their minds and make them hesitate. Now, where souls are simple and single-eyed, they have not these difficulties at all; but when they do not go on cleaving to the Lord with full purpose of heart, they begin to forget what they once knew. It is no longer Christ applied to judge everything here; they allow their own thoughts, their own feelings, their own mind, their own conceit, perhaps to lead them;

but, whatever it is, it is not Christ, and now He brings this fact before them. Why, look at the history that you have in the very beginning of the Old Testament. God had a people once before us, and, what is more, God saved that people. That is the very thing — He did save them. It was not only that He passed over them in the land of Egypt, but there was His mighty arm at the Red Sea that crushed their enemies and saved themselves, and brought them into the desert that He might teach them what was in their heart, and let them know what was in His. But they went back to Egypt in their heart, and they could see no blessedness in Canaan, the heavenly land to which the Lord was leading them on — to Canaan, type of heaven, the land of God's delight and glory; they could see nothing in it, and they did see that in the desert there were serpents sometimes to bite those that refused to learn from God; and, further, that the Lord, if He hearkened to their lusting after flesh, made the flesh to come out of them as it were through their nostrils, as a judgment upon their not being satisfied with the manna, the bread of heaven. All these things happened, and what was the result? All perished in the wilderness excepting two men: Caleb and Joshua.

Now Jude says, That is your danger. You must remember that you cannot tell for certain whether a person has life eternal. Every man ought to know that for himself; every woman ought to know that for herself. If a person believes that he or she has life eternal in Christ, they are called to follow the Lord with full purpose of heart. And if they do not follow Him so, or if attracted by anything worldly, or by pursuits of their own from day to day, they neglect the Lord and His word, and neglect prayer and all the helps that the Lord gives us, which we so deeply

need for our souls — what will be the end of that? Just what Jude is showing them here: “I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew all things, how that the Lord having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not.”

It turned out that they were not true believers, after all. The same thing applies now: “These things happened unto them for types; and they are written for our admonition.”

Jude 6, Jude 7, Jude 8.

“And angels which kept not their own original estate, but abandoned their proper dwelling, He hath kept in everlasting bonds under gloom unto [the] great day’s judgment; as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, having in the like manner with them greedily committed fornication and gone after strange flesh, lie there an example, undergoing judgment of eternal fire. Yet likewise, these dreamers also defile flesh, and set at nought lordship and rail at dignities” (vers. 6-8)

If we compare this chapter of Jude with the Second Epistle of Peter, we get a very clear view of the precise difference between the two. No doubt there is a great deal that is common in both Epistles; but it is the difference that is of great account in taking a view of scripture, as has been already observed. In these two Epistles there may be many points in common, but the two accounts are thoroughly different. The same thing is true as regards all the testimony that God gives us. The marks of difference are the great criteria.

You will notice that Peter, after alluding to false teachers, alludes to “sects of perdition” (2 Peter 2:1). The word heterodoxy gives a different idea. There was something of this difference in the minds of the apostles that ought to be in ours, viz.: — a very strong horror of the breach amongst those who belong to Christ and the church that He formed in unity here. There is a certain wilfulness that is particularly offensive to God. People now have so little sense of “wrongness” that they think it a natural thing that people should be justified in doing what they like; but to look at the matter in that sense would be to give up God. Perhaps men can be trusted in matters of ordinary life to form a sufficiently sound judgment as regards certain things, such as being careful of their food and careful of their dress, and also as regards other things that belong to this life. We find that God says little on the matter, except to guard His children from the vanity of the world and the pride of life. Still there is nothing technical or narrow laid down in the word of God. But it is quite another thing, when we consider that Christ died to “gather together into one the children of God that were scattered abroad” (John 11:52), that we should allow ourselves to extenuate a wilful departure from the right course, by allowing our own notions to carry us away therefrom. Persons should not allow themselves to do this kind of thing, nor should they think that they are superior to others, which is generally a great delusion on their part. You will not find that men who are devoted to Christ set themselves up in this way, because we all know that Christ teaches us to count others better than ourselves. That may become merely a foolish sentiment by the separating us from a spirit of power and of love, and of a sound mind. We are to judge of everything by Christ. If

we let in “self,” we are sure to go wrong. This readiness to see Christ in everything is a happy thing when it is applied to our dealings with our brothers and sisters. It is not that others are necessarily better than ourselves, it is that we are to count them so in our spirit and in our dealings with them. When Christ is before us, we can afford to judge our sins as stronger than those of others. We are well aware of our faults; but it is only when we are much occupied with others’ doings that we know much about their faults. The great thing is that we are to see Christ as our guide, and we are to judge ourselves in ourselves; we are also to see Christ in others and to love them, and to count them better than ourselves.

There are other senses in which people get into this spirit of sect, and thereby give an improper value to certain views. For instance, with regard to baptism. In modern times, at any rate, and very likely also in ancient times, there is, I suppose, hardly anything that has troubled the church more than this subject. By some people, a superstitious value is given to baptism, causing them, as it were, to despise those who have a reasoning turn of mind, and those who have a strong theory and notions about the Jewish remnant; but, so far as I know, the Jewish remnant has nothing to do with Christian baptism, because the handing it over to the Jewish remnant means giving up our relation to Christ. For Christian people, who are already walking in the ways of the Lord, to be occupied with baptism is, in my opinion, a most extraordinary inversion of all that is wise and right, because Christian people have passed through that experience already. Perhaps, when the ceremony was performed it was not done in the best way, and we may think that, therefore, if we had known

then what we know now; we might have been more careful in its performance. Baptism is merely an external visible confession of the Lord Jesus, and for persons who have been confessing the Lord for twenty, thirty, or forty years, to be occupied with baptism seems to me to be an extraordinary change from all that is wise. Baptism is an initiatory step; our Christianity begins when we begin our Christian confession — we should, therefore, be going forward, not backward.

Baptism has even been used as the badge of a sect, and time would fail to narrate the many other ways in this regard. But here, in Peter's Epistle, we have a darker thing referred to — "sects of perdition" (2 Peter 2:1). It evidently was not merely a sect, but a sect of perdition. In this case, the sect of perdition was evidently something very dreadful, and it was apparently against the Lord, because the words are "denying the Sovereign Master that bought them." This, as we have already remarked, is not "redemption" but "purchase," and so takes in all men whether converted or not. It is the denial of His rights over all as the Sovereign Master. So, too, Peter begins at once with the flood, the deluge, but there is not a word about that in Jude. This is another great mark of difference to note, the manner in which the denial of the Lord is described, and how we find God's mode of dealing with this matter. So one sees the propriety of the flood being brought in by Peter, because it was the universal unrighteousness and rebelliousness of the whole world. Jude, on the other hand, was not given to look at that particularly, but at the hostility that is shown to the truth and to Christ. Peter looks at the general unrighteousness of mankind, and so he says: "For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast

them down to lowest hell and delivered them up to chains of gloom reserved for judgment, and spared not an ancient world, but preserved Noah, an eighth [person], a preacher of righteousness, having brought a flood upon a world of ungodly ones; and reducing to ashes [the] cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, He condemned [them] with an overthrow, having set an example to those that should live ungodlily; and rescued just Lot" etc. (2 Peter 2:4-7).

What makes the reference again more remarkable is that Jude speaks of the "angels that kept not their own estate," but Peter of "angels that sinned," and who consequently come under the dealing of God. The flood is upon the world of the ungodly, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are turned into ashes for an example to those that should live ungodlily; but just Lot was delivered because he was a just man. The want of righteousness brought this punishment upon everyone. It is their general ungodliness, but no doubt there is a particularity which Jude takes up, whilst Peter takes up the universality. This is the marked difference between the two. I have dwelt upon this because it shows what the world of modern unbelief is — what is called higher criticism. For these men have been struck by the resemblance between this Epistle of Jude and the Second Epistle of Peter; but with all their boasting of unbelief they have not got the discernment to see that there is a marked difference between the two. These men have been caught by the superficial resemblance of the two Epistles; but when you, as it were, lift up the superficial veil in which these Epistles agree, you will find that the colours are different. You will find darker colours in Jude than in Peter, although it is bad enough

in Peter, most terribly evil. But it is of a general kind; whereas, Jude was led by the Holy Ghost to devote himself to the peculiar form that wickedness takes when it turns from the grace of God, when it turns to licentiousness.

Hence Jude begins with what is not referred to in Peter at all, and it is for this reason that I read verse 5 over a second time to-night. “I will, therefore, put you in remembrance, though once for all knowing all things, that the Lord, having saved a people” — mark that — “out of the land of Egypt” — that is the sovereign grace that shows the salvation. I am not speaking of it now as eternal salvation. It was sovereign grace that chose Israel; they were not chosen for everlasting glory, but only delivered out of Egypt. That surely shows a manifestation of God’s goodness, Who, instead of allowing them to be oppressed and terrorised over by the cruel Egyptians, smote the Egyptians and delivered His people. They came into the narrower circle in one sense of what were God’s people, in one sense also they were saved; but they gave up the grace, they abandoned God. This latter is what Jude has particularly in view. He looks at Christendom as being about to abandon the truth. He shows that whatever the special favour shown by God, men will get away from and deny it; and further, that instead of using grace to walk morally, they will take advantage of grace to allow of a kind of immorality — they will turn the grace of God into licentiousness.

Peter says nothing about this, but Jude does; so that it is evident that these learned men (who think they are so clever in showing that Jude and Peter are merely imitators of one another, and that it is the same thing in substance in both — that there is no particular

difference, that they are in fact the same human picture), do not see God in either. Now, what we are entitled to is to see God in both Epistles, and what is more we should hear God's voice in both. You see then that Jude begins with this solemn fact that the Lord "having saved a people out of the land of Egypt" — I am giving now the strict force of the word — "the second time" (that He acted) "destroyed those that believed not." The first act was that He "saved" them, He brought them out by means of the paschal lamb, which was His first great act of "saving." The first time that God's glory appeared and He put Himself at the head of His people, He saved them out of the land of Egypt. What was "the second time"? When He "destroyed" them. It is not vague, but it specifically mentions "the second time"; this is the great point. At the time the golden calf was set up, that was the beginning of "the second time," and God went on smiting and smiting until everyone was destroyed except Caleb and Joshua. That was the second time. This went on for forty years, but it is all brought together in the words "the second time." God "destroyed them that believed not." That is the charge brought against them. Their carcases were falling in the wilderness. In Hebrews 3 (as is very evident also in the book of Numbers and elsewhere) there is this threat during their passage through the wilderness. It is one of the great facts of the books of Moses. As regards those that came out of Egypt, they came under the hand of God; some perished at one time, some at another, but all perished in one way or the other, until all disappeared; and yet they had all been "saved" out of the land of Egypt by the Lord.

Oh, what a solemn thing to set this before us now! When I say before us, I mean before the church of God, before all that bear the name of the Lord Jesus here below. This is put expressly as a sample of the solemn ways of God to be recollected in Christendom. Then Jude also refers to the angels. I think the wisdom of that is evident. Peter begins with the angels and then goes on to refer to the flood. I think, therefore, if any person looks at Genesis 6 he will find a great deal of wisdom in Jude's reference. I am well aware, of course, that there are many that view "the sons of God" in a very different way to what it appears to me. They are sometimes very surprised, and expect one to be able to answer all their questions. I do not assume any such competency. I admire the wisdom of God in that God does not stop to explain. He feels the awful iniquity of what occurred in reference to these angels. They are fallen angels, and of quite a different class to those who fell before Adam was tempted.

It appears there were at least two falls of angels; one was he whom we call Satan — when man was made, Satan tempted man through Eve. Those ordinary evil angels, of which we read in the Bible from Genesis down to Revelation, are not under everlasting chains at all. They are roving about the world continually, and so far from being in chains of darkness, in "tortures" as it is called here, they are allowed access to heaven. You will see that in a very marvellous way in the history of Job. A great many believers do not believe in the book of Job. You will see there "the sons of God" referred to. What is meant by "the sons of God" there? Why, the angels of God. The angels of God appeared before God. We learn from this that they have access, and include not only the good angels but also the Satanic angels. Satan was a

fallen angel, but still he was an angel, and when “the sons of God” came, Satan was there too. So that it is evident, from the Book of Revelation more particularly, that Satan will not lose that access to the presence of God until we are actually in heaven. It has not come to pass yet. People have an extraordinary idea in their heads that whatever access Satan had before that time, he lost it — either when our Lord was born, or when our Lord died but there is nothing of this in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where, on the contrary it is expressly stated that our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against wicked spirits in the heavenlies. We are not like the Israelites fighting against Canaanites. Our Canaanite is a spiritual enemy in heavenly places, that is, Satan and his host of demons or angels.

But, as we have seen, these are not at all the sins that are referred to here. There is a marked difference. There is a character of iniquity that these angels fell into on earth, and so a distinct difference in their doom. These angels fell into a very peculiar iniquity, which is in a general way spoken of in Peter, but in a special way in Jude. They were put under chains of darkness and not allowed to stir out of their prison. They are not the angels that tempt us now. They did their bad work just a tattle time before the flood. That fact gives the matter a very solemn character. If people want to know how it was done, that I do not know; but you are called upon to believe, just as much as I am. What Genesis 6 does say is that there were “sons of God” upon earth at that time who acted in a way contrary to everything in relation to God, and which was so offensive to Him that He would not allow the earth to go on any longer, and this is what brought on the flood. No doubt too there was also a

general iniquity in mankind that brought the flood upon them. Man was very corrupt and man was vile, but besides that there was this awful violation of the marks that divide the creatures of God in some mysterious manner. Hence God completely destroyed the whole framework of creation, and put an end to them and their offspring, so that every one of them perished. That is what took place then Of course, you will tell me that they could not perish absolutely. No, I admit that these angels could not perish any more than men such as you; but this is what God did with those angels that behaved in that tremendously wicked manner. They became prisoners, they were put under confinement, not like Satan and his host that tempt us to this day, but these particular angels were not allowed to tempt men any more. They had done too much, and God would not allow these things to go on any longer, therefore there was this mighty interference at the time of the flood, and not only the things that generally inflict men. These are the words, “Angels that kept not their first estate.” Their falling was a departure from their first estate. In this very case Satan had not done so, nor had the angels that fell with Satan. But it was quite another kind of iniquity that caused the flood. These angels left their own habitation and preferred to take their place among mankind to act as if they were men on earth, and accordingly, God has now reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness until the judgment of the great day. Nobody can say that this is true of Satan and his host, but if people should think this, I do not see how they can read these verses and give such a meaning to them. Satan will be cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years, but their years do not run out until the

judgment of the great day comes. Then they will be judged everlastingly.

What makes the matter so striking is that Jude compares this conduct, and this awful opposition to all the landmarks that divide angels from mankind, with Sodom and Gomorrah. We know that the enormity of this wickedness exceeded that even of all wicked people. So here their sin brings them into juxtaposition with Sodom and Gomorrah, “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them in like manner to these, giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering vengeance of eternal fire” (ver. 7).

When we come back to Peter and see what he has to say on this matter, it is, “For if God spared not the angels that sinned.” Peter does not go further than that. Of course we know how they sinned — that is what Jude looks into. But here in Peter it is general — “angels that sinned.” He cast them down into hell and darkness, but that description does not apply to Satan and his host. Therefore it seems there were two different falls of angels; one, Satan and his followers mounting up in the pride of their hearts to God, the other, these angels sinking down in the wickedness of their heart to man, to man in a very low condition indeed. The difference therefore is most marked. God “delivered them unto chains of darkness to be reserved to judgment, and spared not the old world.” There is a connection between the two narratives, as it is about the same time. Peter marks this very point, and puts it along with God’s dealing with the angels. This however is entirely left out by Jude. Peter says, “And spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth [person].”

How is Noah described? As “a preacher of righteousness.” Noah was not a preacher of grace. The grand truth that Noah proclaimed was that God was going to destroy the world by the deluge. That was exactly the right message. I do not think we are entitled to say he said nothing more, but the characteristic of Noah was that he was “a preacher of righteousness.” This is precisely what occurs in Peter; he does not bring out the grace of God at all, in his chapter. He is thundering at unrighteousness. He is giving with that trumpet of righteousness a very clear sound indeed. He is evidently giving out, in very dark and solemn words, the destruction that shall await the wicked at the great change; and he shows that the same thing has happened before, and he begins, as far as man is concerned, not with Israel saved out of Egypt by God, but looks at the whole world destroyed. He is looking at the universality of unrighteousness, and not at the gradual departure of the people that were saved, saved first and lost afterwards. “He saved Noah, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.” Peter then looks at the cities of the plain — more particularly Sodom and Gomorrah. He does not say anything about the special iniquity, but looks at it in a general way. “And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned [them] with an overthrow, making [them] an ensample unto those that after should live ungodlily; and delivered just Lot vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds” (2 Peter 2:4-8).

So that instead of these two Epistles being alike, one of them a mere replica of the other, and an imitation in a

clumsy way, they are both marked by most peculiarly different characteristics. And this is what deludes some men with all their criticism, and all the doctrine of the working of mind and the reasoning of rationalism is entirely outside the mark. Man's mind sees certain things in a general outside way and reasons upon it, flattering himself that he is doing something wonderful, and that he is bringing light when he is only spreading mist over the precious word of God, nothing but mist and darkness. So that the general difference between the two Epistles is very marked indeed.

Well then, we come now to the bearing of Peter's words upon the present time. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." That is the practical testimony coming out of it. "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government." It is not, you observe, simply corruptness. No, it is the larger view that is looked at. What would apply to Mahommedanism would apply to Judaism, would apply to heathenism, and would also apply to Christendom. The analogy is, that this particular form of evil requires a particular form of discipline, and that the world will be destroyed not by water but by fire from God in heaven. That is what I think is referred to by the "overthrow," and the reason of it; "whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord" (2 Peter 2:9-11).

But when we come to Jude, it is a great deal closer than all this. What he says is, "Likewise also these dreamers." I do not know any reason for putting in the word "filthy." You will see the word is in italics. There is a great deal

of wickedness where there is nothing wrong in word. It is only in the idea, there may be nothing offensive, yet it is sapping and undermining all that is precious in those people who live in the imagination of their own hearts instead of being guided by the word of God. Why? Because the word of God is an expression of God's authority, and His will is the only thing that ought to guide us, as well as all mankind. If that is true of man because he is the creature of God, how much more is it true of those whom He has begotten by the word of truth! These latter are therefore called more particularly to heed and learn the word of God. I do not know anything of more practical importance than that. If I were to give, in one word, in what all practical Christianity consists, I should say — obedience; and that obedience is entirely one of faith, not law. It is characterised in quite another way by Peter, "obedience of Jesus Christ," (1 Peter 1:2) not obedience of Adam. Adam's obedience was that he was not to touch that particular tree, but now that God has revealed His will we are bound by that revealed will. To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin. It is not merely you must not do anything wrong in all those ways of men which show how far their heart is from God, but "to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Talk about James being legal! obedience is his peculiar grace. He is the very one that speaks about "the law of liberty." The law of Moses was the law of bondage; it was purposely to convict man of sin which he had in his nature, to crush all self-righteousness out of him. Whereas what James speaks of is the exercise of a new life that God's grace gives us, and of the love that Christ has revealed that we should be after the pattern of Christ. What was the difference

between Christ's obedience and the Israelite's obedience? The Israelite's was, Thou shalt not do this or that. But this is not what Christ says. Of course, Christ never did anything that was wrong. Christ was pleasing to God in every act of His life, in every feeling of His soul, in all that constituted walking with God here below. This is exactly what we are called here to do. This is what Peter means when he says, "Elect according to foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification (or, in virtue of sanctification) of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood, of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:1, 2).

The sprinkling is the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and the reference is to Exodus 24, where Moses takes the book of the law and sprinkles it with blood, and he sprinkles the people too with blood; everything being thus brought under death. It was the great mark of death having its sway. The book and the people were sprinkled with the blood shed, meaning death to any who failed to obey that book. Now the Christian in a way stands totally contrasted with that; when he is converted his first desire is to do the will of God. When Saul of Tarsus was smitten down, his first words as a converted man were, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And this is what occurs even before we get peace. It is so with every converted person. His first desire is to do the will of God. He very little knows himself. He does not know how weak he is. He has got a bad nature counteracting him, but he has yet to learn the operation of the new nature that is in him. How does that new nature come? By receiving the word of revealed grace. I do not say the work of Christ the Saviour, because Saul knew very well that he knew nothing; but mercy and

goodness struck him down and gave him a new nature that he once railed at. Paul knew Christ was saving him, but he did not know that we have to learn, not only the word of God, but the experimental way of finding our need of it. It is not only the Saviour that we want, but the mighty work that abolishes all our sins, and brings us to God in perfect peace and liberty through the redemption of the Lord Jesus. It is not only that I am born again; that I am going to be saved by and by, but saved now. This is the proper meaning of the Christian dispensation that produces this desire even before I know that the blood of Christ is screening me entirely. I want to obey as Christ obeyed, not merely to do something like the Jew, but I am doing it now because this nature in me impels me to do it. It is the instinct of the new man. We have a great deal to learn about our utter weakness, and, consequently, about the need of deliverance. So we are elect unto the obedience of Christ, and are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, which gives us the comfortable assurance that our sins are clean gone. Hence the difference is very plain.

Now these “dreamers” referred to, lived in the imagination of their own hearts, and the New Testament is used to help these men very much indeed. When the New Testament is taken up by the natural mind, they proclaim what is called Christian Socialism, which sets up a standard of the gospel and dictates to everybody. You have no right to this large property! You have no right to these privileges that you assume! I am as good as you, and better too! This is the style these men take up with regard to the New Testament, thereby entirely twisting the word in order to gain advantages to themselves and to deny all the truth. It is really

dreaming about what ought to be, according to their mind, and to claim everything that they covet from those that are in a dignified position in the world — “likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion and speak evil of dignities.” They defile the flesh by what they convert scripture to. They consider themselves the equals of all, and not only so, but speak evil of dignities, so that there is evidently no fear of God before their eyes at all. And this shows that there is something very lamentable in the perversion of the gospel, the perversion of the New Testament. It is their own bad and selfish purpose that causes them to do this. The whole principle of the New Testament is this: what those that are of Christ do. Well, they feel according to Christ. What is that? Why, it is the principle of love that gives, that does not seek its own. Do you think these kind of men have any idea of giving? They only talk about other people giving. So this is all dreaming, as it is called here. Very justly Jude launches out into these strong terms, “Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.”

Jude 9

“But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee” (ver. 9).

The verse now before us presents one ground of exception taken against the Epistle by men who trust themselves. This introduction of Michael the archangel seems to them altogether inexplicable, as they consider it a mere tradition of the Jews reproduced by Jude or at any rate by one who wrote the Epistle bearing his name;

for they really do not know or care who wrote it. Only nobody must believe that Jude wrote it! Such talk consists simply of the objections of unbelief, which, doubting all that is inspired of God, sets itself to shake the confidence of those who do believe.

Although it is a fact presented in no other part of God's word, what solid reason is there in that to object? There is ground for thankfulness that He makes it known here.

Not a few statements may be traced in scripture, which have been given but a single mention; but they are just as certain as any others which are repeatedly named. The apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. 6:3, declares that the saints shall judge angels. It is not only that they shall judge the world, which no doubt is a truth revealed elsewhere; but it is there expressly said that they are to judge angels. I am not aware of any other scripture which intimates a destiny that most would consider strange if not incredible. We do find that the world to come is not to be put under angels; but that is a different thing. It does assure us that the habitable earth is to be put under the Lord Jesus in that day; and the saints are to reign with Him. To the risen saints will be given to share His royal authority; for that is the meaning here of "judging." It has nothing at all to do with Christ's final award of man. It is not a small mistake to suppose that the saints will exercise the final judgment over men or angels. All such judgment is exclusively given to the Son of man (John 5:22, 27; Rev. 20).

When it is said that we shall judge the world, the meaning is plain whether men believe or not. Such judging is to exercise the highest power and authority over the world by the will of God and for the glory of the

Lord Jesus. But there is no warrant for the notion that saints will take part in the great white throne judgment. On that throne sits only One, He that knows every secret, that searches the reins and hearts; and He is the sole Judge when it is a question of judging man in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to Paul's gospel. No man was ever given to fathom the lives of others; nor am I aware that we shall ever be called to share that knowledge so essential to the Judge of quick and dead.

In fact, the notion that we are to sit in judgment on people for eternity is a gross and groundless blunder, for which there is no shadow of proof in any part of scripture. But we shall judge the world when the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is come. He will reign for ever; and so shall we, as His word assures; but there is a special display of this joint reign, and this is during the thousand years. This, of course, is no question of eternal judgment, but of the kingdom; whereas, when the earth and the heaven flee, and no place is found for them, eternal judgment follows, and none but the Lord judges. All judgment is given to Him, when the works of men, who despised Him throughout the sad annals of time, come up for His eternal sentence. No assessors are associated with Him; He alone is the Judge.

There remains, however, the plain revelation that we shall judge angels. If this is confined to that one scripture, be it so; one clear word of God is as sure as a thousand. If we have to do with the witness of man, the word of a thousand, if they are decent people, must naturally have a weight beyond one man's. But here it is no question of men at all. What we stand upon, and the

only thing that gives us firmness of ground and elevation above all mist, the only thing that gives us faith, reverence, simplicity, and humility, is God's word. It is indeed a wonderful mercy, in a world of unbelief, truly to say, I believe God; to bow before, and rest in, the testimony of God; to have perfect confidence in what God has not only said, but written expressly to arrest, exercise, and inform our hearts.

Assuredly, if God says a thing once unmistakably, it is as certain as if it had pleased Him to say it many times. Indeed, as it appears to me, it will be found that God hardly ever repeats the same thing. There is a shade of difference in the different forms that God takes for communicating truth. Such is one of its great beauties, though quite lost to unbelievers, because they listen to His words in a vague and uncertain manner. As they never appropriate, so they never hear God in it. They may think of Paul or Peter, John or James, and flatter themselves to be quite as good or perhaps better. What is there in all this but man's exalting himself to his own debasement? He sinks morally every time he lifts himself up proudly against God and His word.

Here then we have a fact about the unseen world communicated, not in the days of Moses or Joshua, when the burial of Moses is brought before us. Here Jude writes many years after Christ, and first mentions it. Why should this appear strange? The right moment was come for God's good pleasure to communicate it.

Did not the apostle Paul first give us in his last Epistle the names of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses before Pharaoh? No doubt we were told of such magicians; but we did not know their names till the

Second Epistle to Timothy was written. Scripture can only be resolved into the will of God. It pleases God to exercise His entire sovereignty in this, and He would therein show Paul given to write of a thing reserved for him to bring out alone. So here we have the Holy Ghost proving His power and wisdom in recalling a mysterious fact at the close of Moses' life. Why should men doubt what is so easy for God to make known?

Is there anything too wonderful for His grace? Is not He Who works in revealing, God's eternal Spirit? And why should not He, if He see fit, reserve the names for that day when Paul wrote? The occasion was the growth of deceivers in Christendom — a thing that many seem disposed to entirely overlook. They yield to the amiable fancy that such an evil is impossible, especially among the brethren! But why so? Surely such impressions are not only stupid in the highest degree, but unbelieving too. It ought to be evident that, if anywhere on the face of the earth Satan would work mischief, it is exactly among such as stand for God's word and Spirit. Where superstition is tolerated, and rationalism reigns, he has already gained ruinous advantage over the religious and the profane. If any on the face of the earth at the present time refute both these hateful yet imposing errors, his spite must be against them. The reason is plain. We have no confidence in the flesh, but in the Lord; and to that one Name we are gathered for all we boast, leaning only on His word and the Spirit of God.

Let these then be our Jachin and Boaz, the two pillars of God's house, even in a day of ruin and scattering. Let us rejoice to be despised for the truth's sake. How can we expect to have any other feelings excited towards us? Do we not tell everybody that the church is a wreck

outwardly? And do they not say on the contrary that the church bids fair for reunion? that the classes and the masses are alike won by grand buildings, rites, ceremonies, music, and the like? that there is on the one side inflexible antiquity for those who venerate the past but on the other side the device of development to flatter the hopeful and self-confident? Then think of the modern influx of gold and silver, of which the apostolic church was so short! Is it not God now giving it to His church that they may in time buy up the world! And if any tell them that all such vaunts are only among the proofs of the church's utter ruin, what can they be but hateful and obnoxious in their eyes? Christ has always a path for the saints, a way of truth, love, and holiness for the darkest day of ruin, as much as for any other. It is for the eye single to Him and the ear that heeds His word to find the path, narrow as it is, but its lines fallen in pleasant places and a goodly heritage. But if we, hankering after earthly things, entangle ourselves with man's thoughts or the world's ways in religion, what can this issue be but that we help on the ruin? Disturbed, uneasy and unhappy we become, like Samson with his hair cut, weak as water, and blind to boot.

Nor is it at all unaccountable that men are busy against an Epistle which is one of the loudest and clearest in the trumpet blast that is blown against Christendom. For it expressly lays down that departure from the truth, and the turning God's grace to licentiousness, are to go on till judgment thereon — not that there may not be such as are faithful and true, keeping themselves in the love of God, and building themselves up on that most holy faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. What can be conceived more remote from men's new

inventions? from the vain restlessness which is ever in quest of some fresh effort? From everything of the sort we are bound to keep clear, as being deadly. It is not only from all tampering with bad ways, or false doctrine, but from humanising on what is divine. To this we are bound by the very nature of Christianity, which calls us to entire dependence upon the word and Spirit of God. It is not for us then, to be asking what is the wrong of this? or what harm is there in that? For the believer the true question is, What saith the scripture? How is it written?

It is written here: “But Michael the archangel, when, contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee” (ver. 9). Here, then, is a grand truth, taught in a striking and powerful manner. The apostle Peter, in the 2nd chapter of his Second Epistle, is said to give exactly the same thing as Jude, but he says not one word about it. He makes no allusion to Michael the archangel. He speaks in verse 4 of angels that sinned, whom God did not spare. But Jude presents it as the angels that kept not their first estate. This clearly has nothing to do with Michael. The reference to the archangel is entirely peculiar to Jude; and the object is to exhibit the spirit that becomes one who acts for God, even in dealing with His worst enemy, that there be no meeting evil with evil, nor reviling with reviling, but on the contrary immediate and confessed reference to God.

What makes it all the more surprising is the power vouchsafed to Michael. He is the angel whom God will employ to overthrow the devil from his evil eminence by-and-by (Rev. 12). But here the historical intimation given is entirely in character with the future. You may tell me

that Rev. 12. was not revealed to Jude, who wrote this. Be it so, yet the same God that wrought by Jude wrought also by John. It is evident from the two scriptures that the antagonism between Michael and the devil is not a truth foreign to God's word. There we have it in the written word. It is the truth of God. Jude was given to tell us what God moved Jude to write, which has not only great moral value for any time, but gives us the fact, full of interest, that the antagonism between Michael the archangel and the devil is not merely of the future. Here the proof lies before us that it wrought also in the past. Thus we can look back fifteen hundred years, and there behold the evidence of this contention between the devil and the archangel. Do you say that it was about the body of Moses, and what is that to anyone? Can we not readily enter into the importance of that dispute? Can we not understand the bearing of that question, when we hold in mind all the history of Israel in the wilderness, as given in Exodus and Numbers?

There is nothing more common among the prophets than this, that while during their lifetime they were hated, after they were dead and gone they became objects of the highest honour; and, what is so remarkable, the highest honour to the same class of people that hated them. They became not objects of honour so much to other people, but were honoured by the same unbelieving class that could not endure the prophets' words when they were alive. They are ready to kill the prophetic messenger when living, and all but worship him when he is dead. Well, it is the same unbelief that acts in both ways; which, when he was alive, scouted the word of God come through him, and condemned and hated him, but when he was dead, and

no longer, therefore, a living character to puncture their conscience, the very people who had war with the prophet would build a fine monument to his memory; and so, getting the character of being men who had a great regard for the prophet, men, therefore, that were doing their best for religion, they gave their money to have erected a fine monument, or to have a fine statue made, or as grand a picture as they could pay for! So true it is, the flesh is quite remarkable for being ready to honour a man when he is dead and gone, whom it could not endure when alive. Our Lord drew attention to this very characteristic. It is not an idea of mine at all, it is the truth of God. Our Lord lays this down most strongly against the Jewish people; and it is not at all confined to Jewish people. If you go now to the town of Bedford — to take an instance from our own country — there you will find a fine monument to John Bunyan, who, when alive, was scouted, imprisoned, and regarded as a presumptuous, bad man. The very same class of people now buy his book, and at any rate are not sorry that the children should read it along with the Arabian Nights' Entertainments in the nursery. So there they have the Pilgrim's Progress and the Arabian Nights' tales, and they are all considered equally entertaining for the children. They thereby show that they think the imprisoned tinker was a genius — for that is their way of looking at it; and therefore they gain for themselves credit in all sorts of ways, both as being men of taste, and also as men not at all averse to religion when it does not touch their conscience. The thing, therefore, that I am speaking of is always true and always will be true till the Lord come, and then there will be no such thing as "the vile person called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful," nor, on the other hand, the unjust treated as

righteous. Then there will be righteousness reigning, and everything and everyone will find their level according to God.

Now we all know from the account given of Moses, both in Exodus and Numbers, how constantly the children of Israel were contending with him, murmuring against him, speaking evil of him — hating Moses, really, and Aaron too. And it was only the power of God interfering every now and then that alarmed them, and cut them down, and compelled them at any rate to pay outward respect. But directly he was dead, the same devil that stirred them up against Moses when he was alive — oh, what would he not have given for that dead body! The dead body would have been made a relic. You know very well that this is a favourite idea of men — the dead body would have been an object of worship. The devil would, therefore, have gained doubly. First, by setting them at war with him while alive, and still more when he was dead by making them idolaters of Moses. So that we can easily understand why it was that the Lord buried the body Himself. But it appears that before he was buried, there was this contention between Michael the archangel and the devil about Moses' dead body; so perfectly in keeping with the mysterious manner in which Jehovah buried him where none should know, and where even if Satan was allowed to know, God interfered that Michael should guard that grave, that Michael should hinder all the efforts of the devil to get hold of that dead body. So we have the two facts: what is here told us by Jude, and the fact of Deuteronomy 34, where we have the account of the Lord's burying Moses — which He never did for any other man. Show me only a single case of the Lord's burying any one. I do not

remember one but that of Moses, and there were special reasons why Jehovah should secretly bury that dead body rather than any other.

There never was a man that exercised so remarkable a position towards a whole people as Moses did to the children of Israel, and now that he was gone, a reaction would take place under the devil, not in the least a reaction of faith, but of unbelief, to idolise that very body, the same man whom they continually plagued while living.

So that the fact, here brought before us, goes along with another fact to which I have just now referred in the Old Testament (the two perfectly tally), viz. — that there were special reasons in the case of Moses' dead body why the Lord should interfere. Now we learn from this passage in Jude a further very interesting fact, not about the Lord, but about the enemy and the one whom Jehovah thought proper to use. Now, there are others of great weight in heaven besides Michael. Gabriel stands in the presence of God, and, as we know, he was employed for a very important mission by God. It was not Michael, but Gabriel very particularly, who was used in announcing the birth of our Lord Jesus, and we can perfectly understand why Gabriel should be then employed rather than Michael. Michael is the prince that stands up for the Jewish people. Yes, but the Gospel of Luke shows the Lord Jesus born of woman, not merely for the Jewish people, but for man — "God's good pleasure in men," not merely in Jews: and therefore it is not that particular angel, Michael; he was not employed on that occasion. So that it appears to me that there was divine wisdom in Gabriel being employed on that mission rather than Michael; and that this is true will

surely be very evident to anyone who reads Daniel 10 and Daniel 12. I just refer to it now because of its importance in showing the harmony of scripture, and that even in a most extraordinary event that is only once recorded. It shows principles of divine truth that support, and fall in, and harmonise, with what was only revealed once. This is what I wish to show now.

Well, in the latter part of Daniel 10 (indeed as well Daniel 11), ver. 20, we read, “Then said he” (this is the angel that had to do with Daniel), “Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia.” There you see that it is not quite an unusual thing for angels to contend. Here we have it in still stronger language: “To fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come.”

Now, we shall find a little intimation who and what these princes were in the next verse: “But I will show thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.”

We learn here that Michael was pre-eminently the prince of Israel. In what sense? Not as reigning visibly, but as invisibly espousing the cause of the Jewish people. Now see how this falls in with Michael’s guarding the dead body of Moses, with his being employed by God to contend with the great enemy, so that there should be no misuse made of that dead body. Who had so pre-eminently this duty as the prince of Israel? And as to the angel that was speaking with Daniel, of whom we read a good deal in the previous part of the chapter in so highly interesting a manner and in the most glowing colours —

he says, “there is none that holdeth with me in these things” — that is, in opposing the princes of Grecia and Persia. Why? It appears that the princes of Grecia and Persia were not favourable to the Jewish people. In the same way, they had interests connected with Greece and Persia that were opposed to the Jewish people; and in the providence of God the angels are referred to here — angels are the great instruments of providence, the unseen working of God being carried out instrumentally by angels.

This is true now. We are all very much cared for by the angels, more than we are apt to think. We read of them in Hebrews (Heb. 1:14): “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” So we are indebted to angels now. I do not say it is Michael or Gabriel, but I do say that the angels are acting a special part at this present time in Christianity for all the heirs of salvation. You see that at this time, in Daniel, it was not so much a question about the heirs of salvation; it was a question of the Jewish people. They were the great object of God’s care in their fallen estate. They had been most guilty, but they were beloved. They were carried into captivity by the Babylonian power. And they were going to be the slaves of other powers on the earth; but for all that Michael stood up for them and this other angel who speaks to the prophet Daniel. There were also other angels that were opposed, whom they had to fight.

Well, people may say that it is all very mysterious. Indeed it is, dear brethren. It is not, therefore, incredible, but of very great moment, that we should have our hearts and minds open to believe what we do not see. There is nothing that adds more to the

simplicity of a believer than his having his faith exercised upon the things that are unseen as well as those that are eternal, and we ought to feel our indebtedness to God for these things.

Now, if you want a proof even in detail as to this, take the 8th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. There you find that the angel tells Philip to go in a certain direction, and he does so; and then we find the Spirit speaks. Not the angel, but the Spirit. I had better refer to it, because there is nothing like the scripture for its precision. Now, in Acts 8:26 we read: “And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” There were two roads, it appears. One was through a populous part of the land, and the other was desert. Well, a desert is not the place an evangelist would choose. The angel, therefore, acting in the providence of God, says to Philip: “You go that desert road.” And it is one of the beautiful features of Philip that he was not a reasoner. Reason is an excellent thing for men who have not got the word of God, and I do not say that there may not be useful reasoning outside divine things, what you may call common sense. But I do say this, that the more the believer can act on divine principles at all times, the better for his soul, and the more to the praise of the Lord. If he is sometimes acting, like a man of the world, on his common sense, and at another time acting on the word of God as a believer, he is in danger of being practically two different persons. And when a man plays the game of two personalities he is very apt to become a hypocrite; there will be a want of reality about the man. We ought only to have one personality. We are bought with a price,

not merely for our religious matters, but for everything. We do not belong to ourselves, we are the Lord's; and, therefore, the more a believer can rise above merely what he will do as a man to that which he loves to do as a saint — the more entirely he keeps to this only, so much the more consistent is he with his profession as a child of God. For why should it not be so? What is to hinder his being a saint in anything at all? Cannot he be a saint when serving in his shop? Cannot he be a saint when in his office? Surely he might, and ought to be. There is nothing to hinder, if he were lively in faith and has the Lord before him. But if, on the contrary, he only looks at the shop or the office — "Well, now," he says, "it is not Sunday, nor is it the meeting now; I go there as a man." So there it is. How can he expect anything like faith, or grace, care for Christ and His glory, if that is the case? I deny entirely that we may not be servants of Christ in the commonest things of this life; and this is what, I think, we have all especially to pray for. Of course, we need to pray that we may behave as saints when we come into the assembly, and when we find ourselves at a meeting of any kind; but why we should be off our saintship when we go into business or anything else is another matter, and a very dangerous line to pursue.

Now then, here you see that we have the angel of the Lord providentially dealing with Philip, and Philip acts upon it at once. He does not say, "Ah, I shall not be able to get a congregation, and at any rate I don't like a little one; I want to have a big one." He has not a word about little or big; in fact, he was not going to have a congregation. He must be content with one single soul. That soul is precious beyond all calculation to God, if not

even to himself. What would all the world be to one if the soul were lost, as the Lord Himself told men, and which they still refuse to believe?

Well then, the angel gives Philip this word, and he hears, and goes without a question. But when he was there — in this road, “this way that goeth down from Jerusalem” — here this Ethiopian stranger in his chariot was met, returning from Jerusalem, and reading the prophet Isaiah. He was not now going up to Jerusalem to get a blessing there. He may have looked for and prayed for that, but he did not get it there. He was returning from Jerusalem unblest, going away from that city, and this was just what the gospel was doing. It was leaving Jerusalem, driven out by unbelief, and this poor Jewish proselyte was going away unblest by the gospel in that city, for he had not found a blessing there. There was a persecution going on there against it. And now, returning, he was reading in his chariot. “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot.” Now, why is it the Spirit here? Because it was what concerned the word of God and the soul. The angel said not a word about the soul of the Ethiopian. I do not know that the angel knew anything about it. The angel had to do the bidding of God, “Tell that man to go by the road that is a desert.” He acted on it; the angel was right, and Philip was right, but it was entirely providential. And then comes the spiritual part, and here the Holy Ghost interposes.

Well, we have not now the angel speaking and the Holy Ghost speaking, but we have the angels acting. We may not perhaps know how it is, but an angel interposes many a time to prevent us going in a certain way, when, if there had not been that interposition, we should have

been killed. We often go where we had no intention of going, or do not go where we meant to go. When I say “often,” I mean sometimes; throughout our whole lives it would really bear the word “often.” But there is no man but what does from time to time what he never intended to do, perhaps through an impulse given him — he cannot tell how or why — and he goes this way, when he meant to have gone that way.

Here, however, we find that there is another kind of guidance of a more spiritual nature for the soul, prompting (so to speak) the soul to give a word for the Lord. Do you suppose there is no such thing now? Such an idea may be for people who do not believe that the Holy Ghost is come, and that to abide; but He is still here. It is put in Acts 8 in an open objective form, but it is meant to teach us that the same thing is true now, although it does not come out openly in the same manner. It is quite true, and this is not the only case. If you compare the 12th chapter of the Acts with the 13th, you will see an angel acting in the one chapter and the Spirit acting in the next. I only mention it because the Acts of the Apostles is surely a history of Christianity, a history of Christians, of what Christians have been used for, and what they are meant to live in. Well, then, here, when it was not a question of Christians or the gospel, but of nations and people, we find the part that the angels play — not merely the holy ones, but the unholy ones. This is the very thing that we find at the grave of Moses, and about that same people, Israel. Michael is the prince who stands up for them opposing the efforts of the enemy against them; and this entirely confirms the principles of God’s word. They are entirely in favour of this extraordinary revelation made in the 9th verse of

Jude, and they are found to support and confirm it in the highest degree.

Now, before we go further, I refer to another scripture in Zechariah 3. There we have a very interesting removal of the veil that we may see the unseen. We read these words: “And he showed me” (that is, the angel showed Zechariah) “Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Jehovah, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him” (ver. 1). There you have the same opposition again. In this case, however, it is the “angel of Jehovah.” I should be disposed to distinguish him from Michael. The “angel of Jehovah” is an altogether peculiar term. The angel of Jehovah is rather the way in which the Lord Jesus is referred to in the Old Testament — not the only way, but a very usual way. The angel of Jehovah every now and then is shown to be Jehovah Himself. I do not mean that He is the only person that is Jehovah. As we read in Deut. 6:4, “Jehovah our God is one Jehovah,” that is, it is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Who are the one God that we acknowledge as Christians. They are all three Jehovah, they are all equally Jehovah, and it therefore helps us to understand why He is viewed as “the Angel of Jehovah.” He is Jehovah too, though not the only One that is called Jehovah. This explains what we have here: “He showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Jehovah, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And Jehovah” (notice that after speaking of “the angel of Jehovah” it is now “Jehovah”) — “And Jehovah said unto Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan” — the very words that Michael uses to Satan as reported by Jude!

Well, is not this a very strong confirmation, not only of this remarkable opposition between the holy angels and

the unholy ones, but also of Satan's opposition? We find this antagonism in both scriptures, precisely alike. Even Jehovah Himself, instead of merely taunting Satan, says "Jehovah rebuke thee." The time was not yet for the most terrible rebuke to come, as it will unmistakably when he shall be trodden under foot. He has to be bound for a thousand years in the abyss; he has to be cast into the lake of fire. All these will be part of the ways in which Jehovah will rebuke him, but till that time arrives we see how God meanwhile guards His own purpose; He does not allow Satan to interfere with His design. He allows man to show out his insensibility and his sin, and He chastises him. He does not yet put forth His power to deal with Satan as He will do; but there is that word, "Jehovah rebuke thee," as He surely will. It is a continual warning from Jehovah, which will be accomplished in its own day, and in various places and various stages. But you can easily see that it would be unseemly to have a mere dispute going on between Jehovah and Satan; and all, therefore, that He puts forth is this solemn warning of what is coming.

Well, the angel repeats that warning to Satan in a very early day, and here, a thousand years after, you have the same truth, the same antagonism even, if not the same persons exactly; but the same spirit all through.

Scripture is perfectly consistent, perfectly reliable. And although Jude was the first one that brought out this fact, it falls in with the other facts of scripture: both in the early days of Moses, in the later of Zechariah, and now in the days of the gospel, in the days of Christianity.

So that nothing can be more complete than the proof that these learned critics are totally ignorant of God,

totally ignorant of the Bible, except of the mere surface, the mere letter that kills, and know not the spirit that quickens.

Well, here then you see how beautiful it is that instead of bringing a railing accusation, Michael simply warned Satan with the solemn words: “Jehovah rebuke thee” — “The Lord rebuke thee.” What would railing do? If there are two people railing, a good and a bad man, and the bad man’s railing provokes the good man to rail, the good man goes down to the level of the bad. It does not at all diminish the railing of the other. I should think at any time that a bad man could gain a good degree over the good man in the way of railing. Surely he is much more practised, and very likely more unscrupulous and more malicious, and therefore it sounds stronger to the ear of man. But, you see, that would be a total lowering of even an angel, and how much more of a saint, I might say. Here we have the beautiful conduct of the angel as a pattern to the saint, that we be not provoked, nor, when we are reviled, revile again, but act as the Lord Himself acted. He committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. Well, that is what Jehovah will do; He will judge righteously, but the time is not yet come for its manifestation.

Jude 10, Jude 11, Jude 12, Jude 13.

“But these rail at whatever things they know not; but whatever they understand naturally, as the irrational animals, in these things they corrupt themselves (or, perish). Woe unto them! because they went in the way of Cain, and rushed greedily into the error of Balaam’s hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah” (vers. 10, 11).

“But these speak evil” — referring now to the persons who, notwithstanding that they had been baptised and had taken their place in the church, were now yielding to every form of corruption, were abandoning the very things that they professed. I do not say that they were outside. This is the difference between Jude and John. When we come down to John’s Epistle they went out; but the corrupting thing in Jude is that there they are poisoning others.

Now it is remarkable that in the Second Epistle of Peter we have only Balaam, and Michael we have not at all; so that nothing can be more superficial than the idea that the one writer has copied the other. It is true that there is much that is common to both Epistles, but the differences between Jude and Peter are the striking thing; the points of resemblance are easily accounted for. In the position in which Jude and Peter were, there must have been the closest friendship, and a very near companionship; and there must have been strong links of love between these two elder servants of the Lord. Would they not communicate their thoughts and judgments ta each other, even if they are looked at as servants of God? This is nothing, therefore, at all surprising. Nothing more likely than that Peter should communicate a good deal to Jude, and, on the other hand, that Jude should communicate a good deal to Peter; and, besides, the Spirit of God giving them to look at the same, or kindred evil, would give them similar judgments and thoughts. You find that in people who have never met or spoken to one another, if they have to do with the same evil, they often say things very much alike; substantially alike they are sure to be, if guided by the Spirit of God, but there are often surprising verbal

resemblances. But this is not where the beauty and the striking nature of the two Epistles of Jude and of Second Peter show themselves. It is in the differences between them.

Now Peter is particularly occupied with wicked teachers — men that privily brought in, what he calls, “heresies,” or sects. The word “heresy” in scripture means “a sect.” It never means heterodoxy, as we use the word in its modern sense. That is not the scriptural sense at all. No doubt in the sect there might be heterodoxy, and there might be a sect without heterodoxies, or there might be one with a great deal of heterodoxy. So that “sect” admits of all kinds, or shades, of evil and error; but Peter is looking particularly at false teachers, and these false teachers covetous men; greed of gain is one marked feature which he specifies. Well now, where could you get an Old Testament example of greed so marked as Balaam? Consequently, we find Balaam in Peter, just where it should be. It falls in entirely with his purport, and with that Second Epistle and second chapter.

But here, Jude, in this very much shorter Epistle — and far more compact, far more compressed, and far more vehement — writes as in a tempest of hatred of all these bad men. Indeed, I do not know stronger language. Some do not like strong language. But that should entirely depend upon how it is used. Strong language against what is good is infamous, but against what is bad is thoroughly right; and I do not know stronger language anywhere than in this very Epistle of Jude in which he speaks out against railing. But strong language and railing are not the same thing. Railing is abuse of what is good; but here we have the pithiest, the most

vehement, and most cutting exposure of what is evil; and instead of this being a thing to regret, it is a thing that we ought to feel and go along with heartily. But I know it does not suit the present age. The present age is an age for trying to think that there is nothing so good but what there is bad in it, and nothing so bad but what there is good in it. The consequence is that all moral power is at a deadlock, and people have no real, burning love for what is good — only a calm, quiet, lukewarm state. They are neither strong for good nor strong against evil; and that is a state which, I believe, the Lord hates — at any rate, it does not agree with either Peter or Jude.

"Woe unto them! because they went in the way of Cain, and rushed greedily into the error of Balaam's hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah." In the Epistle of Peter there is not a word about Cain, not a word about Korah. But here you see that Jude, having a different object, compresses in this most wonderful verse — for it is a most wonderful verse — an amount of moral truth, spiritual truth, divine truth, that was here entirely departed from, grace being altogether hated and abused. All this is found in this short verse. He goes up to Cain.

"These are spots (or, hidden rocks) in your love-feasts, feasting together, fearlessly pasturing themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumnal trees without fruit, twice dead, rooted up; raging sea-waves, foaming out their own shames; wandering stars for whom hath been reserved the gloom of darkness for ever" (vers. 12, 13).

I cannot conceive any but an inspired man venturing to use such decided and solemn language about those that were within the church. That is a marked point of the Epistle. Peter looks at the unrighteousness of man generally, even since Christianity is come, because he is occupied simply with iniquity. This of course is common to both writers; but Jude looks specially at those who took the place of salvation, those that were gathered to the name of the Lord. In this latter case, therefore, the matter had yet more seriousness for the spiritual mind. There is nothing more dangerous than a departure from the faith, the Christian faith. It is not only what man is and has done, but also what grace has made known, for which we are responsible, most of all if we turn from it in unbelief. What is so evil as apostasy?

There are many things that cause truth to lose its power with men. Nothing hastens it more than moral disorder in ourselves, which results from forgetting or abusing grace. We turn our backs on God's authority, as well as our relation to our Lord Jesus; this is followed by our taking up objects that are loved so as to become practically our idols. It is clear that these things have been substantially so from the beginning, as it is also clear from this Epistle that things will go on worse and worse, until the Lord comes in judgment. As to this point we shall have to weigh what is yet stronger than what we have already considered, when it will be ours to seek a divine impression of the words already read. Manifestly they are of the darkest character and full of energy.

Observe here the word, "Woe." I do not know it anywhere in the New Testament except in the very different application which the apostle makes to himself,

if he did not make the glad tidings known (1 Cor. 9:16). Here it is, “Woe unto them.” I am not of course speaking of the Gospels, but of the Epistles; where the Spirit of God is testifying of the Saviour and His work to man, or dealing with those who bear the Lord’s name. In the Gospels, even our Lord could not but say, “Woe”; but then He was warning those that represented a favoured nation, which was then through unbelief passing under divine judgment. The same One Who began His ministry with Blessed, blessed, blessed, ended it with Woe, woe, woe! Nothing was further from His heart than to pronounce that sentence, but as He said, so was He to execute it in due time. He pronounced it as a Prophet when on the earth, if peradventure they might take it to heart, and He will pronounce it as a Judge on the great white throne when heaven and earth pass away.

What, then, is the explanation of this utterance of Paul, “Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel”? Paul, who had been a poor deluded soul, by the grace of God had a fearful warning to do His will in preaching, but he does not say “Woe” to them, like Jude. He might have had his great fears for some when he let the Corinthians know how possible it was for a man who preached the gospel nevertheless to become a reprobate (1 Cor. 9:27). I think there is no doubt that that word “reprobate” means one lost; because salvation does not go with preaching, it goes with believing; and it is quite possible for those who preach to destroy the faith which once they preached. We have known that ourselves from time to time, and it has always been so. But the apostle had such a solemn sense of his responsibility to proclaim the gospel to perishing souls everywhere, that “Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel.” Yet he preached it in the

spirit of grace beyond any man that ever lived. Here, however, in Jude it is a very different case. “Woe unto them,” he says, “for they have gone in the way of Cain, and run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah.”

It is a most remarkable picture of the history of Christendom on its blackest side. There cannot be anything more graphic. It is not the mere order of history. If it were the order of history then the error of Balaam would be put last. It is a moral order, the order of men’s souls. It is what presented itself to the apostle in the Holy Ghost. Jude begins with the first root of what is wrong, and I think he is referring to a man (Cain) that ought to be a brother in affection, and who ought to have been a holy brother, because he took the place of being a worshipper. Cain brought his offering to Jehovah, and it was that very bringing of his offering to Jehovah that brought out his wickedness. How little people know what may be the turning-point of ruin for their souls! Cain no doubt went forward with confidence and with a step of assurance in his offering of fine fruit and other productions of the earth that he had cultivated, no doubt, with care. We may be sure he had chosen the very best because man would not fail in that. A man of the world is often very careful indeed as to outward appearances. Cain sees nothing defective in the offering itself — in the materials that composed the offering; but there was this vital defect which completely ruined him, that there was no faith. There is no mention of either God on the one hand, which must be, nor, on the other hand, was there any judgment of his own sinfulness. He failed therefore completely as to the inner man, for God never calls upon men who put on any

appearance before Him. This is what was done here; perhaps no great depth of it, but still Cain took the place of a worshipper and he brought his offering to Jehovah, with no consciousness of his own ruin by sin, nor of God's grace, or of the need of it. But that was not all.

On the same occasion, Abel brought his offering, which was acceptable; his offering was of the first-born of the flock. Not only was it blood that he offered, the acknowledgment of the necessity of death, and of the Saviour to meet his sins, but there was also the sense of the excellency of the Saviour before God — he brought "of the fat thereof." Consequently there was a most decided effect in the case of Abel when he brought his offering before God. His very name shows what was very true of his character, no confidence in himself, for the word "Abel" refers to that which passes away like smoke, whereas "Cain" has the signification of "acquisition," very much like the word "gain" in our language. Abel was a man entirely dependent upon grace, upon the Seed of the woman of whom he had no doubt heard over and over again from both father and mother, with other truths which he had never forgotten. God took care that these truths should be most prominent from the very earliest day, but it made no impression on Cain, and the reason was because he had never judged himself before God, and had no sense of his real need whatever. The opposite of all this was true of Abel, and his offering Jehovah accepted. This at once drew out the character of Cain; plain enough before to God, but it now came out openly in his hatred of his brother. What had his brother done to arouse that wickedness? You may be sure that the general character produced by faith in Abel had shown itself in every way

of tender affection to his elder brother; but Cain could not brook that God should accept Abel and his offering, and not look at Cain's. Nevertheless God deigned to expostulate with him and his lack of faith, in order to save him, if it could be, from what his wicked heart was rushing into. But no; Cain failed both before God and man, and what is more, before his brother. Now this is the first great beginning of the ruin of Christendom, and this showed itself in early days. We find such a thing quite common in our own days. We cannot doubt but that there was a powerful impression made on the world by the new life and ways of real Christians; yet there always were persons who have not only no sympathy with God's love, but who even despise it, and who are irritated by it, more especially if they are dealt with faithfully by those that know it. This is another reason why our minds are blinded towards our brothers. There comes a still worse feeling towards God, but this order was reversed in Cain's case. In the root of the matter, I suppose that all evil feeling towards one another springs from a previous feeling towards God. Our feeling in the presence of God breaks out in the presence of one another. Certainly this was the case with Cain.

Here we find the first woe. "Woe unto them I for they have gone in the way of Cain." It is a departure from faith, it is a departure from love, it is a departure from righteousness. It was the spirit of a worldly man, and therefore he was the first man who began open worldliness. Before that time there was great simplicity. It would be very untrue to say that there was the least of what was savage in Adam and Eve. There was everything that was sweet and beautiful in what God gave them; but still there were not the delights of

civilisation, there was none of those things that people seem particularly to enjoy in modern times. It cannot be wise to disguise from our eyes that the progress of worldliness is enormous. I do not doubt that all the recent discoveries of gold and silver have greatly added both to the covetousness of men, and the desire for "display" one before another according to their means; whereas Christianity has nothing at all to do with "means"; it has everything to do with faith. If we care to do so there is always a use for what God gives, that is, to use it to His glory; but to turn it all to a selfish account, or to a display before others, is a mere vulgar kind of selfishness. This is the kind of thing that we find in Cain. There were, of course, the pleasures of stringed and wind instruments from the very beginning of civic life, and there was also then the beauty of poetry, which began, no doubt, rather poorly. It was all man, and man's reasoning. This is all man's enjoyment, and it is practically very much what we have at the present day. No doubt many things have been invented since the early times. There is always development in human things, and there is our development in divine things, but there is no obedience in development. There is nothing divine in development, but there is obedience in doing what the Lord sets before us in His word; yet the moment you add to that word in any way, or take away from it, it is the reverse of God's teaching. It is setting up to be wiser than God, and this we can do without His power. All this idea that we can do something that will do His work better is the work of unbelief, and is an idea destructive of a Christian's peace, and destructive of the simple principle of obedience contained in the word of God. Oh, what a privilege it is to own and teach this principle! to hear and do His will! We are always

learners, and should we not always be coming to a better knowledge of the word by faith? Where there is not faith we do not come to this knowledge.

However, we see in the case of Cain a very fit and proper beginning of the woe that is coming on and the terrible sin that calls for the woe. Now the solemn thing is that it also refers to the present time. Evil never dies out, but gets darker and more opposed to God — becomes more hardened against God, without the least compunction of conscience.

Taking events out of mere historical order so as to make them exactly suit the truth, we have, as the next thing, the case of Balaam. The incident which brought out the nature of Balaam and the fact of his being a typical enemy of God is a further sample of what was to be in Christendom. This was when he uttered the most glorious truths; and I suppose, they were the only truths which he had ever uttered in his life. Well, Balaam was drawn to curse Israel, and he was induced to do so by the offers of gold and silver and honour of every kind. And I will even say that he tried to make out that he did not care for money; he said he was entirely above such a paltry consideration. The sin of Balaam is a very solemn thing. He went out to sin, he went out to meet (as our translators have put it) Jehovah — to “meet the Lord,” but there was nothing of “the Lord” in it, the words being merely added (Num. 23:15). The fact is, he went to meet the devil, whom he had been accustomed to meet. He went out to seek enchantment — that is the devil, of course. Our translators have put in “the Lord” (Jehovah), but the fact is it was the enemy of the Lord, the source of all Balaam’s wickedness and wicked power. Balaam knew that it was a divine power that

compelled him to speak about what he had no thought of speaking about; but when he did so, his vast capacity for eloquence went along with his speaking.

God did not refuse to allow this man's mind to be displayed. This is the way in which God sometimes works by all the writers He employs. The man must be uncommonly dull not to see a difference of style in comparing the different books of the Bible. If it were merely the Spirit of God it would be the same style in all, but it is the Spirit of God causing a man to bring out the truth of God and to give it out with that style and feeling which should justly accompany it. So in the case of Balaam: although he was much moved by the thought of dying the death of the righteous, yet there was not one single working of his soul in communion with God. He was the enemy of God, and the one who came to curse the Israel of God, but he was compelled to give utterance to most glorious predictions. The wonderful effusions of this wicked prophet glorified the coming of the Lord Jesus. There is something of that kind now in Christendom. Sometimes the most wicked of men can preach eloquently, and what is extraordinary too, God has often used the words of unconverted men for the conversion of others. I have no doubt that this is the case at the present time, and it has always been so. Of course, it is altogether one of the side features of ruin. The normal manner is for those that are saved to be the messengers of salvation to others.

The error of Balaam was that he was the willing instrument of the devil to destroy Israel, and as he could not curse them he did not give it up, yet it was a vain attempt to do so. Jehovah turned it into a blessing. Balaam thought to employ the women of Moab to draw

the Israelites after idolatry. He could not turn Jehovah away from Israel, so he tried to turn Israel away from Jehovah. I have no doubt a great many souls throughout Christendom have been converted by these utterances of Balaam. Balaam's eyes were fixed upon Israel — he wanted to damage them; they were the people he hated, they were the persons he wished to bring down, they were the persons he maligned and misrepresented with all his might, but he did not know that they were the people of Jehovah. But God knew.

Then with regard to Moses and Aaron: Moses represented God, and Aaron represented the intercession of the grace of God; but Korah would not submit to such a thing for a moment (Num. 16). In the case of Korah, what makes it the more atrocious is that he had a very honourable place; he belonged to the highest rank of the Levites, to that honoured section of the Levites to which Moses had belonged. Moses had first the call of God, Who lifted him up, beyond all question; but Korah belonged to the most honoured of the three families of the Levites who were servants or ministers of the sanctuary, and, as I have said, Korah belonged to the highest of the Levites; but nothing satisfied him. Why? Because he hated that Moses should have a place that belonged to him beyond any other. Satan blinded his eyes, which he always does so that people may feel like this. Korah's object was to achieve what pertained only to Moses and Aaron. There are always many good reasons for bad things, and the reasons sound well, but they are words that strike at God and at Christ. There was a punishment not only of Korah but also of his family, other Levites, and all their families. And the earth opened her mouth and

swallowed them up in a way that had never happened on any other occasion since the world began. There may have been something resembling it, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, where it rained fire and brimstone and consumed the wicked, but the converse was the case here. The earth opened and swallowed them up. We find further a remarkable thing: the children of Korah were not consumed. He was the leader of the rebellion against Jehovah, but God in the midst of His judgment showed mercy to the sons. They did not perish through the plague that afterwards set in amongst the congregation. These sons of Korah are referred to in the Psalms, for there is the fact recorded that there are “the sons of Korah,” and the right persons to sing such psalms. Well, all these things perish that do not depend upon the grace of God — things like the error of Korah, things that war against God, that cause all those uprisings of falsehood. I think all such things such as the Oxford movement, are wrong. I do not mean the Ritualistic one only, which is extremely vulgar. But what is the error of the Oxford movement? It is very nearly the same error as Korah’s. Korah wanted to be priest as well as minister. That kind of thing is what men are doing now who maintain that they are sacrificing priests. It is true that the sacrifice is a perfect absurdity: the sacrifice is the bread and the wine. How could this be a sacrifice? If they called it an offering it would be a better term; but they not only call it a sacrifice, but they fully believe that Christ personally enters the bread and the wine. Therefore they are bound to worship the “elements,” as they call it. Such an idea is lower than heathenism, for the heathens never eat their God. These men are sanctimonious and exceedingly devoted to the poor. Yes, and they are most zealous in attending their

churches, and in attending to their monstrous developments. This is of the same character as that described with reference to Korah. But the only sense in which these men should preach is when they become really sons of God, redeemed Christians, because that is the only sense in which they will be received; but all this false doctrine of the Oxford School denies that all Christians are priests, and infringes and overthrows the real work of Christ, and substitutes this continual sacrifice, which is a sin. So that no wonder Jude says, “Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah.”

Then note the tremendous words that follow: “These are spots in your love-feasts.” Think of it. There were such men at that time in the church. Therefore we ought never to be surprised at anything evil that may break out in the world; the only thing is for believers to fight the good fight of faith. There is another rendering — “Hidden rocks in your love-feasts, feasting together, fearlessly pasturing themselves; clouds” they are, and it should be noted they are “without water,” without the real work of the Spirit of God, the rich refreshment of it — “carried along by winds.” As I said before, I will not deny that God may use any person in a solemn way which is thought to be a good deal of honour in the priesthood, but it is deadly work for themselves who preach. “Autumnal trees without fruit, twice dead, rooted up; raging waves of the sea foaming out their own shames: wandering stars for whom hath been reserved the gloom of darkness for ever.”

May God preserve His saints, and may we by watchfulness and prayer be carried safely through such dangers as these.

Jude 14, Jude 15.

“And Enoch, seventh from Adam, prophesied also as to these, saying, Behold, [the] Lord came amid His holy myriads, to execute judgment against all, and to convict all the ungodly [of them] of all their works of ungodliness which they ungodlily wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners spoke against him” (vers. 14, 15).

This is a remarkable utterance, for which we can only account as being in the power of the Holy Ghost.

There is a traditional book of Enoch in the Ethiopic language, which appears to have been known in a Greek form now long lost. We have not got the Greek, but learned men have endeavoured with all possible zeal to try and make out that Jude quotes from this uninspired book; for the book is evidently one of Jewish tradition, and from internal evidence it would seem that it was written after the destruction of Jerusalem. But there is another thing that appears, I think, to anyone that reads it with, not merely learning, but with spiritual understanding, which is, that it differs essentially in this very verse, supposed by some to be quoted from it, from what Jude has here given us by the Spirit of God.

But how was Jude enabled to quote the words of Enoch, who was taken up to heaven before the flood — and nothing can be plainer than that he does give it as Enoch’s words? “Enoch prophesied,” he says. Well, I think that to us who know the power of the Spirit of God

there is no real difficulty in the matter. It is all the same to Him to record what took place three thousand years ago as it would be to record what took place at the time the apostles lived. It may be a little more difficult to those who doubt this power, if they do; but we are the last who ought to do so.

The fact is, that no tradition has any value beyond man, but a prophecy necessarily, if it is a true one, comes from God. We have no intimation that it was conveyed in any written form, and it was quite possible for the Holy Ghost to have given it again to Jude. I do not at all venture to say that it was so; we really do not know, but we do know, however Jude got it, that it is divine. We know that it is given with absolute certainty, and that it possesses God's authority.

There is a peculiarity when it says, "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam." People have made somewhat of that because they do not understand it. But it is very simple. There was more than one Enoch.

There was an Enoch before this one — an Enoch the son of Cain. I do not see any ground to imagine something peculiar and mystical in this. At any rate, if there be such, I confess I do not know what it is. But I do know that there is a plain and sufficient sense to distinguish this Enoch, and to explain how he could prophesy. We should not look for prophecy in a son of Cain. But that Enoch taken up to heaven in a most remarkable way — more so, in some respects, than the case of any other man; more so than Elijah, though that was a miracle of similar import and character — that Enoch should be the medium of prophecy we can quite understand, for he walked with God, and was not. It was not that he died,

but “he was not,” because he was taken up to God; yet before he left the world, he prophesied. We can hardly doubt that he prophesied about the people of his own day. Prophecy always takes its start from what is actually present, and has a hold in the consciences of those then living. The object was to warn of the terrible consequences of evil that was persisted in, and how the evil then appearing would assuredly be judged of God in due time. But the Spirit of God also launches out to the end from the beginning. This is the common character of all prophecy. We find it throughout all the prophets at any rate. I do not, of course, say that it was always the case where the prediction was about something of a merely present nature, but it was so in the cases of those moral pictures which are not bound to any particular time or person. We can quite understand these being made the vehicle for the Spirit of God to look on to the time of judgment when it would not be providential action of the Lord, such as the flood, for instance, but — much more than any acting after that figurative manner — His real personal coming in judgment.

Now, in that Ethiopic book which I have seen, and of which I have the text and English translation by the late Archbishop Laurence, as well as a French version of the work by a very learned Romanist (perhaps a more excellent scholar than the Archbishop I have named, at any rate one more familiar with Oriental languages) — they both agree in what is totally different from what we have here; and what makes it more remarkable is, they agree in asserting an error which is almost universal now in Christendom.

You are aware that the general view of all Christians who derive their thoughts from traditions, creeds, or articles of faith, is that everyone will be judged alike; and this view falls in quite with the natural thought, particularly of the natural man. It seems to them a very offensive thing that those who are really sinners like themselves, but are believers unlike themselves, should not be judged. It seems, to them, since they think very little of believing, a very hard and unrighteous thing that believers should be exempted from a judgment to which others are fast hastening.

But why? Our Lord puts it in the clearest possible manner in John 5. He there describes Himself in two different lights — one as Son of God, the other as Son of man. As Son of God He gives life. And who are they who get life? Does He not tell us that he “that believes on Him hath life eternal”? It is one of those remarkable, short and pithy statements of the Gospel of John. In one form or another it runs through the entire Gospel, I might almost say from the first chapter, though we may not have the literal words, but the same fundamental, substantial sense. And it goes on all through this Gospel, to John 20 certainly, if not to John 21. And the same great truth re-appears in his First Epistle; that life belongs to him that believes on the Lord Jesus. Just as surely as we inherit death naturally from Adam, so now there is another man who is also God, and being God as well as Man, He has entirely set aside for us the judgment of our sins by bearing it Himself. But that is not all. He gives us this new life which is proper to Himself that we might be able to bear fruit for God now. There must be a good life to bear good fruit. And there is no good life to bear fruit that God counts good except

Christ's life, and all that are of faith have received that life every Old Testament saint, as really as a New Testament saint. They had faith, they had life, they testified for God. Their ways were holy, which they could not have been had they not a life to produce this holiness; and so it is now.

Well, accordingly, those that believe on Him, the Son of God, receive life. If I reject His divine glory, that is, that He is the Son of God in this high and full sense, then I have not life; because He only gives it to those that believe. But do those who remain in unbelief therefore escape? No, He is Son of man; and this is just where their want of faith broke down. They could see that He was a man, and as they had no faith to see anything deeper, they only regarded Him as Son of man. In this very character the Lord will judge them. He will judge them as the Man Whom they despised. They will behold Him as the Man of everlasting glory. Not merely a divine person, but a Man; and in that very quality — as Son of man — He will judge them.

Now, there would be no sense in, or reason for, judging the believer, even if it were not said by our Lord that the believer shall not come into judgment. Because, what would he come into judgment for? If any go into judgment, it is a reality. It must be so if God were to enter into judgment with even believers. Were they never guilty of sins? And if these sins come into judgment, they cannot escape punishment; and if they are judged, they are lost. But if Christ has borne their sins, where would be the abject or wisdom of putting them on their trial after they are acquitted and justified? And we are justified now by faith. All believers are. Every Christian is. It is not a question of peculiar views.

I hate peculiar views. Peculiar views are the errors of men. It would be a most shameful thing to count God's truth to be "peculiar views." The only thing a Christian should care for is God's truth. It is only the language of an enemy to count that "peculiar views." If there are those that try to blacken it and call it peculiar views their blood must be on their own heads. The language is the language of an adversary. We have nothing to do with running after new views or innovations of any kind, and God forbid that we should care for one single thing that is an innovation. I call an innovation anything that is a departure from God's word.

It is not the antiquity of sixteen or seventeen centuries, but we go to the very beginning, to the apostles, and to the Lord Himself; and there is the source from which we may draw and know for ourselves immediately, just as truly as if we had the apostles here before us. The apostles were certainly not more inspired when they spoke and preached than when they wrote; but it was what they wrote that was made to convey down the stream of ages divine truth with the utmost possible certainty. There is a great advantage in having what is written. You can come and come again. Even if you listened to an apostle, or to the Lord, you might forget. You might slip away from His words and put in some of your own. There is nothing more common than this every day, even with very accurate people; they do not carry absolutely every word. It is too serious a thing not to have the word of God, and it is of the utmost importance that we have it written. What we want is the truth first-hand — from the people inspired to give it — and this is just what we have. And the simplest man is responsible to weigh and consider it.

It may be said he is a weak soul. Well, we are all too apt to think too much of ourselves. Especially, if men have a little ability, they are apt to overestimate what they have. There is nothing more common than this, and nothing more dangerous. Whereas, if a man is really a weak soul and does not think much about himself there is far more readiness to learn; unless he is an obstinate man, who, even though he knows but very little, thinks a deal of himself. There is nothing so dangerous as that, especially when such a one lifts himself up against the word of God. When a man is brought to God, he is made nothing of in his own eyes. Would to God we always stayed there, with the sense of our own nothingness! Would to God that it did not evaporate by our getting peace! There is always a danger of a person forgetting that there was a time when he counted nothing that he thought, said, or felt, was worth thinking about. We are meant to keep that humility always. The best and truest form of real humility is the sense of the presence of God and of the infinite value of the word of God. There is nothing so humble as bowing to God's authority, there is nothing so humble as obedience — obeying God. And at the same time, nothing gives greater courage, nothing gives greater confidence, nothing gives greater firmness; and this humility is exactly what we want — to be nothing in our own eyes, and to have perfect confidence in God's word. And faith should produce this in every believer.

Not only, then, does the Lord lay down that the believer, "comes not into judgment," but He declares what the end will be. Not that there will be only one resurrection. Were there but one resurrection, it might be no wonder that there will be only one judgment; but to confirm the

fact that there will be no judgment of the believer — no sitting in judgment on him to decide his lot for eternity — there are two resurrections spoken of in that very same passage in John 5; and I would commend that chapter to anyone who has not duly weighed it. There it is shown that there will be a “resurrection of life” for those that have life for their souls already; there will be a “resurrection of judgment” for those that have not life but sins, and not merely sins but unbelief, the refusal of that life. They rejected the Son of God! For them there is judgment, and for them there is a special resurrection at the close of all. For those that have life now, in the Son, there is “the first resurrection,” a life-resurrection. Other saints, too, will share in this, for though not at the same moment, their resurrection, nevertheless, will have this character. All that are Christ’s who are in their graves when the Lord comes will rise together, and the living that are on the earth at that time will be changed, while others who die afterwards will follow, as we learn from the book of Revelation which is my reason for guarding the statement. They all have a resurrection of life, except those that do not die, and will be brought into the change without resurrection; but their change will be equivalent to resurrection, so that it may be all called, in a certain way, a “resurrection of life.”

But there is also a “resurrection of judgment” for all those that despise Christ, for all that are sinners against God, for all who have refused the Saviour, from the beginning of the world up to that time; and the resurrection of judgment is at the end of all time. Not so the resurrection of life and the reason why it is not is this — that those who rise in the resurrection of life rise to reign with Christ, before the winding up of all things.

The wind up of all will be after all the ages have run their course, so that the last sinner may be included in that awful resurrection — “the resurrection of judgment.” We need not call it a “resurrection of damnation,” because the word used is distinct from that. In effect it comes to that, but it is not the force of the word. It is always better to stand to the exact word of God, even if we do not understand it. We owe it honour and reverence, whether we understand it or not. His word must be right, it must be wise and the best, the only one that is really good and reliable absolutely.

This may seem a long preamble, but it is necessary, perhaps, to make the force plain of what I am going to remark here.

In the spurious book of Enoch, from which the learned people maintain that Jude quoted, the doctrine taught is that the Lord “comes with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon them.” There you see is the error that betrays the devil in the forger, for from this very verse, I do not in the least doubt that that document has been forged. It has every mark of having been written, subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem, by a Jew who still buoyed himself up with the hope that God would stand by the Jews.

And so He will in the end, but in a way totally different from what he, the writer, supposed. For there is no true acknowledgment of Christ. He is simply acknowledged as the Messiah from a Jewish point of view, but there never will be deliverance for the Jew in looking for the Messiah according to their thoughts. It is the Messiah of God, the Anointed of Jehovah, the true Messiah that came, and they rejected Him. But when He comes to

deliver them by and by they will be brought to say, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” They will then give up all their unbelief, they will welcome Him, and He will come and deliver them, and He will save them out of all that strait of trouble in which they will then be.

But He will not judge His own people. He was judged for them, He bore their judgment on the tree, and He will never judge them. Nor is there one word in the Bible — Old or New Testament — that insinuates in the most distant manner that the Lord will inflict judgment on His own people. That He will judge His people is a common thing in the Old Testament. But that will be, as a King, the judgment of their difficulties, their disorders if there should be any; and He will also vindicate them from their enemies. It is in this sense that He will judge His people.

Moreover, God carries on a moral judgment now in respect to His children. “If ye call on the Father, Who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning [here] in fear.” This is still going on. The Lord dealt with the Corinthians in this way. When they were in such a bad state and profaned the table of the Lord, coming boldly and taking the bread and the wine as if they had been in a good state, the Lord laid His hand on them — some were sick, some fell asleep — were removed by death. All this was a temporal judgment. It is what the Lord does now, and this judgment is for our good and profit.

We see the same thing in a family. It is the judgment that a father carries on in his family, or any person charged with the care of youths put under him — young persons

of either sex. Well, there is a judgment for their good. This is a totally different thing from what is called in John 5 a “coming into judgment.” It is even a different word employed — a different form of the word. From Psalm 143 it is evident that the Old Testament saints knew better than that. At any rate, the Spirit of God gave them better knowledge, for there it says, “Enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.” If God were to enter into judgment with the believer it would be all over with him, because even the believer himself would be bound to say, I do not deserve to be saved. And if God were to look at all the faults in a believer’s life He might say, if that is what I have to look at, I have no reason to save you, you do not deserve it. But the ground of a believer’s salvation is not that he deserves it, but that Christ deserves it for us. Christ has completely met all God’s nature, and, further than that, He has borne all our sins and iniquities in His own body on the tree. God will not judge them again as if they had not been sufficiently borne, as if the judgment at the cross were not an adequate one. God will never say that about what Christ endured, and this is just what faith lays hold of. Therefore, the uniform doctrine of the Bible — of both Old and New Testament — is this, that believers are not to come into that future judgment which the Lord will execute at the close of all things; but because we now have life, and are God’s children, He watches over and cares for us, and carries on a moral judgment; and besides this, the Lord Jesus carries on now a judgment of the church.

We find, besides the Father judging individually His children, that the Lord Jesus takes up the things that

pertain to His name among those that are assembled together. He is Head of the church and He has a watchful eye that the things that are done under His holy name should be real, should not be hypocritical, that His name should not be profaned. If our ways are unreal, and we go on badly, He deals with us in the way of discipline, and for the very reason “that we should not be condemned with the world.” There you have the reason. If He did not do so, you might raise a question as to whether they would be lost.

Now then, the author of this spurious Book of Enoch understood not a word of all this. He was not a believer. He was a false man; he would never have forged if he had not been. He was a forger of the worst kind. No forgery is so bad as that which pretends to give us the word of God. It is very bad to be deceitful in anything, but if deceit is carried on in the things of God there is none that is worse in its consequences, there is none that more distinctly dishonours God. And that is the case here.

“Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to -”what does scripture say? to “execute judgment upon all.” This is not the saints. The “all” are totally distinct from the saints. The saints had been caught up, and now come with Him Who executes the judgment on all the sinners to be found in that day. “To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all” — to make it perfectly plain who are meant — all “that are ungodly among them.” There it is, to obviate any argument, for there are people who are not great in the truth who are always ready for an argument! Here we see it is “to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them” (that is, these “all”)

“of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodlily committed.” And not only ungodly deeds; there is another thing that the Spirit of God attaches great importance to — “hard words which ungodly sinners spoke against Him,” words that gainsay God’s mind, words that say the thing that is false of God. Job’s friends did that. Job himself bowed to God. He had not many words, he made a confession of his folly, he said the thing that was right. But his friends had not spoken the thing that was right of the Lord. I do not think that the Lord was putting the stamp of His approval in the same way on all that Job said. He often spoke haughtily, and unhappily about God, and fretted about himself, but the Lord does not refer to that. Job broke down and confessed his nothingness. His friends did not break down. Job did, and, in consequence, Job was restored, and had to pray for those, his friends, who were not as yet restored.

But here it is plain that ungodly words are just as bad in their own way as ungodly deeds. Sometimes an ungodly word does more harm than an ungodly deed. For instance, an ungodly deed might be an act of unrighteousness in a man, but an ungodly word might be a slurring of Christ. This is worse, and particularly if people receive it. People are quite ready to cry out against an ungodly deed. Even worldly men can very well judge ungodly deeds, and the same people would be deceived by hard and ungodly words against the Lord and His grace and truth.

In this Book of Enoch to which I have referred there is not a word about the “hard speeches.” This shows that the author was simply a natural man; a man who, no doubt, had this phrase before him, but he did not

understand it. He evidently did not understand either about the saint or about the sinner. He did not understand about the saints, because he made them objects of judgment as well as the ungodly. It is just like the theologians now. They do not believe what I am now saying. But there is one word, in leaving that subject, that I wish to add. “We shall all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ.” Everything, good or bad, will come out, for the believer as well as for the unbeliever. But that is a very different thing from judgment. This is not called judgment, but “manifestation,” which is not the same thing as judgment. Manifestation of all our ways will be a very good thing for us. How apt we are to overrate ourselves! There may be something that we perhaps flattered ourselves about while we were here alive, and we never saw how foolish we were till risen from the dead and standing before the judgment seat of Christ. There it will all be manifested. Where we thought that we were wise we shall see that we were very foolish. And so in everything where we may have allowed ourselves a little latitude and tried to excuse ourselves, we shall there be obliged to acknowledge it as all wrong. This is for our good. It is a blessing to do it in this life, but it will be all the fullest and richest blessing there. All will be out then. Then we shall know even as also we are known. We shall have no thought different from God’s about a single thing in all our lives. But this is not judgment. Judgment is where a person stands to be tried, and to be convicted of his guilt. This will be the case with everyone who has not been justified by the Lord Jesus Christ and His incomparable work on the cross.

But there is a second point where this forger could not copy the text before him aright. He only speaks of "ungodly deeds." Hard, ungodlily spoken "words" to him did not seem of very much account, so he left out the ungodly "words." The first part seemed the only right thing to him. Consequently, he mutilated the scripture. He could not even copy it truly, and thus he has given us a false version of it.

In other words, Jude never got his prophecy of Enoch from a mere tradition, or from this book at all. He got it from God. How, I do not pretend to say. But he did.

Jude 16, Jude 17, Jude 18, Jude 19.

"These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their lusts, and their mouth speaketh swelling things, admiring persons for the sake of profit. But ye, beloved, remember ye the words that were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they said to you, In [the] end of the time shall be mockers walking after their own lusts of ungodliness. These are they that make separations, natural (or, soulish), not having [the] Spirit" (vers. 16-19).

"These are murmurers." Murmuring is a more serious sin than many think. It could not but be that among Christians there are many things that do not go according to what we like. Suppose it to be even a man of sound wisdom; but if people are not very well founded they are always apt to be disappointed at something in him. It is natural for people to begin to murmur. The Israelites were constantly at that kind of work.

Now, he says, "There are murmurers," and he adds, "complainers" — not content with their lot (the strict

literal meaning of the word). They are persons who like to be something more and greater than they are, than God ever called them to be. They want to be somebody.

“These are murmurers, complainers”; and what is the cause of that? “Walking after their own lusts.” Lust is not to be supposed to be merely gross lusts. There are refined lusts — vanity, pride, ambition; what are all these but lusts? They are all lusts. The lusts of the devil. These are not the same kind of lusts as the lusts of the flesh. Satan was lifted up with pride, and we are warned against falling into the fault or “condemnation” of the devil. It appears that the things mentioned in this verse are very much the same thing: “their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage.” They are fond of having a party, particularly if they can number some rich among the party, “because of advantage.”

What I particularly draw your attention to is this. Enoch prophesied of these. I do not know anything more striking than that. There are the same persons now as in Enoch’s day. There can be no doubt that these people lived in the time of Enoch. But Jude carried us on to the coming of the Lord. The people who are on the earth when the Lord comes will be the same kind in their wickedness as in the days of Enoch and of Jude. Evil, you see, goes on. Evil retains its own terrible character — malignancy and rebellion against God, and all self-sufficiency, and all the terrible things that are so entirely opposed to Christ. Enoch prophesied of these and of the judgment coming upon them.

“But ye, beloved, remember ye” — to confirm this — “the words that were spoken before by the apostles of

our Lord Jesus Christ, how that they told you that there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts" (vers. 17, 18).

Well, we have at least two of these apostles. Surely, that is quite enough. Very likely the other apostles taught the very same things by word of mouth. But we have this warning about these characters, written down by two besides Jude; one the apostle Paul, the other Peter in both his Epistles. In his First, Peter says that the time is coming when judgment must begin at the house of God, and judgment on just this kind of ungodliness then working up; but in his Second Epistle there is a deal more. And I think that Jude goes still further, and that his Epistle was written after Second Peter, and for this reason, that there is an advance of evil. Peter speaks of unrighteous men, Jude speaks of men that once seemed to have the truth, and through their bad life, bad ways, pride, vanity, or whatever it was, they lost it. That is quite a common thing. By common, I do not mean that any very great numbers break off in this way, but that it is a sin which every now and then breaks out. Why, even since "Brethren" began there have been the most terrible cases of people giving up all the truth. The greatest infidel of modern days was one of the early "brethren." He was a very clever man, and gave up his fellowship at Balliol to go to the Eastern world, among Arabs and Persians and the like, with the gospel. He seemed to be devoted to the Lord. But even on his way out he betrayed that he was not a true believer at all. How! By doubting about the full proper Deity of the Lord Jesus; and when he came back brethren enquired into it. There had been whispers of it before his return, but then he was out of the way, so that till his return it was not

possible to deal with him fairly, or to examine him fully, not merely whispers. When he came back he was seen and written to, and his words were the words of an unbeliever; he was therefore refused any place in our fellowship. After this, he went among the dissenters, who welcomed him most heartily, and he preached in their chapels and was most acceptable among them, particularly as he ran down the “brethren” pretty hotly. At this time, he still appeared to be pious in his outward ways and manner, and still read the Bible. But he gradually gave up everything and gave an account of it in a book which he wrote bearing a very anomalous title indeed, for it would appear that he really never had faith. He was a man who was very impressionable, and he easily took the colour of those with whom he was. He valued and was charmed with the sound of the truth, and thought he had it, but I am afraid he never had. So he lived, and so, I fear, he died. There have been others of no such prominence who have had a similar end; not so marked, perhaps, but as sad. Some had once been in fellowship, and seemed to be very honoured persons for a time, before they were really known. And this kind of thing falls in with what we have here.

There were such persons among them; and not merely the teachers. Peter speaks about teachers, but Jude looks at them more widely; they are evidently responsible even though they are not teachers. If others dishonour the Lord who are not teachers, they are responsible. There is this character in Jude: they are apostate from the truth, and have not gone out of fellowship yet. That is the very thing he says. There they are, although it is likely that no one but Jude who saw these persons could speak of them; and Peter saw them

where he was. They appeared fair enough just as there were many such at the time when the person referred to was in fellowship. Many would not believe a word of it. They thought he was a very good man, and that it was a scandal to speak hardly about him. They never could see till the thing came out thoroughly. We are not all “eyes” in the body. We may have an important place. The hand or the foot can do a work that the eye cannot, and there are those who can see far before others; and it is important for people to make use of those who have proved their special competence. Otherwise we are apt to get wrong.

It is an immense thing to say that we have not only teachers now and preachers to spread the truth in spite of their weakness and their liability to err, but we have also those that were kept from error in what they have written, absolutely kept from error; and these are here brought before us as the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They were men of like passions as we are ourselves, but the peculiarity in the case of those apostles and prophets is, that in the midst of their weakness they were preserved — it was not, it is true, like Christ, absolute perfection — but there was the perfect preservation from error in what they wrote. And it was all the more remarkable that this was in one generation only. It was not like the succession that there was in the old dispensation of God. There we have prophets raised up at all times, wherever they were needed; but the great peculiarity for the church and for the Christian is that we have not merely words that were perfect for their purpose, and words that were given faithfully by God in the midst of all the errors of Israel, but now we have a perfect revelation in all respects, by

men themselves imperfect, but nevertheless kept and empowered by the Holy Ghost to say the truth without error whatever.

Now, there are two things in the words of the apostles; the first is the mind of God for the glory of Christ; and this we have in all the books of the New Testament. But in the midst of these words, and more particularly in the latter times of giving these words we have the most solemn warnings that are given in any part of the Bible. It was not at all that all these characters of evil came out so that the Christian could discern them, but they came out sufficiently for the apostles to discern them.

Thus we have our lessons for practical guidance in the words of the apostles. They are the persons through whom we have received the full truth of God. There was not an error that ever crept into the church but is provided for here. There is not a good thing that God had to reveal but what is revealed here.

For we are not meant to be inventors, we are not meant to make discoveries, like the men of science. The reason why there are inventions in the arts, and discoveries in science, is, because all is imperfect. But perfection is what marks the word of God — not merely relative perfection, relative to the state of Israel at different times, but — absolute perfection. What brought in absolute perfection? Christ. There is the key to all that is blessed, to all that is most blessed. There is what explains what is most of all peculiar. It was according to Christ that all the truth should be brought out, unstinted, and perfectly providing for everything that might be through the ages that follow down to the present time. And this in order that we might never have

to look outside scripture for the proof of any error, and this also for the provision of everything good. All is in the word; this word that we have got. The Old Testament is full of value, but, nevertheless, it is only general. Our special instructions are in the New Testament, for we can easily understand that there was no such thing as a Christian in Old Testament times. They were believers, but not Christians. A Christian is a man who is not merely looking for the promises, but who has the promises — accomplished in Christ. Well, of course, the Old Testament saints had not got this, and the church was an absolutely new thing. It was not merely promises accomplished, but the mystery revealed: the mystery that was hid in God up to that time. There was no revelation of it in the Old Testament whatever. Now it is revealed, and it is given to us. And how? By these perfect writings of the New Testament, that left nothing to desire, nothing for faith to desire; plenty for unbelief to add, still more for unbelief to depart from; but nothing for faith to desire. We have all here, and it is only for our faith to discern it, and to practise it.

Now for this reason all came out in one generation. John, the very last of all, was the one that saw the Lord from the beginning. He was, not only one of the apostles, but, one of the first two that ever followed the Lord Jesus and entered into living relationship with Him here below. And he was kept here, beyond others, in the wisdom of God But we have another, also, of those who were eminently favoured, and were conspicuously used. Although Jude wrote a short Epistle, what a great deal there is in it!

Now, turning to what we have already touched upon — “But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which were

spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; that they said to you, In [the] end of the time shall be mockers walking after their own lusts of ungodliness"; that there should be, not merely unrighteous men, or lawless men, but, one of the worst features of evil, "mockers." Why, in the Old Testament, when it was only a question of children that could not resist giving way to their humour — I may call it very bad humour, and very bad manners — but still they mocked the old prophet, they mocked Elisha. And even he the man of grace, was no doubt led of God to call forth the bears that tore them all.

Here we find that it is not little children in their folly (for we know that "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child"), but the case of men who claimed wisdom; and the way they showed it was by "mocking"! "Mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts" — their own lusts of ungodly things. It is rather stronger. Their lust was after ungodliness. This is what characterised their lust. It is not a mere vague term; it is a very succinct term — "lusts of ungodliness." Now this is an awful thing. And resulting from what? I will not say it results from Christianity, from the truth. God forbid. But it resulted from the fact that they were there, and that their hearts got tired of it, and they became the enemies of it. There is nothing more blessed than a Christian man walking in simplicity. There is nothing more awful than a Christian man who casts off Christianity, and who becomes a mocker after the lusts of his own ungodliness. This is what is described here, and what the writer prepares us for. No one could have believed that in early days.

These mockers once looked fair. They once spoke fairly. They were received, they were baptised; they remembered the Lord Jesus, taking part in the assembly, no doubt. They may have been preachers, very likely; but here it was evident they were given up to their own lusts of ungodliness and they were mockers; accordingly, they therefore turned with the greatest spite and hatred upon that truth that once separated them from the world. They were professedly believers, but it is evident they were in reality the emissaries of Satan. And the Epistles (some of the last in the Bible), as well as the apostles of our Lord, laid down this: that these mockers were to come in the last time. The last time was therefore to be a peculiarly evil time, and it is a very solemn thing that we are in that time most fully now. I do not say that it may not be lengthened — that is entirely a question of the will of God. The lengthening of evil may be Just as much as the lengthening of tranquillity. There is the tranquillity for one, and it may end in greater departure than ever, or it may be the means of repentance, and extrication from these toils of the enemy.

But here at any rate he declares, “These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit” (ver. 19). It is important to understand this verse, for there are various kinds of separations mentioned in the New Testament. Sometimes, it is separation within; sometimes, it is separation without; sometimes, it takes the character of parties as yet joined with the rest in outward observances, but their spirit alienated. Those are the persons the apostle refers to in Romans 16: persons “which cause divisions and stumbling-blocks, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned” (ver.

17). That doctrine was that we should walk, not only outwardly together but, inwardly, with real love. It is true it may not always be approving of what each may do and say, but with earnest desire that things might go well, and that those even who are in any way caught by the enemy might be delivered.

Now, the persons in Romans 16 were not to be “put away,” but avoided; and the object of that avoiding was to make them feel and reflect upon what they were about. Suppose they were preachers or teachers, avoiding such would be not to invite them, or if they invited themselves, not to accept their offer. Of course, you can understand that they would not like it, unless they were really broken in spirit. In this case all would terminate happily, but if they were bent on doing their own will they ought to be avoided as the apostle says, and if they do not like this avoiding, and grow bitter under it, the effect would be that they would make a division “without” if they could, instead of “within.” They would “go out” themselves, and try and lead away others.

There are these kinds of spirits. First, they have an alienated mind within, and are self-seeking; and because this is blamed by all that have the good of the saints at heart, and the glory of the Lord before them, they resent it strongly, and, instead of breaking down and judging themselves, they become worse, and then it is not a division “within,” but “without,” that they make. The former is called a schism, the latter a heresy. For I particularly press it on every one here who may not have observed it — that “heresy” in scripture does not mean bad doctrine at all. There may be bad doctrine, of course, along with it; but this is rather heterodoxy —

strange doctrine. There are proper terms for all forms of evil: falsehood, deceit, blasphemy and the like. But heresy means the self-will that does not care for the fellowship of the assembly in the least, and is so bent on its own object that it goes outside. This is what is called heresy. Now that is what the apostle means in 1 Cor. 11. He says, “There are divisions (or, schisms) among you. For there must be also heresies (or, sects) among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (vers. 18, 19).

But there is no “must be” in reference to heterodoxy. People might remain, and like to remain, with their heterodoxy, but heresy does not mean bad doctrine, although this might go along with it. It means that people might get too hot in their zeal, and, being reproved for their party spirit, they refuse to stand it any longer, and they get away. They break loose from fellowship and form some new thing which has not the sanction of the word of God. That is what, in scripture, is called heresy. The doctrine might be sound enough in a general way. There might be no blasphemies, nor heterodoxy, strictly speaking, but there is the heart entirely wrong and seeking its own things instead of the things of Jesus Christ.

So in the verse before us, “These be they who separate themselves” means those that separate themselves “within,” not “without,” at all. This is very evident from the early part of this Epistle: “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (ver. 4). Certain men crept in. They are the same people that Jude is talking

about all through. Unawares, they had “crept in,” not “gone out.” Now this is what gives the true force of the words — “those that separate themselves.” We can easily understand it if we bear in mind the Pharisees. The Pharisees never separated themselves from Israel, but the very name of a Pharisee means “a separatist.” They were separatists within Israel. These were separatists within the church, and in both cases it was not going out, but it was making a party of pride and self-righteousness within. And who are they? Ungodly men; these were the men that were proud of themselves; these men who had these wicked lusts. They were the persons who assumed to be pre-eminently faithful; and, I believe, you will generally find that it is so, that, when persons are given up to delusion, they always have a very high opinion of themselves. No matter how violent they may be, no matter how evil in their spirit, they claim to be more particularly faithful, and they have no measure in their denunciation of every one that stands in their way. This is exactly the class here described.

“These be they who separate themselves.” And what sort of men were they? “Sensual.” The word “sensual” is important to understand. Every man has got a soul, converted or not. Now, when we believe, we receive a nature that we never had before; we receive life in Christ. These men here described had nothing but their natural soul. They had not received life in Christ. They were merely “natural” men. “Sensual,” in our language, is very often taken to mean people who are abandoned to immoral ways. These people may have been so, but it is not the meaning of the word. The meaning of the word is that they were just simply “natural” men. It is the same word which, in 1 Cor. 2:14, is translated “natural

man," and contrasted with the "spiritual man." So he adds here, "not having the Spirit."

Now, having not the Spirit is to lack the great privilege of a Christian. This is the great difference between a believer now resting on redemption, and an Old Testament believer. They were waiting for the Spirit in the days of the Messiah. Although the Messiah is rejected, the Holy Ghost has been poured down on us, but not on those that are still waiting for the Messiah. The Jews are still waiting, and have not the Spirit. These men, although they had taken their place in the church, had not the Spirit. They were natural men. We are therefore given this further development of the terrible evil that had come in even then, although the great mass of the saints, you may be sure, very little understood it, very little perceived it; and therefore it was of the greatest moment that the apostles should. And that there should be inspired men, or, at any rate, inspired instruction given upon what people otherwise would not have been in the least prepared for, and would have counted it a very fierce and terrible picture without any good ground for it; they would think it was making the worst of everything instead of the best. But the Spirit of God does give the truth just as it is.

Jude 20, Jude 21.

Well, now we come to a very comforting word. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in [the] Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in [the] love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto life eternal" (vers. 20, 21).

So then we are not to be cast down, we are not to be disheartened, even by these terrible pictures of evil.

They are revealed in order that we should not be deceived, that we may really know what the actual state of Christianity is before the eye of God, instead of yielding to false expectations and wrong and imperfect judgments of our own. But even in the face of all that, there is this call to these beloved saints to build up themselves on their most holy faith. This is very carefully worded. There is nothing at all said in this Epistle about leaders, or guides, or rulers, or preachers, or teachers either. In a general way, as far as there were any, they have a very bad character, not of course that all who preached or taught were so, but that there were many of this class that were so especially. The saints themselves are here exhorted directly.

They are not to give up their privileges, or to imagine, that because it is a day of such abounding evil, they are not to be very happy. They are comforted with this; that the blessing is perfectly open to them, and they are called to have more faith than ever. There is no time when faith shines brighter than in the dark day, and there is no time when love is more evidently discerned than when there are not many to love, not many that do love, but where there is the reign of selfishness and indifference, and people care for other objects, and put them before that which is imperishable.

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith.” This is the only place in all the New Testament where faith is called our “most holy faith.” It might have been thought that when things are so evidently wrong we must not be too stringent, that we must not be too exacting, that we must not look for such care as on the day of Pentecost. Why, so far from that being so, we require more care. And instead of its being

now called merely the holy faith, or precious faith, Jude calls it, “your most holy faith.” The saints, in short, are encouraged to cleave to the truth in all its sanctifying power. We cannot think too much of “the faith of God’s elect.” I am not speaking now of faith looked at in the saint, but of “the faith” looked at in itself. It is the thing that we believe, which is the meaning of it here. It is not crying up individuals, but what these individuals receive from God. That is what he calls it — “the faith.” There is a great difference between faith and “the faith.” Here it is “the faith.” Faith is a quality of you, and me, and every believer. But that is not the sense here, which is, “the faith once delivered to the saints,” as he says in this very Epistle.

Well, thus you must look at it. When it came, you may say, It came down from God out of heaven, revealed through the apostles — Christ Himself of course in particular. There, was “the faith “: what we are called to believe; that which separated us to God from everything here below. So here, we have the same faith, only — it is not now said, “once for all delivered to the saints,” although this remains true. Here it is called “most holy.” What! has it not got tainted? Has it not got lowered now? Woe to those that say so! “The faith” is just the same faith now as on the day of Pentecost, the same faith that Peter preached, and also Paul, and all others of the apostles. And we have Peter and Paul, i.e. we have their words. We have the most careful words they ever spoke. We have the words that they were inspired to write from God. We do not therefore merely listen, as some of the early fathers talk about a man that saw the apostle and heard the apostle; and it appears that the man that did so was a poor foolish old man! Very likely.

Well, and what have you got by putting a poor foolish old man between you and the apostle? Little or nothing. But Peter and Paul and Jude were not foolish, and whatever they may have been in themselves, there was the mighty power of the Holy Ghost Who gave them the truth of God absolutely intact; and here it is His word now, and we come into personal contact with it by faith. We that believe receive that “most holy faith,” and what is more, we are called, every one, to act upon it now.

And what are we to do with it? It is not only that we impart it to others, we “build up ourselves on our most holy faith.” Nothing, therefore, can give a more delightful picture of the resources of grace for as bad a time as can well be conceived as what we have here. “Ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith”; it is not to be on a little bit of the faith, not on the faith that was given to you. through the intervention of a poor foolish old man. No, here it is, fresh from God, kept fresh and holy, unmixed with anything that could lower it.

“Praying in the Holy Ghost.” What can be better than this? There were men who spoke with tongues in the Holy Ghost. Do you think that is half as good as “praying in the Holy Ghost”? Why, the apostle Paul says that the men that spoke with tongues in the Holy Ghost were to hold their tongue, unless there were an interpreter there present so as to give what they spoke in a tongue in a form intelligible to others. It was a real power of the Spirit of God, but it was not to be exercised unless there were an interpreter. But think of the apostle silencing a man praying in the Holy Ghost! No, the very reverse. There is a great deal of prayer that is not in the Holy Ghost. And we are not at all called upon only to pray in

the Holy Ghost. Happy is he who does, and happy are they that hear prayer in the Holy Spirit. And where there is prayer in the Holy Spirit all is thoroughly acceptable to God, every word is so. Every word of such prayer expresses perfectly what God means at that time. But there are prayers that begin in the Spirit and do not end in the Spirit. Prayers are often rather mixed, and this is true even of real believers; and sometimes we pray foolishly, sometimes we pray unintelligently! This is never in the Holy Ghost.

And, what is more, we are encouraged to pray at all times, even supposing we say what is foolish. Very well, it is better to say it, than to be silent. Much better. Because prayer is the going forth of the heart to God, and it may be like the words of a prattling child to its father or mother. It is all right that the child should prattle, far better than that the child should be dumb. But the best of all is when it is really prayer in the Spirit of God; yet that is a thing rather to desire than to presume that we have attained to. We have to be very careful indeed that we do not give ourselves credit for more activity in the Holy Ghost than we really possess. This supposes entire dependence, and no thought of self, and no opposition to this or to that.

These are things that, alas! may be, and they all weaken and hinder “praying in the Holy Ghost.” But here you see the very same grace that encouraged the saints, even in the darkest day, “to build up themselves on their most holy faith,” instead of having the notion, Oh, it is hopeless to look for that now; when Peter or Paul was there we might have the most holy faith, but how could it be guaranteed now? Well, there it is in this precious word. And those that cleave to this precious word will

find it out, and if their heart is full of it, their mouth will abundantly speak of it; and there is no ground to be discouraged, but the very contrary.

So, in this twentieth verse, we have two of the most important things possible — the one is, the standard of truth not in the least degree lowered, but maintained in all its highest and holiest character, even in that dark day; and, the second, the most spiritual action that could be in any believer here below, viz., “praying in the Holy Ghost.” Why, this is even more than preaching or teaching, because the heart is sure to be in the prayer. A man that can speak well and knows the truth — this may often be a snare. There is a danger in such a case to say the truth, and speak it out, and earnestly too, without there being present the power of the Spirit of God. But to pray in the Holy Ghost is another thing altogether. This cannot be without the immediate action of the Spirit in this most blessed way.

“Keep yourselves in the love of God.” Here Jude is looking at the practical result of these two things. “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” Now, could we keep ourselves in anything better? Was there ever anything higher than the keeping ourselves in the love of God? Love is of God, and we are to keep ourselves in it, instead of being provoked by the evil things around us, instead of yielding because of others yielding. This necessarily supposes great confidence in God, and delight in what God’s own nature is — the activity of His nature. Light is the moral character of God’s nature; love is the active character of God’s nature. Light does not allow any impurity; love goes out to bless others. We are called to keep ourselves, not merely in the light of God — we are there, we are brought there as Christians

— but, in the love of God. We are not meant to have that doubted. We are to keep ourselves fresh and simple and confident in His love.

And he further adds, “Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” I think that mercy is brought in here especially because of the great need, because of the distress, because of the weakness, because of everything that tended to cast people down. No, he says, do not be downcast, look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is it only by the way? No, it is all along the way, to the very end — “unto life eternal,” the great consummation. This could not be unless they already had life eternal in Christ now; but this mercy of God, “of our Lord Jesus Christ unto life eternal,” looks at the full heavenly consummation.

Jude 22, Jude 23.

Now we come to a passage which I feel to be unusually difficult to expound; and the reason is this. The original authorities and the best authorities are all in confusion about it. This is very rarely the case in the New Testament, but it is the case here. All the great authorities are at sixes and sevens in the testimony they give of these two verses (22, 23). And, to show you how great that is, our Version — the Authorised, so-called — looks at two cases only, “And of some have compassion, making a difference” — that is one class; “and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” — this is the second class.

Now I believe there are three classes, and not two only. That will show how uncertain it is. Although, as I have said, I am very far from presuming to give more than my

judgment as far as the Lord enables me to form one. I am certainly open to anything that might be shown to the contrary, but as yet no one has shown it. No one at all. I think that those who know best about it are those that have spoken most cautiously as to it. Many who trust themselves are apt to speak more confidently.

First of all Jude says, “And some convict when contending.”4 That is the idea — “when they dispute”; not, “making a difference,” as of the man that shows compassion. The fact is, compassion belongs to another class, not to this one at all, as far as I am able to judge, which depends upon looking at all the authorities and using one to correct another. That is what it comes to in this singular case, which is a very exceptional thing in the great original witnesses; but God has been pleased in this particular instance not to hinder their difference.

Same then “convict when they dispute.” I think that is the meaning of it. “Making a difference,” as in the Authorised, should rather be, “when they dispute.” It is the people that are being convicted who of course make the dispute, instead of the person that shows compassion making a difference among them. It is quite a different idea. The first class, in this twenty-second verse, has been given (in my belief) very wrongly indeed.

Well, then, the next is, instead of “convicting” people so as to leave them without any excuse for their disputatious spirit, another class is looked at — “others save, pulling them out of [the] fire”; then, a third class, “and others pity with fear5, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (ver. 23).

These then are the three classes: a disputatious class to be convicted and silenced — then, those that are to be saved, snatched out of the fire — and, others to be compassionated with fear, hating the garment spotted by the flesh. So that this all tends to complete the picture of the danger to souls. There is the all-importance of grace in the midst of it, but the truth maintained in all its power. And, you observe, it is for the same persons who are building up themselves on their most holy faith to do this. It is work that is thrown on the responsibility of those that were thoroughly happy and walking with God. These are the persons that would be able to silence the disputatious if they would be silenced by any one. But even apostles could not always do that. The apostle John speaks of the "malicious words" of Diotrephes. These words were directed against himself, and even an apostle could not alter that. The apostle Paul complained of "evil workers" who pretended to be quite as much apostles, if not more so, as himself. He refers to them in very trenchant terms in 2 Corinthians 11. He could not hinder that. And when there was the great meeting in Jerusalem, where all the apostles were present, there was a deal of disputation and discussion there. It was only after it burst out in a noisy meeting at first, that Peter, as well as Barnabas and Paul, gave their testimony, and then James summed up the decision of the assembly (Acts 15).

I only mention it to show that a like state of things existed at that time as now. We often look on the apostles as the painters represent the Lord. If you look at the pictures of the Lord Jesus, He is generally represented as going about with a halo of glory about His head. Well, if that were true, one might expect all

the multitude to be down on their knees looking up to the man with this golden halo around him. But that is just what imagination does. It puts a halo around the Lord, and it puts a halo around the apostles; so that people do not realise at all the terrible evils that had to be faced by them. This was the portion, too, of those that were serving God, even in the best of times. How much more may we expect it now! As the Psalmist said, Time was when the work of the sanctuary was regarded as a good thing for a man to have put his hand to: all that fine carved work, all that grandeur of gold that gleamed in the sanctuary; but now it came to that pass, that a man was prized because he brake it all to pieces (Ps. 74).

Well, this is what we have in the increasing lawlessness of Christendom, but let us not be downcast. Let us remember that the prize is coming; that the Lord puts especial honour on those that are faithful to Him in an evil day. The Lord grant us that great privilege.

Jude 24, Jude 25.

In the body of the Epistle we have already had the coming of the Lord in judgment, that is to say, bound up in the awful departure from the truth which was to be found in the Christian profession. This is what many souls are very unwilling to face. It is natural for man to think that everything must be progressive — the truth as well as all else. No one ever drew that from the Bible, and every part of the Bible, from the first book till the last, shows us man set in a place by God, and abandoning it for Satan. And there is the same story here. No doubt it is unspeakably terrible to find that what bears the name of Christ should turn out worst of

all. I need not say the guilt of it is entirely man's, and that the secret source of that evil is still Satan, as Satan is always behind the scenes in his antagonism, not only to God, but more particularly to the Lord Jesus. He is the One that Satan hates, and hates most of all because He became Man to glorify God where man had failed, and as Man to glorify God even about sin. Therefore, there is, what we might call, a natural antagonism in the devil, being what he is, against the One Who is to crush him at last. He well knows this, and there will come a time when, as he knows, he will have but a short time. That time has not yet come, but it is coming, and coming fast.

So Jude introduces the coming of the Lord in a very remarkable manner — not by a new prophecy, but by the recovery to us of one of the first prophecies ever uttered, and, certainly, the first prophecy that took shape, the ordinary shape, which gave its character to all others that follow. For nothing could be more in the prophetic character than these words: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam (to distinguish him from the Enoch who was the son of Cain) prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodlily committed, and of (what people think little of) their hard words which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." "Words" are the common expression of man's iniquity, because he cannot do all that he would like to do, but there is nothing he cannot "say." Consequently, it is said, "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." This character of evil, so far from being a light thing, is one which is presented

with the utmost gravity, and that by Enoch before the flood: and it is nowhere else preserved. Here, thousands of years afterwards, Jude was enabled to disclose this to us — by what means we do not know. The Holy Ghost was perfectly capable without using any means. Whether there were any, we know not, but we know that here it is, and that this is the certain truth, not only of God, but through Enoch before he went to heaven.

But there is another connection with Enoch that we have now to look into, in the verses that close the Epistle. This is, that we may regard a latent connection in them with the blessed manner in which Enoch was taken out of the scene altogether. Now, this fell to Jude and not to Peter. I have already compared the very great marks of distinction between Peter's and Jude's treatment of these very cases. Peter's view is purely as a question of unrighteousness, and he looks also at the teachers as being the most guilty parties in that unrighteousness — generally done for gain, or fame, or for some earthly motive of the kind that is not of God. Jude looks at it in a still deeper light; for he does not make so much of the teachers. The awful thing to Jude was that the church, that the body of the saints, who ought to be the light of God — the heavenly light of God in a world of darkness — that they were to become the seat of the worst evil of Satan; and this through letting in (no doubt, by carelessness, by lack of looking to God) these corrupters. That is his point of view. Not so much unrighteousness as apostasy. There is nothing so terrible as apostasy. In the case of unrighteousness it might be merely that of men going on with their badness. But apostasy always supposes that people have come out of their badness professedly, that they have received the

truth professedly, that they have professedly received grace from God in Christ the Lord, and have turned their back upon it all. There is nothing so bad as that. So that you see, if there were not the gospel, and if there had not been the church, there could not have been so bad an apostasy as that which Jude contemplates here, from first to last.

We have, first of all then, as I have already shown, the trace of that apostasy as it presented itself to Jude by the Holy Ghost. And he takes his great figures of it from Israel, which after it was saved became the enemy of God, and fell under judgment. Peter does not say a word about that; he looks at merely wicked men; consequently, he is more occupied with the evil that brought on the deluge. Jude does not say a ward about the deluge, because there was no question of a people being saved. There was a family — a few individuals — but there was not a people. Jude looks at the church, and compares the church getting wrong and losing everything after, having apparently gained everything: according to the picture of Israel, saved out of Egypt, and nevertheless, all coming to nothing.

We see how beautifully the figures employed and the illustrations used are all perfectly in keeping with the great differences between the two Epistles of Peter and Jude. And I mention it again, as I have already done, as a proof of the blindness of men in our day, in what they call “higher criticism.” They will have it that the one Epistle is only a copy of the other. Why, they are perfectly contrasted the one with the other. There are some points, of course, that must be common — the wickedness of man, the grace of God, the truth of God. All that must be common to the two Epistles.

But the character of the truth in the one case is simply, men corrupting righteousness into unrighteousness — that is Peter. In Jude it is men, who were blessed by the revelation of grace, turning it into licentiousness, men who had not merely the authority of God, but the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter does not say a word about this. It is God's authority. Even the Lord is there looked at as Master — a Sovereign Master — not in the attitude of ·e our Lord Jesus Christ." Jude adds that. So Noah is the great figure in Peter; whereas Enoch, and not Noah, is the figure before us in Jude.

Now, I ask, how could the wit of man ever have done this? Even when people have read the two Epistles, many Christians have not noticed these differences, yet there they are. What learned men see is the apparent resemblances between the two. But that is an altogether unintelligent way of reading anything. Because, even if you look at all the men of the world, well, they all agree in being men, but just think how foolish a person must be who can see no difference between one man and another because they are both men! That is just the way these learned men talk. They see no difference between Peter and Jude, the one copied the other! Whereas the striking thing is that, although they both go over the same ground, they look at it in different ways — both full of instruction, yet such instruction as only the Holy Ghost could give.

Oh, how solemn when we read this last Epistle, which bears upon the apostasy of Christianity, or rather of Christendom, of those that were introduced to the richest blessings of God's grace and truth in Christ, yet turning to be the bitterest enemies of it (not only

abandoning it, but) treating it with contempt and disdain, and with hatred to the last degree.

This is exactly what we have in the middle of the Epistle. We saw the characters that it takes, particularly Cain, Balaam, and Korah — the beginning, middle and end, I might say. The unnatural brother that hated, not a mere man only, but his own brother, and slew him. The bitterest enemies of the faithful are always those who profess to be faithful and are not. There is no bitterness so deep as that of an unworthy bearer of the name of Christ. Well, that is Cain. Not a word of this in Peter. That belongs to Jude, and is here.

Then Balaam appears in Peter because he is a false prophet that figures the false teachers, who are more the thing in Peter, but not in Jude; for here it is the saints, the body of the saved ones — at any rate in profession. That is what alarmed and shocked him. And he puts it forth for us, that we might now understand it, that we should not be too much perplexed by any of these terrible things which may break out at any time in our midst. There never was a more foolish idea, perhaps, entertained by some of us, that whoever might go wrong this could not happen amongst those called “Brethren.” Oh, foolish Brethren, to flatter themselves in such a way as that! Why you, we — for I take my place along with you in it altogether — we are the persons most liable to have the highest flown expressions and pretension to the greatest piety, while there may be an enormously evil thing going on. How are we to judge of such things? By the word of God. And you will always find that those that are carrying on in that way slip from the word. They do not want the word. They want something new, something that will go on with the times, something that

will make the “Brethren” more popular, something that will get bigger congregations, and all those things that are flattering to human vanity; the consequence is they are naturally afraid of the word. No wonder. No one ever quarrelled with the word of God, if the word of God did not condemn them. Every person who loves the word owes to it all his entrance into blessing; he derives all from that precious word and that precious word reveals Christ. Consequently we should not be occupied about pleasing others and about their work, but with Christ. And we want all God’s children also to be occupied with Christ as the only ground of any solid and sure peace.

In Enoch’s prophecy we may observe once more that it is not exactly “the Lord cometh,” but, “Behold, the Lord came.” This manner of speaking is quite usual in the prophets, and that is why they are called “seers.” What they described they saw as in a prophetic vision. John saw all the various objects which he describes in the Revelation. He saw the heaven opened, and the Lord coming out, and the throne set. But it does not mean that all this was accomplished then. He saw it all before it took place. So did Enoch. He saw the Lord come; and he presented it in that way. In Isaiah 53 we see the same thing. “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.” It does not mean that there was any doubt about its being all future; but that the prophet saw it before his eyes, the eyes opened by the Holy Spirit. It is the same thing here. The Lord is seen at the close of the age coming with ten thousands of His saints to take judgment, to inflict judgment on these apostates; and the Spirit of God here intimates that the same family likeness of departure from God has been going on since

the days of Enoch, and that it was to go on, not only in Jude's day, but in the future till the Lord comes. It was all one in character — hatred of God. And you see how entirely this falls in with what I have been saying, that man always departs from God. It is not only that he is rebellious, not only that he behaves himself badly, not only that he violates this and that, but he turns his back upon God altogether and His truth. This is apostasy, and the spirit of it is already come. It will, come out thoroughly, and then the Lord will come in judgment.

But now the hope! What is that? Well, it is implied in what we saw. "Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of His saints." The question is, How did they come with Him? If the Lord comes with His saints, He must have come before to fetch them to Himself, and this is just what He will do. But that is a thing entirely outside the prophetic introduction of the Lord's coming. The Lord's coming for His saints is not a matter of prophecy at all. It is a matter of love and hope; we may say of faith, love and hope. They are all in full play in the wonderful prospect that grace has opened out before our eyes. Therefore it is that the Lord does not introduce this prospect except in a very general way, in any of the Gospels so much as He does in John: "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself" (John 14:2, 3).

There is nothing about prophecy in that passage. It is future, but its being future does not make it prophecy. It is an abuse of terms to think that prophecy is essentially bound up with judging a wrong state of things and replacing it with a better. But in this case, as in John 14,

the Lord, when He comes to put us in the Father's house, does not judge a wrong state of things. It is consummating His love to the dearest objects of His love, not merely on earth but for heaven; and it is in that way that the Lord speaks. It is the same thing in the Revelation. After He has done with all the prophetic part, He presents Himself as "the bright and the morning star." And when the church has that before her, we find a new thing, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." That is not prophecy; that is the church's hope, and it is strictly the church's hope. Because when you say, "The Spirit and the bride," it is not merely an individual, it is the whole — personified — of the saints that compose the bride. "The Spirit and the bride!" What a wonderful thing that the Spirit should put Himself at the head of it! "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." It might have been thought, Oh! that is only a sanguine hope that the bride has got. But, no; you cannot talk about anything sanguine in the mind of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Hence you see that the great object of the Lord, in that close of the Revelation, was to show that you must not mix up the hope of the Lord's coming to receive us to Himself with the accomplishment of prophecy. The hope is entirely apart from any prophetic events. It is not in the seals, it is not in the trumpets, still less is it in the vials. It is after all these things that the Spirit of God, in the conclusory observations, gives there what the Lord had given, when Himself on earth, to His disciples. The Spirit of God takes up there what was suited to the then condition of the church. The church then knew that she was "the bride" of Christ. This had been clearly shown in more than one chapter of the Revelation. In Revelation 19, the marriage of the Lamb had come, and

the bride had made herself ready. That could not be the earthly bride. How could the earthly bride celebrate a marriage in heaven? And how could the heavenly bride celebrate it there unless saints composing it had been taken there before? This is just what I am about to come to.

Well, then, this coming of the Lord, which is “our hope,” is exactly what Jude takes up here in the closing verses.

“But to Him that is able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you with exultation blameless before His glory; to an only6 God our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord 7 [be] glory, majesty, might, and authority, before all times,8 and now, and unto all the ages. Amen” (vers. 24, 25).

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling.” How appropriate when thus presenting the dangers, the evils, the horrible iniquity of apostasy from all Christian grace and truth that might have the effect of greatly dispiriting a feeble soul! No one ought even to be dispirited; not one. “Now unto Him that is able to keep” clearly refers to every step of the way, and there is power in Him to keep. It is we who fail in dependence. Never does He fail in power to preserve. “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless.” Where? “Before the presence of His glory.” Where is that? Is not that the very glory into which the Lord has now gone? And does not He say, “that where I am there ye may be also”? Here we find that the hope of the Christian and the hope of the church is entirely untouched by all the ruin that had come in. Spiritual power remained intact. And not only that: this glorious,

blessed hope remains for our consolation and our joy in the darkest day.

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you without stumbling and to set you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.” There we have what falls in not with Peter, but with Jude. Jude, of course, entirely agrees with Peter, and confirms Peter as to the judgment that is to fall on those that were not only unrighteous but apostate. But then Jude does not forget that there are those that are true, that there are those that are faithful, that there are those that are waiting for Christ, that there are those that are even more appreciative of the blessing because of the unbelief of man. Therefore it is that he brings in this present power which depends entirely on the Holy Spirit’s presence to keep us; and, further, he speaks of the blessed hope depending upon Christ’s coming to receive us to Himself, “and to present us faultless.” That will only be because we are glorified; that will only be because we are like Himself. He was the only One intrinsically faultless, and He is the One Who, by redemption, and then also by its accomplishment for the body — for redemption now is only as far as the soul is concerned, but when He comes it will be for the body as well — will present us faultless both in soul and body “before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”

Jude 25

“To the only [wise] God.” The word “wise” has crept in here. In all correct texts the word “wise” disappears in this place. It is perfectly right in Romans 16:27. And I just refer to that text to show its appropriateness there: “To God only wise.” I presume that it was this passage

that led the ignorant monk, or whoever he was that was copying Jude, to (as he thought) correct it. But we cannot correct. All these human corrections are innovations, and our point is to get back to what God wrote and to what God gave. Everything except what God gave is an innovation, but God's word is the standard, and all that departs from, or does without, it is an innovation.

Now, in this chapter of Romans, what made the word "wise" appropriate and necessary there, is that Paul refers to the mystery. He does not bring out the mystery in Romans; but after completing the great subject of the righteousness of God, first, in its personal application as well as in itself, secondly, comparing it with the dispensations of God, and, thirdly, in its practical shape — personal, dispensational, and practical — he here adds a little word at the close, "Now to Him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery." The revelation of the mystery — he had not brought this in. But he maintains that this gospel of his was according to it. It was not the revelation of it; but it did not clash with it. There was no contrariety, but that revelation of the mystery was left for other Epistles, Ephesians and Colossians more particularly; Corinthians also in a measure, but chiefly Ephesians and Colossians.

Further he says, "which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by prophetic writings" (or, scriptures, namely, those of the New Testament. I understand that what is called here "scriptures of the prophets" are the prophetic writings of the New Testament, of which Paul contributed so much) "according to the commandment of the

everlasting God made known to all nations” — that shows that the Old Testament prophets are not referred to here at all — “for obedience of faith; to God only wise be glory.” That is to say, this concealment of the mystery and now bringing it out in due time — not in Romans, but in what would be found to agree with Romans and confirm Romans when the mystery was communicated to the saints in the Epistles that had to be written afterwards — all this showed “God only wise.” It is in connection, you see, with this keeping back for so many ages, and now for the first time bringing out this hidden truth, the hidden mystery, as he calls it, to our glory, which is involved in Christ’s exaltation at the right hand of God, and in His leaving the world for the time entirely alone, whilst meanwhile forming the disciples according to the truth of His being in heaven.

In Timothy, however, we have an expression exactly similar to what we have here. “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God” (1 Tim. 1:17). There the word “wise” is brought in again in our Authorised Version. There is no reason for it there. So that there is the same error introduced in Timothy as there is in Jude, and both of them brought from what we already have in Romans 16, where it ought to be. Here, we find again, what a dangerous thing it is for man to meddle with the word of God. The apostle is here looking at God Himself, not at what He particularly does. The wisdom of His revelation — that is in Romans. But in Timothy it is, “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God.” There might be all these pretenders, these gods many and lords many that Paul knew very well among the Gentiles, and Timothy also, and particularly at this very Ephesus where

Timothy seems to have been at this very time. There was the famous temple (one of the wonders of the world), called the temple of Diana. Artemis is the proper word, for Diana was a Roman goddess, and Artemis was a Grecian goddess quite of a different nature, although there were kindred lies about the two.

Here, therefore, in Timothy the apostle presented with great propriety and beauty “the only God.” Bringing in the “wise” God introduces quite another idea which does not fall in with the context, it does not agree with it properly. We find just the same thing in Jude. So that the comparison, I think, of the three scriptures will help to show that “the only wise God” belongs to Romans; that “the only God” — Who is presented in contrast with idols and imaginary beings — brings in to Timothy the force of the “only” true God.

In Jude we have “the only God” for a slightly different reason, but one equally appropriate. He is looking at all this terrible scene and at the greatness of the grace of God towards His beloved ones carried through such an awful sea of iniquity and apostasy.

But if our eye be fixed on Christ, my dear brethren, it does not matter where we are, or whether we are smooth or rough. Some would make a great deal of the large waves, and I have no doubt that Peter was frightened at the big waves on which he found himself walking, and when he looked at the waves down he went. But if there had been no big waves, all as smooth as glass, and Peter had looked down on the glassy sea, down he would have gone all the same. It is not, therefore, at all a question of the particular circumstances. The fact is, there is no power to keep us,

except a divine one, and it is all grace; and the grace that supports on a smooth sea is equally able to preserve on a rough one. Whatever, therefore, may be the special characters of evil and of danger at the present time, all turns upon this: What is Christ to my soul? And if I believe in His grace and in His truth then what does not my soul find in Christ?

“Now, unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy.” For the grace on His part is just the same as if there had been no departure, no apostasy, no wickedness, no unrighteousness of any kind. He wrought His marvellous work of grace for us when we were nothing but sinners. He brought us to Himself when we were no better — unmoved, perhaps, by that wonderful work when we first read and heard about it. But when the moment came for us to believe on Him, how it changed all! And surely the times that have passed over us have only endeared the Lord more to us. I hope there is not a soul in this room but what loves the Lord a deal better today than the day on which he, or she, was first converted. It is one of those notions of Christendom that our love is always much better and stronger on the day we were first converted. Never was there greater mistake. There was a feeling of mercy, no doubt; a deep sense of pardoning grace, but, beloved friends, do we not love the Lord for incomparably more than what we knew when converted? Surely that love has grown with a better knowledge of His love, and of His truth. And here we find that His grace is exactly the same, that the grace that brought Him from heaven, the grace of Him, Who lived here below, that died here below, and is now gone back into glory, is without

change; and that the exceeding joy or exultation will be unquenched in the smallest degree when the blessed moment comes. “He will set us blameless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy.” It is not very much to find where the exceeding joy is. I am persuaded it is both in Him and in us. Perhaps we may be allowed to say, “which thing is true in Him and in you” (1 John 2:8). That was said about another thing altogether — the love that He put into our hearts when we knew His redemption; for until we know redemption there is not much love in a believer. He may have a good bit of affection for the people that he is intimate with, but he is very narrow at first, and till he knows the love of Christ his affections do not at all go out to all the saints. Here then we find, at any rate, this glowing picture of that bright hope, when it will surely be accomplished.

Now, Jude adds, “To the only God.” For who could have met all this confusion? Who could have conceived and counselled all this grace and truth? Who could have kept such as we are through all, remembering our total weakness, our great exposure, the hatred of the enemy, the contempt of adversaries, of all that are drawn away, of all the enticement to go wrong, all the animosities, worst of all, created by any measure of faithfulness? Yet He does keep through it all. “The only God our Saviour”; not only Christ our Saviour. Christ is the accomplisher of it all, but here Jude looks at God as the source, and it is no derogation from Christ. It was the delight of Christ on earth to present God as a Saviour God, and not merely that He Himself was that personal Saviour, the Son of man. So here the apostle desires that we should ever honour God our Saviour, as indeed we find it rather

a common expression in those very solemn Epistles to Timothy.

“To the only God our Saviour.” All other dependence is vain, all other boast is worthless. We are intended to rejoice, or, rather more strictly, to “boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

“To [the] only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might and authority, before all time, and now and ever (or, to all the ages).” It is a very interesting thing to note here the propriety with which Jude closes the Epistle. He says, “Be glory, majesty, might and authority, before all time, and now, and for evermore, Amen.” He looks at the full extent of eternity. It is much more precise than what we have in our Authorised Version; and is here given according to the reading of the best authorities, and rightly adopted by the Revisers.

Peter also closes his Second Epistle in what is said to be the same. But there is this distinction, that whilst Peter speaks of “glory both now and unto eternity’s day” (2 Peter 3:18), Jude brings out in the remarkable completeness of his closing ascription what was, and is, and is to be, in all its full eternal character.

1 ἠγαπημένοις (beloved) AB and several cursives, all the Ancient Versions, Origen, etc. ἡγιασμένοις (sanctified) KLP etc.

2 Θεόν (God) though added (after “Master”) by KLP 31 Syrr., is omitted by ABC 13 Vulg. Copt. Sah. Arm. and Æthiopic Versions.

3 πάντα (all things) ABC2 13 Vulg. Copt. Syr. Arm. and Æthiop. Vv. instead of τοῦτο (this) KL 31 and Sah. Version.

4 ἐλέγχετε AC*, the best cursives, and Vv., διακρινομένους ABC, good cursives, Vulg., Syrr., Arm. — Text. Rec. ἐλεειτε διακρινόμενοι KLP, etc.

5 σώζετε ἐκ πυρὸς ἁρπάζοντες ABC, best cursives, Vulg. Memph., Arm., Aeth., οὓς δὲ ἐλεᾶτε ἐν φόβῳ A (ἐλεεῖτε) B, Vulg. Memph., Arm., Aethiop. — Text. Rec. ἐν φόβῳ σώζετε ἐκ τοῦ πυρὸς ἁρπάζοντες KLP, etc.

6 σοφῶ (wise) is omitted by ABC Vulg. Copt. Arm. Æthiop. and Syrr. Vv. — T.R. inserts with KLP and many cursives.

7 διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν ABCL Vulg. Copt. and Syrr. Vv. — T.R. omits with K.P.

8 πρὸ παντὸς τοῦ αἰῶος ABCL Vulg. Copt. Arm. and Æthiop. Vv. — T.R. omits with KP and most cursives.