

# HELPS BY THE WAY:

A FORTNIGHTLY MAGAZINE.

DESIGNED FOR THE MINISTRY OF A FULL AND PRECIOUS  
CHRIST, TO THOSE FOR WHOM HE DIED.

---

"Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for Him hath God the Father sealed."—JOHN VI. 27.

---

NEW SERIES.

VOLUME I.—1879.

---

TORONTO :

THOS. J. HAMILTON, 308 YONGE STREET,

LONDON E. C.:

ALFRED HOLNESS, 21 PATERNOSTER ROW.

## CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
The Faithful Witness.....	I
Deliverance: What is it. I. The Need of Deliverance.....	5
Key-Notes of the Bible Books.....	11
The Man of God. Lecture I.....	16
Answers to Correspondents.....	28
Deliverance: What is it? II. The Meaning of the Need.....	29
A Few Thoughts on Psalm XXII.....	34
The Plan of the New Testament.....	39
Gleanings.....	47, 55
The Man of God. Lecture II. His Discipline.....	48
Answers to Correspondents.....	56
A Few Thoughts on Psalm XXII. ( <i>Continued.</i> ).....	57
Deliverance: What is it? III. Deliverance Needful from the Law.....	60
Key-Notes: The Gospel of Matthew. I. Its Characteristic Features.....	65
The Man of God. Lecture III. His Discipline.....	70
Gleanings.....	64, 82
The Mounts of Law and Grace.....	83
Answers to Correspondents.....	84
The Gospel of Matthew. II. The Book itself.....	85
The Challenge of Grace, and the Soul's Answer. I. The Chal- lenge.....	91
Gleanings.....	112
Deliverance: What is it? IV. The Means of Deliverance.....	92
At the Well. A Gospel Address.....	101
The Sacrificial Birds.....	113
The Challenge of Grace, and the Soul's Answer. II. The Answer	115
Deliverance: What is it? V. Power.....	120
Gleanings.....	124, 139
A Brand from the Burning. A Gospel Address.....	125
The Gospel of Matthew. III. The Kingdom announced, (Ch. iii.-vii).....	141
Gleanings..	148, 154, 167
The Fruitless Branch and Abiding in Christ.....	149

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
Planted by the Waters .....	155
Our Hope, and its Practical Influences .....	160
Answers to Correspondents.....	168
The Pruning of the Vine .....	169
Sketch of Moral Order and Connection between the Early Books of the Old Testament .....	172
Gleanings .....	175, 185, 196
The Nearness of Our Hope.. .....	176
The Gospel of Matthew.	
IV. The Mysteries of the Kingdom, (Ch. xiii.-xx. 28).....	186
V.—The Coming in Humiliation, (Ch. xx. 29; xxiii)....	190
VI.—The Coming in Glory, (Ch. xxiv, xxv) .....	191
VII.—The Purchase of All by the one Offering, (Ch. xxvi, xxviii).....	193
Some Evils which afflict Christendom and their Remedy, as Depicted by the Lord's own Words to the seven Churches. (Rev. ii. iii).....	
Lecture I.—Spiritual Decline and the Judaizing of the Church (Rev. ii. 1-11) .....	197
Lecture II.—Nicolaitanism, or the Rise and Growth of Clerisy (Rev. ii. 12-17).....	
Lecture III.—Establishments, and a Money Basis (Rev. ii. 12-17)	236
Lecture IV.—The Woman Jezebel, and the Voice of the Church (Rev. ii. 18-23).....	
Lecture V.—“Ye have Reigned as Kings without Us.” (Rev. ii. 24-29).....	
Lecture VI.—Sleeping Among the Dead (Rev. iii, 1-6.....	285
Lecture VII.—Christ's Word and His Name (Rev. iii. 7-13)....	299
Lecture VIII.—What Brings the Time of His Patience to an End? (Rev. iii. 14-22).....	322

## “THE FAITHFUL WITNESS.”

---

(Rev. i. 5 ; iii. 14.)

It is one of the latest assertions of the professed investigators of natural science, that the sun was not always a luminary. Its mass existed, they say, for ages, ere it was crowned with the glory of its brilliant photosphere.

Scripture had long before announced that the first light of the earth was *not* sun-light, and had been laughed to scorn for the announcement. I do not touch the infidel question now. But, in a sphere of things transcending the natural, in which nature herself finds her proper interpretation, it is certain that the light was before the sun. “The Life was the light of men” then first when “the Word was made flesh and and tabernacled among us, and we beheld *His* glory” (John i. 14). Then the God hitherto unseen was “told out” (ver. 18, Gr.); He who, always Himself light, yet had dwelt in the darkness, was made known, and humanity, wonderful to say, was the dark sun-mass which, in the man, Christ Jesus, became invested with the glory of Deity itself.

Thus in His own Person was He the only competent witness to God, in Him manifest. God had indeed given His word of old through the prophets, but now there walked before men’s eyes One who could say, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” One by whom men came to God. In such sort that whoso came to Him had *none back of Him* ever to be revealed to him. The Son in the Father’s bosom was the Father’s heart outpoured into the world.

Oh that men *did* believe it. Here, in the lowliest of men, stranger to nothing human, save only that which is properly foreign to humanity itself—bearing



our infirmities, taking our sicknesses---in whose arms the little children nestled, on whose breast the fisherman of Galilee leaned,—in Him familiarly known as friend of publicans and sinners, while by devils proclaimed the Holy One of God,—in Him alone is known, or can be known, the God with whom we have to do. No other true knowledge of Him is there anywhere. Oh that those who are reading or trying to read God's heart in His providences, or in the upbraiding voice of their consciences, (true utterance as that may be in its own sphere) think they hear the voice of Him who "upbraideth not,"—would accept in reality the revelation of God in Him! How many anxious ones would thus find the way into His presence nearer than ever it was, Himself as accessible, His authoritative word as peace-giving as of old. But He is not here, they say; those singularly blessed days are over. The Son of Man was then upon earth to forgive sins, and palsied limbs no more receive strength to make known His power for this. The Word for them is but a chronicle of a golden age long past, and not the living and life-giving word of Him who "is," as well as "was," and ever "will be."

We would not forget that He has gone to heaven, for therein is our joy ten thousand-fold augmented. It was expedient that he should go away. So He says Himself. The sun has been set in the heavens, that is all; and set there surely to give light upon the earth. They who are "children of the day," before day has dawned upon the world, measure it by His place in the heavens. And the day for them never ends, because their sun never goes down.

Upon the golden lamp of the sanctuary,—and the holy places made with hands were figures of the true,—the "golden bowls like unto almonds" speak to the anointed ear of the true priesthood (1 Peter ii. 5) of One who has passed into the heavens as the "first begotten from the dead." The "almond,"—in Hebrew the "wakeful,"—is the first herald of the spring. Its

## "THE FAITHFUL WITNESS."

3

awaking from winter sleep tells not alone of its own revival but of the million buds and blossoms so soon then to burst forth. And Christ risen from the dead is the argument for all His own of their own present spiritual and future corporeal resurrection. The "faithful witness" is the "first-begotten from the dead" (Rev. i. 5); the "Witness, faithful and true," is 'the beginning of the creation of God,' (iii. 14). The true light reveals a new scene beyond the tears of the present and all that has caused them; but more, where God has got for Himself a name as wiping those tears away. The triumph over sin is *His* triumph, the joy of deliverance *His* joy, the rest attained His own eternal rest, and of all this Christ risen and glorified is the pledge and earnest; in this light alone we see light; "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Cor. iv. 4.)

It is to Laodicea, last of the seven candlesticks, ready to be spued out of His mouth, that the Lord speaks of Himself as the "faithful and true witness." Rich and increased with goods, she lacked the blessedness of the poor in spirit, of those who have nothing and possess all things. To her therefore, the Lord appeals: "Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayst see." One ray of that glory in His face would have revealed her to herself by revealing Him, and an unveiled heaven would have drawn her heart from earth, and beggared her here by enriching her forever.

She had been an *unfaithful* witness in this, that her testimony was to her own fulness and not His, and that she had her good things where He was still rejected and a stranger. She had followed in the path which prosperous, worldly Corinth had initiated (1 Cor. iv. 8), and which would end in resistless judgment in the day when Babylon the great should come into remembrance before God (Rev. xvi. 19). The course is one and the end one; and the end in our day is surely near.

Meanwhile the golden bowls like almonds are still

on the lamp of the sanctuary, and the light of the glory of God is in the face of a man who has passed into the heavens. *He* abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself. And in His light still, alone we see light; alone it tests and reveals the true character of everything: till things are seen in the light of his presence,—in the eternal light that shines from the place where, rejected and outcast by the world, He, first begotten from the dead, is the beginning of the creation of God,—nothing is really known as it is at all. "*That which doth make manifest is light.*" He is the light, the only one; and *our* light, if other than a deception, is but the reflection of his own, the witness that it is night-time because he is absent. Thus the moon is the child of the day, bathed in a brightness not her own, her testimony to one who rules and enlightens her: "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give out the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6. Gr.)

Our witness is to creature nothingness, and His all-sufficiency; to the glory of a *new* creation, which proclaims the judgment of the old, the virgin's lamp which however much it shine amid the darkness of the world we are quitting, is lighted for the Bridegroom only to go forth and welcome Him. F.W.G.

---

## DELIVERANCE: WHAT IS IT?

---

### I. THE NEED OF DELIVERANCE.

Every one who, with his spiritual eyes opened, observes the condition of things among the people of God in the present day, will be conscious that in spite of great and wide-spread blessing through the gospel, in spite of much scripture light and knowledge, and a revival of truths which for ages had been lost sight of, in spite too, of a very extensive and awakening preaching of the Lord's coming,—yet in general the state of Christians by no means answers to what such things would seem to imply. Feebleness, on the other hand, is everywhere apparent. I do not speak of the concurrent growth of ritualism and infidelity, which is evident, but is the product in different ways of the denial of the Divine Word; nor do I speak even of the worldliness which is as undeniably evident among so-called evangelical denominations. I confine myself now to the narrower sphere of those who professedly have peace with God in the knowledge that they are justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and, standing in grace, rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Among such, at least, it is not too much to expect devotedness, and that, as they grow continually in the knowledge of the truth, they should be in proportion sanctified by it.

Before peace is known, a true walk with God is impracticable, however sincerely it may be desired and sought for. The moral character of practical Christianity is found in this: "That they which live should henceforth no more live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." [2 Cor. v. 15.] But is it possible for one to whom his ultimate salvation is yet unassured, to be thus regardless of what must be to him of the greatest moment to have secured? Can he live thus devoted to another, who has such

abundant reason for anxiety about himself? and if there is "no fear in love," as the apostle assures us, and love is the principle of all right obedience, and that by which faith works,—how is it possible to be divested of fear—"fear" which "hath torment"—if there be a real possibility of at last being cast away as utterly reprobate?

It is this that is the misery of all half-gospels. Men are left toiling in worse than Egyptian bondage to work out for themselves a deliverance which no human power could ever accomplish; Christ's work and God's love in Him, in their sweet and sanctifying reality, unknown. No doubt in this condition there may be much ignorant zeal for holiness, while they take up to accomplish it a law which is "the strength of sin," and refuse the grace of which it is affirmed in contrast: "sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace."

But we are to trace out the subtler workings of this principle in those who have already "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." In such there surely should be found fruit unto holiness. The instincts of every quickened soul are after it. Why is it then that such as profess (and we may say, truly profess) to be at peace with God, are found so often in practice little beyond those who profess nothing of the kind? nay, not frequently as it would seem, doing their best to confirm the disparaging thoughts of those who identify the precious gospel of God's grace with what they entitle "antinomianism"? Why is it further, that those who really, with the knowledge of peace, desire earnestly to know what it is to walk with God, manifest and confess such constant and utter want of power for it? And why do so many who have begun well and happily, fall back often under the power of things they had forsaken, and go on in a course of conduct at variance with their Christian profession, if even they do not give it up?

We do not at all suppose that one answer will be sufficient to account for all such cases; but we do be-

## DELIVERANCE : WHAT IS IT ?

7

lieve that one of the most frequent causes is to be found in this, that such souls, though they may have known peace, have not known deliverance—a deliverance such as the eighth of Romans in the commencement of it sets forth : a thing which must be apprehended not merely doctrinally, but experimentally, before the Christian life in its true character can be known and manifested.

The state of need which calls for deliverance is described in the seventh chapter, and it is important to get fully hold of this before we look at what meets it in the eighth. It is on this account that souls have to go through it experimentally, as they have, because deliverance can be reached no other way ; although bad teaching may unduly protract this experience, and even add to it features that are not contemplated in the inspired picture.

Thus it should be seen that the whole question here is of *erving* and of *fruit*. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth *fruit* unto God," (vii. 4.) And again : "But now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held, that we should *serve* in newness of spirit, not in the oldness of the letter." (ver. 6 marg.) So the state is of one "carnal, sold under (in slavery to) sin," doing under this tyranny of sin "that dwelleth in" him, in compulsion to a "law of sin and death," the thing he hates ; and the deliverance enjoyed finally corresponds to this : it is that "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death."

It is therefore no question of justification or of peace. That has all been gone through in previous chapters. That, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, is a conclusion fully arrived at in ch. v. 1, and the inability of the law to *justify* had been fully insisted on previously to that. Throughout our present section there is no repetition of this. It is a different and a further question.

While justification is "not of works, lest any man should boast," and "to him that worketh not . . . his faith is counted for righteousness,"—here on the other hand, it is "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

It is plain then, that ability to "walk" is a matter which needs to be learnt by a man already justified; and that it is such an one, already delivered from wrath and condemnation, who needs yet *another* deliverance from a law of sin and death, a present power of evil in him, without which he is still left helpless, doing the evil he would not, and not accomplishing the good he delights in.

This in itself is important to realize, and at first a thing very difficult to realize. In the vivid apprehension of sins forgiven, of the terror of the wrath of God gone by forever, of the wondrous love which has visited us and turned the shadow of death into morning, it is easy to conclude that the warfare with sin is well-nigh over, when in truth it has not fairly yet begun. Who could sin, for whom the cross of Christ has blotted out the past, the grace of God furnishes the present, and whose future prospect is the glory of God? But experience soon sorrowfully disappoints this expectation, and we learn to cry out despairingly for a new deliverance: "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

What the apostle has elsewhere (vi. 6) called the "body of sin," he here calls the "body of death," and the oppressive power of this body of sin and death is what produces a "law of sin and death in his members." It is the resistance of the still existing old nature he is experiencing, or what is termed the "flesh," for into mere flesh, as if destitute of the spiritual principle God had communicated to him, was the natural man sunk down, and as our Lord says, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh;" from one to another this fallen nature is transmitted.

In the flesh sin dwells—I am only quoting from the

chapters before us—and good does *not* dwell. Its mind (viii. 7. Gr.) is “enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;” so that it is not possible to change its good into evil. It remains, and remains still the same, even in the child of God in whom the Spirit of God dwells; for of such it is written, that “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other.” (Gal. v. 17.)

So in the seventh of Romans the man who is experiencing the power of evil in him, though converted, is conscious also of something within him opposite in tendency to sin and flesh. Nay, he identifies himself rather with that opposite tendency: “Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” (ver. 20.) Twice over he asserts this, although unable to deny either that the flesh too is himself. (ver. 18.)

But all through he maintains that his will is on the side of God and good; he delights in the law of God after the inward man; with his mind he himself serves it; but he sees another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin in his members. He is not indifferent to the state in which he finds himself, as is evident by his anguished cry. “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” The state thus described is sufficiently distinguished from that which the apostle speaks of in the sixth chapter. In answer to the question there, “What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law but under grace?” he replies “God forbid! know ye not that to whomsoever ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” Here the case is that of a free man (or one taking that ground) yielding himself voluntarily up to sin; in the seventh chapter, on the other hand of a man compelled to serve *involuntarily*. These states are wholly different. If the man’s free choice is to serve sin—well; he will get its wages;



but the other, though "carnal," is not choosing to serve it, though he does. The will is right, but the power is wanting.

A terrible thing it is for the soul professing to have peace with God then, and yet unexercised about the evil in him, or the evil he may be in. Let such ponder the solemn warning of the apostle: "To whomsoever ye *yield* yourselves servants to obey, *his servants ye are*, to whom ye obey." And let us also remember that sin in God's sight is not measured by the mere natural conscience, which may be dulled and seared to any extent, or by the customs of society, even professedly Christian, but by the precepts of the Word alone. It is God's account of things that is alone trustworthy; and it is amply so, however little our dullness may apprehend the evil of what He calls such, or the manners of our neighbors endorse His estimate.

But yielding oneself to sin is not the question of the seventh of Romans. The soul is not unexercised, but consenting to and delighting in the good it cannot accomplish. For such, however impossible it may seem in their eyes, deliverance is possible, and the way is pointed out in the chapter before us. How is it possible, indeed, that He who gave His Son to redeem us from wrath and condemnation, should leave us helpless to the dominion of sin? How should the grace which avails to bring a man to heaven, *not* avail to keep him by the way from what to him is misery and to God dishonour? Let any one take heed who imagines that God can acquiesce in the triumph of evil over His good. It cannot be. It would be but to repeat the cry of old: "We are delivered to do these abominations." It would be less our own shame than His, who had failed to manifest His power to fulfil the Spirit-taught desires of His people. Scripture, at least, is in no wise responsible for such a thought. And this we shall go on to consider, at the same time that we enquire into the meaning of such a state as we are speaking of exhibiting itself in a converted and justified man.

## KEY-NOTES OF THE BIBLE BOOKS.

---

In commencing a series of papers under the above heading, I may state in a few words what is designed, that the Christian reader may be able to use them intelligently and to profit.

God's Word being divine, and to us practically at least infinite as its Author, and being moreover His authoritative communication to the purchased people of His choice, it becomes a very serious matter to attempt anything like a scheme or plan of what is there. There is not only the evident danger of misrepresentation of what God has given as the revelation of His own mind and for the sanctification of His people, but there is also the danger of what is a lesser form of the same thing after all,—of a *defective* representation cramping and narrowing the largeness of the Divine utterance. And our representations must *needs* be defective. We might as well try to exhaust the ocean with a water-bucket, as to communicate through the narrow channels of our own intelligence what are the unsearchable riches of Christ. In this sense we do indeed belittle Him by the poverty of our conceptions every time we open our mouths to speak of Him. Yet God is pleased to use this, and Christ stoops,—blessed Lord—daily and hourly to this fresh humiliation, that He may enter through the low and narrow gateway of our understandings into the hearts which He covets for Himself.

This grace is our warrant and encouragement. If our speech of Him be but the prattle of the nursery, we remember that what He hides from wise and prudent He reveals to babes, and out of the mouth of even babes and sucklings He hath perfected praise.

Fragmentary and imperfect, however, as any sketch of the Bible books must be, a Divine plan there is, which it is of the greatest importance to apprehend,—central thoughts about which all the rest group; and a definite structure which, when grasped, exhibits the place and relationship of these to one

another, so as to give an "assurance of understanding" about them, which perhaps nothing else can in like manner convey.

To the writer, moreover, it is not doubtful that God has been pleased, for our further help, if for no other purpose, to employ a complete system of numerals, symbolically significant, to reveal this structure to us. And while in some books, or portions of books, this is too evident to be denied, he believes the same thing to obtain where not so apparent; these places in which it is manifest being meant to attract attention and encourage search after what is to be found elsewhere, as the vein of ore where it crops out upon the surface assures the miner of what is deeper hid.

The book of Lamentations is thus manifestly divided into five parts, corresponding to its five chapters, the first and second being composed of twenty-two verses each, commencing with the letters of the alphabet in regular order to the end. The *third* chapter contains 66 verses in which the same alphabetic order is maintained, but now in triplets, three *alephs* beginning the first three verses, three *beths* the second three, and so on. The fourth chapter returns to the structure of the first and second; while the fifth has still twenty-two verses, but no alphabetic arrangement at all.

Take in like manner the alphabetic psalms. The definite structure exhibited here is evident, whether or not we can explain it, but some purpose (if of God) it must have, worthy of God. The strangeness of it seems designed to awaken enquiry, too little afforded it by those who believe in its having come from Him.

The symbolism of numbers is largely admitted, while its application in this direction seems to have been overlooked. It is the only thing, however, that explains the numerical structure. I have elsewhere given examples of this, and need not repeat it here; if these papers attain their end they will furnish many. But the import of the numbers themselves I

must briefly give, and by this the reality and value of the divisions of the several books may be readily tested. I give them only where I can do so with assurance, or, when more doubtful, with indication of the doubt. And I earnestly invite the co-operation of fellow-students of the Divine word, equally dear and open to all, that by free interchange of whatever the Lord may have given to each, our mutual knowledge may be deepened and extended.

As for the meaning of the numbers, I can but summarize what I have elsewhere given at more length:

*One* stands for 'unity' and 'supremacy;' one God, and not another. Genesis, the first book of Scripture, presents Him as the Almighty, maker and disposer of all.

*Two* speaks of competent testimony: "the testimony of two men is true;" "two tables of the testimony;" "two witnesses" in Revelation; two Testaments. The second person of the Trinity is the "true witness" and the "Word of God."

*Three*, the number of persons in the Godhead, speaks therefore of Divine fulness and completeness, as well as manifestation, for the one God (unknown in His proper character when known only as that) is unveiled to us in these three persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The *third* person is also the teacher, the Revealer. The third book of Scripture, Leviticus, leads us into the sanctuary, to learn as priests what suits His presence. The *third* day, too, is that of resurrection, because in this God manifests Himself coming in power when all hope from man is gone.

*Four* is the number of the 'four corners of the earth' or 'the four winds of heaven.' It is the *world* number, as the place of trial and probation, where man is exposed to diverse influences and looked at from every point of view. The *fourth* book, Numbers, Israel's probation in the wilderness—gives just this side of things.

*Five* is the *human* number, characterizing man by

his possession of those five senses by which he is in connection with the scene around. The fifth book, Deuteronomy, is the *people's* book, as Numbers is that of the Levites, and Leviticus the priests'. The books which are distinctly man's utterance in the Old Testament are stamped with this number: five psalm-like books (from Job to the song of Solomon), five books of Psalms proper,\* and these ending with a five-fold hallelujah, the full utterance of praise at last, from the full heart of man.

*Six*, as the number of man's work-day week, seems to be the measure of his work, and I am inclined to think, also of his *life-discipline*. As the former it may be good or evil, but inclines more, alas to evil than to good. The number of the beast, 666, six in continually higher powers, man's vain effort to reach to the divine, stamping him only with profanity: the six never becomes a seven.

*Seven*, on the other hand is the well-known symbol of divine work completed, the accomplishment of the will and purpose of God in the sphere of the world at large. It divides very commonly into 4 and 3, the world number and the divine, as in the parables of Matt. xiii. for instance. Here the first *four*, spoken in the presence of the multitude, give the world-aspect of the kingdom of heaven; the last three, to the disciples in the house, give the divine side, understood by faith alone.

*Eight* is the first day of the new week, and speaks of a new beginning, and of what is permanent in contrast with the old, which passes away. Thus the *eighth* psalm gives the 'world to come' of Heb. ii. with Christ as Son of Man over it; while the 119th Psalm, with its twenty-two groups of *eight* verses each, gives us the law written on Israel's heart according to the terms of the *new* covenant.

*Nine* has, so far as I am aware, no other significance than what it obtains as a multiple of three by three. It illustrates the truth that, as to the larger numbers, their meaning is generally, so far as traced, derived from the smaller ones of which they

\* In the Hebrew. They are: Book 1, Ps. i.—xli; 2, xlii—lxxii. 3, lxxiii—lxxxix; 4, xc—cvi; 5, cvii—cl.

are compounded. *Forty*, for example, is a 4 by 10, and twelve, a 4 by 3.

The number *ten*, too, seems to fall under this rule, As in the ten commandments of the law, it is the measure and mark of responsibility to God. This is the effect upon man of divine testimony, as five is the human number; and ten is 5 by 2.

Ten times Pharaoh hardens his heart, and ten times God in judgment hardens, and the *ten* plagues which fell upon the land were judgment measured by responsibility. These three things, responsibility, sin, and judgment, seem here very solemnly to have the same measure

*Eleven* I have no light upon; but *twelve* I have already stated to be 3 by 4. It is the number of divine government administered by man. Twelve apostles to regulate in the kingdom of heaven, with twelve corresponding thrones when the Son of man takes his throne. Twelve gates and foundations for the metropolitan city—New Jerusalem; twelve tribes correspondingly of the royal people upon earth.

This closes the regular series of symbolical numbers, so far at least as I am able to follow it. There remains but one number more, of which we may fitly speak.

*Forty* is the well-known number or measure of perfect probation; and here again the numbers of which it is compounded speak for themselves. It is plainly 4 by ten. Ten the measure of responsibility to God; four the testing of man in the world; the product of these two, perfect probation of man in the full measure of his responsibility. Such was the character of Israel's forty years' sojourn in the wilderness; of the Lord's forty days' temptation; of Esau's forty years which ended with his marriage with two Canaanitish wives, and the loss of the first born's place and blessing [Gen. xxvi. 34—xxvii.]

All this will be tested thoroughly as we proceed to apply it in the study of the Bible books. I am well assured it is not fancy that it does apply; and I have elsewhere adduced in the way of proof much more than I can bring forward here.

## THE MAN OF GOD.

---

### LECTURE I.

---

(1 Kings, xvi. 29—xvii. 1.)

I have just read these closing verses of the sixteenth Chapter, beloved friends, in order that we may have before us in some measure the times in which Elijah stood forth. My desire is that we may, if the Lord will, in this or a lecture or so, look at what in the most striking features, the man of God is. Now, you find in the times of Israel that word "man of God" comes repeatedly up in connection with Elijah and Elisha. The title, while actually found as the character itself is prominently brought out, in times of failure, is still really applicable to all the Lord's people, as what they are all, I may say, positionally, and as purchased by the blood of Christ. They are surely God's men; but the "Man of God" is the title here of one who is practically that,—one whose practical character answers to his position.

We have in a very striking way in the second epistle to Timothy the man of God spoken of as the one for whom in a sense all Scripture was written, and whom alone it would profit as it ought; and so it becomes a very serious thing with us, whether we have that character. The Apostle tells Timothy, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."—2 Tim. ii. 16, 17.

There you find that Scripture only has its proper effect on the man of God, and though of course no

child of God is shut out, and it is written for all in that sense, that all may be and should be such, yet of necessity the profit of it is limited to those who have, in a measure at least, the character of the man of God,—God's man; of those who stand out for Him, those who are manifestly and practically His.

That character of course becomes only the more distinct as the times are trying. The apostle tells us, also, even in his time: "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."—Phil. ii. 21. Just in proportion as that is so, of course it makes more striking the reality of one who is a man of God; it makes him shine out in the darkness as it is said of John the Baptist, who as you know took up Elijah's mission: "He was a burning and a shining light," not merely a shining light, mark, as the dead and decaying wood may shine, but a burning light as well. And it is a great point to understand that, while of course the darkness is not of God,—surely it is not!—yet, at the same time it is used of God to make His light more apparent. We should accustom ourselves to think of it in that way; not excusing the evil, or thinking lightly of it, but as certainly not sinking down under it, or being controlled by it. For God's lights, as such, are made for the darkness, which does not hide or put them out, but manifests them. Such a light, in the very darkest days in Israel, was Elijah the Tishbite.

In the chapters before this, how little one seems to find one's way amidst the discordant shapes of evil that fill the page, where the son is but spiritually the "brother of his father," as Ahab's name imports, and that which is born of the flesh is only flesh again. It is so beautiful that you get God at once brought into the scene when Elijah steps into it. And while it is darkness all around, it is not unrelieved darkness any more. If you look back and consider, you will see how largely God's people have lived in such times as these; how from the very beginning of all dispensations that which was entrusted to man's care he failed in; and



the ruin of what was set up became a settled thing. If you take Israel, God says of their course in the wilderness:—"Ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your God, Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them; and I will carry you away beyond Babylon." (Acts vii. 43.) The failure in the wilderness is there connected with the Babylonish Captivity, though a great number of years intervened. The whole thing failed there, and Babylon was the necessary result of the failure in the wilderness.

Take again the Church, as we know, before the Apostles had passed off the scene. It was the mercy of God that they had not passed off the scene before we get His judgment through them of the condition of things. One of them can tell us: "It is the last time; and as ye have heard that Anti-Christ shall come, even now there are many Anti-Christ; whereby we know it is the last time." (1 John ii. 18.) Another: "The mystery of iniquity doth already work," (2 Thes. ii. 7:) and it only waits to have certain hindrances removed, for the man of sin to be fully manifested. Look into the writings of those called "Fathers," but a generation or so after the Apostles. There was a sudden dropping down into the very depths of darkness, we may say, at once. From that time to this, nearly 1800 years, has been a time, in which of necessity God's marked-out people had to walk with God singly and alone. It is what we ought always to do of course, but still more does a time of general departure call on those who would be overcomers to walk alone with Him. If the stream be adverse we need more spiritual energy, that is all.

If you compare the Second Epistle of Peter, the 1st chapter, with the 1st chapter of the First Epistle, you will find that difference. There is a call in the second for greater energy; because God does not leave us to the influences of every kind about us. He is not wanting. He does not fail, if man does. And it is so astonishing that we should be ready almost to credit Him with failure, because we fail. Yet, alas, we do. And at a time of general failure, as if delivered up to

it, we claim it as even a sort of humility, not only not to pretend to be Pauls, but even to take his path at all.

Yet they were men of like passions with ourselves; and we, as they, are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. The Spirit of God was no more in them than in us; because if the Spirit of God is in us it has no measure from God. You find everybody almost imagining that there is a 'measure of the Spirit,' whereas there is not in that sense a measure of it at all. That word which the Apostle gives in the Epistle to the Ephesians: "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit," (v. 18) is to all Christians. If we were filled with the Spirit, should we be anything less than men of God? Elijah had a special mission of course, and so had Paul; but still as to spiritual character, should we be any other than men of God? If the night is dark, will not even the faintest light be brighter?

The times in Israel were not such times as we should look for such a light as Elijah the Tishbite in; it was exactly God's time. God delights in showing in the very midst of it all, that He is quite as sufficient for the darkest times as for the brightest. Elijah's name shows where his strength was. "My mighty one is Jehovah" is its full significance. "Eli" means "my God," but yet also "my strength," or "my mighty One." It is the word used by the Lord upon the cross, "Eli, Eli," "My God, My God," but the very force of it there is that He is appealing to One who has got abundant power, (if it were only a question of power) to bring Him out of all the difficulty in a moment; instead of which the Mighty One His strength forsakes Him. So here, it is "Jehovah is my Mighty One," and it is the power of God we see in him; a power as available for you and me, as for Elijah.

"Tishbite" is said by some to mean "The Converter;" the one in whom there was God's power to turn men from the way in which they were unto Himself; and who sought to bring a nation back to God. In his own lifetime there might seem to be little apparent success in

that; even so there is the lesson for us. For while God never allows his word to fall fruitless to the ground, and we may surely trust Him for that, on that very account we may leave that success to Him, not indifferent, but still not troubled, if it do not much appear; and anxious, first of all, that the seed and sowing should be to His mind, rather than to see results which perhaps the day of manifestation will alone disclose.

That is what God would have before us; success is in His own hands, and God is content sometimes to work in a way to us unscrutable. Look at the Lord's life: how many apparently converted? a few disciples gathered in an upper room after His resurrection. There was quite a number at Pentecost, and a mightier work; but as you go on you find no such large success as in apostolic hands you would expect perhaps from the Gospel. Very various indeed it is: in many places that the Apostle went to, instead of having, what people seem to expect now from a few weeks' revival meetings, converts by the scores, very often but a few, so far as we can see. And only in a few places at first was there large response. In some exceptional cases, you find the Lord saying, "I have much people in this city;" but in no wise was that the rule. And the Lord in His own parable of the mustard-seed indicates that the growth of the little gospel-seed into the 'tree' was as little likely a result, as it argued well for Christianity. Alas, the great spread of this took place in proportion to its adulteration, and as it became popular so it became corrupt.

Why do I speak of this? Because if we make success our object it will become a snare to us. We shall get our eyes upon the results, and by this test our work untrue. For if that were the test, what about His who said, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for naught!" "Yet surely," was His appeal, "my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." God on the other hand would have us look, in the most careful way

possible, at walk and work and life, and as to what comes of it, the issue of it all, leave that to be made manifest in the Day fast approaching, which shall make everything manifest. Are you content to leave it to that? Care for souls and love to them is of course another thing. God forbid that I should say one word which should make that a matter of little moment; but beware of what on every side people are doing; and beware of thinking that quantity, with God, will atone for quality.

Now with Elijah, while God honored the man in the most remarkable way, as you know; put Himself along with him, authenticated his word, and gave the fire from heaven which consumed the sacrifice; yet there seemed no adequate result. Did the nation turn to God? "Hear me," Elijah prays, "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back again." (I Kings xviii. 37.) In the very next chapter he is fleeing from the face of Jezebel, because she had said, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." (xix. 2). There you find perhaps how the ill-success apparently of his mission affected one like Elijah. When he looked at that, he was asking—Would God I might die; and sank down into discouragement at once. There he was, just the man, that was not going to die, just the man, as you know, that was taken straight into heaven, without seeing death at all, vanquished with the apparent want of success, after all this wonderful display of power. Is this not to us a most wholesome warning not to look at the success so much as at the being with God which will ensure success? If we are to wait for the success, for the end, in order to see what the thing is we do, is it not manifest that we must do the thing in the dark in the meantime, as to whether it be of God or not? Yet only as knowing this can we do it in communion with Him. What comes of it, is God's account, not ours. We need not be afraid that His purpose will not

be fulfilled, or that which is of Him not prosper.

I want you to look at Elijah in the attitude which is expressed here in a few words. "Elijah the Tishbite who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, as the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." (xvii.) He stood before the living God: God was for him that—the living God. That is the first thing; "as the Lord God of Israel liveth," he says. He can find no way of expressing assurance equal to that. It was the surest thing he knew, the most vividly realized, that the God of Israel lived. And that is just the thing that we want to realize on the way down here. The living God is what we want in the midst of scenes like this; in the midst of all so full of life and activity, the life around and about, brushing us on every side, how we do want to realize the living God!

I know when you look at Elijah's life, you may say, "certainly God did manifest Himself to Elijah in a marvellous, miraculous way, which we do not see at all now. To only some is it given to work in that way with God. We cannot see these things now." Yet God is the same living God, and we may be sure of this; that while it is true, we do not realize what Elijah did, the failure is clearly *our* failure, and not God's. I do not mean to say there are what people call miracles in the self-same way now; that is not exactly what I am speaking of. We do not expect fire to fall from heaven, or anything of that sort very likely, —but while all this is true, as we see how the draught of fishes could bring the living God home to a soul ready for the announcement, so we may see, and should be prepared to see, Him acting in every little event of our lives. We only want to look: just as with those people who are not prepared to find great things in the Word, they will never be able to find great things in it. The open eye is faith. It is the new sense of the child of God, and more certain than any other. In proportion as this is in exercise, will the Word be permeated by a living Presence. "Quick and powerful,

and sharper than any two-edged sword," it will bring us under the eyes of "Him with whom we have to do."

So with God's presence about us. The earth is still full of Him. What has drawn a veil over His presence? Really it is unbelief. That is all. Unbelief! I grant you that veil is perfectly impenetrable, unless the Word has approved itself to us as His revelation in the way we have spoken of. But then creation becomes, from mere materialism, spiritualized and transfigured. Our own history becomes the story of an omnipotent love, under which "all things work together for good to them that love God." He counts the very hairs of our head, goes beyond all our thought and care for ourselves, and fills our loneliest moments with His presence.

It is only that which will make our lives at all what they ought to be; it is only that which will redeem them, so to speak, from the littleness and meanness, and unimportance, otherwise attaching to them. The meanest life in His presence ceases to be drudgery, and becomes ennobled. The noblest without it, what is it but utter vanity?

You must not imagine that Elijah's life was made up of miracles. How small a part of it these miracles were! And when he stands forth here to answer for the living God, we do not find that the faith he manifested had been nurtured upon miracles. It is not God's way. Those who believed in Christ's name when they saw the miracles He did were not those in whom He confided. It is when we have faith in His presence and nearness, that He will respond to the faith we have. But He does not come at first in that sort of way. It would be merely tempting God to want Him to show Himself in this wonderful way just to prove He was with us. To question is to tempt Him. He is near us, and we ought to know it; and when we realize that, then we may see perhaps, what to unaccustomed eyes may look not unlike miracle even in the present matter-of-fact day.

But again, to Elijah the living God was not merely his God. He was that of course, but not alone that. He was the God of Israel. I think that is a beautiful thing, quite characteristic of the man of God. Israel were God's people. He was not standing before Israel, remember; do not let us make such a mistake as that. He stood before the *Lord God* of Israel, not before Israel. But Israel was something to him, because His God was Israel's God. It was the connection of Israel with the Lord God of Israel which made Israel what they were; and because the Lord God was the Lord God of Israel, therefore Israel was in his thought connected with the Lord God for whom he spoke.

Now that is of immense moment to us, to whom God has revealed the mystery of His Church. We may easily have the Church before us, and be monopolized with the thought of the Church in such a way as really to take us out of the presence of God. What is the Church without the God of the Church? We may easily be making much of the Christian, and leaving out the God of the Christian, and leaving out all that gives Christianity or Christians the least importance.

On the other hand let us understand, that to stand before the God of Israel implies this, that we are linked in heart with what is God's cause in the world. "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it," not for a fraction of it, even the most intelligent, aye! or the most devoted. Everyone of the tribes had its name upon the high priest's breast-plate; and even so all His saints are upon Christ's heart now. Can we be God's men, and yet not in active and earnest sympathy with that with which his heart so intimately concerns itself? Surely it is impossible. "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, says the Apostle, "for His body's sake, which is the Church."

Thus, while God, who forgets not the smallest in His care for the greatest, nor one of His people in His

concern for all,—is to be for us personally and intimately ours, at the same time He is to be the Lord God of Israel to us, and we are to stand before Him as such. Now, this standing before Him, what does it mean? It is not an expression of confidence—there is abundant confidence you see at once—or of rest, or of peace. Too often we make that the whole thing. That is not, after all, what makes the man of God, although necessary to know, of course, to be such; but it does not come into the picture here. He stands before the Lord God of Israel. As you see at once, it is the attitude of service. He is waiting, ready at His bidding to go. Not merely walking before Him, not running about surely, with the restless hurry of many, too busy with His service to listen to His word. “Standing” is waiting to have His will expressed. We stand before the Lord God when we are waiting for him to direct us, and do not move without his guidance. There may be much more standing than moving even, no doubt. If you take Elijah’s life, how much more of standing, or waiting, or being alone with God, than there was of acting for Him; but the acting for Him, in consequence, came just at the right time. So should we be ready to serve, not merely occupied with the service, much less hurrying about, as if to be doing was the whole matter, but to be in *His* path, to be doing *His* will, conscious that all else is worse than idleness.

Now notice how God identifies Himself with the men who stand before Him in this way. “As the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.” What a bold thing to say! Of course, Elijah did not mean to assert, that because of his word the Lord would do these things. It was not after all, that the Lord was going to accomplish Elijah’s will, but that Elijah was accomplishing the Lord’s. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” He had got into the secret of God’s mind, and was honoured by being made the announcer of it. “Surely



the Lord God will do *nothing*, but he revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets . . . .  
 The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophecy?" (Amos iii. 7, 8.) The prophet and the man of God are nearly identical. Would He keep back anything from those who stood before Him, seeking to be servants of His will and towards the people of His choice? What a wonderful place that is to be in? For God to identify Himself so with one, not to be ashamed of him, as it is said in the 11th of Hebrews of those old worthies; not ashamed to identify Himself with, and uphold before the face of the world, the word of a poor, untitled man, but to whom His word and will were all. That is what Elijah was, and so he became linked with the fulfilment of the purposes of One to whom the universe is but the scene of the display of a glory which transcends it still.

Now that is the character of the man of God. I have very feebly traced out what is there, but still that is what the man of God is. I want to know, not whether we are that in full, but still how far that represents us, or has meaning to us, at all? Whether we are outside of the whole thing, so to speak, or not? Do we know what standing before the Lord God is, and before the Lord God of His people? Do we know what it is to have the living God before our eyes in this kind of way? Do we know what it is to be able to see, not only His actings in our lives, but what He is doing in the world, and toward His people, because we are with Him and therefore have His mind? Do we know what it is, as sons of God, to be His servants, working with the zeal and intelligence of those who both know the Father's will, and know the Father?

Of course we must be sons before we are servants; but, being sons, do not let us imagine that this is everything! People put service in the wrong place often. They are serving before they are sons, or before they are conscious of being sons; and slipping therefore into that hired service for which God has no place.

On the other hand, it is surely the right thing when sonship ripens into service, and the full reality of sonship can hardly be enjoyed when this is not so.

Even so, rest *from* labour developes into rest *in* labour, or it is not the full rest Christ gives. Rest for the conscience is attained when we have known that the work of Christ is what God alone accepts, and has accepted, as justifying us before Him. Therefore He *gives* rest. "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi.28) Does he stop there? Is that all? No; He goes on at once, and in immediate connection with it, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall *find rest* unto your souls." (29 v.) That is the only way in which rest in the full sense is attainable; in which we can practically find it. It is rest, not apprehended by the conscience merely, but laid hold of by the heart; rest from all restlessness, all turmoil whatsoever,—perfect and complete repose.

But, notice, it is His yoke and His burden. It is not a yoke of our own making or imposing. It is not setting ourselves to so much work for him. It is another thing to take Christ's yoke and His burden, and learn of Him, the Doer of the Father's will, and whose meat and drink it was to do it. In Him the true Son was the perfect servant. Have we apprehended that because we are sons, from the very nature of the child's relation to the father, we are necessarily and always servants? The child is never released from it, as a mere ordinary servant may be. His very relationship makes him a servant to his father. A servant of love, no doubt, and thus completely one.

Our service from first to last is to have His word to justify it. Our own wills religiously, are no more really right than irreligiously. God has one path for us to walk in, one work at any moment for us to be about. While the Word guides, it must be a living guidance—guided by His eye.

The Lord grant it, for His name's sake.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

---

I. Zech. xiv. 21: What does the "Canaanite" mean?

The word is evidently used symbolically here, as the literal Canaanite was never "in the house of the Lord." The Canaanite is, according to the meaning of the word, 'the merchantman,' the trader in divine things. His presence in the house of the Lord is the sign of utter profanity, and of the ruin of Israel. In Jno. ii. 14—16, we have the shadow, during the Lord's life on earth, of what His zeal for the Father's house will by and by accomplish. In Babylon the great also, the "merchantmen" and their greatness are specially noticed. Judaism and Christianity in their corruptions are akin.

II. 2 Pet. iii. 16: "unlearned and unstable," are not these the ungodly?

Essentially they are, though it may well be not openly so. The words are a little more strictly "unlearned and ungrounded," and the last is the fruit of the first. We can only really *learn* in the presence of God, and there we always do. "Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" is companion to "led astray with divers lusts" (2 Tim. iii. 6, 7). How many there are who never realize what hinders their apprehension and enjoyment of the truth, even among true Christians! "Wherefore, laying aside *all malice and all guile*, and hypocrisies and envies and all evil speakings, as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. ii. 1—3). While in the full sense these unlearned and ungrounded are no doubt the ungodly, it is important not to miss the fact of how far like causes operate in like way among believers. God give His word edge for the consciences of His own!

## DELIVERANCE: WHAT IS IT?

---

### 2. THE MEANING OF THE NEED.

---

A “*law* of sin in the members” is not what is proper to the Christian, as we have seen. If on the one hand the apostle’s language is, that, “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,” on the other hand he says, “these things write I unto you that ye sin not, and *if* any one sin”—he supposes this possible, but not normal. Again, “whosoever is born of God doth not commit”—or better, ‘practise’—“sin: for his seed remaineth in him, and he *cannot* sin (or, be sinning), because he is born of God.” (1 Jno. iii. 9.) The force of these words is, not that a believer cannot commit *a* sin, (a thing contradicted by Scripture and experience alike), but that he cannot *practise* it, or be sinning, as he once was. And, over and over again, this is asserted. “Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him. Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that practiseth sin is of the devil,” (ver. 6-8).

This language has been strained so as to make it contradictory of the supposition that the experience of the seventh of Romans is that of a child of God at all; and to lead people into the manifest error, that a mere child of nature may “with the mind serve the law of God” as ‘delighting in it.’ But this is in the teeth of the apostle’s own assurance, that “the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can be*; so then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God,” (Rom. viii. 7, 8). Here the mind *is* subject to the law of

God, as the mind of the flesh, or of one in the flesh, cannot be. Thus the man passing through this experience, with a right will, and perfect powerlessness to accomplish it, is clearly converted and a child of God. And that deliverance described in the beginning of the eighth chapter, by which freedom from the law of sin is attained, and the righteousness of the law (of God) is fulfilled in him who walketh not after the flesh but after the Spirit, is looked at as already the happy portion of those whom the Apostle John in his epistle is addressing as believers.

And their portion it is: a thing which thus lies at the beginning of a true Christian course; for how can one unable to do the things he would, carnal, and the slave of sin, be qualified to walk with God or to glorify Him? And yet alas, with many a true child for a long course of years the truth is not known which sets free for this. For the truth it is that sets free (Jno. viii. 32), and the truth alone; but that also, truth apprehended by a soul conscious of its need, conscious of bondage, and longing for deliverance. It is only when the cry is wrung from the soul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" that the answer is supplied, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is an experience of evil from which we are delivered; and for that we must, in one way or another, *pass through the experience*.

But this is not yet the explanation of the need. For why should not the knowledge of peace with God and the practical deliverance from the power of sin go together? In the Epistle to the Romans it is evident they are treated as separate questions, of which the one receives its answer after the other. The ordinary experience of believers confirms this, if it does not add often '*long after*.' I am persuaded that in fact the want of deliverance is the great want of by far the larger part of those even at peace with God. Their lives, if they would own it to themselves, are

made up of empty purposes and broken resolutions, if they have not got into the more perilous condition rather, of half-contentment with the evil, from which there seems no escape. Why then the need of such an experience at all as this in such as I am speaking of?

Now in the practical attainment of peace with God, we may find (if we have attained it) what may help us greatly in the enquiry. Here too, what a length oftentimes of so-called 'conflict' before that which is already made for us, and so fully proclaimed to us, and to which we are made so heartily welcome, is attained! What means this struggle? Its character is evident enough at least to those who have passed through it. It is the struggle to maintain, or to produce,—by God's help, too, no doubt,—some righteousness of our own, for peace or for justification. Instead of bowing before God's righteousness, according to which "our righteousnesses," "*all* our righteousnesses, are as filthy rags," we seek to rescue something from this absolute condemnation, and be received at least as not wholly and in the full sense 'lost.' We try, (and are often *taught*) to find firm footing for faith in the assurance of our *saintship* and not of our *sinnership*; as if as *sinner*s we were not entitled to the fullest possible confidence in Him whose special title is the Saviour of sinners.

And thus we miss what we are anxiously striving after. The "God, I thank thee I am not as other men,"—the self-satisfied assurance of the Pharisee,—is what God can never own or accredit. Peace through our own evidences,—peace through our own work or effort or self complacency,—cannot be identified with "peace with God *through our Lord Jesus Christ*."

Now in the matter of holiness and fruit-bearing a similar lesson has to be learnt. The holiness which God does indeed seek from His people is confounded with a *self-consciousness* which is the destruction of

holiness. To one of whom God testified, "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty," He had to say, "thine heart was *lifted up* because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness" (Ezek. xxviii. 12, 17). Into no such dangerous path as that does the Lord lead the feet of His own. He cannot trust us to such perilous self-contemplation. He has made Christ to be our sanctification as much as our righteousness (1 Cor. i. 30), and the way of it is occupation with Christ, and with Christ alone. Only as "we all with open face" are "beholding the glory of *the Lord*," do we become "changed from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 18, *marg.*)

How we are enabled for this we shall have to consider more at large directly. The fact itself is what I would press here. Justification is no more on the principle of faith than sanctification is. Holiness is no more acquired by self-cultivation than righteousness is. It is faith that purifies the heart; it is faith that worketh by love; it is faith that does all this, because it is *Christ* does it, and faith it is that lays hold of Christ for whatever purpose. Self is never its object, but Christ only. The soul taken up with the beauty of Christ is the soul that at one and the same time is learning effectually to be holy, and what is its own nothingness and unlikeness to Him.

The need of the experience of self in the seventh of Romans is the need of learning practically to abide in Christ at all times, to accept Him for practical life as well as for position. And here we have to find, what is a thing strange enough in the discovery, that a pious and right willing self may stand in the way of this, and need to be set aside, that Christ may have the place that He must needs have with all His own. "I live, yet *not I*, but Christ liveth in me," says the apostle (Gal. ii. 20). That is another thing from saying "Christ is my life," to say "*Christ lives* in me."

It is a practical substitution (for faith) of Christ for the saint on earth, as real as His substitution for the sinner on the cross. In death He was the sinner's substitute ; in life He is the saint's. This may be still an enigma to the reader. I trust it will be cleared up as we proceed.

"We are the circumcision," says the apostle again, "who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have *no confidence in the flesh*" (Phil. iii. 3). This does not seem so sweeping. Of course, we think, "the *flesh* is not to be trusted in ; but if we are born again there is more than flesh in us surely : does the new nature go for nothing ? is all as much corruption in the child of God as in the child of the devil ? there are good desires in me, I am sure : is there not to be good fruit ? does not God enjoin it ? ought not I to be producing it ?"

Surely God does enjoin it : surely we are to produce it. But the fruit is for the Master's eye and taste, not ours ; our light is to shine for others, not ourselves ; and that new nature, which we have as children of God, *its* principle is faith, its knowledge, "Christ is all" (Col. iii. 11). Faith, love, hope,—our whole Christian character—are tendrils which attach God's vine-branches elsewhere, and which if they clasp about themselves, the whole trails in the dust, a ruin.

"No confidence in the flesh" means thus 'no self-confidence' at all ; and the despairing cry, "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me ?" is just the break-up of this self-confidence when in a Christian,—the absolute necessity for a Christian walk. The bearing of the law upon all this is now to be considered, before we can rightly understand the deliverance itself.



## A FEW THOUGHTS ON PSALM XXII.

---

A few points in this precious part of the inspired writings I would briefly call attention to. As *the* psalm in which are set forth in concentrated form all the deep sufferings of the Lord in working out that wondrous work which has secured God's glory and the everlasting blessing of redeemed creation, it gives us the great principles that were called into exercise in the cross, and is the key to many a difficult question that might arise in our souls. May we in approaching such a subject, in the sense of the holiness of the ground we stand on, tread it with unshod feet.

In the account given in Genesis xxii., which evidently points to the cross, and what took place there, we have clearly two main features portrayed. No one can read it intelligently, and doubt that Isaac is the Son who obediently and willingly goes an unresisting victim to the altar, and if he escapes being sacrificed through God's interposition, it is by the substitution of another, the "ram caught in a thicket," that he does so, and another principle of the gospel finds illustration, yet Abraham receives him from the dead "in a figure." We have in Isaac the passive obedience that yields to the will of God, at whatever cost to himself; and are reminded of the One who having said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God, though inwardly shrinking from the terrible ordeal, so as to say, "Father, if it be possible, let *this* cup pass from me," yet added, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

If in the Son is seen devoted obedience, that was fully put to the test; yet that is far from being all. Another point is strongly emphasized throughout, and

## A FEW THOUGHTS ON PSALM XXII.

35

that is, that in the Father we see love put to the extremest trial. Why does God seek to stir up every feeling and emotion of love in Abraham's heart with such words as these, "Take now thy son, thine *only* son Isaac, whom thou *lovest*, and get thee unto the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering;" but to shew us how much it cost Him to give *His* Son, as it is expressed by the Lord himself, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son;" and in Rom. viii., "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." I look then, in this psalm, for these two sides of truth to be directly or indirectly developed. The obedience of the One who bore sin's judgment on the cross, and God displayed fully in that double aspect of His nature, according to which He has declared Himself as Light and Love.

Psalm xxii. clearly has its two parts. From verse 1 to 21 we have the work done; from 22 to the end the results of that work, the suited answer in blessing to the perfections of the One who has glorified God in the place of sin-bearing. Three main elements of suffering were His at that time. From God, from man, from the enemy. The first from 1 to 5, the second from 6 to 18, and the third from 19 to 21. Some may hesitate as to the last; but it is clear, from John xiv. 30, that he who had assailed the Blessed Lord with his temptations in the wilderness, and there been vanquished, and who appeared for a moment through Peter, Matt. xvi. 23, only to meet with instant rebuke, was permitted to come again and' harass the soul of the Lord Jesus in that hour of extreme anguish when, the hand of God upon Him for our sins, and subject to the brutal insults of men, every ray of light had gone out in darkness, and all moral support being withdrawn, nothing was left but His own intrinsic worth and excellence to be manifest. And surely the dog and the lion are the fit emblems of

that unclean destroyer of our race, who was allowed to put to the test the moral perfectness of the One who had undertaken to deliver from his grasp those who had been his too willing captives and prey. Oh, who can tell what to Him were those hours of physical and moral agony, which have procured for us the peace which as an unbroken calm rests upon the soul of him who has faith in Jesus.

The Lord's cry upon the cross, when from the sixth hour to the ninth darkness came over the face of the whole land, is the key note of the psalm and its opening words. Only the word "*my*," expressive of conscious relationship, affording a trace of comfort, though perhaps in the sense of distance really adding torture to His grief. The main point of this part, I apprehend, is the apparent change in God's ways, by whom the cry of the righteous for deliverance was never unheard, as witnessed by His dealings with the fathers. *The righteous One*, speaking from his own moral consciousness of integrity, and the known character of God can ask; why am I forsaken? Why not heard in my distress? We who through grace believe can add the answer, with one of old, "But He was bruised for our iniquities, he was wounded for our transgressions, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." But this is left for faith to supply, that nothing may detract from the beautiful picture of moral perfection; and we see the blessed display of one in conscious innocence crying to God and yet unheard, still justifying the One, the light of whose countenance was withdrawn in the hour of need, in those memorable words, "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." This perfect justification of God in all His acts was the piety that procured deliverance according to Heb. v. 7, for surely had it failed, a doubt of God's holiness crossed his soul, *all* would have been lost never to be regained. But such was He, know-

ing Him "as one brought up with Him," that the angels could celebrate at His birth what was the Father's pledge to the moral competency of the Son: "Glory to God on high, on earth peace, good pleasure in men."

Heaven again opened at His baptism, and the Spirit descending upon Him as a dove, the Father's voice bore witness, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and again repeats the same on the Mount of transfiguration, in anticipation of the glory that would surely result, as the fruit of those sufferings in which His divine perfectness was to be displayed. This, then, was the utterance of a heart that never wavered in its confidence in God, nor allowed circumstances of the deepest trial to awaken suspicion of the rightness of His ways. How unlike us, who with hearts full of distrust are ready to complain of any little trial, even though the just fruit of our own ways and state. But blessed it is to know that, as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly; and even now possess in that nature which is born of God moral likeness to our risen Head; though often through want of care and self-judgment we let out the evil dispositions of the flesh. But we shall "awake with His likeness," and be "satisfied."

Man's part in it is next seen, though only as an added element of sorrow to that which eclipsed all others; and with them "a worm and no man,"\* he is marked as the object of their scorn and reproaches; yet the place he was left in by the One who had forsaken him in the hour of his need and calamity, seemed to furnish his enemies with a just reproach, as to human eyes his claims were but pretension, for he was left alone unaided to endure their taunts. There was no sympathy from man, no angel from heaven to strengthen, but "they gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." But

---

\*Ish, man in his dignity.

God was His confidence as He had ever been, since first He had come into the world to take the place of a dependent man. The opposite to man in general, as witness the sinner's confession in Psalm li. (Comp. xxii. 9, 10 and li. 5). But the sinless one here gets judgment, as the sinner there counts on mercy or grace, to which, where God's character is known, the deepest need is the greatest claim. But in Ps. xxii. the claims of righteousness are not heard because of sin-bearing for others, by the righteous One; whilst the cry of the sinner is heard, because warranted by, as it is the fruit of, the testimony of God which awakes it. (See Ps. l. 7-15.)

The picture then is given of the outward and the inward sufferings of Christ. Just as in the Meat or Gift Offering of Lev. ii. we have it baken in the oven, or in the pan (flat plate, marg.) That he was mocked and derided and spit upon, and crowned with thorns, any one could see. His inward feelings in view of it all none knew, except himself and God, save as He gave utterance to what was passing within as in this Psalm. His perfection so far from screening Him from suffering, only gave intensity to His sense of it; and man His creature, led by Satan, stopped short of nothing he could devise to inflict pain and insult upon Him. This was but man's fire, but it brought much sweet savour from Him, who "was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not His mouth." Instead of accusation, as the answer to their sin, there was only intercession, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." But God's fire, as well as man's, must try this perfect victim; and the fire of the altar burned as incense \* this precious sacrifice. God's holy judgment, whilst it dealt with the sin, found not only nothing of evil in the One upon whom it was laid, but every good that even He could desire was there.

TO BE CONTINUED.

---

\*Lev. ii. 9 "burn" it is literally, "burn as incense."

## THE PLAN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

---

We shall begin with the New Testament for many reasons. Principally because in it God has spoken out to us in a way He could not do before Christ had come, and its clearer utterances are necessary to give the full interpretation of the Old. Much preliminary work had to be done before God could bring out what all along was in His heart. The rent veil—rent at the Cross—makes the real difference between the Old and New. During the old dispensation God was in the “thick darkness;” now he is “in the light.” Then to see God was to die, none could see his face and live; now to see him in Christ is to see *the Father*, and the way into His presence is opened wide. Then He could not clear the guilty; now He receives sinners, and “justifieth the ungodly.” And the reason of all this is that God in the law was proposing to man to live by his own works: “the man that *doeth* them shall live by them; *now*, when man has utterly failed in that obedience, God is declaring His *grace*, “the exceeding riches of His grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.” \*

There was a necessity for that preliminary dispensation of law; for until man was found to be, after full trial, “*yet* without strength,” as well as “ungodly,” the “due time” had not arrived for Christ to die for the ungodly.† If God is shewing grace, He must shew that it is “*not of works*” or of debt. He must settle first the question of man’s claim upon Him, before He can speak of mercy and ‘free gift.’

The law then was the trial of man, in order that with every assistance, he might if possible work out righteousness, and justify himself before God. The

---

\* Comp. Exod. xxxiii., xxxiv. and 1 Kings viii. 10-12, with 2 Cor. iii., and 1 John i. 7. † Rom. v. 6; comp. iv. 4, 5.

unrent veil during all that time declared that the "*way into the holiest*," where God dwelt. "*was not yet manifest.*"† A God who could "*by no means clear the guilty*," could not give man, who was that, access to His presence. But the trial being over, sentence given, "there is none righteous, no, not one," "there is none that doeth good, no, not one," nay, more, when God having sent His Son into the world in love, man had crucified and cast Him out of it,—then at last God could speak out. Grace would be now indeed "no more of works," but shown in the very setting aside of man's work altogether. The law, which made nothing perfect, is set aside: there is "a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, (for the law made nothing perfect), but the bringing in of a better hope, by which we draw nigh unto God." \*

Then indeed, as we look back along the previous dispensation, we can discern that, from the very beginning, God had nothing else in his heart towards us but what He has now revealed. Only the ignorance and self-righteousness of man had been the real barriers that kept back the outflow of love, which now, bursting all barriers, is pouring itself forth. The shadows of the law have now another meaning, and we find how, even in Israel's history, "all these things happened unto them for types, and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." †

The very number of the books of the Old and New Testaments will be found to be significant of their respective characters, not one jot or tittle being insignificant in this all-perfect and all-precious word of God. In the Old Testament there are *thirty-six* ‡ books, the simplest division of which is into 3 by 12. Three is the divine, and twelve the governmental number ;

† Heb. ix. 8 ; comp. Rom. iii. 23. \* Heb. vii. 18, 19, *Greek*.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 11, *Greek*.

‡ Counting Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles as one book each, which they really are, as their division cannot be traced further back than to the Septuagint.

the two taken together give "God in government." What more precise definition could we have of the books of the law?

In the New Testament we find *eight* writers, the New Covenant number, and *twenty-seven* books. Twenty-seven is the cube of three: 3 times 3 times 3; the only number possible into which nothing but the divine enters; the number which speaks of divine manifestation in the fullest way. Thus at the first glance, so to speak, this spiritual arithmetic puts its seal upon the canon of Scripture, more effectually than any external witness could do. But there is much more than this.

There is no inspired *arrangement* of the books, but a classification of them is possible; and the only natural, and (I think) unexceptionable, one would be into four sections. The four Gospels stand at the head every way. They are "the beginning" of the first epistle of John (ch. i. 1, ii. 7, 13, 24),—the Genesis of Christianity.

Then the Acts, which stand alone, not the "Acts of the *Apostles*,"\* as others have rightly remarked, so much as of the Holy Ghost, come down in place of the departed Saviour,—are as plainly its Exodus.

Then, as a third section, we have the Epistles, the body of Christian doctrine, in which, as in *Leviticus*, we are brought into the presence of God, to learn what suits Him in the Sanctuary.

While in Revelation, the one prophetic book, we have a fourth division, which gives us only too sadly the testing in the wilderness, and the Lord's own judgment upon the professing people of His choice.

Let us look a little more at each of these sections.

The four Gospels are the testing in the world of Him in whom alone all testing only brought out perfection. Of them John stands apart, and is very dis-

---

\* The inspiration of the titles, save of the *last* book alone (and then how needful and significant!) may be fairly questioned; but perhaps the oldest MS. (the Sinaitic) has but 'Acts.'



tinct in character from the three synoptic Gospels, and this is generally recognized.

The Epistles are *twenty-one* in number,—three sevens, of which *fourteen* (two sevens) are Paul's. Here the completeness of the Divine work, as making known the Worker, is easily read in the numerals, and manifest in the character of the books as a whole; while Paul's are the more *objective* clearly, and in them the work of redemption is more displayed.

The solitary books of Acts and Revelation have, in very different ways, alike the imprint of sovereignty upon them, as I think all must recognize. I shall not pursue this further now, but only subjoin the briefest possible outline of the whole New Testament, that we may have before us the field of research, the field wherein lies the inestimable treasure which Divine love has committed to us. May the search not to us be barren or unpractical! for here the word applies: "If thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." (Prov. ii. 3-5.)

#### DIV. 1. THE GOSPELS.

1. MATTHEW: gives us *Israel's King, and the 'Seed'* in whom the Gentiles would be blessed, but His kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, and himself Divine; as such, rejected by His own, and crucified, but that cross the true *sin-offering*, in which is laid the foundation of all blessing, and of widest rule—now in patience, and truly recognized (the king absent) by faith alone; bye-and-bye set up in person at his appearing.

2. MARK: the Son in service, the restorer of what he took not away; to man commending the path of obedience; to God the *Trespass-offering* for disobedience.

3. LUKE: the Mediator between God and man, the *Man*, Christ Jesus, in whom (sin atoned for, and

wrong repaired) the way of the love of the Father towards the prodigal is opened, and a table furnished where God and man can be at one, man's heart won back to be partaker of the joy with which he is welcomed. This is the fruit of the *Peace-offering*.

Thus the three synoptic Gospels clear out of the way all hindrances to what the final Gospel reveals. The object for our hearts, which we can now without distraction enjoy in communion with the Father, we find in—

JOHN: the Only begotten in the bosom of the Father, revealed by one in *His* bosom,—Divine *love* told out in the most intimate way; the glory of God revealed, the Father told out in the Word made flesh, to those quickened with the *Life* He gives, and endowed with His Spirit:—a glory full of grace and truth, in which the all-revealing *Light* is come into the world. The world, blind and ignorant, has rejected it, and by the gate of death and resurrection he passes out of the world, going before His sheep, whom He leads out with Him. These are the fruit of His death, come up with the corn of wheat, with which they are presented to God, accepted in the finished work of Him who is God's *burnt-offering*.

#### DIV. 2. THE ACTS.

The Church's exodus from Jewish and legal ground to that of the absolute grace of which grace to Gentiles is the full expression. Yet the gospel in its chief preacher only reaches the Gentile capital as a prisoner (although not really bound;) as its translation to the throne of the world was really but its Babylonish Captivity.

#### DIV. 3. THE EPISTLES.

1. THE EPISTLES OF PAUL, fourteen in number, give especially the objective side of truth, what is presented to faith alone, notably the first seven. He alone *developes* the doctrines of justification and Divine righteousness, of the Church as the Body of

Christ and Eve of the last Adam, and that of new creation. The subjects of the Epistles I very briefly indicate. The figures are but a suggestion as to the true order of the books.

(i.) ROMANS: *justification* by the blood of Christ and *acceptance* in His person, with whom we have died to sin and to law, that we may be fruitful for God in the power of His indwelling Spirit.

(iv.) 1. CORINTHIANS: Christians *sanctified* in Christ to God, His *temple*, and the *Body of Christ*; in the world, yet apart from it; remembering His death, built up in love by His Spirit, and on the basis of His resurrection, the pattern and assurance of their own.

(v.) 2. CORINTHIANS: supplementary to the first, opens out the heart of *ministry*: its manner, its matter, the character required for it, its conflicts, and its seals.

(ii.) GALATIANS: gives the *contrast between law and grace* as exhibited in the law itself and in the dispensations and promises of God, who had ordained the tutor for the time of nonage, but now was seeking His children for Himself, delivering them by the cross from what was the principles of the world, and bondage, and from the world itself, to walk as crucified to it, according to the rule of new creation.

(iii.) EPHESIANS: sets us as quickened and risen with Christ in the *heavenly places*; as *His Body the Church*, and *Eve of the last Adam*, witnesses of His grace and manifold wisdom to principalities and powers, among whom are spiritual enemies against whom we are called to maintain practically our position.

(vi.) PHILIPPIANS gives us *Christ known experimentally* by one to whom in a hostile world He is the principle of life, the pattern of the walk, and the alone object of the heart's pursuit. To such He suffices, in whatsoever state they may be, beside, for perfect satisfaction and delight.

(vii) COLOSSIANS unfolds to Christians their *fulnes*

*in Christ their Head*, a mystery unknown till Christian times: Divine fulness bodily in Him in whom they are filled up, and are to walk *in* and worthy of Him, dead with, quickened with and risen with, Christ, and to seek things above, where Christ at the right hand of God is to the new man all and in all.

1 THESSALONIANS shows us faith, love, hope, as characterizing those turned to God from idols: their hope the coming again of their Lord and Deliverer.

2 THESSALONIANS, another supplementary epistle, speaks of the corruption of Christianity ending only in the destruction of the wicked one at the Lord's appearing, and assures us of our rest with Him before judgment is poured out on the ungodly.

1 TIMOTHY gives the provision for the maintenance in the house of God of that which suits His character as revealed in the gospel, a Saviour-God, and therefore a holy one; with a warning of coming departure from the faith. In—

2 TIMOTHY there is already a 'great house,' and while the foundation of God stands sure, the seal (by which you find it) is that the Lord knows His own, and you must depart from iniquity, following righteousness, faith, peace, with the pure-hearted. Scripture will furnish thoroughly *the man of God*.

TITUS appears to be the insisting upon the vital connection between the truth and godliness.

PHILEMON shows that one's Christianity is not to be as a lever for worldly exaltation, and that grace is not the claim of right; while yet, where influential, it brings high and low together in a common joy in what is the portion of all saints, only true and eternal.

HEBREWS gives us 'salvation to the uttermost' by Him who as Captain of our salvation leads us through the wilderness into final rest, and who, as our risen Priest in the true and heavenly sanctuary (already for us accessible and without a veil) intercedes for the *infirmities* of those already and continuously perfected

by the blood of atonement with regard to *sin*. But faith is necessary for the path, as indeed it ever was, but now outside the camp of Judaism, to return to whose shadows is to renounce the substance.

2. The so-called CATHOLIC EPISTLES, which are by no means always that, are seven in number, and are much more *subjective* in character, being largely occupied with practical conduct.

JAMES requires the manifestation of faith, its *justification before men*, by its sure and necessary fruits.

1 PETER insists upon the holy government of a Father God, under which we are to walk as obedient children, pilgrims and strangers on earth as heirs of a heavenly inheritance, born again of and nourished by the Word, a holy and royal priesthood, to praise and show forth His praises.

2 PETER exhorts to energy as called by glory and virtue, and because of the tide of lust and self-will, disputing government, soon to set in, and the day of the Lord suddenly to come. Which—

JUDE corroborates, the evil being already in the church which the Lord would judge at His coming.

1 JOHN takes up the Christian as born of God and having the Holy Ghost, to develope the working of the new life which he has got. Christ is our life, and we are partakers of the Divine nature: so, as God is light and love, these are seen as manifested in the believer's life, along with what they involve also, the confession of Christ himself as the Son of the Father.

2 & 3 JOHN give us from opposite sides that inseparability of light and love which this necessitates. In the 2nd, love calls for the maintenance of truth. In the 3rd, truth requires the manifestation of love.

#### DIV. 4. REVELATION.

The only distinctly prophetic book of the New Testament adds to the prophecies of the Old the heavenly part, in them entirely wanting, but of which the earthly is no obscure figure. It gives us first of

all Christ's judgment of the Church on earth as His responsible witness till its removal, and then of apostate Christendom and the nations, amid which Israel or a remnant is being purified and taught to look for Him whom they pierced. Beyond judgment and purification by it, is seen the eternal blessedness of the saint. It is emphatically the book of rewards and final issues, in which all about us is seen in its end, and the fruit manifests the tree. On the part of the creature evil, on God's part good that overcomes the evil, and only is displayed by it the more. The Lamb is the lamp of its display.

---

The life of the Son of God is my life, and it is a life of resurrection. It may be up and down again—nothing but ups and downs continually—all my ruin as a creature coming out; but from the time when God revealed His Son to me, He took possession of my heart's affections, and I know that I have been in Him and He in me from that time.

People continually say, I know I am not what a Christian ought to be. I answer—If you are not dead and Christ your life, and if you are not walking in the power of it, how *can* you be what you ought to be?

Have you known fellowship in suffering with Christ? known deep waters? You will have to go down to them. If you do not get sorrow in fellowship with Christ, you will get it in discipline.

If a company of saints get at ease and lose the freshness of love to Christ, God can kindle a fire so fierce as to touch all of the flesh that turns their hearts from Him.

The number of those who understand the mystery of the church is very small, but far smaller is the number of persons who know what resurrection life is.

G. V. W.

## THE MAN OF GOD.

### HIS DISCIPLINE.

#### LECTURE II.

(1 Kings xvii. 2-9.)

Now we have from the second verse of the chapter, the Lord's discipline of His servant. We have his character in the first verse :—what he was, how he stood before the living God, the God of Israel. We see him in the presence of God's enemies with His word ; one of those who had learned His mind, and therefore who could be used as Jehovah's mouth. He is now called away into the wilderness, himself to be disciplined ; to learn some needed lessons under God's hand.

Discipline is needed by us from the first moment of our lives until the last. The discipline of the Father is ours because we are children. And the discipline of the Lord is ours too in the character of servants ; for He has as much to do in shaping the instruments He uses, as He has *by* them when they are shaped.

That discipline of the Lord never ceases ; but still there are special seasons of it, and a special season we have here in Elijah's life. He has scarcely stood forth publicly before the world before the Lord takes him away again, apart by himself. No doubt it was not a new thing for Elijah to be alone with God ; but there are yet some new features in his present isolation. He is bidden to turn eastward and hide himself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. You know what Jordan means,—the great typical river of death. And Cherith means 'cutting off.' The Lord brings him to that significant place and

there makes him drink of the brook, sustained by the ravens who feed him there.

We have to take these illustrative names to help our understanding of the Lord's dealings here. They shew us Cherith as the prophet's Mara, where he had to drink in as it were the death from which as judgment he escapes. Miraculously sustained himself, he learns for himself "the terrors of the Lord," and how sin has wrecked the first creation. And it is a lesson that we have to learn. We have to pass through the world knowing, as far as outward circumstances go, no exemption from the common lot of men. God would not sever us from it. His own Son has come down into the world, as we know, in order to go through it Himself; the One who was ever pleasing to the Father, and had no need of discipline, and could not possibly have to say to judgment except as bearing it vicariously on the cross. Yet in His grace He came in the likeness of sinful flesh, and passed through all the trials and troubles proper to man. Free from the callousness which sin engenders in us, He entered into them in a way we can little realize. "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." His mere presence in the world was enough to make Him a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." It did not need that He should personally be subject to it: it was enough for Him to be in the world to realize what the world was. He had come from God and went to God, and He was with God all the way through. That was sufficient to make Him pre-eminent-ly a Man of Sorrows, just because He was not a man like us. How little of the misery around have our hearts room for! How even familiarity with it deadens our sense of it! And how our own personal sorrows absorb and abstract us from those around. Think of One all eye, all ear, all heart, for all of this.

The Lord knew it divinely and felt everything.

*Personally* however He gave Himself up to that which sin has made our condition. His probation, as



you know, was not in Eden but a wilderness. Nor did He use His miraculous power to relieve His hunger there. He had come into the world only to do God's will in it, and His hunger was no motive to act, when that will was not expressed. In His answer to Satan He just takes the ground of man, but perfect man:—"Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

And the word of God, whatever trial were involved, whatever suffering it called for, that word was to Him meat and drink. He lived by it. It ought to be that to us. The bare fact of having the word of God to fulfil, whatever it call for, ought to be enough surely to sustain us. The bare fact of being in His path ought to be enough, as we realize it, to furnish us with the endurance and faith needed for it.

Thus then the Lord passes Elijah through the suffering and sorrows coming on the land. He brings him to Cherith; and Cherith yields him water for his thirst. Just as in the beautiful language of the 84th Psalm, it is said as to the blessing of those "in whose heart are the ways"—the ways that lead to the presence of God: "who passing through the valley of Baca," (of tears) "make it a well." Cherith becomes this to the prophet.

Thus God makes things most contrary to us work together for good to them that love Him. It is not loss to learn what that world is through which Christ has passed before; nor to be proved by it as He was proved; nor to have had in it the discipline He could not need; nor the opportunity of doing in it, as He did, the Father's will, in the face of suffering and of sorrow.

Bye and bye it will certainly be no sorrow to have known in whatever measure the circumstances of his path down here, in which God was glorified as nowhere else. How could we be so prepared to see, as now we may see, but soon shall fully, what His perfection was, or what the grace that brought him into

the world for us? And then to have shared, in whatever smaller measure, with Him the trial, and with Him the victory! Manna is no *mere* wilderness food, though it is that. In our Canaan home at last, and for ever, (it is written) that he that overcometh shall eat of the hidden manna.

This is another thing from discipline of course; but we do need discipline at God's hand continually too; and that discipline is really what God uses to strengthen and bless. You have it in a beautiful way in Balaam's unwilling blessing of the people. "Who can count the dust of Jacob?" Jacob is looked at in the figure of dust. What does that mean? It means that they had been as dust trodden under the foot of the Egyptians. And yet Egypt was the place in which suddenly Jacob had grown into a nation. "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." It is the rule in all dispensations that have been, for all God's people. Thus Balaam says: "who can count the dust of *Jacob*?" 'Jacob' is designedly said. It was his natural, not spiritual name, Jacob the 'supplanter.' And Jacob needed the humiliation, but grew by it.

That is what we find in the first place as to the prophet in this chapter. In the second place God takes him away from the brook, when it fails and dries up, to Zarephath, outside of Israel altogether. Israel had rejected the Lord, and were feeling His hand in consequence. He takes him outside of Israel to be witness that the grace of the Lord will not be dammed back by human barriers, or restricted to the narrow limits to which man would confine it. That is the way the Lord uses that story of the Widow of Zarephath. And the gospel in Luke commences with His testimony at Nazareth, that if in Israel the outflow of His goodness is restrained, God will have His witnesses in spite of that. Grace will only show itself the more gracious. Outside of the whole field of privilege, He takes Himself a witness among the Gentiles.

For the Lord's words recorded in the 4th chapter of Luke are not a mere arbitrary expression of God's sovereignty. They have been so taken, but they are not. "I tell you of a truth," He says, "that many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land: but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta a City of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow" (25, 26 v.) Now you must remember that what they had been just saying, after they had borne witness too of His gracious words, and wondered at them, was, "Is not this Joseph's son?" Before this He had been declaring to them the acceptable year of the Lord, and the power of the Spirit there in Him for their healing. It is when they were saying, "Is not this Joseph's son?" in spite of the gracious words they were conscious and witness of,—it is then that He warns them that God cannot be shut up by their unbelief: if they reject Him, He will go outside to the Gentiles.

That is what Elijah has to learn in the case of the widow of Sarepta. He has to learn to go out with God outside the limits to which natural ties and even religious associations, would confine him, and recognize in a woman of Sidon the work of God's sovereign grace,—there in its fullest and most wonderful display. I do not believe we have bottomed the need of man,—or therefore our own,—until we have learnt the absolute *sovereignty* of Divine grace: shown however, let us remember, in a scene where man's rejection of it compels Him to be sovereign, if He show grace at all. Man's will, alas, is in opposition to that will of God to which, if all yielded, all could and would be saved. But if some—if *we*—have yielded, is it because of betterness in us? were our hearts naturally more docile or obedient? Scripture shall answer for us: "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." Therefore, beloved brethren, was it needful that we should be born again, "*not* of the will

of the flesh. *nor* of the will of man, but of God" alone. The very figure speaks of this; for in our natural birth was there aught of our own will? were we consulted? Or in creation, has the thing called into being its choice? And we are not only born of God, but His creation, "His workmanship, *created* in Christ Jesus unto good works."

But then this sovereign grace is grace in its fullest display. It is divine love overtopping barriers that might well be thought even by it unsurmountable. It is the heart of God manifested. His will shewn indeed to be but the energy of His nature who is Love.

I know what rises in the mind of some. "Why not then save all? Could He not as well save all?" But I can only answer, *the necessary limit even to Divine goodness is its own perfection*. God has solemnly assured us, He would not have men perish. What infinite Wisdom *can* do, I must be infinitely wise myself to know.

Elijah's second lesson is one that it indeed imports the man of God to have learnt well.

All the way through Elijah has to learn the lesson of dependence. Dependence of course is nothing else than faith; and the Lord puts His servant where faith shall be a continual necessity. Thus what He seeks from us He gives us practical help towards producing for Him. Faith grows by exercise. God ordains for it in Elijah's case continual exercise. He has no stock of his own, we may say, ever to subsist upon. The ravens bring him bread and flesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening; and the next day, and still the next, it is the same thing again. And then when he comes to Zarephath, there you find in the same way the widow is called upon to sustain him, and there is a little oil in a cruse and a handful of meal in a barrel. The meal does not fail in the barrel, and the oil does not fail in the cruse. It does not increase however: it continues a handful of meal

and a little oil; and he is kept in that way, in constant dependence upon God.

And that is the way the Lord would have us spiritually. He never gives a stock of anything—of grace or of gift—so that we can say, “I have got enough to last me so long at least.” That would be taking us out of the place of faith, and depriving us of the blessing God has for us. He covets to show us what He is: His power, His love, His unforgetfulness of us. As it is said of the people whom in His love and His pity He redeemed: “He bare them and carried them all the days of old.” It is a great thing to get this in a real and practical way for ourselves with God. If He keeps us low down here,—and you know it is His way in more senses than one to call and choose the poor,—it is not because His hand is niggard, God forbid, but that we may not miss realizing this great blessing of His care. Often all we think of is having our need met; but how little a thing is that with God! It would cost Him nothing, we may say, to meet the need of a life-time in a moment; and a lesser love than His would supply it at once and get rid of a constant burden. But that is not His way. To supply the need is a small thing; but to supply it in such a way as to make us feel in each seasonable supply the Father’s eye never withdrawn from us, the Father’s heart ever employed about us,—that is what He means. “Give us day by day our daily bread,” is the prayer the Lord taught His disciples; and thus we ask Him continually to be waiting on us. Is it not much more than to ask, Give us now, that we may not have to come again?

What a place the wilderness was to Israel, where the constant manna was a daily miracle, and the cloud of Jehovah’s presence led them in the way! It was the place, alas, of constant murmurings; but in God’s design, and to faith wherever in exercise, how wonderful a manifestation of the living God! Yet that wilderness journey is but for us a type; only a

shadow, therefore, short of the reality of what faith in us should realize to be ours. What a spectacle to the heavenly beings, to whom is "known by the church the manifold wisdom of God;" what daily miracles of grace for eyes that are open to it!

And of course these were types—as the manna and the water from the rock,—of *spiritual* blessings ministered to us. And here the same rule applies. No stock given into our hand; all funds in God's treasure-house; but therefore unfailing: and a daily, hourly ministry of strength according to the need, which not only meets it, but tells of the tenderness of a Father's care, and of the faithfulness of our High Priest gone in to God.

Precious lessons for more than Elijah the Tishbite; fresh for our hearts to-day.

Where believers often fail is, that they have not patience to wait on the Spirit of God to be taught any truth; and if it is not brought to them at once, they exercise their own thoughts. But it is better to wait even ten years, saying, I have not yet got light from God's mind. To do otherwise will be like building with a bit of bad stone.

The question of speaking to souls, is a question of personal love to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not say you have no gift for it. Do you love Christ? If so, you will never lose an opportunity of speaking a word for Him.

If you do not understand what God's present claims over you are, you may depend upon it that as days of testing comes on, you will not be able to keep your footing.

G. V. W.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

---

3. Are the terms, "born again," and "quickened," synonymous? Can a man be said to be born again until indwelt by the Holy Ghost?

As to new birth, Scripture is very plain, that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God;" of course with a real faith, which is therefore fruitful (comp. Jno. i. 12; 1 Jno. v. 1; iii. 9; ii. 29). But this is the plain equivalent of what is said of those who are quickened: "Whosoever believeth in Him (in Christ) hath everlasting life—is, of course, quickened. And, moreover, it is precisely stated when this takes place: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear *the voice of the Son of God*, and they that hear shall live." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth *my word* and believeth on Him that sent me, HATH everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but *is* passed from death unto life." (Jno. iii. 36; v. 34, 35).

The point of transition is when first Christ's voice is heard by the soul as the "voice of the Son of God;" when His "word," as such, becomes authoritative with it. It is not *what* the soul hears; it hears and recognizes a voice which alone has power to wake the dead, and it lives. Here is quickening; and it is identical with what the apostle says of those who are born again. Every one who so awakes to find that indeed Jesus is the Christ (this has meaning for him) is born of God.

A distinction has even been attempted between being "begotten" and "born of God," whereas they are but different renderings of what in the original is the same word.

## A FEW THOUGHTS ON PSALM XXII.

(CONTINUED.)

His cries, unanswered for a time necessarily, or atonement could not have been wrought, He is brought by the hand of God into the dust of death, that the judgment of God upon sin might be completely satisfied; but from the "horns of the unicorns" he is "heard" and "delivered out of death," "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." But then something besides His sufferings we must think of, if we would estimate fully the whole picture here. Infinite those were, and He only who bore them can estimate their depth. We are allowed to look on and in our measure trace them, as His utterances given by the Spirit tell forth what passed within, when His holy "soul was made an offering for sin." But if it cost the Son all this to redeem us, we must not forget that all the character and attributes of God were called into exercise. Was it nothing for the Father to listen to the cry of distress from His well beloved, "Hear me, O Lord, for thy loving kindness is good, and turn unto me in the multitude of thy tender mercies; hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily?" Ps. lxxix. 16, 17. And here, "Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" \*

Was it nothing for the Father to listen to these appeals, and refuse the succour that was claimed? When we remember with what open heart and arms the prodigal is received, evil as his ways have been, we have to ask in view of what is here, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Surely He whose repentings

---

\*The expression of extreme pain, a cry wrung forth by grief.



were kindled within Him, at the sorrows brought in righteous government upon unrepentant Israel : who could say, "Is Ephraim a dear Son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still,"—had no less compassion for His only begotten Son, whose claims, founded upon His own piety and integrity, could surely not go unanswered. Yet sin was upon the sinless One, and, identified with all that we had done, as the substitute for us, the very righteousness appealed to must be against him, as thus identified with all that which was obnoxious to God's displeasure. "God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." But mark how His righteousness is put to the test, when thus appealed to. If God could deal leniently with sin, surely it would have been then. But no it could not be. God must act true to His nature, or cease to be what He is, and Christ forsaken of God is the witness to the intensity of His holiness, and the depth of His love towards fallen man.

But righteousness, if it dealt with the sin, must own the personal claims of the one who became the willing victim ; and His piety maintained through severest testing was owned, as it could not but be, by God, nay more, delighted in. His perfect justification of the one who smote Him,—*"But Thou art holy,"* and unfailing love to man in spite of all that he had suffered, *"Father forgive them,"* was the double witness that he had not given way under the strain. And what more lovely than to see the One who is *"mighty God,"* conquering, not by power and heroic acts, but by patient suffering in human weakness the reproaches and contempt of His creatures, and for them from the hand of God the due of their sins. Eternity shall unfold it more and more to our worshipping hearts. No wonder if in view of all this wondrous scene, without a parallel forever, we

find that "the meek shall eat and be *satisfied*; they shall *praise* the Lord that seek him; your heart shall live forever; all the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord; all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him."

But mark well, dear reader, that heard from the horns of the unicorns, Christ in the midst of His brethren is there, redemption being accomplished, to praise Jehovah—for us the God and Father—and for what? Because that when righteousness had brought Him into the dust of death for sins of others, yet when he cried unto him he heard. That this too was a part of divine righteousness, as much as the judgment of the sin, I fully believe; and it is taught us in the closing words of this most blessed Psalm, "They shall come, and shall declare His *righteousness* unto a people that shall be born, *that He hath done this*."

May God give us more fully to estimate as taught by His Spirit the wondrous depths of the divine character as displayed in what took place at the Cross, to rejoice more before God in fellowship with Him whose sufferings are at an end, and who lives to die no more, who in the midst of the church sings praise to God. On the other hand, to glory in "the cross of our Lord Jesus, by which we are crucified to the world, and the world to us." So that we may know how to refuse in every way its fellowship, and take our places with a rejected Christ; and yet too how to go for Him into it, constrained by the love of Christ, to bear witness to the grace of God in a scene of deep unfathomed need.—R. T. G.

## DELIVERANCE: WHAT IS IT?

---

### 3. DELIVERANCE NEEDFUL FROM THE LAW.

---

In the doctrinal statement at the beginning of the seventh chapter is declared the need and the fact of our deliverance from the law. Even in the sixth it is already said: "sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law but under grace" (ver. 14). In the beginning of the seventh, it is more strongly stated, "ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ . . . that ye should bring forth fruit unto God." And again, "But now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of the spirit, not in the oldness of the letter" (ver. 4, 6).

Strange as this may sound,—strange as, the apostle admits, this doctrine must sound, where the law so spoken of is the law of *God*, "holy and just and good,"—it is yet in full consistency with the language of Scripture elsewhere. "The strength of sin is the law." "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added *for the sake of* transgressions" (Gal. iii. 19, *Greek*),—i. e. not to avoid, but to *have* them. In the chapter before us the apostle shews us this worked out in experience: "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came,"—what then? "sin revived, and I died; and the commandment which was unto life"—'ordained' is not in the original, and is too strong; was 'proposed,' one may rather say,—"I found to be unto death." Let us now enquire into this so dark a problem for many even to the present day.

The 'due time' for Christ to die, was "when we were yet without strength," as well as "ungodly" (Rom. v. 6). Man's need, before it could be met, had to be exposed. That was his need: "ungodly" and impotent for good; and 'yet'—after long years of trial—he was only that.

The law was one of God's appointed means to bring out this. Evidently probationary in character, the result of the trial, long and patient as it was, was to establish the sentence, "there is none righteous, no, not one," "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." And this was its foreseen and designed effect: "we know that whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

For this end of course nothing must be wanting *in the law itself* to make it a fair and a full trial. In effect nothing *was* wanting. While God's necessary claim for righteousness was exhibited by the law itself, this was accompanied with every incitement to obedience that could be given, and every possible discouragement to disobedience. Delivered from cruel bondage in a way which manifested the power and goodness of their Deliverer, the awful judgments accompanying it, though upon their enemies, were warnings on the other side not to trifle with His goodness. The visible ensigns of Deity were before their eyes, the audible utterances of Jehovah in their ears. Did they obey, earth should be practically paradise renewed; while disobedience would mar all their happiness for time as well as for eternity. Heart and conscience, eye and ear, the whole of man and in all his circumstances and relationships, was addressed in the fullest way. Nor was the encouraging voice of mercy wanting: still in the ears of even the wicked man it proclaimed that, did he turn from his wickedness, and do that which was lawful and right, he should "save his soul alive."

All failed, and failed utterly: failed, as being "weak through the flesh," the corrupt nature of man, which could neither be won by its goodness nor controlled by its holiness. While that holiness could not relax its requirement, nor forego the penalty attached to disobedience. Good as the law was, the "motions of sins" were "*by* the law." "Sin," says the apostle, "taking occasion *by* the commandment, deceived me, and *by it* slew me." And this was the fore-known and designed effect: "sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."

To expose sin then, to detect it in its innermost working, to manifest its utter sinfulness, provoked and aroused by the very presence of good,—this was the aim and object of the law.

How it aroused it, the apostle likewise shows. "I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet (or lust); but sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence (or lust)." There the very point is touched which reveals man's departure from God. To 'lust' is to manifest a heart not in subjection to God. The "corruption which is in the world" is "*through* lust" (2 Pet. i. 4). Had we not dropped away from the sense of God's wisdom and His love,—did we believe in absolute *goodness* on a despotic throne, the Lord of heaven and earth our Father,—whatever the circumstances, how could one's heart crave more? how should it do other than rest absolutely?

The law then must of necessity forbid 'lust,' as the very characteristic feature of man's condition, as the expression of unbelief and enmity which is the "mind of the flesh." It must *forbid*,—but what then? Lust is *there*, and no prohibition will get it out: no law will better it. The flesh remains even in the

child of God, and, as ever, opposed to God. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. v. 17).

But more: the law is not merely powerless to change the flesh; its prohibitions but irritate and arouse the enmity against God which is its 'mind,' and which surely rebels against them. The *motions* of sin are thus by it, although the sin which is now roused into activity was there before. The law detects it only, and brings it out as 'transgression' of the Divine command: sin by the commandment becomes exceeding sinful. But thus also it is the strength of sin and not of holiness. Its very perfection for the purpose for which God gave it necessitates this.

The law thus reveals me as evil to the very heart's core. It makes me learn this experimentally by putting me under responsibility *not* to be the thing I am. *It occupies me with myself and with the evil*,—very profitably surely until I have learned the extent of it. I am taught practically to "know, that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." In the face of a right will, I cannot accomplish my desire. I may argue that it is not I that do the evil, it is "sin that dwelleth in me:" still that is not deliverance. It only makes me cry the more, "O wretched man."

Self-occupation is the necessary effect of being in conscience under law. The law says 'you,' 'you,' 'you,' and we respond with 'I, I, I.' Some thirty-five times in this experience of the seventh of Romans are 'I' and 'me' repeated. The only good in it is in the full discovery of the evil; and in the self-despair in which it ends.

Self-occupation is never holiness. God never means me to be able with the Pharisee to thank Him for the goodness that I find in myself. Self-conscious humility is spoiled by the consciousness. If I will be at it He leaves me to find in this irreparable flesh,

which cannot be mended, what I may break my heart over but never alter. It is a quick-sand which spoils all my building; a morass impracticable to cultivation; and God uses this in His sovereignty over evil to wean me from self-confidence and self-complacency, and cast me over helplessly upon Himself. But then surely it will begin to be apparent, that for real fruit God-ward I must be "delivered from the law." This is the plain teaching of the epistle to the Romans; and the experience detailed by the apostle, and familiar to so many souls as there described, is abundant confirmation of it.

But what then? Have I title to give up this striving? Will not that rather be to lapse into indifference, than the way to overcome the innate evil? Must I acquiesce in my powerlessness, and how shall that be to me the way of power? Questions such as these we may ask in vain at the hands of human reason. God has however provided the answer; and here we shall find the apostle's language fully to apply, that the "gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

---

Directly Peter and others confessed Christ they got a new nature; love from the Son of God was flowing through their hearts, and it brought them to go following in His footsteps. They had no intelligence as to the Messiah, they were poor stupid Jews, but He had revealed Himself and He was a magnet to their hearts and they followed with purpose of heart to cleave to Him.

At Pentecost there was immense power from personal knowledge of Christ and the presence of the Holy Ghost; and yet, had they a single copy of the scripture? I have seen the most unintelligent saints putting aside error, saying, "*I know Christ*, and this thing and He cannot go together." G. V. W.

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

---

### I. ITS CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES.

---

The phrase distinctive of Matthew's gospel, as found alone there, and there found two and thirty times, is 'the kingdom of heaven.' It will be necessary for some, to remark that the earth is always the sphere of this heavenly rule, which, as prophesied in the Old Testament, will yet be established in power, in the hands of Christ, over the whole of it. In the meanwhile there has been a preliminary offering of it in the person of the King to Israel, a people carefully educated to receive Him, in whom man's disposition towards God was tested fully. The cross has shown that disposition to be enmity towards God. It was also (according to the title set up over it) the distinct rejection by Israel of their King: a rejection which has led to their own long (though *not* final) rejection as His people, and the setting up of the kingdom in another way not contemplated in Old Testament prophecies, and therefore called 'the *mysteries* of the kingdom.' (ch. xiii. 11.) This is the kingdom as now we have it, the king rejected by the world and absent; and though upon the Father's throne and the earth really His and to be put into His hands the moment He asks for it, He has not asked, because of other purposes to be fulfilled in the meantime. He is now gathering out of the world a people peculiarly to be His own, associates with Him in His rejection and patience now, and soon to be His associates in His coming glory, when He takes His throne as Son



of *man*. These also compose His body and His bride as the last Adam; characters however which Matthew's gospel does not reveal. This purpose being accomplished, He comes again in glory to purge by judgment, and reign over the earth according to the sure testimony of the elder prophets.

The development of these points in Matthew we shall look at more particularly further on. The government of God over the earth is its main theme throughout, in which it connects with the books of the Old Testament beyond the other gospels. The link with these is moreover maintained by repeated quotations, wherein the seal of the old is put upon the new revelation. It thus occupies plainly an introductory place, and the character of the dispensation it introduces is set forth with evident reserve.

God's throne is the subject, and "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." But thus a controversy with man is supposed at the outset. What is he, when measured by the claim of God upon him? Emmanuel-Jesus is indeed come forth to be a Saviour; but He only appears to be rejected, and must go to the cross in man's behalf, before the shepherd-rule of the true David can be established over him. The cross is in its sin-offering aspect, and the blessing flowing from it is intimated (as already said) with some reserve. The shadow of the cross in some sense darkens the whole book. The work of salvation is to do, (ch. i. 21) not done, and the clouds about the throne are not yet cleared away. The words 'grace' and 'peace' (in the gospel sense of peace), 'Saviour' and 'salvation' do not yet occur. Forgiveness of sins is only exceptionally proclaimed (ix. 2) as a needed testimony to the extent of the Son of man's authority. 'Rest' is only to be found by taking His *yoke*. The very gospel is the 'gospel of the *kingdom*' only, and the full grace of it (although it is found) is found as in the Old Testament, under a veil.

Thus there is reserve. The Father is indeed made known under that title, and as '*your* Father,' but not yet have you met Him or been in His arms. He is 'in heaven,' His throne, and earth on which you walk is His footstool. He cares for you, but as yet with a providential care, in a lesser form of which His sun shines upon the evil and the good. Bye and bye He will make full distinction: the wheat shall be gathered to the barn; the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Yes, the righteous! Who?

True, the Son of man is come to save the lost (xviii. 11); but this is applied definitely to the 'little ones,' and as to the rest, "except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and the debtor, "forgiven all that debt," is, for his unforgiving spirit towards his fellow-servant, delivered by his lord, after all, "to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him" (xviii. 3; 32, 34).

All is here plainly governmental and conditional: the Father's throne, not yet the Father's heart; save only as His beloved Son is proclaimed there upon earth, the fulness of His delight. And He too according to the holy ways of Divine government must find His way to the throne by the Cross of suffering. In the language of the parable, if He would have the field of the world in which His treasure lies, or if He would have the Church as His precious pearl, He must in either case "sell all that He has, and buy it." He must meet the full claim of Divine righteousness upon man: He must be "made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Thus it is as sin-offering that the last chapters of this Gospel represent Him; taking jealous care to shew that He "knew no sin." The traitor who delivers Him up bears witness of His innocence; the judge washes his hands of the blood

of the 'justman;' and heaven bears witness in the dream of Pilate's wife.

Mark's gospel has, equally with Matthew's, the cry of abandonment, which Luke and John omit. These last clearly present the sweet-savour offerings. The difference between Mark and Matthew is not so obvious, but it is clear when the whole character of Mark is taken into account. For this then we must reserve our consideration of it; but it will be understood from what has been before us, that the questions of sin and righteousness are prominent in Matthew, and that the cry, "why hast Thou forsaken Me?" is characteristic of that outside place where the sin-offering is burnt without an altar. The "altar which sanctifieth the gift" is the Lord's person which gave value to His work. In the higher grades of the sin-offering it is not seen, because in it He is treated as the sinner, and not the Holy One He really was. And this is what we find in Matthew.\*

Until atonement is thus effected, the Father's heart cannot fully be displayed. Man's heart moreover is not filled with the joy, which, being in God, turns the heart to God. No sinner is seen anointing the Lord with her precious ointment. The worship is rather homage to a king. Joy there is, but love only as yet commanded, not yet properly responsive to the command. The disciples' path with its responsibilities and rewards is very fully given.

Matthew very clearly distinguishes the dispensations, as we have seen. The Lord's opening title "son of David" reveals Him in Jewish relationships; that of "son of Abraham," as the One in whom the nations too should be blessed; but it is only as Son of God, Immanuel, He can be king of heaven's kingdom, and

---

\* There is a remarkable verse in Proverbs which connects the different characters of the Lord in Matthew: "There be three things which go well, yea, four are comely in going: A lion, which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any; a grey-hound [or probably a war-horse]; an he-goat also; and a king, against whom there is no rising up" (xxx. 29-31.) The goat, associated with these types of power, is the characteristic animal for the sin-offering.

the test-question for Israel is, will they receive Him as such? The condemnation in the Jewish court is for making Himself 'Son of God,' as before the Gentiles, as King of the Jews. They are yet to acknowledge Him in both characters.

We may now glance at the divisions of the book. They are seven, and may be briefly given as follows :

- I. (CH. i. ii.): THE KING.
  - [i] The Son of David but Emmanuel, ch. i.
  - [ii] The Shadow of the Future, ch. ii.
- II. (CH. iii-vii): THE KINGDOM ANNOUNCED.
  - [i] The King proclaimed and anointed, ch. iii.
  - [ii] The Proving in the Wilderness, ch. iv. 1-11.
  - [iii] The Principles of the Kingdom, ch. iv. 12-vii.
- III. (CH. viii-xii.) THE REJECTION OF THE KING.
  - (i) The Signs of His Presence, ch. viii-ix.
  - (ii) His Messengers, ch. x.
  - (iii) Rejected, yet Inviting, ch. xi.
  - (iv) Rejected, and Rejecting, ch. xii.
- IV. (CH. xiii-xx. 28). THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM.
  - [i] The Kingdom of an Absent and Rejected King, ch. xiii. 1-52.
  - [ii] The Path of His Disciples, ch. xiii. 53-xiv.
  - [iii] The Way of Blessing, ch. xv-xvi. 12.
  - [iv] The Principles of the Kingdom in its Mystery-form, ch. xvi. 13-xx. 28.
- V. (CH. xx. 29-xxiii.) THE COMING IN HUMILIATION : "MEEK AND SITTING UPON AN ASS."
- VI. (CH. xxiv, xxiv.) THE COMING IN GLORY : "JUST AND HAVING SALVATION."
  - [i] As to Israel, ch. xxiv. 1-42.
  - [ii] As to the Church, ch. xxiv. 43-xxv. 30.
  - [iii] As to the Nations, ch. xxv. 31-46.
- VII. (CH. xxvi-xxviii.) THE PURCHASE OF ALL BY HIS ONE OFFERING.
  - [i] The Presentation, ch. xxvi. 1-56.
  - [ii] The Offering, ch. xxvi. 57-xxvii.
  - [iii] The Acceptance, ch. xxviii.

We are now to look at these sections more in detail.

---

## THE MAN OF GOD.

### HIS DISCIPLINE.

#### LECTURE III.

(1 Kings xvii. 17-24.)

In this last scene in the verses I have read to you, we find the third thing in the discipline of the man of God: and a thing that is above all needed to be known, in order that he should really fulfil this character. As I have said, it is simply what we all are by position, it is what we all must be practically, or else our very profession of Christianity condemns us. Being a man of God, is not being something very exalted and which God would leave, so to speak, to our choice, whether we would be so or not. As we have seen already, "all Scripture is given to furnish the man of God thoroughly unto all good works." Mark well: it does not speak of furnishing anybody else, and we are necessarily God's people; by the fact that we are purchased by the Blood of Christ. Beloved friends to be according to His mind therefore is what we are called to, and throughout history,—especially I may say, that of the Church of God, the very failure of that Church itself has furnished a scene, in which those true to Him have been continually forced by circumstances, only the more to take that character.

You have here, in the very last verse, something which especially makes known the man of God. The woman says to Elijah: "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth." What is it that makes the man of God specially known to her, and gives specially to his testimony the character of truth? It is this:

not merely that he knows the living God, but that he knows and has had to do with the God of resurrection. Death visits the house of the widow of Zarephath. God has taken away her son. Not the widow alone, but Elijah himself is brought face to face with this fact of death; a death which the woman's conscience realizes, as ours do, if in activity at all, to be the fruit of sin.

Death is the stamp upon a fallen creation, the solemn witness upon God's part of the ruin which has come in. Everywhere, in every language, whatever the darkness of man's mind, whatever the religious corruption of those not wishing to retain God in their knowledge, it has testified plainly to men's souls of wrath against the creature He has made. Why else undo what He has done? Why take again the life that he has given? He is not a child to break and cast away His plaything of an hour.

Death is what we all have to do with; the liability to which God has not delivered any one of us from here. If the Lord Jesus comes, of course we shall not die. But in the meanwhile each of us is personally liable and exposed to it. And what we need is surely to know the God of resurrection. We need a God of that character in two ways. For ourselves of course as a matter of simple power for our own life. We need to know this also as a power for testimony, as Paul the Apostle; "We also believe and therefore speak: knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus;" or, as you see it here in the widow of Sarepta: "Now by this, I know thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."

Resurrection, God's power over death, power available, and displayed in our behalf, is thus God's testimony to Himself among men. But I may say, in these times it is particularly the testimony he is giving. You know, if you take the Lord Jesus through His life even down here, as you have Him in the first

chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "He was marked out the Son of God." How? He was on the one hand, Son of David after the flesh. But He was marked out the Son of God, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead." By the fact that He could meet death and manifest Divine power over it. By that fact, He showed himself as evidently the Son of God. For He met it not as Elijah meets it here, by prayer and supplication, looking up to another for help about it, but in His own power and name alone. By His simple word He met it and dispelled it; a condition hopeless for man to deal with. Man says, "while there is life there is hope." When death comes there is no hope. He can only bury his dead out of his sight. That gives God the opportunity to come in. It is just there He testifies to Himself as One who has, available for man, the power of resurrection. The Lord thus manifested His power on earth before His own death and in His own name. He showed that He was the Son of God there with practical help for man; a power that could deal with sin itself, or it could not deal so with its fruit and penalty.

When the Lord met death, He met it fully. Jordan filled all its banks for Him. He knew it in its full character as penalty, bearing in His own body what had brought it in. Three days and three nights He lay under it, and when He arose from the dead, there took place what had had its type long before, when for Israel the Ark stood in the bed of Jordan. When those who bore it stood on the brink of the waters, they rolled away right and left, till there was a road no woman's heart need fear to travel, from shore to shore. Then His own words received their full interpretation which He had spoken to the sorrowing heart of Martha before that, "*I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*" (25, 26 v.)

In the past there had been death. In the past people had to go through it. No doubt He was with them. And so the Psalmist says: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." (Ps. xxiii.) Still it had to be gone through, though resurrection eventually for them also should banish it, whereas now the Lord having been in it, and come through, there is no real death involving us, but a clear path made right through it. "I am the resurrection and the life; and he that *liveth* and believeth in me" has no death to go through at all: "shall *never* die." Now are we not called as christians to realize the truth of that? It is truth of course for faith; it is not truth evident to sense and sight. Yet by-and-by when the Lord Jesus comes, it will be manifested as to those that are in the body, at that time;—it will be manifested as to us then, if we should be, as we easily may be, here, that death has no title over us at all. He will take His own to Himself without dying. Until that time it is a fact that faith has to realize. For faith it is simple that Christ having passed through death and come up out of it, His resurrection no less than His death is ours. Divine power has shown its exceeding greatness towards *us*, "according to its working when God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." (Eph. i. 19, 20.) In Him,—quickened and raised up with Him,—we too "are seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Therefore in God's mind we have no death to pass through, for we have passed through it in Him who is as much our representative in the heavens, as He was upon the Cross. We are rightly expected therefore to know resurrection in a way which even an Elijah could not know it: in a way in which no saints of the Old Testament could possibly know it. We are called to know it, as those who in themselves, in their own persons, are living examples of it.



True we did not know what death was, in passing through it: there was no water in Jordan for us. The waves and billows, so terrible as *God's* waves and billows, spent their force on Him alone. We have come through the dry bed only. But we have come through. This is the simple fact in God's account; and God's is ever the truest—the only true one. Being dead with Christ we are also quickened with Him out of death, and raised up and seated together in Christ in the heavenly places.

It is one thing to have this, of course, in Scripture, nay, to recognize this truth in Scripture; but another thing for ourselves to have known what it is practically, to have got hold of it experimentally; to have apprehended in this respect that for which we are apprehended of Christ Jesus. It is this latter alone that makes us men of God and gives us to be real witnesses for God, accredited witnesses of heavenly things. This makes us lights indeed in the world: for earth's ordained lights are heavenly; sun and moon and stars light her up, otherwise dark. So, if the church is the responsible witness for God on earth—the candlestick, —the true light, the 'angel' is the heavenly 'star' (Rev. i. 20.) Nature is one with God's word in affirming thus the character of all true witnessing; because it comes from God it must be of necessity heavenly, for He is. Resurrection puts us there. Resurrection carries us outside of the world through death, its boundary line. Left in it for a while no doubt, in another sense, but even so pilgrims and strangers, merely passing through it. We belong to it no more than Christ belonged to it.

And is there not such a thing as getting hold of this in reality? It is a different thing to say, I know it is there in Scripture, from saying, I know it for a truth in my very soul. Such recognition will make us of necessity something of—in one sense much more than, what Elijah was. It will carry us into a new sphere of relationship, of thought, of interests;

and where all is deathless and eternal. We shall appreciate the Lord's words to the lingering disciple, to "let the dead bury their dead." That will be no unintelligible mysticism, as to many a believer we fear still it is.

The simple recognition of the fact requires faith. All spiritual realization is by faith: a faith to which the surest evidence and the highest reason is that God has spoken. And although the Spirit of truth must make it good to us, and to grieve the Spirit is necessarily to deaden spiritual sense and dim perception; yet it is as the Spirit of truth He acts,—by truth, and our faith in it. Thus alone can we pass through death and beyond to where Christ is before God, and there for us.

If you look at the eleventh chapter of John's gospel, you will find there the great chapter which speaks of resurrection as God's witness. All the way through, you find how even Christ's disciples are under the power of death. The sisters of Bethany send to Him to say that His friend Lazarus is sick. The thought is—one so natural—if Christ were there He could not die. They want His presence in order to put off death, which yet could be merely a reprieve, staving it off for a little while. That is all they think of. He has other thoughts. He stays away in His love to them—for it comes in here so beautifully, "now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus,"—and let him die.

When the Lord proposes to go to Judea again the disciples say, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?" Thomas says, "Let us go also that we may die with Him." Death is upon all their souls; nothing but death. When He comes He finds them overwhelmed at the thought that death had come and touched one of the Lord's own. Instead of Lazarus being this, making it better, it made it worse in one sense. Was He indifferent? or was death master even over His?

What does He do? He has said from the beginning: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God: that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Facts might seem to be against Him; for Lazarus does die. But even so is it seen, as else it could not, that He, not death, is Master. Lazarus is raised. And what is the consequence. Such a testimony to Himself they never had before; crowds come out of Jerusalem to learn about this wonderful thing; and the very presence of Lazarus there, the man who had actually come through death is the thing that draws them. They come, "not merely that they may see Jesus, but to see Lazarus also whom He has raised from the dead." Think of a man who had actually come through death and come out of it! If we apprehended, that we are just such a people: if we did apprehend in any proper sense, that we really belonged to another sphere; what a testimony for Christ it would be! It would indeed bring persecution. It brought it in that case. It was then that the Pharisees consulted about putting Christ, and Lazarus also, to death, because by reason of him all men, as they thought, would believe on Him. They would like to put out the lamp which God had lighted; but it just shows what the power of such a testimony is. And let me say again, there is no real and sufficient testimony, there is no proper christian testimony now, but that.

Some may call it high truth; and some again, to whom it is outwardly familiar, may think it truth that needs very little insisting upon. I wish it did. What is the fact when practice comes to test the actuality and power of the belief we have? What, for men who really knew the power of resurrection, would be the serious business of their lives? Would it be their aim to make money, beloved brethren? Trying to get things comfortable around them? To keep up their station in the world, and live as well as their neighbours? Of course we have got to get through it, and have to do with it in the way of business. He

who was 'the carpenter' has sanctified honest labour, and there is nothing at all derogatory or unspiritual in it. But I need scarcely remind you what He was down here, all the way constantly and absolutely a heavenly man. Let me ask you, beloved friends, do you think that Christ could have set His heart on making money? Do you think He could have come into the world in order to seek a comfortable place in it or any thing of that sort? You know it was the very opposite of that. And what are we? We are distinctly His representatives in the world, as He was Himself His Father's Representative. "As My Father hath sent Me into the world," He says to us, "so have I sent you into the world." What is the consequence? Why, we must not talk about this being 'high truth,' and we must not think that after all the humble part is not pretend to so much. We are Christ's representatives down here in the world. True or false, no doubt: that is what it comes to; *true or false* witnesses for Christ down here. The responsibility of the place is ours, and if we are Christians, we must frankly accept it.

It will not do to value ourselves upon our morality, honesty, benevolence, and that sort of thing. The world knows perfectly well, there is no testimony merely in that, because it will find you honest men, benevolent men, and moral men, without the least pretence to religion. The world is keen-eyed, and knows that that is no sufficient testimony. "If that is all you have to show," they will tell you, "we can do without your Christianity. We have just such people who have none." But if we appear as people of another sphere, people who have their backs upon the world, as having beyond it a sufficient and satisfying portion, such as in it they have not,—that is another matter. "There be many that say, who will shew us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."

Elijah of course could not know, as we now may, the power of resurrection. We have in this case the exhibition of it, in a very different way, because we have Old Testament truth, and not New Testament. Still it was resurrection that made Elijah known as a man of God, and the word of God in his mouth as the truth. So nothing else will make the word of God in our mouth known as truth in any sufficient sense, or approve us as men of God.

You will find if you turn to the 4th chapter of the second of Corinthians, the Apostle speaking very plainly about this. What opened his lips to speak? He was continually exposed to death, given up to it, not merely of his own accord, but by God's will too, God everywhere exposing him to that which he had given himself up to. "We are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (11 v.) He was "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," (10 v.) and God gave him up to death, to meet it practically: "in deaths oft."

That was the very thing which made *life* work in those around about. This death which was working in him, (12 v.) was the power of his testimony to them. Death, so to speak, had a fair opportunity to shew its power over him; but it only shewed that it had none at all, all it could do was to make life shine out brighter. "Death worketh in us but life in you."

The power of resurrection opened his mouth: "I believed and therefore have I spoken," (13 v.) "knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." (17, 18 v.)

That is where his eyes were; that is what his heart was occupied with; and you find at the opening of

the next chapter, how fully for him Christ had met death and judgment. To die was to "depart and be with Christ." The thought of the judgment seat moved him for others: "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men."

Listen to him again: "We have this treasure, (the treasure of divine grace) in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."  
(7 v)

What is the practical value of the "earthen vessel?" The bird of heaven, the leper's offering in Lev. xiv., needed an earthen vessel too!—to die in!

It was one thing impossible for God, to die. He who had that in His heart of love for us, if He remained that simply, could not die. He took an earthen vessel—a human body—to die in. We have this treasure in earthen vessels, and death works in us. God has taken us up as earthen vessels, in which He can accomplish something for Himself. He takes up what is just proper material to be broken into potsherds: poor, weak creatures who can stand nothing, we may say; and then like Gideon's men, having hid His lamps there, He breaks the vessel to make the light shine out. Death may have power over Paul's body, but the very fact manifests that there is that in Paul over which it has not power. His true life is beyond it, untouched by it. The life of Jesus, the risen heavenly life of Jesus, shines manifestly out in him.

"Death worketh in us, but life in you."

The life of Jesus belongs not to the world. It is eternal life, with the Father before the world was, and manifested to us in Him in whom the world found nothing kindred to itself, therefore no beauty. His home was elsewhere. His delights with the sons of men did not alter that. In us too it will manifest itself as that which has its source and attachment elsewhere, and there, where alone no want, no unrest, no instability is found. We manifest it when Christ is

our realized sufficiency and strength, and our circumstances alter nothing, as with regard to this they can alter nothing. When we pass through the world, debtors to it for nothing it can give. This is not misanthropy; not asceticism; not giving up this world in order to get another: that is only living to ourselves in another form, and from that we are delivered. It is the very opposite, giving up the world because we *have* what is beyond. God is our portion, and to the fulness which is ours in Christ, the world can add absolutely nothing; nor, blessed be His name, can it take anything away.

This is real testimony to Christ. It is when we can say: He is enough for us; and know how to be abased, and how to abound, for He strengthens us. Why, oftentimes God has to put us on a sick bed, in order to show us practically what He can do. Blessed it is surely to see how He works thus; to see how He proves His sufficiency to those whom He lays low. But the blessing of a sick bed is often just, that God takes away all other things to show us that in reality we have lost nothing, whereas before we did not quite believe this. And what Christ shows us there, He is ready to show without the need of a sick bed at all. I do not say that all there need it in this way. I am not reflecting upon these at all, God has his own mysterious working, and there are many and diverse purposes worthy of Himself, He can accomplish thus. Still this is often what we learn and have to learn there, to be weaned from nature's breasts, and find what is our sufficiency elsewhere.

The power of resurrection is divine power, and He who is in us, come down from His own abode to link our souls with the place to which they belong, is not limited in His power to do this for us. No doubt we, by our unbelief, may practically limit Him, and like as with Elijah on the mount, then storm and earthquake and fire may be needed to prepare the way for what after all must do His work with us—the “still, sinall voice.”

Let us remember too one thing as to resurrection which connects itself with our first gospel lessons. I have already spoken of it, but not as fully as it needs. Until Christ died,—until the work was done by which righteously He could do it,—God could not show Himself upon our side or His heart out as He would. There was a time when even the blessed Sufferer had to say: “I cry in the day time, and thou hearest not.” He had to be delivered *out* of death, not from it,\*—out of it as the one gone into it for others.

As soon as His work was accomplished, then God stepped forth and showed Himself at once on the same side as the One who took that place for us,—by raising up His Son from the dead. It was the acceptance of Christ’s work. He showed himself there upon our side. Therefore, the Apostle says at the end of the 4th of Romans, “If we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification,” (24, 25v.) That is, believe on the God who is for us righteously by the death of Christ. Who is for us, and showed Himself for us, the very moment He could. And He could be for us now with all His attributes displayed and glorified. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; righteousness required it, while love shone out in it.

That is what resurrection makes us know. It is the full and bright display of divine glory now shining in the face of a man in the nearest place that can be to God in heaven; yea, and that man is God,—His image. To attempt to know Christ after the flesh, as the Apostle says for himself he did not, is to lose all the blessedness of this. Nor is there any Christ to be known but up there in heaven. If our souls are occupied with Him up there, in the light over which never more comes a cloud; there where all the glory of God is displayed, shining, with perpetual sunshine

---

\* So the passage in Heb. v. 7, should be read.



down into our souls,—what will the world be to us?

With our eyes and hearts up there, where Christ in the glory is the revelation of a divine object for a heart brought back to God,—they will necessarily be off the whole scene from which temptation comes to us. He is for us there in the glory. We are before God in Him, those upon whom God's eye rests with fulness of satisfaction, His own beloved. And so, practically, outside all that now tempts and defiles and weighs down here; that is what God has provided for us, and our first duty as christians—taking the Epistle of the Philippians—is to “rejoice in the Lord.” To be happy where happiness is full and uninterrupted. The only possible power we can find for going through the world aright, is the power of the enjoyment of Christ. If Christ is known in this way; if Christ satisfies, in that is strength to do all things—to be abased and to abound—as the Apostle; to go down into the scene of death, and while it works upon us, to give forth the testimony which God seeks from us. The Lord give us in His grace to realize what I have so feebly shown you here. Thus only can we be practically men of God.

The Lord enable us to realize what we are, as those who have learned the power of resurrection, the power which has raised up Christ from the dead, and which works towards His people in the same energy, raising us up with Him and putting us in Him in the heavenly places before God.

---

If I saw Paul, he would not tell me that he had more of Christ than I have; though he knew a great deal more of what it was to suffer for Christ than I.

The Lord draws every soul alike; a pure spring or water will fill every vessel alike, whatever the size or shape of the vessel.

## THE MOUNTS OF LAW AND GRACE.

---

In Heb. xii. 18-22, Mount Sinai and Mount Zion are put in contrast with each other as the representatives of law and grace. The mount of law was that where Moses himself had owned, "I exceedingly fear and quake." Zion on the other hand was where God established His king, raised up in grace, after people, priest and king had failed in Israel, (see Ps. lxxi. 56-72). It was but a little while since, that I was observing how significantly the names themselves bore witness of this contrast. 'Sinai,' the mount of law, means 'miry,'—the law being the ordained instrument for putting men into Job's 'ditch,'—(Job ix. 30, 31). While Zion on the other hand means "dry ground,"—a good foundation for the foot planted there.

The two mounts where the blessings and curses *of the law* were to be pronounced on the land, have equally significant names, but in the reverse way 'Ebal,' where the curses were uttered, is derived from a word which means "to strip the leaves off a tree,"—the curse is real and effectual, recalling the withered fig tree of the Lord's last visit to Jerusalem. While on the other hand, 'Gerizim,' the place of blessing, means 'sterile, barren,' for no real blessings could be under the law for a people ever breaking it.

How these names should have spoken in the ears of a people familiar with the meaning! and how continually and graciously the Lord was ever reminding them of the true import of the covenant, under which they were! For us the speech is still plainer, and the responsibility of understanding it is so much the more increased.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

---

4. Will you explain James ii. 14.: "Can faith save him?" Also vers. 17-25?

The faith which is not fruitful is no true faith, and as worthless for salvation as for aught else. This is what the passage insists upon, and the warning was never more needed than it is to-day. "Faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone;" and dead faith is no more faith than, properly speaking, a dead body is a *man*. Any other doctrine would be the saddest possible—to imagine one might have an utterly unproductive faith, accomplishing nothing for the man who had it; all truth, therefore, all the word of God, powerless for such a soul! Observe on the contrary the honour put upon faith in the above passage: "faith if *it have not* works." Faith is the worker, purifier, sanctifier, and the works themselves must be such as spring from faith, or they are nothing worth.

5. What is the 'portion' which Jacob gave to his son Joseph, which he says he has taken out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and with his bow?

It is well to know when to confess ignorance, and in this case, the question is a vexed one. My own impression is that it is prophetic, and refers to Joseph's double portion through Ephraim and Manasseh in the land. "I have taken" might be said in the spirit of prophecy by the father of those who were literally to take it out of the hand of the Amorite. Nothing else seems to accord with the facts of the history, except we have here a reference to something not elsewhere recorded. But I take it rather as prophetic.

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

### 2. THE BOOK ITSELF.

#### (1) The King. ch. i., ii.

(1.) The first chapter reveals to us the titles and glories of the King. The genealogy is placed first, for it is the Son of David and of Abraham who is to be before us. But this is but as the outer court of the temple: His true glory is that He is Emmanuel, 'God with us.' The genealogy is no doubt Joseph's—the legal one: Joseph, not Mary, is prominent here, and carefully reminded of his royal birth. That it is the legal genealogy makes only more impressive the fact of its containing (just in the undeniable part too, for any one claiming to be King of Israel) those four women's names mentioned in it. All are probably (most, certainly) Gentiles. But more: in each case their connection with the Lord's descent brings out some striking feature of the gospel. Tamar's *sin* connects her; Rahab's *faith*; for Ruth the law is set aside; while Bathsheba, specially mentioned as Uriah's wife, shews us sin in a believer unable to defeat the purposes of God towards him. Thus the Son of David is not only Son of Abraham, but 'Jesus' also, according to the import of that name below. And this is a specimen of Matthew's way of stating the Gospel, already spoken of.

Thus far the genealogy, marking out the Son of David according to the flesh. But now we are made to know in the same wondrous Person the One 'without genealogy' (Heb vii, 3, Gr.); born, as we are *new-born*, of the Holy Ghost, the predicted Son of a Virgin: Emmanuel, 'God with us.' Such is heaven's King; who, to fulfil His title, must be 'Jesus'—a Saviour. Thus we have full introduction to Him already in all the characters in which this Gospel presents Him to us.

(2.) The second chapter foreshows at once His his-

tory. The Gentile magi, come up to do homage to the King of the Jews, find Jerusalem at first ignorant, then troubled by the news. Yet they can designate Him scripturally enough as God's shepherd-king for His Israel, out of Bethlehem, 'the house of bread.' But the Edomite is in the place of power, and the Edomite hatred, unchecked and against God, fulfils His word in judgment upon the guilty people. Bethlehem, that had no welcome for her Saviour, finds none from the destroyer now. He who is cast out in fact by Israel herself departs from among the people.

The Gentiles meanwhile have worshipped and presented their gifts, 'gold and frankincense and myrrh,' significant gifts no doubt, whether those who offered them were conscious of it or not. 'Gold' is the symbol of divine glory; 'frankincense,' of the precious humanity whose suffering only brought forth perfection, the odour of a sweet smell, acceptable to God; while the 'myrrh,' used in embalming, speaks of the death by which He was to save His people from their sins.

Gone down into Egypt, the Lord assumes the place of the true Israel (Isa. xlix. 3-4), and begins the history of the people from its beginning over again, as their Representative for the eye and heart of God. In this way Hosea's prophecy, (xi. 1) applies to Him. Out of it God calls Him into the 'land of Israel' (the only place in the New Testament where it is called so) that, because it is indeed Emmanuel's land. (Isa, viii.8].

But He comes back to Galilee,\* where, still according to Isaiah's prophecy, (ix. 1, 2.) the light breaks forth; for 'Galilee of the Gentiles' is the place where, the ruin of the people being manifest, God can come in with help. There then He abides, and in "a city called Nazareth," the place of all others out of which comes no good. He is sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

---

\*'Galilee' means 'circuit.' Is it because here the lost blessings return? Certainly, none of these Scripture names are without significance.

## THE CHALLENGE OF GRACE, AND THE SOUL'S ANSWER.

### I. THE CHALLENGE.

(Psalm l.)

Psalms l. and li. need to be taken together. They are a precious unfolding of grace on God's part towards man in the first, and then the apprehension by the sinner, that that is just the suited thing. The latter then is the answer to the former.

For God is addressing men, His people, and the wicked, revealing His grace as the basis of all blessing. This is seen in the invitations He puts forth when He has to refuse their gifts and sacrifices. Instituted by Himself as types of Christ in His work, shadows of good things to come, and thus a link with God for a sinful people, they yet became as abused by Israel, offensive to the One who instituted them. It was a further step in the progress from God. Not alone was law broken, but sacrifice abused, and made the occasion for going on in sin; and save through the coming in of infinite mercy, every thing was forfeited. Verses 8 and 9 plainly give us this. Isaiah, the first of the prophetic books, opens with the same testimony. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, nor of lambs, nor of he goats . . . . . Bring no more vain oblations," &c. (Isa. i. 11-18.) In the same strain God speaks through the prophet Amos, (v. 21-23.)

It is this too that is the testimony of Christ in Ps. xl. Only I gather there more the thought of their inefficacy in meeting the requirements of God as to

## 88 THE CHALLENGE OF GRACE, AND THE SOUL'S ANSWER.

sin, as the apostle Paul urges in Heb. x. It was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. In these places it is more Israel's guilty abuse of God's provision, whilst overlooking the integrity He required. Thus law must give way to grace, and the blood of bullocks and goats to the better sacrifices they spoke of. How blessed to see, sad and humbling as it is, the failure of man thus paving the way for the coming in of the fulness of divine grace.

The mighty God, the Lord, (El Elohim Jehovah) has called the earth from the rising of the sun till the going down of the same. His day of creation-rest had been broken. It is followed by a long day of testimony and work. No answer to His call is found. Next comes His own witness to Himself. The sun in its mid-day strength needs no lamp of man to shew it, and he would be convicted of blind folly who sought thus to prove it. So too all human evidences of the truth of revelation are but the proof of the incredulity of man's heart, and, if they are leant upon, witness to, whilst they foster weakness and unbelief.

"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, *God hath shined.*" Zion answers to grace manifested to man in thorough undesert. It is the exercise of this which is God's prerogative, and He delights in it, as it is said, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob;" and in another place, "The mount Zion which He loved." How unspeakably precious is this, which just suits us in our need, as it also suits the blessed God thus to declare Himself.

Man, by creation in the place of subjection, left it through listening to the deceiver. Law applied to him in a fallen state, with promise of blessing to encourage, and threat of judgment to drive, and all the authority of God to back it, yet failed to subdue the will of the creature. But grace wins the heart, when through the effectual working of the Spirit, the truth is brought home, and bows in willing subjection to the power of Divine love, the one who had

## THE CHALLENGE OF GRACE, AND THE SOUL'S ANSWER. 89

defiantly withstood the testimony to judgment. As snow melts before the summer sun, so do rebellion and hardness of heart give way before the power of grace. "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" is the first cry of the bitterest enemy in the rebuking rays of the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. No wonder Paul was so jealous lest the coming in of law should shut out grace with its blessed, strengthening, sanctifying effects; and surely in this day, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" is a most important word. Yet few of us know what it is in half the measure that we should. May we have Christ before us ever, and then we shall prosper indeed.

His coming as judge is given us in v. 3-6. It is the advent of the Lord Jesus, for "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." It is the time of the 'end of the age,' when He who has long *kept silence* (v. 21) as to sin, and not interfered with men's ways, that He might give testimony to grace, will do so no more (v. 3), but will deal out righteous judgment to those who have refused and abused His grace. To Him at that time His saints are gathered. Covenant based on sacrifice is the ground of their acceptance. Not those sacrifices which He refuses further on, but that one only efficacious one which has given *Him* rest about sin as well as us.

From 7-15 we have the testimony of God to His people, which in part we have noticed. The refusing of their sacrifices and looking for integrity of heart and worship, as the fruit of the grace that hears their cry in trouble; and which could not but do so, as it is awakened by His testimony and call to them. The object of His dealings thus are His own glory, that which must ever be the prime motive of all His ways, who is the centre and source of all good.

The wicked are addressed next, from v. 16-20.



## 90 THE CHALLENGE OF GRACE AND THE SOUL'S ANSWER

Hating instruction and casting God's words behind them, is a terrible picture of man left to himself. Companionship in evil, which is the way men of the world strengthen themselves against God, and the tongue framing deceit. No ties of nature were safeguard from the slander of the lips, when the heart "*deceitful above all things* and desperately wicked," was stirred up to vent its dissatisfaction and malignity. How dreadful a thing is sin, yet it is clothed in what makes it attractive to us. But let the best in nature be put in circumstances to develop what is in them, and what will they not do? Take away the restraints that in mercy are surrounding men in daily life, and soon you will see that there is no difference. The same blight is upon all, and all flesh is corrupt before God. It is a humbling truth, and saints have to learn it, not by the coming out necessarily of the evil, though often that is the way, but in the sanctuary we can truly say, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells *no good thing*."

Are not many dear saints, whilst owning this as true, yet building up themselves in the flesh a good deal? It is so hard to be truthful with ourselves, and to give up sparing the flesh. How many an one finds it too humbling to confess, even a sin which conscience smarts under. We like to save our reputation, as if we had any to save. What most honors God, if we have failed, is the frank confession of it. That also most wins the confidence and love of those who are godly minded, and commands too the respect of those who are not so, in spite of themselves. Oh for more of this spirit, which grace in exercise would surely bring, and flinching from which cannot but harden and work moral ruin! No character but His have we to save, and we must guard it from reproach, if we have sinned, by the frank and humble confession of the sin. Truth that does not effect this in us is surely most inoperative, and our souls often *are* so little in the sense of grace because of the neglect of it.

The two following verses, 21, 22, are a solemn

## THE CHALLENGE OF GRACE AND THE SOUL'S ANSWER. 91

warning. God's forbearance is interpreted as indifference, and emboldens the heart of the wicked in its course: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil." This was the case when God left the world without government before the flood. This is the fruit of His not interfering in this day of grace. But the flood bore witness to His righteous abhorrence of the sin, as the coming of Christ in judgment will do at the close of this age. Men will then see how vain have been their thoughts about Him, and that He is not as indifferent as they suppose.

Verse 23 is a little summary of the moral of the psalm. Praise to God, right ways and His salvation go together. Not surely good works to recommend, but repentance and its fruits, which though too much divorced from salvation to-day by many, is never separated by God. Even as the joy in heaven in Luke v. is over "one sinner that *repenteth*," and in His name repentance and remission of sins to be preached, both of which He is exalted *to give*; and in Ps. xxxii., from which Paul quotes to show that a man is justified, not by works, but by faith alone, we read: "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are *upright in heart*."

---

Had God, when He had given the Son of His love, exhausted His love? Did He not give the Holy Ghost? and has He spent it all? Ah! when we come to the Father's house, shall we not find that fountain for ever flowing in all its fulness, in all its boundless torrents of blessing!

What a thought, that there is no promise ever given to Christ that His members will not have their share of!

Faith not only supposes light shining down, but the Lord giving to the soul power to receive it.

## DELIVERANCE: WHAT IS IT ?

---

### 4. THE MEANS OF DELIVERANCE.

---

We must now take up the verses which speak of the deliverance itself. But in the first place there are two points of criticism to be insisted on, that we may not have to discuss them, where to do so would divert us from the subject before us.

The first is, that we are at liberty entirely to disregard the division of the chapters, which, every where a mere human work, is here most injurious to the proper understanding of the question of deliverance. Indeed, if we end where our present seventh chapter ends, deliverance there is none. For, although the cry, "O wretched man that I am," has been followed by, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," yet the only explanation that seems to follow is, that with the mind he is serving God's law, and with the flesh sin's law: just the old difficulty, and no deliverance, nor way of deliverance, after all. For that, we must go on into the eighth chapter.

The second is, that we must omit altogether the last clause of the first verse of that chapter. All critics are now agreed, whatever their individual creed may be, that "who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" is an unwarrantable interpolation from the fourth verse, where the words are in perfect place and keeping. As they stand (and still more certainly in the Greek), they make "no condemnation" conditional upon a certain walk. But this would effectually set aside the apostle's argument, as we may surely even already see. It would be poor consolation to one groaning over his powerlessness to do the thing he

would, to be told that his freedom from condemnation nevertheless depended upon his doing this ! And it would be the emphatic denial of the doctrine already so emphatically laid down for us in the previous chapters, that we are "justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." But the consideration of the passage at length will clear up any remaining difficulty.

The cry, then, uttered in the anguish of the discovery of his condition, the man himself directly answers with a burst of praise. Finding he cannot deliver himself, and God himself giving him no help in the direction in which he has been looking for it, his cry is almost a wail of despair. "O wretched man that I am, *who shall* deliver me from this body of death ?" Death he calls it, for death to man is hopeless ; but death also, because separation from the God towards whom his heart is, is surely that. And how can God be with him, while sin has power over him, and he none ? It is not a question of justification ; people in this condition may make it such, but not the apostle here. For him that point is already settled ; nor is he going to unsettle it again. But God may be for us when He is not able to be with us, and this may well make one in that condition cry out of a 'body of death.' The mind of the flesh is *death*.

But it is not exactly to God that he cries. Unbelief, alas, is working ; but also real despair of self. The point to which God has all through, unconsciously as far as he is concerned, been guiding him. He, a man justified and born again, has had to come to this, that still power is not in him. A new nature is not power. The will is right and the walk most wrong. Ah, never was there such a heart-break as to find, when we "*delight* in the law of God after the inward man," spite of all, a "law of sin in the members, warring against the law of the mind, and bringing us

into captivity to the law of sin which is in our members."

But this point being reached, deliverance is at hand. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The first word of the delivered man is praise, and brings in a name which we have never heard throughout the experience preceding. The eye turned in upon self has been turned away from Christ. The destruction of all hope of self-satisfaction has left it free to return to its allegiance. Deliverance has come through Him who is now more than ever 'Lord.' But how has it come, and in what form? Has there been a sudden infusion of power from on high, nerving the paralyzed soul to accomplish the thing impossible hitherto? No: that is contradicted by the words which follow. It is not that: it is a word which has come home to the soul; a new revelation, which reveals the folly and hopelessness of the past struggle, while it brings it to an end for ever. "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin: now then there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the Spirit's law, of life in Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death."

There is the explanation of the deliverance. I have but slightly transposed some words, to give, as I believe, more vividly their meaning. First, the speaker describes the condition in which he still is, when he deliverance comes. Then he gives the delivering word which has come to him, that withal there is no condemnation to those in Christ. Then he shows that this law of the Spirit, of life in Christ,—has in fact set him free from sin's law.

Let us look at each part of this in detail, that we may by God's infinite grace get full assurance of understanding about it all; for it is the 'truth' by which we are set free, although the Spirit of God alone can make the truth effectual for this.

First, the words with which the seventh chapter

closes,—“so then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin,”—are not a description of the state which follows deliverance, but of the state to which deliverance applies, and in which it finds the speaker. This is shewn by both clauses of the sentence: equally by the fact that he is yet serving the law of *God*, and by the fact that he is yet serving the law of *sin*.

For serving the law of God is not being ‘delivered from’ it or ‘dead to’ it, and we must be that, as the apostle has told us, in order to bring forth fruit to God. And again, to serve the law of sin shews that sin is still to us a *law*, and we are not delivered. No doubt this is emphasized, that it is ‘*I myself*’ who am upon the side of God and good, but that only shews fully the condition in which spite of ‘himself’ he is serving the law of sin, to be one of bondage.

The old question may come up again: “‘Is the law sin,’ that you confound them so together?” But the apostle has already put the question and replied to it. It is *not* sin, but ‘holy, just and good.’ But although it is not sin, it is the ‘strength of’ it (1 Cor. xv. 56); and we have been considering how it is, and that it must necessarily be so. The truth of deliverance cannot be understood unless we are fully convinced of and grounded in this fundamental fact.

The delivering word comes right upon this: “Now then there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” Do not let us assume that we know this, hastily, because we know justification, although justification it is; but in a peculiar power, and with a special application which make it in some sort a new thing for the soul. We must look at it in this way, and at its application to the case in hand.

“*In Christ Jesus.*” What is that? It is evidently a definition of all Christians. And it defines them as a people identified with One who as a man has entered into the presence of God for men, their Representative. The full acknowledgment of that

wonderful fact, too little apprehended by those who have title to all the blessedness it would let in upon their souls, that Christ is as really a *man* in the glory of Gōd as when on earth He hungered and thirsted, and wept, and bled, and died, is absolutely needed in order to apprehend this place of ours in Him. If He had not taken true manhood up to God we could not be 'in Him,' as our Representative, nor be in God's sight "as He is," if He were *only* the Divine Son, for ever in the Father's bosom. It is *Man* who has suffered for man, died for him, has been quickened out of death, raised up, and is ascended. It is as man that He has earned for us the glory into which we enter, preparing for us a place in the Father's house by presenting to God that precious and efficacious blood with which He has passed through the heavens.

"In Christ" is in this way the language of complete identification. Representing us upon the Cross, His resurrection was the Divine declaration of the acceptance of the Representative in His place and work. Henceforth the eye of God sees us ever in Him alone. We are reckoned, and are to reckon ourselves, as with Him dead, buried, quickened, risen, and in Him seated in the heavenly places before God. God's delight in us is His unchangeable delight in Him. Therefore the Lord says to us, "Because I live ye shall live also."

How could there be a doubt about the believer's perfect security, if this were realized? It would be impossible. Can He change? or will God say to Him, "I cannot any longer accept you as standing for this people?" Or once again, *if* standing for them, is *He* on probation yet? is *His* work completely done, or still to do?

It is done, blessed be God: He sits in the glory of God. His heart is at rest, and ours may be. Had He not entitled our hearts to rest, His own heart would not allow Him to be seated there.

And "now then there is no condemnation to those

that are in Christ Jesus." How would it be possible, for those whose acceptance is in the Beloved? Only we must remember that the question before us is not of wrath, of condemnation in that sense, but of a body of death from which the speaker groans to be delivered. Personally accepted and delivered from the fear of wrath to come, he is still for practical holiness a man in the flesh. He is a person with a mixed character of good and evil, who has to master or eradicate the evil and develop the good. And that is the only view that naturally we could take of it. The practical experiment however is the reverse of encouraging, as we have seen. The body of death is perfectly impracticable to this kind of self-culture. In self-despair as to producing the good state he longs for, his eye is turned upon his blessed Representative in heaven; and *there*, it flashes upon him, is his remedy. *In the matter of holiness he must as frankly accept Christ as what he is,—his true self,—as for righteousness he had to accept Him before.* To him serving the law of God with his mind, but with his flesh practically the law of sin, the delivering word is "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." 'In Christ,' can God's own eye find fault with him? 'In Christ' is there any flesh, any body of death? anything to mend, or improve or alter? *And in Christ he is.* There his chains drop off. Much more, but still that. He is delivered. He is free!

Let us understand well. *This is not walk yet.* It is the principle, the key, and, when applied by the Spirit of God, the power for it. We are to "walk as Christ walked;" we are to walk 'in Christ;' and the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" sets us "free from the law of sin and death." Thus the responsibility of a right walk is still and ever ours. It is not that Christ's walk is substituted for ours, or Christ's holiness imputed to us, or any thing of that kind. It is not yet the question of how to walk, but



of what I *am* ; but a question which, when settled in God's way, stops necessarily the effort to BE, what no effort of mine can make me, and what, thank God, His infinite grace has already made me.

"As Christ is, so are we in this world;" and this for "boldness in the day of judgment" [1 John iv. 17]. Could effort of ours make us 'as Christ is?' It would be clearly impossible. And yet nothing but this would reach up to the standard God has given us. Nothing short of this would be perfection; and nothing short of perfection could we rightly rest in. So far the so-called 'perfectionist' is right enough. He is wrong in this, that he seeks his perfection in the flesh, in himself as a man in the world; and so he misses it; while to persuade himself that he has *not* missed, he has to lower the standard of perfection, to accommodate it to the actual fact of his imperfection. So true is it, that "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." The deception would not be possible if Christ were the measure and test of what is perfect. Dare any one assert himself to be, [other than as *in* Christ,] *what Christ is?* Dare he assert even that for one day of his life on earth he has walked as *Christ walked?* Then away with the folly of perfection in the flesh; for Christ is God's standard for the Christian, and He will not lower it.

But if imperfection God cannot accept, and perfection I cannot bring Him, what then? Then I must accept a perfection of God's providing, and find in Christ a self that needs no mending and cannot be improved, where no body of death disturbs or oppresses, and occupation with which is not legalism nor Pharisaism. "There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus." God's eye can find no blemish nor defect, but His favour better than life, rests like the fruitful sunshine upon the soul that drinking it in reflects it back to Him, a wealth of satisfaction and joy in Him.

I have to walk now as what I am. I have not to

walk to be what I am not. I am to 'walk in Christ;' and to 'abide in Him,' that I may walk in Him. How else can I walk in Him, than as being consciously 'in Him?' But to be there is to be delivered, for no body of sin or death is there: "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

I am privileged to turn away from what I find in myself as a man down here then, because in the death of the cross, the death wherein I died with Him, "sin in the flesh" has been fully dealt with. The condemnation of it by God, which I have been looking at as necessarily to be expressed in His dissociation from me,—a loss of fellowship and separation—has already found its full expression, where for sin, but for me, the Son of God died. For faith, not for experience, I too am dead, and that 'to sin,' because "He died unto sin once." I *reckon* myself (not feel or find myself) to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in *Jesus Christ*, (ch. vi. 11).

As far as what I am, then, is concerned, all effort, all *necessity* for effort, is at an end. I have no self to take up and make something of religiously. In the "man in Christ," as such, flesh and sin do not even exist. But more: in a true sense, 'I' do not exist. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 21.) Or better, "I live, no longer I." This "I, no longer I" is the mystery and the power of practical Christianity.

"I live,"—because of course the person, the individual, remains still the same. It is no Platonic mysticism, no pantheistic absorption into the ocean of being. The joy that fills my heart, the brightness poured over my life, are *mine*, fully and entirely mine.

Nay, I live henceforth a life true and eternal, worthy to be called such. I have for the first time, as the apostle terms it, "what is *really* life."\*

But "I live, *no longer I*,"—because the blessed fact of Christ's death for me upon the cross, of Christ's life for me in heaven, I have by faith laid hold of. I have come into the infinite blessedness of God's thoughts and actings concerning me. Him whom God has accepted for me and as me, I have learnt to accept in the same way, for and as myself. As the life which He has given me is His own very life, and has in Him its source and spring, a "life hid with Christ in God," so "in me Christ lives" down here. I have by faith realized identification with Him, as His,—part of Himself.

His peace, His joy, are mine. His life and Spirit are mine. His pursuits, objects, interests, are mine. The love of His Father is mine. His present rejection and His future glory are mine also. And all this in the power of a love wherewith He has at His own personal cost, set me completely free from all that alone *I* but now had title to, or which had title to me.

What a deliverance is this! I am drawn out of the whole scene to which I belonged, and in which my interests, my rights, my cares, my sorrows and temptations inhered; and being drawn out and to Himself, the hold of all this loosened and cast off for ever,—I am sent into it for one blessed purpose, as His, to REPRESENT HIM IN IT. "As Thou hast sent me into the world, so have I sent them into the world." (Jno. xvii. 18.) And so as the works He did were "in the Father's Name," (Jno. x. 25,) the works we do are to be in *His* name: "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus." (Col. iii. 17.)

But we must look at this still further, and at its practical results.

---

\* So 1 Tim. vi. 19 should be read, and not as in the common version, 'eternal life.'

## AT THE WELL.

---

### A GOSPEL ADDRESS.

---

The Lord had not one stereotyped answer, beloved friends, for those He met. He met souls; He answered souls; not questions even, but souls. And you will find, if you take this chapter for instance, and compare it with the chapter preceding, how differently the Lord answers two cases which were indeed different themselves, but the difference between which would have caused, one might naturally think, precisely opposite answers to those the Lord gave. You find in the 3rd chapter Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, a teacher, a man of respectability, and of religion, one who came to the Lord with a serious enquiry, as a teacher come from God. He owns the divine power which was working through Him; and, while he comes timidly—comes by night—yet by that very act shows himself aware how much he is risking by the coming, how much he is endangering his reputation with the people by coming to the Nazarene. And yet he comes, reverently to own that He is a teacher come from God, and to put himself, teacher as he was, in confessed ignorance, at His feet to be taught.

Now you would think the Lord would have opened at once all His heart to such a man. His first words, you would think, would be words of amplest assurance and unbounded encouragement. Nay; the very first words the Lord has to say are, “You must be born again.”

That is not the gospel, beloved friends. Do not ever mistake “you must be born again,” for the gospel. It is a very great mistake to suppose the gospel to be

any, "you must be." No such thing—you may be assured if it is a "you must be," that it is not the gospel. If a man must be born again, what is he going to do to be born? What does his whole past life count for? Just nothing. What is he going to do for the future? He has got to begin all over again; but how? He has got not merely to live, but to be born. What can a man do in the matter? He has nothing to do with his natural birth. What can he do as to spiritual birth? *He can do nothing.*

It is just a shut door in a man's face, and that is what the Lord intends. But why does he shut the door in Nicodemus face? I will tell you why. Nicodemus was a man of the Pharisees; one of the teachers of the people who were leading the people all wrong; he was a man who, with all his sincerity, all his honesty, all his desire to be taught—actually did not know, in spite of such Scripture as the Lord referred him to, what was needed to enter into the kingdom at all. He was one of a class which the Lord represents as being able to stand up before God and say honestly enough, in a sense, but self-deceived, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Well, was it not true? Why, yes, the Lord never says one word about its not being true—it was all true. Why should he not say it? He does not claim perfection, nor that what he had done was done without God's help. He thanks God for it. "God, I thank Thee, I am not as other men." He was not only a moral man but a religious man. He was painstaking and self-denying, for he gave tithes of all he possessed, and fasted twice a week.

Was not that a most respectable man? earnest, moral, religious, yet what do you find? The door shut in his face more fully and more decidedly than in that of Nicodemus. "The *publican*, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes

unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." And *he* went down to his house justified. *He* found the door opened; the other man found the door shut. Do you understand and appreciate the difference, beloved friends?

Now here in Nicodemus is just a man of this class, and what he wanted was just what the Lord gave him; for the Lord never made a mistake. Self-righteousness must come to a break down. "You have not begun to live," is what the Lord says to Nicodemus: "you must be born again."

What is one to do? Oh! beloved friends, the very hardest thing for a man is to learn that he can do nothing. But just there is he cast right over upon God.

Now mark, dear friends, I find that truth of the new birth pressed by our Lord, how many times, do you think? Once! on whom did He press it? On a Pharisee! For what, beloved friends? Just to bring him into a state in which he could *receive* the gospel. With all his respectability, and with all his morality and with all his religion too, he must be born again!

But now, what if you turn to the next chapter? You find a person of an opposite character—entirely opposite—a woman alone, but alone for other reasons evidently than Nicodemus. He by *night* to save his respectability; the woman alone by day—in the midst of the hot day of the east—because people won't have to do with her. The one is the respectable man, and he does not want to lose his respectability; the other is one with whom if people were found, *they* would lose *their's*.

She comes alone, but not to meet Him. She is not looking for Him. She does not know what she is really coming there for. She comes with her water-pot;—and how often has she done that before. She comes with her eyes, so to speak, fixed upon her water-pot. You would say she is a dead, hard creature. What her life was, we know. How is it the Lord treats her in a precisely opposite way to that in which

He treats Nicodemus? How is it that while He shuts the door in the face of the Pharisee, He opens it wide in the face of the sinner? For that very reason. Because she *is* a sinner—for for sinners Christ died. To sinners God can show mercy. With sinners there is just this one thing: they have not got righteousness to be stripped from them; they have not got reputation to lose; they have not got barriers of this kind to receiving the gospel. What the Lord says explains it all. He says, “the Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom before you” (Pharisees). They go in as a class, why? Just, beloved friends, because Christ has died for sinners. God’s love is seeking sinners.

A world-wide invitation goes out in consequence of this. Does it shut out anybody? Nobody; but they may be self-excluded. If you had seen over the door-way here to night: “This place is for sinners,” would you all have liked to have come in? It is all very well to say, “we are all sinners.” I say again if you had seen over the door-way, “This room is wheresinners assemble,” would you have liked to have come in? That is just the trouble with the gospel. The invitation includes all—Christ died for all. He does not want anybody to be lost. If He came for the righteous He could not have given the invitation to everybody. He can now—a world-wide invitation; and oh! beloved friends, man has got to come down to this before God can raise him up; for God’s principle is, that “he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” We have got to learn our nothingness; we have to take a truthful position before God. He cannot save a man with a lie upon his lips. He can’t lift up a man when he is lifting himself up. He will show grace, mercy, love—take up the chief of sinners to show it—but alas! men will shut out themselves by substituting their own terms for God’s.

Now Nicodemus wanted to come in on his own terms, but the woman, she, as a sinner, is already where God in Christ can meet her need.

He says, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, 'Give me to drink,' thou would'st have asked of Him, and He would have given thee *living* water." Oh! beloved friends, that is the first sweet, blessed assurance to every soul that is on that ground to-night. "If you know the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, 'give me to drink' thou would'st ask of Him and He would give thee living water." It is quite sure; there is no possibility of denial—He would give you, if you would only take the place of a receiver, making Him a giver; instead of taking the place of a giver, and making Him but a receiver. She does not understand what the living water is. She has the well before her; and she asks, "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank thereof himself?" There is just a little wonder and reasoning in her heart. "Who is this man with His strange conduct,"—a little thought,—"How strange of a Jew to step over the requirements of the law and come this way with His strange thoughts and new talk about 'God's gift?' that God wants man to receive!" May not that be a new thing for some of our hearts to-night, to learn, that God is indeed more ready to give, than you are to receive; to learn, beloved friends, that God has got love in his heart for you; when there is no thought or care in your heart for him? Yet it is true; for the lost sheep does not seek the shepherd, but the shepherd the sheep. He goeth after that which is lost until He finds; and then the joy of heaven is but *His* joy reflected, where all is fullest sympathy with Him.

And so there is a way in which we can give the Lord to drink. We can satisfy the love that seeks, by just letting it have its way with us, as it desires.

Her heart is touched, her interest is roused, and more—God is before her soul; the light shines for her by which she is to see herself. Because it is only in the presence of God we learn ourselves. Then He goes further, and now mark, beloved friends, she asks



Him for water—she says, “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.” Still she does not know what she is talking about. “That I thirst not” shows that ; and the Lord says quietly, in His own blessed, wonderful way, “Go call thine husband and come hither.” He knows all about the secrets of her heart, knows all about what has brought her there a solitary outcast, *knew* all about it when he spoke of that gift of God to her, and how freely He would give, if she would only take the place of receiving and ask of Him. And He *shows* her that He does, but in such quiet words, just touching the tender spot, and no more, like the physician ; as if saying, is there not something *there* ? not naming it, but suggesting it to her as who would ask, will you not confide in me ?

When that, alas, meets with no response, He goes a little further, and shows that He knows all about it all. But then in simple words, with no judgment, no upbraiding : He ‘upbraideth not.’ *Conscience* might upbraid, and rightly. *His* care is that in the presence of God and of His love she might have what would give her truest judgment of herself, and at the same time lead her out of herself for healing and deliverance. So unlike our treatment of a sin-sick soul is His. *We* judge people readily enough, and it is easy : but it brings no deliverance. They will neither take it nor thank us for it. *Their* judgment it must be, not ours ; and they need other help than this to make it theirs. *He* first of all takes hold of her for God ; so that, when the secret of her life comes out, it is the simplest and most natural thing to come to Him as to a friend about it. It is evident He is no enemy. He is not telling it to her as one who is against her. He is against the sin to be sure, but not against her. Nor, if He is to be believed, is God either. Knowing her life, He has shown Himself for her already. He has invited her on the part of God to take a gift that He would surely give. Will she not understand better

now those words about that water, when she has found that He knows all, and has to own Him as a prophet? She has to own that. "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." She does not run away. She has asked something, she does not know quite what, some great mysterious gift, and He has assured her she shall get it. She is attracted, held fast to listen to His love, with a dawning sense that He and it are more and other than at first they seemed. He has just shewn her a burthen that has to be removed, sin that has to be met if any blessing is to be for her from God, and she turns to Him with a question by no means idle for her, nor an escape from the tale her conscience told,—a question as to how to approach God. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

Doubtless questions about forms of worship are often the escape of souls from what is becoming too grave. But this was not the condition of this soul before us now. She had had her life bared to her, had owned him as a prophet, and worship was to her what to so many it still is, a homage meant to propitiate an offended God. Jacob's way of winning his brother is still a much approved and fashionable way when the question and the Person are of much more importance. "I will appease him with the present that goeth before," he says; "and afterward I will see his face; *peradventure* he will accept me." And with these as with Jacob acceptance is still a '*peradventure*.' If your religion is of that sort, how can you know when you have done enough? Suppose it should not be just what you estimate it to be in God's sight. Oh! would you hang eternity upon a *peradventure*?

Don't take that way, beloved friends. The very uncertainty may show you that you have not got God's way of peace. For 'peace' He speaks of. The Lord answers her question in a way that shows He does not deem it a light one or out of the way. The time was coming when worship would not be a

matter of going to Jerusalem or any place at all. Worship, He tells her, has to be in spirit and in truth, in the knowledge of the person worshipped. You must know God. You cannot worship an unknown God really, because worship is a thing of the heart; it is not posture or ceremonial, but the heart poured out in adoration. You must see something in Him to worship. You cannot worship an unknown God. But still, beloved friends, souls go to worship God in that way; and think He ought really to be pleased with it. After all, they don't know what it is to worship. What is God's name? Do you say, Father? And if you do, is it mere orthodoxy, or as knowing Him in that relationship? "Worship the Father," He says. Beloved friends, do you go and say, 'Father,' in spirit and in truth? Do you not see, that for that the question of acceptance must be settled first? Do you feel at home with God? or are you still outside, like that father's son who served his father so many years, and yet music and dancing in his father's house were a strange thing? Beloved friends, are you doing, doing? and yet I come and ask you "have you got peace with God?" and you have to say, "well, I do not know what that means." I say, "what! have you been serving Him so long, and yet not known Him?"

You must worship the Father,—“Ye worship ye know not what,” saith the Lord; “we know what we worship, *for salvation* is of the Jews.” Do you hear that, beloved friends? God is known—the Father is known, by *salvation*. Do you not see, that unless God is known as a Saviour-God, He is not known at all? How do you know Him? As a judge before whom you are going to appear, and then it will turn out whether you are accepted or rejected? That is not salvation. Salvation is His work, not your work. People do not save themselves, they are saved; God is the Saviour, not man. Beloved friends, God has provided salvation: “Christ is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.” And the

sweetness of that is not merely, that salvation is provided—full and real deliverance for man, as there assuredly is,—but that salvation is to give you a Father, a real God for your hearts, and in Him a Father, to give you ability to worship in spirit and in truth.

Like the prodigal of the Lord's familiar story, turned back to his father's house by famine, for the bread the very hired servants got to the full, when you in the very midst of your anxiety,—at the best, if received, thinking to be a hired servant,—find the Father's heart close to yours, and the Father with His arms about your neck, kissing you, (you a sinner, far off yet and in your sins) God meeting you where you are, because you could not meet Him where He is, you find God for you in the day of grace:—God in Christ a Saviour. God, known and enjoyed, is what will make the "spring of living water" rise up in your souls. That is what will satisfy, and abundantly satisfy. You will carry the refreshment with you. Do you want to know where to find it? That meeting-place between God and the sinner, do you want to know where that is, beloved friends? The cross is that meeting-place between God and man. God and man there come together: man in his wretchedness and ruin; man far off from God; for why had Christ to go into the place of curse, if man was not there? Why, beloved friends, should the blessed Son of God take that awful place, forsaken of God Himself, if, after all, although sinners, we were of that respectable sort, if not quite good enough to go to heaven, yet not quite bad enough to go to hell? The cross, can you look at it, and say, "Christ died for me"? 'He died for all,' you say. I answer: if He died for "all," if He took up that place for all, what must their place be? Are you going to make distinctions amongst sinners, who needed such a death as that to bring them to God? Are you going to plead some little difference between yourself and others, when after all Barabbas' cross

was the place for you and them ? Sinners, with no title but their sins, no reason that God should meet them but that He delights in love and in mercy: if you are able to take that place that the Lord of Glory took, you may learn how surely to say, "He died for me."

Or are you going to take some credit still for something or other in you ? Ah, it is not an enemy that is telling you of your sins, but divine love that has come down to you, by the sacrifice it had to make for you, telling you what you are. You are just the sinner who needed such a death as that, and for whom he died. And, beloved friends, that is God's meeting-place for you. If you thus look at the cross to-night, you will see surely how God meets you with a ready-made salvation. "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." If you could add, with the apostle, "of whom I am chief," you would have chief title. Are you sinners ? That is all God wants. Take simply, honestly, that place before God ; but add nothing to it. Do not say 'respectable sinners,' for Christ did not die for such. If you are not quite bad enough for the cross, then you are not such as Christ died for. If you are a sinner, simply, take this mercy home to-night. God, in Christ, is appealing to your hearts to receive this love. God is appealing to your hearts, as to whether He does not mean well by you, when He offers this salvation ; and why you should distrust him ? He is keeping back judgment from the world, to shew you mercy. The Father is seeking. That is what Christ tells the woman: "The Father seeketh such to worship him." It is not they who seek the Father, but God is seeking men ; beloved friends, will you receive it ? Will you give him credit for it ? The Father seeketh such to worship him.

"I know that Messiah cometh which is called Christ ; when he is come he will tell us all things."

"I that speak to thee am he."

And she is met. That seals to her this grace.

The cross was not yet; but there was already for her the long expected one, Messiah, Christ, and He it was beside her by the well, ministering to her in the full knowledge of her sin, the grace that alone could meet it. This is for her, God's meeting-place. Christ is in her soul; the living water henceforth will spring up for her satisfaction for ever.

Christ is what you want, dear friends. Are you offended when you open the Gospels and find Him in company with sinners? Do you sympathize with the Pharisees when they make this report of Him, that he receives sinners? Or will you allow Him to receive these few far-away ones, enshrined and canonized in Scripture, but not the low and ordinary sinners of the present day?

Most welcome news, sweeter than water to those parched with desert thirst! A man that receives sinners, casting out none that come, invites, because all are sinners, all men to Himself. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Whatever your experience, whatever your feelings, or your life. What can a sinner have but bad feelings and *bad* experiences? What is a sinner but a person of bad life?

He had spoken to her by that well, knowing all about her, and He was the Christ—was there, the living proof of what God was. All was there for her; for her who had asked for what she knew not, and got according to His knowledge and His grace.

And now she runs away to tell the men in the city,—the people who knew her well,—that she had found a man who had told her all things that ever she did. You see at once what has fastened itself upon her. If you know the blessed relief of having had all out before God you will understand it. Has he told it to you in that way, beloved friends? So that having no more reserve with Him, you need have no more now with any other? Can you say, with her, "He told me all things that ever I did. He and I

have been together, all my sins out, and nothing but love to me a sinner."

One thing more. If your heart is full, so is His. If he has given you, how wonderful to know that you have given him! When the disciples come from the city to which they had gone to buy meat, what do they find? Find him with his meat and drink already. The shepherd has found his sheep and he does not want the meat to eat. Joy will not let us eat, any more than sorrow, when it reaches a certain height. Such joy is His. Joy to meet one poor sinner by a well, and bring her to rest and to God. And still He is the same—yesterday, to-day and forever the same Jesus.

Only you must be with Him, remember, upon His own terms. You are to be the sinner, He the Saviour. You with your sins and He with His grace. You the receiver, and He the giver. You must be with Him after that fashion, beloved friends, that you may drink in the infinite grace that is in Him, and find not merely salvation, but a God whom your whole soul can bow down before; one with whom you can be at home indeed; one whom you can trust when you can trust nobody whatever besides, and, least of all, yourself.

Beloved friends, that is what God is—God in Christ. Do you want Him to-night? Is there thirst in your souls? Do you want a Christ like that?

The secret of all joy is to know that I have a great work to do, that is, to live for Christ, and to feel that I have not time for myself. I have time only to live to, and to manifest Him down here.

The Father's love, the Saviour's love is upon you, and you ought to have the joy of the Holy Ghost ever in your heart.  
G.V.W.

## THE SACRIFICIAL BIRDS.

---

A writer, generally intelligent in Scripture, ventures the suggestion that birds are always used there as types of evil. He surely forgets that there were clean as well as unclean; and above all he strangely forgets the sacrificial birds. I propose a very brief glance at these, as types, as I suppose none will question, of the Lord Himself. Of these but two are distinctly named—the pigeon and the dove; a third, prescribed in the law of the cleansing of the leper, is more indefinitely given, although, often apparently rightly rendered ‘sparrow.’ This case it is, however, that brings out very distinctly the force of the ‘bird of *heaven*,’ a term used in Scripture in precise opposition, to what the before mentioned writer insists on as typically characteristic, that although they can rise above the earth, yet they can only do so a little way. On the contrary, I believe that they are always representative of visitants from another sphere, whether (as often) in a bad sense, of “principalities and powers in heavenly places” (e. g. Matt. xiii. 4, 19), or as here in a good, of One higher than the highest, whose love brought Him down to the lowest parts of the earth.

That Christ is here before us is evident, and no less so, I believe, that it is Christ as a Divine Being, One who had to acquire capacity to suffer, naturally foreign to Him. The bird is killed in an earthen vessel, over running water (Lev. xiv. 5), and the earthen vessel without doubt symbolizes His humanity (comp. 2 Cor. iv. 7) filled with the living water (as the term really is) of the Spirit. Thus in the most touching way is represented to us, how the body prepared Him was needed, and taken, though not for this alone, that he might be able to suffer and to die.

Further on, as sin offering and burnt-offering we find the other two birds, the pigeon and the dove. The former is the *rock*-pigeon, of whose nests the hills of Palestine are to this day full. They were so easily procured as to be available for the poorest; and here



again we see how God would neither have riches nor effort necessary to procure (what in the thing typified could not be so procured) the offering needed for the soul. But the special significance of the *rock*-pigeon is no doubt derived from its habits. Like the feeble coney, its trust is in the sheltering rock; and thus again there is beautiful contrast to what the bird of heaven in itself implies. "Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust," was the language, not alone of David, but of David's Lord. And in that path He was perfect: "Beginner and Finisher of faith" in its whole character and course."

But the dove is even more striking, as it is of course the more familiar emblem of the Lord. It was as a dove the Spirit at His baptism descended upon Him, and thus His patient ministry of love, which then publicly began, received its token. Not only had the Inhabiter of heaven come down to earth, but the bird of *love* was the plain intimation of what had brought Him to that strange humiliation, while that of necessity on that very account He was a "Man of sorrows and acquainted (*fully* acquainted, some render it) with grief," the mourner-dove as certainly declared.

In the 68th Psalm we find still other features. There as God's promise to restored Israel it is declared: "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver wings and her feathers with yellow gold" (verse 13). It is as if the dove—and the figure is how significant when we remember how the Lord used it in his lament over Jerusalem (Luke xiii. 34)!—had covered the defilement of the people with her 'silver wings,' and only these were seen. How beautiful when we consider that 'silver' is typical of atonement and that gold—the sheen of gold in the silver—is connected with the display of divine glory. How what brought Him down united thus these two characters, and the significant beauty of the whole description, I leave the reader for his fruitful meditation.

## THE CHALLENGE OF GRACE AND THE SOUL'S ANSWER.

---

### II. THE ANSWER.

Psalm li, to which now we turn, is the answer to what we have been looking at. "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (v. 15) had been His testimony to man. God, dealing in grace, could do this, and if it was grace, we are prepared to see the chief of sinners welcoming the glad message, and owning the suitability of God's way to the need that was felt. David here looks for mercy measured by what God has shown Himself to be, and adapted to all the need of the sinner. Many find it hard to believe their sins are not too great to be forgiven. It is surely well to have a deep sense of them, but there is one thing that exceeds them, however great, and that is, grace. Grace and the work wrought are, alone, sufficient; and to deny this is to deny the capacity of God to meet the need of the sinner. Where sin *abounded* grace did *much more* abound, both as to its comprehensiveness, and the blessings brought being far greater than what sin lost to us. God's way of restitution is to bring in something better. Oh, how worthily He has wrought for His own glory, and linked with it our blessing, that He may dwell amidst the praises of His redeemed people. So, as to the measure of the forgiveness extended to us, it is "according to the riches of His grace." Eph. i. 7.

Washing and cleansing from sin are what is looked for, as the proof of this mercy counted on. Acknowledgment of sin is the ground taken, the moral state about our ways which the goodness of God leads to, and which is the suited condition of soul for God to extend forgiveness. It is ever thus, "repentance

## 116 THE CHALLENGE OF GRACE AND THE SOUL'S ANSWER.

and remission of sins" are linked together by God. Only, we must remember that repentance may be imperfect, and should be ever deepening, the forgiveness perfect and eternal as the work that procures it. God speaks forgiveness from a blood-sprinkled mercy seat, the one sacrifice of Christ having fully met the demands of His holiness, of which His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God, and the coming of the Holy Spirit into the world, are the full and perfect witness. The soul can now rest: its fears of judgment gone, with the knowledge of sin atoned for by the Lamb of God's providing. Many lack peace in their souls because they are not simple in their faith in that which God has wrought, and are occupied with what is passing within, or with reformations, devoting themselves to the Lord, and Christ is hidden from their vision by these things. How great self is that can thus hide Christ from view, and how great the need of humbling in this case. David, in Psalm xxxii., pictures to us one in this condition for a time. "When I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long: day and night thy hand is heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." All this is the fruit of self-occupation, and nothing but confession brings relief. The poor patchwork of a mended self is what we may seek to furnish, but it neither suits God nor can it satisfy the demands of an awakened conscience. We are shut up to but one way—confession, passing sentence under the eye of God upon self; this is what the mind and heart seek to avoid and escape from, but God, in mercy to us can but receive us, as owning what we are and where we have been. We must note here that sin is seen as an offence against God. Not merely its results in the sorrow it entails deplored, nor, grievously as David had wronged his neighbor, was that the greatest element that as a weight pressed upon his spirit. But the sense of his sin against God was what eclipsed all else. "Against *Thee*, Thee only

## THE CHALLENGE OF GRACE AND THE SOUL'S ANSWER. 117

have I sinned, and done evil in *Thy* sight."

But if God deals with man, it is not alone to make manifest that he has sins to be repented of, but an evil nature within, of which these are but the fruit, and until sentence is passed upon that there is but half deliverance. So here we have not alone, "I acknowledge my transgression and my sin is ever before me;" but also "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." In the family of man there has been but one exception to this universal rule, "children of disobedience," and, therefore, by nature, "children of wrath, even as others." Not some others, but the *rest*, Jews and Gentiles, all alike. That one exception I need hardly say, was the Son of God. "That *holy thing* that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." That He who is from eternity in the bosom of the Father, has taken upon him humanity, is the central truth of Christianity, and the basis of all God's dealings in grace with man. "Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." The one in whom he was well pleased is the One through whom He can have good pleasure in men. But it must be through the sufferings of the cross as well as in the painful trial of His obedience in life. that the great Captain of our salvation becomes perfected as such.

Truth in the inward parts, integrity and uprightness of heart, is what God desired, the evidence of this being found in honest confession to God. For this, and to put in relationship with Himself a sinner, God must do all. Must purge, must wash, must create the clean heart, and renew a right (or settled, established) spirit within him. When God does all, all is well done, and "Thou hast wrought all our works in us" is as true as that He has wrought all for us at the cross. All needed to make us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." This is the true apprehension of grace which delivers from self, and

## 118 THE CHALLENGE OF GRACE AND THE SOUL'S ANSWER.

from fruitless efforts of our own. It does not deny responsibility, but it puts the soul on the only ground on which responsibility can be met. Just as the exhortation to "*work* out your own salvation with fear and trembling," is followed by, "for it is God who *worketh* in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Responsible to maintain exercise of conscience before God as to what we pass through, and do, and the way of doing it, we surely are, to "approve the things that are excellent," "to prove what is that good and acceptable will of God," and for confession when we fail. If we do not this we shall soon get hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and the not very remote fruit of having put away a good conscience, is making shipwreck of the faith in some way. Yet, as to all our responsibility, if we take it up simply as that, apart from grace, we fall most surely into legalism and discouragement. Grace, if I have learned it truly, leads me in the sense of my incapacity, to roll myself back, responsibilities and all, upon the Lord, with an "Undertake for me." The main secret of all strength and blessing is in this. Not alone are we privileged to "reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord," but we are to "*yield* ourselves up to God," that He may not find in us a contrary and perverse will, to check and break down, nor a careless and unexercised soul, indifferent to His claims, which discipline must arouse from, or, saddest and severest discipline of all, to which He gives us up for a time, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." But that He may find in us a ready obedience to Himself in all things, whether they call for activity or patience on our part, so that in our weakness His strength may be perfected, and He glorified in us. I do not forget, here, that it is by engaging the heart with its true object Christ, that all in us is produced of moral likeness to His ways and mind. But this will surely be the fruit of thus yielding ourselves up to God, as not our own, but bought with a price.

## THE CHALLENGE OF GRACE AND THE SOUL'S ANSWER. 119

Let us not, however, forget that even this may, as perverted by the flesh, become a snare, and how many are occupied with their devotedness to Him, and thus sink down into another form of sin — self righteousness. If I am truly given up to Him, it will be in the sense which His presence always secures in the soul, not of what I am to Him, but of what He is in Himself, and for me, and produce the deep and abiding consciousness that I am nothing, and helpless in myself, and only fruitful as His grace works in me by the power of the Spirit.

Thus, in this Psalm, without following out its details, the soul counts upon God for everything: wash me, cleanse me, create in me a clean heart; restore me the joy of thy salvation, uphold me with Thy free Spirit, and even as to the very worship God desires, “O Lord, open *thou* my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise;” and, finally, as to all the blessing of Millennial days, “Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion, build *thou* the walls of Jerusalem, *then* shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness, with burnt offerings and whole burnt offering; then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.”

Blessed it is in any measure to have the sense of this, that divine love and energy may manifest themselves in us, and that we may be saved from our own fruitless activities, and the self will and reliance upon human efforts and ways, which to-day abound everywhere.

Let us never lose sight of the fact that the blessed place is still found at the Master's feet. That thirst of soul is only met by our going to Him to drink, and rest, in a sense of disobedience and sin, will be known only to those who take His easy yoke and light burden. It is a day in which increasingly we need to find our sanctuary in Him, and to listen to the apostle's exhortation to Timothy, “My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” R. T. G.

## DELIVERANCE, WHAT IS IT?

## 5. POWER.

I have now rest for my heart. I am no more at the impracticable work of trying to be what I am not; I *am* all I desire to be. Only, sense and experience do not present to me my true self at all. My life is in Christ Jesus. *I* am in Him. And this only faith recognizes, which recognizes also the cross of Christ as that wherein my old self was judged, and set aside for God. My "old man" was crucified with Christ;" the "new man" is the man in Christ alone.

Here the perpetual sunshine settles down upon my soul. God is for me,—with me,—and must ever be. No cloud is there of His putting; no hiding ever of the Father's face. *I* may turn away,—true, *I* may forget, but I have only to turn to Him again, to find undimmed His glorious face shining upon me in His own Beloved, and in His presence I am welcome and at home.

And observe: these two things I find in the One who, having filled the lowest place on earth, fills the highest place in heaven. In Him I find what I am for God, and am brought to God. In Him, also, I find the "image of God," and the "glory of God." He is man for God, blessed Lord, I know. And He is, also, just as fully and manifestly, God for man. In His own wondrous person do these glories meet. He who is God with God, is man with man. And, therefore, also, is He man with God, and God with man.

Think of the fast embrace with which I find myself held, right to the heart of God Himself, when I discern my place in Him who is alike Son of man, and Son of God, alike *first* begotten and *only* begotten.

Grace, and only grace, has set me in this place; despotic, absolutely sovereign grace, willing to manifest itself as such,—to show its exceeding riches unto the ages to come. What could effort of mine have done in the matter? What can failure of mine *undo*? Yet, blessed be God, this is His power for me that I may *not* fail, “Sin shall not have dominion over you, because you are not under the law, but under grace.”

“The joy of the Lord is your strength.” A soul happy in Christ, how little can temptation avail with it! how little can it be shaken! A soul with its joy o’ershadowed, how accessible to the influences, of a thousand kinds, which are not of God! Therefore, the apostle will say, and say again, to his beloved Philippians, “Rejoice in the Lord.”

This, then, is the first element of power for me. Happiness, in this sense, *if real*, is in effect holiness; joy in Christ is devotedness; occupation with Christ is what is, of course, implied in joy; and the brightness thus diffused within my heart diffuses itself naturally,—necessarily—in my life also. “We all, with open (unveiled) face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.” (2 Cor. iii. 18, marg.) “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give out the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (ch. iv. 6, Gr.)

Occupied with this glorious object we are transformed by it; we receive the light and give it out. Hence, another characteristic of a life of power is that it is a life of *dependence*: only as we *receive*, and what we receive, we give out. And this surely, also, “abiding in Christ” implies. “The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye,” says the Lord, “except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.” (Jno. xv. 5.) The



connection between branch and stock must be maintained, or the sap cannot circulate; so, only as we abide in Him, does He, as fertilizing sap, abide in us. Or, as the Lord again put it at the Feast of Tabernacles, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (Jno. vii. 37, 38.)

This flowing forth—this reflection—this fruitfulness, in fine—is not the result of effort. We must abide in Him, and He will certainly abide in us. We must be in the sun to reflect it. We must come and drink at the inexhaustible stream, that the living waters may flow forth. The flowing forth is a necessity, if the vessel be in connection with a reservoir of supply more capacious than itself, but a necessity, mark, *after the vessel is itself full*. Alas, the effort to live and to walk aright is so commonly a failure, because it is the effort to pump out of a vessel that has but little in it, an effort which (if successful) *only exhausts the vessel itself*, while God's way is that only the overflow should pour out, and *the vessel be always full*. But, thus the overflow is itself no scanty measure, but (when once the vessel is full) the whole power of the spring itself; as the Lord says "*rivers of living water*."

For this, then, there must be dependence—a dependence of which we are made, and intended to be, continually conscious; for thus, as Christ is alone continually power to us, the constant ministration of it is the constant witness of an omnipotent love, which carries us and all our burdens. And thus we have not to measure our strength for the evil day, for our strength it is not. He has guaranteed that, "As thy days so shall thy strength be." (Deut. xxxiii. 25.) This is the promise to Asher—the happy one; and happy, indeed, is he who realizes it. Thus, as the Apostle says, what indeed we want to know in ourselves is weakness, for "when I am weak then am I

strong;" "*His* strength is perfected in weakness." And then it is not merely that I receive sufficiency, but it is "*His grace*" that is "sufficient for me." As with Israel in the wilderness, every day is a new realization of a love which is as fresh and true one day as another, and as full of power in the greatest as in the smallest emergencies.

Thus it is beautiful to see how in this eighth chapter of Romans, instead of as before, an unavailing struggle of self with self, "the law of the *Spirit* it is, that sets me "free from the law of sin and death." And so, from this point throughout the chapter, what is set against the flesh, or the "sin that dwelleth in" it, is now everywhere not the good, pious, right-willing 'I', but the "Spirit," the blessed Spirit of God, who has come to take up His abode within me. The power that worketh in us is Divine power, therefore, not myself, although with me and in me, power upon which I can confidently lean, and without self-sufficiency or self-complacency.

And He who has come to take of the things of Christ and show them to my soul comes not to fill me with my own brightness, or gladden me with my own beauty, or set up another object before me, outside of the Christ in whom I live. All that would be mere distraction—all "gain to me" in this sense merely loss. So much less would He be to me than the 'all' He must be.

It is true that the Spirit of God may have (alas!) to take also of things that have been in my walk and ways, to show me where I have *not* walked as what I am, *not* walked as Christ walked. But even so, not to occupy me with myself, but to shew me the fruit of having forgotten to "reckon myself dead unto sin, and alive unto God in Jesus Christ." Having learned and owned what has come of my eye being off Christ, my *resource* is His grace, who brings the basin and the towel to cleanse me from the defilement I have contracted. "If *I* wash thee not," He says, "thou hast no

part with me." For that, even, I must be His debtor, and for that again, in company with Him.

And that is the secret of a walk of faith ever ; for He, and He alone, is faith's object ; it knows no other. Ought I to have faith in myself ? Ought I to have an object there ? The cross of Christ, then, is the death of self, His grave its burial, that, burying my dead out of my sight, I may be free to be occupied with Him who is not dead but living, and in whom I live.

This is deliverance. But if it be, how many of us, Christian reader, know it ? Alas, unbroken will, persistent self-indulgence, worldliness, attest on every side how little it is known. Everywhere the terrible lack of power is manifest. Over how many children of God sin *has* dominion ! And the only reason why many are unconscious of it is because "sin" is measured by a mere worldly standard, and *not* by Scripture. What title have we to measure the true Christian life by less than the words of the apostle, "I am crucified with Christ ; nevertheless I live, yet *not I*, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Beloved reader, they are the words of the same apostle, "whatsoever is *not of faith* is SIN."

Poor indeed are all our words ; but God give His *own* word, at least, power.

---

If God has done a work for me, witnessed to by the Holy Ghost in my conscience, I could not have a doubt of its perfection. All God's character, His holiness and love, are united and bound up in it ; if it is not received by me I am lost forever.

As Son of God, Christ had a perfect right to say, I will and I will not, and He is the only one who (save on two remarkable occasions) never did so.

G.V.W.

## “A BRAND FROM THE BURNING.”

---

A GOSPEL ADDRESS.

---

Zech. iii. 1-4.

The words that I have read, beloved friends, apply properly to the receiving back again of the Jews in the last days, when the Lord puts away their iniquity. Joshua the high priest is the representative of Israel, and he represents them both in their iniquity, which God puts away, and in the blessed place into which he is brought afterward. But then God's reception of any sinner, or of any company of sinners, is on precisely the same pattern as that of any other. God has one way of saving, and only one; and therefore we may rightly take, without the least straining, the account that we have of God's justification of his ancient people, the Jews, yet to take place in the last days, to represent the justification of any sinner now.

The doctrine fundamental to the gospel is, that there is no difference between man and man,—not, no difference as to the amount of sins that anybody may have committed or the aggravation of them; for there the day of judgment will bring out a difference, and put every body exactly in his place according to his works, that is, those who are not saved by the gospel. It is true then, that there are various degrees of sin, and God will judge with perfect equity as to all; but that is no question of salvation at all. As to it, everybody is precisely upon the same footing: “There is no difference, *for all have sinned* and come short of the glory of God.” It does not say, “all have sinned so many times.” And every one will assent to the

fact that we have sinned. But beloved friends, what follows that is, "all have sinned, and *come short of the glory of God.*"

What God was showing forth all through the old Testament times was, that, according to the principle of works no one could ever be admitted into his presence, no one could see God and live. That is what the Apostle refers to. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." God dwelt in the midst of Israel in visible glory. He dwelt in the tabernacle or in the temple; but, beloved friends, he dwelt there, as you know, in a place that was carefully shut up from men—out of which men were carefully shut. Nobody could see his face and live. That was the great truth signified by the veil of the temple. The way into the holiest, the apostle says—"the way into the holiest," the figure of heaven," was not yet made manifest." Nobody could go in and see God.

As long as ever the law lasted, that was maintained. If you take Moses on the Mount, when the law was given the second time, in Exodus xxxiii, xxxiv, you find that he asks to see God's glory. But God says: "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live;" but he says, "there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand, while I pass by: and it shall come to pass when my glory is passed by, that I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my *back parts*; but my face shall not be seen."

How much, beloved friends, would you know of a man if you only saw his back parts? What they saw then was God with His back to them, and His face turned away.

That was in the first great day of Israel's glory, so to speak. Now look at another. When the temple was just reared up, and God came to take possession of it; the glory fills the building. What does it do

then? *Drives all the priests out.* And Solomon says, "The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness." (1 Kings viii. 12.) If He dwells in the thick darkness, what can you know about him? If *you* are thinking, dear friends, of living for God in order to get into His presence, that is God's word for you. All the time the law lasted you saw His back and not His face. He dwelt in the thick darkness. Is there any one of you who depends upon any thing of the sort for acceptance, that has ever seen God's face? Is there any one of you who dares to say he can stand before Him on this ground? There is no one. Because if it depends upon any work of your hands, be it the smallest thing you can imagine, still God is God, and we may work so as to satisfy ourselves very well, but it is another question as to satisfying God. And if I have got to satisfy God, beloved friends, I cannot take it for granted that what I do will satisfy Him. I must have His judgment about it therefore. But this we cannot have till the day of judgment; so we must go on until the day of judgment and see how it turns out. Alas! and in the meantime you must go on in that awful uncertainty, drifting on, not knowing whither you are going.

I say, if there is the smallest thing you have got to do to be accepted with God, it will not do to say you know you have done it right. Are you infallible? Has not God said about your heart, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" And, beloved friends, if you cannot know your own heart, how can you trust its judgment? How can you tell it is not deceiving you?

The fact is, nobody has peace with God on that ground, and yet there is such a thing as peace. If I go to the New Testament, I find that, "being justified by faith, we have *peace* with God," and again, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*." Beloved friends, He means what He says. Is anxiety rest? Is doubt

rest? Is not knowing where you will be in eternity rest? Is it peace to say "I do not think any body can know whether he is saved"? There may be indifference and carelessness in all that, but not rest or peace. But there is such a thing as peace, and *knowing*. "These things I have written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." People say, but that is presumption. Is it presumption to know what the apostle wrote that we might know? Is it presumption to take God's word and believe it? The fact is, if you have got eternity before you, how can you rest for a moment with the question where you are to be in it unsettled? You cannot, beloved friends; it is impossible.

If we cannot meet God upon the throne and in judgment; if we cannot by all that we can do get into His presence; what are we to do? Beloved, *He* has rent the veil and come out to us. He has come out Himself when we could not go in. And, Christ's blessed work being accomplished, He has opened heaven itself to us. Opened the way of access, by the blood which has been shed for us, and His free and gracious invitation now from the heights of glory into which He has gone is still: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Now look at what we have got *here*, in the third of Zechariah. It is a sinner in his sins in the presence of God. Now, beloved friends, is not that the very thing you would be afraid to be? What do you think it must be for a sinner in his sins to be in the presence of God? When a soul is awakened, is not the first effort, the natural effort, to turn over a new leaf, forsake one's sins, and so get into the presence of God without them? You never can. Whenever you meet God for the first time, you will find yourself in your sins in His presence. Nobody ever met Him in any other way.

God picked out the best man on the earth, and that was Job. The Lord said: "Hast thou considered

my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man." There was not one like him, and God says it; but when Job finds himself in the presence of God what does he say? "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The prophet Isaiah found himself in the presence of God, and probably he might have been the best man in Israel in his day; and he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the Seraphim; each had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts," &c. And what does Isaiah say? "Then said I, woe is me, for *I am undone*; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; *for mine eyes have seen the king*, the Lord of Hosts."

You are not in bad company, when you are in company with Job and Isaiah; but what they found when they got into the presence of God was, that they were undone sinners. Beloved friends, God alone can remove your sins, and you must be with Him to have them removed; and if you get into the presence of God in the day of His grace you will find Him for you. If you get into His presence in the day of judgment, you will find Him against you. In the day of judgment He will be a just *judge*; in the day of grace He is a just *Saviour*. Beloved friends, if you find yourselves in the presence of God in the day of grace, it will be to find He is for you and not against you, and to be in His presence as a sinner is SALVATION.

Job found it so; it was the end of his difficulty. "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" lifted him right out of where he was, and gave him more than he had before. That confession of Isaiah, "Woe is me for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips," brought the live coal in the seraph's hand to



cleanse his lips ; “ Lo, this has touched thy lips ; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” And here, beloved, we get a sinner with his sins, with a stopped mouth in the presence of God, and it is only to find God for him and not against him.

That is what people want to know, beloved friends. God is for us: that is the wonderful reality which the gospel gives us. “ I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” Why ? “ Because it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” How is this ? “ Because therein”—in the gospel—in good news to sinners,—“ is the righteousness of God revealed.” God’s righteousness is revealed, *not* in shutting sinners out of His presence, but in GOOD NEWS ; what God Himself can call “ good news :” divinely suited to comfort the heart. If you receive them to night, you will go away with your hearts as glad as they can be.

God is light. He is love, but He is light. “ That which doth make manifest is light.” When is a man in the presence of God ? When he is revealed to himself, so that he knows his own condition, and, beloved friends, the one thing that he knows as his condition always, when he gets first into the presence of God, is that he is clothed in filthy garments. He is a sinner in his sins, and nothing else.

It is a very easy thing of course for people to say, ‘ we are all sinners.’ If that is being in the presence of God, why we are all in the presence of God, for every body will own he is a sinner. And that Pharisee, when the woman of the city came into his house, I suppose *he* would have owned that, yet he says : “ This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is, that toucheth him : for *SHE* is a *sinner*.” Beloved friends, do you know what it is to distinguish yourselves from other sinners, and put the difference to your own credit ? No man in the presence of God can feel like that. When a man is in the presence of God he is a real sinner, a brand for the burning, if even plucked out.

That is what the angel of the Lord says of Joshua. "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" A brand plucked out of the fire is a thing put *into* the fire, to be burned; you may change your mind and take it out of the fire, but that is where it was, and it was sentenced to be burned. There is none righteous, says the law itself, the very law that people appeal to. They say, did not God give us the law? well! What says the law? "There is none righteous, no not one." This is God's judicial sentence. And what is that said for? It is said, beloved friends, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

Did you ever take your place with your mouth stopped, guilty before God? Do you not see that is being in His presence? If you are in the presence of God you are only there with your mouth stopped. Not a word about other sinners. Not a word about difference between sinners. Not a word about degrees of sins. And let me say too, not a word about good resolutions, or anything to the credit side against your sins! A man comes to me and says, "Well, yes, I did do so and so, but"—Now, I say, you are going to make excuses That is what God says. If you say, I have done so and so, it is all right; but if you add "but"—it won't do. You are going to balance your sins with your good resolutions, going to ask God to look at what you are going to be, instead of what you are; that is not being in the presence of God. Every one who is before God is there GUILTY.

God has given that verdict, that every mouth may be stopped. Then, beloved friends, you are not under probation: the trial is over; the sentence has been pronounced; and all your talking is only trying in vain to get God to give you a new trial.

He has pronounced definitely and positively against the whole world. Beloved friends, have you accepted his sentence? That is your only hope; no

plea, no telling God you will do something. If you get into the presence of God, it will be to say, "I abhor myself." You do not abhor a man who is going to turn round and be respectable. When you get a man with whom you can do nothing—an abandoned creature, you give him up. That is the sort of man you abhor. Beloved friends, when I abhor *myself*, I give myself up. I say it is no good trying to make anything of myself. Sentence is passed upon me; and, if God does not show mercy, all is over; no looking forward to a day of judgment to be told how it will turn out then. Judgment has come. Judgment has been pronounced. Everybody has not yet got the exact measure of what he will get; that is true; but judgment is pronounced, and all the world is pronounced guilty before God.

"Clothed with filthy garments." Did you ever notice there is a remarkable contrast? When it is a question of men's righteousness, you will find the prophets saying, "all our righteousnesses"—(that is not our sins, our *righteousnesses* are not our sins. Our righteousnesses are our efforts to do something. Our righteousnesses are our best performances)—"all our *righteousnesses* are as filthy rags." Not garments, they are not garments at all—*rags*, '*filthy rags*.' But when it is a question of our sins, God says: "clothed in filthy garments." They are not filthy rags, they are filthy garments, he is covered with them. His filthy garments are his iniquity. Our righteousness does not cover us, but our sins do. "From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is no soundness, but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores." That is man's condition before God. If now, as God's word speaks to you, you learn what you are, and take your place in that way, as a lost sinner, a sinner covered with his sins,—you now know what repentance is. "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Not, I abhor my sins,—a good many do that; it is 'abhor my *self*.' Have you ever said, "I am undone"? that is what Isaiah said. He did not say, "I am *going*

*to be* undone, if I do not turn over a new leaf.” Did you ever say, I AM undone? Did you ever know what it was to be *‘lost?’*

The Lord Jesus Christ come to save that which was *‘lost.’* He speaks of Himself as going after the *‘lost.’* There is not a soul among these lost ones that is not found, that the arms of everlasting mercy do not finally enclose. “He goes after that which is lost, until he finds it.” The *‘sinner that repenteth’* is *‘the sheep that is lost.’*

There is not a word from the sinner in our chapter; not a word from Joshua here. He does not do or say a thing. There he is, a sinner in his sins, wholly dependent upon the mercy and love of God—upon that and nothing else—a sinner in his sins, in the presence of God.

What will God do with a sinner in his sins? What can God do with a man clothed in filthy garments? Beloved friends, what will he do with you, if you are there?

Mark,—oh, mark it well,—you have got to stand before God in that very fashion, if you have not yet done so. You may defer it; you may put it off; you may refuse to think about it now; you may refuse to take God’s sentence home; you may say, “Oh, well, I shall have plenty of company, if I am lost; there will be a good many more lost with me.” That will not help you when you stand before God; you will find yourself an individual soul, alone, and not in company, or, I might say, only in company with Him whose eye will read you through and through and expose you to yourself, naked and deformed and in your own proper condition. There will be no talking about your company then. There will be no thought about your neighbour. You will be a solitary sinner before God, with only His eye upon you. If you stand before Him thus now, you will find there is mercy for you. If you stand before Him then, you will find it everlasting destruction. This is the acceptable time,

behold, now is the day of salvation. Now!—*now*, dear friends; and how long is that ‘now?’ Every pulse-beat, every tick of the clock, is a ‘now;’ you don’t know how many of them you have got. Friends, there is salvation for you to take hold of as instantaneously as that; because God knows what your need is. There is a rope out for souls that are drowning, that they may clutch on the instant. That is what you want. It is all very well for men who don’t know what eternity is, to talk about having time. If I had a salvation to offer you that required a week to work out, I could not insure you a week. Blessed be God, I have got a salvation *now* for you.

A sinner in his sins in the presence of God! what will God do? can you trust Him for that? Do you think there is any good thing in God’s heart towards you? Do you connect Him with a doctor and a dying bed? or with the thunder storm?

Is there any good in God’s heart towards man? Do you believe it? *Do you believe it, beloved friends?* We are in a land in which the mass of people profess to believe it. God gave His Son, but they won’t believe in Him. If they believed in God they would not think of Him always as a Judge, and in connection with a storm or a pestilence.

Did God give His Son to punish man? Did Christ die to reveal God as a judge? Why was it, then? Is there any good in God’s heart towards man? Beloved friends, when you come to this, that there is none in your heart towards Him, then you will be ready to admit that there is some in His heart for you. These two things go together.

Now the sinner has not a word to say for himself. “And the *Lord said* unto Satan, the Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” May I not do as I like? says the Lord. And the sinner being silenced, the adversary is silenced too. If the sinner has nothing to say, the adversary,

too, has nothing to say. If you want to stop the adversary's mouth, dear friends, stop your own mouth, and let God answer for you.

Well, now, it is as simple as possible. "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel; and he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him." That is the way sin is taken away; just one word from God, "Take away the filthy garments from him." Beloved friends, is there anybody that would like to hear a voice like that to-night? *God has written it there, that every soul that likes may hear it.* Did God write that for *that* sinner's sake? Has He written the blessed words with which He met sinners of old, for their sakes? No, but for ours. He is the self-same God to-day. He never changes. He never has any exceptions. Never! He is the same God everywhere, in every case the same, thoroughly trustworthy, never changing. And if you are in His presence now, in your sins, He says, "Take away his filthy garments from him." Do you believe that? Well, He gives you His word. If you do not believe that He will give you His oath. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He is faithful, faithful, faithful. Do you know what "faithful" is? True to a pledged word. Faithfulness is in fulfilling a pledge. Somebody has got a claim upon me in some way; I am faithful to *my* word, faithful to what I have promised. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Do you claim that faithfulness of God? If you bring nothing but sins to Him, you can claim it.

There is a confessed sinner in the presence of God. God is faithful and just to forgive him his sins. Has not God pledged Himself? Would He be faithful if He did not keep His word? You ask, perhaps, How can He forgive us our sins after that fashion? Be-

loved friends, because Christ died for sinners.

People argue, indeed : Christ died for sinners, and therefore you must do all you can to be a Christian, and so to be saved. Beloved friends, you take yourselves out of God's loving hands of mercy, which are longing to take hold of you ; that is all. You make Him act in righteousness against you instead of in righteousness for you. God does not save in that way. God does not justify people as Christians, church members, and all that. He "justifies the *ungodly*," the people who do not work for it. "To him that worketh not"—"worketh not," do you understand ? Dear friends, that is God's word, not mine, "To him that WORKETH NOT, but believeth on Him that justifieth the UNGODLY, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Do you think God means what He says ? Do you think God does what He says ? God "justifies the ungodly," do you believe that ? Oh, yes, people say, we believe that. Well, what are you going to do ? "*Going to do the best we can.*" Is not that it ? the best we can ! Have we to do the best we can to be ungodly ? If God justifies the ungodly, must not you be the sort of person that God justifies ? Must you work to be ungodly ? Ah ! if you look at yourselves aright, you will find you are ungodly enough already—ungodly enough to be justified. If you believe that what do you do ? Nothing ! *because* you believe. If you want to do something, you do *not* believe He justifies the ungodly. If you do believe He justifies the ungodly, you do nothing. Christ died for *sinners*, nobody else. He did not die for good sinners, or for the better class of sinners. He found one man who was the very chief of sinners, and He could not leave him unsaved. He took up that man, the chief of sinners as he was. He could not let him go. Because, if He let the chief of sinners go unsaved, people might have said, there is a limit to the power of the blood of Christ ; there was one man, at any rate, that the blood

of Christ was not sufficient to save. So God took up the chief of sinners and made an apostle of him. He wanted him to speak in men's ears and hearts: "There! that is the sort of sinners I am saving. Those are the sort of sins that the blood of Christ washes off." Come now, and put in your claim as a sinner to the precious blood of Christ and you will get remission of sins. God will say as to you, Take away his filthy garments from him.

But note: He does not simply turn to others to say that. He turns to the sinner himself. He wants the sinner to know it. He does not wait until He gets to glory, to say it to him. He says, "I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee." He says, "iniquity" here in the plainest terms He can. He does not say, "filthy rags." He speaks it right out. He wants the sinner to know it.

Is there anybody here who can say, Oh! that I could hear such a word to-night? If you are in company with Joshua now, those words will apply to you as well as him. Christ's death can cover you; God's mercy is for you. Still He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Are you such? Perhaps, with doubt and perplexity, and all that sort of thing. Well, will you come? No right or wrong way of coming, if to Him; but, will you come? "I will give you rest." "I WILL give you rest." No uncertainty about it; not "perhaps," not "probably," I will give you rest, but I **WILL** give you rest. No doubt, or uncertainty about Christ; He is the "yea and amen." "I *will* give you rest." He has made himself responsible about it; will you put that responsibility upon Him to-night? You cannot help answering as to whether you will come or not. You have answered it already to Him; you may reverse your decision; but you have either said "I do," or, "I do not want it." It is as simple as can be, beloved friends. Nobody can come right, in one way; nobody can come wrong, in another. That is,



you know, a sinner cannot come in a right state, with right thoughts and feelings. He comes a sinner; but he comes right if he comes to Christ, for whosoever comes to Him He will in no wise cast out. Christ says, "Come unto me," but He does not say, in any particular way. Oh! beloved friends, if your hearts answer to Him now, he says, "I will give you rest." Just take your place with Joshua; confess your sins—nothing else—and He is faithful and just to forgive you your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

But He does not merely cleanse you from your sins. "I will clothe thee with change of raiment." What does he do? He puts a robe of righteousness upon you. How is that? He puts Christ on you. Christ has not only died for men, he has gone up into the presence of God for men; and the very highest seat in glory is occupied by that one who was upon the cross for sinners. God has taken the man who filled the cross to fill the throne of glory; God has taken Him up there in His presence, beloved friends; and there he is, a *Man*, a man for ever. He has not merely gone back God, as He came; He has gone back *Man*, and to be a man forever. There is a man in the presence of God, in the nearest place to God he can be; a man who has got a place for man, who never needed to get a place for himself. He has worked for a place for man and he has got it, and Christ is made of God unto us "wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." Christ is our righteousness—the change of raiment for the filthy garments of iniquity, and Christ is righteousness to everyone who believes on Him.

Beloved friends, the soul that believes in Christ is as Christ is before God. What Christ is, He is: as righteous, unchangeably righteous; "righteous as *He* is righteous." We are accepted in the Beloved, before God as He is, with all His perfection; with all that God sees in Him for us, and the value of His work is

ours with God.

That is the "change of raiment." One moment a sinner in your sins before God, and another moment clothed with Christ before Him, and as Christ is before His eyes. And mark, beloved friends, *God* does all that. He does not say to the sinner, take off your filthy garments and put on these. He says to those who stand by, "Take away the filthy garments from him." He does not say put on these new garments. He says, "*I* will clothe you with change of raiment." God does all.

Now what does he say to you? He is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and to make over Christ to you as your acceptance before Him. Is not God's righteousness on your side now? What do you say; "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Why? "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed;" for God must not only be a good God, a loving God, but a righteous God, and his righteousness is revealed, where? *In the cross*, and is that *against* sinners? No! God's righteousness is revealed in the cross, and that is not against sinners, but for sinners. The cross is death, the cross is judgment: the cross, beloved friends, is not the fruit of good works, or anything of that sort, it is the fruit of sin, although the sinless One took it. And if you want a title to the cross, your sins are the title. Take your sins, put them down there in the presence of God, and God is faithful and just to forgive you your sins. Aye, and to give you the whole value of the work of Christ as you prove yourself thus to be one of those for whom Christ died. He will put you in absolute perfection before God, the absolute unchangeable perfection of Christ for ever and ever.

---

Everything with Paul became service. Whatever it was, whether life or death, he said, "There is something I can fill with Christ."

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

6. Is there any reason for believing that the prodigal in Luke xv. is the picture of a child of God backsliding? The difficulty [of another view] seems to be in the 11th and 32nd verses.

The same difficulty appears in Matth. xxi. 28, "a certain man had two *sons*," is identical in both passages; yet the Lord expressly applies this to the Pharisees on the one hand and the 'publicans and harlots' on the other. The same application must be made of that in Luke xv., for the plain reason that the Lord had the same two parties precisely before Him, and is answering the murmurs of the Pharisees: "This man receiveth sinners," a murmur which we find in the mouth of the older son. What would the story of the declension of a child of God have to do with the two classes He is addressing?

The term 'son' is not misapplied, if we remember that Judaism not Christianity was then existing. God says, "I am a Father to *Israel*," although this did not involve new birth or eternal life at all. They had as a nation 'the adoption.' (Rom. ix. 4.)

The 31st verse is what is more usually urged to show that the *elder* son represents a child of God. If so, one who did not know what music and dancing in his Father's house was, and whose toil for him had gone quite unrewarded. No: it was a mirror held up in which the cold hard Pharisaism, ignorant of grace, whether of that day or this, may see itself. "All that I have is thine," when applied in this way, simply represents that God's house receiving one, does not leave a less portion for another, and even a Pharisee may have the inheritance of God's children, though not *as* a Pharisee.

7. Is there not a seeming contradiction between the 9th and 13th verses of Luke xvi? I desire light upon this parable.

The parable of the unjust steward represents man fallen and under sentence of expulsion from his earthly stewardship. Grace, such as it is shown in the preceeding chapter, has not changed this sentence, although it has done much more by opening heaven. But in the meanwhile he has in his hands his master's goods, and his wisdom to use his opportunity, so that the riches committed to his trust may be his friends, not accusers, when he leaves this scene.

There is not the least opposition between the 9th and 13th verses, because "serving mammon" is the very opposite to making 'mammon,' in this Scriptural way serve *you*.

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

---

### 2. THE KINGDOM ANNOUNCED, CH. III-VII.

---

(1). The third chapter gives us the proclamation and anointing, not of a Son of David merely, but of the Son of God. We see at once that only as this can He take the kingdom, a kingdom which is to be God's. The blessing of it is this, that man, over whom, astray from God, many lords have had dominion, returns to Him to whom alone he owes subjection. So now it is Jehovah's way that is to be prepared; and, at His baptism, it is His beloved Son whom the Father owns. Satan too tests Him as this: "If Thou be the Son of God."

The proclamation of the kingdom of heaven necessarily involves the call to repentance. If Jehovah it is that comes, how otherwise could they prepare His way? The baptism of repentance is in Jordan, that is, 'baptism unto death.' Those coming to it take that solemn place, confessing the sins which have brought them there. They must not say they are Abraham's children; for the axe is at the root of the trees.

Then the Lord comes to take His place in death for those He finds there, not as One whose due it is, but to 'fulfil righteousness.' It is His pledging to that more solemn baptism of which He speaks afterwards. And He who could give an argument to the Father's love in thus laying down His life (Jno. x. 17), is thereupon owned by the Father as His Son, the object of His delight, the Spirit as a dove anointing Him for His work. The bird of heaven, the bird of love and sorrow, in whose silver wings of redemption

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

is the sheen of the gold, the display of divine glory, is His lovely and fitting type.

(2). Thus proclaimed and anointed, He is deliberately exposed to the tempter, led up of the Spirit, not of His own will; the second Man, blessed contrast to the first, tempted in a wilderness, not in a garden, fasting to meet the devil, not as others to meet God. His forty days' exposure, not fed with manna but ahungred, reveals Him perfect in the knowledge, which in forty years of lessons Israel had failed to learn. He answers Satan out of Deuteronomy, in which the moral of their wanderings is declared, taking ever the place of man in dependence, out of which the devil would use the truth of His Divine glory to seduce Him.

The flesh, in Him sinless, is the first point of attack. Here the tempter finds in One come to do God's will, no motive in the hunger of a forty days' fast to provoke a will to satisfy it. Man lives by the word of God, not bread: so He in dependent willlessness.

The second temptation is as Messiah, to whom the promise quoted confessedly belonged. But the devil mutilates it, for the blessed word of God could not in honest usage be a means of temptation. He would lead the Lord aside from "His ways," to prove, if He could, that God was for Him. But if Israel had thus tried God, He, perfect in faith, could not so tempt Him.

Finally, and at once, all the kingdoms of the world are set before Him, by the sudden dazzle to throw Him if possible off His guard, if but for a moment, and seduce His heart from its allegiance to God. But here Satan has disclosed himself, and, being disclosed, is defeated. He departs; and angels come and minister to the Conqueror.

(3). And now the light shines out in Galilee. The King Himself proclaims the kingdom, gathers His heralds, and displays the "powers of the world to

come :”\* the power by which evil shall be banished from the world under Messiah’s sway. Thus manifesting His title to the kingdom, in the presence of the multitude He instructs His disciples in the characteristics of it. This is the “sermon on the mount ;” and the kingdom itself, we must remember, is that of which the prophets prophesied, the kingdom in which Jerusalem shall be, more gloriously than ever, “the city of the great King,” and “times of refreshing shall come from the *presence* of the Lord,” not (as now) the kingdom in the time of His *absence*. Yet, *in principle*, the Lord’s words apply to us often only with *more* force on that account, as we may easily see, if we apprehend the difference of dispensation.

The Lord begins with describing the character and blessedness of the heirs of the kingdom, a character formed by the hope of what yet they see not (v. 3-6), and by the more specific divine lineaments, which are found in all God’s children (7-9). Persecuted for *righteousness*’ sake, they are yet the salt of the earth, and for *Christ’s* sake, they are its light; they are to let that light (their testimony to Him) shine before men, that their good works, seen in that light, may glorify their Father (10-16).

Next, the law is mentioned in its integrity, not a jot or tittle removed. It is to be written on Israel’s heart according to the terms of the new covenant (Jer. xxxi. 33). The Lord applies it to the thoughts and intents of the hearts, completes it by the repeal of what had been allowed hitherto for the hardness of them, and adds to it the manifestation of a love even to enemies, by which they are to show themselves the true children of their Father (17-48).

Three special characters follow, of a righteousness which is to be before God, not men : alms (which is mercy, *manward*) ; prayer (the evidence of dependence,

---

\*Heb. vi. 5 : the word ‘powers’ is one used commonly in the plural for ‘miracles ;’ and the “world to come” is the regular phrase for Messiah’s kingdom.

*God-ward*); and fasting, (mortification, *self-ward*) vi. 1-18. Then, treasures are to be laid up in heaven, the eye single, the heart without carefulness, in the knowledge of the Father's care (19-34); without censoriousness (vii. 1-5), as on the other hand without loose abandonment of spiritual things to those incapable of valuing them (6). Two things close this part: the assurance of the Father's help ever available (7-11), and the 'royal law,' summing up the law and prophets, as far as concerns conduct towards men (12).

The last part is a warning with regard to giving practical heed to the Speaker's words, though the road they led might be narrow and untrodden, and false prophets deceiving souls. The time of trial would come which would test every man's foundation, and he only that built upon His words would abide the storm (13-27).

### 3. THE REJECTION OF THE KING.—Ch. viii. xii.

(1.) The character of His kingdom being thus announced, the next two chapters give at full length the signs which shew the presence of the Deliverer and King. Here again at the outset, in two typical cases, is exhibited His rejection by His people Israel and His reception by the Gentiles.

The leper, one of Israel, but whose place was forfeited by his condition, is the significant representative of the former. The Lord heals him by *touch*, as one locally present for man's need, sending the healed man to the priest to certify the cure, and as a testimony to them. There is no result from this; but then we have a Gentile, the centurion, whose faith, going beyond any in Israel, accredits Him with power to heal, not merely present but *absent*, by His word. This is characteristically the faith of the

present dispensation, and the Lord announces there-upon the nations coming and sitting down in the kingdom with the heirs of promise, while the children of the kingdom should be cast out.

We now find Him healing at Peter's house,—fulfilling Israel's prophecy with a sympathy manifesting itself in power for all that came. Yet He Himself has not where to lay His head. None the less is His claim upon His disciples to follow Him absolutely.

And now He displays fully the extent of His authority: on the Sea of Galilee, over the powers of nature; the winds and the sea obey Him, but the disciples marvel, through unbelief. Next Satan's power is met with the same ease and foiled; man's terrible captor is compelled to give up his prey: alas, the people more alarmed at His presence than at the devil's, ask Him to depart, and He departs. Thirdly, He reaches down to the deepest need of all, the sin which subjected man to evil and the evil one; and He works a miracle to give them sensible proof that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins: but here it is in answer to the accusation, "This man blasphemeth." Thus the more He manifests Himself, and in blessing, the more decided is His rejection on the part of men. But it only compels Him as it were to greater grace: He calls the publican, and sits down in his house with publicans and sinners. He comes to call these, not as the law which required righteousness: the new wine of His grace is to be put in other than the old legal 'bottles.'

Again, most beautifully, a dispensational picture follows here. Israel is in fact dead, as is Jairus' daughter. For her too therefore, he has to go beyond the law, which could not give *life*; but then upon that principle faith is welcome freely to use for its need the power in Him; again the principle which brings in Gentiles, and that before (in fact) Israel is raised.

Having vindicated thus His title as Son of God



(for resurrection marks Him out as this, Rom. i. 4, with power for man), He can now appear as Son of David: for this title, as we have seen, is based upon the other. Yet as really rejected, the blind men are forbidden to spread His fame as such. The dumb man, finally, who speaks when the devil is cast out, seems a picture, once more, of what caused the nation's silence, where they should have hailed their King. But the Pharisees consummate their wickedness by imputing to Beelzebub His miracles of power.

(2.) The second subdivision begins with ix. 35. The Lord's pity for the scattered sheep makes Him send forth messengers throughout Israel. The testimony is distinctly to them, not to Samaria or the Gentiles, and "powers of the world to come" still attest the coming kingdom. It is a testimony which, while in abeyance during the present dispersion of Israel, will be taken up again after the Church is removed to heaven, and not completed until the Son of man be come again (x. 23). This final testimony will be above all in the face of trials and persecutions of the severest kind; but the Lord is with His messengers, to reward or punish those who in them receive or reject Himself:—a principle applied to the Gentiles in ch. xxv. 31-49.

(3.) Ch. xi. is the direct witness of His own grace, in spite of opposition and rejection. Even the Baptist seems to waver, while the people in general have rejected both John's testimony, coming in the way of righteousness, and the Lord's in grace. Wisdom's children have been only publicans and sinners; and the cities, privileged to behold His mighty works, have only used the opportunity to increase their judgment beyond that of Canaan or of Sodom.

Yet His heart rests. It is good that from the wise and prudent should be hidden what the Father reveals to babes. And all things are delivered into His hands, who is Son of the Father, and in turn reveals the Father. His hearts rests, and He gives rest. In

obedience to Him and learning of Him who is meek and lowly of heart, is true rest found. His yoke is easy and His burden light.

(4.) In the 12th chapter that generation's guilt is summed up, and their doom pronounced. The Lord shews them that the Sabbath, the sign of God's covenant existing with them as His people, is gone for those, who had broken the covenant, and lost the place of relationship with God. David's rejection made common the most holy things; and then again in the temple the sabbath was not observed. The Son of man, greater than David or the temple, was Lord of the sabbath day. But also God used the break-up of the legal covenant to shew and require mercy.

The convicted Pharisees seek to destroy him. Again the blind and dumb, made so by Satan's tenancy, bears witness to the Son of David, and again the Pharisees utter their awful blasphemy. The Lord exposes their folly and warns them of the danger of blaspheming the Holy Ghost. The bad fruit showed the whole tree bad, even the idle words for which men would give account in the day of judgment.

Finally, when they seek a sign, He tells them the sign of Jonah alone should be their sign. Jonah, after three days and nights in the whale's belly, had appeared at Nineveh with the word of judgment. The Son of man, rejected and three days in the grave, would in His day be a similar sign of judgment to His rejectors (comp. ch. xxiv. 30). The external reformation which had taken place on their return from Babylon, when the unclean spirit (of idolatry) had left his house, would not avail; the house was empty still, and he would return with seven other spirits worse than himself, and take possession (comp. ch. xxiv. 15, and 2 Thess. ii. 4).

He closes with the solemn breaking of all fleshly ties. It was he who should do the will of His Father in heaven, whom alone He could now recognize as in

relation to Himself. This is a principle of Christianity, and prepares the way for that view of the *mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven,—the kingdom during the rejection and absence of the King, which the next section of the book discloses to us.

---

The presenting the blood is one thing, the appropriation of it by the sinner is another. The moment I can say to Him who died, "Thou hast washed me in thy blood," I have appropriated it by faith; but if I say, "I want to be the servant of Christ, as well as being washed in His blood," I shall give the proof of being set apart by the blood to live only unto Him.

No human mind could say, "The Lord Jesus is in heaven and I am in Him." Men of the world would laugh at you for saying it. Yet it is a fact, and the believer can say it is so, because it is revealed in the Word, and he has tasted it in his own soul.

There is a routine of things and duties connected with earth, which sometimes catches hold of us and draws us down; even necessary care for relations may go to occupy the mind, so as to hinder the outflow of a heavenly walk.

If my heart knows Christ, Christ is the answer to everything. I begin and go on with Christ, matchless in His beauty; and He goes on with me. I desire to be His, and nothing but His.

Is the peace of God in the soul disturbed by things down here? No, never! If waters break in stormy currents against a rock, the rock is unmoved; it is only the waters that are disturbed.

Never take a penknife, because you think statements in the Word are too large, to cut them down to your own tiny measure.

The peace of one who is hid in the cleft of the Rock nothing can disturb.

## THE FRUITLESS BRANCH AND ABIDING IN CHRIST.

---

The fifteenth chapter of John may be called the chief chapter of exhortation in that gospel. It speaks of fruit-bearing, and of the responsibility of the disciple of Christ, and hence calls for fruit from every one who professes to be such. Israel was the vine of old, but Christ is the true vine, the source of all fruit-bearing. Israel was the people to whom God looked for fruit of old ; now He looks for it, from those who confess the name of His Son. Any man who says he abides in Him, his responsibility is according to his profession, he ought to walk even as He walked.

This responsibility according to our profession is set forth in many places in scripture, "Ye are the salt of the earth," even though the salt lose its savor and be worse than nothing. "Ye are the light of the world," and again, "a city that is set on an hill can not be hid." Striking figures, the two latter especially, of the marked effect of the testimony of all who are called God's people. "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you," had to be written of some false to this responsibility. And so to the Corinthians "ye are the Epistle of Christ, known and read of all men." These passages speak of testimony before men, and John xv. of fruitfulness to God ; but in all, there is recognized the same wide-spread responsibility, attaching to all who are called God's people in the world, calling for a walk according to God's word, and sometimes announcing rejection by God and judgment from Him for failure.

Men look for fruit for their labor from the whole

## 150 THE FRUITLESS BRANCH AND ABIDING IN CHRIST.

of the field or garden cultivated, not from a part only, and so God's claim is upon all who have enjoyed the gospel, and especially upon those confessing His name. All professing then to follow Christ, are as branches in the vine.

This passage therefore is to be classed with the many solemn passages of this character in the New Testament, which shew the existence of two classes among the professed people of God, the fruitful and the fruitless, those whose walk answers to their profession, and those who at the end are found wanting. Of such a kind is the parable of the Sower, in Matt. xiii. where one class of hearers only bears fruit, and these are the ones who receive the seed into good ground, that is, into an understanding heart. *All* such bear fruit, and none besides; so also in the parable of the pounds, and in that of the talents; the one who meets judgment at the end, is the one who has made no use of his pound, or his talent; has not even put his Lord's money into the Bank, that his Lord might receive his own with usury. And so very notably, in the sixth of Hebrews, the one who falls away from all the privileges of the gospel, is compared to the ground that bears thorns and briers, after all the labor that can be bestowed on it, and which "is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned;" like the withered branches of the fifteenth of John, which men gather, and cast into the fire, and they are burned. It is important too to notice that those passages do not set forth the case of one bearing some fruit at first, and afterwards becoming fruitless, which is what we are apt to think, especially as to the sixth of Hebrews, and the fifteenth of John, but of bearing no fruit, absolutely none from first to last, in His sight who can see all things. Thus in the passage before us, the branch that is taken away, "beareth not fruit." In such a case there is no life, no life from God. One verse in James makes this plain, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Of course in such

## .THE FRUITLESS BRANCH AND ABIDING IN CHRIST. 151

a chapter there is not that which gives peace to the anxious. It is rather as the law of Mount Sinai to such and gives the knowledge of sin. But those who have peace with God, are stirred to watchfulness and perseverance in the life of faith.

As to the word, "every branch *in me* that beareth not fruit," it is not *in Christ*, in the sense of Rom. viii, or Ephes. ii, by the Holy Spirit. That subject is not introduced in this chapter. We must read the passage in its connection. The Lord was using the figure of a vine and its branches, a figure of things going on on earth, of outward profession of discipleship. All professing to follow Christ are in the relationship of those addressed in this chapter, they are branches in the vine. But the one who abides not in Christ, in whom there is not living reality, real dependence on Christ, is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather these, and cast them into the fire and they are burned, as the tree that *bears not* fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire, which we know is condemnation and judgment.

But there is such a thing as reality, as abiding in Christ. Abide in Me, and I in you. And mark the difference between what is said of the world and what is true of the follower of Christ. The whole world *lieth* in the wicked one. The believer *abides* in Christ. In the believer there is life, there is the energy of God through faith, in the midst of deadness all around. It is remarkable that after the exhortation "abide in me," which is for us to do, there is added that which is linked with the exhortation, "and I in you," which is not of our doing. It follows as a sure consequence nevertheless. When we abide in Him His life is active in us, He Himself is in us, in sensible communion, somewhat as in the 3rd of Revelation, "if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me." We can not bring Christ into our hearts, but we can abide in Him, and with that is found, "and

## 152 THE FRUITLESS BRANCH AND ABIDING IN CHRIST.

I in you," two things that go together. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." How thorough and constant a dependence, how intimate a communion, is our appointed portion! We can do all things through Him, without Him we can do nothing. This is our joy, though so easy to forget, so often forgotten; we need discipline to learn dependence. If we get through the day, without dependence there is not fruit bearing. We walk by faith, and not by sight.

Under law there was the seeking to bear fruit, as in the flesh, as of ourselves. Now it is abiding in another, in Christ; and therefore altogether a living in the exercise of faith. It is what Paul was carrying out when he said, "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Self occupation is not faith, from the very fact that I am thinking of myself. Self is the object, though it be only a trouble to me, and so whether I feel myself to be in bondage, or on the other hand, if I am deceived into self complacency, I am not in either case, in those things walking by faith, but rather by faith, by feelings. By faith I have Christ for my object, for my dependence; not my feelings good or bad. And now the blessings He gives, we may rest in, and lose dependence and communion, and that exercise of conscience which flows from, or goes only with, a real dependence on Christ throughout the day. "The God of hope fills us with all joy and peace IN BELIEVING" in the exercise of faith. To walk by sight is the constant temptation—to walk by faith, is overcoming by the power of God.

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Here it is not "and I in you," but "and my words abide in you," "ye shall ask what ye will &c." That is, there is obedience and intelligence in the mind of Christ, through His words abiding in the

## THE FRUITLESS BRANCH AND ABIDING IN CHRIST. 153

heart, and so prevailing in prayer. If His words are abiding in us, our asking what we will will be asking what He wills, and if we ask anything according to His will, we know that He hears us. It is possible then to know the mind and will of God, and to pray the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, which availeth much. But for this we must be followers of Christ, who pleased not Himself. The heart's confidence must be in God, and His word for all things. There was but One who could say, 'I know that thou hearest me always,' but we are to remember the example of Elias, who was a man subject to like passions with ourselves. Effectual prayer goes with an uncondemning heart and confidence towards God.

"Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." He speaks of *His* Father, the One He had made known to them, and whose will He came to do. The disciples were the fruit of His work, and in bearing much fruit by the grace of Christ, the Father was glorified. And now that Christ is absent, the results of His Cross, are seen in the world in His followers to the glory of the Father. Those who thus bear fruit are His disciples in reality. And the word, herein is my Father glorified, appeals to the heart, and may we not say it, brings the heart into divine fellowship—into fellowship with the work of the Father and the Son. Not that our place of fellowship, our relationship as sons, is here spoken of. They are disciples and servants, but yet called friends, spoken to as friends. It is from such a standpoint, that we can see the wonderful grace of the Lord, that He should so speak to us, and invite and count upon our heart's interest in His work to the Father's glory, as bearing fruit in us, and all this in close connection with the end of ch. xiii., "the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." We may trust such a Lord. It is all grace. The poor erring sheep were soon to forsake Him and flee, but the Lord in and of His own love communicates to them, and establishes and builds



## 154 THE FRUITLESS BRANCH AND ABIDING IN CHRIST.

them up in the truth. He knows their hearts but He is the shepherd of the sheep, and "having loved His own He loved them to the end."

And then He tells them of His love, bringing them into the circle of Divine affection. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you," a wonderful comparison for our hearts to dwell upon, "continue ye in my love." As we are to abide in Him, so we are to abide in His love. the soul's repose in life's journey. In keeping His commandments we abide in His love. We do those things that please Him, and in this path of obedience alone, have we the joy of His love in the heart, as Jesus Himself kept His Father's commandments and abode in His love, which shews the wonderful and blessed reality of His pathway of dependence and obedience, though He were a Son. As we read in this same gospel, when wearied at Sychar's well, it was His meat to do the Father's will. So He speaks these words to us in the fifteenth chap., that His joy may remain in us, and that our joy might be full. Is not communion of the love of Christ and obedience out of a full heart full joy, the joy of Christ in us, His words, His joy, His peace, His path is our portion, and His glory.

E. S. L.

---

Peace may flow as a river—but the moment we are washed in the blood, God takes us up to train us for Himself. It does not interfere with our blamelessness before Him as washed ones; there is not a thought in His mind of blame, but because I am so connected with Christ, He sees all the little ways in me that are unlike Christ.

If you do not understand what God's present claims over you are, you may depend upon it that as days of testing come on, you will not be able to keep your footing.

G. V. W.

“PLANTED BY THE WATERS.”

---

PSALM I.

---

The book opens with the blessedness or happiness of the godly man in contrast with the wicked. In a less degree it is the picture of all those who tread in His footsteps, yet primarily it is the Lord Jesus, for He only could truly claim this character. Redemption setting us on new ground, in our measure we participate in what is there, and the Psalm itself furnishes important instruction as to the path of peace the godly are called to walk in through our evil world. Sanctification is separation, and therefore the character of the godly man is first put in the way of contrast to, and abstinence from, that which characterized the wicked (or lawless). He is viewed as walking, standing, sitting. The counsel of the ungodly does not influence his path, but he goes on in wisdom's ways, which are ways of pleasantness, and *all* her paths peace. But what fills men's minds who are away from God, he does not share in, the plans and schemes of the world in its abandonment of God for him have no attractions, but the reverse. Therefore its course and way he is not found standing in.

Is there not here a distinction between ungodly and sinners thus?—the ungodliness points to the state rather of their minds as at enmity with Him, and therefore their counsels He is apart from, they do not influence him. Sinners seem rather to point out the fruit of these counsels in actual things done, and the godly man is not found standing as a loiterer in these

ways. The seat of the scorner he sits not in. Here he is viewed more at rest, but not sharing in that levity of mind and stubbornness of will which rejects God's testimony. But sanctification is by truth: God has spoken, and amidst the confusion the human will, perverse and restless, has introduced, a path has thus been marked out for man. Even the blessed Lord as to this, though in Him holiness was inherent, yet took God's revealed will as His guide. “Thy law have I hid in my heart.” And in answer to Satan He first quotes: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” “I seek not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.” How blessed to see that no other than the Word and Will of God, which governed the heart and ways of the obedient One, is left for us to live and walk by. God's Word implanted in the heart by the Spirit of God, and which thus believed carries with it both conviction of our sins and peace for our consciences, becomes dear to us, because of the healing it has wrought: “He sent forth His Word and healed them;” and this Word, in the distrust of ourselves and all save the God from whom it comes, which it has wrought within, becomes that in which we take pleasure. (See. Ps. cxix). So here, “but his delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in His law doth He meditate day and night.” There may be a stage in Christian progress in which this is little seen, such as Rom. vii; the fruits of love to that word are not found manifest there, because the soul is not in liberty, but under bondage, and therefore crippled in its attempts at holiness. But yet true to its character as born of God, the law of God is delighted in in the inner man, though outward conformity to it is not yet found. God has to teach that, taken as law, with the claims of God upon responsible man enforced by a penalty, it is fruitless to deliver and can only condemn, whilst the one born of God consents fully to its requirements which he is unable to meet.

There must be a deliverer, not alone from the guilt of sin, and its consequences, but from that which is the strength of sin—of that which it forbade. This only can be through taking it out of the region where law applies, and that is the condition known as "in the flesh." Death then—death with Christ, is the only way of escape, and on resurrection ground in the full unclouded favour of God, there we can walk in happy liberty with Him who has thus brought us to Himself, "I through the law am dead to the law, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. Precious words of rejoicing from a delivered captive, who now loves his deliverer with a deep and strong attachment. By the Word, through the Spirit, all this is ministered to us, and we love that by which God has met our need.

Unwatchfulness of heart, however, and the getting under (in consequence) the power of other things, may take away our appetite for the "sincere milk of the Word," and then we sink down as unsustained in heart, beneath the pressure of the world. Blessed to know that still the Faithful One keeps us, or soon we should give up all and become like the world which knows not God. The spirit of this age with its hurry and drive, too often begets in Christians a want of meditation upon the truths they read or hear, and it becomes like an undigested meal which rather oppresses and burdens than relieves and satisfies. It is good to cultivate a habit of meditation in secret with the Lord, who loves to have us sit at His blessed feet in the enjoyment of that privileged and "good part, which shall not be taken away." For this we must learn how to put aside things often which would claim our consideration and though excuses may be made, more often it is lack of heart rather than of opportunity that stands in the way.

“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” is His Word, however, and obedience to it will not fail to secure blessing, and the manifestation of His loving care as to all that concerns us in our need as creatures ; we shall learn that it concerns Him too

A tree planted by rivers (or rivulets, a stream divided into canals and brooklets for irrigating) of water, and receiving constant nourishment therefrom, is the figure used to convey the thought of the flourishing condition of the one who thus draws strength and vigour from the precious Word of God. Fruitful in his season, and his leaf unfading in the summer's heat, he abides a witness to the sustaining power of God, who finds delight in that which is the product of His own rich and sanctifying grace. We see this illustrated in Mary first found sitting at the feet of Jesus hearing His Word, and then at Lazarus' death not acting in the haste of Martha, who hastens off unnoticed to meet the Lord, when she betrays her incapacity to take in His words, and her ignorance of His person. “I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask (*aiteo*, beg) of God He will give it thee,” (*erotao* is always used of Christ's prayers to the Father). Her words too, though similar to Mary's, yet lay more emphasis upon “*my* brother” and are more reproachful than hers. But Mary, when summoned by her sister, obeys what she thinks the Lord's call, and going forth, all the Jews go with her, and at His feet she casts herself in deep reverence, as one who better knows who He is. Again in chapter xii, she is found at His feet doing the suited thing and expressing both her devotedness and her apprehension of the danger He was in from His enemies. She anoints Him for His burial, and her most precious things are consecrated to Him. All this was the fruit of having sat at His feet at first. Her activities were the fruit of this, and therefore put forth in intelligence of His mind.

The contrast of all this in the ungodly is given

in verses 4, 5. Driven before the wind as chaff, is the picture of the instability of the one, who, rejecting God and His counsel, has nothing of truth to stay himself upon. Forsaking one error for another, he is a prey to the ever changing views of men, through whom Satan works to blind the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the knowledge of the glory of God should shine unto them. Therefore, we have even Christians warned not to be “carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be *established* with grace,” Heb. xiii, 9. See also Ephes iv, 14. The ungodly, therefore, shall not stand (in the sense of enduring so as to be able to abide it) in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. There will be a final and eternal separation, even as already it exists in spirit. Contrary tastes cannot be the ground of communion, and sin and righteousness are opposite extremes. This is the ground of the eternity of punishment, the unalterably unrepentant condition of the wicked, to overlook which is an impossibility with God as it is impossible for Him to deny Himself. “So I swear in My wrath they shall not *enter into My rest*, for they have not *known My ways*,” Ps. xcv. 11; Heb. iv, 11.

The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous. Blessed comfort for the upright in heart, whose walk is in the light, but unknown to the world; his principles of action and motive, the will and glory of God, he is often misunderstood and misrepresented, yet “I know thy works” will carry comfort to his heart, whilst the way of the ungodly shall perish. What fruit, save sorrow and pain, can come of the ways of sin?

R. T. G.

## OUR HOPE, AND ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES.

---

I must not assume, dear reader, Christian though you may be, that you have the Christian hope. Doubtless every one who is not infidel accepts as a fact that the Lord is coming again, but that is a very different thing from having it as a really lively and active expectation in the heart. For most of God's people even yet, it is to be feared, that that coming is too far away to be anything else than dim and in-operative. The practical thing—I cannot call it hope with them—is death, which is actually looked at indeed as the coming of the Lord, or at least, if it be not that, something just as good as that.

Proposing then, if the Lord will, to look, in a series of papers, at what for us is contained in or dates from His coming, and (in our next) to quicken our anticipations by the consideration of its probable nearness, I feel that I must first of all briefly review the Scriptural evidences for the hope itself.

(1) That death is the Lord's coming I need say little about. It is but the assertion of those who think themselves wise enough to substitute their own terms for those of Scripture, not one passage of which can be produced even seemingly to justify it. "If I will that he tarry till I come"—the Lord's words as to the apostle John,—would be rendered simple folly by reading them, "if I will that he tarry till he *die*"; and the report that went abroad among them that heard it, "that that disciple should *not* die," unwarranted as it might be, still shows that with them Christ's coming was the very opposite of dying. So the common quotation, "watch, for ye know not

## OUR HOPE, AND ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES. 161

what hour your Lord doth come" is part of a long prophecy, which if any one believed to be a prediction of believers dying, it would be really vain to reason with him.

Death is departing to be with Christ, not His coming to us at all; and such texts as "We shall not all sleep," and "we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord" shew the very opposite anticipations to those in the minds of masses now.

(2) A providential coming, whether to destroy Jerusalem or for whatever else, is not at all more satisfactory as an interpretation. In Luke xxi. 20-27, the destruction of Jerusalem is *before* the coming of the Lord, not at it, and in Matt. xxiv. 15-31, there is no destruction of the city at all, and it is *after* the tribulation the Lord comes.

Nor could that be providential judgment in which the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven, with all His angels, in power and great glory, sends His angels to gather His elect from the four winds, receives the wise virgins, rejects the foolish, and separates the sheep from the goats among the nations.

(3) A coming by the Spirit will not fulfil these indications either, whether that be placed (as it is variously) at Pentecost, or as yet future, and to introduce the millennium. As to the last moreover, a future spiritual coming is additionally unscriptural. Spiritually, He is here, and not to come.

(4) There remains the literal unforced rendering of the words, the only thing that is really worthy of Him who does not use ambiguous speech with those to whom as to His children He utters what is in His heart. Other interpretations are but the fantasies of wise and learned men, which the simple have learned from them, no doubt, but which they could never have originated.

(6) This coming is pre-millennial, and *in order to* the blessing of the earth, although judgment upon those who are destroying it must clear the way for



## 162 OUR HOPE, AND ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES.

blessing. This is proved abundantly by many passages, too many even to enumerate: it is part of the web and woof of Scripture. I can specify but a few.

The apostle tells us that "the times of refreshing shall come from the *presence* of the Lord," and as to the way of it, that "He shall send Jesus Christ, whom the heavens must receive *until* the times of the restitution of all things,"—the times of *restoring*, not after they have *been* restored (Acts iii. 19-21.)

It is Israel's conversion that is to be life from the dead to the nations of the world (Rom. xi. 15;) but Israel is nationally converted only when they look upon Him whom they have pierced (Zech. xii. 10, xiii. 1); and that is, when "He cometh with the clouds, and *every* eye shall see Him" (Rev i. 7\*).

Zech. xiv. gives us the coming of the Lord in the very midst of Israel's final trouble, His feet standing on the Mount of Olives, and all His saints coming with Him; and in that day the Lord is King over all the earth; there is then to be one Lord and His name one.

Rev. xix. gives us first of all the marriage of the Lamb in heaven, and upon His wife the fine linen which is interpreted to be 'the righteousness of saints.' Then He comes *from* heaven with His armies, upon which the same fine linen covering the Bride is seen. Then there is the judgment of His human, and angelic (xx. 1-3) enemies; and then the saints reign with Christ a thousand years before the resurrection of the rest of the dead, and *their* judgment (xx). But this connects with a line of truth which must be separately noticed.

(7) The resurrection of the saints is always connected with the coming of the Lord, and separated not only in character but in time from that of the wicked. The text just quoted, people object to as figurative. There is a vision, no doubt, (what the

---

\* "All kindreds of the earth" here is literally "all the tribes of the land," whose mourning is given in Zech. xii.

## OUR HOPE, AND ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES. 163

apostle 'saw,') but there is also the *interpretation* of the vision: "this is the first resurrection" is the interpretation of the vision, *and not figure at all*, as also what follows in the 6th verse.\*

But the doctrine of the first resurrection is not based upon this text alone. It is everywhere distinguished in the New Testament as "the resurrection *from* the dead" not from *death* merely); a special, selective one. Thus in the Lord's answer to the Sadducees, "those that shall be *accounted worthy* to obtain that world and the resurrection *from* the dead . . . are equal unto the angels; and *are the children of God, being* the children of the resurrection" (see xx. 35, 36.)

Again, in a passage which speaks of the very 'order' of the resurrection, it is said, "Every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterwards *they that are Christ's*, at His coming" (1 Cor. xv. 23.) What more misleading, if all were to rise at once?

(8) Instead of the Church being destined to convert the world, the coming of the Lord is to the judgement of Christendom, which by the removal of the wheat becomes simply a tare-field, as the parable I refer to shows, and *Israel*, not the Church, converted as we have already seen, becomes that which "blossoms and buds and fills the face of the earth with fruit" (Isa. xxvii. 6). That it is Israel literally to which these, and the Old Testament promises generally, belong, the Apostle Paul states in the plainest terms. (Rom. ix. 3, 4).

This hurried and imperfect statement should suffice to show that the coming of the Lord is not an unpractical doctrine at least, but connects itself with a number of important truths. To call any Scriptural

---

\* The objection that it is a resurrection of 'souls,' is forgetfulness merely of a very common Scripture phraseology, in which the soul stands for the person himself (see Gen. xii. 13, &c. and the whole question treated in "Facts and Theories as to a Future State," part 1, ch. 7.)

The idea that only *martyrs* are spoken of is from want of distinguishing between two separate companies, which are really mentioned, the persons sitting on the thrones as first seen (and who are not raised first then), and the 'souls of those beheaded,' &c. The detail I cannot go into here.

## 164 OUR HOPE, AND ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES.

truth indeed unpractical is to dishonour the love that has made it known to us, and to ignore the fact that truth links itself with truth, as error with error. And how little unpractical can that truth be which is to characterize our attitude as Christians: "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, ye may open to him immediately" (Lu. xii. 35, 36). How the Lord Himself appreciates such a spirit of watchfulness, the words that follow in this chapter should sufficiently declare.

But let us trace a few of the practical consequences which flow from the real reception of this truth; for we are bound to admit that it may be as inoperative as any other whatever may be, if the mind alone, and not the heart, be concerned with it. If the heart be in it, it is not too much to say that its influence will be exerted over the whole walk and ways.

In the first place, then, as to the gospel itself, the reception of the true doctrine of the Lord's coming clears it from all suspicion of legality with which the common view almost of necessity imbues it. For, His coming being put off to the end of the world, the resurrection and the judgment of saint and sinner are necessarily thrown together. All stand at the same time before the Judge to be "judged according to their works," and, by a sentence given upon this principle, are received to everlasting blessedness or depart to everlasting fire. In this case who but must hesitate to account his salvation a settled thing before the judgment of the great day settles it? And if that be still according to works, what good of talking about our present justification or salvation being "not of works?" "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord," is the psalmist's cry: "for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified!" But how can we ever plead, "enter not into judgment," when we know, in fact, He *will* enter into judgment, and that

## OUR HOPE, AND ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES. 165

with His servants; and then, what? if the Psalmist's words are true.

Now I do not pretend here to take up the texts out of the confusion of which this doctrine has been manufactured; they will come before us in due course, if this series of papers go on as contemplated. But it is plain that the doctrine of a pre-millennial coming, and of the resurrection of the saints a thousand years before the wicked, separates widely and at once between these two, and takes the saints out of all possibility of coming into the judgment according to their works, which will be the portion of the latter. Nay, the character of the resurrection and its connected events clearly separate them, as the saints are "*raised in glory*," and caught up to meet the Lord in the air, before He even appears to the world at all: for "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall *we* also appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4.) Certain it is then, however and whenever we shall (as all shall) "give account of ourselves to God," no question can be raised as to the title to glory of a saint who is declared a child of God by being a child of the resurrection, and *already glorified*!

But again, as to our character here, what more suited to keep our hearts out of the world than the assurance that He may come at any moment actually to take us out of it and introduce us into all the joys and glories of the Father's house? People ask, I know, does not the knowledge of an ever impending death act in the same way and with equal power? I ask them in turn, can they really believe it does? and do facts show that it does? The very enthusiasm that they often deprecate as connected with the expectation of the Lord's coming, do they often have to complain of such enthusiasm as connected with death? Even to him who is able to say with the apostle, that 'death is gain,' and 'to depart and be with Christ is far better,' (and doubtless every Christian may and should be able to say that), death is not, and cannot be, what the com-

## 166 OUR HOPE, AND ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES.

ing of the Lord is. Death is the dropping of the body, not its redemption. It is personal gain, which may be almost balanced to one's mind (as in the apostle's case) by others' loss. The coming of the Lord is pure gain, pure joy, and no loss whatever. It is the confirmation for ever of every spiritual tie. It is the blessing of all believers from the beginning of time. It is the time for which the Lord Himself is waiting, as the gathering of His own purchased people,—the fruit of the travail of His soul. It is the time too when He shall take His great power, and bring to an end the misrule and disorder under which the earth so long has groaned; the time for which creation looks as for its enfranchisement.

The assertion that death is as powerful a lever as the Lord's coming for the soul, comes only in fine from those who have never known what the latter is; and I think I may safely add, *think it scarcely worth the trouble to enquire*. The Lord Himself has settled for him who will listen to His word, what couples itself with the thought that He delays: "if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth His coming, and shall *begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken*." And has not this effect followed in the Church's history? who that knows anything about it will say that it has not?

A third practical consequence connects itself with this. If the world, according to the common thought, is to be gradually leavened with the gospel, of necessity its character will be changed in that proportion. The numerous Scriptures which speak of the "course of this world" being "according to the prince of the power of the air,"—of "*all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*,"—of the world treating the disciples as it treated the Master, and kindred things to these, cease to apply in the present day, as they did of old. Conformity to the world becomes proportionately more in place, and in a *Christian* world, perchance even a duty. And

## OUR HOPE, AND ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES. 167

when, to supplement and confirm all this, the promises of earthly blessing to an *earthly* people, Israel, are taken as applying *literally* to a people who belong to heaven,—the climax of carnal ease and self-indulgence is simply and surely reached.

How different all becomes when we are made to see the real future of the professing Church, and that He who is at the very door judges this alliance with the world only as departure from and lukewarmness to Himself! If Christendom is to be *judged*, and not approved, how earnestly shall I take His word to test the whole state and condition of things around! how little being with the multitude of even His professed followers will assure my heart as to my path being with Him!

Be assured, beloved reader, the truth of the Lord's coming is one of the greatest practical importance to the Christian. To make light of it is to make light of Christ's own reiterated and emphatic testimony to His people, and to walk by the light of our own wisdom, gone astray from Him. How emphatically, just at the present time, He is calling upon us to awake to the reality and nearness of His approach, we shall, if He permit, consider in our next.

---

The opposition that comes from Satan as a roaring lion is very different from his serpent character of seductiveness. There is a great difference between the action of that poor old woman who took a green faggot that she might add to the sufferings of a martyr, and that of trying to turn aside the spirit of a martyr with blandishments and seductions.

Oh, that God would act as in the day of Pentecost and put us where we so little stand, as reflectors of that Son of His love, each one presenting the reflection of that Christ at his right hand. Every heart will own that we are not like Pentecost believers.

G. V. W.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

(7) Is the day of the Lord (2 Pet. iii. 10, 12,) the day when He shall come *with* His saints, to commence His millennial reign; and is the earth to be burned up *then*, before the millennium? That is the day we are to be "looking for and hasting unto;" and yet it is the time when "the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved."

*Ans.* The dissolution of the earth is not before the millennium but after, as Rev. xx. clearly shows. The difficulty connected with the passage in Peter, only results from looking at the day of the Lord, as if it were an ordinary day, which we are warned against in the same chapter. The day of the Lord is in opposition to 'man's day' (I Cor. iv. 3, marg.) It begins when, His 'patience' being over, He rises up to bring the time of his misrule to an end; and while in one sense it never closes, in another it may be perhaps said to do so, when the first heaven and earth have passed away and in the new creation which succeeds, the rod of iron is no more needed.

The millennial state is called by the Lord the 'regeneration' (Matt. xix. 28) and there is a remarkable analogy between the history of the earth and of the individual when looked at in this way. A saved man's history has these successive stages: 1. the state of nature, sin reigning; 2. the state of regeneration, sin still existing, but not reigning; 3. *after the death and resurrection of the body*, (or the 'change' of it, if alive when the Lord comes) the perfect state, sin destroyed altogether. These three stages answer quite to 1. the groaning state of creation in the bondage of corruption; 2. the millennial state, righteousness reigning, but still sin existing; and 3. after the *dissolution* Peter speaks of the new heavens and earth wherein dwells righteousness.

## THE PRUNING OF THE VINE.

---

With reference to John xv., two things strike me forcibly : in the first place, what its pruning or "purging" is ; in the second, how this is effected.

Now as to the first, it is well known that a vine is a thing absolutely useless save for fruit. The prophet asks, or rather the Lord by him : "Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work ? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon ? . . . Behold, when it was whole, it was fit for no work" (Ezek. xv. 3-5). This solemnly is the necessity of fruit emphasized in the Lord's vine-branches : if they do not furnish that, men can do nothing with them but "cast them into the fire and they are burned."

But fruitless branches are very plentiful indeed upon a vine, and pruning is absolutely needed in order to bear proper fruit. Its unrestrained luxuriance will develop into mere foliage, not only useless in itself but which *carries off* the sap from whatever fruit there is. And not only are there branches absolutely fruitless, but the fruitful ones show the same tendency to go off in mere branch and leaf, and have to be closely trimmed. No tree requires such constant and severe pruning as the vine.

How significant is this for us ! What a needful tale it tells of what is required of us, that we may repay the Lord's care with such fruit as He seeks. "Meditate upon these things ; *give thyself wholly to them*, that thy profiting may appear to all," says the apostle to Timothy. Was he not thinking of him there as one of God's vine-branches ? And is not that the same lesson ? the lesson of concentration of all our faculties and energies in one pursuit, that the sap (as it were) be not drawn off and spent upon that which is not only itself useless, but positively hurtful, if it be not fruitful.



The mere judgment of a thing as right or wrong *in itself* does not decide the question then as to what *to us* is that. What harm is there in branches and green leaves? Yet as on the one hand every fruitless professor is not merely of no use but a sad injury to the professing Church, so on the other, no pursuit we engage in can possibly be simply negative as to Christ. As with the *man*, so with the *thing*: what is not for Him is against Him.

What deep, what wondrous blessing would be ours, if, with a real sense of the absolute sufficiency of Christ to us, we would cut off with a rigorous and unsparing hand all that did not help us to know more His excellency, for which all else will one day be seen to be dung and loss, whether or no we count it now to be so.

Pruning or purging is by the Word. "Now ye are clean" (or purged) "through the word that I have spoken to you." This then is the dressing of the Divine Husbandman. It is not, as some might suppose, the discipline of suffering. God may, and does use this, no doubt, for the purpose of breaking down our wills, that patience may have her perfect work. No doubt that tribulation (in the Divine hand and love to us) works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. But that is not what we have here; it is the judgment by the word of all that in which the soul would waste its energies. And the Word alone it is that can really do this, that can expose the true character of things by revealing that which is the standard of measurement and the true test of everything. It is obvious that no suffering can do this. When our wills rise up against God's, it may break them down; but it is the holy word alone that teaches holiness: affliction without this could teach but weariness.

And the Word itself can teach effectually, not merely negatively by characterizing things as evil; but by occupying and filling us with what is positive.

ly good. It is thus a fair test of where the soul is, how far the word itself is engaging our attention: for what else have we to put us in connection with "things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into man's heart to conceive?" "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit," and therefore in His word alone.

What shall we say then of the spiritual indolence, which satisfies itself with the very scantiest knowledge of the treasures Divine grace has offered to us? which must have always the babes' milk, and never goes on to the solid food of mature age? What about the many with whom the mere fact of salvation seems to be enough, and who find things beyond 'too deep' for the blessed Spirit who dwells in them to put them in possession of: that Spirit who (it is expressly urged upon us) "searcheth the 'deep' things of God?" What, alas, must we think, but that the energy they lack in this direction is being in fact drawn off in others? that we should find them busy enough in worldly matters? branches, with a rich luxuriance of barren shoots and leaves? and using it may be the gospel of their salvation rather as an opiate to soothe their over-excited brains, than as a spiritual tonic to brace up their energies to lay hold of their own portion,—to go over into the good land of their inheritance, of which the Lord hath said, "Every place that the sole of your feet shall tread on shall be your own?"

This purging or pruning then, what a light it throws upon the central exhortation of this chapter in John,—to "abide in" Christ. The lopping off of other things is just that we may "abide in Him." Abiding in Him is when our minds, our affections, energies, refuse to wander; when He suffices us; when we find our sap, our nourishment, our fruit in Him.

SKETCH OF MORAL ORDER AND CONNEC-  
TION BETWEEN THE EARLY BOOKS  
OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

—o—

GENESIS.

Creation, failure, election, principles of action,  
(constitutional sanctification.)

—o—

EXODUS.

Redemption into settled relationship.

—o—

LEVITICUS.

Worship, communion, and practical sanctification.

—o—

NUMBERS.

Responsibility tested and breaking down.

—o—

DEUTERONOMY.

Law supplemented by grace, to carry the heir  
into his inheritance.

—o—

JOSHUA.

The heir put into possession by God.

—o—

JUDGES.

And fails in every respect.

—o—

RUTH.

So sovereign grace alone will do.

—o—

GENESIS.

Creation very good (i. 31) but the creature fails,  
whether innocent (iii. 6.) or with a conscience (iv. 8.)  
also after the warning of executed judgment (the  
flood) as much as before, both individually (Noah)

SKETCH OF MORAL ORDER AND CONNECTION, &c. 173

and collectively (Babel). God then calls out His elect from the mass (constitutional sanctification), Abram and seed, and unfolds the principles of His government and ways, in their experiences going on to millennial blessing (ch. 49) though the seed sinks back into the world, (Egypt.)

EXODUS.

The elect delivered (passover) from the judgment of the world and then (Red Sea) from its bondage, are established in relationship with God, (law); known and accepted.

Then God can, and will, dwell with them. Notwithstanding they corrupt themselves (ch. 32,) God carries out His own purpose and builds His dwelling.

LEVITICUS.

At that dwelling, the sweet savour of Christ rising out from judgment (fire) to God, is expressed in sacrifices at the hands of priests, and the nation is maintained in fellowship with God, (chs. 3, 7, 17.)

Failure to heed a divine distinction, brings out distinctions running through all creation (chs. 11-15.) But the *cloud* of incense (xvi. 13), *i. e.*, Christ's essential excellencies, elicited by judgment, gives a glorified God ground, not only to override failure, but also to establish universal liberty (chs. 25), to be enjoyed in absolute devotedness, (ch. 27.) N. B. The observance of God's distinctions is practical sanctification.

NUMBERS

Responsibility is assigned in detail and accepted throughout the camp, any total devotedness (vi. 1-21) calling out from God blessing in the whole value of His own name (vi. 22-27). Its cry to God is appointed (x. 1-10), and God responds in leadership (x. 33-36). But people, (xi. 1) Leader,

## 174 SKETCH OF MORAL ORDER AND CONNECTION BETWEEN

(xi. 11) and Priest, (xi. 11) all fail, and that repeatedly. Yet God, ever true, defends His own before their adversaries, (xxiii. 21 &c.,) while He cannot allow evil unrebuked, (ch. 25,) registers them in detail at the close of their wanderings, (ch. 26), confirms their worship, (ch. 28); avenges them upon their foes, (ch. 31); and assures their inheritances to them inalienably (ch. 36.)

## DEUTERONOMY.

The nation's history, interspersed with warning and instruction, is recounted to convict them, and to show that grace is needed to carry them on while law is not rescinded. The grace is given as seen in three witnesses, the supplemental covenant on the principle of faith (chs. 29-30, compared with Rom. 10.) Moses' song, and lastly, Moses' blessing.

## JOSHUA.

The possession of the inheritance is made good to the elect and redeemed heir, first by miraculous entry upon it, and then in detail by conquest, but all is accomplished by God's power alone. This is displayed in "7 trumpets of jubilee," (lit:) in "ambushment," in sun and moon arrested, and in the hardened hearts of the foes (xi. 20); while any independent efforts of the heir recoils upon him to his loss, as witnessed upon his power at Ai, and upon his intelligence with the Gibeonites. God thus proves His own fidelity to His side of the covenant, finally setting up a great stone under an oak as permanent testimony to His own work herein, and to His claims accordingly.

## JUDGES.

Tribe by tribe falls short of answering to those claims and the heir is shewn to be utterly faithless to his side of the covenant. Special interventions of God alone preserve him from ruin, whether his ex-

THE EARLY BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. 175

ternal enemies, or internal disorders be the threatening cause.

RUTH.

The elect, redeemed, and installed heir, having thus failed, first in the wilderness, and then in the land; under pure law, and under law tempered with grace, having failed to maintain God's appointments, or to subdue his enemies, or to honour his own internal relationships, but having finally made "his own eyes" his standard; shewing that redemption claims and the covenant blessings of the inheritance were together powerless to control him, nothing is now left for God but either final reprobation or judgment, or sovereign mercy.

The heart of God gives the latter.

This is seen in Ruth, who after the famine, is seated in the highest favour, wife of Boaz, the owner of the soil, sharing all with him; *i.e.*: the people, figured by a Gentile—one without claim—are by pure favor only, set in the highest blessing as the sovereign gift of God, participating the wealth of the Lord of all the earth. E.C.P.

---

There is the strongest contrast between the whole life and standing of man as a creature, and the eternal life: life that was with the Father. The life of the creature is seen displayed in its most perfect form in man in Eden, body, soul and spirit, but the perfection of existence, past all dispensations, will be when Christ raises all believers as men in His own eternity and in His own likeness.

It is a solemn thought, how are the hearts of people that are so little fresh in love to Christ to get freshness at all? It is only by seeing anew what God has made Him to them, and what He is. The more they see it the more fresh the heart will be. There is an immense lack of freshness in us.

G.V.W.

## THE NEARNESS OF OUR HOPE.

---

The calculation of 'times' in connection with the coming of the Lord has been a fruitful cause of disappointment to those believing in the pre-millennial coming of the Lord, while to unbelievers in it it has naturally given some apparent justification of their unbelief. Our Lord too has specially warned us against it. "It is not for you," He says to His disciples, in the forty days which intervened between His resurrection and ascension, "it is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father has put in His own power." (Acts i, 7.)

This has been sought to be explained as a temporary restriction now removed, and the language of the prophets, that the vision was "shut up and sealed till the time of the end," but "at the end would speak, and not lie" (Dan. xii. 9; Hab. ii. 3,) has been taken to prove that we might expect to know them as the time drew nigh.

It is naturally enough asked, if the dates are in Scripture, must they not be intended to serve some purpose? and, like all the rest of it, are they not "profitable for doctrine?" Nor can we answer this, as long as it is not seen that "times and seasons" are connected with *Jewish* hopes, to which the whole *Christian* dispensation is in reality an *interruption*. The want of "rightly dividing the word of truth" is the great cause of perplexity as to its interpretation. The division of the Word into two Testaments ought to help us, and the apostle of the Gentiles distinctly teaches us that the 'promises' of the Old Testament (taken in the letter) are Jewish, (Rom. ix. 3, 4) while the gospel of Matthew on the other hand assures us that the "*mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven,"—the kingdom in the form it takes during the present dis-

pensation—are “things which” up to that time “had been kept secret from the foundation of the world.” (xii. 35.)

It is therefore in vain to look for the record of events in Christendom in the prophecies of the Old Testament. I do not deny, of course, a *typical* significance, but this only can be discovered by the direct teaching of the New, and has limits (as all typical teaching has\*) carefully to be ascertained. The literal application of Old Testament prophecy is always connected with Israel as the subject of Divine care and providence, and the pivot around which the wheels of His earthly government revolve. The period in which they are nationally set aside is a gap, sometimes just marked out, more often passed over in silence, a time of the suspension of purposes, which are afresh taken up the other side of it.

But this uncounted interval of time deranges all attempts at calculation of the periods. Take for instance the great prophecy of the ‘seventy weeks,’ one of the highest importance to understand as connected with the whole plan of the book of Revelation. The commencing and terminal points are marked as clearly as can be. The commencement is clearly passed, for it dates from “the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem,” Nehemiah’s commission, about the middle of the fifth century, B.C. The termination is when *Israel’s* transgression is finished, and their Sanctuary restored, a period as plainly not yet reached. And yet the whole period of 70 weeks is only 490 years, while more than 2000 have actually intervened. The reason for this is indicated however in the prophecy itself, which gives us 483 years or more to Messiah’s *cutting off*, and then an uncounted time of desolation for the city and sanctuary, at the close of which occurs the seventieth week.†

---

\*Heb. x. 1: “a shadow, and not the very image.”

†See vol. ii., first series : pp. 40, 98, 123.



The gap is thus just indicated, but that which in the wisdom of God fills it up is left unnoticed: the Christian revelation alone supplies it. But often the gap even is not noticed, as where in Isa. lxi. 2, "the acceptable year of the Lord" and "the day of vengeance of our God" are brought together; and in like manner the first coming of the Saviour often blends with His second coming.

A remarkable break in this way in the apparent continuity of Old Testament prophecy is found by comparing Rev. xvii. with Dan. vii. The latter chapter gives us the well-known four empires as apparently stretching from Nebuchadnezzar till the coming of the Son of Man. And upon this a seeming argument is based for regarding that coming as a spiritual one only and the kingdom of the Son of man as the Gospel dispensation. For plainly the Roman empire which seems to exist in the prophecy up to that time is not existing now. It is broken up, the independent kingdoms of southern and western Europe being its severed parts. Nor, from the prophecy of Daniel only, could we answer this. But in the light of Rev. xvii., we can at once explain it: for we find here a second rise of the Romish beast out of a non-existent state. "The beast that was, and is not, *and yet is,*" should be rather (as is confessed by critics) "the beast which was, and is not, *and shall be present,*" and thus the difficulty is cleared up in a way which makes this prophecy agree with the character of Old Testament prophecy generally, the days of the gospel dispensation being omitted from it. Any reckoning of times into which this uncounted gap may come is thus seen at once to be impossible.

It is important to note this at the outset, when we propose considering the probable nearness of the Lord's approach. We are not going to set time, or take up chronology at all in this connection. Still less are we going to supplement the teachings of the Word of God with the calculation of Pyramid measurements.

God has given us Scripture as able thoroughly to furnish us to all good works, and it is Scripture alone that we admit as having title to be heard at all.

Astronomical cycles for the same reason we leave entirely to astronomers, refusing to be guided by anything which proposes itself to us as knowledge outside the volume of inspiration itself. To this nothing can be added, as no jot or tittle written there can fail. The rambling off to other things may be a proof of the ferment in which men's minds are, but it cannot be considered a healthy sign.

God's word itself however teaches us that we may be seeing the approach of 'the day' (Heb. x. 21); and while we believe that to look for certain things as necessarily to take place before His advent would be in some measure at least to echo the wicked servant's cry, "My lord delayeth His coming," it is a very different thing to ask if there be not *already* signs to indicate His being near. That God has given us such indications to quicken our faith after so long a lapse of time as has been "since the fathers fell asleep," every one in whose heart glows the 'blessed hope' will, I think, admit. Still it will not be in vain to remind ourselves of what may be familiar truth, while to many it may be encouraging to find how very much remains, after laying aside everything that is doubtful or obscure, in which we may surely see the glimmer of the morning.

There are signs, in fact, whichever way we look, in the social, political, ecclesiastical, and spiritual spheres alike. We do not propose to classify them, however, in that way, nor pretend indeed even to enumerate them all; they are so many. We propose only to take up some of the most striking.

To begin with what is most external. Politically there are many remarkable signs: the growth and extension of Russia, the revival of Italy and Greece, the Eastern question, the commencing return of the Jews to Palestine. With each of these we might fill pages,

where we shall have to confine ourselves to as many lines.

1. Russia is the power spoken of in Ezek. xxxviii. as to come up against Israel in the last days, when they shall again be dwelling safely in the land brought back from its long desolation. It is well known, although still struggled against, that instead of "*chief prince of Meshech and Tubal*," we should read *prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal*." Unbelief itself can hardly maintain that *Meshech and Tubal* do not find their modern representatives in the countries of which *Moscow and Tobolsk* are the chief cities in this day. The oldest Greek translation (the Septuagint) also gives *archonta Rhos*, the ruler of Rhos. The 'land of Magog,' no one doubts to be Scythia or Tartary, mostly now Russian; Persia and Togarmah (Armenia) are at his borders, as is also the Asiatic Cush, in our version Ethiopia. Other names may be more difficult to identify; but these are ample to show that the great power foretold by Ezekiel is indeed getting ready to fill her predicted place, while she has been for long extending herself in the very direction indicated, the waning power of Turkey alone intervening.

2. The resurrection of Greece is another remarkable occurrence. She is expressly named by Zechariah as among Israel's adversaries at the time the Lord finally takes up their cause (Zech. ix. 13.) Moreover in Daniel (ch. viii.), "in the *last end* of the indignation" of God against Israel, we find a king of Greece who destroys "the mighty and the holy people" (Israel), and who at last, standing up against the Prince of princes, is broken without hand. He appears to be the final 'king of the north' in the eleventh chapter, who manifestly, throughout the chapter up to this point, is a Grecian king.

Yet Greece had seemed to be as a kingdom blotted out of existence. She is risen up again, and bent upon claiming her old possessions, as we know.

3. Still later, and very recent indeed, is the revival

of Italy. We have already seen that the book of Revelation fully recognizes a time of non-existence for the Roman empire, which is yet to have a form it never has had, 'ten horns,' or kings, giving their power to the beast. The barbarian kingdoms of the past, formed by the division of the empire, never gave power to, but took it from, the empire; but in this form it too will be found in conflict with the King of kings, and be overcome by Him when He appears. (Rev. xvii. 11-14; xix. 11-21.)

Now the *empire* still 'is not,' nor is it probable that *Christians* will see it restored; its time of revival fills up the interval between the time in which the Lord takes up His people, and that in which He appears in glory with them; but the *kingdom* of Italy, which had been broken up into a number of small states, is restored, and is an evident first step towards that which God has written, and which (spite of the anxiety of politicians to preserve the balance of power) will surely come to pass.

4 Again, everybody has heard much about 'the Eastern question.' But everybody familiar with God's prophetic Word knows that the East (particularly Palestine) is to be the place of settlement, Divine settlement, of orational controversies. The powers of the north and south and west are thus depicted in a final struggle before the interference of Him under whose peaceful and powerful sway "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Man's 'Eastern question' may not be at all the same as God's, and is not; but who that has looked as guided by the Word at the impending future, but must see that the one is rapidly merging into the other?

5. The return of the Jews to their land is actually accomplishing. In Jerusalem itself there are said to be now 23,000 Jews, and they are buying up all the available ground within it. Agricultural labour is being resumed, and the latter rains, long absent, are

reported to be returning. A Jew is currently reputed to have a mortgage upon the land. Lastly, the British occupation of Cyprus is giving a new sense of security in the east, which must needs have the effect of encouraging their most sanguine expectations.

Let us bear in mind, that Scripture intimates no complete return of Israel,—no proper restoration, in fact, till the Lord himself restores, and that after His coming. Their return before that is but partial, and in unbelief,—a state which will be the cause of their last and sorest trouble. But the budding again of the fig-tree is the Lord's own special sign of His being at the door; and the fig-tree (as in Luke xiii. 6) is the type of Israel (Matt. xxiv. 32.) No more significant sign can we have than this.

6. Another prominent sign of the times is the spirit of lawlessness and independence prevailing everywhere. The spirit of Communism in its various forms is a matter causing the most serious alarm, not merely to despotic governments, but to those of the most popular character also: in the United States, for instance, as well as in Russia. Nor is this a mere passing ebullition. The rulers of conservative Europe have had uneasy and uncertain possession of their seats for a long time past. The voice of the people is making itself heard more and more, and in no respectful tones. They are newly interpreting the very ancient maxim, 'Might is right,' by the assumption that might should be with the many, and not with the few. In result it is individual self-will casting off restraint, and with man's law, God's also.

We shall find this character of the last days in the prophecies both of the Old and New Testaments. It is the 'clay' which enfeebles the feet and toes of Nebuchadnezzar's imperial image (Dan. ii.) Peter and Jude both speak of it as a special element in the decline and corruption of Christianity which they depict; but I must leave my readers to follow out this for themselves in Scripture: a mere reference to it must suffice us here.

7. That Christendom as a whole ends in open infidel apostasy is what the Word of God distinctly teaches. Antichristian as Rome surely is, there remains yet to be developed a final form exceeding all in blasphemy and iniquity. The beast will at last throw off the woman who at first rides upon it, and with the ten horns will "hate the whore, and make her desolate and naked, and eat her flesh and burn her with fire" (Rev. xvii. 16); but it will be only to be found to be in open antagonism to the Lamb (14, xix.) Popery will thus not be the last or the worst form of evil. *The* Antichrist will deny both the "Father and the Son" (1 Jno. ii. 22.) No longer content to be at all the 'woman,' and to own subjection to Christ at all, he will be '*the man*,' although it be 'the man of sin,' and sit in the temple of God, and shew himself as being God (2 Thess. ii.) Thus the present 'mystery of iniquity' will issue in a 'falling away' or apostasy, and that in a strong delusion in which *all* will be taken, who, while they had the truth, believed not the truth, that they might be saved (11, 12.)

Looking round, we may say that the apostasy has begun already. Germany, the leader once in evangelical reformation, has become the leader in a destructive rationalism which leaves little for the most open infidelity to destroy. In England it almost divides the Establishment with Puseyism, and has largely leavened the dissenting bodies. Dr. Smith and his following are signs of what is doing in Presbyterian ranks. In France infidelity has long shown an open and increasing front. In Italy and elsewhere a large number, who have learned it secretly under the garb of Popery are escaping from the pressure of this, to practise it openly elsewhere. America is a field in which all growths develope rapidly, and where they attain a corresponding stature. That God is working, with all this, I fully and thankfully own; yet not to alter the face of things, but to save individuals out of

it. When presently the voice of the Lord shall summon His own to meet Him in the air, Christendom will be but a tare-field ready for the burning, in the fire of His wrath.

8. Apart from this, the signs of the last days are in the professing church painfully evident. Such texts as "In the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" need only to be quoted. Those who are acquainted with the wonderful prophecy of Rev. ii. and iii., in which the whole course of the professing church is mirrored for us from the apostles' day till the Lord takes His people, will know how near the close we seem to be. I cannot do more than refer to this just now. In Philadelphia the last announcement of His coming is given, and the word is now, "Behold, I come *quickly*." Is not this the cry now to us on every side? Shall we not hear it?

9. But this links with another statement, and that also from the Lord's own lips. In the familiar parable of the ten virgins, in which the state of Christendom is described in connection with His coming, the tarrying time which has tested so the hearts of His people is brought to an end by the sudden cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him." That cry wakes up the sleeping virgins, and they rise and trim their lamps. Upon that the Bridegroom comes, too suddenly for some of the slumberers.

Now the great and grave question is, is not the time of the church's slumber passing, if not past? Has there been nothing answering to that cry, the echo of the announcement to Philadelphia, "Behold, I come quickly?" Has there been no announcement? no consequent stir in the professing church? no fresh going forth with kindling of heart to meet One whose coming sounds to it as the greeting of a marriage bell,—the coming of the *Bridegroom*? If so, may we not be very sure that He is near?

Are you awake, reader? Has the cry thrilled your very soul? Do you respond to the love which greets you,—the love which expects response from His redeemed? Is it all settled and sure that you are His? Is your whole future His as well? If ere this year yet ran out He came,—if you began next year in eternity with Him,—*would you regret it?*

---

It requires the mind of Christ to accept what one does not require, because given for His sake. I once declined taking something from a poor widow; I was not up to the mark. She wanted the gospel preached and came up to help with her two mites; and one ought to take care not to refuse any the blessed privilege of identifying themselves with the work and interests of the Lord.

God *does* care to supply all your need, but He has a plan of His own, a plan in which He has everything to satisfy the heart to overflowing. He will supply all the present need of His people, and then give them riches in glory by Christ Jesus for evermore.

The Philippians were stripping themselves for Paul, but his heart was so simple that he could accept it all, saying, "My God shall supply all your need." He could not refuse their last bit of bread; because he knew that his God would supply them.

Do I feel love to the God who gave His Son to die for me? and is love to Him who by that death enabled me to call His God my God, the motive that enables me to empty myself of everything for Him?

We find constantly that where Satan gets power over a soul is from fragments of truth being presented which do not satisfy the soul and do not lead on to glory.

G.V.W.



## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

---

### 4. THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM, ch. xiii-xx. 28.

---

(1). The mysteries of the kingdom disclosed in these parables are "things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world." Its history is shown in them: a history of failure again on man's part, God's purposes of course not failing. The external history is told in the presence of the multitude, in the first four parables; God's thoughts (which do not fail) to the disciples in the house, in the last three.

The first parable gives the sowing of the Word of the kingdom, from which the children of the kingdom spring. But there is various success. Sown in a hostile world, three parts are destroyed by the power of Satan, the flesh, and the world, only one part in four producing fruit. The second shows us Satan's sowing (permitted through man's unwatchfulness) not of the Word of course, not of wheat, but of tares among the wheat: a work which cannot be undone until the final separation in the harvest. The wheat is first removed; and then the tares, gathered before in bundles, are cast into the fire. The third parable shows the tree-like power [of Babylon, comp. Dan. iv.] developed out of the little Gospel-seed so little likely to produce it: a worldly system in which the birds (the powers of evil) find secure lodgment. While the fourth finally exhibits the woman (the professing church) herself corrupting the Word of Christ (the meat offering, Lev. ii.) with the leaven of false doctrine (ch. xvi. 12; Mark viii.)

All this is what evidently has taken place, and

scarcely needs disciples eyes to see. The last three parables, on the other hand, give us the Divine thought, which cannot fail. They give us, I believe, respectively His thoughts as to Israel (His treasure), the church (His pearl), and the Gentiles, after the church is removed to heaven, the whole of what fills up the interval between the setting up of the kingdom of the absent King, until He comes again in glory. This prophetic history is now followed by scenes, which (while of course real occurrences) are designed to give us typically various features of the kingdom in this its mystery-form.

(2). First, we have the Lord's rejection at Nazareth, where He had grown up in their midst, and then the death of His fore-runner at the hands of Herod. The Lord takes His place in rejection in the desert, where the people coming out to Him are by His disciples' hands ministered to and sustained. This is still our privilege in the day of rejection. In the next picture He is gone up to take His place of intercessor on high, and His disciples are on the sea alone, tossed with waves, and the wind contrary; as it still is. The boat represents the human means by which, when faith has not Christ personally before it, we maintain ourselves upon the waters. These are essentially Jewish, no doubt; and the disciples, left so by the Lord, were in fact at first a Jewish remnant. From this boat Peter, recognizing the Lord upon the waters and drawing nigh, separates himself to be with the Lord (the true church position), and the Lord and Peter return together to the boat, *the wind then ceasing*. Those in the boat (a remnant of Israel) own Him as the Son of God, and the boat coming to shore His power in blessing is made known through all the country, as the world will know it after His coming again.

(3). The next chapter shows us God's way of blessing in contrast with man's traditional teaching, which only perverts conscience, and proposes to cure

the heart by washing the hands. In the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, a Canaanite, of a race under the curse, finds the blessing which she seeks, not as claim but as grace,—as a dog. If a man even gives a dog the crumbs, God will give more! The safe appeal is to His heart, and grace alone is the manifestation of what is there. The feeding of the multitude follows, and is connected with this: seven loaves (perfect provision) inexhaustible by man: seven baskets left over and above, when all are filled.

(4). Once more the Lord is put before us rejected by man's unbelief, and needing the special revelation of the Father to make Him known as what He is, Son of the living God, who will build His church on Himself in resurrection, where the gates of hades cannot prevail against it. But this supposes death—the cross,—a path from which disciples shrink, but which is His way for them to the glory beyond. We are “called by glory and virtue,” as the apostle Peter (he who shrank from it here) developes from our Lord's words in this place (2 Peter, i.)

But the glory is not merely at the end of the way: it shines also upon it. This the transfiguration does for the disciples, in which the “power and coming of the Lord” are made known to “eye-witnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter, i. 16–18.) Having beheld this, they come down from the mount of vision to meet the devil at the foot of the mount; and here is seen the failure of disciples (through lack of prayer and fasting—of dependence and self denial) to use the power with which they had been entrusted. Still there is resource in the Lord, as there ever is.

Next, on the occasion of the temple-tribute, the Lord teaches Peter the place of sons, and associates him with Himself as that. And then a little child is made to illustrate conversion and true greatness in the kingdom. With such lowly ones the Lord identifies Himself; and for them the Son of man came, the Father's will is their security.

But He is also present to give power to the acts, and to answer the need, of a feeble "two or three" gathered to His name. When grace has sought in vain the recovery of a brother, and the assembly (if but two or three) is not listened to by him, he must be treated as one outside. On the other hand, those who have known grace are responsible for its manifestation, a responsibility which the government of God recognizes and will require of all those accepted as forgiven ones.

Another subject begins in the 19th chapter: that of natural relationships in their connection with the kingdom. They are sanctioned fully, and freed from that which Moses had had to yield to the hardness of men's hearts. Grace maintained God's order in the first creation, as it enabled men, if need were for the kingdom of heaven's sake, to walk superior to the natural instincts. Again, little children are received of Christ and blessed, for of such was the kingdom of heaven. Throughout all this we see plainly that grace is acting in the fullest way.

Yet there is responsibility: there are rewards. The doctrine as to these is the closing section of this part of the gospel. But first it is shewn, in the case of the rich young man, that salvation itself is not to be purchased,—no bargaining can secure this. He who would do so finds the price still too high, and goes away sorrowful. "A rich man," and such only can expect to *buy*, "can hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." But it is not *salvation* that is in question: when the disciples would make it a question of that, saying, "Who then can be *saved*?" the Lord answers that, impossible as that would be to man, to God, who alone saves, all things are possible.

Peter then raises the question of rewards; and here, while every one that has forsaken aught, *really for Christ's sake*, "shall receive an hundred-fold and inherit everlasting life," yet the principle is, "The last shall be first, and the first shall be last." In the parable those who are simply debtors to grace for whatever they might receive get proportionately much

more than those who have covenanted for so much. The first in their own account are last in God's.

The cross is before the Lord's eyes, the right and left places beside the Lord in the kingdom before the eyes of the two disciples: they will take even the cross if it be the pathway to personal exaltation, but not thus can the highest place be reached. When the rest are indignant at the two, the Lord further warns them that the places themselves are not such as would satisfy ambition; His kingdom is not a kingdom of the Gentiles; the highest there is He who came to serve in lowliest fashion: "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

#### 5. THE COMING IN HUMILIATION, ch. xx. 29—xxiii.

At Jericho the Lord heals again as Son of David, and soon after enters Jerusalem expressly as fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy. All the city is moved; He cleanses the temple, and there heals the blind and the lame; but the leaders of the people reject Him, while His praise is perfected only out of the mouth of babes and sucklings. He leaves the city, and returning in the morning, curses the fig-tree, whose promise of fruit was not fulfilled: a type of the nation who rejected Him. The chief priests question Him as to His authority, but He refuses answer till they have settled the prior question of John's baptism. In fact repentance must be the way to salvation; but, despite their seeming respect for Divine authority, the publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before them. And now, having rejected one after another the servants He sent to them, they were about to consummate their guilt by slaying His Son. And that would be their own rejection.

Yet patient mercy would not stop even here, as the following parable of the kingdom shows. The very death of Christ would furnish forth a table where the King could invite guests to the marriage of His Son, guests already 'bidden' by the voice of prophecy.

But the Jews (these bidden ones) still reject, persecuting to death the messengers of grace. Then the limit of Divine forbearance is reached, and the city burned up, while a general call goes out to all men. This gathers many, among whom however (when the King comes in to see the guests) some are found whose type is the man without a wedding garment,—the covering, that is, which grace provides. And indeed out of all whom grace invites, the *few* only are chosen, and not the many.

After this the various parties among the Jews come up before Him, seeking to entangle Him in His speech, but in fact for judgment. The Pharisees and Herodians are condemned by Cæsar's image on the tribute money. The Sadducees are convicted of ignorance of the Scriptures and the power of God. The lawyers are made to recognize as the great commandment of the law what proved them most of all guilty. Finally, the Lord by a question convicts them of ignorance as to the true dignity of David's Son; and then in the 23rd chapter He denounces them as the hypocritical misleaders and destroyers of the people. Jerusalem, refusing the love which would have gathered her children under its secure shelter, is left desolate without Him, until they shall say (as yet they shall say) "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

#### 6. THE COMING IN GLORY, ch. xxiv, xxv.

And now, in answer to the disciples' question, His coming in glory is put in contrast with His coming in humiliation. It is important to note, for the understanding of the prophecy, that Matthew in contrast with Luke, is occupied almost exclusively with what is *even yet* future. A kind of partial anticipation there has been in what has already taken place, and this is after the manner of prophecy in general, which finds in the signs of the present the portents of the future. But everywhere in it the *end* is what is in the mind of the Spirit, and we misinterpret, if we do not connect it with the end.

Here the disciples' question is one which plainly speaks of His coming and the end (not of the *world*, physically, but as in ch. xiii.,) of the *age*. The Lord does not speak of any destruction of Jerusalem, nor of armies encompassing it from without, but of idolatry within, the Antichristian abomination of the latter days. This is the beginning of unparalleled tribulation, so severe that, if it were not shortened, no flesh should be saved. Immediately after this short time of trouble the Son of man comes, and therefore the taking of the city could not be it, for that by no means was the end of the trouble. Besides He comes with his angels in the clouds of heaven, and gathers Israel, his elect, from their long dispersion to the four winds of heaven. Then that generation (of unbelievers among the people \*) passes away; and not till then. But the fig tree (the figure of the nation) is putting forth leaves, and fruit is found, at that very time, a time in which the judgment of God as in Noah's day would sweep away the impenitent.

To verse 41 of chap. xxiv, we have the coming of the Lord in relation to Israel; the parabolic style commencing here shows that the Lord now again is speaking of the things kept secret from the foundation of the world (xiii. 34-35). We have thus the Christian side of things to chap. xxv. 30. The blessing upon watchfulness, and the result of the heart pleading that the Lord would delay His coming are first exhibited. Then in the following parable the falling asleep of the whole professing church who had at first gone forth to meet Him; the cry which at midnight wakes them; and the rejection of the foolish virgins. The next parable gives us the reward of

---

\* 'This generation' is often used, as here, in a moral sense,—a race, with certain moral characteristics,—and without the time-sense often attaching to it. Thus Ps. xii. 7: "Thou shalt preserve them from this generation *for ever*"; comp xxiv. 6, lxxiii. 15; Prov. xxx. 11-14. In Phil. ii, 15, 'nation' is the same word. To apply it in the time-sense in the prophecy above is impossible.

service, and the judgment of him who in the place of a servant had not the faith in His Master needed for service.

Finally, from verse 31, we find the judgment of the quick—the living nations or Gentiles,—when the Son of man is come. Christians are already with Him when He comes, and the judgment of the wicked is not till the great white throne at the end of the millennium, when the earth flees away. This is at the commencement, and of the living only. There is no resurrection, and no examination of all deeds done. They are judged simply by their treatment of Christ's 'brethren'—the Israelitish messengers, as it would seem; of the 'everlasting Gospel,' going forth in the interval between the taking away of the saints to be with the Lord, and His coming in glory with them. This interval is the time of gathering for blessing on the earth.

7. THE PURCHASE OF ALL BY THE ONE OFFERING,  
ch. xxvi-xxviii.

(1) And now the hour of the Lord's betrayal is at hand. He is aware of it, and Master of all: no one takes His life from Him, but He lays it down of Himself. Her prescient love who anoints Him for His burial, brings out the traitor in the person of one of the twelve. The Lord indicates him at the final supper, where He institutes beforehand the memorial of His death, and explains its deep and blessed meaning. He predicts the scattering of the sheep, and to Peter his fall. Through all this part nothing is more apparent than His entire control of all through which He moves.

Gethsemane (the oil press) has another character. His shrinking from the cup before Him was part of His perfection. He could not take it as His own will, but only as His Father's. Sorrowful unto death, He finds none to watch with Him. The shadow of



the cross is beginning to isolate Him from those who are the chosen companions of His path. The last dread isolation is yet to come, but the presence of it is already upon His soul. Sleeping when they should be waking, they are fighting when He is giving Himself up. What could their swords do but dishonour Him, who could have had twelve legions of angels for His defence, had not the Word of God claimed His fulfilment of it! They forsake Him next and flee.

(2) He had now presented Himself for the offering, and it must be manifested as an unblemished one. "He was made sin for us who knew no sin." It is the holy sin-offering. The false witnesses cannot prove His guilt even before His enemies. He must be condemned for His own true witness and that alone. As Son of God it is that the Jewish tribunal reject Him, without and against all evidence, and He hides not His face from shame and spitting. Peter's fall fulfils His prophetic words. The traitor comes and attests His *innocence*: the highest attestation *he* is qualified to give. But the Jews consummate their guilt, buying Aceldma with the price of blood: a potter's field to bury strangers in, the involuntary prediction of that to which they were self-condemned: the world has been to them since a burial-ground for strangers.

The charge before the Gentile governor is that He claims to be King of the Jews. His accusers again prove nothing, and He answers nothing. The double witness of the judge himself and of heaven in his wife's dream is that He is a 'just man.' At the pass-over (a beautiful intimation of its meaning) a prisoner is released. Pilate anxious to save Jesus makes it a question whether he shall release Him to them, or Barabbas, a noted sinner. The people choose Barabbas, and the Lord takes the cross instead of him.

Pilate washes his hands and delivers Him up. The infatuated Jews imprecate His blood upon themselves. Mocked of the soldiers, gall mingled with His drink, His vesture parted, He is crucified. His salvation of others, His faith in God, is thrown in His teeth, and even by the malefactors with whom He is numbered.

But now the true and exceptional character of the cross comes out. The darkness for three hours over the land is but the type of the deeper darkness, the due of our sins, which is upon His soul. *God* has forsaken Him: the solitary exception in all His ways with the righteous. Crying again with the loud voice of unexhausted strength, none taking His life from Him, but laying it down of Himself, He "dismissed His spirit." \*

The effects of His death are immediate. The veil which forbade access to God is rent from top to bottom; the power of God raises the dead; the Gentile believes. But the Jews, hardened in unbelief, which is soon to be most effectual witness to His glory, seal up the stone, and set a watch against the third day.

(3) And now we have the full and formal acceptance of His work made known by resurrection. Galilee, not Jerusalem, is here the appointed meeting-place with the eleven, although the women see Him, and receive His message. The chief priests bribe the soldiers to tell an incredible story to their own shame, the nation is exhibited in obdurate unbelief. He whom they reject has all authority in heaven and earth, and sends forth His disciples to disciple unto

---

\* In Mark and Luke it is "He expired," as any other man might do. In John, as Son with the Father, He "delivered up His spirit." Here the words shew simple power over it. The terms used in each Gospel are very characteristic.

His kingdom, but in the Triune name, the revelation of which marks the new dispensation as now come. He Himself is present with them unto the end of the age.

---

Are you so living to Christ that you take up all the duties that lie in your path, and do what your hands find to do *unto Christ*? Satan often blinds the eyes to the omnipotency of Christ, leading one to say, "I cannot expect Christ to come into such a little thing." What! does not Christ fill little things as well as great? All the omnipotency and might of God is found in the heart of that risen Man. If not, prayers could not be heard. I get His whole attention when I speak to Him in prayer, as if there were not one more save me. If I say that anything so small cannot occupy Him, it is only pride denying His omnipotency.

Are you ready to go *at once* straight into heaven, if the gates were thrown open? What manner of persons ought we to be to say it? Are we walking in a way perfectly consistent with stepping to-night at once into the glory, to be at home in the Father's house?

Not a fragment of nature remains in the place you are in, *in Christ*. All your connections are new with God. There is a walk that becomes this place. If I know the heart of God toward me, am I walking as a child with Him?

How often one has had a powerful consciousness in the soul that prayer has been heard, when no word, or half a word, has been uttered; one has suddenly felt that the *Lord* has come in to *answer*.

“Some Evils which Afflict Christendom and their Remedy, as Depicted by the Lord's own Words to the Seven Churches.”—Rev. ii. and iii.

## LECTURE I.

---

### SPIRITUAL DECLINE AND THE JUDAIZING OF THE CHURCH. (Rev. II. 1-11.)

---

WE are going, beloved friends, if the Lord enable us, to look at the addresses to the Seven Churches—not indeed in detail, but more especially certain parts of them—as representative of the state of Christendom as a whole from the time almost when the Lord left earth, until the time in which he comes again. Now in the first place, it is only right that I should show you briefly what is my warrant for taking these addresses as applying in this way. I can only just indicate the reasons, the main one being the suitability of the application itself.

You find then, that the Lord here is addressing through His Apostle seven churches in Asia, a little district in the western part of what we call Asia Minor, and a very small part of that. But these Seven Churches are evidently taken up to represent the church at large. In the first place they are remarkable as having distinctly that number. It is a number which, as you know, runs through the Book of Revelation. You have not only these Seven Churches, but Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets, Seven Vials, Seven Spirits of God, and other sevens, which everybody can see at once have a distinct significance as such. It is not a casualty that there are just seven. Now here we find the same number, which some of us will know to be one of the numbers which signify perfection, generally in a good sense; and indeed the perfection of Divine work. God completed everything in creation on the seventh day.

Again, to these seven churches the whole book of this prophecy is committed, evidently for us, and for all time, yet it is put into their hands; and thus they are made representatives of the church at large.

Furthermore the Lord presents Himself here in this chapter in the midst of the seven candlesticks. These candlesticks stand for the seven churches, there can be no question. There was a seven *branched* candlestick in the Tabernacle or the Temple,—here we have, as it were,

the seven branches separated from one another, and standing alone. That seven branched candlestick was the light of the sanctuary, the light of the priest. It was significant of Christ by the Holy Ghost (through the Word, of course), the light of His people. In this scene in Revelation, His people are looked upon as the "light," not of the sanctuary, but "of the world," and the candlesticks stand each upon its own base, significant of their position of responsibility. But here again, it is not merely among seven Asiatic churches that He walks, nor only those who have this position : the seven churches are but representatives of the whole.

Furthermore, the whole Book is a 'prophecy,'—a prophecy which reaches down to the very end of time and even into eternity itself : a prophecy not of any local significance merely ; and such an introduction as merely concerned itself with a few churches in the apostles' time, whose memory for most would otherwise be entirely passed away, would scarcely be in keeping with this character of the book itself. If they are prophecy, then the whole book evidently is one ; and if of the condition of the church at large, then how specially important for the servants of the Lord to whom He would shew, for their own guidance, things that would shortly come to pass.

Then, furthermore, if you take the chapters themselves which contain these addresses, you find that in every one of them there is the most solemn appeal to "every one that hath an ear to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Scarcely any part of Scripture has such constant solemn injunction to attend to what is written. Surely if we are to take the divine warning and admonition as applicable to ourselves, we must believe that these chapters have a very peculiar place in God's Word ; and a very peculiar application to us all. Written and handed down from one generation to another, all that have an ear to hear are exhorted to attend. But, after all, the most satisfactory evidence that these addresses do belong to the church at all times is this, that we can trace that application in the actual facts of its history, and this it is which it will be my endeavour to set before you in these lectures.

Now first of all let us understand what is the character of the book we have before us. We have a distinct title : a thing not usual in the Word ; you seldom have a title to any of the books of Scripture. The first two verses here are evidently that, and the title is "The

Revelation of Jesus Christ." He calls it a "revelation." He says distinctly it is an "unveiling" or disclosure of certain things shortly to come to pass. Instead of being something which no one can understand, it is what God calls a "revelation."

We need not say, that if God gave it to show these things to us, there will be no such obscurity about it as to defeat the object for which it is given. I venture to say, we shall not find it obscure, if we have honest hearts to receive it. You will find in the parable of the sower that it is the honest heart only that "understands." And then also, it is a revelation to Christ's servants. It is to all thus, no doubt, but in that character. It is His servants that will have to do with the things. Their path will be in the midst of the things about which He is going to speak, and His servants will need to discern between the things which please and displease Him. But if we are not servants—if we have not that character, no doubt we shall find it hard. If we seek speculative knowledge, that is, rather than practical.

To servants there is a distinct encouragement given with regard to hearing and reading the words of this prophecy: "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." If we could not understand them perfectly, I may say, and know without any doubt, what these things apply to, how could we be expected to "keep the things written therein?" Because, if the thing is after all merely doubtful, "what may be so or not be so," it has no right in fact over you or me. We ought not to walk in doubtful paths. "Whatever is not of faith is sin;" and faith must have God's word to support and justify it. And therefore I say again, if there was not something that could be distinctly laid hold of, and learned, and understood in its application to what is around us, the things in the midst of which we are living, we could not possibly be expected to keep "the things written therein."

Let us now look at the addresses themselves. In the first place to the "Church at Ephesus." We have the Lord speaking in words simple enough, but which are as solemn as they are practical for us all to-night. Amidst much commendation of them,—and the Lord commends all He can—He has this to say to them, "Thou hast left thy first love." "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil, and thou hast tried them

which say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars, and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted ; nevertheless I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." (v. 2, 3, 4).

That is then the commencement of decline everywhere, with every one of us: and if this applies to any one of us at this time, let us remember that we are "fallen," and can never be right until restored to that first state.

I want you to notice how much the Lord can commend where He finds such serious fault. "I know thy works," He says ; but not merely works,—“thy labour.” That is energetic work. But again, labour in the midst of a scene like this is apt to break down under the disappointment and discouragement incident to it. The Ephesians had not broken down ; they had “patience,” quiet endurance. They went on labouring in spite of discouragement. Then again, patience is apt to degenerate into toleration of the evil which we are so constantly meeting. They on the other hand, “could not bear them which were evil.” It was commendation of them, that they shewed no such liberality as people often now would have. Such toleration is inconsistent with the love of truth and good.

Evil, too, was shewing itself in high places already. It is remarkable to see that at the very commencement there were those already “saying they were apostles, and who were not.” Let us mark that : it will be important to remember it in another connection by-and-by. We know what that pretension ripened into in later times, and that it still exists. We must not be daunted by it any more than the Ephesians were : “Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not ; and hast found them liars.”

Furthermore, they had borne and suffered, and for Christ's name sake had labored. There was true love to Christ : there was not the first freshness of it, but there *was* true love to Christ underlying it all. There was much fruit ; but the Lord had this to say : “Nevertheless I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love.” There is no “somewhat :” that would look as if it were a little thing that the Lord was speaking of, whereas it was as great a thing as could well be. After that, it is solemn to see that even Balaam-teachers were but comparatively a “few things” more. But He never calls *this*, “somewhat.” The Lord is jealous of our hearts

—of our love, because He loves us ; and it is not a little thing for Him to see our love declining, —to see the first freshness of it gone.

I want to put it in a very practical way to every soul here to-night. I want to ask you, who, by your coming here to-night, take the position of Christians—of those who have known Christ,—I want to ask you, as I would ask myself, whether you know what 'first love' is, and whether you have this 'first love' now? There is this characteristic of it, and I have no doubt your memories will justify me here, that first love is an engrossing thing.

You know how any new thing is apt to take possession of one. It has passed into a proverb. But in the case of first love it is preeminently characteristic of it, that it absorbs the subject of it. If we remember what it was when first of all our eyes were opened to see what Christ was, and to call Him ours,—our Saviour, to receive what He had done for us, I think we shall confess a common experience ; that for a while at least, short or long as it may be, His love possessed us ; there was nothing else to contest the place with Him. And if it is otherwise now—if we have got down to a quieter and more moderate estimate of Him, and can find room and time for many an object, of which Christ is only among others one,—we may think it perhaps wisdom even, rightly surviving the heat of youth, when *He* is saying to us, "Thou art fallen, thou hast left thy first love." That is what you find for instance in the Apostle Paul, who, I believe never relinquished his from first to last. What you find in the Epistle to the Philippians is that his love had that engrossing character. He gave himself up to the object of it ; very deliberately too, but entirely and undistractedly. He had "one thing" before him : One idea possessed him. It made him, no doubt, what people would call narrow and one-sided. Nevertheless these are the men—to put it in that way—that make their mark in the world. Few men but get distracted with a number of objects ; while on the other hand if you find a man bent upon one thing, absorbed with the desire, you will find generally (of course I cannot say universally in a world like this), that that man in a great measure realizes his desire. What he pursues, he pursues earnestly, concentrating his faculties upon his object, and he succeeds. If it is money, he will get money, and so on. For success in other things at least, I suppose every one will grant there is nothing like entire occupation with one thing. Now it is distinctly this that the



Lord claims for Himself, and nothing less than this. We may easily imagine, as love grows cool, that we are only acquiring wisdom ; that we were extreme and enthusiastic ; and that the natural heat of first days is passed and ought to pass away ; that we are only wiser when in fact we are less spiritual and less devoted ; I surely believe, less *happy* too. For oh, there is nothing like the happiness of an absorbing and responsive affection, which eternal and infinite love has awakened towards itself. And I say again, the Apostle Paul, at least, was not one of these prudent ones ; and he says distinctly that we are to follow him, *as he followed Christ !*

“For him to live was Christ.” There was nothing else whatever ; and Christ sufficed for him. These are what you find together in the Philippians. Take care you keep them together. In the first chapter you have a man for whom to live was Christ, and that man, you find in the last chapter, Christ *perfectly sufficed*. He had learned, in whatever state he was, to be content ; —he knew both how to be abased and how to abound ; everywhere and in all things he was instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and suffer need. He was not elated by prosperity, nor cast down by adversity : always, in whatever state, content. How ? He reveals the secret : “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Now do not imagine that every Christian can say that. Can any of us say so ? It is of no use of course to urge what Christ can do. Christ can do everything, but the question is, do we practically so know Christ as to be able to say, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me ?” If not, what is the reason ? Failure as to the first principle : “For me to live is Christ.”

Fruit may look very beautiful on the outside, and yet after all not be ripe for the Master's taste, so here a great deal of fruit there was, which looked fair enough, but it *had not hung in the sun enough*. It was not ripe for the Master's use. Now I want to say, we are not in a right state to judge anything,—even to discern what evil is, except our hearts are really right with Him. The Lord is giving us here what was the root of all the evil we find afterward. Because if our hearts lose their freshness of love to Christ,—that is to say, if Christ has less of our hearts than once he had, something else will surely come in to fill the gap. If nature, as they say, abhors a vacuum, our hearts surely do ; and if Christ is

not filling them, the world in some shape or other will be brought in to fill the void. It surely will be so. But then what? There is no satisfaction there. What is the world? If you take the Apostle's own estimate, or rather God's by Him, it is this: "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world." Lust and pride, and that is all! Does lust satisfy? Lust is just unsatisfied desire. Does the pride of life? Alas! the pride of life is but twin brother of envy,—another form of lust. And then, "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." Is not that enough of itself to destroy satisfaction? Now if what I pursue is only lust, the result is, the void becomes greater, and I become, alas!—if the Lord does not come in and stop me,—only more reckless and infatuated in the pursuit. One step of departure leads to another; and what about the Word of God, and its wholesale judgment of the world and all that belongs to it? Shall I take it truthfully? Shall I wish to apply it in its full force to the very things I am seeking after? The necessary result is that my judgment is warped as to what the world is, and I find it hard to believe that evil is just as evil as God's Word would have it. "Hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" So the course hastens downward. Save God alone, nothing can stop one in it.

Do not wonder then that you have here the root of all the evil that has sprung up in the Church, and do not let us sit down and judge this thing and that thing in what we find around us, while at the same time we have the root of it all unjudged in our own souls. I do press it on you, and on myself alike, that, if Christ has not our hearts fully, if our business, our pleasure, our whole life in fact is not really, truthfully, honestly devoted to Him—(I am not speaking now of realized absolute consistency, we all have to own much inconsistency, but still) if to give Him all is not the purpose of our hearts, there is really no proper fellowship with Him, and of course, no power to judge truly what evil is. To have part with Him, He must cleanse, and He alone: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." But if we put our feet into His blessed hand, we must put them there without reserve. If *He* washes, it must be according to His thought of what defilement is; and if He does not cleanse, we can have no part with Him. He cannot bear fellowship with evil; but as a consequence, our fellowship with Him is gone. The very least reserve,—

the very least deliberate keeping back from Christ what is rightfully His—these hearts that He toiled so for and has taken so much pains to win—the very least conscious keeping back from Him is, so to speak, fatal. The freshness of our souls is gone. I am sure as we go on with Him, He will show us more and more what this and that is, and that the judging all these things is more or less a practical work. Our eyes clear more and more, as we are with Him, and we learn more and more to call things by their names, and see them as they really are. While all that is true, and while there is thus a growth in practical sanctification—yet the surrender that He calls for from us, from the beginning and throughout, is an entire and unreserved surrender.

There is no use in our going on any further with these addresses except we can honestly say: "Well, at any rate my heart's desire is to give Christ all." It is no use trying to go further else. You cannot learn God's truth as a school-boy learns his lesson. It is not merely for the head; it is for the heart. The eyes to see it are of the heart, and not the head; and I put it to your heart, as to where you are. It is solemn to think of its being Ephesus that is thus addressed. Had it been Corinth or Galatia, we should have said, the evil began with them from the beginning almost. But this is Ephesus, the very first, as one might say, of apostolic churches, and the one to whom especially had been committed the deposit of church truth. Failure here leaves us to ask, And where not, if at Ephesus? And in truth, if we only look at the epistles to the various churches, we shall have no difficulty in seeing that long before apostolic days were over, the fresh, bright days of the primitive church were gone. The warnings and reproofs of the early epistles change to solemn and emphatic statements in the latter. At Rome all sought their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. "All they that are in Asia have departed from me," says the apostle to Timothy. The mystery of iniquity was already working. In John's days already there were many antichrists who had gone out from them; and, inside still, such as Diotrephes resisting openly the yet living apostle, and casting true brethren out of the church.

The prophetic warnings carry this on to the very "last days" of Christendom. Evil men and seducers should wax worse and worse. False teachers should bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and many follow their pernicious

ways by reason of whom the way of truth would be evil spoken of. The 'last days' would be specially 'perilous times,' men having the form of godliness and denying the power thereof. And the man of sin, the heading up of evil already at work, would crown the final apostacy, and receive judgment from the Lord's own hand at His appearing.

We are prepared then to find the aspect of things getting darker as we proceed with these addresses. Even in spite of corrective measures, which the Lord's faithful love could not but provide, if even yet they might be roused up to a sense of their condition, and return, truly and effectually, to Himself.

This discipline it is we find accordingly taking effect in the next epistle to the church in Smyrna, the persecution which everybody knows broke out in the days of the heathen emperors. The 'tribulation ten days' has been referred to thus by those who had no thought of any application of these addresses to the state of the church at large. The justification of it by the history is undoubted in this case; but here you find that the Lord comes in, in the most gracious and tender way, though not to take them out of it, because He had His own purpose in their going through it. He wanted them to learn from the world how thoroughly in opposition to God it was. He would force them, as it were, by the great outward pressure, to Himself, that there they might learn, as there only they could, the true character of that which was creeping in; and therefore He lets them go through it, bidding them only be 'faithful unto death.' He had been so, had 'resisted unto blood, striving against sin.' He had gone through it, and taken away its sting. He gives them the assurance of His sympathy. By-and-by He would give them the crown of life.

Individually, multitudes were thus faithful. Nevertheless we must not imagine that in general the state of things improved. On the contrary, I want you to notice that there is a class of people spoken of here who are very distinctly brought into notice, and whom the Lord as thoroughly reprobates. If we have skill in reading the symbolic language which is everywhere here employed, we shall have no difficulty in regard to who they are, or to their place at this time in ecclesiastical history. The class of people which He refers to are depicted in these vivid words: "I know thy works and tribulation and poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of

*them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN."*

He does not speak of these then, as the people He is addressing, but do not let us imagine that on that account they were outside, and not in fact an existing party in the church. It is in accord with the character of these epistles that the Lord does not address these. It is just the same with the Nicolaitans, the followers of Balaam, and the woman Jezebel, who must be all admitted to have been inside the professing church. But He could not reckon those who were tools of Satan, as among those who had an ear to hear. That they called themselves Jews too, does not imply that they did not profess to be Christians also, for in fact they might be confounding Judaism and Christianity together; and this we know took place almost from the beginning, and the apostle Paul has everywhere to resist it. And these are not Jews, although they say they are. Had they been such, they would scarcely have needed to profess it so. Now Satan is the great adversary of Christ: the one continually seeking to destroy His work; as Christ on the other hand comes to destroy the works of the devil. This was the synagogue of Satan, a Jewish party, the tool of Satan in his effort to destroy Christ's work. They were not Jews really at all, but people taking Jewish ground, the ground of the synagogue; and blaspheming (or slandering) the true followers of Christ. It is slander, not persecution, such as from the world outside, that they are charged with; and the name by which the Lord calls them may instruct us sufficiently as to their real character. The 'synagogue' is the Jewish word for their gathering, as the Christian word everywhere used is 'assembly.' The word 'church,' we need scarcely say, is a word that really has no existence anywhere in the Word of God: it is the product of later times. This is well known, and there is nothing peculiar in saying so. Everyone who is acquainted with the original will allow it. At the same time it is of the greatest importance to keep this clearly in mind. If I speak of the 'Assembly,' of course it could not possibly be confounded for instance with walls, with bricks and mortar. Yet that is one notorious abuse of the word 'church.'

Then again, if I speak of the Christian assembly, as it is in Scripture, *i.e.*: the "assembly which is (Christ's) body," I cannot think of anything else than the gathering of all His members. Church membership

is nothing else or other than membership of the body of Christ, and there cannot be many bodies of Christ, but only one, and that containing all true Christians. How then can we speak of the church teaching, or anything of that sort? What is this church that teaches? The church is the whole company of teachers and taught alike. What they call church teaching is only the teaching of certain teachers in past generations, accepted more or less widely in after times. But that is not the church at all. The restoration (were it possible) of the true word 'assembly' would destroy many of these fancies at the very outset.

Now let us mark, there is a difference between the Jewish and the Christian words. The word for the New Testament assembly, 'ecclesia,' is derived from two words, meaning 'called out.' It is not merely a gathering. It is a gathering of people who are distinctly 'called out' from others. On the other hand 'synagogue' is a mere '*gathering together*.' It is no gathering *out*; and this very precisely distinguishes the Jewish from the Christian gathering.

Now in order to see what that means, let us look briefly at what Judaism was. It was a probationary system in which God was trying man to see if He could get anything out of him that He could accept,—trying man to see if by any assistance He could give him, he could by any possibility make out a righteousness for himself, and stand before Him on the basis of his own doings. In Judaism God gave man the law as the measure of obedience which He required, in order that he might see His face and live. But he never did see God's face, and never could see it, on those terms. The moment you see what the law is, you cannot have any doubt that it must effectually exclude man from God's presence forever. Everybody at once will say: "If I have got to love God with all my heart and mind and strength, and my neighbour as myself, I have not done it, do not do it, and can not do it." Now, if these are the terms upon which man is to stand before God by his own work, then it is absolutely impossible for a man to come into His presence in that way. He is certainly excluded: and that is exactly what the law was given for. Says the apostle: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."—(Rom. iii. 19.) That was not merely the actual effect of it, but it was the *de-*

*signed* effect of it. Its sentence says : "There is none righteous, no not one." That sentence was the end of the trial—the end of man's probation. It is the end of the trial when sentence is given. The apostle points out to the Jews that sentence had now been given—given by their own law. The trial of man as to this was ended. It is no use for a moment speaking as if the trial were going on, after sentence has been given. "There is none righteous :"—Abraham or Moses, for that matter. The trial is over, the sentence is given, and that is the issue of the law—its foreseen and designed issue,—every mouth stopped, and man guilty. I know it is very hard for us to imagine this, the law being God's holy, good and righteous law. But the truth is, that the very issue of it as a trial lay in this, that God was taking man up *on his own ground*. If you take all the forms of religion everywhere, you will find some way or other they are law—keeping or doing something in order to live. It is the universal principle of what is called 'natural religion'; and no wit or wisdom of man has been able to devise another way. That is exactly what Scripture says as to the law. It was the 'principles' or 'elements' of the world.' It is what the world everywhere recognizes and acts upon ; and rightly as between man and man. Laws are necessary to keep the world in any tolerable condition. We could not live but for them. Now what man finds so necessary in this way, he naturally takes up as the principle between God and himself, and even there he is in measure right. The trouble is he does not know, and would not like to believe, that on that ground he is simply lost, and nothing else,—and thus he would bring the measure of what is required down to what he believes to be the measure of his ability, and thus evade the righteous and inevitable sentence.

The law then chimes in with the natural thoughts of man's heart everywhere. But he finds it hard to realize that God gave that law simply for the purpose of condemning ; for he does not know the heart of God or the resources of His hand ; and if the law condemn, he sees nothing beyond. All his effort is therefore to escape judgment, but this he cannot : for God is holy and can not pare down His law, and on the other hand, *no* paring down will suffice to give man assurance before God. If sin be a matter of account at all with Him, he cannot appear before Him without it. The truth is, he is lost ; but he will not face the truth. There was one thing therefore characteristic of Judaism, as there is one thing

characteristic of Christianity. In Judaism it was characteristic, that God was hidden : while the one thing characteristic of Christianity is that God is revealed. "The Lord has said that He would dwell in thick darkness," says Solomon. "God is in the light," says the apostle : "No man hath seen God at any time : the Only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "He that hath seen Me," says the Son Himself, "hath seen the Father." Judaism and Christianity are thus in essential contrast. The unrent veil ; the way into the holiest not made manifest ; God essentially unknown ; that is Judaism ; and the very names by which God is called show this : He is the Almighty, the Eternal, (perhaps the nearest interpretation of Jehovah), the Highest. None of these names tell me His heart. The Almighty ! How will He use His power ? Eternity, Sovereignty—all these are not *Himself*. But the Son, His well-beloved, comes into the scene—become a man, too, to be near to man—and He reveals the *Father*. There I know Himself.

At the second giving of the law,—then when alone God spoke of mercy, and a gleam of the glory lighted up Moses' face,—still it was Jehovah only who appeared. And while it is true He declares Himself as "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,"—yet, He has to add, because it was still law, which the tables of stone, word for word, again contained—"and that will *by no means clear the guilty*." But then what hope for man, who at any rate is that ? Although God could thus say as to the wicked man, as He does in Ezekiel, "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is *lawful* and right, he shall save his soul alive," still the unrelaxed measure there is law and nothing else. Mercy might deal with his past sins and give him a new beginning, but the new leaf he turned over, could he keep it unblotted ? Could he ever bring to God the unblotted leaf which He required ? Alas, never ; he never could save his soul. And the law in its mildest form only made man's deep depravity the more apparent. It was but what the apostle calls it : "The ministration of death" and the "ministration of condemnation." And therefore, Moses at the mount still only saw God's back parts, and not His face. And therefore also the unrent veil through all the days of Judaism still showed, that the "way into



the holiest was not yet made manifest." What was made manifest was but the uselessness of all man's efforts to see God and live.

Now as to the essential characteristic of Christianity.

First. It was *not* the modification of law : it did not come to make that still milder. On the contrary the Christian revelation maintains the law in its utmost rigour. It is a Christian apostle who insists, that "if a man keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."—(James ii. 10). And it is another apostle who tells us, that "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse ; *for it is written*, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them."—(Gal. iii. 10).

Christianity maintains then, not abrogates, the righteous condemnation of all upon that ground : upon the ground of works of any kind, that is : for every point of man's duty is covered by the law. Sentence has been given then ; the trial of man ended. He is 'ungodly,' and more ; he is 'without strength' too. Nothing in the way of goodness or righteousness can be expected from him. What then remains ? Why, God can shew out Himself. He could not do it as long as the trial was going on. Man would naturally have said : "I have performed my part of the agreement ; I have kept the covenant." Therefore God had to keep His face veiled to man continually. But as soon as there was no doubt at all that man never could make his way in, never could stand before God at all, then, at the time when man's sin had reached its height, when the Son of God hung dead upon the cross man had given Him—when the carnal mind had shown out thus its enmity against God in the completest way, *God's own hand rent the veil from top to bottom* ; and by that precious blood-shedding there was a way made to go in to God, and for God on the other hand to come out to meet man. Yes, a *man* indeed found his way into the presence of God, and sat down there by virtue of His work ; but it was the *man*, *God's fellow*. (Zech. xiii. 7). And the way by which he entered was henceforth a way of access, consecrated and made safe for sinners by the virtue of His precious blood.

That is what characterizes Christianity. God has come in with His grace in a way independent of man's works altogether. There is no more any mixture allowed or possible. As the apostle says : "If it be of grace it is

no more of works ; otherwise grace is no more grace." (Rom. xi. 6.) There is nothing more emphatic than that : you cannot mix these two principles. The gospel of Christianity is grace. God is not requiring from man except that he receive what He offers. He is not asking for righteousness. He is 'ministering' it. The sinners exposed and condemned by the law are by the gospel welcomed and set at rest. He who by law could not clear the guilty, by the work of His Son justifies the ungodly. It is God that justifieth. Because "Christ died for the ungodly" He "justifies the ungodly." We are able then by the blood of Christ to go right into God's presence and see Him face to face. That God who was behind the veil and "in thick darkness," is as the apostle John says, "in the light." And that glory out of which we were once shut, becomes our permanent and peaceful home. But now mark, if that be the case, Christianity at once brings people into a distinct place of acceptance with God and relationship to Him, which Judaism never possibly could give. It brings into being a people who are distinguished from all the world beside as a people reconciled and at peace with God. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He *right* to become sons of God." (Jno. i. 12, marg.) In Christianity you have thus the 'calling out' of those who are able to take the place of being the children of God. In Judaism there was the mixing up as people might say now, of the church and world together. There was no separation, and none possible. In Judaism men were yet being tried, and nobody could take his place as a child of God, in the true sense, as born of Him. Nobody could call God in that sense his Father. The apostle tells us in the 4th of Galatians, that the true children, though heirs, were in their time of nonage, "under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the Father," and "differing nothing from servants, though lords of all." At school, with the schoolmaster, children say 'sir,' or 'master,' and not 'father.' So they : "enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Ps. cxlvi. 2.)

True, God was the Father of *Israel* ; but Israel was a nation in the flesh,—a mingled company of sinners and saints together. There was, there could be, no marking out the one from the other. There was no assembly of saints distinct from sinners. The only calling *out* was of Israel from the Gentiles, the type only, and in some sense the very contrast of the calling out of Christians

from the world. In Judaism thus there was complete mingling. In Christianity there is now the separation of God's children, who are exhorted distinctly to come out and be separate from unbelievers, in order really to enjoy their place as that. (2 Cor. vi. 14-18). And on the other hand Judaism was not in this sense a 'calling out,' but a mere 'synagogue,'—a 'gathering *together*.' There, in the 12th chapter of the Gospel of John, where Caiaphas unconsciously prophesies that Christ should "die for that nation," (Israel,) the apostle adds: "and not for that nation only, but also that He might gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." That was one purpose of the death of Christ, that He might be able now to gather together in one the children of God scattered by Judaism in fact itself. The church of God is the assembly of those, who, no longer on trial, have the place already of God's children, and as baptized of the Spirit, Christ's members; whose acceptance is ascertained and settled for ever;—of grace and not of works, nor mingled with them. The bringing in of Judaism again into the church, was the bringing in of distance between man and God. It was putting back the veil which God had rent on the cross—putting God into the thick darkness, and man still under trial, to find his way to meet God and stand before Him if he could. It was the putting distance between God and man of necessity, and covering the blessed face of God which He had revealed in Christ. Call it High Church or what you please, that it still is. Of necessity, therefore, it is the remingling of the church and world together. Because, if they are on trial, nobody knows who or what he is. You cannot separate saint from sinner; all are together on trial. You cannot separate the children of God from the children of the world.

Now if you look around, that is what you will find exactly almost everywhere. The results of that awful change from assembly to synagogue, are everywhere visible. In the epistle to the Galatians, we see what was coming into the church in the apostle's time; and you know how earnest he is about it: "I would they were even cut off," he says, and warns them if any one came and brought a different gospel, not another, (for there were not two), he was to be an anathema. That Judaism has got lodgment in the church of God means nothing less than the destruction of it in its true character. The first point of departure (after that which we were looking at in Ephesus) is the loss in the true sense of the

very church itself, and this was before uninspired church history began. Startling to say, we never have the true church historically existent as that any more. If an ecclesiastical historian can say, "the annals of the church are the annals of hell," we may surely own that what he is speaking of, is not (except in responsibility) the church, but the synagogue of Satan! Is the term too strong? Alas! while Christians are no doubt scattered through it, is the church of Rome, or of Constantine, or even further back, anything better as a whole, than the miserable travesty of the true church, Christ's body? Under whom but under Satan have men wrought to make it so? And every fresh departure from the truth is some fresh growth in fact of Judaism. No wonder, since it is man's religion naturally, and he has never been able to produce another. Baptised it may be, and transformed outwardly, no doubt. Men may be called Christians, although they hardly dare call themselves so; 'members of Christ,' made so by a sacrament; bishops may give the Holy Ghost, as freely as ever did apostles, if words may be taken for divine realities. Alas, under it all, and at no great depth, the beautiful form is hollow as a mask, a whitened sepulchre of impurity itself. Only, so many are defiled, it has become the fashion, and is not to be talked of; he that departs from iniquity makes himself a prey. Look around, beloved friends, and at least it will not be hard to recognize the forms of Judaism, nor to hear the language of the synagogue, again set up. Doubtless they call themselves Christians, who if you ask them, are they *Christ's*? will think you have no business to inquire; and if you set up to be His, will wonder at your presumption. If you have no doubt, they will doubt for you. With them men are still under trial, and they do not know how it will turn out. As in Judaism, you find everything to act upon man through his eye, his ear, his emotional nature: architecture and imposing spectacles; music and oratorical appeals; everything to wake up the religious sentiment in a being who is not wholly 'lost.' As I have said, although called Christians, you are not to judge if they be really such. They are church members; but the true church is invisible, and they know not where it is. They have practical working churches which do well enough. Have they eternal life? They would be afraid to say. Forgiveness of sin? They do not know. Are they children of God? Who knows? It is charity to suppose they are, and

they will accredit you if you will accredit them. Is not that what you find on every side almost? A mixture of the church and the world follows of course. Separation is reprobated. It is Pharisaism—pretending to be better than your neighbour.

All that is just really what we have here. It is the world gathered together, as the substitute for God's gathering of His own. God is gathering people *out of* the world; a people who are "not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world." As to the church it is practically gone completely. The world of necessity comes in like a flood, and the children of God are swamped. They call it the 'religious world,' and so it is, although believers there are in it, many: over-ridden, be-mired, and in bondage, a bondage which they feel, while they cannot break through it. If there be any fundamental difference between the church and the world, what must ensue from that mixture? The church becomes the world and the world the church. "All that is of the world" is necessarily found in it. To this day "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" are all there, and flourishing; and who rules over the world? Who is its god and prince?

I close here to night with just an application. You will, I hope, not misunderstand me, or think that I am confounding all Christendom together under the awful title we have been examining. God's own church still exists, thank God. Its members are to be found on all sides, though alas, scattered, and largely refusing true union with one another for the sake of alliances, which, if they had eyes to see, they would recognise as of the world. I do not forget that we of this day are heirs to evils which come to us sanctioned by great names, and by dear ones. I must not shrink on that account from calling them by their true titles: I am bound the more to do it. It is those who lent themselves in very early times to change the true church of God into a Jewish gathering upon legal principles, confounding His people and the world together, whom He denounces as Satan's synagogue. But alas, the attempt was largely successful. Men slept. The sad results are with us to-day. The practice and the principles remain,—widely diffused, and long almost universally accepted. The true church has disappeared—is invisible. Of God's light for the world, a few scattered lights appear, dim enough amid the darkness. How far to yourselves or in general the principles I have described apply, you must discern for

yourselves. Only let us be honest and be earnest. Let us not scruple to call evil that, because good men have practised it. And what we see as evil, let us refuse with our whole hearts. Let us refuse to call law gospel,—to sanction it, or listen to it. Let us remember the apostle's fearless and scathing words. Had I used such to-night, what would people say? Let us refuse too, complicity with what has changed the face of the professing church, until the features of Christ's spouse are no more visible. Let us refuse the yoke with unbelievers, even though they be baptized and orthodox unbelievers. It is the Lord says, not I, that we must do so that He may be, practically, to us the Father that He is. With these words let us close, and I will add no more to them: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel (an unbeliever)? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. vi. 14-18).

---

## LECTURE II.

---

### NICOLAITANISM, OR THE RISE AND GROWTH OF CLERISY. (Rev. II. 12-17.)

---

WE are going really to look at that 10th verse :  
“So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”

This next stage of the church's journey in its departure, alas, from truth, may easily be recognized historically. It applies to the time when, after having passed through the heathen persecution, and the faithfulness of many an Antipas being brought out by it, it got publicly recognized and established in the world. The characteristic of this epistle is—although I do not now dwell upon it, I hope to take it up another time—the church *dwelling* where Satan's throne is. ‘Throne’ it should be, not ‘seat.’ Now Satan has his throne, not in hell, which is his prison, and where he never reigns at all, but in the world. He is expressly called the ‘prince of this world.’ To dwell where Satan's throne is, is to settle down in the world, under Satan's government, so to speak, and protection. That is what people call the establishment of the church. It took place in Constantine's time. Although amalgamation with the world had been growing for a long time more and more decided, yet it was then that the church stepped into the seats of the old heathen idolatry. It was what people call the triumph of Christianity, but the result was that the church had the things of the world now as never before, in secure possession : the chief place in the world was hers, and the principles of the world everywhere pervaded her.

The very name of “Pergamos” intimates that. It is a word (without the particle attached to it, which is itself significant), —really meaning ‘marriage,’ and the church's marriage before Christ comes to receive her to Himself, is necessarily unfaithfulness to Him to whom she is espoused. It is the marriage of the church and *the world* which the epistle to Pergamos speaks of, the end of a courtship which had been going on long before.

There is something however which is really preli-

## NICOLAITANISM; OR, THE RISE AND GROWTH OF CLERISY. 217

minary to this, and mentioned in the very first address which I shall take up to-night, and which really comes in place here. I could not so well bring it in when we were looking at the first address, because there it is evidently incidental, and does not characterize the state of things. In the first address to the Ephesians the Lord says: "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the *deeds* of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate" (ii. 6). Here it is more than the 'deeds' of the Nicolaitanes. There are now not merely 'deeds' but 'doctrine.' And the church, instead of repudiating it, was holding with it. In the Ephesian days, they *hated* the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, but in Pergamos they 'had' and did not reprobate, those who held the doctrine. The serious question then is,—how shall we interpret this? I answer that the word 'Nicolaitanes' is the only thing really which we have to interpret it by. People have tried very hard to show that there was a sect of the Nicolaitanes, but it is owned by writers now almost on all sides to be very doubtful. Nor can we conceive why in epistles of the character which I trust I have shown these to have, there should be such repeated and emphatic mention of a mere obscure sect, about which people can tell us little or nothing; and that seems manufactured to suit the passage before us. The Lord solemnly denounces it: "Which thing I hate." It must have a special importance with Him, and be of moment in the church's history, little apprehended as it may have been. And another thing which we have to remember is, that it is not the way of Scripture to send us to church histories or to any history at all, in order to interpret its sayings. God's Word is its own interpreter, and we have not to go elsewhere in order to find out what is there. Otherwise it becomes a question of learned men searching and finding out for those who have not the same means or abilities, applications which must be taken on their authority alone. God does not leave us to that sort of thing. Besides it is the ordinary way in Scripture, and especially in passages of a symbolical character, such as is the part before us, for the names to be significant. I need not remind you how abundantly in the Old Testament this is the case, and in the New Testament, although less noticed, I cannot doubt but that there is the same significance throughout. Here, if we are left simply to the name, I think the name alone is sufficiently startling and instructive. Of course to those who spoke the language used, the mean-



ing would be no hidden or recondite thing, but as apparent as those of Bunyan's allegories. It means then "*conquering the people*." The last part of the word "*Laos*," is the word used in Greek for the people, and it is the word from which the commonly used term "*Laity*," is derived. The Nicolaitanes were just those 'subjecting, putting down the laity,' the mass of Christian people, in order unduly to lord it over them. There is another word which is very striking in this connection, and found in this very address, side by side with this; a word quite alike to this 'Nicolaitanes,' although it is a Hebrew word and not a Greek, as you have the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes so you have the 'doctrine of Balaam;' and as Nicolaitanes means 'conquering the people,' Balaam means '*destroying the people*.'

You have pointed out what he 'taught' Balak. Balaam's doctrine was, "to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication." For this purpose he enticed them to mixture with the nations, from which God had carefully separated them. That needful separation broken down was their destruction, so far as it prevailed. In like manner we have seen the Church to be called out from the world, and it is only too easy to apply the Divine type in this case. But here we have a confessedly typical people, with a corresponding significant name, and in such close connection as naturally to confirm the reading of the similar word Nicolaitanes as similarly significant. I shall have to speak more of this at another time, if the Lord will. Let us notice now the developement of Nicolaitanism. It is first of all, certain people who have this character and who—I am merely translating the word—first take the place of superiors over the people. Their 'deeds' show what they are. There is no 'doctrine' yet. But it ends in Pergamos, with the *doctrine* of the Nicolaitanes. The place is assumed now to be theirs by right. There is a doctrine, a teaching about it, received at least by some, and to which the Church at large, nay, on the whole, true souls have become indifferent. Now what has come in between these two things,—the 'deeds' and the 'doctrine'? What we were looking at last time—the rise of a party whom the Lord marks out as those who said they were Jews and were not, but who were the Synagogue of Satan: the adversary's attempt (alas! too successful) to Judaize the Church.

I was trying to show you last time what the

characteristics of Judaism are. It was a probationary system, a system of trial, in which it was to be seen if man could produce a righteousness for God. We know the end of the trial, and that God pronounced, "None righteous, no, not one." And then alone it was that God could manifest His grace. As long as He was putting man under trial, He could not possibly open the way to His own presence and justify the sinner there. He had, as long as this trial went on, to shut him out. For, on that ground, nobody could see God and live. Now, the very essence of Christianity is that all are welcomed in. There is an open door, and ready access, where the blood of Christ entitles every one, however much a sinner, to draw near to God, and to find in the first place, at His hand, justification as ungodly. To see God in Christ is not to die but live. And what further is the consequence of this? The people who have come this way to Him,—the people who have found the way of access through the peace-speaking blood into His presence, learned what He is in Christ, and been justified before God, are able to take, and taught to take, a place distinct from all others, as now His, children of the Father, members of Christ, His body. That is the Church, a body called out, separate from the world.

Judaism, on the other hand, necessarily mixed all together. Nobody there can take such a place with God. Nobody can cry "Abba, Father," really; wherefore, there could not be any separation. This had been once a necessity, and of God, no doubt. But now, Judaism being set up again, after God had abolished it, it was no use, it is no use, to urge that it was once of Him; its setting up was the too successful work of the enemy against this Gospel and against this Church. He brands these Judaizers as the "Synagogue of Satan."

Now you can understand at once, when the Church in its true character was practically lost sight of, when Church-members meant people baptized by water instead of by the Holy Ghost, or when the baptism of water and of the Holy Ghost were reckoned one, (and this very early became accepted doctrine) then of course the Jewish Synagogue was practically again set up. It became more and more impossible to speak of Christians being at peace with God or saved. They were *hoping* to be, and sacraments and ordinances became means of grace to ensure as far as might be a far-off salvation.

Let us see how far this would help on the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. It is plain that when, and as, the

Church sank into the Synagogue, the Christian people became practically what of old the Jewish had been. Now, what was that position? As I have said, there was no real drawing near to God at all. Even the High Priest who (as a type of Christ) entered into the Holiest once a year on the day of atonement, had to cover the mercy-seat with a cloud of incense that he might not die. But the ordinary Priests could not enter there at all, but only into the outer holy place. While the people in general could not come in even there. And this was expressly designed as a witness of their condition. It was the result of failure on their part, for God's offer to them, which you may find in the 19th chapter of Exodus, was this: "Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine, and ye shall be unto Me a *kingdom of priests*, and a holy nation."

They were thus conditionally offered equal nearness of access to God,—they should be *all* priests. But this was rescinded, for they broke the covenant; and then a special family is put into the place of priests, the rest of the people being put into the background, and only able to draw near to God through these.

Thus, a separate and intermediate priesthood characterized Judaism, as on the other hand, for the same reason, what we should call now *missionary* work there was none. There was no going out to the world in this way, no provision, no command, to preach the law at all. What, in fact, could they say? that God was in the thick darkness? that no one could see Him, and live? It is surely evident there was no 'good news' there. Judaism had no true Gospel. The absence of the evangelist and the presence of the intermediate priesthood told the same sorrowful story, and were in perfect keeping with each other.

Such was Judaism; how different, then, is Christianity! No sooner had the death of Christ rent the veil and opened a way of access into the presence of God, than at once there was a Gospel, and the new order is, "Go out into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." God is making Himself known, and "is He the God of the Jews only?" Can you confine that within the bounds of a nation? No, the fermentation of the new wine would burst the bottles.

The intermediate priesthood was, on the other hand,

done away; for all the Christian people are priests now to God. What was conditionally offered to Israel is now an accomplished fact in Christianity. We are a kingdom of priests; and it is, in the wisdom of God, Peter, ordained of man the great head of ritualism, who in his first epistle, announces the two things which destroy ritualism root and branch for those who believe him. First, that we are "born again," not of baptism, but "by the Word of God that liveth and abideth for ever;" and this, "the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." Secondly, instead of a set of priests, he says to all Christians: "Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (ii. 5.) The sacrifices are spiritual, praise and thanksgiving, and our lives and bodies also (Heb. xiii. 15, 16; Rom. xii. 1), but this is to be with us true priestly work, and thus do our lives get their proper character: they are the thank-offering service of those able to draw nigh to God.

In Judaism, let me repeat, no one drew really nigh, but the people—the laity (for it is only a Greek word made English,)—the people not even as the priest could. The priestly caste, wherever it is found, means the same thing. There is no drawing nigh of the whole body of the people at all. It means distance from God and darkness,—God shut out.

Now, *THAT is the meaning of the 'Clergy.'* I want you to look at it very carefully. I want you not to think it a mere question—as people are very apt to do—of a certain order of Church government. I want you to see the important principles which are involved in this, and how really the Lord has cause, as He must have, to say of Nicolaitanism: "which I also hate." And I fearlessly say, that my aim and object to-night is, to try to make you hate it as God hates it.

I am not speaking of people, God forbid. I am speaking of a thing. Our unhappiness is, that we are at the end of a long series of departures from God, and as a consequence, we grow up in the midst of many things, which come down to us as "tradition of the elders," associated with names which we all revere and love, upon whose authority in reality we have accepted them, without ever having looked at them really in the light of God's presence. And there are many thus whom we gladly recognize as truly men of God and servants of God in a false position. It is of that position I am speaking. I am speaking of a *thing*, as the Lord does:

“which thing I hate.” He does not say “which people I hate.” Although in those days evil of this kind was not an inheritance, as now, and the first propagators of it, of course, had a responsibility, self-deceived as they may have been, peculiarly their own. Still in this matter as in all others we need not be ashamed or afraid to be where the Lord is. Nay, we cannot be with Him in this unless we are. And He says of Nicolaitanism, “which thing I hate.”

Because what does it mean? I will tell you in brief what the very idea of a clergy is. It means a spiritual caste, or class, a set of people having *officially* a right to leadership on spiritual things; a nearness to God, derived from official place, not spiritual power: in fact the revival, under the names, and with various modifications, of that very intermediate priesthood which distinguished Judaism, and which Christianity emphatically disclaims. That is what a clergy means; and in contradiction to these, the rest of Christians are but the laity, the seculars, necessarily put back into more or less of the old distance, which the cross of Christ has done away.

We see then why it needed that the church should be Judaized, before the deeds of the Nicolaitanes could ripen into a ‘doctrine.’ The Lord even had authorized obedience to Scribes and Pharisees sitting in Moses’ seat; and to make this text apply, as people apply it now, *Moses’ seat* had of course to be set up in the Christian church; this done, and the mass of Christians degraded from the priesthood Peter spoke of, into mere ‘lay members,’ the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was at once established.

Understand me fully, that I am in no wise questioning the Divine institution of the Christian ministry. God forbid; for ministry in the fullest sense is characteristic of Christianity, as I have already in fact maintained. Nor do I, while believing that all true Christians are ministers also by the very fact,—deny a special and distinctive ministry of the word, as what God has given to some, and not to all,—though for the use of all. No one truly taught of God can deny, that some, not all among Christians, have the place of evangelist, pastor, teacher. I believe I make more of this than current views do; for I believe that every true minister is a gift from Christ in His care as Head of the Church, for His people, and one who has his place from God alone, and is responsible in that character to God and God alone. The miserable system which I see around degrades him from this bless-

ed place, and makes him in fact little more than the manufacture and the servant of men. While giving, it is true, a place of lordship over people which gratifies a carnal mind, still it fetters the spiritual man, and puts him in chains; everywhere giving him an artificial conscience towards man, hindering in fact his conscience being properly before God.

Let me briefly state to you what the scripture doctrine of the ministry is, it is a very simple one. The Assembly of God is Christ's body; all the members are members of Christ. There is no other membership in scripture than this, the membership of Christ's body, to which all true Christians belong: not many bodies of Christ, but one body; not many Churches, but one Church.

There is of course a different place for each member of the body by the very fact that he is such. All members have not the same office: there is the eye, the ear, and so on, but they are all necessary, and all necessarily ministering, in some way or sense, to one another.

Every member has its place, not merely locally, and for the benefit of certain other members, but for the benefit of the whole body.

Each member has its *gift*, as the Apostle teaches distinctly. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us*" &c., (Rom. xii, 4—6.)

In the 12th chapter of 1 Corinthians, the Apostle speaks at large of these gifts; and he calls them by a significant name; "manifestations of the Spirit." They are gifts of the Spirit of course, but more, they are "manifestations of the Spirit," they manifest themselves where they are found: where, (I need scarcely add that I mean,) there is spiritual discernment,—where souls are before God.

For instance, if you take the Gospel of God, whence does it derive its authority and power? From any sanction of men? any human credentials of any kind? or from its own inherent power? I dare maintain, that the common attempt to authenticate the messenger, takes away from, instead of adding to, the power of the word. God's word must be received as such: he that receives it sets to his seal that *God is true*. Its ability to meet the needs of heart and conscience is derived

from the fact that it is 'God's good news,' who knows perfectly what man's need is, and has provided for it accordingly. He who has felt its power knows well from whom it comes. The work and witness of the Spirit of God in the soul need no witness of man to supplement them.

Even the Lord's appeal in His own case was to the truth he uttered : "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" When He stood forth in the Jewish synagogues, or elsewhere, He was but, in men's eyes, a poor carpenter's son, accredited by no school or set of men at all. All the weight of authority was ever against Him. He disclaimed even "receiving testimony from men." God's word alone should speak for God. "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." And how did it approve itself? By the fact of its being truth. "If I speak the truth, why do you not believe Me?" It was the truth that was to make its way with the true. "He that will do God's will shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." He says, "I speak the truth, I bring it to you from God ; and if it is truth, and if you are seeking to do God's will, you will learn to recognize it as the truth." God will not leave people in ignorance and darkness, if they are seeking to be doers of His will. Can you suppose that God will allow true hearts to be deceived by whatever plausible deceptions may be abroad? He is able to make His voice known by those who seek to hear His voice. And so the Lord says to Pilate : "Every one that is *of the truth* heareth My voice," (Jno. xviii, 37.) "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"; and again : "a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him ; for they know not the voice of strangers," (Jno. x, 27, 5.)

Such is the nature of truth, then, that to pretend to authenticate it to those who are themselves true, is to dishonour it, as if it were not capable of self-evidence, and so dishonour God, as if *He* could be wanting to souls, or to what He Himself has given.

Nay, the Apostle speaks of "by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to *every* man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. iv. 2). And the Lord, of its being the condemnation of the world, that "light is come into the world, and men loved darkness, rather than light, because their deeds were evil," (Jno. iii. 19). There was no lack of evidence : light was there, and men owned its power to their own condemnation, when they sought escape from it.

Even so in the gift was there "the manifestation of the Spirit," and it was "given to every man to profit withal." By the very fact that he had it, he was responsible to use it—responsible to Him who had not given it in vain. In the gift itself lay the ability to minister, and title too; for I am bound to help and serve with what I have. And if souls are helped, they need scarcely ask if I had commission to do it.

That is the simple character of ministry: the service of love, according to the ability which God gave, mutual service of each to each and each to all, without jostling or exclusion of one another. Each gift was thrown into the common treasury, and all were the richer by it. God's blessing and the manifestation of the Spirit were all needed sanction. All were not teachers, still less, public teachers, of the Word, still in these cases the same principles exactly applied. That was but one department of a service which had many, and which was rendered by each to each according to his sphere.

Was there nothing else than that? Was there no ordained class at all then? That is another thing altogether. There were, without doubt, in the primitive church two classes of officials, regularly appointed, or (if you like) ordained. The deacons were those who, having charge of the fund for the poor and other purposes, were chosen by the saints first for this place of trust in their behalf, and then appointed authoritatively by apostles mediately or immediately. Elders were a second class,—elderly men, as the word imports,—who were appointed in the local assemblies as 'bishops' or 'overseers,' to take cognizance of their state. That the elders were the same as bishops may be seen in Paul's words to the elders of Ephesus, where he exhorts them to "take heed to . . . all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*." There they have translated the word, 'bishops,' but in Titus they have left it:—"that thou shouldst ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee; if any be blameless . . . for a *bishop* must be blameless," (Acts xx., 28; Tit. i. 5, 7).

Their work was to 'oversee,' and although for that purpose their being 'apt to teach' was a much needed qualification, in view of errors already rife, yet no one could suppose that teaching was confined to those who were 'elders,' "husbands of one wife, having their children in subjection with all gravity." This was a needed test for one who was to be a bishop: "for if a



man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God ?" (1 Tim. iii. 1—7).

Whatever gifts they had they used, as all did, and thus the apostle directs : "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, specially they who labour in the word and doctrine," (v. 17). But they might rule, and rule well, without this.

The meaning of their ordination was just this, that here it was *not* a question of 'gift' but of authority. It was a question of title to take up and look into, often difficult and delicate matters, among people too very likely in no state to submit to what was merely spiritual. The ministration of gift was another thing, and free, under God, to all.

Thus much, very briefly, as to Scripture doctrine. Our painful duty is now to put in contrast with it the system I am deprecating, according to which a distinct class are devoted formally to spiritual things, and the people—the laity—are in the same ratio excluded from such occupation. This is true Nicolaitanism,—the 'subjection of the people.'

Again I say, not only that ministry of the Word is entirely right, but that there are those who have special gift and responsibility (though still not exclusive) to minister it. But priesthood is another thing, and a thing sufficiently distinct to be easily recognized where it is claimed or in fact exists. I am, of course, aware that Protestants in general disclaim any priestly powers for their ministers. I have no wish nor thought of disputing their perfect honesty in this disavowal. They mean that they have no thought of the minister having any authoritative power of absolution ; and that they do not make the Lord's table an altar, whereon afresh day after day the perfection of Christ's one offering is denied by countless repetitions. They are right in both respects ; but it is scarcely the whole matter. If we look more deeply we shall find that much of a priestly character may attach where neither of these have the least place.

Priesthood and ministry may be distinguished in this way. Ministry (in the sense we are now considering) is to *men* ; priesthood is to *God*. The minister brings God's message to the people ; he speaks for Him to them. The priest goes to God *for* the people ; he speaks in the reverse way for them to Him. It is surely easy to distinguish these two attitudes.

"Praise and thanksgiving" are spiritual 'sacrifices':

they are part of our offering as priests. Put a special class into a place where regularly and officially they act thus for the rest, they are at once in the rank of an intermediate priesthood,—mediators with God for those who are not so near.

The Lord's Supper is the most prominent and fullest expression of Christian thankfulness and adoration publicly and statedly. But what Protestant minister does not look upon it as his official right to administer this? What 'layman' would not shrink from the profanation of administering it? And this is one of the terrible evils of the system, that the mass of Christian people are thus distinctly secularized. Occupied with worldly things, they cannot be expected to be spiritually what the clergy are. And to this they are given over as it were. They are released from spiritual occupations to which they are not equal, and to which others give themselves entirely.

But this must evidently go much further. "The *priest's* lips should keep knowledge." The laity, who have become that, by abdicating their priesthood, how should they retain the knowledge belonging to a priestly class? The unspirituality, to which they have given themselves up, pursues them here. The class whose business it is, become the authorized interpreters of the Word also, for how should the secular man know so well what Scripture means? Thus the clergy become spiritual eyes and ears and mouth for the laity, and are in the fair way of becoming the whole body too.

But it suits people well. Do not mistake me as if I meant that this is all come in as the assumption of a class merely. It is that, no doubt, but never could this miserable and unscriptural distinction of clergy and laity have obtained so rapidly as it did, and so universally, if everywhere it had not been found well adapted to the tastes of those even whom it really displaced and degraded. Not alone in Israel, but in Christendom also, has it been fulfilled: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule through their means, and *my people love to have it so!*" Alas, they did, and they do. As spiritual decline sets in, the heart that is turning to the world barter readily, Esau-like, its spiritual birthright for a mess of pottage. It exchanges thankfully its need of caring too much for spiritual things, with those who will accept the responsibility of this. Worldliness is well covered with a layman's cloak. And as the church at large dropped out of

first love, as it did rapidly, and then the world began to come in through the loosely guarded gates, it became more and more impossible for the rank and file of Christendom to take the blessed and wonderful place which belonged to Christians. The step taken downwards, instead of being retrieved, only made succeeding steps each one easier ; until in less than 300 years from the beginning, a Jewish priesthood and a ritualistic religion were everywhere installed. Only so much the worse, as the precious things of Christianity left their names at least as spoils to the invader, and the shadow became for most the substance itself.

But I must return to look more particularly at one feature in this clerisy. I have noted the confounding of ministry and priesthood ; the assumption of an official title in spiritual things, of title to administer the Lord's Supper, and I might have added also, to baptize. For none of these things can Scripture be found at all. But I must dwell a little more on the emphasis that is laid on ordination.

I want you to see a little more what ordination means. In the first place, if you look through the New Testament, you will find nothing about ordination to teach or to preach. You find people going about everywhere freely exercising whatever gift they had ; the whole church was scattered abroad from Jerusalem except the Apostles, and they went everywhere preaching (literally, evangelizing) the Word. The persecution did not ordain them, I suppose. So with Apollos. So with Philip the deacon. There is in fact no trace of anything else. Timothy received a gift by prophecy, by the laying on of Paul's hands with those of the elders, but that was *gift*, not authorization to use it. So he is bidden to communicate his own knowledge to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also ; but there is not a word about ordaining them. The case of elders I have already noticed. That of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch is the most unhappy that can be for the purpose people use it for. For prophets and teachers are made to ordain an apostle, and one who totally disclaims being that, '*of men or by man.*' And there the Holy Ghost—*not* confers power of ordaining any, but says, "*Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereto I have called them,*"—a special missionary journey which it is shewn afterwards they had fulfilled. (See Acts viii, xi, xiii, xviii ; 1 Tim. &c.)

Now, what means this 'ordination' ? It means

much, you may be sure, or it would not be so zealously contended for, as it is. There are, no doubt, two phases of it. In the most extreme, as among Romanists and Ritualists, there is claimed for it in the fullest way that it is the conveyance, not merely of authority, but of spiritual power. They assume with all the power of apostles to give the Holy Ghost by the laying on of their hands, and here for priesthood in the fullest way. The people of God as such are rejected from the priesthood He has given them, and a special class are put into their place to mediate for them in a way which sets aside the fruit of Christ's work, and ties them to the church as the channel of all grace. Among Protestants you think perhaps I need not dwell on this; but it is done among some of these also, in words which to a certain class of them seem strangely to mean nothing, while another class find in them the abundant sanction of their highest pretensions.

Those, on the other hand, who rightly and consistently reject these unchristian assumptions, do not pretend indeed to confer any gift in ordination, but only to 'recognize' the gift which God has given. But then after all, this recognition is considered necessary before the person can baptize or administer the Lord's Supper,—things which really require no peculiar gift at all. And as to the ministry of the Word, God's gift is made to require human sanction, and is 'recognized' on behalf of His people by those who are considered to have a discernment, which the people as such have not. Blind themselves or not, these men are to become "leaders of the blind," else why need others to be eyes for them; while their own souls are taken out of the place of immediate responsibility to God, and made responsible unduly to man. An artificial conscience is manufactured for them, and conditions are constantly imposed, to which they have to conform in order to obtain the needful recognition. It is well if they are not under the control of their ordainers as to their path of service also, as they generally are.

In principle this is unfaithfulness to God: for if He has given me gift to use for Him, I am surely unfaithful if I go to any man or body of men to ask their leave to use it. The gift itself carries with it the responsibility of using it, as we have seen. If they say, 'but people may make mistakes,' I own it thoroughly; but who is to assume my responsibility, if I am mistaken? And again the mistakes of an ordaining body are infinitely

more serious than those of one who merely runs unsent. Their mistakes are consecrated and perpetuated by the ordination they bestow; and the man who, if he stood simply upon his own merits, would soon find his true level, has a character conferred upon him by it which the whole weight of the system must sustain. Mistake or not, he is none the less one of the clerical body,—a minister, if he has nothing really to minister. He must be provided for, if only with some less conspicuous place, where souls, dear to God as any, are put under his care, and must be unfed if he cannot feed them.

Do not accuse me of sarcasm; it is the system I am speaking of which is a sarcasm: a swathing of the body of Christ in bands which hinder the free circulation of the vitalizing blood which should be permeating unrestrictedly the whole of it. Nature itself should rebuke the folly, the enormous inference from such Scriptural premises as that apostles and apostolic men 'ordained elders'? They must prove that they are either; and (granting them that,) that the Scripture 'elder' might be no elder at all, but a young unmarried man just out of his teens, and on the other hand was evangelist, pastor, teacher, all God's various gifts rolled into one. This is the minister,—according to the system indeed *the* minister, —the all in all to the fifty or five hundred souls, who are committed to him as '*his flock*,' with which no other has title to interfere! Surely,—surely—the brand of Nicolaitanism is upon the forefront of such a system as this!

Take it at its best, the man, if gifted at all, is scarcely likely to have *every* gift. Suppose he is an evangelist, and souls are happily converted, he is no teacher and cannot build them up. Or he is a teacher sent to a place where there are but a few Christians, and the mass of his congregation unconverted men. There are no conversions; and his presence there (*according to the system*) keeps away the evangelist who is needed there. Thank God! He is ever breaking up these systems, and in some irregular way the need may be supplied. But the supply is schismatical and a confusion: the new wine breaks the poor human bottles.

For all this the system is responsible. The exclusive ministry of one man or of a number of men in a congregation has no shred of Scripture to support it; while the ordination, as we have seen, is the attempt to confine all ministry to a certain class, and make it rest on human authorization rather than on Divine gift, the people,

Christ's sheep, being denied their competency to hear His voice. The inevitable tendency is to fix upon the *man* the attention which should be devoted to the word he brings. The question is, is he accredited? If he speak truly, is subordinated to the question, is he ordained? or, perhaps I should say, his orthodoxy is settled already for them by the fact of his ordination.

Paul, an apostle, not of men nor by man, could not have been, upon this plan, received. There were apostles before him, and he neither went up to them nor got anything from them. If there were a succession, he was a break in the succession. And what he did he did designedly, to show that his gospel was not after man (Gal. i. 11) and that it might not rest upon the authority of man. Nay, if he himself preached a different gospel from that he had preached, (for there was not *another*), yea, or an angel from heaven (where the authority, if that were in question, might seem conclusive) his solemn decision is "let him be accursed."

Authority then is nothing, if it be not the authority of the word of God. That is the test, is it according to the Scriptures? "If the blind lead the blind shall they not *both* fall into the ditch?" To say, "I could not of course know, I trusted another," will not save you from the ditch.

But the unspiritual and unlearned layman, how can he pretend to equal knowledge with the educated and accredited minister, devoted to spiritual things? In point of fact, in general he does not. He yields to the one who should know better; and practically the minister's teaching largely supplants the authority of the word of God. Not that *certainly* indeed is thus attained. He cannot conceal it from himself that people differ—wise and good and learned and accredited as they may be. But here the devil steps in, and, if God has allowed men's 'authorities' to get into a Babel of confusion, as they have,—suggests to the unwary soul, that the confusion must be the result of the obscurity of Scripture, whereas they have got into it by *disregarding* Scripture.

But this is every where! Opinion, not faith; opinion to which you are welcome and have a right, of course; and you must allow others a right to theirs. You may say, 'I believe,' as long as you do not mean by that, 'I know.' To claim 'knowledge' is to claim that you are wiser, more learned, better, than whole generations before you, who thought opposite to you.

Need I shew you how infidelity thrives upon this?

how Satan rejoices when for the simple and emphatic 'Yea' of the Divine voice, he succeeds in substituting the Yea and Nay of a host of jarring commentators? Think you, you can fight the Lord's battles with the rush of human opinion instead of "the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God?" Think you, "Thus says John Calvin, or John Wesley," will meet Satan as satisfactorily as "Thus saith the *Lord*?"

Who can deny that such thoughts are abroad, and in no wise confined to Papists or Ritualists? The tendency, alas, is in the heart of unbelief ever departing from the *living* God, as near to His own to-day as at any time through the centuries His Church has travelled on, as competent to instruct as ever, as ready to fulfil the word, "he that will do His will shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." The 'eyes' are 'of the heart,' and not the *head*. He has hidden from wise and prudent what He reveals to babes. The school of God is more effectual than all colleges combined, and here layman and cleric are equal: "he that is spiritual discerneth all things," and he alone. Substitute for spirituality there is none: unspirituality the Spirit of God alone can remedy. Ordination, such as practised, is rather a sanction put upon it; an attempt to manifest what is the manifestation of the Spirit, or not His work at all, and to provide leaders for the blind, whom with all their care they cannot ensure not being blind also.

Before I close, I must say a few words about 'succession.' An ordination which pretends to be derived from the apostles, must needs be (to be consistent) a successional one. Who can confer authority (and in the least and lowest theories of ordination, authority *is* conferred, as to baptize and to administer the Lord's Supper)—but ~~one~~ himself authorized for this very purpose? You must therefore have a chain of ordained men, lineally succeeding one another. Apostolic succession is as necessary on the Presbyterian as on the Episcopalian plan. John Wesley, as his warrant for ordaining, fell back upon the essential oneness of bishop and presbyter. Nay, presbyterians will urge against episcopalians the ease of maintaining succession in this way. I have nothing to do with this: I only insist that succession is needed.

But then, mark the result. It is a thing apart alike from spirituality and from truth even. A Romish priest may have it as well as any; and indeed through the gutter of Rome most of that we have around us must necessarily have come down. Impiety and impurity do

not in the least invalidate Christ's commission. The teacher of false doctrine may be as well His messenger as the teacher of truth. Nay, the possession of the truth, with gift to minister it and godliness combined, are actually *no part* of the credentials of the true ambassador. He may have all these, and be none. He may want them all and be truly one nevertheless.

Who can believe such doctrine? Can He who is truth accredit error? the righteous One unrighteousness? It is impossible. This ecclesiasticism violates every principle of morality and hardens the conscience that has to do with it. For why need we be careful for truth, if He is not? And how can He send messengers that He would not have to be believed? His own test of a true witness fails: for "he that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory, but he that seeketh *his* glory that seeth him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness in him." His own test of credibility fails, for "if I *speake the truth*, why do ye not believe me?" was His own appeal.

No: to state this principle is to condemn it. He who foresaw and predicted the failure of what should have been the bright and evident witness of His truth and grace, could not ordain a succession of teachers for it who should carry His commission, unforfeitable by whatever failure! Before apostles had left the earth, the house of God had become as a 'great house,' and it was necessary to separate from vessels to dishonour in it. He who bade His apostle instruct another to "follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart," could not possibly tell us to listen to men who are alien from all this, as His ministers, and having His commission in spite of all. And thus notably, in the second epistle to Timothy in which this is said, there is no longer, as in the first, any talk of elders or of ordained men. It is '*faithful* men' who are wanted, *not* for ordination, but for the deposit of the truth committed to Timothy: "the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Thus God's holy word vindicates itself to the heart and conscience ever. The effort to attach His sanction to a Romish priesthood, or a Protestant hierarchy fails alike upon the same ground, for as to this they are upon the same ground. Alas, Nicolaitanism is no past thing, no obscure doctrine of past ages, but a wide-spread and gigantic system of error, fruitful in evil results. ~~Error~~



is long-lived, though mortal. Reverence it not for its grey hairs, and follow not with a multitude to do evil. With cause does the Lord say in this case: "which thing I hate." If He does, shall we be afraid to have fellowship with Him? That there are good men entangled in it all must admit. There are godly men and true ministers, ignorantly wearing the livery of men. May God deliver them, may they cast aside their fetters and be free! May they rise up to the true dignity of their calling, responsible to God, and walking before Him alone!

On the other hand, beloved brethren, it is of immense importance that all His people, however diverse their places in the body of Christ may be, should realize that they are *all* as really ministers as they are all priests. We need to recognize that every Christian has spiritual duties flowing from spiritual relationship to every other Christian. It is the privilege of each one to contribute his share to the common treasury of gift, with which Christ has endowed His Church. Nay, he who does not contribute is actually holding back what is his debt to the whole family of God. No possessor of one talent is entitled to wrap it in a napkin upon that account: it would be mere unfaithfulness and unbelief.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." Brethren in Christ, when shall we awake to the reality of our Lord's words there? Ours is a never-failing spring of perpetual joy and blessing, which if we but come to when we thirst, out of our bellies shall flow rivers of living water. The spring is not limited by the vessel which receives it: it is divine, and yet ours fully,—fully as can be! Oh to know more this abundance, and the responsibility of the possession of it, in a dry and weary scene like this! Oh to know better the infinite grace which has taken us up as channels of its out-flow among men! When shall we rise up to the sense of our common dignity? to the sweet reality of fellowship with Him who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Oh for *unofficial* ministry, the overflowing of full hearts into empty ones, so many as there are around us! How we should rejoice in a scene of want and misery and sin to find perpetual opportunity to show the competency of Christ's fulness to meet and minister to every form of it.

Official ministry is practical independence of the Spirit of God. It is to decide that such a vessel shall overflow though at the time, it may be, practically empty; and on the other hand that such another shall *not* overflow, however full He may have

filled it up. It proposes, in the face of Him who has come down in Christ's absence to be the Guardian of His people, to provide for order and for edification, not by spiritual power but by legislation. It would provide for failure on the part of Christ's sheep to hear His voice, by making it as far as possible unnecessary for them to do so. It thus sanctions and perpetuates unspirituality, in stead of condemning or avoiding it.

It is quite true that in God's mode of treating it, the failure in man's part may become more evident externally: for He cares little for a correct outside when the heart is nevertheless not right with Him, and He knows well that ability to maintain a correct outside may in fact prevent a truthful judgment of what is our real condition before Him. Men would have upbraided Peter with his attempt to walk upon those waves which made his little faith so manifest. The Lord would only rebuke the littleness of the faith which made him fail. And man still and ever, would propose the boat as the remedy for failure, instead of the strength of the Lord's support, which He made Peter prove. Yet after all the boat confessedly may fail; winds and waves may overthrow it; but "the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." Through these many centuries of failure have we proved Him untrustworthy? Beloved, is it your honest conviction that it is absolutely safe to trust the living God? Then let us make no provision for *His* failure however much we may have to own that *we* have failed! Let us act as if we really trusted Him.

---

### LECTURE III.

#### ESTABLISHMENTS, AND A MONEY BASIS.

(Rev. II. 12-17.)

We have seen, beloved friends, two main steps in the Church's outward decline, after the loss of first love had made any departure possible. First of all, the Divine idea of the Church was lost. Instead of its being a body of people, having in the full and proper sense, eternal life and salvation, children of God, members of Christ, and called out of the world as not belonging to it, it became a mere 'gathering together' of people for whom, indeed, the old names might in part remain, but who were in fact the world itself with true Christian people scattered through it. Children of God, no doubt, they might be by baptism, and by it have forgiveness of sins also, but that was no settlement for eternity at all. They were confessedly under trial, and uncertain as to how things would finally turn out, a ground which all the world could understand and appreciate, with sacraments and means of grace to help them on, and prevent them realizing the awfulness of their position.

Of course, this immense change from Church to Synagogue was not at once effected. Yet the Church historically known to us, outside of the New Testament, is but in fact essentially the Synagogue. The fire of persecution helped to prevent for a while the extreme result, and to separate mere professors from the confessors of Christ. Still through it all the leaven of Judaism wrought its deadly work; and no sooner was persecution stopped than the world's overtures for peace and alliance were eagerly listened to, and with Constantine, for many, the millennium seemed to have arrived. Could the Church of the Apostles have fallen into the world's arms so? Their voice would have

rebuked the thought as of Satan, as indeed it was. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"

The second step we saw in the rise of a clergy, a spiritual or priestly class, replacing the true Christian ministry, the free exercise of the various gifts which resulted from the various places of the membership of the body of Christ. The clerical assumption displaced the body of Christian people—now a true 'laity'—as at least less spiritual and near to God; a place, alas! easily accepted where Christ had lost what the world had gained in value with His own. As Judaism prevailed, and the world came in through the ever opening door, the distance between the two classes increased, and more and more the clergy became the channels of all blessing to the rest. Practically, and in the end almost openly, they became the Church; and the Church became, from a company of those already saved, a channel for conveying a sacramental and hypothetical salvation.

We now come to look at the issue of all this, when circumstances favoured. In Pergamos, where the Lord presents Himself no longer in the tender and gracious sympathy He manifests for His suffering ones in Smyrna, but as having the sharp sword with two edges,—His word to judge the state of things among them—in Pergamos, the characteristic thing is, they are "dwelling where Satan's throne is." 'Throne,' not 'seat,' is confessedly the word used. The translators apparently shrank from the use of the stronger word; for, according to current belief, Satan reigns in hell, not on earth, that is, in the prison in which God has put him, but from which he has strangely broken loose. Milton's picture is the popular one, and with it, no doubt, you are familiar. But it is as unscriptural as it is unreasonable. What would be thought of a government which allowed a chief malefactor to reign in his prison, over his fellow culprits, and to break prison and roam freely where he would? God's government is not chargeable with this. In hell Satan will be the lowest and most miserable there; and when committed to it there will be no escape permitted. But that will not be until after the millennium, as Rev. xx. assures us.

This idea however permits people to escape from the appalling thought,—plainly the Scriptural one,—that he is now the 'prince of this world,' and the 'god of this world' (or 'age'). It is over the world he exercises au-

thority, and this gives to the 'world' and 'dwelling in the world' an excessively solemn character.

For 'dwelling in the world' is another thing, of course, from '*being*' in it. We are in the world perforce, and in no wise responsible for that, but to be a dweller in it is a moral state, it is to be a citizen in it, the condition which the apostle speaks of in Philippians as obtaining among professing Christians: "For many walk of whom I have told you before, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame,—who mind earthly things; for *our* conversation (or citizenship) is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (iii. 18-20).

Their characteristic is, that they are enemies, not of Christ personally, but of the *Cross*, that cross by which we are "crucified to the world, and the world to us." Their hearts were on earthly things, which, not satisfying them, as earthly things cannot, made their god to be their belly, that inward craving became their masters and made them drudges in its service.

The Christian's citizenship is 'in heaven.' That forms his character, and delivers him from the unsatisfying pursuit of earthly things. But little indeed is this understood now. Even where people can talk and sing of the world being a wilderness, you will find that in general the real idea of a place of sorrow and trial, to which all,—the world and the Christian alike—are exposed. Pilgrimage in their minds is a thing perforce. The world passes away, and they cannot keep it, but if honest they would own that they would keep it, if they could. As they cannot, they are glad enough to think there is such a place as heaven at the end of it; in the meanwhile they go on trying (honestly, no doubt, if you can call such a thing honest in a Christian) to get as much of it as they can,—or at least as much as will make them comfortable in it.

It is a different thing to be a pilgrim really—a man journeying on earth with an absorbing purpose to reach a fixed point beyond; not one whom the world is leaving, but one who is leaving it. By the very fact that the stream of time is carrying us all down with it, if that constituted a pilgrim, it would make all the world pilgrims, and so, in fact, people do talk of the "pilgrimage of life;" but this is the abuse of a term, and not its use. We can be pilgrims in that sense, and find all the world companions; and such in fact had got to be the idea of

pilgrimage in the Pergamos state of the church. They talked of it, no doubt, and built their houses the more solidly to stand the rough weather; if they owned there were 'rainy days' ahead, it was the more their duty to lay by for a rainy day. *God said*: they were dwelling where Satan's throne was.

The history of old Babel was repeating itself. You may find the vivid type of it in Genesis xi., where men 'journeyed' indeed, but not as pilgrims, or as only that till they could find some smooth place to settle down. "They journeyed," as colonists or immigrants on the look out for land, from the rough hills where human life beyond the flood began; "from the east" (with their backs, that is, toward the blessed dawn); and "they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there."

That was, alas, the Church's progress: from the rough heights of martyrdom down to the smooth level where were no difficulties to deter the most timid souls. There the Church multiplied, and there they began to build "a city and a tower whose top should reach to heaven;" but the city was not Jerusalem, but Jerusalem's old enemy; not the "possession of peace" but the city of "confusion," Babel.

Yet it prospered. They built well. True, they were away from the quarries of the hills, and could not build with the 'stone' they had there been used to. They did the best thing they could with the clay which was native in the soil of that lower land. "They had bricks for stone, and slime for mortar." We have seen some of this work already. It looks well, and lasts in the fine climate of those regions quite a long time—human material, not divine,—'bricks,' man's manufacture, 'for stones,' God's material. They cannot build Great Babylon with the 'living stones' of God's producing. Men-made Christians, compacted together, not by the cementing Spirit, but by the human motives and influences whereby the masses are affected, but which the fire of God will one day try: so is Great Babylon built.

Now it is remarkable that the word Pergamos has a double significance. In the plural form, it is used for the citadel of a town, while it is at least near akin to *Purgos*, 'a town.' Again, divide it into the two words into which it naturally separates, and you have '*per*,' 'although,' a particle which "usually serves to call attention to something which is objected to" (Liddell and Scott); and '*gamos*,' 'marriage.'

## 240 ESTABLISHMENTS, AND A MONEY BASIS.

It was indeed by the marriage of church and world that the 'city and tower' of Babylon the Great was raised. And such are the times we are now to contemplate.

They were the times of the great Constantine, the time of what is significantly called the '*establishment* of the Church,' but not, alas, its establishment upon its Rock-foundation, where the gates of hades could not prevail against it, but its establishment in the world's favour and under its protection. It was the success of Satan, the triumph of his plan by which the church became the synagogue, but not now God's, but in opposition to God.

As a consequence you find not only Nicolaitanism now fully accepted, but the 'doctrine of Balaam' also. They were still what is called *orthodox*. "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth." They maintained, in general, the truth of Christ as against Arianism, which denied His proper deity. It was the period of the creeds,—of Nicene orthodoxy. But it was an orthodoxy which, while maintaining (thank God for it) the doctrine of the Trinity, could be and was very far astray as to the application of Christ's blessed work to the salvation of man. Orthodox as to Christ; most unorthodox as to the Gospel.

Where in the Apostles' Creed (so called) do you find the Gospel? 'The forgiveness of sins' is an article of belief, no doubt: but how and when? In the Nicene Creed there is "I acknowledge one *baptism* for the remission of sins," and entire silence as to any other. In the Athanasian it is owned that Christ "suffered for our salvation," but how we are to obtain the salvation is again omitted. Practically the belief of the times was in the efficacy of baptism, and so painful and uncertain was the way of forgiveness for sins committed afterwards, that multitudes deferred baptism to a dying bed that the sins of a life-time might be washed away together.

The Lord goes on to say: "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."

Balaam, the *destroyer* of the people, is a new graft upon Nicolaitanism. A prophet, in outward nearness to

## ESTABLISHMENTS, AND A MONEY BASIS. 241

the Lord, while his heart went after his own covetousness;—a man having no personal grudge against the people, but whose god was his belly, and who would curse them if his god bade; one whose doctrine was to seduce Israel from their separateness into guilty mixture with the nations and their idolatry around;—the type is easily read, and the examples of it distressingly numerous. When the church and the world became on good terms with one another, and the church had the things of the world wherewith to attract the natural heart, the hireling prophet was a matter of course, who for his own ends would seek still further to destroy all godly separateness.

How glad one would be to be able to think that a thing of the past! But it is one step only in a persistent departure from God, on the part of the professing Church at large never retraced or repented of. Nor, solemn to say, however much individuals may be delivered, is such decline ever recovered from by the body as such. Every step downwards only accelerates the progress down. In the wilderness, Israel took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of their god Remphan, and the Lord's word appended is, "I will carry you away beyond Babylon." There were many reformatations afterwards, more or less partial, but no fresh start.

So with the Church. People talk about a second Pentecost. There never really was. The true Pentecostal times lasted for how brief a moment!

It is a sad and terrible thing to speak of evil, and we have indeed ever to watch ourselves, lest in fact we should be rejoicing in that which we affect to judge. But if the Lord has pronounced, woe will it be to us if we are not with Him in His judgment. It would be unfaithfulness and dishonesty, as well as real breach of charity, not to say what the Lord says. To modify or alter it would be dishonest. "He that hath My Word, let him speak My Word," He Himself says.

From Constantine's day to the present, Pergamos has characterized the state of things. World and church have been one in Christendom at large; and wherever this is found, there in truth is Babylon, although Rome may be head of Babylon, as indeed she is.

Let us look about us with the lamp the Lord has given us, and see whereabouts we are with regard to these things. How far are we individually keeping the Church and the world separate? How far are we really refusing that yoke with unbelievers, which the passage



in 2 Cor. vi., so emphatically condemns? Our associations are judged of God as surely as any other part of our practical conduct: and "be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" is His word. He cannot, He declares, be to us a Father, as He would, except we come out and be separate! Solemn, solemn words in the midst of the multiplicity of such confederacies in the present day! Can we bear to be ourselves searched out by them, beloved brethren? Oh, if we value our true place as sons with God, shall we not be only glad to see things as they are?

Now this 'yoke' forbidden has various applications. It applies to anything in which we voluntarily unite with others to attain a common object. Among social relations marriage is such a yoke; in business relations, partnerships and such like; and in the foremost rank of all would come ecclesiastical associations.

To take these latter now: there are certain systems, which as we have already seen, mix up the Church and the world in the most thorough way possible. All forms of ritualism do:—forms wherein a person is made by baptism "a member of Christ and a child of God." Where that is asserted, separation is impossible, for no amount of charity, and no extravagance of theological fiction, can make the mass of these baptized people other than the world.

All national churches in the same way mix them up by the very fact that they are national churches. You cannot by the force of will or act of Parliament make a nation Christian. You can give them a name to live, while they are dead. You can make them formalists and hypocrites, but nothing more. You can do your best to hide from them their true condition, and leave them under an awful delusion from which eternity alone may wake them up. That is much to do indeed, and it is all in this way possible.

All systems Jewish in character mix them up of necessity. Where all are probationers together it is not possible to do otherwise. All systems in which the church is made a means to salvation, instead of the company of the saved, necessarily do so. When people join churches in order to be saved, as is the terrible fashion of the day, these churches become of course the common receptacle of sinners and saints alike. And wherever assurance of salvation is not maintained, the same thing must needs result.

Systems such as these naturally acquire, and rapid-

ly, adherents, money and worldly influence, and among such the doctrine of Balaam does its deadly work. The world, not even disguised in the garb of Christianity, is sought, for the sake of material support. Men that have not given themselves to the Lord are taught that they can give their money. It is openly proclaimed that God is not sufficient as His people's portion. His cause requires help, and that so much, that He will accept it from the hands of His very enemies. There is an idolatry of means abroad. Money will help the destitute; money will aid to circulate the Scripture; money will send missionaries to foreign parts; money will supply a hundred wants and get over a host of difficulties. We are going to put it to so good a use we must not be over scrupulous as to the mode of getting it. The church has to be maintained, the minister to be paid. They do not like the principles that 'the end sanctifies the means,' but still what are they to do? God is in theory of course sufficient, but they must use the means, and the nineteenth century no longer expects miracles.

But why go over the dreary round of such godless and faithless arguments? Is it a wonder that infidelity bursts out into a triumphant laugh, as Christians maintain the impotence of their God, and violate His precepts to save His cause from ruin? Nay, do you not in fact proclaim it ruined, irredeemably, irrecoverably ruined, when His ear is already too dull to hear, and His arm shortened that it cannot save?

Money will build churches, will buy Bibles, will support ministers,—true. Will it buy a new Pentecost? or bring in the millennium? Will you bribe the blessed Spirit to work for you thus? or make sheer will and animal energy do without Him? Alas, you pray for power, and dishonour Him who is the only source of power!

But what is the result of this solicitation of the world? Can you go to it with the Bibles you have bought with its own money, and tell it the truth as to its own condition? Can you tell them, that "the whole world lieth in wickedness?" that "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world?" Can you maintain the separate place that God has given you, and the sharp edge of the truth, that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God?" Of course you cannot. They will turn round upon you and say: "Why then do you come to us for our money? You ask us to give, and tell

## 244 ESTABLISHMENTS, AND A MONEY BASIS.

us it will not please Him our giving ! It is not reasonable: we do not believe it, and you cannot believe it yourselves !”

No: the world does not believe in giving nothing for nothing. Whatever the word of God may say, whatever you may think of it in your heart, you must compromise in some way. You must not maintain the rigid line of separation. Balaam must be your prophet. You must mix with the world, and let it mix with you; how else will you do it good? You must cushion your church seats and invite it in. You must make your building and your services attractive, you must not frighten people away, but allure them in. You must be all things to all men, and as you cannot expect to get them up to your standard, you must get down to theirs. Do I speak too strongly? Oh, words can hardly exaggerate the state of things that may be every where found, not in some far-off land, but here all round us in the present day. I should not dare to tell you what deeds are done in the Name of Christ by His professing people. They will hire singers to sing His praises for admiration and to draw a crowd. They will provide worldly entertainments and sit down and be entertained in company. And as more and more they sink down to the world's level, they persuade themselves the world is rising up to theirs. While God is saying as of His people of old: “Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not, yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not. And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face; and they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek Him for all this” (Hos. vii. 8-10).

It is a downward course, and being trod at an ever increasing pace. Competition is aroused, and it is who can be the most successful candidate for the world's favours. The example of one emboldens another. Emulation, envy, ambition, and a host of unholy motives are aroused, and Scripture, the honour of Christ, the jealous eyes of a holy holy God—ah, you are antiquated and Pharisaic if you talk of these.

There is one feature in this melancholy picture I cannot pass by briefly thus. *The ministry*, or what stands before men's eyes as such, how is it affected by all this? I have already said, that Scripture does not recognize the thought of a minister and his people. Upon this I do not intend to dwell again. But what after all in the present day has got to be the strength of the

tie between a church and its ministry? Who that looks around can question that money has here a controlling influence? The seal of the compact is the salary. A rich church with an ample purse, can it not make reasonably sure of attracting the man it wants? The poor church, however rich in piety, is it not conscious of its deficiency? People naturally do not like to own it. They persuade themselves, successfully enough, no doubt, that it is a wider and a more promising field of labour that attracts them. But the world notoriously does not believe this; and it has but too good reason for its unbelief.

The contract is ordinarily for so much money. If the money is not forthcoming, the contract is dissolved. But more, the money consideration decides in another way the character of man they wish to secure. It is ordinarily a *successful* man that is wanted, after the fashionable idea of what is success. They want a man who will fill the church, perhaps help to pay off the debt upon it. Very likely the payment of his own salary depends upon this. *He will not be likely most to please who is not influenced by such motives:* and thus it will be only God's mercy, if Balaam's doctrine does not secure a Balaam to carry it out. But even if a godly man is obtained, he is put under the influence of the strongest personal temptation to soften down the truth, which if fully preached may deprive him of not only influence but perhaps even subsistence.

Will the most godly man be the most popular man? No: for godliness is not what the world seeks. It can appreciate genius, no doubt, and eloquence and amiability and benevolence and utilitarianism; but godliness is something different from the union of even all of these. If the world can appreciate godliness, I will own indeed it is no longer the world. But as long as the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life still characterize it, it is not of the Father, nor the Father of it. And then, why in that passage does the apostle say "the *Father*?" Is it not because in thinking of the Father's relation to the world, we must needs think of the *Son*? As he says again in another place: "who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the *Son of God*?" And why? Because it is the Son of God the world has crucified and cast out; and that cross which was the world's judgment of the Son of God, is for faith *God's* judgment of the world.

Was Christ popular, beloved friends? Could He with divine power in His hands and ministering it freely for

## 246 ESTABLISHMENTS, AND A MONEY BASIS.

the manifold need appealing to Him on every side,—*could He* commend Himself to men His creatures! No, assuredly. But you think perhaps those peculiarly evil times. They understand Him better now, you think. Take then His dear Name with you to men's places of business and to their homes to-day, to the workshop and the counting-houses, and the public places. Do you doubt what response you would get?

"In the churches?" O yes, they have agreed to tolerate Him there. The churches have been carefully arranged to please the world. Comfortable, fashionable, the poor packed in convenient corners, eye and ear and intellect provided for: that is a different thing. And then it helps to quiet conscience when it will sometimes stir. But oh, beloved, is there much sign of His presence whose own sign was "*To the poor* the gospel is preached?"

Enough of this however. It will be neither pleasure nor profit to pursue it further. But to those with whom the love of Christ is more than a profession, and the honour of Christ a reality to be maintained, I would solemnly put it how they can go on with what systematically tramples His honour under foot, yea, under the world's foot—falsifies His gospel, and helps to deceive to their own destruction the souls for whom He died. The doctrine of Balaam is everywhere: its end is judgment upon the world, and judgment too upon the people of God. If ministers cannot be supported, if churches cannot be kept up without this, the honestest, manliest, only Christian course is, let the thing go down! If Christians cannot get on without the world, they will find at least that the world can get on without them. They cannot persuade it that disobedience is such a serious thing when they see the light-hearted, flippant disobedience of which it is so easy to convict the great mass of professors, while it is so utterly impossible to deter them from it. "Money" is the cry; "well, but we want the money." Aye, though Christ's honour is betrayed by it, and infidels sneer, and souls perish. Brethren, the very Pharisees of old were wiser! "*We may not put it into the treasury,*" they whispered, "*because it is the price of blood.*"

It will be a relief to turn to Scripture, and to examine what we have there upon this subject. It is very simple. There was no organized machinery for supporting churches; none for paying ministers; no promise, no contract upon the people's part, as to any sum they were to receive at all. There were necessities, of course, many,

to be provided for, and it was understood that there was to be provision. The saints themselves had to meet all. They had not taken up with a cheap religion. Having often to lay down their lives for it, they did not think much of their goods. The principle was this: "Every man as he is disposed in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver." It was to be to God, and before God. There was to be no blazoning it out to brethren, still less before the world. He that gave was not to let his left hand know what his right hand was doing.

It is true there were solemn motives to enforce it. On the one side: "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." But on the other side, most powerful, most influential of all, was this: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich."

Such was the principle, such was to be the motive. There was no compulsory method of extraction, if this failed. If there was not heart to give, it was no use to extract.

So as to the labourer in the word,—it was very clearly announced, and that as what God had ordained, that "They which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel," and that "The labourer is worthy of his hire." But although here also God used the willing hands of His people, it was not understood that *they* 'hired' him, or that he was *their* labourer. What they gave, it was to God they gave it, and *his* privilege was to be Christ's servant. His responsibility was to the Lord, and their's also. They did not understand that they were to get so much work for so much money. They did not *pay*, but '*offered*.' There is a wonderful difference: for you cannot 'pay' God, and you do not 'offer' (in this sense of offering) to man. The moment you *pay*, God is out of the question.

Do you think this is perhaps a little unfair on both sides? that it is right that there should be something more of an equivalent for the labour he bestows,—for the money you give? That is good law, bad Gospel. What better than simony is it to suppose after this fashion, "that the gift of God can be purchased with money?" Would you rather make your own bargain than trust Christ's grace to minister to your need? Or is it hard for him that he who ministers the Word

## 248 ESTABLISHMENTS, AND A MONEY BASIS.

should shew his practical trust in the Word by looking to the Lord for his support? Ah, to whom could he look so well? and how much better off would he be for losing the sweet experience of His care?

No: it is all unbelief in Divine power and love, and machinery brought in to make up for the want of it. And yet if there is not this, what profit is there of keeping up the empty profession of it? If God can fail, let the whole thing go together; if *He* cannot, then your skilful contrivances are only the exhibition of rank unbelief.

And what do you accomplish by it? You bring in the Canaanite (the merchantman) into the house of the Lord. You offer a premium to the trader in Divine things; the man who most values your money, and least cares for your souls. You cannot but be aware how naturally those two extremes associate together, and you cannot but own, that if you took the Lord's plan, and left His labourers to look to Him for their support, you would do more to weed out such traffickers than by all your care and labour otherwise. Stop the hire, and you will banish the hirelings, and the blessed ministry of Christ will be freed from an incubus and a reproach, which your contracts and bargainings are largely responsible for.

And if Christ's servants cannot after all trust Him, let them seek out some honest occupation where they may gain their bread without scandal. In the 15th century before Christ God brought out a whole nation out of Egypt and maintained them forty years in the wilderness. Did He, or did He not? Is He as competent as ever? Alas! will you dare to say those were the days of His youth, and these of His decrepitude?

So serious are these questions. But the unbelief that exists now existed then. Do you remember what the people did, when they had lost Moses on the mount a while and lacked a leader? *They made a god of the gold which they had brought out of Egypt with them, and fell down and worshipped the work of their own hands.* History repeats itself. Who can deny that we have been looking on the counterpart of that?

Is there any measure, it may be well to ask here, of the Christian's giving, for one who would be right with God about it?

The notion of the tithe or tenth has been revived, or with some two tithes, as that which was the measure of one Israelite's giving. Jacob has been propounded to us

as an example, as he stood before God in the morning after that wonderful night at Bethel, when God had engaged to be with him and to be his God, and to multiply his seed, and bring him again into the land from which he was departing. "If God will be with me," he says, "and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace ; then the Lord shall be my God; and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house, and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto Thee."

God's ways are so little like our ways ; His thoughts so little like our thoughts ; it is not very wonderful man does not understand them. But surely Jacob does not here enter into the blessedness of God's thoughts.

I need not dwell now upon his case, but only notice it to say that for a Christian at least the whole principle is a mistake. You are not to ransom nine-tenths from God by giving one. You are bought with a price, you and yours. In a double way, by creation and redemption too, you belong, with all you have, to God. Many people are acting upon the perfectly wrong idea that whether as to time, money, or whatever else, God is to have His share, and the rest is their own. They misunderstand the legal types and do not realize the immense difference that accomplished redemption has brought in with it.

Before "Ye are bought with a price" could yet be said, it was impossible to deduce the consequences that result from this. Grace goes beyond law which made nothing, and could make nothing, perfect. The very essence of the surrender of the life to God is that it must be a voluntary one. Like the vow of the Nazarite, which was a vow of separation to the Lord, and which reads, "when any one *will* vow the vow of a Nazarite," that surrender must be of the heart, or it is none. Nor is it a contradiction to this, that there were *born* Nazarites, Nazarites from the womb as Samson and the Baptist. We are all *born* (new-born) to Nazariteship, which is implied, and necessitated (in a true sense) by the life which we receive from God. But the necessity is not one externally impressed upon it : it is an internal one. "A new heart will I give you," says the Lord : but the new heart given is a heart which chooses freely the service of its Master.

A legal requirement of the whole then would have been unavailing and a mere bondage. "Not grudgingly



or of necessity" is, as we have seen, the Scripture rule. But that does not at all mean what people characterize as "cheap religion." It does not mean that God will accept the 'mites' of the niggard as the Lord did those of the woman in the Gospels. Christ does not say now, "Give as much or as little as you please: it is all one." No: He expects intelligent, free surrender of all to Him, as on the part of one who recognizes that all is really His.

If you will look at the 16th chapter of Luke, you will find the Lord announcing very distinctly this principle. The unjust steward is our picture there: the picture of those who are (as we all are as to the old creation) under sentence of dismissal from the place they were originally put in, on account of unrighteous dealing in it. Grace has not recalled the sentence, "thou mayest be no longer steward." It has given us far more, but it has not reinstalled us in the place we have thus lost. Death, in fact, is our removal from our stewardship, although it be the entrance for us as Christians into something which must be confessed "far better."

But grace has delayed the execution of the sentence, and meanwhile our Master's goods are in our hand. All that we have here are *His* things and not ours. And now God looks for us to be faithful in what is, alas, to men as such (creature of God, as indeed it is) "the mammon of unrighteousness,"—the miserable deity of unrighteous man.

Moreover grace counts this faithfulness to us. We are permitted to "make *friends* of this mammon of unrighteousness" by our godly use of it, whereas it is naturally, through our fault, our enemy and our accuser. It must not be imagined that the "unjust steward" is to be our character literally all through. The Lord shews us that this is not so when He speaks of 'faithfulness' being looked for. No doubt the unjust steward in the parable acts unjustly with his master's goods, and it must not be imagined that *God* commends him, it is "his lord" that does so,—man as man admiring the shrewdness which he displayed. Yet only so could be imaged that conduct which in us is *not* injustice but faithfulness to our Master,—grace entitling us to use what we have received, for our own true and eternal interests, which in this case are one with His own due and glory.

But then there are things also which we may speak of as 'our own.' What are these? Ah, they are what the

Lord speaks of as, after all, "the true riches." "If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's—not 'another *man's*,' but of course God's,—'who will give you that which is *your own*?'"

Thus our own things are distinct altogether; and I must not tell Christians what they are. I need only remind you, that if you have in your thoughts as men down here, a quantity of things, your own possessions, to be liberal with or to hoard up,—in both cases you misapprehend the matter. You have as to things here your *Master's* goods, which if you hoard up here, you surely lose hereafter, and turn into accusers. On the other hand you are graciously permitted to transfer them really to your own account, by laying them up amid your treasure, where you treasure is—"in heaven."

The rich man, in the solemn illustration at the end of the chapter, was one who had made his lord's 'good things' his own after another fashion, and in eternity they were not friends but enemies and accusers. "Son," says Abraham to him, "remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things." That was all, but what a solemn memory it was! How once again the purple and fine linen and sumptuous fare met the eyes they at once gratified and now appalled. Lazarus had been at his gate, but it was not Lazarus that accused. And oh, beware of having things your own down here. There was a man who had 'his good things' here, and in eternity what were they to him?

I know this is not the gospel. No, but it is what, as the principle of God's holy government, the gospel should prepare us to understand and to enter into. Have you observed that the most beautiful and affecting story of gospel grace, the story of the lost son received, is what *precedes* the story of the unjust steward? The Pharisees, who in the 15th chapter stand for the picture of the elder son, are here rebuked in the person of the rich man. Will not the prodigal received back to a Father's arms be the very one who will understand that he owes his all to a Father's love? Is not "ye are bought with a price" the gospel? But then ye are *bought*: ye are not your own.

Put it in another way. You remember that when God would bring His people out of Egypt, Pharaoh wanted to compromise,—of course by that compromise to keep the people as his slaves. Three separate offers he makes

to him, each of which would have prevented salvation being, according to God's thought of it, salvation at all. The first compromise was "*worship in the land.*"

"And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.

And still the world asks, why need you go outside it? You are entitled to your opinions, but why be so extreme? Why three days' journey into the wilderness? Why separate from what you were brought up in, and from people as good as you? Ah, they do not know what that three days' journey implies, and that the death and resurrection of Christ place you where you are no more of the world than He is! Egypt,—luxurious, civilised, self-satisfied, idolatrous Egypt,—and the wilderness! what a contrast! Yet only in the wilderness can you sacrifice to God.

Then he tries another stratagem:—

"And he said unto them, Go serve the Lord your God; *but who are they that shall go?*"

"And Moses said, we will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds we will go: for we must hold a feast unto the Lord.

"And he said unto them, Let the Lord be so with you, as I will let you go and your little ones: look to it, for evil is before you. Not so, go now ye that are *men* and serve the Lord; for that ye did desire."

By their little ones he had them safe of course,—a perfectly good security that they would not go far away. And so it is still. How many are brought back into the world by the children they did not bring with them *out* of the world.

One last hope remains for Pharaoh:—

"And Pharaoh called unto Moses and said, Go ye, serve the Lord, *only let your flocks and your herds be stayed*: let your little ones also go with you."

"Leave your possessions," he says: and how many leave their possessions! Themselves are saved: but their business, their occupation, these are still not sacred things, they are secular; what have these things to do with the salvation of the soul?

But God says, "no: bring them all out of Egypt: yourselves, your families, your property, all are to be Mine."

And in point of fact, His it must be if we would ourselves keep it, for we cannot keep it of ourselves. The man out of whom the devil went, is our Lord's own illus-

tration of the fact that an empty house will never lack a tenant. The sweeping and garnishing and all that, will not keep out the devil, but perhaps only make him more earnest after occupation. Nothing will save from it but the positive possession of it by another, who will not and need not give it up. So we must bring Christ into everything, or by that in which He is not, we shall find we have but made room for another,—Christ's opposite. The parable has application in many ways and in many degrees to those who are Christ's people, as well as to those who are not. Our really idle hours are not idle. Our useless occupations have a use, if not for Christ, then against Him. Our so-called recreations may be but the frittering away of energy, as well as time, and not only distraction, but the seed of worse distraction.

We are in a world, where on every side we are exposed to influences of the most subtle character; where corruption and decay are natural; and where all thus is not permeated by divine life, it becomes the necessary and speedy subject of decay and death. To a beleaguered garrison a holiday may be fatal. We cannot ever here ungird our loins or unbuckle our armour. It is not enough to withstand in the evil day, but having done all, still you must stand. So if you leave Christ at the door of the counting-house, you will have to contend alone (or give place to) the devil within the counting-house.

Does this startle you? does it seem to require too much? It requires that you should be with Christ in constant companionship, at all times and on all occasions. Is that a narrow, a rigid, an uncomfortable view of matters? Does it distress you to think of giving Him such a place as that? There are those who believe that *he* is the picture of a converted man, who complains he never got a kid to make merry with his friends. Do you realize that? Do you sympathize with such a view? Have you friends that you would like to run away to for a while out of Christ's scrutiny or company? Beloved, when you think of heaven, is it of a long *monotony* of being "ever with the Lord?" You startle at that suggestion; and no wonder. But if you will find eternal joy then, and now can think of it as that, to be ever with Him there, is it less happy to think of being always with Him here?

At any rate you cannot alter the reality by all your thoughts about it. None of our thoughts can change the nature of things. You cannot find in all this world a clean corner, in which you can be apart from Christ and

yet apart from evil. And if you could, the very idea of being so, would of itself pollute it with evil. No, Christ must be a constant Saviour as to every detail of our walk and ways. Communion with Him is the only alternative of communion with evil. The wisdom that has not Him in it, will be "earthly, sensual, devilish," if it come not from above, come it will from below.

Thus you see how important it is to be right here. It is not a mere question of points of detail; it is a question of truth of heart to Him, which affects every detail,—the whole character and complexion of our lives indeed. So you must not wonder at a question of *cattle* being concerned with a deeper question of 'salvation' itself; looking at salvation as not merely being from wrath and condemnation, but of salvation from the sin also which brings in these. God gives it us thus in the typical picture here, and it is not a blot or deformity in the picture, but rather an essential part. Be persuaded of it, beloved friends, that only thus can we find, in the full power of it, what salvation is.

We have been looking at this from the side of responsibility. Surely it is good to look at it also from the side of salvation. Until you are clean delivered in these three respects you cannot be happily with God, nor even safe. Of course I am not talking about reaching heaven; you may be safe in that respect. But whatever you have that is not Christ's, that is the world's still, and it will drag you back into the world. You are keeping it back from Him; you have a divided interest; how can this but affect all your intercourse, all your happiness (or what you ought to have) with Him. Can you go to your business and shut the door upon Him, and He not feel it, and *you* not feel it? Can you say to Him, "Lord, Sunday is yours and Monday is mine," or "Lord, there is your tenth, and these nine are mine," and feel perfectly satisfied that all is right with Him?

And practically it gets to be much less. He gets a part of our superfluity and that is all. We must dress like our neighbours, live up to our rank of life, put a little by for a 'rainy day,' and something for our children. "We must be *just* before we are generous," we think. And then, with some reserve for recreation, and some for miscellaneous trifles, *all the rest shall be the Lord's*. It may be but a 'mite,' but did not He accept a mite? *So the very narrowness of our dole to the Lord who has saved us links us with her who had His special commendation.*

Better keep it all back, than give in that fashion. For the amount given just hinders from realizing where we are. We give it ungrudgingly, perhaps: we think it has the Lord's approval therefore. We do not think *how much it is* that we can give ungrudgingly.

Ungrudgingly, it must be. Love, it must be. Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, except it be love that does it, it will be utterly condemned. But if our love is measured by what we give to Him, how serious is the question raised!

In this great world of sorrow and of evil Christ has interests dear to his heart,—how dear, no one of us has perhaps a notion of. Souls lie in darkness to whom His word would give light, and in bondage to whom it would bring deliverance. He says to us: "I count upon my people to do this." How can we answer to Him for this confidence He has placed in us? Shall we say, "Lord, I have had to keep up with my neighbours, to provide for the future, to do a great many things, which I thought of more importance?" Or shall we say, "Lord, Thou art so great, so high, so powerful, Thou surely canst not want my help in a matter like this!" Or again, "Lord, Thou art so gracious, I am sure Thou wilt accept anything I may bring; I would not suppose Thee a hard Master to want me to bring Thee much?" Alas, what shall we say? Shall we not rather own with broken hearts how little we have valued *Him*?

The "doctrine of Balaam" thrives upon the heartlessness of God's own people. Do not let us imagine, because we denounce the mercenary character of what is current all around, that we can have no share in upholding what we denounce. It is far otherwise. If we have given cause, are giving cause, to those who sneer at the advocates of 'cheap religion,' we are giving it the most effectual possible support. In words you denounce; in deeds you justify. You tell them that it is vain to trust to the power of Christ's love in Christians: that your own barn is practically dearer to you than all God's house; and they can point to you triumphantly as proof of the necessity of all that they contend for.

Beloved, I have done. I have spoken out my heart, and I must pray you bear with me. Who that looks round with a heart for Christ upon all the abominations practised in His name, but must be led to ask, did not all this evil spring out of the failure of His own people, of those who at heart loved Him? And further, how far are we perhaps now unsuspectedly helping on the

very evils we deplore? Do we not pray for Him to search out our hearts, and shall we shrink from having them searched out? If the search detects nothing, we need not fear it. If it shews us unanticipated evil, it is well to realize that the truthful judgment of the evil is ever the truest blessing for our souls. It will cost us something, no doubt, to walk in what is ever a narrow way. A race,—a warfare,—call for energy and self-denial. But ah, beloved, it will cost us more, much more, to have Christ walk as a stranger to us, because our paths and His do not agree. How few, when they speak of cost, put this into their balance-sheet! Yet, “if I wash thee not,” He says, “thou hast no part with Me.” Are there not many trying to keep up appearances, when that is the inward trouble of their souls?

But the door is open, beloved, to come back. He has never shut it. The one thing so greatly lacking now is whole-hearted integrity. So few without some secret corner in their hearts they would not like to have searched out by Him. That corner *must* be searched out, for He must be a Saviour after His own fashion; and if we would not have it, we can have little apprehended the fulness and reality of His salvation. Not alone does He save from wrath. He saves from *sin*. It is in subjection to His yoke that we find rest. From our own will, and ways and thoughts, in His blessed will, His thoughts, His love.

God grant it to us for His name's sake, even now.

---

## LECTURE IV.

---

### THE WOMAN JEZEBEL AND THE VOICE OF THE CHURCH. (Rev. II. 18-23.)

---

WE are going on to-night with the fourth of these Epistles to the Seven Churches—the Epistle to Thyatira. It is the first part of this, that we shall have before us only. The latter part will be reserved until another time, if the Lord will. And we have now come down to what has very plain and simple application to Popery or Romanism.

We have been tracing the steps leading down to it, and when we begin to speak of Romanism, if this be a true application we are making in this address now, let us remember that God looks at it, as inside of that which He owns in a certain sense as His. I do not mean that He owns the woman Jezebel; but that He does surely the Church of Thyatira, and there the woman Jezebel is. It is not something outside of us, not something we have not got to do with, but merely to let alone. It is not something that has arisen, independently, outside of us, (supposing we are, as we are, in a certain sense, separate from it.) it is something that is only the legitimate result, the full ripe fruit, of what we have seen maturing in former epistles.

We have been tracing, in fact, its gradual rise. First of all, the assembly of God,—the called out ones, losing their separate place as that, and becoming a 'Synagogue,'—a mere gathering of people indiscriminately as it were together. Then we have seen the appointment of a distinct class of priests to go between God and the people, because the people were now in fact strangers, and not able to go to God for themselves. That is what we mean by "Clerisy." Then, in the next place we have seen the marriage between the church and the world,—her complete settlement in it; and how this



necessarily gave her the things of the world, only to become baits to lure and entice worldly men, for the sake of what they knew and valued, to assume the role of Christian teachers, who themselves, on the other hand, brought in the doctrine of Balaam, teaching and seducing God's people more and more to amalgamate with those around them, and to give up all pretence of separation. That was Balaam's work with Israel, whose history has been in fact but as it were the anticipation of our own. And now we come to the Church of Thyatira—the full ripe result of this—the Woman Jezebel, who is doing systematically, and as a prophetess, what they had done as individuals, and with less pretension.

As you will understand, I do not intend to confine myself only, in speaking to-night, to what is called Roman Catholicism. If we were merely looking at it in that way we should be attacking something we have very little to do with. But I want to shew you that the very principle that is so plain in Popery obtains much more widely, in fact, with those, at any rate, who have come out of Popery and ecclesiastically are fully outside.

I must, first of all however, shew the application to Popery itself. Evidently the great point in the Epistle is the suffering of this Woman Jezebel. The Woman Jezebel is now at the same work with the followers of Balaam formerly. But, as I have just now said, they were but individuals. Now the professing church as a whole is doing it: for this is the force and meaning of 'the Woman.' The Woman is teaching and claiming absolute authority, the authority of a prophetess, that is, in fact, inspiration for her teaching. She is claiming infallible authority. And yet the Woman it is, who according to the scripture has no right to teach. "I suffer not a Woman to teach," is the principle there. If you take the scripture, the Church is always the Woman, never the Man. This is very simple, because the Church is what is espoused to Christ, and Christ it is who is the Man, to whom she owns subjection. Christ it is from whom therefore the word has to come to her. The moment she herself presumes to teach, that very moment she is of necessity setting up an independent authority apart from Christ. She is in revolt from her proper allegiance to Him who is professedly her *Lord*.

It is the Woman in the Man's place here. It is the Church substituted, and substituting herself, for Christ.

And this Woman has a very remarkable name. Her name is Jezebel: carrying us back, of course, to the days of Ahab, king of Israel, the days of the very worst part of Israel's history, and the one who, while queen of Israel, was at the same time a Canaanite and idolatress, and a most bitter persecutor of God's saints, yea, of God's prophets.

I need scarcely point out to you how remarkably this name of Jezebel suits the well-proved character of the Romish church. If you go on to Babylon the great, the Woman of the 7th chapter of this book of Revelation, you find her drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And there she is pointed out as sitting upon the seven hills, and the city reigning over the kings of the earth.

Her name is very remarkable in another way: its meaning, I have no doubt,—although there are differences about it—but the most commonly accepted meaning of the word, Jezebel, is "chaste." While the Lord Himself is speaking about her fornication and the children He will kill with death, her pretension is the exact opposite of the fact. She pretends to be the chaste spouse of Christ; in fact in the 17th chapter she is called the harlot. What is her character? Everyone knows that she claims infallibility for her teaching: it is her boast. No church has gone to the full extent of that as Rome has. She claims to be a prophetess; and therefore to speak with authority from God, oracularly, and yet she at the same time is teaching and seducing God's servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. She is putting the seal of God on the most horrible iniquity.

The very commencement of the address here has marked reference to her teaching. In other cases you find the Lord presenting Himself in a character suited to the state which He is addressing. Here He presents Himself as "the Son of God." There is nothing more distinct in the teaching of Rome than that He is simply the Son of Mary. They exalt Mary above Him in every possible way. They say Mary is a woman and has a tender heart, therefore go to Mary rather. Mary too is a mother, and she can command her Son. Even if they own Him to be God, this still serves to exalt Mary more; for then Mary is the mother of God and queen of heaven. That is the blasphemy of Rome. The Lord takes distinctly therefore here His own proper title as the Son of

God. How striking it is! If we look into it, we shall find every word applying in the most complete way to that of which it speaks. That is this Woman Jezebel. It is the church in Christ's place; lowering Him, we may say, in every possible way to exalt herself; setting aside His word to introduce her own, and claiming for her word that authority which she denies to the word of God itself.

You know how she denies it. She will tell you—exalting at the same time her own tradition to a level with it—that there is no doubt at all that it is the word of God, but she will tell you at the same time that you cannot understand it, except as you listen to her teaching. Practically it is her teaching you are to hear: as she misapplies scripture, you are to “hear the church” (Mt. xviii. 17). If you ask on the other hand how you are to know the Church, she will give you marks, as Unity, Sanctity, Catholicity, Apostolicity (not one of which, notoriously, applies to her), but she will not send you to ascertain her character from that very book which she calls the Word of God, and which she pleads in behalf of her own authority! She opens the book to shew you a fragment of a sentence—“hear the Church,”—and then she shuts it tight between her fast-closed hands, and says, with a self-possession that almost redeems it from absurdity:—“and that is myself: you must hear ME!” So, in point of fact, what she inculcates is the blindest possible credulity.

But I do not dwell upon this any longer. I do not want to-night to talk about other people. We want to have something that concerns ourselves. And I think there is no difficulty in finding that which concerns us abundantly in the very principles which are involved in this.

We may imagine that we have got outside of Popery, while we are really holding fast the very principles of Popery itself. We may have got the root, while the proper fruit of the tree we are disclaiming; but, beloved friends, the root undoubtedly is to be found everywhere in the soil, and plenty of fruit too. That root is the Church's authority to teach—to give forth what you are to listen to as, in some sense at least, authoritative, because she teaches it.

Of course, when I say that, I admit fully that that is maintained in very different degrees and ways.

If I go to Ritualism I shall find, for instance, preten-

sion almost as high as that of Rome herself, only connecting itself with an antique Catholicism, of whose traditions they are merely the jealous guardians.

This is still the infallible oracular Church, only with an infallibility less tangible, and doctrines less defined. But church teaching is not necessarily connected with this pretension at all; if we look through Christendom, we shall find almost every little sect in it professing to define for herself doctrines which she holds, and which she insists upon her members holding. I do not mean to say that they claim infallibility at all, or that they do not appeal to God's blessed word for what they hold as truth. That, of course, is all right, and in its place, but I mean something very different from that. I mean, if you take for instance the Churches of the Reformation, and those which have sprung out of them since, you will find that every one is still holding fast this principle, that the Church is to teach, and it is necessary that a body of doctrine should be put forth as church teaching to which appeal can be made, and which may answer for the truth their members hold.

Now there we have, spite of its disguise, what I may really call an essential principle of Romanism. The Church's, instead of Christ's authority. The Church pretending to give a word which is authoritative, at any rate to those who, if they are not members of Christ, *are nothing*.

Let us look at it a little more fully. As I say, in the first place, there is this pretension about it. The Church claims to be a teacher. I will not say now an infallible teacher. I do not say, the whole length is true. That would be pure Romanism; but nevertheless a teacher. And those who hold to the Church, whatever that church may be, are at anyrate bound to submit to her teaching. Now if we take scripture how completely contrary it is to all this. In the first place, what is the Church? The Church is the assembly of God's people—the assembly that is Christ's body; its members are members of Christ. I say very simply, that, from first to last in the New Testament, you will find no other equivalent of the Church, in God's thought. What man would make of it is recognized, I grant; but that is another thing. It is the church which is Christ's body, and to it every member of Christ, and he alone, belongs. But the moment that is said, the question is, where is the teaching body? Plainly the body of Christ is com-

posed of all, teachers and taught alike. The very youngest babe in Christ belongs to that body as well as the oldest and most advanced. How is it possible, then, that this Church can give any authoritative utterance at all? The fact is that you must necessarily put aside that definition of the Church the moment you think of its teaching. Whom would it teach? itself, or the world, or what? Is it not plain that you must not confound the teachers and the taught? And if the Church is the teacher, the teaching must be for those outside the Church! And who teaches the Church itself?

Every creed and confession is in fact the faith at first of a few, addressed to those outside the few who put it forth. It may gain adherents and become the faith, in that way, of a great number; but however that may be, the authoritative teaching is only that of the original few, binding (to whatever extent) even the teachers of the same body afterward. For when you say, "the Church teaches us so and so," you do not at all mean the present teachers. You may be in fact recalling them to the teaching of the church, or convicting them of departure from it. The teaching which binds (or is supposed to bind) is not that in fact of the Church of to-day, which may have departed from it, but the teaching of certain teachers in the past, however many may have accepted it since then. The Church then is not here the teacher, but has only bound itself to receive such and such teaching. It is taught, not teaches. And the whole weight of an imposing name is made to attach to the teaching of those, who living in the after-generations of the same people, would not be recognized at all as having the same authority.

But—apart altogether from Scripture, which is not in question here—what gave this place to the teachers of the past, which the teachers of the present may not pretend to? Have we not the same Spirit as they had? Have we not the same Word to enlighten? We may as a fact be less spiritual—true: but was that prophesied of, when these Church confessions were framed, that we should be such as the Word and the Spirit of God would be insufficient for, and a human formula be an absolute necessity?

If we turn to Rome we shall find her more consistent, and therefore more wholly wrong. She does not exalt the past above the present, but claims the same infallibility as resident in the Church at all times. And as in in-

fallibility there are no degrees, her decrees of yesterday have all the authority of Scripture itself. But even here, the voice of the Church means the voice of the Pope, or the Pope with the bishops and the cardinals, and it would be nothing but the keenest irony to tell the simple layman, that *he* had anything to do with the decree declaring the Pope infallible, or the Virgin Mary immaculate, except in obeying it.

Still you may think this only a quibble, and that 'the voice of the Church' does not mean that the Church teaches otherwise than through its teachers; and this would avail for Rome better in fact than for the Protestant bodies, if—there is a great deal often depends upon 'if'—it could be maintained. But it cannot: for in fact the teacher is not the instrument or mouthpiece of the Church, but of Christ through the Spirit. "*He* gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some pastors and teachers." And not only so, but the Apostle John can speak to Christians as having the Word of truth and the Spirit of truth, as being in a true sense independent of teachers. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One," says he, "and know all things." And again: "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but the same anointing teacheth you all things, and is truth, and is no lie." (1 John ii. 20, 27).

*There* is indeed infallibility, and 'available for every Christian; but it is the infallibility of the Spirit, not of the Church, nor of man: an anointing which every Christian has received, and which renders him, as I have already said, independent of teachers even, in a true sense, which we must guard however from constructions man's pride of heart would put upon it. The apostle does not evidently mean that teachers are superfluous or an excrescence upon the body of the Church. He does not mean to make every man a teacher, nor that God will maintain him in independence of ministries which He has Himself ordained. He does not mean us to be units: and the Church of God is a body in which the highest cannot say unto the lowest, "I have no need of you." He who refuses the help that God supplies him with, need not wonder if he be left to prove the folly and barrenness of self-sufficiency.

But yet there is truth—deep and needed truth for us—in just these words: "ye know all things, and need not that any one teach you." It is the knowledge springing

from daylight and good eyes. The best eyes would not avail in darkness; nor the best light if we were blind. But the Word is light, and the Spirit of God has rolled off the darkness from our eyes. To men with proper sight, in daylight, I can say, not only, "you can see," but "you see all things." I do not mean the Antipodes or the other side of the Moon, I simply mean that whatever is before you your own eyes can see. You are not like a blind man, needing to take it on my authority that the sun is shining or the clouds threaten rain. Yet I may call your attention to it, or I may put an object before you, which was not in your field of view before. And this is the proper office of a teacher, not (as I have had to say upon another occasion) to give authority to truth, nor yet to decide for you that such or such a thing is true, but merely to put that before you which must authenticate to you both itself and me,—itself as truth, and me as a teacher of truth.

Here the Word and the Spirit have their proper supremacy with the soul. They, and they alone, are the guarantee of truth. They, and they alone, are my true and abundant security as to doctrine.

But here is the trouble with these confessions of faith, which you will understand I am not finding the least fault with, as the confession of the faith of those who drew them up. I may thank God for the Augsburg confession as a protest against error, while I refuse it as having authority to define my own creed. And this is what it came to be used for, as a test of truth and as security for its preservation: how feeble as such all Germany bears witness at this day. And no wonder, for thus the apostle's own security—what he presented to the Church as such,—is set aside, nay, proclaimed insufficient and untrustworthy. The Bible! why plenty of Unitarians will accept the Bible! What then? Why, get a *human* declaration as to the Deity of Christ, and that will settle the matter.

I am not accusing people of intentional dishonour to the Word or Spirit of God, but none the less, such it is, in fact. I am not attacking people; but I am bound to tell you in all honesty what things are, and I should not be honest if I did not.

It is the common sin and shame of the whole Church of God. It has been our own, I suppose: all of us. And if unbelief introduced these things at first, unbelief no less maintains them. And we who have had so long in

our hands an open Bible are proportionately responsible, are we not? Surely much more than those who lived in the days when it was only just re-opened.

I do not say that those who hold these things follow them out to their conclusion, but I am justified in giving the conclusion to which they may be followed out. What the Lord says is true in this application, "Ye shall know them by their fruits: do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

And here do not let yourselves be misled by the common thought that men of God could not teach what is false. In that way the goodness of a man is set up against the truth of the Word of God; and as I have already said at another time, God's Word is not allowed to be authoritative, because good men speak different things. Men equally good and learned, who have taken equal pains (we suppose) to ascertain what it is they teach, are nevertheless teaching things directly opposite to one another. And yet God has given His Spirit to lead into all truth, and He has said, "If any one will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." How are you to connect these things, to make them harmonize? If you take men's goodness as security for their doctrine you cannot do it. Thus it is that so many cast the authority of Scripture overboard. You must not be so presumptuous as to say you have the *truth*. You may have opinions. What is the worth of an opinion? Suppose it leads you wrong? If it is *my* opinion, it is what I have no title to have, if the Word of God is to be authoritative. Has He spoken unintelligibly, or can His blessed Spirit teach contradictory things? We must think so if we look at man's goodness and man's character, instead of testing by the Word all he brings.

God meant, and has told us distinctly, that by the Word we are to test everything. Will men submit to that appeal? "Search the Scriptures," were His own words, "for these are they which testify of me." So the Bereans (so often spoken of, so little followed!) are noticed as more noble than those of Thessalonica, because as to what even an apostle said, "They searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Where else shall we find certainty at all? You may talk of presumption, but, I tell you, in the presence of eternity we do want certainty—something that we can lean upon that will not give way. And it is the lack of certainty that is the feebleness of so much Evangelical Protestant-



ism. Infidelity is "*positivism*," and Rome is as bold as ever with her claim to possess absolute truth. How will you stand against the two, if you alone are uncertain? The Romanist naturally turns to you and says: "Don't you want certainty?" I say, surely I do; and therefore I go to that which only can give it:—the Word of God, and the Spirit of God. The moment you bring in other authorities, the Word of God is gone.

Take for instance the so-called Church of England, if such and such a person teaches error, they do not bring the Bible into Court, and look at that. *It has no place there.* I say distinctly, in judging what is heresy, it has nothing more to do than if it were not in existence. It is the Prayer Book that must decide; and if it is not condemned by the Prayer Book, the man is entitled to hold it, rank as the heresy may be. That is what you see every day. It is what Christians are groaning over in every direction, but they do not impute it to the right source. They do not see that it is the very necessity of a creed, which they suppose will secure the truth: that the necessary effect of the creed is, that it removes the real standard of truth out of Court altogether, and puts something else into its place. Now here we need not question the piety of the men who composed the creed; yet, none the less, what is the result? Of course they could not foresee what new heresies would arise; they could not guard every gap. They were not prescient as the Author of Scripture is. So their notable security for truth actually is in the way of their dealing with the error. They have barred God out from settling it in His own way; and their unbelief in His wisdom and care ties them hand and foot, and delivers them over to the enemy.

Let me ask you seriously, do you really think God's mind is really less certain, less clear, less plain speaking than man's word? You say that people profess to find this and that doctrine in Scripture. It is quite true: but do you really mean to say that after all man's word is clearer, and so can be greater security than God's Word? If you realize it as His Word you can not surely argue so. Is it not God speaking to man? a Father to His children? Does He not speak even to babes; not to the learned, but the unlearned. If all this be true (and it is the simplest truth that can be), what must be the result? The result is that God's Word must be simpler, truer, safer to trust to, far, than any possible human creed

can be. And to supplement it with a creed, an authoritative creed, is in fact to supplant it: it is to say, God has not done for us what man can do; that God has not cared for us with even the care we have for one another.

The next result of a human creed is necessarily sectarianism and schism. I know this is a very little matter indeed in people's eyes just now, and I grant that there is something that is worse in God's eyes, and that is that false unity which people claim in Rome: a unity, not internal and spiritual, but external, secured by an authoritative putting down of all dissent from it. That unity did practically obtain for ages. And what do we call these times? We call them truly "The Dark Ages." But that was when the Church's dictum (in opposition to God's word) was most authoritative.

Where there is not power to repress dissent after this fashion, the result of an authoritative creed is to produce divisions. Being human merely, it will not of course be perfect; it will give the measure of its composer's knowledge, and very naturally also bear the marks of his failure, wherever he has failed to apprehend the teaching of the Word. These errors are now, *equally with the truth itself*, bound upon all by the same authority. People must submit and do violence to their consciences, or they must respect their consciences and go outside. The confession becomes thus a party badge. It binds people together by the very beliefs in which they differ from other Christians, whom they cannot but own to be walking as godly as themselves. Scripture itself has to be interpreted in conformity with the creed, and where it cannot be silenced, sectarians are made in plenty; and doctrines are changed from their design of edification to be the unholy watchwords of intestine strife.

So we have lost practically the blessed name of Christians, and are known as Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, names derived from our differences only. Our differences are exalted above what we have in common, and the body of Christ is rent into many bodies, which become therefore human organizations, not Divine. God's Church is owned to be the true one, but it is invisible. There are practical working Churches, which accommodate themselves better to the many minds of men, and which they can regulate to their own satisfaction.

Who takes the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians as de-

fining the actual Church to which they belong? Is the body of Christ Methodist or Presbyterian? In what Church is 'membership' neither more nor less than membership of Christ? Who takes the 14th chapter as regulating the Church's coming together? Yet the apostle there exhorts every one who pretends to be spiritual, to know the things he writes unto them are the commandments of the Lord. It is all antiquated and passed away; or applies to an invisible body nowhere to be found on earth.

On the other hand they tell us that—

"The *visible* Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered," &c.; and that

"The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority on Controversies of Faith."

Whose is this voice? It is *not* Jezebel's: there is no pretension to infallibility, but the contrary: the Church "must not ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written;" and there is danger of it, for "as the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch have erred, so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith."

This is not infallibility, but on the other hand, a very simple acknowledgment of danger in submitting to this authority that the Church is said to have. Yet she is maintained in the power she has abused, and is only warned not to ordain anything contrary to God's Word. But who is to decide if she does? And what are we to do, if she does? Conform in spite of conscience, or go outside the Church? Both the one and the other have been done by tens of thousands; and the Church's authority has been maintained in Protestant England at the cost of innumerable troubled consciences and the secession of the truest, bravest, godliest men she ever had. The Act of Uniformity emptied two thousand pulpits at once. How many have submitted, not strong enough to contend, not true enough to make the sacrifice demanded, the day of manifestation alone will show. How many at present do violence to their own consciences every time they use the baptismal services, who shall say? It cannot be helped, they say, for the Church has authority to decree, and she has no infallibility to save her from decreeing error! Does the Word of God indeed give

authority where there is such manifest incompetency to use it? No, emphatically: God forbid,—it is the Church's *own* decree, not God's; the woman in the place of the man, and thus confusion.

Jezebel goes farther than this, and wisely. She does not proclaim her authority and her incompetency in one breath. She is a prophetess, and infallible, the only ground upon which her authority can be righteously maintained. But she is emphatically the preacher of unrighteousness, teaching and seducing Christ's people to eat idol-offerings and commit fornication. It is the 'woman' of the 13th of Matthew, putting the leaven into the fine flour of the meat-offering; for it is Lev. ii. that explains the parable there. Just as the 'tree' of the third parable shews the result of the word of the kingdom to be the establishment of a Babel-like power in the world, and this answers to Pergamos; so the 'woman' of the fourth parable corresponds to the 'woman' of the fourth epistle, and the 'meal' of the parable would be better rendered by the 'fine flour' of Leviticus. That fine flour is Christ, the bread of life, the food of His people, and the woman might lawfully have this and distribute it. But she is doing more,—she is adding of her own to it, and his is to adulterate and spoil it. God has given her no right of manufacture of His people's food. If she adds anything to it, it is 'leaven'—corruption. The leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, and the leaven of Herod, are what the Lord Himself points out as the danger in connection with His people's food (Matt. xvi. 12; Mark viii. 15); and this He plainly points out to be their 'doctrine.' The doctrine of the Pharisees was ritualism and superstition; the doctrine of the Sadducees was rationalistic infidelity; the doctrine of the Herodians was a courtiership of the world. And here are plainly still the adulterations of Christianity. The *Man's* voice—Christ's—it is which alone has title to be heard by the people of God; when the *woman* speaks, it is at once insubordination and corruption.

Unhappily those who at the Reformation so nobly and boldly protested against the doings and sayings of the Woman Jezebel, left the root of it all untouched in not protesting against ALL Church legislation in the things of God. Had they left legislation to the righteous Law-giver, and claimed for the Church the simple duty of obedience to Him,—had they maintained the authority

of His Word alone, and for power the power only of His Spirit—how different would the result have been! Instead of this they took away but infallibility from the Woman, owned the actual bad fruit of her teaching—and then, having branded her thus as evil and incapable, —set her up again as before, with only an admonition to teach truly and according to the Word. The natural result followed. Men having the Word in their hands now, and having learnt that the Church was fallible, soon found her teaching actually false. Division followed. Discord. Doubt of all truth. Until infidelity on the one hand proclaims that nothing can be really known; while Jezebel looks down from her prophet's chair, and asks, "Does not 'Babel' mean 'confusion'? where is the real confusion,—with your many voices, or my single one?"

And in truth does not 'Babylon the Great, extend further, however much her seat may be, and is, in Rome?

When God's judgment fell upon the old typical city, the seat of empire of the first apostate, and when, scattered necessarily by the confusion of speech, they separated and left off to build the city,—did not those who abandoned the plain of Shinar, carry with them in their diverse speech the evidence that they too were only hindered by that effectual impediment from building Babel still?

Are the diverse tongues of Protestantism anything but the sign of how thoroughly God hates the *mere* outward, earthly, ecclesiastical unity, which nothing humanly speaking, hinders from being built up again, save the utter impossibility of coming to an understanding, so as practically to build together?

Yet let us not be dismayed. God and his truth remain the same. "He that will do His will shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." If we will be content in weakness and nothingness to be doers of His will, seeking not name or power but the blessedness of proving the peace and pleasantness of His holy ways, we shall find His truth the same as ever, and His strength made perfect in our weakness still. If but 'two or three' were literally left together, His 'there am I' has provided not only blessing but sanction for the two or three. Was there another with whom *he* walked, who 'walked' of old 'with God.' We know not: but only of himself (of his generation) is this written. The 'two or three' seems to assure us it shall not quite be that. But still assingly must our feet be walking, as it were *alone*, 'with God.'

We shall look at Jezebel in yet another character, if the Lord will, next time. But I put it to you now, whether these Church teachings—much wider than Jezebel's—have not in fact the character I have attributed to them; whether they are not based upon a false assumption of authority where Christ's word gives none? whether they do not suppose God's Word to be incomplete and less plain-speaking than man's? and whether they have not led, and do not lead to the scattering of Christ's sheep instead of gathering them? They do, no doubt, assume to be for gathering, not scattering; but we must mark well our Lord's words: "he that gathereth not WITH ME, scattereth abroad." As a fact, is not the result further and further division? must it not necessarily be so?

And if all this be true, what is our duty, when the Church presumes to step into Christ's place, and claim the obedience which is His due alone? Is it humility to give way and say nothing? Is it loyalty to Him to give up what is His due? Surely every honest hearted servant of His will answer, no. Let then the answer be practical and outspoken. Let us return to the simple blessedness of hearing His words and doing His will—to the yoke, which being His (far different to what the Church's yoke has ever proved) is easy, and to His burden which is light. Let us hear the words, which as they come down to us from the centuries of the past, approve themselves as indeed prophetic, "he that hath an ear to hear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

## LECTURE V.

---

“YE HAVE REIGNED AS KINGS WITHOUT US.”  
(Rev. II. 28-29.)

---

As I have already said, we have here the full, ripe fruit of the Church's declension. We have, in a sense, the perfect development, the full corn in the ear, ready for the sickle of judgment at His coming again—a coming first announced, in these addresses, here. The ripe fruit tells us what the tree is,—the end tells us what the thing has been from the beginning. If we look at the Church of Thyatira, or rather at the Woman Jezebel, we shall see that in every way Christ's word and Christ's person are superseded by her. It is the Church that is the teacher and not Christ; and the Church has slipped into the throne and is reigning upon the earth before the Lord's time has come to reign: that is, in the sense in which alone His saints could share the Kingdom with Him.

We shall see directly that there is a sense in which He reigns now. But this is not a throne which the Lord can share with His saints. That throne is yet to be set up, and the Church reigning in the meanwhile without Christ is really reigning in His despite, fulfilling the words addressed long before to the Church at Corinth: “Ye have reigned as kings without us.”

They had left the apostles out, and were reigning, with these still suffering. *They* were not reigning.

“I think that God hath set forth us the apostle,” says one of these, “as it were appointed unto death, we are a spectacle unto the world, to angels, and to (1 Cor. iv. 9).”

The apostles certainly, whatever may be true of their successors, did not reign. They disclaimed it in the fullest possible way. And the whole of the New Testament is against the idea of any reigning now until the

“YE HAVE REIGNED AS KINGS WITHOUT US.” 273

Lord Himself comes, and takes that throne, which, as I said before, He can share with His people.

But let us look now at this state of things in Thyatira, and we shall see how it is in fact a perfect denial of two grand features, I may say, of Christianity. These two grand features are *Christ's absence* as rejected on the one hand, and the Church being a mourner until He returns; and, on the other hand, in the meanwhile *the supremacy of the Holy Ghost*, as come down into the world to represent the Lord Jêsus Christ.

These are really the two forms of denial which you see in a glaring way in the Church of Rome—the Woman Jezebel. These are the two things prominently denied there. She reigns, in her thought, rightly even over kings,—Christ Himself not being here but still rejected,—and there is a vicar of Christ, a *human* vicar in place of the Divine One. Jezebel has usurped the authority and attributes of the Divine One. She reigns, instead of being subject; and her infallibility becomes her practical denial of His.

Let us look at these two things. In the first place, however, let us be clear that the Lord does reign now. I do not mean to deny that, as a truth, but on the contrary assert it in the fullest way. There *is* a Kingdom—the Kingdom of Heaven now. Do not let us fall into the mistake that the Kingdom of Heaven does not exist now. It does exist, although it exists in a form of which the prophets of the Old Testament knew nothing. It exists in that form called in the 13th of Matthew the “Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.” This mystery-form is a form which the prophets and spiritual men of old knew nothing of, and said nothing about. It was hidden from ages and generations. As you find in the same chapter that the Lord spake in parables, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, saying, “I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret since the foundation of the world.”

That is what we have here: what has been kept secret from the foundation of the world. The Kingdom was not a secret. It was clear enough that Messiah was to have a kingdom, and sit upon the throne. But the throne and Kingdom, in the form in which we now have it, the Son of God sitting upon the *Father's* throne,—not the Son of man sitting on His own (a human) throne, but the Son of God sitting upon His Father's throne, is not



## 274 "YE HAVE REIGNED AS 'KINGS WITHOUT US."

the Old Testament doctrine. And a Kingdom with the King rejected and absent, and true disciples suffering instead of reigning, is an equally strange thought there.

You will find, if you look at the end of the 3d chapter of Revelation, the Lord reminds Laodicea: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne. And the moment you think of that,—the Son of God on the Father's throne,—you will see He could not share that throne with His disciples. None of us could sit upon the Father's throne! and thus, although it is quite true He is reigning now, it is not true that His disciples are reigning with Him now. It is false, utterly false. He is reigning now on the Father's throne; and we are translated, as you have it in the first chapter of the epistle to the Colossians: "Translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son" (13 v.) not of the Son of *man*. but *God's* dear Son.

You will notice in the appearing of the Lord, in the day of His manifestation, that it is as the Son of man He appears. "You shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven." That introduces the Kingdom of the Son of man. And going back to Daniel, you will see in the 7th chapter, how the Son of man comes and receives a Kingdom. Again in the first part of this book of Revelation, in the first chapter, it is One like the Son of man who walks in the midst of the candlesticks. and who speaks therefore as such to Laodicea.

Now, when the Son of man takes His own throne, as such, He has got a throne to share with His people. He will have His people to share that throne with Him: but in the meanwhile to speak of sharing His throne is utter ignorance; none but Himself can fill God's—the Father's, throne. That is the throne He has now as the Son of God. His own throne is as the Son of man, and then, and then alone, we reign with Him.

Now that at once gives us clearly the present state of things. In the meanwhile what have we here? Why, suffering, as a matter of course. The King is rejected, although on the throne of God. God has placed Him there, until His enemies are made His footstool, and that, however shortly it may be, is not so yet.

You will find the second Psalm full of that thought. That Psalm, you will remember, the apostle quotes in the beginning of the Acts as true of the Lord in that day, when the whole world was linked together, the

“YE HAVE REIGNED AS KINGS WITHOUT US.” 275

nations and the people of Israel too, against the King whom God had anointed on the holy hill of Zion—the King of the Jews. But death cannot hold Him: He is taken up out of the sealed-up sepulchre. “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh,” (4 v.) That is where He is sitting, “in the heavens.” “Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure,” (6 v.) Then God’s voice comes out; “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.” And the Lord says: “I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” That is as man. “*To-day* I have begotten thee:” that would not be applicable to the Lord as the Only-begotten of the Father. It is only true of Him as born upon the earth. “Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession: Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron.” A very striking word we have there: that word “rule.” The words in this second chapter of Revelation are evidently taken from that second Psalm. That ruling, though with a rod of iron, is really shepherding. In the second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew the quotation from Micah gives the same thought: “And thou, Bethlehem, . . . . . out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel.” It is the same expression, “shall *shepherd* my people Israel.” Out of Bethlehem God’s shepherd-king had come before, king David, the very type of Christ: and where He rules with a rod of iron, that is yet a shepherd’s care and love. Love can, if need be, strike. It is a mistake to imagine any inconsistency in this. The “rod of iron” is for preservation no less than for destruction: nay, preservation is the end in view: it is to “destroy them that destroy the earth,” and to make even the earth a place where peace will flourish as the effect of righteousness.

“Ask of Me,” Jehovah says, and He has not asked:—He is still sitting in patience, and we are therefore, as the apostle John (Rev. i. 9), “in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.” His long-suffering is now salvation. When it is over, and delay would be, not blessing, not long-suffering, but weakness, it is with the rod of iron, not, as people imagine, with the gospel, that He takes the ends of the earth for His possession. The 26th of Isaiah shews that grace has been tried, and found ineffectual. The gospel has been going out for centuries

## 276 "YE HAVE REIGNED AS KINGS WITHOUT US."

and had no effect in converting the mass of mankind. When the Lord comes this confederacy of the nations against Him will be showing itself in its full character, as the psalm depicts it. They will be saying more than ever, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." And "then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure." He will use, in contrast with grace, the iron rod; and here He associates His people with Himself: "And he that overcometh and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall *shepherd* them with a rod of iron,"—the same word; "As the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star" (25, 27 and 28 vs).

There you have what we are waiting for. In the meanwhile to have a kingdom, to pretend to rule, or to have the upper hand in a world where Satan is really god and Prince is only necessarily to compromise with Satan. We may be sure that he who offered the Lord all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them, would not be slow to tempt His people somewhat after the same fashion. And so he has done. But the church has not been faithful as the Lord was. She has been flattered into believing the world was growing better, when she ought to be ashamed of being less distasteful to it than He was, and has accepted the thought of a millennium with Christ absent and the devil here.

When the millennium really comes, and before you hear of the saints' reign, the reign of Satan comes to an end. Satan is bound with a great chain, and cast into the bottomless pit, and shut up for the thousand years. There is no reigning of Satan then,—no allowing Satan to reign while the Lord is reigning. Christ is coming to have it all for Himself. As a consequence you will find that a real belief in the Lord's coming is thus a very practical thing. If we believe that on the whole the world is going on well, and its conversion by the Gospel progressing, how can it be but that it will affect all our estimate of its character, and of our need of separation from it? The friendship of this world, will that be enmity to God in the millennium? How far then is it true to-day? 'Crucified to the world', not of it; all that is of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, and 'not of the Father'? That must have been of course in Pagan times.

“YE HAVE REIGNED AS KINGS WITHOUT US.” 277

How can you speak of the world as a thing to be overcome? A scene in which all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution?

The Cross becomes no daily necessity. They bore it in past ages that I might wear the crown to-day. Thus the whole character of the Christian life is in this respect changed. The Lord Himself shows the usurpation of authority, and worldly ways, to be the effect of putting off His coming: “If that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth His coming;” what then? “And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken.” There is already what is only perfected in Jezebel here.

The time of the Church’s reign was necessarily the time of its worst corruption, then. Men call it ‘the Dark Ages.’ It was a very distinct step beyond the Pergamos condition we were before looking at. There if the Church were united to the world, she was not as yet its mistress. On the contrary the Christian emperors were the rulers, convoked councils, placed and displaced bishops, and had in every way the upper hand. So that the Church, became,—for her own interests no doubt, but still—a mere tool in their hands.

Again, in the churches of the Reformation,—so far as they were, at least, established churches, there the rulers of the State obtained ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and became heads of the church in their respective countries. This was evil, and a terrible evil too, but it is not Jezebel. Jezebel had her foot, and in theory always has her foot, upon the necks of kings; and distinctly quoted Scripture for her supremacy: the very same Scripture too that people are quoting now in behalf of what they call a spiritual millennium. The promises of the Old Testament to an earthly people, and which the apostle in the 9th chapter of Romans claims as, spite of her unbelief, belonging to Israel still,—these promises are spiritualized, as they call it, by being applied to the church. In our Authorized Version you may find such applications constantly in the headings of chapters and of pages also. But the spiritualizing of the prophecies is, in fact, as is very easy to see, the *carnalizing* of the church. For the *promises* are not spiritualized. The earthly is not translated into the heavenly, but earthly promises are applied as such to a heavenly people: with what possible effect but that of making the people earthly?

## 278 "YE HAVE REIGNED AS KINGS WITHOUT US."

Do not mistake me. If as Christians, we are "blessed with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," we are entitled to lay hold of every *spiritual* blessing and by faith claim it as our own. Thus if God said to a saint of old, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," the apostle tells us that so we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper." The promises to Moses or to Joshua we may apply to ourselves. This does not take them from those to whom they were addressed, nor does it authorize us in applying promises as to headship in the earth and such like in the same way. "All spiritual blessings *in heavenly places*" sufficiently distinguishes.

I need not say, that is not confined to Rome: it is everywhere. Rome has acted it out to the full; Rome has given us the ripe fruit; and what has the fruit been? What has her reign been? As you know, so far as she actually fulfilled this, it was a reign of terror for all God's real saints. They were hunted into the dens and caves of the earth, to escape the power of what called itself "The Church." Babylon, as we have it in the 17th chapter of this Book, drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. That is how she used the power which she claims.

But, as I say, we cannot leave this there. We cannot say, "that is Popery; we have nothing to do with it." The principles are all around us in the present day. We may have given up the fruits of the doctrine, but have we renounced the doctrine itself? Have we taken these words of the Lord as true and applicable—now as ever—"if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake the same shall save it."

These words are as true this day as in the day in which they were uttered. Have we apprehended them? Have we accepted the alternative,—the principle of His kingdom now in the time of His patience?

What remains for us, then? The Cross! The glory beyond and the cross by the way are principles which the Lord connects together; and rough as the path may be, it is alone the path where the glory shines. God has "called us by glory and virtue." "Virtue" there is 'courage,' needed for the difficulties of the way. We are "strengthened with all might, according to the power of His glory, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, giving thanks unto the Father who hath

“YE HAVE REIGNED AS KINGS WITHOUT US.” 279

made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Israel’s desert pilgrimage is the figure of our walk of faith over a soil where nothing naturally grows for us; our bread,—our sustenance,—has to come from heaven; the track of glory is traced on barren sands. Nay more, it is an enemy’s country; circumstances are against us; the world is against us. We can purchase even a truce only by unfaithfulness. We are the descendants of martyrs and confessors. We are the followers of One whom the world crucified, and who has left us an example that we should follow His steps in the midst of those inwardly as hostile as ever, even beneath the garb of Christianity itself. His own words warn us: “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore doth the world hate you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”

Has the sober light of the nineteenth century dispelled these things as illusions? or are these things really true of us? Would it not be well to ask ourselves here to-night—What cross do I carry?—Do I carry *any*? People have got so low, that they talk about taking up their cross in getting up to speak in meetings sometimes. And if that is not our thought, yet how far do we apprehend that there is a cross at all? The common trials which come upon us as men, as in the flesh still, are not the cross. The cross is what is ours as *Christians*, and it still *is* ours, so far as we are practically Christians.

The Lord has not changed His thoughts, because the church has bought her peace with the world by shameful compromise. No, it remains there in the Word, just as sharp, clear, and unmistakable as ever it was. And those who can read these passages to mean their entire opposite, have lost the power to interpret Scripture, or Scripture rather has lost its true power over them.

A few words now about another thing.

If the Church reigns in the absence of Christ, what then? Why then there must be something representing Him down here. He must have a vicar. He is not present—even the world cannot mistake that—except

280 "YE HAVE REIGNED AS KINGS WITHOUT US."

spiritually. He is at God's right hand. That is the common faith of Christianity, and it is the faith even of Rome. Although in spite of that her altars are continually proclaiming Him corporally present,—the faith of Christianity is that Christ is away.

But a visible kingdom requires a visible head. And I need not tell you that such they have given it. The Pope is, for Rome, Christ's vicar ; and this is only the natural development of the thought of Church-government which historically preceded and led on to it; and which extends far beyond Rome. Presbyterianism, Prelacy, Popery, are but three steps in the same direction. Apostles are no more; and the Church is orphaned, if not governed in a visible manner. Hierarchical government in some form is a necessity to it.

Now the Lord has indeed a Vicar during His absence—a perfect, infallible Guide for His people, as well as a guide book absolutely perfect. The Church has not only a perfect body of discipline, but One also who is the Interpreter and Administrator of it. It is the characteristic of God's people, that "as many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." So distinctive and so wonderful a blessing is the presence of the Holy Ghost with us now, that, although the disciples in our Lord's day were blessed, by the fact of His presence with them, beyond all the generations previous, yet He could say to them : "It is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send Him unto you."

His presence in the believer makes even his body the temple of the Holy Ghost. So His presence in the church makes it also "the temple of the living God." Looking at the Church again as the body of Christ, He is the One Spirit animating the body. As all the members move under the control of the spirit in the natural body, so in the body of Christ also: if the members do not understand and move in harmonious subjection to the spirit, we speak of it as disease; and it is not less, but more truly so in the body of Christ.

If we open the Acts, we shall find everywhere His presence—greater than apostles, higher than the highest there. From the day of His descent at Pentecost, He is supreme over all; and that supremacy becomes the harmony of action, the unity of spirit in the lower sense. Sovereignly He calls instruments as He will, and as sovereignly uses whom He calls. "Separate Me

“YE HAVE REIGNED AS KINGS WITHOUT US.” 281

Barnabas and Saul,” He says to the prophets and teachers at Antioch, “to the work whereunto I have called them . . . . And they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed into Seleucia.” How strange to read as power conferred on man to convey office what is really the naming of individuals by the Spirit Himself, as called and sent forth by Him: one of them being the man who asserts his own apostleship to be “not of men nor *by* man”!

“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia, . . . . they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not.” “And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days, who said to Paul by the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem.” Not ordinarily indeed, perhaps not often, was the bidding of the Spirit expressed as audibly; but the manner of communication was but circumstantial, and not of the essence of the matter. *He* was present, Comforter, Guide, Teacher, Witness; Spirit of the body, “dividing to every man severally as He will;” a Divine Person, with divine power and divine authority.

Yet unseen! I grant the fatal flaw in all this for most. The Bible they can see, but it is not definite enough. The Spirit of God they cannot see, and alas, cannot believe in, in a practical way. “Whom the world cannot receive,” says the Lord Himself, of the Holy Ghost, “because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.” And when the line between the Church and the world is gone, who can wonder that this unbelief should be permeating the mass of what is professedly Christ’s? It is not only Rome that refuses to the blessed Spirit the place He has come to fill. The unbelief which has denied the sufficiency of Scripture, and supplemented it by creeds which come soon to supplant it, has denied in the same way the sufficiency of the Holy Ghost, and supplemented His authority with hierarchical governments to which (whatever the theory) He is practically unnecessary.

If you ask people what they mean by church-government, you will get various answers, no doubt; but they will all agree substantially in one thing. That one thing is, in an omission of what is indeed the key-stone of the arch. They will tell you, some, that they believe in an Episcopal form of government, some a Presbyterian, some a Congregational. And if you ask them further,



282 "YE HAVE REIGNED AS KINGS WITHOUT US."

Where do they put the Holy Ghost, you will find the mass of people even denying any special presence of the Holy Ghost as characterizing this dispensation. They will tell you, so far truly, that the Spirit of God has always been acting in the world from the creation of it; that the new birth has always been His work from Abel, or from Adam to this time. They believe too, in certain special gifts at the day of Pentecost, and for some time thereafter. A distinctive 'coming' in the place of Christ, a coming so important in character that it was expedient even for Christ to go away, that we might have it, they do not understand, and do not believe in. One well-known man, an Evangelical divine, Dr. Hugh McNeile, of Liverpool, when he had to admit that a personal 'coming' of the Holy Ghost after the ascension of Christ was taught in the Word, could only account for it by the supposition that, during the Lord's lifetime upon earth, all the operation of the Spirit was limited to Himself alone, so that the three and thirty years of our Lord's presence, were years in which no conversions could take place at all,—a barren time in the world's history, a unique and utter desolation otherwise of spiritual influences!

And thus you will find that the *practical* faith in the Holy Ghost's presence now is scarcely faith in a *Person*. It is 'influence' like rain or dew or gentle breeze,—and these are true and Scriptural figures so far, but quite impersonal. They talk of a "measure of the Spirit," and every fresh stirring of heart they find is a fresh 'baptism' of the Spirit. The evident and necessary result is that they lose the first requisite for faith in Him as one come down to take charge for Christ on earth, to dwell as God in the house of God, to animate and govern the body of Christ, as the spirit in man guides and governs the natural body.

Hence church-government in people's minds has nothing to do really with His presence here. Bishops, priests, and deacons may need, and of course do need, His influences. So in theory does the Pope. But practically the ordering of things is (within certain limits, whether of church-tradition or of Scripture, so far as Scripture is supposed to serve) in human hands, and subject to human wills. "The Church has power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith." "And those [ministers] we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to

“YE HAVE REIGNED AS KINGS WITHOUT US.” 283

this work BY MEN, who have public authority given unto them in the congregation, to *call and send* ministers into the Lord's vineyard.” But the Holy Ghost may not have ‘called or sent’ them! Well, that, of course; and that is provided for: for “although in the visible church the evil be ever mingled with the good, *and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the Word and Sacraments*, yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and DO MINISTER BY HIS COMMISSION AND AUTHORITY, we may use their ministry, both in hearing of the Word of God, and receiving of the sacraments”!!

Thus they may have Christ's commission although the Holy Ghost hath *not* ‘called or sent’ them; Christ and the Holy Ghost are made to be at issue; and the Church can go on ordering and ordaining in despite of the Spirit Himself!

And this is *order*; while those who desire to yield subjection to the Word and Spirit of God alone are convicted of being rebels against proper authority, and sure to end in confusion and (as some have said) in ‘atoms’! Yet faith will follow where God leads, owning indeed that in His path all will be confusion that is not subjection; and that, leave Him out, we at least have no resource. Let it be so. We will abide the issue.

To churches constructed after the common pattern the government appointed by God could not possibly adapt itself. The only possible one must be available for spiritual and unspiritual, believers and unbelievers alike. The world ever really says, “We do not so much as know whether there be a Holy Ghost,” and counts the talk about Him as mysticism, and faith in Him as fanaticism and confusion. But faith, to be faith, must be in the unseen. In the unequal yoke of faith and unbelief, believers must descend to the level of their yoke-fellows. Unbelief cannot rise up to faith. Faith therefore must descend to unbelief. That, alas, has happened.

The effects of all this we have had before us already in some respects. The principles which have led to them are prolific in evil, but it is the principles themselves that are occupying us now. Rome, to which in this epistle we have reached, exhibits whereto the course of departure from God tended from the beginning. He who rules the course of this world has ruled it, and now it is seen clearly to be the adversary's deliberate assault upon the truth of God. The rejection of Christ by the

284 "YE HAVE REIGNED AS KINGS WITHOUT US."

world, he has made us forget in the world's embraces; the cross He has changed from an inward discipline to an outward ornament; for the dishonored Spirit he has substituted hierarchical dignities; for the coming of the Lord, an ecclesiastical millennium. Thank God, though the tide runs strong, there is yet an overcoming possible; and the Lord's closing words here remind us of it. Let us keep them in our hearts. "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father; and I will give him the morning star.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

## LECTURE VI.

---

### SLEEPING AMONG THE DEAD. (Rev. III. 1-7.)

---

In the address to the Church of Thyatira, we find the Lord announcing His coming, and bidding His saints wait to share then with Him the authority which the false church was assuming to have already. Thyatira presents us thus with a phase of things which goes on at least until the Lord comes for His saints; not indeed until the rising of the Sun of Righteousness upon the world of which Malachi speaks, but until He comes as the Morning Star, the herald of the day before the day appears.

In Sardis we have therefore not only a development of the Thyatira condition, but in many respects, as it is easy to see, what is in entire opposition to it; not the claim of infallibility, not corruption of doctrine (as what is prominent), not persecution of the saints, not the exercise of authority in the same sense. There is now a very simple and explicit statement as to the character of things, which is a lack of spiritual power, nay, of life itself. While Christ had as much as ever "the seven spirits of God"—the plenitude of the Spirit as of old, and for His people—in fact they whom He addressed had a name to live only, and were dead. I would only there were more difficulty in applying this; but it is surely what fatally characterizes, and did from the beginning characterize, not individuals of course necessarily, but the Churches of the Reformation.

Understand me well. I do not speak of the Reformation itself when I say this; for the Reformation was the blessed work of God, and the Lord does not judge, and never can have need to judge, His own work. He refers to what His grace had done for them, to what they had heard and received. Their responsibility was to take

heed to it, and hold it fast; and already they had failed in this. This is the ground of judgment.

Christ has the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars. So He is represented here. There is no failure in the supply of spiritual power; no failure in His care for His people. Yet in them there is a strange and terrible lack. With more pretension than had before been manifested in one way, for they have now a name to live, a name assumed to be in the book of life, the actual condition of the mass is that of death—not feebleness, but death.

There are exceptions; not merely those alive, but still more, those that have not defiled their garments; and of these the Lord speaks in the warmest terms of praise: "They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy." Alas, it is only a 'few names.' Others may be alive, but in a scene of death—you know what defilement with the dead is among the symbols of the Old Testament—the many of those even alive are defiled. But the mass are dead altogether—dead with a name to live.

The Lord further refers to this in His promise to the overcomer in Sardis: "Him that overcometh . . . I will not blot his name out of the book of life." The book of life is understood by the majority of people to be only in the Lord's hands, and all the names written in it by Himself. Those ignorant of the gospel consequently stumble over this blotting out of the book of life, supposing that it is the blotting out of those who had once been saved. But there is no such thought here. There is not the slightest sign that those mentioned ever had life at all; they had a name to live—only the name.

Contrariwise you find, in Rev. xiii. 8, the very opposite as to those "written" as we ought to read it, "from the foundation of the world in the book of the Lamb slain." It is their security from being deceived by and worshipping the beast. Sovereign grace is their only and their sufficient security. Here, on the other hand, the book has got into man's hand, and he writes names as he pleases. But the Lord in His own time corrects the book, and then He blots out the names of those who had *but* the name.

Now the 'name to live' has very peculiar meaning in connection with Reformation times. It was, and is, in nowise characteristic of Popery, the putting people's names (while here on earth) into the book of life.

'Saints' for them are the dead, and not the living. The living she warns, that "no man knows whether he is worthy of favor or hatred," and that it is best not to be too sure.

Her pardons, her indulgences, her sacraments, only show by their very multiplicity how difficult a thing salvation is. Darkness is the essence of her system, and she thrives upon it.

On the other hand, the Reformation recovered the blessed gospel, and the word of reconciliation was preached with no uncertain sound. The doctrine of assurance was preached with the utmost energy, and was stigmatized by the Council of Trent as the "vain confidence of the heretics." They even pushed it to an extreme, maintaining, at least some of the most prominent Reformers did, that assurance was of the very essence of saving faith itself, and that unless a man knew himself forgiven, he might be sure that he was *not* forgiven.

It is plain then that Protestantism put a man's name in the book of life in a way that Popery did not.

Two immense things the Reformation gave to us, which have never since been wholly lost, an open Bible, in a language to be understood; and on the other hand the gospel, at least in some of its most essential features. These are inestimable blessings, which would we had but hearts to value more.

Of the men too who were the dear and honoured instruments in handing them down to us, we cannot speak with enough affection and esteem. God honoured them (how many!), taking them to Himself in fiery chariots, from which their voices come, thrilling us with the accent of the heaven opening to receive them. Those who disparage them will have to hear, one day, their names confessed and honoured by Him they served, as those of whom the world was not worthy.

But on the other hand, we must not make, as many are doing, the Reformation the measure of Divine truth. They are not loyal to the Reformation really, who accept less than Scripture as their measure or test of this. The broken and conflicting voices which are heard, the moment the question is no longer of the gospel, but of the Church and its government, assure us that if here Scripture has spoken, the churches of the Reformation do not in the same way convey to us its utterance. Lutheranism is not Calvinism, the Church

of England is not the Church of Geneva here. We must needs, whether we will or not, take Scripture to decide amid claims so conflicting; and when we do so, we find, with no great difficulty, that no one of these takes us back to the Church as it was at the beginning, the body of Christ, or the House of living stones, at all.

Instead of this, as is well known, the churches of the Reformation were essentially national churches. Not in every country of course able to attain the full ideal, as in France where Rome retained its ascendancy by such cruel means,—but still always of that pattern. Rome had of course prepared the way for this. The nations of Europe were already professedly Christian nations, and it was not to be expected that those who escaped from Jezebel's tyranny would give up their long hereditary claim to Christianity. The adoption of an evangelical creed now did not and could not change the reality of what they were. They learned the formula, put their names upon the Church books as Protestants, learned to battle fiercely for the gospel of peace, and how could you deny their title to be Christians? Yet as to the many, it was but a name 'to live.'

We must learn to distinguish two elements in the ecclesiastical revolution of those times. There was first of all a most mighty and most manifest work of God. The Scriptures, released from their imprisonment in a foreign tongue, began to speak to responsive human hearts, with the decision and persuasiveness that the Word of God alone can have. Christ began once more to teach as One having authority and not as the Scribes. The blessed doctrine of justification by faith, everywhere brought souls held fast in bondage into liberty, and the knowledge of a Saviour-God. The ecclesiastical yoke could not hold longer those whom the truth had freed, and where Christ had become thus the soul's rightful Lord, Rome's authority was but the tyranny of Anti-christ.

This was was the first and most powerful element in Protestantism; not a political movement but a movement of faith. Luther, solitary, at Worms, in the presence of the mightiest political power in Europe, was God's testimony that the work was of Him: His strength was manifest in human weakness. Had that place of weakness been retained all through,—had but God been allowed to show that power was His alone, how different would have been the result. And it is due to

the foremost name of Protestantism to acknowledge that, as far as carnal weapons were concerned, Luther would have rightly refused them a place in a warfare which was God's. But at least to call Protestantism essentially a political movement, is to do it glaring injustice and contradict the plainest facts.

Yet we cannot ignore the political element which soon entered into it. Rome had made the nations everywhere feel the iron hand of her despotism, and the national reaction against her was the natural result of her intolerable and insolent oppression. The notorious wickedness of her chiefs had destroyed long ago all real respect. Her power stood now in an excessive and degrading superstition. She lived upon men's vices and their fears; and where the light fell and removed the darkness, the fears were removed also, if the vices were not. Men learned to look upon the power they had cringed to with contrary feelings, deep in proportion to their depth before. Their interests, politically and otherwise, coincided with the spiritual movement which Divine power had produced. Soldiers, politicians, governments, made common cause with the men of faith. It was hard not to welcome such apparently God-sent allies, when on every side persecution raged. The movement increased in external power and importance; but its character was in just that proportion lowered and perverted.

There was need of defined principles to give cohesion to elements which the Spirit of God no longer sufficed to bind together. Outside there was the pressure of Rome, a compact and immensely powerful body, armed, drilled, and intensely hostile. Organization was soon a necessity; but of what or whom? To have proclaimed the true Church would have been to cast off their allies, to ensure the continuance of persecution and reproach, to leave Rome unchecked, triumphant. I do not say that the true thought of the Church ever dawned upon them. But I do say that their alliance with the world was a sure means of hindering their seeing it. There were formed instead national churches, with evangelical creeds as pieces of state-craft, and political power to back them, not divine.

Of these creeds we have already spoken a good deal, but yet there remains much more to say. It is easy to see that if a creed had been of necessity for His Church, the wisdom of God could have easily given us an infallible one, and His love could not have failed to do so.



On the contrary He has given us that which he proclaims able to furnish the man of God thoroughly to all good works, but which people feel at once to be as different from a creed as can be.

Why do people want a creed? They want something which can be more plainly and easily read than Scripture. Scripture is infinite; a creed must be definite. Of Scripture everybody makes what he likes; what they want is something different, something that shall not be susceptible of two meanings, plain to all, spiritual and unspiritual, church and world alike.

I have before been contending that Scripture is clearer, plainer really, than any word of man; besides being in infinite wisdom written so as to meet, as nothing else can, the thoughts of man at every point, so as to be the only guard and protection against heresy to the end of time. This is simple truth; and I am now going to own, what may seem a contradiction to my former words, that from their own point of view there is some truth in what they contend for as between Scripture and a creed.

*From their point of view.* For the apostle's words limit us somewhat when we speak of the intelligibility of Scripture. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that, '—what? "That THE MAN OF GOD may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

So that Scripture, profitable for doctrine as it is, does need a state of soul for its proper apprehension. It needs not indeed great attainments, human learning, deep research, but (what may be found in the lowest and poorest just as well), *devotedness*,—that we be God's men: what all Christians are indeed by position and profession, but alas, not what all practically are. This is the single eye, which we must have, for the body to be full of light.

But this being so, we can easily see that the Bible is not just the book for a court of law, and it is not the book for a national creed. The truth in it is not meant to be accessible merely to the natural mind. It is not crystallized into so many doctrines, and if it is not, if it is so essentially unlike a creed, on that very account we may surely believe that nothing like a creed was in God's design. He did not mean to give something that should serve as a motto for political partizanship, or a banner which should serve for any other purpose than

spiritual warfare. Nationalism, the union of the living and the dead, was never in His mind. He meant spirituality to be a first necessity, and an absolute one, for the discernment of His thoughts; and men, when they reject the blessed word of God for their plainer creed, show really that herein they are at cross purposes with Him.

"Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead," is the exact moral description, as it is the condemnation of nationalism. Of more than this, no doubt, but still of this. It is not the Church of God at all, but a Christianized world with Christians scattered through it—a place so defiling that but a few really keep their garments undefiled. Connected with the truth as Popery is not, such a system betrays the truth which it professedly upholds. The character of the last days is developed by it: "Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, proud, blasphemers," retaining all that was natural to them under the garb of Christianity, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

This is the effect of popularized truth—popularized as God never meant His truth to be. Of course you will distinguish between this and the *preaching* of His truth, than which nothing is more assuredly according to His mind. His gospel is to go forth to every creature, and the blessings of an open Bible we shall not be apt to exaggerate. But by *popularized* truth I mean what we have already been speaking of, truth made into a party badge so as to be accepted by those with whom Christ is not; for He was never popular, and He is not.

Popularized truth means truth that has lost its power. It may be truth for which martyrs died, truth that when first given of God, or given afresh, was full of quickening power. Popularized, it is so far lifeless. No exercise of soul in receiving it; no cross in professing it; they have got from their fathers what their fathers got from God; to their fathers' shame, to them it is honour. There is nothing to test conscience, nothing to make them ask, dare I take this without human sanction to commend, nay, in the face of all human discountenance? Yet only thus have we got it truly from God. The martyrs they talk of took it thus, and suffered for it; they take it from their fathers, a principle which would have condemned the martyrs; and they take it without the least thought of *being* martyrs.

Truth is proclaimed as powerless by the unholy lives of its professors, while unholiness is recommended by the practice of those who are orthodox as to the truth. And thus truth tends to die out of itself as valueless, remaining all the while in the national creed, embalmed as a memorial of the past. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God." We are experiencing this at the present time with regard to all the national systems too manifestly to need more than a bare allusion.

It is a system adapted to worldly minds, and to be worked by political machinery. The Word of God is no necessity to it except it may be to furnish a table of lessons: for the *authoritative* standard is the creed. The Spirit of God is not necessary to it: for colleges can manufacture preachers, and ecclesiastics ordain and send them forth, apart from this. Christians are not necessary to it: they are too uncertain a constituent part of a nation or its government, to be capable of being reckoned on; and there is no means of determining with certainty who they are. A sacrament,—baptism or the Lord's Supper—takes here the place of less manageable tests.

And the grieved and insulted Spirit may be besought to breathe upon the lifeless mass, and fill the sails of the ship of the state. But He must keep within the bounds prescribed by ritual, hierarchy and parliament, or He will be treated as schismatical. And it may be remarked how often in fact a schism springs out of a large and manifest revival. Souls brought near to God, and made to feel the value of His Word, and the necessity of obedience to it, are not made thereby the mere docile servants of the state-religion. The new wine will not be held in the old bottles. Statesmen are thus not favorable to such fresh enthusiasm, and no wonder: it divides the house which it is their interest to keep as one.

But is not here the history of the churches of the Reformation, of Protestantism in fact, during the three centuries of its existence? Is not this the true account of its divisions, for which it is reproached? The Spirit of God is not indeed the author of confusion, but of peace; of unity, and not disunion. But when people talk of schism, they should remember to what that term applies. As found in Scripture, it is "schism in the *body*" that is reprobated, and the body of Christ is

not a national church. When men have joined together the living and the dead,—when they have subjugated consciences to formularies instead of Scripture,—to hierarchies instead of God, or to hierarchies in the name of God,—what have they forced the blessed Spirit to do but to draw afresh the line they have obliterated between the living and the dead, between man's word and God's, between human authority and Divine?

And His mode of doing this has been constantly to bring out of the inexhaustible treasure of His Word some fresh or forgotten truth, which would do that which the popularized truth in the creed had almost ceased to do—would test the souls of His people as to whether they were indeed the descendants of those who confessed Him of old, whose tombs they built, and whose memories they had in honour. The fresh truth calls for fresh confession; costs, and is meant to cost, something; brings its confessors into opposition to the course around them, and separates them at once from those whose only desire is to go with the stream, and with whom the profession of Christ and the cross are widely separate.

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

I am not, therefore, upholding or making light of schism. The divisions of Protestantism are its shame; and to glory in them is to glory in one's shame. Error is manifold, contradictory, schismatic. Truth, however many-sided, is but one. Sects, in their multiplicity, may accommodate, no doubt, the religious tastes of man; but that only would show how purely human they are, how little divine.

The unity of the Spirit may be maintained, and allow indeed for growth in knowledge, and in unity of judgment as to many things. The Church of God has room for all that are God's, of whatever stature—fathers, young men, and babes. It cannot allow of, nay, insists upon, the largest charity for those who differ from us in aught that would not link the name of Christ with His dishonour. But that is a very different thing from what is implied in a creed, and indeed I may say, is its fundamental opposite. For the creed defines, in a way, that, if rigidly adhered to, *shuts out* toleration as to points of confessedly minor importance, where the Spirit of God would teach, not indifference indeed, but the largest charity, forcing its definitions upon all in a way *most* felt by the *most* conscientious. It is as necessary, as far as the creed goes, to believe in a child's being regenerate when baptized, as it is to believe in the Son of God himself. I grant there may be practical laxity, but for a soul before God that does not do. For such an one, with his eyes open, the subjection to human institutions in the things of God is just what he cannot and dare not yield.

"Schism in the body" then is always wrong. Separation from evil at all costs is a necessity, and always right. And from this have been gathered the freshness and power which have plainly characterized so many movements of this kind at the beginning. They began in self-judgment and devotedness. The evil at least they saw, and were exercised about, and the measure of truth they had was held in power. It was soon systematized, and in that proportion its power began to fail. The founders, if you look at their lives, were men of faith and power, suffering and enduring. The manners of the adherents were chastened, simple, primitive. Organized, popularized, with a large following, its freshness waned; and in the third or fourth generation it had taken its place as simply another sect among the

many, boasting of a history which it did not discern to be a satire upon its present condition.

The organization, the creed, are to preserve the truth. But did these give them the truth they are anxious to preserve? Surely not, as they must own. God in His love, God in His power, has given what man had proved his incompetency to retain. They cannot trust Him to retain it for them, after He has given it. He has used His word to minister it; they turn round and use for that blessed Word of His, a creed of their own manufacture to preserve it. The generations after follow their fathers' creed and not the Word. The truth popularized is gone as "Spirit and Life." God has to work afresh and outside of what a little while ago He had Himself produced.

And the spiritual life of the time has come more and more to manifest itself in 'revivals,' which, so far as they are really such, are the protests of the Spirit of God against prevailing death continually creeping over everything; and oftentimes connected with fresh statements of truth, when the old have lost their power. The Lord's warning to Sardis points out this constant tendency to death. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die." "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent."

It is scarcely too much to say that every true revival, whatever the blessing for individuals,—nay, I might even say, in proportion to the blessing for individuals,—weakens the national system; and this for reasons we have been considering. The Spirit of God must needs work in opposition to the death produced by the system, and therefore against the system which produces the death. Souls quickened by the Spirit of God cannot go on contentedly under deadly and unchristian teaching, comforting themselves with the assurance of the article that "the evil" who sometimes "have chief authority in the ministration of the Word and Sacraments" do yet "minister by Christ's commission and authority;" nor will they always be able to accept the ecclesiastical "yoke with unbelievers," because the system requires "every parishioner" to communicate, irrespective of any other security as to his conversion than his baptism and confirmation may imply.

It will be no marvel then to find, what any one with spiritual understanding needs must own, that at least the large proportion of those who could be said to "have

not defiled their garments" in the history of Protestantism have been in some way or other dissenters from the national system. The first generation of English reformers were dissenters from Rome, and Rome did her best to keep them pure, in the fires she kindled for them. In the second and third generation from these, a people began to be separated, who from their honest endeavour to be right with God were nick-named 'puritans.' I need not tell you what great names, which, after-generations have learnt to love and honour, are found among this class,—a class with whom fine and pillory and imprisonment were familiar things. Everybody knows that Bedford gaol was the "den" in which John Bunyan dreamed his memorable dream. In Scotland the attempted enforcement of prelacy, gave a succession of martyrs and confessors to the Presbyterian name, with whom as elsewhere their time of persecution was their time of real blessing, while Episcopalianism which was riding rough-shod over them had gone already more than half way back to Rome.

With the movement under Wesley and Whitefield, nearer to our own times, we are naturally still more familiar; and that which issued in the Free Church of Scotland is still within the memory of a generation not yet passed away. All these, and many others, will exemplify the truth of what I have been saying; until in our own days the national systems are showing evident signs of decrepitude and breaking up; and Romanists and infidels are beginning their pæans on the downfall of Protestantism. We who are able to see it all in the light of Scripture, can easily understand why all this is, and see only the truth of God's Word more and more manifested in it. Christianity flung as a cloak over a corpse can surely not warm it into life. Corruption will go on underneath, eating away the form of life, the only thing it ever had, until at last the cloak will more or less fall off, and what was all along true become apparent.

When the Protestant churches shall be gone altogether, or gone as such, their protest will not be gone, but only transferred to another court. Heaven will take up what they have dropped. Babylon the great will fall under Divine judgment; and apostles and prophets and God's people everywhere will rejoice at her fall.

But let us contemplate a little while now the other

side of things. We have had before us to-night what is intensely sorrowful, more provocative of tears than Jezebel's corruption. There the very malignity of the evil roused the whole soul against it. Here there is the fruit of what was in the beginning a movement of God. He can speak of what they had seen and heard, and exhort to hold it fast. There are still "things that remain," although "ready to die." And how can we but sorrow intensely over what was so fair in its earliest promise, and received its baptism in the blood of martyrs?

Yet the word to the overcomer, once again recurring here, comforts us with its recurrence. It links us, if we have ears to hear, with the same little remnant that has ever been finding its way, through storm and flood, to Him from whose love neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword can separate, and in which they have approved themselves, through Him, more than conquerors. The overcoming may be now in a new sphere, and separation may have to be from brethren, in some sense, of a common faith, heirs of great names in faith's records. Yet, in the overcoming, only overcomers are their true successors. Not those who, in our Lord's days, built the sepulchres of the prophets, represented them, or were linked with them, in His account, but those whom He sent forth to be persecuted by these same admirers of antiquity.

And God must teach us independence, even of one another; that rightful independence which springs from real and lowly dependence upon Him. In His presence what were even the greatest of His followers? How can I say to another, 'Rabbi, Rabbi,' when I must take the honour from Him that I deck another with? If I had not Him, it were lowliness; if I have Him, it is dishonour to Him.

It is not schism, this separate path, when not my own will leads me, but His word and Spirit! It is not separation in heart from brethren, if Christ be dearer to me still than they. Nay, love to them approves itself only thus, as the apostle teaches us, "when we love God and keep His commandments." (1 Jno. v. 2.)

Faith's victories are not in applause wrung from a multitude, but in the path of One, true Joseph, separated from His brethren; and God has overruled the presence of evil (which, I need not say, He has not caused) to the



giving us a path, at least in its circumstances, the more Christlike. We are not left to the subjection to evil; He calls us to rise above it. The difficulties of the path are only to prove afresh the power of God to carry us through them all. Every encouragement throughout these epistles is held out simply to the overcomer. The Lord give us only the needed energy. The time is short. The end is at hand. The grace that is now sufficient for all daily need will soon be manifested in the crowning of the conquerors. Then those that are poor shall have the kingdom; the mourners shall be comforted; the meek shall have the inheritance; the hungerers and thirsters after righteousness shall be filled; above all, the pure in heart shall see God—the God whom sin for the time has banished from the earth He made.

## LECTURE VII.

---

### CHRIST'S WORD AND HIS NAME.

(Rev. III. 7-13.)

---

We have much before us to-night, which I shall do poor justice to in the short time before me. But there are some prominent characteristics, as usual, of the state of things to which the epistle addresses itself, which I wish to bring before you. I do not intend to go into many details, but merely to apply certain prominent points in this address.

The epistle has a different character from any former one. The Lord speaks of Himself in a very distinct way from that in which He spoke of Himself before. It is not anything external, but what He is Himself, the Holy and True One; and in these epistles the way the Lord presents Himself is always in accordance with the state of those to whom He speaks. It is warning or encouragement, or perhaps both, as in the address to Smyrna, "He that liveth and was dead," where it is enforced by the words, "Be *thou* faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." Here, "He that is holy, and he that is true" is a solemn admonition, and yet it surely has its blessed comfort too.

This personal title, in conjunction with the whole epistle, seems to show the final break-up of ecclesiasticism, and an individual walk becoming the whole matter. Holiness and truth have seldom been the attributes of bodies of men even where professedly Christian. Not long was it even in apostles' times before one of these could say, "All seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ." Pentecost has never returned. And now, having followed the development of Christendom at large from Ephesus to Thyatira, and having seen the truth given again of God dying out in the national systems of Protestantism, (in Sardis), in Philadelphia we

find a strictly remnant testimony, the Holy and the True speaking of that which has seldom characterized more than individuals, and which challenges our response as individuals to it.

It is comparatively easy to point out Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, but who shall point out Philadelphia? Can you decide it in your favour by the fact that you belong to this or that company of people,—are in this or that ecclesiastical relationship? Is this all that is intended by keeping Christ's word and not denying His name? I am not at all denying that the question of our associations is one of grave importance, and rightly finds a place in connection with these things. A place it must have, and a serious one, for he must purge himself from vessels to dishonour, who would himself be a vessel unto honour; and Christ's Word defines our church-place, as all else. But to take a part for the whole would be a grave mistake, and even to give an undue place to such a part.

It is more than doubtful then, if any body of Christians as a whole can possibly represent Philadelphia as a whole. It is quite certain that in order to do so, it would have to be in a better condition far, than was the church already in the days when apostles were yet upon the earth. No: the more Philadelphia represents a condition which has in a remarkable way the Lord's own approval, the more does it become us to see well whether that condition is our own or not.

Let us look a little then at what we have here in its prominent features.

They have but a little power: no very great works characterize them. Three things however do, to which the Lord evidently attaches great importance.

First: "thou hast kept My Word."

Secondly: "and hast not denied my name."

Thirdly. "thou hast kept the word of My patience."

And first, it is 'My word,' in opposition to all other. Everywhere through the epistle, as you cannot fail to see, this 'My' is remarkably emphasized, and the person of the Lord exceeding prominent. It may remind us how He has been bringing out in these latter days the truth as to Himself. Not alone the effect of His work, the power of His blood to cleanse and reconcile, but what He personally is who has done all for us. Especially has He been teaching us to look into the inner sanctuary into which He is gone, and to recognize

Him more simply and really for what He is, true Man, as true a Man as ever, as well as God over all for ever blessed. I think none can doubt, who know what God has been doing for us in His grace for some time past, that the Lord Jesus has been fixing the eyes of His people more intently upon Himself, and inviting us to nearer intimacy. For how many the thought of Christ where He is now, was dimmed by the very glories of the Godhead into which He was thought to have gone back, scarcely any longer to be thought of as a man at all! And to how many has the thought of a man, true man, in the very glory of God, and there as representative of His people, brought Christ into a distinctness and intimacy which is now the life of all their joy.

Thus this vividly personal mode of address is no less strikingly appropriate to our day, than it is in itself precious and inspiring. And is it not also a further mark of *remnant times*? He whom men cast out of the synagogue, because he could not but know and say that Divine power had opened his eyes, and because he would not dishonour—little as he knew of Him—the one in whom that power had displayed itself;—*he* was but cast out to learn in His presence the glory of the Son of God, and to take his place among the sheep of the true Shepherd. And in proportion as we prove the breaking up of everything,—the *religious* ruin, not merely of the world as such,—do we not find (if it be real) the presence of the Lord, as the more needed, the more for our need! And then, as this is proved, “His word” has a place with us correspondingly. *His* word, because *His*,—inherently sweet, no doubt, but not just because of its inherent sweetness: His word, in opposition to all else.

And, beloved friends, if we look around us at the present day, which of us can be ignorant that the Word of God it is, that is in special question everywhere. The two great parties of this day, the party of superstition on the one hand, and of infidelity on the other, however they may seem to be essentially opposed, yet unite in the attempt to lower and take away the authority of His word as such. Will Rome allow consciences to be simply before God, and in subjection to Scripture? So far from that, you are to receive her infallible interpretation of it and not listen to it for yourself at all. And all ritualism, however diluted, runs in the same direction. The voice of the Church is substituted for Christ's voice, and the

Church herself presses in between you and Him: there is to be distance and not intimacy. On the other hand, infidelity—which you will find, in a form still more variously diluted, where you least suspect it—will not allow God's voice to speak to you in any real way at all. Religion is an earth-born thing, not heaven-born; an *aspiration* perhaps, but not an *inspiration*; a seeking after God, not God after you; and a seeking which they are now determining to be a fond vain thing, for God is the Unknowable, and even the conception of Theism is 'unthinkable.'

On the other side, God has been bringing out for us in the most wonderful way the fulness of His word. I do not at all speak of external evidences, although in every self-chosen path by which man is seeking to escape from God, He has been meeting and confronting him with these. Stones have been crying out in Egypt and bricks in Assyria. The disentombed memorials of the long dead past have proclaimed Him then living who still and ever liveth. But I speak of that in which His word has witnessed for itself, as the innermost shrine of His presence in which every voice speaks of His glory. That word which to unbelief is so poor and common and gives no response, has never to faith been so revealing God, since apostles and prophets spoke it first. Christ mute in the judgment-hall, and before His accusers, has never so manifested Himself before in the midst of His own. Thus a true and faithful God has been providing for the need of His people in the days which are coming, which even now are come, when nothing else remains to us; when if we cannot take His word and rest in it, no other rest is possible at all.

You may understand then what an immense thing it is to be keepers of Christ's word. Let us remark now also, that it is not merely *words* of His, but His *word*, His word as a whole. It has become a common fashion to say that Scripture *contains* God's word, not *is* it. Thus we are left to pick out, in the best manner we may, whatever is really His, from that which may be merely the mistake of the writer. Thus the word ceases to have authority over us; instead of its judging us, we become its judges. We obey it when obedience coincides with our own inclinations, and when we do not find it so, our excuse is at hand.

We can easily discern the folly and the sin of this; but we must remember, beloved friends, how we may

really be acting secretly in such a way as this, without having any formal theory at all about it. Practically, we may be making our Bible a mere collection of favorite texts, and ignoring those we have no fancy for, as if they were not inspired by the same authority. Are there none who have a very real disrelish for practical homely precepts, who get on excellently with the highest doctrines? Let us understand then clearly, that keeping Christ's word means surely, if it means anything, honest subjection to the whole of it, to that of which even we may not perceive the importance, as if we did; calling nothing little of what He enjoins,— of what has equal authority to emphasize it.

We have need to remember, too, that our own contrary wills are often the most effectual hindrances to receiving what is really Christ's word. How solemn it is to think that of the mass of things in which we differ from each other as Christians this contrariety must needs account for very much the larger part. The Lord's words are plain enough, and universally applicable, that "if any one will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." It is due to Him surely to own that our differences are due to ourselves and not to Him. But then these differences, found in so many whom we must esteem as really godly men, what a warning they give us of how much that is not of God may be, even in the godliest. So far as we have indeed whole-heartedly followed Him, who can doubt that He has led us right? But then how little really unreserved following there must be!

And it is not hard to see that such is indeed the case, —that a mass of His own (ignorantly perhaps, but then self-blinded) are really following 'words' of His, rather than as a whole His 'word.' Nay, many seem to have come deliberately to a stand, where to go further would cost them (they think) too much. They do not realize that it costs them really more to proffer Him a compromise He cannot accept; that it costs the brightness and freshness of their lives now, and what hereafter He alone knows. How many are trying to make up for this by the excitement of work for Him, and almost persuading themselves that "to obey is" *not* "better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

I say again, do not decide it by ecclesiastical position, —do not in fact draw the line anywhere, do not think it means you are this side of any line. Is your face—are

our faces—still ever onward after Him, who rests not till He has us where His heart can rest with us? How plainly perceptible it is, when a soul thus stops! Though the working may go on, and the whole outside be no other than it was, there is something gone that at once one in fellowship with God himself will feel in hindering fellowship. Beloved brethren, how sorrowful it is to lose one another's company in this way! But if we lose Christ, what shall replace it?

And here again so many in judging themselves take up with what is far below the Christian standard. Their measure is merely by what is in itself right or wrong—a legal measure. They occupy themselves with what is good, perhaps the Gospel, and fancy that must be devotedness, when perhaps it is all self-invented employment and will-worship, not in His plan for them, and meant even in fact (so treacherous are our hearts) to buy them off from true obedience.

But I must pass on to the next thing here in the Lord's commendation of the Philadelphians. The first thing is, "thou hast kept My Word": they are exemplifying a spirit of true obedience; and now it is, "thou hast not denied My name."

Now names in Scripture are significant things. They are not there as in the present day put upon people for their prettiness or because they run in the family. God did not think it an unworthy thing often Himself to interfere and change or give a name, as we can all remember, and so the Lord with His disciples. There was a reason for the name. It was the expression of what the person was, most generally, as in Abraham, Israel, Peter, and such like; and so especially with the names of God or of Christ.

When God took the special name of Jehovah with Israel, it meant that he was going to approve Himself to them in that character, as the immutable God, the I AM, upon whom they could rely to keep the covenant. So Christ is Immanuel, 'God with us,' and in order that that prophecy may be fulfilled, or shown to be, He is called 'Jesus,' His people's Saviour from their sins. God could not be with us except our sins were met, and none but a Divine person could meet them,—salvation must be of God: and this is all expressed in that word 'Jesus.'

Again the word 'Christ,' which every one knows, is but the Greek form of the Hebrew 'Messiah,' speaks of

Him as the One anointed of God to be the Deliverer in three necessary ways: a Prophet to bring out of error; a Priest to open the way to God; a King to govern for God.

Thus Christ's name is a remarkably explicit declaration of Himself. And this name of His, with the facts which it implies, is what is committed to His people to hold fast and maintain as His, in the midst of a world which has rejected Him. To confess His name involves thus the confession of His absolute Deity; His true humanity; His salvation of His people; His being their only and sufficient Teacher, Intercessor and Lord. This we have not to '*profess*' of Him merely, but to '*confess*,' for the world will not allow that He is really this. I do not forget that among us the world is even yet what is called a Christian world, but that does not alter it really. As soon as it sees that these names mean something for you, that they express truly what Christ is to you, then they will not suffer it. Their protest may be more or less polished according to the refinement of the age; it may be the protest of liberality itself against *your* narrowness: none the less you will have to suffer. Christ calls for confession ever. His people need never fear that they will have to give up the old path of suffering, consecrated by the prayers and tears of past generations of the long line of His witnesses. The world never really changes: our path through it, our struggle against it, cannot change.

The name of Christ expresses then what He is: the truth of what He is, is what is committed to us, what we have to confess in the face of the world. Here is the great controversy between God and man in the present day. As in Israel the question was between Jehovah, the one true God, and the gods of the heathen; and Satan's effort then (alas, his too successful effort) was to lead the people of Jehovah into the surrounding idolatry; so now the question is as to the one Christ, and Satan's power has set up "many Antichrists."

People little realize how pre-eminently false doctrine is the work of Satan. Christ is the "Truth;" the Spirit of Christ, "the Spirit of truth;" Satan is the "liar from the beginning." By a lie of his, man was first seduced and fell; by the truth he is brought back to God, and sanctified; Satan's effort is therefore by counteracting lies to destroy the power of the truth, and his most successful method is not so much direct denial, as per-



version of the truth. Knowing man's heart but too well by long experience, he knows how to combine truth and error so skilfully, that the truth shall give only the more speciousness to the error, while the error in the guise of truth shall appeal to the lusts and passions, and enlist them upon its side.

Thus Satan seduces as an angel of light, and Christendom, with its profession of Christ's Lordship, can worship many lords under that profession. Not denying His name, may in this way be given as a signal mark of approbation in the midst of Christendom, even more than in the midst of heathenism.

If we look further into Scripture for the association in which we find the name of Christ, we shall soon see that it is connected with the whole standing and walk of the individual believer, as well as with the practical gathering together of His people: things which, always of primary importance, have, as thus connected, come into special prominence in the present day. We are "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus;" our prayers are to be presented in His name; our every word and work are all to be done in His name; our gathering as Christians is to be "to his name." And these things may be otherwise stated as our identification with Christ before God; His identification with us before the world; and the objective power of what He is for us, individually or collectively. That these are things very specially in question in these days, if we are intelligent observers, we shall surely see.

Our justification in His name involves the first of these truths. It is our identification with Him before God that alone permits, and necessitates our acquittal. We are justified, as Scripture assures us, "by His blood;" He having stood for us upon the cross and died under our just sentence. But thus also, if His death is ours, His coming up from the dead is also ours; if "He was delivered for our offences," He "was raised again for our justification." His death was ours as sinners before God: we passed away in that character entirely, "our old man," all that we were as children of fallen Adam, being "crucified with Christ." His resurrection declares the fact of His acceptance in the offering of Himself for us,—declares therefore our acceptance. Our place is henceforth in Christ before God, identified completely with the One who as Man is entered into the heavens and set down in the presence of God for His people.

Hence the Lord could speak to His disciples, in view of

the accomplishment of His work, and of His now imminent return to His Father, of prayer in His name as a new thing which would be now for the first time their privilege, when the Spirit of truth having come to lead them into all the blessed reality of the new position, they should know that He was in the Father, and He in them, and they in Him (John xiv. 20). Conscious of their gracious identification with Him on high, they were now for the first time to approach the Father as thus identified; and the answer to their prayers, however feeble these prayers, would be the testimony of Divine satisfaction with Christ and with His work.

But if His people are thus in Christ on high, He on the other hand is in them below; and, while identification is not the only thought in this, (for He is in us as life also and by His Spirit, and this is what empowers us for such a place), yet identification is none the less clear and certain too. If He represents us in heaven, we represent Him on earth, and this is as wonderful a privilege as it is immense a responsibility. We represent Him before the world: living His life, treading His path, learning His sorrows and tasting too His joys. Whatever we do in word or deed, we are to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. iii, 17).

And are not these truths which, though from the beginning in Scripture, God has been graciously restoring to us in these days afresh, and which characterize in a measure the spiritual movement of the time? Do not they give fresh meaning to the confession of His name? No doubt the revival of "justification by faith" is as old as the Reformation; and that that doctrine was then brought out with simplicity and power. We have cause to thank God for it abundantly. Yet even that had been again very much obscured by the substitution of experiences and fruits of the Spirit, instead of Christ, as to be rested in. And this has deprived the doctrine itself of much of its power and blessedness. But there was one thing to which the Reformation did not attain, and of which the common evangelical doctrine (so called) has fallen entirely short: and that is, this identification of the believer with Christ risen and gone in, as Man, to God.

Even the full manhood of the Lord, as a present thing in heaven, has become misty and indistinct, and the resurrection side of the gospel is nearly absent from the 'evangelical' systems. They stop short with Christ's

death for us, and use that to replace us upon earth as men in the flesh still. They count it mysticism to talk of not being in the flesh, of being dead with Christ, risen and seated in Him in the heavenly places. The righteousness they impute is obedience to the law merely, than which they say there can be nothing higher, and which yet (according to the system) Adam should have fulfilled.

The effect of this is, we are left in the world and of it, though forgiven and justified; we are to take our place in it and make it better, not walk outside of it. Pilgrims and strangers we are not, save in the perforce way that all the world is, time hurrying us on alike to death and an eternity beyond.

A signal proof of this is just the doctrine everywhere current, that the law is the rule of a Christian's life. To this doctrine they attach extreme importance. To deny it is, as they think, to open the flood-gates of iniquity, and preach license of the wildest sort. For they have settled it against the apostle's clear and emphatic statement, that the law is the strength of holiness, instead of being, as he affirms it, "the strength of *sin*." (1 Cor. xv. 56). The law, they say, is the "transcript of the mind of God," and therefore the same as the gospel, only a good deal more. To speak of being "dead to" it, and "delivered from" it, they would deem profanity, if it were not that, these expressions being found in Scripture, they had decreed them to apply merely to the *ceremonial* law.

But the 'ceremonial law' is a theological fiction, not a Scriptural fact at all. It is not found in Scripture anywhere, but is an arbitrary invention, to escape from its plain meaning. In the very chapter from which the expressions just now cited are taken, and in direct connection with them, that law is represented as saying "Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. vii. 7). Was this the ceremonial law? Was the ceremonial law 'the strength of sin'? But my point is simply now, that when they claim the law as the rule of a Christian's life, they thereby omit from the Christian standard, all that is not found in the Jewish one. The higher position of the Christian is not admitted to have any corresponding practical effect. Long life on earth is set before him as an aim and object. The heavenly position is not contemplated; and pilgrim and strangership are left out of the 'rule;' for in the ten commandments manifestly these are not to be found.

How differently does the apostle set things before us in the last chapter of his epistle to the Galatians: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto Me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature (or creation); and as many as walk according to *this rule*, peace be on them, and mercy, and on the Israel of God." The Christian rule is that he walk as one crucified to the world, in Christ a new creation—not a mending of the old.

Thus, as I have said, evangelicalism drops the resurrection side of the gospel, and the characteristic heavenly features of a Christian's life. God has however come in to recall them to our attention. He is lifting our eyes up to the heavens to which He is just ready to call us home, and oh, may our hearts answer to His appeal. Remember, this must be no mere theory with us. It will not do to take this place, and spare the flesh and cultivate worldliness after all. It will not do to talk about resurrection-life without some consistent endeavour to apprehend and exemplify it. Practical results will always follow real faith, and this is as true of faith in any special truth, as it is of faith as a whole. The Holy and the True One here also seeks for holiness and truth.

There is another thing connected with the name of Christ as we have already seen, and you must suffer me to go on to speak of this. It was Christ's name that once linked together all His people. No other name was known amongst them. And when other names did begin to appear, the apostle's voice rebuked the dishonor put upon the One to whom alone they were baptized, who was alone their Master. Now, alas, the name of Christ is no longer a sufficient bond of union for His people. No doubt they are ready, one and all, to claim the promise of His personal presence, where two or three are gathered to His name; yet, if, instead of accepting this as a matter of course, they would try and prove their title, they would find it perhaps less easy than they think to do so. Would His name gather less than all His own? Could you plead being gathered to His name, and, apart from the question of Scriptural discipline, exclude His people?

If His name be the truth as to what He is, as we have seen, then this will exclude all falsehood as to Christ.

But for the very same reason, it will unite all true confessors of Him. If what He is, unites us, we shall have to put aside all separate and separating creeds and articles, and return to simple membership of the one body of Christ.

Alas, does it seem a bold thing now to claim His church for Him? Well, if we may scarcely hope that she will answer to the claim, yet Christ has provided in His grace from the very beginning for the faith of two or three, if there were no more, who would refuse all bonds beside His name. If they have nought else they have the assurance that that faith shall not be in vain, — that He at least will be with them, whose presence is all needed sanction, and all joy.

You may perhaps turn round upon me here, and ask, do I mean to deny that Christ is with all His people, or that the Spirit of God does not work in the denominations of Christendom? And many will be ready to urge, nay, have urged again and again, that the way in which the Spirit of God works amongst these shows His sanction of them. But that is too large a conclusion. It would carry us on to the conviction, that Romanism itself was sanctioned of Him. Who can deny that God worked by such an one as Martin Boos? He worked, and worked largely; and we can surely own it fully, and bless His name for it, without at all supposing that His love and pity shown to souls in the midst of popery, sanctions the papal system! God is sovereign in His grace, bound and limited by no restrictions. We rejoice to know that in a world of sinners He has bought Himself title to come in anywhere and save. Sin is no barrier, where the Lamb of God has suffered for it. Did He want to have things right before He came in, who would be saved?

If you urge that grace, where it comes in, will tend to set things right, I must say, of course, every soul that knows God would agree to that. But there comes in the mystery (mystery it is, to believers and to unbelievers alike), the mystery of the human will; which, even in God's people, dares to set limits to obedience to His word, aye, and can cover up with flowers these, as necessary fences and safeguards to holiness.

I fully allow that everywhere God's Spirit works, and works for right; but everywhere, alas, man's will works too. Let us not confound these. None can "be as God's mouth" who do not learn, with Jeremiah, to "take

forth the precious from among the vile." The mingling of such things together is not of God; but much that is of God is yet so mingled.

Yes, the working of God's Spirit is like that to which the Lord compares it, "the wind" that "bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." And God's grace is to the chief of sinners unrestricted grace. We must not take these as putting sanction on the circumstances amid which they work. We must not judge of the latter but by the Word which God has given us for perfect guidance. And we must not propose to follow Him in His workings necessarily, for this is beyond us, to do as He does; and, as has been truly said by others, "He is the Sovereign, and we are the servants," and the servant must only do what he is bidden.

Most fully then can we allow that God works among denominations, without in the least conceding that denominations are of Him, or that He is with them *as such*. I have declared also already my conviction, that in the first commencement of many of these He was with, fully with, those whose consciences forced them into separation from some evil, which He had made them realize as such. But that proves nothing as to the denomination itself. Who can read indeed the apostle's challenge of the first entry of the thing at Corinth, and honestly maintain that God approves of it? Or that all that he forbade was their wrangling about it, but that when that wrangling had come to a division, then it would be all right? That would be to forbid a tree to have blossoms, whose fruit nevertheless might be acceptable enough.

We can maintain, then, fully God's universal grace. We can believe and rejoice in the unrestrained working of His blessed Spirit. We can do more than this: we can allow that with every individual Christian Christ, according to His promise, is—a promise *realized* indeed by these in proportion to the simplicity of their faith in Him, a faith whose fruit is found in the works which surely come of it. Our Lord's promise is clear, but in terms it is well to recall precisely, while we think of it. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." And again: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him,

and we will come and make our abode with him " (Jno. xiv. 21-23.)

God forbid that we should deny these blessed words, or attempt in any wise to limit them arbitrarily, or indeed to limit them at all. The words apply to the individual, and to the individual alone: that is clear. And it should be clear that the Lord's promise to two or three gathered to His name is a promise additional to this, and outside of it. It is a sanction, not of an individual state, as that in John is, but of a gathering as a gathering; a sanction connected not only with the hearing of prayer, but with binding and loosing by the assembly: with assembly acts, which no individual merely, and no mere set of individuals, have power for.

For the assembly, if practically but only two or three, of those gathered to His name, is thereby prevented being a mere clique or private party, met to accomplish merely personal ends. Its door must be open for all that are Christ's, confessing truly His blessed name; and then He can be there to give efficacy and authority to that which is not the aim of a faction or a self-isolated party, but of His own gathered as His own,—as far as *their* will and aim can accomplish it, in unity with all His that are in practical fellowship with Him.

We may see then the reason of this promise, and that it is no arbitrary thing. And in order that He may be able to be with us so, He has put the terms of it as low as He could put them for a gathering to be a gathering at all,—“two or three.” Blessed be His name! How great the grace we have indeed cause to own, in a day of such feebleness and disunion as is the present, spite of its pretension. Nor need there be one bit of pretension on the part of those who thus gather to His name. They above all are called to recognize the ruin in which they themselves have had but too disastrous part, and to own what is a continual warning against the supposition, that aught but continuous lowly cleaving to “the strength of Christ” can keep in a path where failure from the very beginning has been found.

Thus much then as to the confession of the name of Christ. Let us mark here, before we go on to consider the third thing before us, the meaning of the name Philadelphia, a meaning which connects well with what we have had just now, both in the way of warning and of encouragement alike. Philadelphia means ‘brotherly love.’ Not association merely, even where of brothers,

but brotherly *love*. So is it to be with us : love, on the one hand, wherever there are 'brothers,' love to all the children of the Father, *as* His children, but a love which most surely consists, and only consists, with heedful maintenance of what is due to the Father. You will understand that I am but repeating really the apostle's words : "And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." Then the extent of this, and the argument for it, are given us : "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God ; and every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that was begotten of Him." And then the caution : "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments : for this is the love of God that we keep His commandments ; and His commandments are not grievous." (1 John iv 21 ; v. 2.)

Many are making the mistake to-day of supposing love to be the track, so to speak, in which we are to run ; whereas it is the motive force by which we run in the track. The Word of God lays down the rails ; and these are necessarily, and rightly, rigid and narrow too, in a true sense. The Word itself tells us that the way is a "narrow way."

But love takes that road alone, and never another. The apostle will not allow that anything we may think love is such. He will not allow feeling to be the test at all. Of course we shall *feel* it—that is quite true—but it is not the *test* ; man's heart is too deceitful to allow it to be such, whether as regards love to our brother or to our Father, God.

Man is emotional, capable of being worked upon, and of working himself up to almost any extent. And he is quite capable of perilous mis-judgment of himself in that very way. I am not at all speaking of hypocrisy, (although I do not say there is not danger of that too), but of the way things may affect us powerfully, as it would seem, and yet superficially. This emotional feeling is no guarantee as to our true condition, any more than the waves driven by the wind against an ocean-current are a sign of the real obliteration of the current.

But love, of all things, is that which, as being when true most God-like, has most imitations which are not of God. The giving all one's goods to feed the poor—the giving one's body to be burned—the apostle supposes



might all be without love: therefore not adequate tests of it. I may love a child of God, and very dearly, and yet love him for many another reason than because he is a child of God. My love may be merely social; what is most Christ-like in him may be what I like least. How little indeed, if we take the apostle's characteristics of it in that 13th of Corinthians, shall we find often of what will stand examination: "love that seeketh not her own, that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things"!

And if you will turn to the first chapter of the second of Peter, you will find that in the order of Divine growth, "brotherly love" comes in a very different place from what we should naturally imagine. From 'faith,' the beginning of everything in us, brotherly love is the sixth stage on towards perfection, and only short of the full maturity of 'love' itself. We are first of all to add to our faith 'virtue,' in the Roman sense of 'virtue', spiritually applied. For as faith's walk is against nature, and through a hostile world, the very first requisite for it, next to faith itself, is 'courage'.

At the start you have got to make up your mind. There must be no indecision, no half-heartedness. The obedience, which the apostle John has given us as the test of love, comes at the very beginning. Have we all even reached this first point from which alone the Philadelphian position can be attained? Are we all by God's grace unreserved in self-surrender to Him who is indeed our master and Lord? Only after this (not before) comes 'knowledge'—true 'knowledge'; only to be acquired practically by the road, and in the field in the face of the enemy; and knowledge which immediately becomes practice as 'temperance,' government of ourselves, and 'patience' in view of adverse circumstances 'endurance,' holding on to that wherewith we began: not only 'I did count all things but loss'; but still, 'I do'.

Then 'godliness' begins. The more positive fruits begin to appear. The truth is acting upon the one given up to follow it, self-ward, world-ward, God-ward, and now at last *brother*-ward. Think of how much it involves to be a Philadelphian, and you will see at once that no mere right position ecclesiastically will put you there. You must be devoted; you must be self-governed; you must be enduring; you must be with God: and then these points reached, your love to your brethren will be in orderly development, and somewhat that we can trust.

But then we need not marvel, however much we may deplore it, how little of this spirit is indeed to be found. But there is no remedy in mere expectancy or in lament, still less in accusation of one another on this score. The doing of this betrays the doer. It shows that 'seeking not her own' is not the quality of our love at least. If we mourned it rightly, we should be more with God about it—intercessors, not accusers. And with them, remembering that only what we *receive* we *have*, we should be seeking for God to minister of and manifest His love to the needy and unsatisfied hearts towards Him, which this coldness of heart toward each other implies.

On the other hand let us notice for our encouragement that from faith as a root all these fruits develope. The apostle's words infer as much as this. They are really "*in your faith have also virtue, and in virtue, knowledge,*" and so on. This is as plants grow, each fresh bud developing out of the product of a former one. For faith, the root of all, lays hold on Him, in whom all spiritual blessings are ours, and the spiritual growth is only by what we learn of Him.

And so the apostle adds: "And if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful *in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" The remedy is not in moody self-occupation, and not in endeavouring to get out of ourselves what is not found there, but in more real and earnest laying hold of what is ours in Him who is for us complete satisfaction and all-sufficient power.

It is a great thing to be a Philadelphian, and you will not wonder that under this title the Lord should describe a people who with all their weakness have His special approbation. But here, if we look a little around us, we shall surely find on the one hand a Divine movement stirring the hearts of God's people towards a real practical 'brotherly love' springing out of 'godliness.' On the other it is easy to see an imitation of this which aims at a getting together of Christians, even at a sacrifice of that which is of God. In the world too, confederacy is the order of the day. "Union" they say, "is strength." And everywhere, societies, associations, companies, amalgamations of every kind, for all sorts of purposes, are found. They are naturally largely commercial, and for such selfish ends as the world that knows not Christ is full of. They are a banding of individuals who to the last remain really in interest individuals, not seekers of each other's

good, but their own. They are neither the expression of love nor do they promote it. On the contrary it is well known that the larger they are as corporations, the less heart there is in them. They intensify the self-seeking to which they minister, and for which they provide an ampler harvest field.

The bond here is in no wise brotherhood, yet who can deny that professing Christendom is largely permeated by the same spirit, and has adopted worldly means in a worldly spirit, for ends professedly Christian? Do not mistake; do not run into the thought that these ends being worthy ones must sanctify the means employed to reach them. These combinations to produce great results, is there no ensnarement in the very thought? Are not means apt to be mistaken for ends? Is not the consciousness of strength which union promotes, and is designed to promote, the very opposite of the weakness which has need of and brings in God? Does not the publicity of action put those engaged in it before men's eyes, rather than God's, and make them little content with such words as the Lord addresses here to Philadelphia: "I know thy works?" Lastly, does not the apparent greatness of the result aimed at, induce a carelessness as to what are considered the smaller details of ways and means by which it is to be reached?

No one can deny that while the increase of sects goes on without apparent abatement, yet along with this there is a marked and decided tendency to union for all kinds of objects dear to the Christian. Missionary societies, Bible societies, Tract societies, Sunday-school Unions, Young Men's Christian Associations, and such like, ignore on the one hand what they recognize on the other, and aim to unite Christians as such, to accomplish results which the divisions of Protestantism, it is confessed, have hindered. And in movements of this kind there is much that one can very heartily rejoice over. Who can doubt that there is working a real desire for Christian fellowship, a longing for liberty beyond the artificial limits imposed by ecclesiasticism, and a yearning for greater and better fruitfulness than the strife of sects would allow? Who can doubt also that in this way the zeal of many earnest workers has been kindled, and that much has really been, and is being, accomplished? Intolerance has been softened down, sectarian rancour mitigated, and a busy activity in evangelistic efforts especially induced, which the Lord is using for blessing to numbers of souls.

We should be sadly wanting in discernment if we did not see, and in Christian spirit if we did not rejoice over, such things as these. Nor must it be thought a contradiction to point out on the other hand results which are to be deprecated, and tendencies which are rapidly developing as the years roll by, which must be a source of trouble, if not surprise, to every one to whom

——“Anworth is not heaven,  
And preaching is not Christ ;”

to whom the quality of a thing, and that as viewed by the “Holy and the True,” is of more importance than its quantity.

Let us judge candidly and seriously of that which the coming day at least will reveal in its true character. Who that has that before him dare rashly blame or carelessly pass over things which affect the glory and the heart of the Lord our Saviour, that heart upon which rest (as the sculptured jewels on the high priest's breast-plate), the names of His beloved people, not one of them forgotten? He who has before him, what we have here, the Son of Man in the midst of the candlesticks, will be delivered from the snare of acting before other eyes than His, and will have no motive to apply other than truthfully, and in love “what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Will you not, dear friends, on the other hand, listen to what if it be wrongly uttered you need not shrink from, and if it be true, and you be true, you may not?

Consider then the effect of the unions of which I am speaking, and you will, I think, easily see one marked result. Save nominally and professedly, they cannot be considered as the union of true Christians even. The discipline of the various bodies of Christendom is as various as aught else. We have glanced at the churches of the Reformation, and scarcely need to have it repeated that nationalism everywhere gives “a name to live” where there is no real life. The discipline here is of the very loosest kind. Annihilationism, Universalism, Swedenborgianism, Rationalism of the extremest kind, are in some of these systems allowed openly to manifest themselves. “Tares and wheat,” they urge, “are to grow together to the harvest.” “Judas was at the table of the Lord.” And thus they have Scriptural ground, as they imagine, for *not* “putting away from among themselves a wicked person,” or “purging themselves from vessels to dishonour.”

What must be, what *is*, the effect of this and such like laxity? And what, of bringing a large number together where even the feeble bonds of such discipline are relaxed, and the 'membership' of the loosest bodies is accepted thus far by those who in their own bodies are governed by stricter and more Scriptural rules? What can the effect be but the deterioration of the whole, a leavening of worldly principles, and of positive false doctrine also? Are the spiritual ordinarily in a majority in these large bodies, or in a minority? Do they lead the rest, or have they to find themselves forced to follow the lead of others, and to mix themselves up with that which they feel and own to be not as they would have it, but still tolerate for the sake of the connection with so large a machinery for good, as they esteem it?

Generally a compromise as to the truth has to be made, which would forbid any one in these associations to do what Paul appealed to the Ephesians as to his having done amongst them: "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." They have to be (so far as these connections go) servants qualifying by omissions their Master's message, bound to refrain from delivering what He has put into their mouth to deliver. O that beloved brethren in the Lord would well consider for themselves individually, how far this can go, without dishonour to the Lord who has bought them for His own, or without loss of real power from the grieving of the Spirit of power!

Are not, as I have already said, means insensibly substituted for the end, and the registry of so many visits made, so many tracts distributed, so much ground covered, made to do duty oftentimes for that which these things are only handmaids to, if they mean anything at all?

And if a true result be apparently more sought or really—say, if conversions are registered instead of, or along with the visits and the tracts—the case is often still more sorrowful: conversions being expected as the result of so much machinery, and chronicled, oh how lightly and carelessly, God's unutterable grace forced to swell, in labelled items, less the praise of God than of man's successful effort!

Upon all this I do not desire to dwell longer now. Examples to demonstrate the truth of it, will not be wanting to those who care to test what they do, by the one perfect standard to which we all appeal, and by

which all will be exactly measured in a coming day. With all this, I gladly own a greater seeking after communion among those that are the Lord's. I would only press, that co-operation apart from the truth is not God's mind, nor are human and voluntary associations His method either. God's church—not a union of churches, but a union of members with their living Head—is His association, and in this He has provided as well for the maintenance of His truth as for the true liberty of His people. If we will not take this, how can we ask Him, because He is gracious, to bless the make-shifts substituted for it? Is it "love in the truth" and "for the truth's sake," where truth is set aside or compromised, in order to be together?

Yet if you follow truth, instead of practically bringing you to unite with the many, it will separate you—isolate you—reduce practically to nothing much that now may seem great and valuable—and shut you up into a narrow path from which naturally you shrink. Does Scripture ever promise aught but a narrow path? Are weakness and nothingness hindrances or helps to trusting God? Is it any harm for faith to have exercise? and is not the power of God as competent to work by small means and individuals as by a multitude, and by machinery of the utmost power? If we do not think so, what does it show but how sadly a trust in means and machinery has displaced confidence in the living God?

Let us pass on now to consider one other thing in the attitude of these Philadelphian saints which the Lord singles out for special approbation. "Because thou hast *kept the word of My patience*, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

And what is connected with this?

"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Remark, He says for the first time now, 'quickly.' We have not had that before. It is a sign here of how the time of His patience is coming to an end. It is now as the apostle says in the first chapter, "The kingdom and patience of the Lord Jesus Christ." By and by it will be His "kingdom and glory." Now it is the time in which, though already possessing "all authority in heaven and earth," He waits, not taking His power to put down evil, but exercising that long-suffering which is unto

salvation, that of which each one of us here saved by grace is an example and a proof.

Can it be a strange thing then for us to have to keep the word of His patience? to remember ever *what* holds back the wheels of judgment, and delays the fulfilment of our hope as Christians? *Patience* is not indifference as to that hope, but the very opposite. Were we indifferent we should not be able to speak of or to realize patience at all: "if we *hope* for that we see not, then do we with *patience* wait for it."

Happy is it to need the exhortation to be patient thus, because, our desires laying hold of the exceeding great and precious promises, our souls are carried onwards in the current of them toward the haven which faith pictures close at hand! Need we wonder at an admonition to be 'patient?' Should we not wonder if our souls could embrace that future blessedness, and have no such need? But the keeping the word of His patience is more, a good deal, than being patient ourselves. It separates the thought from repression of merely selfish longings, and elevates it into communion with Him whose waiting and whose coming forth alike, are the necessary result and the display of what He is, the Divine Lover and Saviour of men's souls. If He come, or if He wait, each is with Him that in which righteousness, love and wisdom combine and manifest themselves.

To those keeping the word of His patience two things are now intimated: first, that He will keep them out of the hour—not out of the temptation merely, but out of the *hour* of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Out of the judgment of the world ready to involve the lifeless professors of Christianity, whose hearts remain, spite of their profession, bound to earthly things; out of the trouble and sifting, too, which will precede the judgment at the Lord's hand when He appears.

But how shall they be kept out of a time of universal trial? That is intimated in the second promise, "I come quickly." His coming will gather His saints into safety far from every breath of the tempest to ensue. They shall be with Him, raised or changed, caught up to His blessed presence, before the trial comes; and when the world sees Him coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, no saint of the present time but shall be with Him there.

And now let me ask: if this intimation of the speedy approach of the Lord marks Philadelphian times, who

can for a moment doubt the coincidence with the cry which for some half a century has been stirring the hearts of Christians everywhere? Nothing is more certain, be it right or be it wrong, than that there has been a wide-spread revival of the hope of the Lord's coming together with an impression of its actually being very near? Even the dates which have time and again been confidently set for it, show if on the one side the mistakes of prophetic interpreters, on the other not less plainly the prevailing expectation; while there have been all through a large and increasing number who have never given credit to any of these calculations, who have yet been as deeply as any convinced that the time is near at hand.

What is this, according to the prophetic aspect of this Philadelphian epistle, but itself a token of its actual nearness? Has not the Lord been saying to His own in fact, "I come quickly?" It is easy, no doubt, to fasten upon mistakes made by warm hearts or excited minds, in order to bring discredit upon the truth; but Scripture, which disclaims for us the knowledge of times or seasons, assures the faith of those who would be "exhorting one another so much the more as they see the day approaching."

Let us hold it fast, and let us hold it pure: free from the errors with which Satan is seeking to degrade it by association,—free from the mistakes of ignorance and fanaticism,—but also from the coldness and indifference of hearts that can find in the Lord's words here nothing which, as they think of it, it needs the admonition of patience to regulate though not restrain.

I must pause here, though there is of course much, much more in the epistle. I must leave to your own meditations the sweet encouragements and promises to the overcomer, which, as often noticed, so link the believer with the One who addresses him. May we be able to take hold of them. They are ours for faith to realize and rejoice in: that faith which not only now "overcometh the world" but in the professing church has also to overcome. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him My new name."

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."



## LECTURE VIII.

---

WHAT BRINGS THE TIME OF HIS PATIENCE TO AN END.

(Rev. iii. 14--22.)

---

We come now, beloved friends, to the solemn close of all, and it is very striking that we come to that close here, immediately after the epistle in which more than a little gleam of light and blessing shone out,—the epistle to Philadelphia. The two things are very closely connected; the blessing of the Church in Philadelphia really leads us in a sense to the judgment of the Church in Laodicea.

The great feature in the address to Laodicea is that they are lukewarm—neither cold nor hot. But surely we may say, we have had the cold state of Sardis; death is cold enough. We have had in Philadelphia the Lord reviving things: there has been something which we may call surely heat. Now the mixture of these two things produces this lukewarmness which He speaks of. It is not heat, as in Philadelphia; it is not cold, as in Sardis; but the effect, so to speak, of the heat, is only sufficient to change the cold into lukewarm, nothing more. There has been effect of the truth,—the truth must always have effect,—God's word never returns to Him void, without doing something, without making its mark on souls some way. But then it may make its mark in two ways. It may be in blessing, as God designs. Oh, surely what He wants is blessing; but on the other hand, if it is not received so as to become such, what then? Still it has effect, but in increased responsibility and corresponding judgment. And if Christianity fails—for it is the history of professing Christianity that we have been looking at—if Christianity fails; if, when God brings forth the treasures of divine truth, yet there is no due reception, no blessing

for the mass, no real revival at large is produced by it, what then? He has got nothing else to do. Judgment must come. He must wind up the whole state of things.

You see if there was law and that failed, as you know it did fail: that is, of course, when men failed under it and were convicted by it, as transgressors;—if the law failed, God had something else to bring in—the precious grace of Christianity. And this He did, while nevertheless judging the apostate state of things in Judaism. Still God came in and gave the more “precious faith” of Christianity. If Christianity fails now, what has He to do? what has He to bring in more? If His truth, before tried, and now re-tried (His two-fold witness), is not sufficient to revive things, what then? Well the case is just what you find in the 26th of Isaiah: “Let favour be showed to the wicked”—(that is, grace be shown; it is the same word)—“Let grace be shewn to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness;” and what then? “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” That is what you find; judgment must come because grace has been refused; because it has accomplished nothing as to the world at large, He must take the rod of iron; because His word and His Spirit have been rejected, He must come with the rod of iron to beat down opposition.

But notice what is here very striking: it is not merely that God has been giving His truth again and it has been refused; it has not *in one sense* been refused; it has been taken, or there would be no heat in Laodicea; there would be nothing but the coldness of Sardis. There has been the effect. The truth has been taken, but for what has it been taken? Alas! instead of to judge man and to bring all his high thoughts down in the presence of God, that he might be lifted up and blessed, it has been taken by man in order to exalt himself with it. He is thereby become “rich and increased with goods, and has need for nothing.” In his own thought he is so, whereas he is really “wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked.” And that is the striking feature we have here. Christ Himself is not connected with the truth. The truth has been taken, and people flatter themselves upon having it; they are rich and increased with goods. They have got a great deal, but have not got Christ. Christ is outside; though He stands at the door and knocks, still offering to come in; if anybody will open the door

He will come in, and sup with him, and he with Him. On the other hand, if Christ be outside the door, man can do in His absence what in His presence he could not do; he can dress himself up with the truth God has given him for another purpose—glorifying himself instead of God.

The Lord therefore presents Himself, as the One, so to speak, who had done all He could, and all had failed. He is “the Amen,” the faithful and true witness: *He* has not failed.

He is the “Amen.” You find in the second epistle to the Corinthians, in the first chapter of it, how the apostle speaks of himself as having that character, or his word rather, that of yea and amen: because in Christ is yea, and in Christ is never yea and nay. No uncertainty or doubtfulness was there in Christ or His word; He was always simply positive ‘yea’—always speaking one thing, and absolutely to be depended upon. If we have only one word, it is a blessed reality given us in God’s infinite love, which we may hang our souls upon for eternity, and which will never fail us. The character of Christ should stamp itself upon the Christian; Christ, as seen in His word, should be exhibited in His people; but nevertheless, if, as here so sadly in Laodicea, they have not been faithful, He abides faithful: He is the Amen, the “faithful and true Witness.” The Church has been anything but that. He is just about to remove the candlestick, because they are untrue and unfaithful; but the Lord has not failed, and He therefore presents Himself as One absolutely true and trustworthy. And that, we can say, in the midst of the failure of everything in the present day, is our joy and comfort. His people’s short-coming is not His own. Infidelity may seek to justify itself by the failure of Christians; and even Christians, alas, are capable in the general wreck, of almost charging it upon Himself. But no, He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself. He is the “faithful and true witness.”

Again, He is “the beginning of the creation of God:” that is a most important thing. You see in all these addresses, the Lord brings out that in Himself, which bears upon and meets the state before Him. So here, He is not only the faithful and true witness, but He is the beginning of the creation of God. The old creation, spoiled by sin, is passing away; its history is completed in God’s sight,

and judgment has been pronounced in the cross of Christ. Christ risen from the dead is not the mending of the old creation, but the bringing in of the new creation. In Him, risen from the dead, is all that God owns as really His, first and always in His thought, and for which the ruin of the old only prepared the way.

When the psalmist lifted up his eyes to heaven, and in view of God's glorious handiwork there, exclaimed, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?—the Son of man that thou visitest him:" the answer is "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels." But made whom? He is speaking not of the first man, but the second—the One in whom alone his true ideal of man is realized; the One of whom Adam the first was but the fleeting image, and even the contrast too.

Now, if that be so, just notice the remarkable words used here of the state of things in Laodicea, because, as I say, it is evident that, while keeping Christ outside, they are taking the truth He gave and dressing themselves up with it, pluming themselves upon it, counting themselves rich and increased with goods; that is, taking God's truth in order to build up the old creation and not the new. It is an exceedingly solemn thing to see that the very truth which God has brought out in order to judge man by, is the very truth he uses for the purpose of self-gratulation. If you take the law, how has man used the law? God gave it "that every mouth might be stopped," as the apostle says, "and that all the world might become guilty before God" (Rom. iii.) How has man used it? You know he has used it to establish his own righteousness by it; instead of taking it to condemn, he has used it for the very opposite. And so exactly with Christianity: God has brought in the truth of the new creation; the world before Him lying under death and judgment. And yet man would take the blessed truth of Christianity, and dress up the old creation with it, and patch up the world, making it better if he can. That is, alas! what he is doing on every side; and men are vaunting the success of the effort. You know what progress people think they are making: how much better the world is, and they hope the Millennium is not far off.

The Gospel is going to have its effect because the churches are filled, and they have a good deal of money to send abroad, a good many Bibles for the heathen, all mere external things which show nothing. You can

buy all kinds of Bibles for so much money, but you cannot buy the Spirit of God for so much money.

No doubt, God's Spirit is really and largely working; but His end and man's end are diverse thus far, that while He is converting souls to "deliver them *out of* this present evil world," man's thought is an improved world, a Christian world : the effect of which is only to amalgamate Christians and the world, and spoil the Scriptural character of Christianity altogether.

But in these last days God has given many to recognize at least the truth in His Word as to this. Again He has revived the truth of the new creation, and revealed to us the practical and fruitful consequences which result from a place in Christ, where He is, in the heavens. Beloved friends, *what are we doing with this truth we recognize?* Are we talking of being in Christ, a new creation, old things passed away and all things become new, and yet clinging with all our might to what has in it all the moral elements that make up the world—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life"?

Rank, station, birth, riches, worldly position, what are all these to us? Whether we be high or low, or rich or poor, the question applies alike. Are these things 'gain to us'? Do they count for something in our estimation? Or the things that are 'gain to us,' are they counted truthfully all '*loss for Christ?*' Are we renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created us, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision, or uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is ALL and in all"? Is this theory with us, or is it practical reality? Has the Lord any need to appeal to us as the One who is "the beginning of the creation of God"? If so, is not Laodiceanism with us in that proportion?

For certain it is, that as Philadelphia sets before us that true 'brotherly love' which springs from our apprehension of a relationship which we have towards one another in Christ and with God, so this fatal closing word, 'Laodicea' speaks of that which is the entire opposite of such apprehension. Laodicea means '*people's right*',\* not Christ's glory. It represents a claim which belongs entirely to the old creation, and not the new, a claim which sets aside the meaning of the Cross

---

\* From *laos*, 'people', and *dike*, 'right.'

as the judgment and setting aside of the first Adam and his issue, and of course equally ignores the blessed place which we have of grace, in Christ. But we shall have to look at this again before we close. Let us go on now with the Lord's address : He says further :

"I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot."

So that He does not accept lukewarm Laodicea as an improvement upon the coldness of Sardis. And why? Because the heat is not the heat of revival but the heat of declension. It is the final product of what He had given to bring about a totally different one. The failure is after repeated, exhaustive trial. It is the failure of all the highest, richest, and most wonderful truth,—God's heart poured out without reserve to man, that he might know Him, enjoy Him, be at home with Him. It is the turning back of heart in the very presence of an opened heaven to take up as something the paint and tinsel of the world.

Therefore He says : "So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

This is the solemn end of professing Christendom. Of course He will not spue His own beloved people out of His mouth. He must take these first of all to Himself before He can reject the whole mass as nauseous to Him. And we have already seen in the address to Philadelphia, that the Lord tells them He is coming quickly, and that He will keep them out of the hour of temptation coming upon all the world. Not merely out of the temptation,—He might hide them in the desert so,—but out of the *hour*. Thus He must take them to Himself out of the world altogether. And that is what "I come quickly" also intimates.

Here then we have the brief solemn pause before the Lord takes His people to Himself. He must do this before the professing body is spued out of His mouth. He cannot so reject even the poorest, weakest and most wayward of His own. And it is important to insist upon this, because there is abroad a view, according to which only a class of better than ordinary Christians will be taken up when the Lord comes, while the rest will be left on earth to go through the tribulation which follows this, when the earth is enduring the vials of His wrath. They point to the promise to Philadelphia as in this way the promise to a special class. And the ten

virgins of our Lord's parable they speak of as all Christians, as they bring the very fact of their being 'virgins' forward to prove,--only foolish Christians unwatchful and unready, with (indeed) the oil of the Spirit in their lamps, but no *extra* supply in their 'vessels.' Thus their lamps, which had been burning, cease to burn at last, and the fresh supply of oil they get is obtained too late for admission to the marriage. The Lord rejects them as His bride only; they lose their place in that, and are shut out to be purified by tribulation, and made ready for the Kingdom afterwards.

But how many precious realities must be denied by those who hold this view. Is it our faithfulness then that gives us a part among those who are dignified with the title of the bride of Christ? Is the Lord when He comes, indeed going to discriminate in this way between less and more faithfulness? Between ordinary and extraordinary Christians? What an engine for turning the blessed and purifying hope into a means of self-occupation and despair! If I am to be one of these more than ordinary Christians to be acknowledged by Him, where is the line to be drawn, and on which side of it are we? Is my joyful expectation of this blessed time to be based upon my belief in my own superiority to the many of my brethren? What comfortable Pharisaism or what legal distress must such a view involve!

If true, why should such a discrimination be made between the *living* saints alone? Why should it not equally affect the dead? And then what is to purify these?

As to Scripture, the support it gives to any such view is only apparent, and results from an interpretation of single passages which is at issue with its plainest doctrinal teaching. The coming of the Lord to remove His saints is not in Scripture ever connected even with our responsibilities and their adjustment, but with the fulfilment of the hope wherewith grace has inspired us. Our responsibilities and the reward of our works are ever connected with that which is called the appearing or manifestation or revelation of Christ, His coming *with* His saints, not *for* them. At the door of the Father's house to which He welcomes us when He comes, no sentry stands. We go into it as purged by the precious blood of Christ, and in Christ. Already are we not only entitled but "*meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

When He comes to the world, and His people take their places with Him as associated with His government, then dignities, honors, rewards of work will find their place. It will be "Have thou authority over ten"—"be thou also over five cities." We cannot keep these things too distinct in our minds. Salvation, righteousness, the child's place with the Father, membership of the body of Christ, our relationship to Christ as His bride, nay, also our being "kings and priests unto His God and Father," are things which are neither gained nor lost by work of ours at all. Christ has procured them for us, and grace bestows them: grace, and grace alone.

When the Lord therefore Himself descends from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, is there discrimination among those in Christ: of the dead, who shall be raised? of the living, who shall be changed? Nay, but "the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord." Blessed words, how they pierce through and scatter the chilling fogs of legalism, and make "the blessed hope," not a means of sorest perplexity and doubt, but 'hope' indeed!

Nor are the passages upon which these writers build in contradiction at all. The promise to the overcomer at Philadelphia is one of a class, which, as the eye runs over them throughout these apocalyptic addresses, show plainly that they apply more or less to every true believer. Take the promise to him at Ephesus, and ask: will any believer not "eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God?" Take that to Smyrna, and ask: will any one "be hurt of the second death?" And so on through the remainder. To the least believer something surely of the spirit of the overcomer belongs, and while the promises suit themselves as encouragements to faith, adapted to the special condition of things pointed out, yet we know that the fruit of the tree of life, and deliverance from the second death, are not the result of any performances of ours, or any faithfulness on our part, but of His work, and of His grace alone.

Again, as to the ten virgins, it is a mistake to suppose that in that character Christians are represented as espoused to Christ at all. The virgins who go forth to



meet the bridegroom are not the bride, and to put them in that place disjoins the parable. According to the whole tenor of the prophecy of these chapters, the Jewish people and the earth are the objects mainly in view, and the parable of the virgins parenthetically brings in the connection of Christians with it. The Lord is coming to take a *Jewish* bride, according to the common language of the Old Testament prophets. On His way to do this, His people of the present time are called up to meet Him, and to return with Him. So much is implied in the expression in the Greek. It is when He is come then to earth that the foolish virgins are rejected, and not as His bride, but are cast out of His kingdom altogether. The parable is a parable of the *kingdom*; and the kingdom in the parables embraces the whole field of profession. 'Virgins,' 'servants,' and such like titles in them, merely intimate the responsible profession, not necessarily the truth. *He* was a servant who had laid up his lord's money in a napkin, and never really served at all. He was a servant, but a wicked one; and so with these foolish virgins.

As to oil, they are expressly stated to have taken *no* oil with them; and the Lord's words of rejection, "I know you not," are decisive from One who "knoweth them that are His," and could never disown them.

No, He cannot spue His own out of His mouth, He must take them out of what He is going to judge, before the first hot drops of the storm of judgment fall. Even then it will be made publicly manifest before He rejects the public professing body, how really they have on their part rejected Him. Christendom ends in open apostacy. The day of the Lord will not come except there be a falling away first, and the man of sin be revealed. Popery, evil as it is, and Antichristian too, is not the last evil nor the worst. It is the harlot *woman*, not the *man*. It has been revealed over three hundred years at least; and the day of the Lord is not yet come. The Antichrist will deny the Father and the Son alike.

How solemn to contemplate this last end of what began so differently. How, above all, solemn to consider that both at the beginning, and again at the end, the sin and failure of His own people is that which initiates and completes the ruin. Who can doubt that Christians everywhere are taking up this self-complacent utterance—"rich, and increased with goods, and in need of nothing"? Who cannot see that truth is being

taken up as a form of godliness apart from power, apart from all the practical results that should flow from it? And who but can see, that has eyes to see at all, that that is the most terrible and hopeless sign of all, when the salt wherewith the mass should be salted, ~~is~~ losing its savour, and becoming powerless to act for God at all!

Ah, it is one thing to appreciate the comfort of the gospel, and the blessings which it procures for man, and it is another to accept honestly the level to which the gospel reduces all, and the place before God in Christ which brings poor and rich, and high and low, to a perfect equality, the rich rejoicing in that he is made low, as the brother of low degree in his exaltation.

Do we not want all of us to be reminded of what passed between the emulous disciples and their Lord, on the solemn journey up to Jerusalem, when the Cross was before the Master's face, but even its gaunt shadow could not still the contentious rivalry among His followers for the places on His right hand and His left, in His kingdom? "You are making it a kingdom of the Gentiles," is what He virtually says to them; "you are thinking of earthly place such as in these; of what would satisfy ambition and self-seeking greed! Do you think these are the places that are mine to give? No, with Me the highest is the lowest: the greatness is in lowliest service, the blessedness in giving, not receiving; the highest there He (unchanged in spirit still) who as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

And then as to our own personal relationship to Christ, it is need that brings us to Him first and makes us to know Him, and in His presence the sense of need, need met by Him, is ever maintained. It does not discourage us, for His grace is sufficiency, but it is only in weakness that His strength is made perfect still. "Rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing" is what no soul in the presence of Christ can say. Rich *He* is, and for us those riches are available; but the richer He is in our eyes, the poorer we are in our own. We can only keep the Laodicean condition, by keeping the Lord outside our door.

And is there not a creed every where, largely professed among those who claim to be in some sort the very leaders of the Christianity of the day, which comes very near indeed to Laodicean profession? How could the

claim to be rich and increased in goods, and in need of nothing, be more really made than by those who claim for themselves 'perfection?'

Perfection! what do they mean by it? That they walk in very deed and truth just "as Christ walked?" That is the Christian standard; we cannot, with Scripture before us, make it lower than that. But will any body say that even for a single day, aye or for a single hour, he has walked just as Christ walked? If there be, let him stand up and say so, and we shall know what to think. Or let him say it to his neighbour, and see what he thinks. But if not that, what do people mean by saying that they are perfect?

I know there is Scripture for the word. The devil in deceiving Christians will always take Scripture if he can, to accomplish his purpose. But the Scripture term does not mean, what in the dialect of the so-called "higher life" it is made to mean. Take one of the strongest texts used, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect:" the context shows decisively what is meant. We speak of a thing as perfect that has all its parts, without at all regarding the finish of the parts. So the Lord tells us that as children we must resemble our Father, and for this exhibit the different features of our Father's character. We must not only love those who love us, but as He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust, we must exhibit this feature of His character also: not righteousness alone, but also love.

'Perfection' is also used for the mature Christian condition, as a glance at the margin of Heb. v. 14 will shew. The term there, 'of full age,' is in the margin rendered 'perfect,' just as in 1 Cor. xiv. 20, "be *men*," is in the margin 'perfect' or 'of a ripe age.' It is used thus with two applications: in Hebrews, Christianity itself is perfection or maturity, in contrast with Judaism which was a state of childhood. But again, among Christians there are those perfect or mature, in contrast with being 'babes;' and the apostle Paul in the third of Philippians in which he disclaims the having already attained, or being already 'perfect,' (a consummation which in that sense he would not reach until with Christ in glory) classes himself immediately after among those who had in another sense attained: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded."

There are many texts, which I cannot now go through, but this should be sufficient to prevent the catching at a word, as people are prone to do. Plenty about perfection there is, no doubt, in Scripture, but as I said before, if people set up any standard of practical perfection short of walking as Christ walked they are really lowering it. If on the other hand they can measure themselves with Christ and feel no rebuke, they must be more, than credibly self-complacent.

Mischief is wrought two ways by the idea. In the first place, sin tends to be palliated, excused, covered by misleading names. Lust is called temptation, and sometimes even daring dishonour done to Christ Himself by the insinuation that He too was thus in like manner 'tempted.' So people quote: "He was in all points tempted like as we are, *yet* without sin," as if it meant that *He* had such inward desires, only restrained them, so that there was no actual out-break. This, the actual blasphemy of Irving and of Thomas, in milder and less positive forms infests masses in the present day. The text they quote, in the common version, favours these views too much. There is properly (as any one may see by the italics) no word in the original representing 'yet.' "He was tempted in all points like as we are, apart from sin," is the true rendering. You must not imply sin in any way in the Holy One of God! Sin it is that produces lust, and lust again brings forth the positive outward sin. He had neither, and herein was our total opposite, who, as Scripture assures us: "in many things offend, *all*."

But again, the character of holiness is sadly spoiled by this perfectionism. It becomes self-occupation, self-assertion. How much of Christ really do you find in the experiences so largely dealt in by those who advocate this doctrine? Is it with the apostle, "not I, but Christ liveth in me," or is it, alas, a glorified, transfigured, very self-conscious I, that lives and reigns throughout them? They do not see that as the natural life in a state of health does not engross or claim the attention,—as the heart's pulsation or the lung's work is not furthered but disturbed by thinking of it,—as the man in hospital it is who talks of his 'good days,' because they are scarce, and as the dyspeptic it is who 'feels' his stomach,—so this aim at a self-conscious holiness produces but a poor, degenerate, sickly Christianity at best. Is it far off from that which says, I am

rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knows not that it is wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked?

"I counsel thee," says the Lord to Laodicea here—"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."

There are here three things which they are exhorted to 'buy.' So wealthy are they, the Lord will not talk of *giving* to them. And indeed it would be a happy thing for them to exchange their riches for them: false glitter for true gold. This is the first thing—gold. A frequent symbol as you know in Scripture, and pure gold (as here, 'gold tried in the fire') for what is divine. In the ark of the testimony and in the furniture of the holy places generally, gold covered all. The apostle, I believe, gives us the exact meaning when he speaks of the golden cherubim as "the cherubim of glory, shadowing the mercy-seat." This 'glory' is the display of what God is. God glorifies Himself when He shines out in the blessed reality of what He is, and Christ is the true ark in which the two materials are found together. Gold and shittim-wood. The radiance of divine glory is the gold; the shittim-wood the precious verity of manhood.

Can we not see why to Laodicea the gold tried in the fire is the first requisite? Their riches were but paper money, manufactured out of the rags of self-righteousness, and of merely conventional, not intrinsic value. Christ is what they lacked. Divine glory in the only face in which it shines undimmed. This is the power of Christianity—its essence and its power alike—and this is what the false, pretentious Christianity of Laodicea lacked so terribly: occupation with Christ; discernment of what and where all that is true and valuable is to be found. To know where this is, is to have it. Faith that finds this treasure is welcome to its enjoyment. To be without it is to be poor indeed.

Next—"white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed," is, no doubt, practical righteousness of life and walk. There is a connection between this and the former, which when we have their meaning becomes evident enough. Unless you have the Divine glory shining in the face of Jesus for your soul, you will find no ability

to live or walk aright. The 'white' is the reflection of the full, undivided ray of light; and God is light. How is our life to be the reflection of this, except as "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give out the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"? Leviticus must precede Numbers ever. We must go in to see God in the sanctuary before we can possibly come out and walk with Him in the world.

Finally: "anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." Thus there was utter blindness—the condition of the Pharisees over again, for they surely did not realize it, but said, "we see." And thus their sin remained. If consciously blind there was healing with Christ as here. But they alas, lacked not the physician.

Still He says: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with Me."

Thus to the last that gracious invitation. His heart lingers while there is yet possibility of response on their part. But the day of grace is just at an end. If the words we have been thinking over find the parallel I have been drawing—if it be not untruly drawn—then we are surely near that end: who can tell how near!

Before I close, however, I must return to that significant word which describes so simply, so vividly, the moral, spiritual, aye, and political character of the latter days: "the church of the Laodiceans"—the men who claim "people's rights." Ominous name! terrible claim when uttered in the ears of a God, strong, if yet so patient, and provoked every day.

It is a claim which denies the fall, and the sentence confirmed by countless individual sins; the claim of a world which has refused and crucified the Son of God come into it in simplest loving mercy!

Let us look at it politically; for its political aspect is not without the deepest significance. Are not everywhere the nations quaking at the prospect of an uprising of the masses with this very watchword? When democracy meant only the curbing of the despotic power of rulers, when it meant still respect for wealth and rank, and law and order, they could rejoice over it, and cite it as the evidence of morally improved times. Arbitrary power only was to be restrained; there was

to be equal justice, and quietness and assurance as the effect of righteousness. No doubt, the abuse of power had been great enough to provoke reprisals, and to make the downfall of absolutism an apparent real advancement. But man was and is the same; and the mistake has been ever to suppose that alterations of this kind could really heal or touch a moral state which was the essence of the trouble. The leprosy, skinned over here, would break out elsewhere, for it was deeper than the surface: in the blood, in the vitals of humanity itself.

Who could say where the movement for men's rights should stop? Who could say to the restless surge of the sea, Come no further! here shall thy waves be stayed? There were, and there are, still infinite and gigantic evils,—the power and abuse of wealth, for instance; tyrannies which no form of government yet devised had touched or could take into account. What does every man's right to his own imply? What is 'his own'? Is his right to use it to include a right to the enormous abuse of it, which self-interest with power at its back will always make? Whose rights are to be respected, when they come in conflict?

And from a lower level than before, come murmurs hoarse and threatening: socialism, communism, nihilism—dread names, not merely for the monarch, but also for the man of property, and the law-abiding citizen. "People's rights" threaten to be in terrible conflict with one another, and in their name how many wrongs to be inflicted! This is the Laodicea of politics, which is destined to be the rock on which governmental reform will surely split, and end in anarchy and chaos. "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

But the removal of the things that can be shaken will only make way for a kingdom, not such as they anticipate; absolute, which admits of no dispute, but righteous altogether. How refreshing to turn from the thoughts that have engaged us, and think of the contrast with all rule the world has ever seen!

"He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people; and the little hills by righteousness."

He shall judge the poor of the people: He shall save the children of the needy: and break in pieces the oppressor . . . . In His days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace as long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him."

Politically, Laodicea closes the present state of things.

In another phase of it we shall find Laodicea characterizing the ecclesiastical state. Naturally the political aspect, when church and state have come so near together, affects the ecclesiastical aspect too. Democracy is manifesting itself unmistakeably in this sphere also. The people are rising up against the long rule of their spiritual leaders, and are claiming their rights at the hands of these. But they are not content with what is their just due here. They must be lords of their former masters. They pay their ministers; and who is the real master, he who pays, or he who is paid? Having control of the purse-strings, they see no reason why they should not choose their pastor, as they choose their lawyer or their doctor. But this means, that preachers must preach to please them; their doctrines, their style, must approve themselves to the criticism of their hearers. And thus, alas, Scripture is being more and more fulfilled, which, prophesying of the last days, says: "for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap *to themselves* teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned to fables."

You know that I am advocating no spiritual aristocracy in saying this. People would accuse me rather, perhaps, of the opposite extreme. But in truth, both are alike unscriptural. Neither aristocracy nor democracy is God's principle; but a true *theocracy*. Christ is alone master, not clergy, not people. Ministers are but 'servants,' as the very name imports, but not "servants of men,"—against which the apostle, as you will remember, so vehemently contends. "If I yet pleased men," says he, "I should not be the servant of Christ." Thus are these two things in essential opposition. Christ needs to be in His true place, which Laodiceanism, here as elsewhere, excludes Him from. Bring Christ in, and the ministers are *His* servants. Bring Christ in, and the people are *His* people. His service, on the part of all alike, is true and perfect freedom alike to all.



You will understand me, when I say, that I rejoice to see the pernicious distinction between clergy and laity being in some measure done away. I rejoice in the free evangelizing which is going on in almost all denominations; I rejoice to see Christ's people taking their true place as in relation to Him, distinctive priesthood and vested rights of clerisy being done away. Only let God's word settle all; let Christ have His sovereign rights: Laodiceanism will be then impossible.

But finally let us never forget there is a spiritual Laodicea. And this too in a double way. It may be purely spiritual: and here perfectionism, which we have glanced at, is plainly one form. Another, upon a lower plane, is to be found in that spirit which contents itself with outward church prosperity, and neglecting Divine measurement, seeing the church and world nearer together, assumes that the world is coming up to the Christian level, when it is Christians who are coming down to the level of the world. Here Christ must be outside the door in order to judge so. The soul supping with Christ and Christ with it, must needs know better what are His tastes, and how little the ostentatious ecclesiasticism or the showy charities so abundant can suit Him. Let me not speak disparagingly. I do not assign all (God forbid!) to one common rubbish-heap. There are quantities of devoted, sincere labourers, whose labours are with God, and whose fruit will be found with Him. And He too, who seeth not as man seeth, neither seduced by fair appearances nor harsh in premature judgment,—He who teaches us that in taking forth the precious from among the vile we shall be as *His* mouth,—*He*, much more, will find that which is valuable to Him, doubtless, in that which to us may seem the merest refuse. Still the general result is but little affected. The heart that can look complacently upon the general condition of things religiously can scarcely be with Christ aright. It is not a question of prophetic knowledge merely, or what views we entertain about the Lord's coming, though our views and our disposition of heart cannot be altogether disconnected,—it is a question of obedience to His word and of truth of heart to Him.

But spiritual Laodiceanism has yet another phase, and shall I own it to you? to me it is the most hopeless and distressing. It is where grace is owned and the Christian stand-point is assumed, the Christian language used, the ecclesiastical position (so to speak) all right, but wher

this is all found essentially inoperative upon the soul. Because here the failure of the Word is most decided, and if the Word fails what is there to renew us by?

Beloved brethren, let me return then to this, and insist a little upon it; can we insist too much, where this awful brand of Laodicea rests upon the one with whom God's truth is only professed, to be more than ever denied,—Christ's name assumed, to be more than ever dishonoured?

The place in new creation, is it ours? do we profess it ours, that wondrous place, where, for every one who is in Christ Jesus old things are passed away, and all things become new? Is our standing there, our "walk" to be "according to this rule," "in Him" whom we have received, Christ Jesus the Lord? Are we as to all fleshly standing, title, claim, dead with Christ, buried, never to come up again?

Who would think of the old Laodicean contention upon ground like this? Who would dream of 'people's rights' being here once more the watch-word, among the followers of a carpenter's Son, whom the world crucified, and whose chief spiritual leaders are the fishermen of Galilee?

Brethren, be cold or hot: be one thing or another plainly. When all are one in Christ, shall there be room for the hateful strife of democrat and aristocrat, as if the world was *not* crucified to us, as if we did *not* glory in that Cross of Christ, by which we are crucified to the world?

"Members one of another," "all one in Christ Jesus,"—is this not social equality of the very highest order? Brethren alike in the family of God, is this indeed, or is it not, nearer, dearer, more powerful than the ties of flesh?

Not aristocracy, not democracy, but *theocracy*: let that be our watchword!

Is a worldly position something? do our brethren in Christ feel that in our intercourse with them we do indeed, in language which Scripture is not responsible for, though our common version is, "*condescend* to men of low estate?"\* Do they feel that it is 'condescension,' not a recognition of true equality?

On the other hand, is a worldly position, which we have *not*, something, and are we using our Christian

---

\* Rom. xii. 16: translated better in a recent version: "Have the same respect one for another, not minding high things, but *going along with the lowly* [or what is lowly.]"

place to lift ourselves higher in the world, or to assert in the face of another the 'equal rights' which are ours?

To both sides no study could be more wholesome than that of the brief epistle, so little thought of, in which we find the apostle Paul sending *back* to his former condition a run-away slave, now Christian, to his former master, Christian also. "Receive him as myself," he says to the latter, "no longer a servant, but above a servant, a *brother beloved*." Such was the relationship of Onesimus to his former master; and such words, in those old days of deeper reality, *meant what they said*.

But yet as to Onesimus, was he to claim the place which grace had put him in, and insist on 'equal rights' with his master? Was he to use his Christianity to escape from his slavery, and that because his master was a Christian? No; on either side, no! Grace was that under the supremacy of which both master and slave were now alike; the slave to the master, a 'brother beloved'; but himself subject to a grace which if it had given him the new relationship, taught him to value it too highly to prostitute it to the claim of worldly advantage.

*The claim of grace is not grace.* It is not grace in me to pull another down from an assumed level, nor yet to claim one's own from others. It is the prerogative of grace to stoop to serve; and yet it is grace's prerogative to lift the lowest up upon a level so high, that the highest of earth's princes shall esteem it only immeasurable exaltation to be allowed to share it with him.

Oh, to be ever *Christians!* to sup with Him, who if He admits us to His company, must have the door kept open for all that are His. His, and to be associated with Him in the fast coming glory, before which all earthly glory even now pales and dies!

Philadelphia and Laodicea! significant contrasts! with which are we? Surely, surely, the closing days of Christendom are Laodicean. Sorrowfully I feel it, and affirm it. And what then! why then He is near; He will come. Let us brace ourselves to our duty; let us hold fast the faith; let us be only more fully subject to Him whose rule is service, whose yoke is ease itself, whose presence and whose fellowship begin heaven for us upon earth. Oh to know it better! As we look around, as we look within, our exhortation changes into prayer.