

THE  
PRESENT TESTIMONY,  
AND  
Original Christian Witness Revived.  
IN WHICH  
THE CHURCH'S PORTION  
AND  
THE HOPE OF THE KINGDOM,  
ETC.  
ARE SOUGHT TO BE DEVELOPED FROM SCRIPTURE.

---

לֹא בַחִיל וְלֹא בִכְחַי אִם־בְּרוּחִי  
Zechariah iv. 6.

---

VOL. II.

---

LONDON:  
R. GROOMBRIDGE & SONS,  
5, PATERNOSTER ROW.

M.DCCC.L.

**LONDON :**  
**PRINTED BY GEORGE LITTLEWOOD,**  
**93, LONDON WALL.**

## CONTENTS OF VOL II.

NO.		PAGE
I.	Synopsis of the Books of the Bible.—Exodus . . . . .	1
II.	The Old Prophet of Bethel . . . . .	-29
III.	Concerning the Near Appearing, or Presence of False Prophets . . . . .	40
IV.	Haggai, Chapter II. . . . .	47
V.	Gift inalienable from the Church . . . . .	51
VI.	Baptism over the Dead . . . . .	56
VII.	The Manna despised . . . . .	62
VIII.	The Three Crowns . . . . .	72
IX.	Criticisms . . . . .	86
X.	"A little Leaven leaveneth the whole lump" . . . . .	87
XI.	The History of Ahab . . . . .	90
XII.	Synopsis of the Books of the Bible.—Leviticus . . . . .	103
XIII.	The Golden Calf . . . . .	130
XIV.	The Fourteenth Chapter of John, etc. . . . .	150
XV.	Fellowship and its Responsibilities . . . . .	154
XVI.	The Child of Resurrection . . . . .	160
XVII.	"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" . . . . .	171
XVIII.	Rudiments of the World. . . . .	179
XIX.	Synopsis of the Books of the Bible.—Numbers . . . . .	196
XX.	The Nazarite Vow, Numbers, chap. vi. . . . .	236
XXI.	The Worthiness of the Lamb . . . . .	246
XXII.	Some Thoughts on reading the opening Chapters of the Acts of the Apostles . . . . .	256
XXIII.	The Administration of the Fulness of Times . . . . .	267
XXIV.	Moses' Song . . . . .	279
XXV.	Grace Triumphant . . . . .	285
XXVI.	The Folly of trusting to Egypt for Help . . . . .	300
XXVII.	Elijah, "A Man subject to like Passions as we are" . . . . .	310
XXVIII.	The Resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. . . . .	318
XXIX.	"Salvation is of the Lord" . . . . .	324
XXX.	The Offerings viewed in connexion with Luke xv. . . . .	346
XXXI.	Philippians, chap. i. 1—7. . . . .	351
XXXII.	Synopsis of the Books of the Bible.—Deuteronomy . . . . .	359

No.	PAGE
XXXIII. "The Earth is the Lord's, and the Fulness thereof"	387
XXXIV. Illustration of Two Acrostic Psalms, exi. and cxii.	391
XXXV. "Faint, yet persuing"	395
XXXVI. "Then will I make this House like Shiloh"	402
XXXVII. Divine names and titles; I. —Elohim, God	406
XXXVIII. Shiloh, Beth-shemesh, and Mizpeh	422
XXXIX. Prophecy, Israel's Encouragement to build the Temple. Comparison of Ezra, Haggai, and Zechariah	434
XL. Josiah and Jehoiakim; 2 Kings xxii.; Jerem. xxxvi.	457
XLI. The Deluge	460

## THE BASKET.—

The Church	159
------------	-----

## VERSES :—

"Christ in you, the Hope of Glory," Part II.	55
The Good Shepherd	71
"Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me"	153
The Prospect	278
The Warning	355
The Hope	356
"Launch thy Bark, Mariner"	357
The Dying Believer bidding farewell to the Bible	358
"Yet a very little while"	390
The Christian's Prospect	421

## VARIETIES :—

The Bride	46
Exodus	85
Fragments	102, 149, 245, 255, 309, 317, 354
Leviticus	129
Principles and Persons	170
The Wreck	178
Numbers	235
The Blessings of the Twelve Tribes; Genesis xlix.	266
Hebrew Proper Names	299
The Present Testimony : What is it ?	323
John xiv. 20.	345
Scraps	350
Deuteronomy	386
Extracts	405
The Two Lamech's	433



# THE PRESENT TESTIMONY,

ETC., ETC.

---

N<sup>o</sup>. I.

## SYNOPSIS OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE.— EXODUS.<sup>a</sup>

IN the book of Exodus, we have, as the general and characteristic subject, the deliverance and redemption of the people of God, and their establishment as a people before Him—whether under the law or under the government of God in long-suffering, who provided for his unfaithful people a way of access to Himself, although they had failed. God's relationship with the people had at first been in grace; but this did not continue, and the people never entered therein with intelligence, neither did they understand this grace like persons who stood in need of it as sinners. We shall proceed to examine a little the course of these divine instructions.

First, we have the historical circumstances which relate to the captivity of Israel—the persecutions which this people had to endure, and the providential superintendence of God answering the faith of the parents, and thus accomplishing the counsels of His grace, which not only preserved the life of Moses, but placed him in an elevated position in the court of Pharaoh.

But, although Providence responds to faith, and acts in order to accomplish God's purposes and control the walk of His children, it is not the guide of faith, although it is made so sometimes by believers who are wanting in clearness of light. Moses's faith is seen in his giving up

<sup>a</sup> Genesis, Vol. I, No. XII. p. 215, was printed from a paper forwarded by the Author,—his own version, in English, of one written by him in French for the "Témoignage." This (on Exodus) is a translation from his MS, but since corrected by himself.—*Ed.*

were to dwell, which is found chap. xxxiv. there is in chap. xxxv. another part of the instructions of Moses, which he gave when he came down. It is not now the certainty of entering, and the conduct suited to those who have found grace, to abstain from all that might tend to bring sin back when they were enjoying the privileges of grace; Moses speaks to them of the portion of the people under the influence of that communication which the Mediator, as Head of grace, had established. The Sabbath<sup>n</sup> is appointed; and moreover, His people (grace thus manifested) are encouraged to show their good-will and their liberality in everything that concerned the service of God. Consequently, we find the manifestation of the spirit of wisdom and of gift in service. God calling specially by name those He designed more particularly for the work. This was done liberally; they brought more than was sufficient, and every wise-hearted man worked, each the things for which he was gifted; and Moses blessed them. Thus was the tabernacle set up, and every thing put into its place, according to the commandment of God. Therefore (what we might have remarked before) the whole is anointed with oil. Christ was thus consecrated, anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power; and moreover, Christ must, after having made peace by His blood, having all things to reconcile (being the one who first descended, and afterwards ascended, to fill all things with His presence, according to the power of redemption in righteousness and love divine); I say that the unction of the Holy Ghost must carry the efficacy of this power in redemption everywhere. Therefore had the tabernacle been sprinkled with blood. It is the power of the presence of the Holy Ghost, not regeneration. God takes possession of the tabernacle by His glory, and the cloud of His presence and of His protection, becomes the guide of the people (now forgiven), happy and so greatly blessed in being under the government and guidance of God, and at the same time His habitation and His inheritance.

<sup>n</sup> The Sabbath is again found whenever there is any principle whatever of relationship established between the people and God; it is the result of every relation between God and His people;—they enter into His rest.

N<sup>o</sup>. II.

## THE OLD PROPHET OF BETHEL.

1 KINGS, XIII. 1—32.

THE effect of sin was to separate the heart from God; so the conduct of sinners (Rom. iii. 18.); “There is none that seeketh after God.” The natural heart is opposed to God; and the enmity already there, is increased by the subtlety of Satan, in order that he may keep it from Him, whom to know is life and peace. When, in His grace, the soul is quickened and brought nigh by the blood of Christ, the hostility of Satan ceases not. A present God, is present power. *The enemy of souls seeks to undermine our dependence upon God, and thus separate us from Him.* In the former case, security is pledged; in the latter, endangered. And if life (“because he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself”) is certain, yet fruit-bearing ceases, and the Lord is not honoured. Whilst rejoicing in the salvation provided for us in the gospel, we must remember the object of it, in that God may be glorified in us. And to this object Satan is opposed. Many are the ways by which he succeeds. Oftentimes by exciting to evil, for the chaff is still in us, and needs but the fuel to ignite. But the believer escapes to his hiding-place (Psalm xxxii. 7). He knows the enemy in this form and avoids him. Or if taken unawares, yet the source of the evil is detected, confessed and forgiven (1 John, 1.9). But the enemy is not put down or turned from his purpose. If he cannot work to our injury by things which are evil, he will strive to do it by that which is good. The good which flows from God shall be presented as food for the soul, instead of the God who supplied it. The fruits of faith in God, instead of the God of the fruits. And it is just here where his success has been most eminent. If the bait, in the form of gross evil, is not taken, and his presence detected, yet, transformed

into an angel of light, he succeeds. The world and its allurements may be overcome; but that which is good being perverted to raise a reputation for ourselves, instead of bringing glory to God; by that we fall. The precept being regarded—"When ye have done all, say ye are unprofitable servants"—is the state of heart which preserves. But, alas! who is sufficient for these things!

We have, in the subject before us, an instructive lesson. Judgment pronounced upon evil by the prophet of the Lord, and the reception he met with. The opposition of the king, and the power of God supporting his servant. The servant's faithfulness in obeying the commandment and in refusing a reward; closing with his fall and the occasion of it. He is proof against temptation when presented in the form of evil, and he falls when tempted by apparent good. The voice of a brother, his standing and reputation, are honoured above the word of God. He disobeys the former and accredits a lie in the latter.

The Holy Ghost is silent as to the sin of the old prophet of Bethel. The sin of the one against his neighbour is clear; but the sin against God in the other's disobedience is clearer. We are often taken up with that which is an injury to many, regardless of that which is done against God. Many can contend earnestly for love to the brethren, and warmly resent failure in this respect, yet remain unmoved when the truth of God, on which it is based, is sought to be undermined. We cannot hold the truth, without love to the brethren being a consequence. The fruit-bearing which flows from communion with God is the evidence of it. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all things else shall be added unto you."

The communion of saints did not spring from their agreement with one another, but their union of heart about God. Taught by His spirit the virtue and value of the Lord Jesus for them, they rolled themselves in the confidence of love upon His care. That they enjoyed His presence was manifest, in that "great grace was upon them all." In beholding the love of God, they

*The Old Prophet of Bethel.*

31

became vessels for transmitting it. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord they were changed!" "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." He bestows His gifts on those who love Himself. There is positive declension in the soul, when the gifts are spoken more about than the Giver—when saints can be grieved for the lack of right deportment to themselves from their brethren, yet indifferent as to right thoughts about God in Christ. Dishonour to the Lord is less thought about than disrespect to one another. But so it is under every trial: man has proved himself untrue to God; God, in His covenant with Christ, true to man. "He abideth faithful." Blessed that it is so! Most blessed! because He changes not, we have confidence and hope. We must cease from man. We must trust in God.

The subject before us so graphically portrayed, is not novel in its occurrence. A saint to day and a prophet then, have features in common. Seeing the one, you recognise the other. The servant of God subduing every outward opposition, and himself subdued by that which was within.

Very weak ones have got the victory over the world outside the church, have overcome its threats, and despised its rewards. Very strong ones have fallen from troubles within. Ostensible evil is easily resisted; when, disguised as good, it subdues. Hence the need of constant dependence upon God, and right thoughts about Him, that He may give us the spirit of dependance upon Him. There was a bond between Job and God, as related in chap. xlii. ver. 8. "Ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job." Job had his failings and many of them. But Job had right thoughts of God. We have our failings and many of them, so that no less a Christ than the Christ of God can meet our need. Let us beware of dishonouring Him, and of that which is as bad, if not worse, assuming a neutral attitude. Judging the wrong ways of many who are contending for the right, instead of identifying ourselves with those on the Lord's side.

The sin of Jeroboam provoked the judgment of God,

and in the chapter before us is given the prophet's denunciation against the altar. The course of the prophet to the close of the tenth verse, is marked by steadfastness in the service of his master. He set out on his errand by the word of the Lord. He delivers his message. The king is provoked to wrath, and commands the prophet to be seized. "He put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold of him, and his hand which he put forth against him dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him." The word of the Lord is adhered to, and His strength goes along with it. He identifies Himself with His testimony. The king, smitten, becomes a suppliant. He who stretched out his hand against God cannot draw it back again. And he entreats of the prophet to pray for him. What instruction is here!

The servant, whilst witnessing for God, is supported by Him; and the power of the world is humbled at his feet. And so it should be with the church. Not because she is the called of God, but for His sake who called her. Alas, she has used the grace God has bestowed, for her own exaltation, forgetful of His glory. "And the man of God besought the Lord, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before." And the king said unto the man of God, "Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward." And the man of God said unto the king, "If thou wilt give me half thine house I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place. For so it was charged me, by the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel."

Thus far the word of the Lord is obeyed—the testimony against the altar delivered. Outward opposition was overcome, and the gifts of the ungodly king rejected. The prophet was not afraid of his threats, and was proof against his rewards. His separateness as God's witness against ungodliness was maintained. Yet, "let not him that putteth on his armour boast as he that taketh it off."

*The Old Prophet of Bethel.*

33

Many trials await us in the wilderness. We cannot raise so much as our helmet (Eph. vi. 17), but we are open to the darts of the foe. The sense of danger should keep us on the alert. It was "whilst men slept that the enemy sowed tares." That which is most apparent, is the least dangerous. The history of the Church elucidates this. Open opposition to God's people drove them to Him for protection. "When Peter saw the wind was boisterous, he was afraid, and, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me!"

The greatest danger to the Lord's people is from one another. Paul, speaking to the elders of the Church of Ephesus, warns them that grievous wolves should enter in among them—"Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." "Looking diligently, lest any man fall from the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." Such portions of the Word healthily digested in the soul, would work wonders in the way of keeping down self-sufficiency amongst saints. None ever wandered so far from the truth, but any of us may go further; none ever dishonoured God by sin, however hateful, but we may do worse. We cannot depend upon one another. We cannot confide in one another; and the communion of saints did not consist in leaning upon one another; but each individual trusted in God, and, according to his faith, was in a position to assist his neighbour. If brotherly love could be sustained apart from God, then in just such proportion could we do without God. But "of Him, and to Him, and through Him, are all things." He gives the blessing, and His is the power to sustain it. In honouring Him, we are taught to honour one another. When His glory is our aim, our happiness is His. Exalted conception of the majesty and dignity of the Lord Jesus . . . and God the Father delights to shower down blessing on His people. His happiness is in them, and they find their happiness in Him. Let us beware of unhallowed thoughts of the Son of God. Let us eschew curious disquisition about His person. His name is Wonderful;

*The Old Prophet of Bethel.*

no man can unravel the mystery. He is presented to us as the object of adoration, not as a subject for inspection. "He smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord."

But again to our narrative. We read in verses 11 to 19, "Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father. And their father said unto them, What way went he? for his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah. And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon, and went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? and he said, I am. Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread. And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place: for it was said to me by the word of the Lord, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest. He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him. So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water." Paul, writing to the Galatians in chap. i. 8, says, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." The prophet of Judah had delivered his testimony upon the express revelation of God to himself, and it was not said to him "Go to such a person, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." We have a standard in the written Word, and the Spirit of God also to enable us to apprehend it. A revelation discordant with it could not be accredited. The New Testament unfolding the purpose of grace in the Gospel, was but the fulfilment of the promises recorded in the Old.



*The Old Prophet of Bethel.*

35

The prophet of Bethel might have much to recommend him to notice. His years would add weight to his words. He came as a brother, and put in his claim to be so regarded because of his brotherhood. The temptation was strong, and succeeds. We shall do well to take heed in our days. A man, in the grace of God, may understand and clearly put forth the grace of the Gospel. A man, in the strength of the Lord, may manifest much of the savour of Christ in his life. God may put honour upon him, and he may deserve to be honoured; but God allows no man to usurp His place.

Those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, "and the man in labours more abundant," are alike debtors to grace. What hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Who maketh thee to differ from another? Eminent gifts for the edification of the body, or shining faith for the example of the body, give no pre-eminence over it. God gave them for the service of the Church, and their service is real only as it leads the soul to rely on God. The servant should serve for the Lord's sake, and the body be grateful for the Lord's sake. The servant should wait on the body, because it is the Lord's; and the body should cherish the servant, for the Master's sake. And when this is the principle of service, it carries over every difficulty, even as with Paul, "The less he was loved the more he loved." They were dear to the Lord, though unfaithful to him; and the single eye as to whose they were, strengthened his purpose in ministry. How full of instruction is the life and career of Paul! How true to his Master; and, *therefore*, how true to His members! How dear to him the honour of Jesus; and, *therefore*, the welfare of His Church! He would not have them regard him, but Christ in him, and follow him only as he followed Christ. How this shines forth in his parting scene with the elders at Ephesus! He "commends them to God, and the word of His grace."

Fatal delusion, if the servant of Christ allows the maintenance of his own credit and character to occupy the place of the Lord's glory and honour! Sad folly, if his own wounded feelings distress him more than the

"Lord being wounded afresh in the house of his friends"! Our own happiness is secured just so far as the Lord's glory is our aim. Faithfulness to Him secures devoted love to His people. God in Christ must be the spring of every right action for Him. Diversity of judgment in minor matters will not disturb the peace of a community, where conscience towards God is respected. Whilst praying that we may see eye to eye, we can give God thanks that the eye is directed to Him. The commandment, "This is my beloved Son, hear Him!" effectually closes the door to any one less than Him. True teaching sets Christ before the taught. The subject matter conveyed will occupy the heart more than the person who imparts instruction. The object is to bring the soul into obedience to God. The instrument can never take His place, so John in his Epistle writes, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God."

The Prophet of Judah failed in this. "I am a prophet as well as thou art," said the old Prophet of Bethel. God, who gave the calling to both, is displaced. Their character and standing is before them, responsibility to God forgotten. No uncommon occurrence in another light in our day. Brethren in Christ may dispute about their relative qualifications, whilst God, the Giver of them, is little thought of. And this is Satan's object. We can be jealous for fruits, and not care about the tree, until the blossom is nipped and blighting winter comes over the soul. Added to this, disobedience to God brings down His judgments. And these things are written for our admonition. The manner of the punishment, also, is characteristic of the offence. If man's word is regarded before God, then by man shall the sentence of condemnation be inflicted. If saints care more for their own credit with brethren, than obedience to God in His word, and prefer quiet at the sacrifice of a good conscience, they may yet learn, as did the Prophet of Judah, that the very parties for whom they have made shipwreck of faith, will be instruments in God's hands for their chastisement.

"And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the

*The Old Prophet of Bethel.*

37

word of the Lord came unto the Prophet that brought him back: And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord: Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place of the which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come into the sepulchre of thy fathers."

And so it fell out unto him. And in verses 23, 24, 25, we have the judgment recorded.

The Prophet was sent to Jeroboam because the latter had disobeyed the Lord and departed from Him. Now the servant falls himself into the sin of hearkening to man and neglecting God. As was before remarked, he triumphed over the opposition of the world without, and is seduced into unfaithfulness by a brother within. Communion with God is the basis of fellowship with one another. Love to God, from the knowledge of His love to us, produces love to one another. The thoughts of God concerning His people, communicated by His Spirit, form affection towards them. But He is the source of it (Psalm lxxxvii. 7): "All my springs are in Thee."

Thus John, writing to Gaius, addresses him "whom I love in the truth." Harmony and peace flow from Him. They have no existence apart from Him. Hence, statements of truth propounded for our reception, must be weighed in the sanctuary before Him. No instrumentality, however eminent, releases the saint from responsibility to God. If God, by His Spirit through the Word, sets seal to the communication that it is true, we honour the instrument because God has so used him.

To accredit the vessel for transmitting the truth, without inquiring of God as to its being truth, is to honour the creature in the place of the Creator, and set man in the place of God. Thus the Prophet of Judah falls a victim to his folly. It may be he was weary with his work, for he was "found sitting under an oak." It may be the weakness of his flesh sorely tried him. The Apostle warns against such a condition in Hebrews xii. 2,

when exhorting believers to consider Jesus, "Lest ye be weary and faint in your minds." Again, "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not."

It is manifestly possible for such lassitude, from continued trial, to overpower the believer, that he becomes an easy prey to the devices of the enemy; forgetting that "God giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" (Isaiah xl. 29).

Rest was presented to the eye of the Prophet, and his heart already longed for it. The bait is gilded over by a brother's reputation; he takes it, and falls. Sad consequences for him, yet full of instruction to us.

It surely was a time of general apostasy and grievous departure from God, when the circumstances detailed in our narrative occurred. Yet, so much the more culpable was the disobedience of the Prophet of Judah. Just as in our day to acknowledge the ruined condition of the Church, involves responsibility to God, not incurred by those who do not recognise it. In the days of the Prophet Micah, how lamentable the evil by which he was surrounded, how dark the picture: yet how blessed the conclusion to which he was brought! "He could not trust in a friend, or put confidence in a guide." "Therefore (he says) I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me" And so in Malachi iii. 16: "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it."

The Prophet of Bethel, who thus led his brother astray, he too has his hour of sorrow. Perhaps he was jealous of the testimony God had confided to the Prophet of Judah, as also of the honour put upon him in the work the Lord had done by him that day in Bethel. Be this as it might, there was a spark in his heart, which needed but the enemy to fan into a flame, and he became a fit instrument for his brother's destruction. Not that he foresaw the consequences, though he was the tool to bring them about. Nor did his sin in tempting, excuse the other in yielding to the temptation. His soul, out of

*The Old Prophet of Bethel.*

39

communion with God, devised a lie to deceive, and the soul of the other, out of communion, was easily betrayed. Sad was the fate of the victim, and sorrowful the lamentation of the old Prophet of Bethel (verses 26, 27, 28, 29). "And the old Prophet came to the city to mourn and to bury him. And he laid his carcase in his own grave; and they mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother! And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones: for the saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass."

Sorrowful picture of human frailty and its consequences. He mourns the dead he betrayed when living, and accredits the testimony borne by his brother as according to God: seeking consolation for his grief, saying, "When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones."

"The Lord give *us* understanding in all things" (2 Tim. ii. 7).

L.



"The path narrows as we near the goal."

Every prop must fall but one.

"Thy rod and *thy staff*."—Jacob crossed the Jordan with it, and it is beautiful to see him close the scene in worship—"leaning on the top of his staff." May it be ours, too, so to close this earthly pilgrimage, if we are called to die, or patient hold it till the Lord Himself call us hence away—to be "for ever with the Lord."—S.

N<sup>o</sup>. III.CONCERNING THE NEAR APPEARING OR  
PRESENCE OF FALSE PROPHETS.

I JOHN iv. 1—6.

THIS little treatise is addressed to those who not only know Jesus to be a Saviour, but who know Him as their Lord, to whom their allegiance and obedience is due. Happy those who look wholly to His good pleasure as their Lord. They ought also to know that this is a time when allegiance to Him will be put to the test. It will be quite a different proof than heretofore, because Satan will deceive with far more deceivableness than heretofore. The deception will begin with unbelief in the Lordship of Jesus, and by insubjection to it; and in speaking therefore of the world and not of heavenly things, but perhaps often commending what is earthly religious, and thus enhancing the deceit. One can hardly believe that it is not already the case, and they are not in themselves so apparent, as not to require that the spirit by which they speak should not be tried by you, that you be not misled. We are desired to try the spirits, to bring them to proof by the works of the prophets who speak by these spirits. 1st. They must be proved by their works, and their works are not holding Jesus to be come in the flesh, and therefore immediate Lord over all men; and, 2ndly, speaking of the world. These are two very simple things, so there is no need that simple men should be deceived; it is the want of knowing Jesus as Lord that may lead even the elect into danger. Obedience to Jesus as Lord will disown what He disowns—will make a good confession of the hope He has left, and will worship according to the power of that Spirit, that is of Him and the Father. We must not suppose, that having the spirit of antichrist is to make those, who by this spirit, speak of the world and

*Presence of False Prophets.*

41

its hopes, like men possessed so as to act violently and madly; they would in this case be quickly suspected or disregarded; but these require to be tested in the knowledge of God and of Christ, because they soberly lead from God and His obedience. Persons would gain no credit, and that their master knows, if they were to proclaim principles that would shock mankind. In order to persuade men, they must propose some advantage, something that does honour to mankind and not dishonour, and no one is taught in the honour and reward of obedience to Christ. A condition that would need forgiveness of God they would repudiate. They will say that man in his own honour and dignity, and educated therein, has a true nobility; that death is no judgment of God; and if they acknowledge a continuance of existence after death (not a restoration of the dead to life by the power of God), it is to their own honour, and the extension of the self-importance with which they have dignified themselves. With a future life, however, they trouble themselves but little. The mark given in addition to the denial of Christ come in the flesh is, that they speak of the world, and the world heareth them. What is now more common than these two marks? God warns us now against these. Against the world He has already warned us. The world perisheth, and the works thereof; and the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life are of the world, and not of the Father. The world will be judged and the works thereof, but of this those that scoff are willingly ignorant. They have known it, or at least have heard the testimony and rejected it. No one can get rid of the judgments that God has appointed by His word. Disbelief does not alter the truth of any thing. What is, is; and what shall be, shall be. Man does not make any thing untrue by his disbelief. So nothing that is false can be made true because I am deceived by it, even if it were to my ruin; nor do my convictions make any thing true, nor bind God in His judgments, or else my judgment would bind God. Men deceived by themselves are easily deceived by others who prophesy

according to the blindness of the people; and who is so foolish as to think, that a man thinking he sees, or that he has a true mental apprehension of a thing will make it certain? God is never moved from His throne, and He will be justified in the day when all things will be judged; and if my affections are with God, I say, "Let God be true, though all be liars." Now God has revealed the resurrection of all men, and they will stand just as they now are to be tried in their present capacity of conscience, by His presence and not by their own thoughts; and their judgment will be final and righteously so, for God has not failed to make known His goodness by His word. A true prophet believes that Jesus Christ has appeared in the flesh, and will come to blessing or judgment. Such a one therefore speaks of things to come; he speaks of the peace made by blood, and that God has loved, receives men for the sake of His Son whom He has given.

Now false prophets are in this Scripture prophesied of; they prophesy false things, and the reverse of God's judgment of the world. They will speak of the capacities of it and its greatness; of the perfectibility of man, and of the world's institutions becoming his noble condition, and the world heareth them. How quickly are the ears of man caught by the false evangelist, or these inspired pretenders! How Christ's coming to judgment, and as *Lord* over the world would be scorned, though the price was paid for his deliverance from Satan in body and soul, as well as that for other men!

It is quite true, that at present some men have not gone as far as others in the denial of the Lordship of Jesus, but their words and position are in a strange contradiction one to the other. Religion is not yet always rejected by those who listen to the false prophets, but few would listen, did any do more than accidentally speak of it. Man was so formed of God, that some acknowledgment of Him is natural, and necessary to him as a right condition of his existence. Wholly to reject is to denaturalise himself; but they do not acknowledge a Lordship in Jesus, and the world heareth



*Presence of False Prophets.*

43

them. Politics, as we daily know them, are an unbelief of the Lord as Lord. Man as man, sufficient to himself, is the ground of their doctrine; and as the Egyptian said of his river, "The river is mine own, I have made it for myself." It is a simple character to try them by, and it seems a sweeping judgment; but God judgeth all things in truth, and giveth a simple rule to judge by, and all that is not in Christ will be found not of Him. A false prophet is one not confessing Jesus, and their word is about the world independently of God, and the world gives them heed; these are they that speak by the spirit of antichrist. The apostle says many false prophets are gone out into the world. If any man knows the true extent of the call that God has made by the apostle, and by those who follow the truth he delivers, he listeneth not to such at all.

Now the spirits and prophets that speak by them are prophesied of; and because they do the reverse of what true prophets do, they are false prophets, and they are spoken of as to appear in these latter times, when all things are hastening to the time of God's interference in the world by His judgments against the rebellious; and the spirit is called the spirit of antichrist, because it is set against the Lordship of Jesus over the world, and will fully exist in antichrist when he is manifested. Those that are of God overcome the seduction and turn away, because they have a spirit in them that is greater than the spirit that is in the false prophets. But let us not conceal from ourselves how plain the distinction is made by the Word of God between one spirit and the other. Nor let us think less of the grace of God to man in Christ, or to ourselves who believe, for Christ is made of God to us, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption"; we are possessors of Christ, and own the Lord of whose glory we are partakers, but separate by a clear undeniable separateness from all the false prophets speak of. "Come out and be ye separate, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty." Doing good to all men, and loving one another for God and for our hope's sake,

and our works will be owned of Him when He shall come, and they shall be judged for all "the hard speeches they have spoken against Him."

It is unbelief in us to have any thing to say to any of these matters. We return as the dog to his vomit when we do so. We must not be deceived by words of honour and of noble sentiments. When men do well to themselves, men will speak well of them, as is said in the forty-ninth Psalm. *Your* rule is, "Whom the Lord commendeth;" but for us they are condemned, though we confess ourselves always sinners saved by grace. The Lord cometh to judgment.

But if the spirit of anti-Christ is at work, the same will produce a FALSE PROPHET far above the rest. How wise is the arch enemy! Will he let the world see this all at once? None were ever wicked at once. No man ever gained his fellow-men by proposing a thing as evil, but as good; but you have here, in the description of the false prophets and their works, the sure marks of the beginning; and they lead surely to the end. Those we speak of speak of the world, and the world heareth them. Men, again, now perhaps dispute about religion, and about this or that being the right one. God says, "True religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is to keep yourself unspotted from the world;" and His commandments are to believe on the Son of God, and to love one another in this faith. Now, beloved, everything is slipping from its place. Everything that is not founded on Christ and His word, and to the exclusion of everything else, will soon be in the enemy's camp. Take with you a single eye, and your whole body shall be full of light; otherwise you will slip away into the dominion of evil, and at last of Satan. Do not be deceived by the name of religion. The weak, the crucified One, is the power of God unto salvation. It is a matter of faith and of holding fast. Disbelieve the false prophets. Believe God, and the devil will flee from thee, and thyself be left to the rejoicing of hope, and to you belong rest (with those that have from the first declared the salvation of God) when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven

*Presence of False Prophets.*

45

with His mighty angels, and *you*, perfected by trial, because you hold fast ; *they* who have troubled you, righteously receiving tribulation, and punished with everlasting destruction from that presence which is become your's in joy for evermore. Let us now be fain to pluck out of destruction those in whom we discover that God yet keeps a conscience to the Lord alive in their breasts.

This then is the present state of things, or one we shall see presently accomplished ; but there will be a GREAT FALSE PROPHET. The power he will receive of Satan will be very great : his business will be to commend him to whom Satan will give his power and throne and great authority, by the permission of God ; and the great false prophet will commend him to mankind by signs and wonders, and miracles, and fire from heaven, to cause men to obey him whom Satan has set up, as the glory and boast of man.

It is one fashion of the unbelief of the present day to deny the existence of Satan, the adversary. There can be no greater cause of any falling into his toils, because when miracles and wonders are now done they will be ascribed to God, and thus they will give credit to Satan and be deceived. But Scripture (and a sad woful sign of the power of Satan is it when the Scripture is kept from the hands of the people) is express on the subject, that as miracles were performed at the beginning of Christianity, that the miracles at the close of the dispensation will be from the Evil One, and not from God. Such then will have no eyes to discover the deceit, but wonder and worship. This false prophet will without doubt find his representatives, who by the same deceit will commend the same lie to those that are subject to them and not to God ; and indeed, all those whose names are not written in the book of life through faith of the Son of God. And it is a sure word, that Christianity falls not into forgetfulness or into the ignorance of heathenism again, but is apostate from God in the fulness of human intelligence and in hatred of Christ.

The false prophet will receive his doom with the great

king and power who is yet to be manifested, as we learn from the Apocalypse, chap. xix. 20, and other places of Scripture in the New and Old Testament. If you will compare this with chap. xiii. ver. 10, the description of his working miracles to deceive is the same as in chap. xix. 20.

The false prophet in chap. xiii. 10, has the character of a worldly power; this he apparently loses, before he is finally destroyed. It is not said that the prophets mentioned in the text at the head of this tract do any miracles—their task is more ordinary: their character is, that they do not confess the coming of Christ as man, and they say, “Who is Lord over us?”—and they speak of the world, and may be, its religion too. But the time comes; the world, through hearing of them, is ripe in the deceivableness of unrighteousness to fall into the last snare of the enemy; and the great false prophet, and those who are connected with him, will bring men into the last measure of deception and rebellion against the Lord. The time is not afar off. The signs of the last times abound on every side. It is written, that in the last times false prophets shall come on the earth, and speak by the spirit of anti-Christ. And this is written to warn and quicken you who confess the Lord, that you be not also deceived.

D.

---

**THE BRIDE.**—“And the Spirit and the Bride say Come. And let him that heareth say Come. And let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

May the present sweet sense, divinely taught, of our privilege as part of the Bride, espoused to Christ—keep our souls enjoying His love for Whom we wait. While some overlook and some discuss, may we *enjoy* the Church’s bright place—surely fed by, and feeding on, the love of our absent Lord—The Lamb.

N<sup>o</sup>. IV.

## HAGGAI, CHAPTER II.

I HAVE regarded this second, and indeed first chapter of Haggai, as deeply instructive, mainly as showing God's blessing and power towards a remnant. The work of building the house of the Lord was now begun. The word of the Lord had come to them before, reproving them, that though they could find time to dwell in *their ceiled* houses (verse 4), and did not suffer any trifle or difficulty to interfere in the way of erecting *them*, yet if they met with any *difficulty* in endeavouring to raise the Lord's house, they immediately gave that up,—“The time was not *come* that the Lord's house should be built.” Happily this reproof of the prophet had stirred up the minds of the people, they *did* begin to build; and immediately the word of the Lord came to them to encourage them:—“I am with you, saith the Lord.” The building proceeds; and now, in this second chapter, the word of the Lord comes to speak with them concerning this building. It tells them the LORD had not despised “the day of small things.” Man might, but God did not. “Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison as nothing?” But what then? “Yet now be *strong*, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord . . . . And be strong, all ye people of the Lord, and *work*; for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts.” For he adds, “According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so *my Spirit* remaineth among you; fear ye not.” And if the *Spirit* remained among them, was not that all they needed? Is He not the Author of all power, of all wisdom, of all grace? Moving on the face of the waters at the beginning for creation; the Author of all power in judges or in prophets. And if that was true in its sense (for the

Spirit *indwelling* was not yet given, John vii. 39) to the remnant in an earthly dispensation at its close, shall it be less true in a heavenly spiritual one, when “the Spirit *abiding*” (John xiv. 16) is one of the great glories of the dispensation? Shall God be more faithful to the covenant of Moses than of Christ? respect more the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob than those “Yea and Amen” in Him? The Spirit, therefore, remaineth with the faithful remnant of God’s people, to guide them, to lead on, to give them wisdom and strength amidst difficulties and enemies. “Yea,” says the Lord, “I will shake great kingdoms for your sake.” For when the Lord takes up the cause of His people; He lets nothing stand in the way. “Since thou wast precious in my sight thou wast *honourable*, and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life” (Isaiah xliii. 4).

“When He His people’s cause defends,  
Who then can do them harm?”

“And *the desire* of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with my glory.”

Remark, how beautiful the hope of God’s people in apostasy, and the close of their dispensation is, not in their temple becoming equal to the *former* temple (though seeking *themselves* to stand in *all* God’s will), but in the blessed better hope of the coming of Him, who is Himself the temple and glory. Then shall all be put straight.

“The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.” If inclined to murmur now about small things, I would say it shews we are out of communion with the Lord’s mind. It is out of the *small things* that He brings His greater glory. Is not this the principle enunciated by Christ in 2 Cor. xii. 9.—“My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is *made perfect* in weakness;” and so blessedly accepted by Paul in the same verse. “Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory,” etc. If, therefore, we despise small things, we are judging after the flesh, the outward appearance, not in communion with the Lord’s mind about it.

The word of the Lord comes further upon the matter in ver. 10. It seems to speak of man's inability by himself to good, and of his ability only to evil; they could not sanctify anything indifferent in itself by their touch according to the law, but could only defile it; showing that man defileth, by his own corruption, even the work of the Lord that is in his hands:—"So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands: And that which they offer there is unclean." But why is this said? Is it to degrade? Oh no, it is only to humble; it is only that in the deep consciousness of our own insufficiency, of our own defilement of such holy work, we may carry on the Lord's *service*. Yet, *thus* carried on, God can and will accept it. It is that, like Paul, we may *serve* the Lord in all *humility of mind*, with many tears, etc. (Acts xx. 12). And *this*, I fear, we much *fail* in. Yet, as was said, grace *can* accept the sincere, though *feeble* desire of *obedience*. There had been nothing but leanness before—leanness, because they had departed from the living God, with whom alone is the riches and fatness of the olive-tree;—and the harvest was not *yet* brought into the barn: the vine, the fig tree, and the pomegranate had not *yet* brought forth their fruit: Yet, *from this day* will I bless you, saith the Lord. *Peace* and *blessing* are both here recorded for them (verses 9 to 19).

Yet again the Lord has another word for them; for as I said—and the great point that I think is brought out in this prophet is that—God's *almighty* strength is connected even with the weakness of His people: "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying," etc. The Lord said He would overthrow even "the throne of kingdoms" for their sake, to deliver them: He would "destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations:" He would "overthrow the chariots, and those that rode in them; and the horses and riders should come down, every one by the side of his brother" (see what was noticed on verse 6).

Let this thought therefore dwell on our hearts, dear brethren, that the least remnant of God's people, as more

especially standing in the communion of His mind, is connected with all His power; in the day of their greatest weakness they stand as a connecting link with all His mighty purposes, which are soon to be manifested: God could not, so to speak, do without that link: He could not *in His grace* do without a remnant according to the *election of grace*. And they have only to know His mind in faithfulness, in order to stand connected with that power soon to be revealed. It may be said, perhaps, that all this dispensation has been a *connecting link*, a final dispensation as to the consummation of all things—“Upon us the ends of the ages *have come*” (τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων, 1 Cor. x. 11). How much more upon us who stand even in the *end* of such an age; upon us, to whom more especially the cry has gone forth, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet him.”

May we indeed, dear brethren, stand “having our loins girded about, and our *lamps burning*.” The much entering into that truth, will indeed, under the Lord’s blessing, give power to our souls: it will connect us with all the *power* and *blessing* of that day (Malachi iii. 10, etc.), will tell us, whether the Lord, even in the last closing days of a dispensation, when failure, and nothing but failure, has been proved to the uttermost, will be deficient, or less than ever He was (compare verse 6) in *real blessing* to His people: “I will give you a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” The next verse (23) of this chapter of Haggai, tells us, I think, of blessed *nearness* to the faithful—nearness in that day. “I will make thee as a *signet*” (Cant. viii. 6); even as Rev. iii. 20, tells us of the same even in *Laodicea*.

Can apostasy, then, rob us of nearness to Christ, that chiefest of all things? Oh no; it should only drive us nearer. The Lord give us hearts to value such blessings: grace, and faithfulness to seek them in His appointed way (Mal. iii. 7).

G.

---

2 Cor. xii. 9.—“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”—*Ed.*



## No. V.

## GIFT INALIENABLE FROM THE CHURCH.

IN the controversy that arose respecting the abiding of *gift*, properly so called, in the Church now, I do not know that I saw the Scripture truth put in the same *naked*, singularly simple light, in which it appears to me to stand in the Word. Scripturally speaking, we may say that the existence of gift in the Church rests on the basis of another truth, which can never be *altered*; viz., “that there is one body, and many members.” If you can shake the one, you may shake the other; but with it it will stand.

The scriptural evidence of this we shall find, I think, remarkably distinct. In Romans xii. 4, etc., we first find it. “*For*, as in one body we have many members, and all the 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* (χαρίσματα) differing according to the grace that is given us whether,” etc. Here, I think, we might say with truth, speaking in a general way (though *strictly* it would not, I judge, admit of being carried out), that gift was the *πραξις*, the action of the different members of the body. In 1 Cor. xii., you have it just on the same footing, equally plain: “But all these worketh that one, and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” (That is, dividing *gifts* (χαρίσματα), see verse 9, “gifts of healing.”) “FOR, as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. FOR by one Spirit have we all been baptised into one body; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. FOR the body is not one member, but many.” In Ephes. iv. we get just the same teaching in spirit. First, we get the one body—one in its common privileges, 4 to 6; then the different gifts as *necessary* for the welfare of that one

body: "But unto every one of us (perhaps the nearest English translation would be, "to us *individually*," ἐνὶ δεῖκαστω ἡμῶν) is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." And the word *prophets*, ver. 11, would clearly identify the thought here as the same with 1 Cor. xii., where, verse 10, "prophecy;" in one case it being spoken of as the gift (δομα) of Christ, in the other the χαρισμα of the Spirit; both for the same object, in part, "the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 12, 16). And I might ask here, if we see "pastors and teachers" (verse 11) now, to take the lowest view, which unquestionably we do in different bodies of Christians, where does it come from? I say, from the gift of Christ now as much as ever, though that gift be much dishonoured by human additions.

"Till we all come (the passage proceeds in Eph.) unto the unity of the faith,....unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," which I would say is clearly not the mere filling up of *revelation*, or the *written word*, no more than 1 Cor. xiii. 10, which is degraded thus (see verse 12); but rather, I judge, the Church formed even here on earth, in principle, into fitness for Christ (Philip iii. 14, 15, 13; Ephes. v. 26, the *that* at the commencement of verse 27 showing the connexion of the two) (John xv. 15; Rev. xix. 7).

1 Peter iv. 10, I think, conveys the same thought: "Stewards of the *manifold* grace of God." Χαρισμα is there used. These are, I think, quite the leading passages of the Word.

And from these passages it is quite clear to my own mind, that gift *abiding* in the Church stands on a most sure footing, which can never be shaken; it is connected with the very *nature* of the Church.

It might perhaps appear to some, "Why revert to a past thing? the thing is pretty clear to us." But I would remark, that the question of gift is a *vital* one to the Church; a *vital* one. And why? It is, in other words, the question of the SPIRIT acting in the Church. And strongly am I persuaded, that, where it is not maintained, the question really *acted* on of the Spirit in the Church,

in the Assembly, it will bring in weakness, and may end in *death*. Nothing can compensate for it—no ministry. The Assembly is not the place where man should be honoured, but God. Observe, I am not speaking of mere fleshly liberty, but of the true acknowledgement of the Spirit. There is enough to sober the flesh in 1 Cor. iii. 12 to end.

Experience may have warned us of this, that in every failure of faith or truth, there will be also a break-down of this.

It is, I apprehend, a chosen jewel of God, if rightly, graciously used. The “manifold grace, manifold wisdom of God,” exhibited on earth; God Himself manifested (1 Cor. xii. 6, 28).

In answer to the objection—“I do not see it. I do not see *gift* in the Church now.” One might remark, That is scarcely the ground of *faith*. It is better to question our own perception, than the faithfulness of God. There is, however, a blessed faculty imparted to the saint, which would enable him to discern it, I believe, though it might be mixed up and obscured. “Ye have an unction,” says John, “from the Holy One, and know all things. The *anointing* which ye have received of Him abideth in you.” And let me ask, What is the object, the subject of gift, the best gift? Is it not the knowledge of God, and of Christ? And is there less fulness now in God, or in Christ, for the Church? Is there less of spiritual blessing (Greek) in heavenly places in Christ? less treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Has, or can apostasy change our relations to Christ (John xv. 15); or the boundless store which the Spirit has to unfold? (xvi. 14, 15). Therefore, I suppose, I might fairly ask, why gift, the best gift (1 Cor. xiv. 2, 3, 5), should not be the same now, though *modified* by circumstances? If God is the same, and the Agent of instruction, the Spirit (1 Cor. ii. 10) the same, why should gift be changed? O no! it is ever God’s word to His own: “I am the Lord thy God, which *brought thee out of Egypt*; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.”

With regard to the external gifts, miracles, etc., we

might perhaps make this observation, that whilst God's principle abides the same, it remains with Him to apply that principle. He cannot, perhaps, own us in apostasy in testimony by power before the world; but He must always own Himself in love to the Church in Christ Jesus (Eph. iv. 12, 13). For himself, the writer can record, that, in his own experience, every attempt at outward power has, to his apprehension, been decidedly counter-met by God; and this, I judge, according to His own principle in wisdom: for why should we exalt ourselves out of the ruin which we have made, and thus, perhaps, forget the very God from whom we have received it, instead of sinking low before Him in the consciousness of the entire *ruin* we have made; and there, *in that position*, receive from Him every blessing that a loving hand can give? (John xiii. 8, 5).

And let me say here, that there is perhaps no more advantageous game that Satan can start, than to set saints looking out for external power and gifts. The fleshly mind is excited, the enthusiasm wrought up in looking out for the outward power; whilst Satan, unperceived, brings in any desperate delusion he may. There is something very solemn, I think, in the teaching of Ex. xxx. 38, respecting the holy perfume, the "sweet incense," as I suppose, for the altar of incense, etc.: "Who-soever shall make like unto that, to *smell* thereto, shall even be cut off from his people." It is very possible to get intoxicated with God's incense. Yea, I think these last times have shewn us *awful* specimens of it, using the praises and excitement connected with God's truth and service for ourselves, until the law, the truth of God, is rejected: and what wisdom is in them? Compare Ezek. xxviii. 14, 15.

Especially I would say, there would be the danger of being diverted thereby from that which is our immediate and *special* hope, the return of the blessed Bridegroom Himself. We know the tendency there has been in the Church to rest in the Spirit, if I may so speak, instead of in Christ; and great danger would there be now for the Church, sunken, but not sufficiently *humbled*, to rest

*Gift inalienable from the Church.*

55

in its own endowments, instead of *awaiting* the return of its Lord. Not without reason, I think, has that blessed testimony of John Baptist been given us: "He that hath the Bride is the BRIDEGROOM." We are too apt to mistake the *friend of the Bridegroom* for the Bridegroom Himself. It may be self in another shape.

I only suggest, further, when Israel returned from Babylon, was it with outward power in testimony, or God's almighty power and grace, supporting, helping, and cheering them in weakness?

G.

---

WRITTEN AS A SECOND PART TO THE HYMN GIVEN  
VOL. I. p. 478.

6. O Thou, who this earth as a lone pilgrim trod,  
Thy Father our Father, and Thy God our God;  
To Thee we behold the bright Seraphim bow—  
Lord Jesus! all glory doth rest on Thee now!
7. And, Jesus, we know God's deep purpose to be  
To empty—then fill us, with glory from Thee;  
And now Thou dost wait Thy full wealth to impart,  
That "day of espousals," the joy of Thy heart.
8. Now, moment by moment, to answer our needs,  
Thy blood, Precious Victim! in righteousness pleads;  
And, shielded by *that*, how secure and how calm  
Our souls, on God's bosom, are folded from harm!
9. We see Thee, Lord Jesus, with great glory crown'd;  
And, waiting Thy coming, in peace would be found.  
Thy visions of glory have turn'd all to dross;  
Then give us, for Thee, to count all things but loss.

G.

---

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."—James v. 7, 8.

N<sup>o</sup>. VI.

## BAPTISM OVER THE DEAD.

## 1 CORINTHIANS XV. 29.

“O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?”  
(1 Cor. xv. 55).

“MAN being in honour abideth not; he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for He shall receive me” (Psalm xlix. 12-15). Such is the doom of the wicked: they go down to the grave: their memorial perishes with them. And hereafter, when the bright and beautiful morn of the kingdom shall break, they shall be ashes under the soles of the feet of the righteous (see Malachi iv. 3): In the words of the above-cited psalm, “The upright shall have dominion over them” then. The rest of the dead (that is, the wicked distinguished from those who will have part in the first resurrection) we read, “shall not live again until the thousand years shall be finished”; while others are reigning in life, they, and many of them kings of the earth in their day, will lie forgotten and uncrowned in the dust. While the righteous are feeding on the hidden manna above, death, the mighty destroyer, will be feeding on them. They shall be raised, it is true, but raised only for judgment—to be cast, after the millennium has ended, into the lake of fire for ever. How different this from our hope! “God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me,” says the believer, in the above-cited passage, as he contrasts his own happy lot with the fearful condition of those who live and die without hope. “O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave,

*Baptism over the Dead.*

57

where is thy victory?" Such is his song, even now, in the midst of this death-stricken world.

Thus then, in accordance with this, standing, as it were, encircled by a vast cemetery, where the unregenerate dead of past ages lie mouldering beneath—the very soil under his feet being almost composed, we might say, of their ashes—the saint (an exception himself to the general order of men), by a simple act on his part, declares himself to be *a child of resurrection*, to have passed from death unto life; expresses his union with, and, at the same time, his hope in Him who is “the resurrection and the life.” This act is that of *passing through the waters of baptism*. Others around him are dead, yea “twice dead,” as the Apostle declares, dead both as to body and soul; and the day, as we have said, is at hand, when he shall have dominion over these lost ones. Hence, now, even now, in the anticipation of full triumph at last (while he mourns their fate, it is true, not willing, in one sense, to share such a victory), he stands over their graves as a conqueror: knowing that though death is their portion, and that they shall never see light, he himself has passed from the kingdom of darkness into the very regions of life, of light, and of glory. And there, as I have said, he is baptised—baptised in His name who has given him the victory. This seems to me to be a solution of that difficult passage, “Else what shall they do which are baptised over the dead (*ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν*), if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptised over the dead?” (1 Cor. xv. 29). As an illustration of this, we may say of the elect in the days of Noah, that as the ark wherein they were sheltered floated in safety over the nations of those that were lost, that they were baptised over the dead. We have, I believe, sufficient warrant for this, inasmuch as the baptism of the Spirit is the anti-type (*ἀντίτυπος*) of both; namely, of the ordinance as we have it, and also according to 1 Peter iii. 20, 21,\* of God’s deliverance of Noah. Again, the

\* In the passage here referred to, instead of the “*like figure whereunto*,” etc., it should be as follows: —“*The anti-type (ἀντίτυπον) whereunto* (referring to the salvation of Noah and his

children of Israel, we read, were "all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." And, as they lifted up their voices in triumph over their Egyptian pursuers, now lying conquered and dead on the shore, is it too much to say, in like manner, that the baptism through which they thus passed, was a baptism over the dead?

Without saying that I feel assured that this is the true view of this passage, I beg to offer these thoughts, just by way of *suggestion*, to Christians, merely observing that this commends itself to my mind as a very *probable* interpretation of the Apostle's words *Βαπτίζομενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν*, "Baptised over the dead" (1 Cor. xv. 29). In our translation, it is rendered "*for*," not "*over*, the dead." But the primary meaning of the preposition *ὑπὲρ*, the first indeed which presents itself in the Greek lexicon, and that moreover *governing the genitive case*, which it does in this passage, is "over," or "above."

The common interpretation which refers it to such as were baptised for, or instead of, those who, for Christ's sake, had suffered martyrdom, filling up the place in the ranks of those who had fallen, has, I suspect, never much satisfied even those who have held it, having, I venture to say (and this is a point which should never be lost sight of in the interpretation of Scripture), no moral connection with anything else which we find in the Word; whereas the above interpretation appears to my mind to be fully in harmony with the glorious prospect of those who hope to meet the Lord in the air at His coming, to attain unto "*the resurrection from amongst the dead*" (*εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τῶν νεκρῶν*) (Phil. iii. 11), and now, even now, are alive in the midst of a world where death has reigned from the outset.

Then there is another point. Knowing that they

---

house in the ark) even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Here observe, Noah's deliverance by water is the *type*, the baptism of the spirit the *anti-type*. With us, water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Ghost are, one of them the *type*, and the other the *anti type*.



*Baptism over the Dead.*

59

surely shall rise, the saints, in this 15th of Corinthians, are represented not only as passing through the waters of baptism, but also as willing, if needs be, to pass for Christ's sake through the fires of persecution, to die in His cause. "Why stand we," says the Apostle, "in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink: for to-morrow we die" (1 Cor. xv. 30, 32). Here we have a further, a *second* testimony, in the persons and acts of the saints, to the truth of the doctrine of resurrection. This, I believe, is needful to notice, because we may easily confound the act of being baptised over the dead, in verse 29, with that of suffering for Christ's sake spoken of in the above-cited verses; whereas, I believe, though closely connected, of course, they are distinct things altogether—the one being *the first act* of the saint in his course (at least, so it should be), the other the *continuous suffering*, the hourly jeopardy, the dying daily, the refusal to eat and to drink like the world, which, of necessity, follows the confession of the name of the crucified Jesus.

And here, in addition to the first part of this subject—namely, what I have suggested with regard to verse 29—let me observe that this victory of the saints over death is in harmony with that which Christ Himself in the end will achieve. He triumphed, we know, when He Himself rose from the grave: He will triumph again when His Church shall be raised: but not till "*the last enemy*," *Death*, is banished for ever beyond the precincts of the new heavens and new earth, will His conquest be perfect. It was defilement in Israel to touch a dead body, a bone, or a grave (Num. xix); and hence, during the millennium, this earth, however pleasant and fair it may be, will not be perfectly pure. No; because Death, the sad witness of sin, will be there: they who shall have no part in the first resurrection, the nations of those who are lost, will continue still to pollute it. But, in the end, this death-defiled world will be wholly dissolved—not *annihilated*, I say, but

*dissolved*—yes, and in the very act of dissolving (so at least to me it appears), unable to hide them from the all-searching eye of their Judge, it will give up its dead to be finally punished, to be cast into the lake of fire for ever. After which, out of identically the same materials, those atoms of which it was formed at first, now thoroughly purged from the least trace of mortality, even to a dead leaf or an insect, the new everlasting earth will be formed. This I believe to be an explanation of the following passage: “I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and Death and Hades (*ᾠδης*) delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works: and Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away: and there was no more sea” (Rev. xx. 11, etc.) With regard to this passage, if it were otherwise than what I have stated above—if this earth is to be *annihilated*, instead of being *dissolved*, and then *made anew*, as I have said, the power of Christ in redemption would, in this instance, be foiled. But no, it will not; I believe it cannot be so. This earth, just as much as our bodies, is redeemed by His blood; and hence, though dissolved, like the body, when sown in corruption, like the body again, when raised in His likeness, it will know in the end the full power of His resurrection. Hence the new earth, and, let me add, the new heavens, in like manner, will be the very same heavens and earth which we see around us at present, purged by the fires of the last day from every trace of corruption and death.

*Baptism over the Dead.*

61

And here, in conclusion, I would offer what to me seems an explanation of the two above passages. First, "Death and Hades (*ᾠδης*) delivered up the dead which were in them" (Rev. xx. 13): secondly, "Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. xx. 14). Hades, we know, is the place of the soul in its unclothed and separate state—the grave that of the body while under the power of death. This passage then applies, as I take it, to their re-union and final destruction—I mean of the bodies and souls of the wicked. The body (Death's prisoner) being called forth from the grave (*death* here by a figure being put for the *grave*), the soul, on the other hand, being summoned from Hades, to be united for ever, and for ever tormented.

Such is the doom of this world. Filled, as it is, with itself, its wisdom, its glory, its many inventions, such is its terrible end. Such, however, is not the lot of the righteous. We, even we (blessed thought!) are the children of God, joint-heirs also with Him who is Heir of all things both in heaven and in earth, and, as such, conquerors, like Him, over Death and the Grave. Well, then, may we, as we turn from the thought of the judgment which is to finish the drama of this world's history, and look up to heaven, our birth-place, our home, where we are to dwell for ever with Him—well, then, I say, with such a hope in our souls, may we echo the sweet words of the poet, and sing—

His be the victor's name  
Who fought the fight alone;  
Triumphant saints no honour claim,  
Their conquest was His own.

He, hell, in hell, laid low:  
Made sin, He sin o'erthrew:  
Bow'd to the grave, and killed it so—  
And death, by dying, slew.

Bless, bless the Conqueror slain,  
Slain by divine decree;  
Who lived, who died, who lives again,  
For thee, His saint, for thee.

E. D.

N<sup>o</sup>. VII.

## THE MANNA DESPISED.

Numbers, xi. and xxi.

**TWICE** do we read of Israel despising the provision which God in His grace made for their necessities in the desert. The record of both instances, we have in the book of Numbers—the book of the wilderness. The cases, however, are distinct; and while both exhibit the evil of the flesh, it is in different ways that they develop this; and God's treatment of the one is distinct from His treatment of the other.

We have the history of the first in Numbers xi. Israel had not then been long out of Egypt: and it was the recollection of Egypt which induced them to despise the manna. A mixed multitude, as we read in Exodus, xii. 38, had accompanied them in their journey. Attached to the redeemed nation by the influence of circumstances and the action of motives natural to fallen man, they were strangers to the grace which had chosen Israel from among the nations, and to the hopes which were theirs as the chosen and redeemed of the Lord. To them, Canaan, and the presence and grace of that God who had promised it to His people as their inheritance, were nothing. All they wished, all they hoped, was to better their own condition by attaching themselves to this wonderful people. And when they found that they had but exchanged the indulgences of Egypt for the toil and travail of the wilderness, with provision, to them tasteless and unsatisfying, they regretted what they had done. And it was with them that the dissatisfaction and murmuring began. “And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting.” Would that the evil had stopped there! But “the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick. But now

*The Manna despised.*

our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all beside this manna, before our eyes." They too remembered Egypt. Once, indeed, the hard bondage they suffered there made them think little of the fish and cucumbers and melons. Their chains pressed so heavily that they could only groan for deliverance. Their groanings were heard and God brought them forth with high hand and with out-stretched arm. Then the joy of their deliverance filled their hearts, and they sang the praises of their Deliverer. But now they have forgotten the chains which made their food bitter to them in Egypt, and they have forgotten too, alas, that which at first so filled their hearts with gladness, the grace of their Redeemer and the wonders of their redemption, and they only remember the fish and the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions and the garlick which they ate in Egypt freely! Such, alas! is man. Such was Israel; and can we not, beloved brethren, say from our hearts, such have we proved ourselves to be as well? How common is such a process as this. First of all, the world's pleasures fill and madden the heart and make it insensible to the chains wherewith Satan binds and leads us captive at his will. Light from God breaks in; we become on the one hand conscious of impending judgment; on the other, sensible of the slavery in which Satan holds us. Of ourselves, from ourselves, there is no escape either from the one or from the other. The world's pleasures cease to entice us. The terrible realities of our condition engross our thoughts and all we can do is to groan for deliverance. That deliverance is vouchsafed. The blood of the slain Lamb becomes our refuge from the judgment which hung over us; and the resurrection of Jesus assures us that the power of the Enemy is set aside for ever; that he who had the power of death has no further claim on us. It proclaims, moreover, that God is for us, and enables us triumphantly to ask, Who can be against us. The joy of this takes the place in our hearts which the world once held, and we gladly leave all to follow the pillar of cloud and fire across the desert to the promised land. And there are those who follow to the

end without ever so much as looking back. Caleb and Joshua were such in their day. Paul too, in his day was borne onward by an energy of faith which not only counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, when that knowledge first broke in upon his soul, but which enabled him twenty or thirty years after to say, I “do count them but dung that I may win Christ.” And in this energy of faith he went forward to the end. But how rare is this. How common the sin and experience of the Israelites in the case under consideration. It may be that in the first place “false brethren” fall a lusting like the mixed multitude who accompanied Israel out of Egypt. But how ready is the flesh in believers to follow the example of those, who, while professing godliness, are strangers to its power. Egypt’s chains no longer embitter Egypt’s food. The joy of the first apprehensions of Christ and of the redemption He has accomplished no longer satisfy the soul. Some who bear the name of Christ return to this or that worldly compliance or fleshly indulgence; and how ready we all are to follow. We too *remember* the pleasures from which we had been weaned; and while the heart craves for these the manna is sure to be despised. “There is nothing at all besides this manna, before our eyes.” Time was, when to feed on Christ was all we wished. The first to be thought of in the morning, the last at night, and the only one of our hearts the day through. And all that we then felt needful to complete our joy was to be with Him where He is—not merely enjoying Him through faith by the Spirit, but beholding Him face to face, and dwelling with Him in the embraces of His love for ever. But when the world’s joys begin to be remembered, how different the estimate of Christ “Nothing at all but this manna before our eyes.” But God has His remedy for failure like this in His saints. He has the answer of His grace, too, to the weakness of those who sigh to witness such failure, but lack the faith which would count on His unfailing resources to meet it. Moses sinks under the burden. “Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh that we may eat. I am

*The Manna despised.*

65

not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me." In the people we may see the *evil* of the flesh, hankering after the indulgences of Egypt, and in Moses, the *weakness* of the flesh, its incompetency to bear the burdens which it has not faith to cast upon God. How differently does the Lord deal with these two forms of failure. The murmurings of the people are punished by the bestowment of that for which they lusted. "Say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?" Moses staggered at this word, and spoke of the "six hundred thousand footmen," and asked if the "flocks and herds should be slain," or "the fish of the sea gathered together to suffice them." Even Moses has to be rebuked: "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not." And so it was. The lusting of the people was punished, and the unbelief of Moses reproved by the outstretched arm of God. "A wind from the Lord" brought "quails" which lay upon the ground "two cubits high," and "a day's journey" on either side of the camp. The people gather "all that day, and all that night, and all the next day;" but "while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague." Solemn, indeed, is it when God chastens us by giving us the very things we lust after. Yea, and serious it is when our unbelief needs the reproof addressed to Moses—"Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" But with what condescending kindness was that reproof blended and administered! Moses had said, "I am not

able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me." It is true that he added, "And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness." But the Lord passes by this petulance and vexation, and simply relieves His servant of the burden which so oppressed him. He leaves him to learn what his spirit and temper had been in the light of the grace which takes no notice of it, but compassionately provides for his comfort and relief. Seventy men of the elders of the people are to be gathered, and to stand with Moses before the Lord; and "I will take," says the Lord, "of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone." Blessed God! how marvellous and gracious are thy ways! May we all learn to trust and to adore Thee.

We now turn to chap. xxi. An interval of eight-and-thirty years has passed since the circumstances we have just reviewed. Eight-and-thirty years has Israel been wandering in the desert, until the generation which came out of Egypt have well nigh all fallen in the wilderness. It was their unbelief, as we know, which occasioned this; and numberless had been the proofs afforded in their conduct throughout this whole period that they were indeed a stiff-necked and disobedient generation. But how precious the display of the unfailing goodness and faithfulness of God. During all these eight-and-thirty years, the manna never ceased. They despised it—they murmured—they rebelled—they believed the false report of the eight-and-thirty spies, rather than the sure testimony of God; they refused to go up into the promised land; they would fain have made them a captain, and have returned to Egypt; they followed in the wake of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and murmured against the Lord, because of their destruction. In these, and alas! in how many ways besides, had they provoked the Lord to anger; but for all these years, every morning when they arose (save on the Sabbath days) their tents were surrounded by the manna from heaven, and they had but



*The Manna despised.*

67

to gather and eat, and be strengthened and refreshed. But now, after the lapse of eight-and-thirty years, we again find the manna despised. It is not now, however, the recollection of Egypt. Most of those who now compose the assembly were children when they came forth out of Egypt; they have been brought up in the wilderness, and have known no other mode of life than that of subsistence on the manna, while they have moved from one station to another in the desert. The forty years during which they were to wander are nearly expired, and they are almost at the borders of the promised land. There is only the land of Edom between it and them (see chap. xx.), and if they may but pass direct through Edom, they at once reach the land of their hopes, and the toils and sorrows of the wilderness are at an end. But the king of Edom will not suffer them to pass. Nor are they allowed of God to force a passage. There is no way but to "journey from Mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom." They have to turn again into the wilderness. After wandering for nine-and-thirty years, they find themselves, as it were, beginning their wanderings afresh. They are where they were at starting. "And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." They could have done with the manna, as they thought, for the little time required to go direct through Edom; but to turn again to where they began—to begin the wilderness over again—to have all this dreary journey right round the land of Edom; this is more than they can bear: their hearts faint, and they speak against God and against Moses, "for there is no bread," they say, "neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread." What a picture, beloved brethren, of our hearts. We thought the wilderness had been almost passed; there seemed to intervene but one little remaining obstacle; and might we have had our own way with that, as we thought, it might easily have been overcome. But God's ways are not as ours. We are not to force a passage through the land of Edom. Patience and subjection to God are to be exercised by passing all

round it, though that involve the turning again into the wilderness, and beginning our wanderings, as it were, afresh. And to have all this journey to go over again, and nothing but Christ to feed on and to refresh us by the way—ah, the whole secret comes out there. *The state of heart which can say (or feel, where it dares not say), “nothing but Christ!”* as though he were not ALL, whether for this world or for the next—*that state of heart needed to be brought to light and judged, and hence the having to compass the land of Edom, and enter on the wilderness afresh.* We might have taken credit to ourselves for being well satisfied with Christ our heavenly food, had not the mandate to make another circuit of the desert put it to the test. But for this, we had not known that it was in our hearts to loathe the food from heaven as “light bread,” after subsisting on it for so many years. As it is, we have been brought to the painful consciousness of this, and have been cast on God for the remedy. What was His remedy in the case under review? “The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people; and much people of Israel died.” They had lost their appetite for the manna, and loathed it as light bread. They had spoken against God and against Moses; but now they come to Moses and entreat him to pray to the Lord to take the serpents from them. But (as another has said) the Lord had other and better thoughts respecting them. Had He simply granted their request, those who were already bitten must inevitably have perished. The people never thought of them. All their anxiety was that the danger which threatened themselves might be removed. “Take away the serpents,” was their cry. We all know what the Lord’s gracious provision was. A brazen serpent was erected, to which the wounded and dying ones might look and live. We are all familiar with the use made of this by our blessed Lord. “Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” It is the gospel of the grace of God for poor lost sinners. Israel, weary of the wilderness, and impatient of their

*The Manna despised.*

69

continuance in it, had despised and loathed the manna. How was their appetite for it to be revived? The Lord sends fiery serpents among them, and they say, "We have sinned," and cry to the Lord. He, better to them than their own requests, does not take away the serpents, but sets up a brazen serpent, that whosoever is bitten may look to it and live. God's gracious provision for their daily sustenance they despise. Wounds and sorrows are the result, and they become glad of God's gracious provision for their healing and deliverance. And is not this, beloved brethren, the oft told tale of our declensions and restorations? Christ, as our daily food, our manna from heaven, is despised by us, and treated as light bread. The destroyer is let loose upon us, until we become glad of Christ as he was made known to us at first, God's Son, and the Gift of His love; but still, the Son of Man lifted up for dying sinners to look to and live. When we have lost our spiritual appetite for Christ, the Bread of heaven, we are made, in one way or another, to feel our need of Him as Saviour, and to feel afresh the value of the blood He shed for the remission of our sins. How precious do we then again find Him to be to our souls! Known afresh, in living power, as the Healer of our wounds, as our Saviour and our Life, He is no longer esteemed by us as "light bread." How sad, that we should need to learn thus by our falls and by our wounds the preciousness of Him who surely should be above all price to our souls for His own intrinsic excellence, and beauty, and worth. But so, alas, it is; and while nothing becomes us but to hide our heads in the dust, surely we must acknowledge, to the praise of God's infinite grace, that it is better to learn, even by our wounds, to value Christ, the only One in whom healing virtue resides, than to be suffered to go on, as, alas! our wretched hearts would do, lightly esteeming Him. O that He might, in very truth, be our only sustenance and joy!

But there are depths of mercy and grace in the Lord's dealings with Israel, in this chapter, which we have not yet noticed. How often do our unbelieving hearts seek to limit the Lord's goodness, and measure what may be

expected from Him by our own failure, rather than by His infinite grace. How common is the feeling, that when grievous failure has occurred, though there may be healing from the Lord as in the case before us, still no such aboundings of joy, or power in testimony, or victory in conflict, can be looked for, as might have been expected had there been no failure. And what is all this but unbelief? And what an answer to it all we have in the chapter before us. Not only was the manna which Israel had despised continued to them—not only was a brazen serpent set up for the healing of any who were bitten of the fiery flying serpents, but they are conducted by the Pillar which guides them to the place where a springing well refreshes and cheers them, and they surround it with their songs—“Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it.” How sweetly does this tell of the springs of refreshing wherewith the Lord cheers and gladdens His poor healed and restored ones. His love is not satisfied with healing and feeding those who have despised His goodness, and brought wounds and stripes upon themselves; it is in His heart to refresh, to gladden, to cheer their hearts, and draw forth fresh songs of holy joy and triumph from their lips. Yea, and more than this. They come ere long to the borders of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan. One after the other comes forth to withstand them; and they are not prohibited, as in the case of Edom, from forcing a passage through their territories. And what do we behold? These mighty kings, one of whom was celebrated in proverbs for his prowess, and the other a warrior of gigantic stature and strength, are as nothing before this company of pilgrims. God is on their side, and their enemies are destroyed before them, and they possess the land of their enemies. And all that followed in the wilderness was God’s vindication of them by the mouth of him who was hired of Balak to curse them; (their renewed failure, alas! through the cunning of Balaam) but still their overthrow of the Midianites, and the division among the two tribes and a half, of the land of Sihon and of Og. Thus ends the wilderness. It ends in victory

*The Good Shepherd.*

71

and praise. And I would leave it as a question for the consideration of my brethren, why it is we find such frequent mention made afterwards of the overthrow of Sihon and of Og? Is it not that the Lord would have this impression of His own grace to be the one left full and fresh upon our hearts by this wondrous history? May it be so by the power of His own Spirit, to the praise and glory of His name!

T.

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

JOHN X.—PSALM XXIII.

The Lord is my Shepherd; no want I need fear;  
He guides and attends me with fostering care,  
And leads me in pastures the world never knows,  
Beside the still waters of life to repose.

When, vex'd with temptation, I heavily move,  
My soul He restores with the tenderest love;  
In plain paths of righteousness still am I found;  
The malice of Satan, by grace, I confound.

Though through Death's dark valley in sorrow I tread,  
In this shadow'd world, no affliction I dread;  
For Thou, Lord, art with me, each step of the road—  
Thy comforting presence my staff and my rod.

With choicest refreshments, my board Thou hast crowned,  
While foes that revile me in famine are found;  
The oil of rejoicing on me Thou hast pour'd—  
My cup runneth over with blessings, dear Lord!

Thy goodness and mercy shall still be my song;  
Eternity's raptures Thy praises prolong:  
In courts of the house of my God I shall dwell,  
The chorus of heaven in triumph to swell.

G.

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”—Eph. iii. 20, 21.

N<sup>o</sup>. VIII.

## THE THREE CROWNS.

“Ought not Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory.”  
(LUKE xxiv. 26).

SUCH was the order of the divine counsels. If the Son of God humbled Himself to take the form of a servant, and to be found in fashion as a man, and to become obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross—and all this for the wondrous end of displaying the grace of God—His name of humiliation becomes His name of exaltation; and throughout the range of heaven and earth, and even that which is beneath it, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. “For the suffering of death, Jesus is crowned with glory and honour, that He by the grace of God might taste death for every one.” It is thus that the worth of the humiliation of Jesus is not only to be estimated as that by which God is glorified; but the worth of His obedience unto death, even the death of the Cross, is also manifested in the royal and priestly dignity, into which those are brought who make confession unto the Crucified One, as Saviour and Lord. It is by the blood of Jesus that they are made kings and priests unto God and His Father. They enter into glory upon the sole ground of His precious bloodshedding. To Him as the Lamb they ascribe exclusively their redemption. “Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”

But besides the common regal and priestly dignity so graciously secured to the believer, we find mention made in the New Testament of specific crowns—“the crown of righteousness,” “the crown of life,” “the crown of glory.” These are held out as encouragements to the saint under special circumstances of trial which meet him in his path; and it will be interesting to trace the connection between the circumstances, and the particular

crown held out as an encouragement under them. To be curious where God has been silent, or to attempt to shape divine revelation to human thought, is at all times prejudicial to the soul; but not to weigh the connection of Scripture, or to rest in vague generalities where the word of God is definite and precise, is to deprive ourselves of much comfort, as well as of profitable instruction.

At the close of his active and eventful ministry, the Apostle Paul thus expresses himself: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

Whatever were the hardships and sufferings of his ministry, and the humiliating position in which he was placed by it in the eyes of men, the Apostle felt its true dignity. He was "set for the defence of the Gospel," the noblest service in which it was possible for a man to be engaged; for it was no less than vindicating the honour of Christ. His deep anxiety of soul for the preservation of the faith, as that in which the welfare of the Churches was involved, was in his estimation more than all the pressure from without—"besides that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the Churches." He had no respite from warfare. "The faith" was assailed on every side, and from the most opposite quarters. It was equally endangered by Jewish ordinances and Gentile philosophy, slothful ignorance and prying curiosity. The saints for the most part were not alive to the importance of contending for "the faith." They did not perceive that by so doing they were favouring the "righteous<sup>a</sup> cause" of Christ. Such a principle is needed in order to contend heart and soul for the faith once delivered to the saints. But the saints themselves are often impatient of either being roused to activity, or of being disturbed from their ease. Hence the facility with

<sup>a</sup> Psalm xxxv. 27: "Let them shout for joy, and be glad that favour my righteous cause." Margin, "righteousness."

which "the faith" has been corrupted. Some have passively listened to teachers, "whose word will eat as doth a canker." Some would follow in the more liberal school of such teachers as Hymenæus and Alexander, and "putting away a good conscience, make shipwreck concerning the faith." Some, instead of receiving by faith that which it had pleased God to reveal, were always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Others again openly controverted, and even with bitter animosity, the teaching of the Apostle, as Alexander the copper-smith. The Apostle was as it were the teacher of one single idea—yet how high, how vast, how comprehensive an idea, "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." He would not allow this grand idea to be either overlaid or undermined. On the eve of his departure, he was able to say, "I have fought a good fight; *I have kept the faith.*" He had allowed no inroad on the faith from any quarter. He dealt with its depravers indeed very differently; but he never allowed the thought of charity to interfere with his most uncompromising defence of "the faith," whether it was endangered by the vacillating conduct of an Apostle, or the avowed opposition of a coppersmith. "The faith," in the estimation of the Apostle, involved something far beyond the question of individual salvation; an invasion on its integrity was an attack on the rights of Christ. It is this which gives its value to "the faith." In human estimate, the welfare of man is the point; but in the estimate of God, and of those who are born of Him, the first and last point is the glory of Christ. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him.

What is "the faith" but the present assertion of the dignity of the person of the Son, and all the titles, styles, honours, and offices which belong to Him as "the Christ of God?" The Church is set here as a witness to Him in that which He essentially is, as well as all His given glory. All this will be manifested in due time, and



there will be no room for gainsaying then. But the rejection of Christ by the world has raised the question, on the ground of *righteousness*, whether Christ or the world is right. It is on this ground that we find the crown of righteousness connected with keeping the faith. Christ has been unrighteously deprived of His honour by the world, and His honour has not yet been publicly vindicated by judgment. In the meanwhile, those who are taught of God to know Him, live only for one end as their highest object, and that end is to assert His rights. It may be but in very feeble testimony—it necessarily must be with personal humiliation, and real denying of self; but they only who are living for such an object will be found in the right when Christ is publicly manifested. Such have renounced all that men esteem valuable for Christ, and have asserted His honour when the assertion of His honour brings no present advantage; and this, in God's estimate, is righteousness. Hence the encouragement to fighting the good fight of faith. When Jesus appears, He will own those who have stood up for His honour as having been on the side of righteousness. The question has been raised by the Lord Jesus Himself, as to whether He or the world is right. It is a question of *righteousness*. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me." The Father hath vindicated the righteous cause of His Son, by raising Him from the dead, and giving Him glory—leaving the world (in righteous retribution) under the wicked one, until the rights of the Son are publicly vindicated by judgment on the world. If we take part with Christ, while His rights are actually unvindicated by judgment on the world, we are on the side of righteousness; and the crown of righteousness, when Christ's title shall be fully vindicated, is held out as our encouragement in the confession of Him before men. If we side with the world, then are we classed with those who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. The crown of righteousness is held out to all that "love the appearing" of Jesus; for His appearing makes manifest to all, that

which the Holy Ghost has manifested to His disciples now, and which they have confessed unto before men.

There is an interesting connection between this passage of the apostle in his Epistle to Timothy, and the address of the Lord Himself to the Church of Philadelphia. "Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept *My word*, and *hast not denied My name*." In all its feebleness, this Church had stood up for the honour and dignity of Christ. They did not measure the value of the name of Jesus by their own conscious weakness. This they maintained; and the exhortation to them is, still to maintain it. "Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast; that no man take thy crown." The Lord regarded them as already crowned. They were on the side of righteousness: and the danger was lest the crown should be taken from them by their ceasing to confess the name of Jesus. "Behold, I come quickly;" and then the crown with which He saw them already invested, would be publicly seen by others—a Crown of Righteousness. So the apostle, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, *the righteous Judge*, will give me; and not to me only, but to all who love His appearing." Those who keep His word, and deny not His name, may well love His appearing; even as it is said of the faithful remnant of Israel in a yet future day: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at His word: Your brethren that hated and cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified; but He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed."

"The Crown of Life." "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." This crown is held out as encouragement, under the peculiar and characteristic temptation to which the saint is exposed by "loving his life in this world." The Lord presents Himself, as knowing His own worth, as the one absorbing object of our affections; on the other hand, the god of this world, either directly or indirectly, presents some present object of advantage

*The Three Crowns.*

77

or interest. Hence the temptation. Is the present object or Christ most precious to us? It is as though the Lord Himself addressed us individually in the person of Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" whatever the object may be. The crown of life is given to those "who *love Him*," even as the crown of righteousness is given to those who "*love His appearing*." This line of doctrine of the value of the Lord Jesus Himself as a paramount object, is thus presented to us by the Lord Himself: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me; for whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? for the Son of Man shall come in the glory of the Father, with His angels, and then He shall reward every man according to his works." The Lord alone is a worthy exchange for the soul; every thing else is worthless to give the soul for. How wise, how rich, how blessed is that man who has exchanged himself for Christ! Man can give nothing in exchange for his soul; but Christ presents Himself to be received, in the conscious knowledge of His own value.

The life which Jesus gives to them who receive Him, is a life only nourished by faith in Him, feeding on Him who gave it. It finds no aliment from anything in this world; all here is contrary to it, and it has to struggle its way all the time we are here through opposing obstacles. It is endurance unto the end; and this endurance is characteristic. It is alike in contrast with Israel in the land under David and Solomon, and with Israel restored in the millennium under David's Son. In both these instances there is no "patience of hope," but actual possession. But now the life communicated from the risen and glorified Head in heaven, to the individual members on earth, necessitates trial. The life thus communicated does not, as it were, breathe its native air: for this it longs. What freedom, what expansiveness will it have,

when Christ who is our life shall appear, and we also appear with Him in glory. But so long as the life so communicated is here, it is characterised by endurance. "To them who by *patient continuance* in well-doing." "Tribulation worketh *patience*." "They bring forth fruit *with patience*." Patience or endurance is, practically, the key-word to us. We have to do with the God of *patience*; and we are strengthened according to His glorious power unto all *patience* and long-suffering with joyfulness. There are indeed special temptations to which as individuals we are liable, but present circumstances of themselves become a trial to the saint, because he is a saint. We are in the world, and the world is under the Wicked One; and we *know* very experimentally the difference between quietly floating down the stream, and being set against its course. All of the world which once we thought to be for us, is now felt to be against us. The world, and all in it—whether conventionally bad or good, moral or immoral, religious or irreligious—was set against Jesus, because *He* was not of it, and this, His living testimony against it that its deeds were evil, was acutely felt by it. His gracious word to His disciples is, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "Ye are they which have continued with me in my *temptations*, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed me." It is with respect to temptations of this kind that we are exhorted to run with *patience* the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, who for the joy set before Him, *endured* the Cross, despising the shame. All the temptations of the blessed Jesus arose from the contrariety of that which was around Him, to that which He was in Himself. "The Prince of this world came, and had nothing in Him." "He was tempted like as we are, yet without sin." All the pressure of circumstances was let loose against Him, and He suffered under the pressure; but nothing ever turned Him aside from dependence on God, or made Him swerve from His purpose of doing the will of God. He carried His obedience to death, even the death of the Cross; He endured the Cross, "and is set down on the right hand

of the throne of God." In Him we see what life crowned really is, and He holds out to us the crown of life to cheer us in running with patience the race set before us.

"Without sin"—one difference; but an amazing one. "In Him was no sin"—no lust to correspond with the cunningly-devised temptation. Pressure of all circumstances from without must necessarily cause the saint suffering. Such a character of temptation is acutely felt, because of its contrariety to that which the saint is as born of God; but, alas! they know painfully the amazing difference between themselves and Jesus in this very respect—they cannot say "without sin." They know to their sorrow that there is that in them which is ever ready to correspond with the temptation, from whatever quarter it comes. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust and enticed." The life communicated by the Spirit is thus subject to constant pressure, and exposed to constant hindrances; but even then it turns to us for a testimony that the life is there, by reason of the temptations being so sorely felt. We naturally desire the removal of the temptation, but it pleases the Lord to allow it, in order to show the sufficiency of His own grace. The temptation may increase upon us, so as almost to shut us up in hopelessness, but it only tends to prove the faithfulness of God. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." In every temptation the turning point will be, whether the Lord or ourselves is the object nearest to our hearts. This is the point which the Lord regards. "Blessed is the man that *endureth* temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive," etc. "When he is tried" surely means after having endured the temptation, without yielding to it. What a blessed difference between life suffering and struggling for its very existence, and life crowned, and in that sphere where its energies have unhindered scope, and where there is nothing to distract its affections from the one object which at once draws them forth and satisfies them.

We find the like connection between the crown of life and present trial in the message of the Lord Himself to the Church in Smyrna "I know thy *tribulation*." "Behold, the Devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be *tried*; and ye shall have *tribulation* ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

"The Crown of Glory." "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed; feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock; and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." There is something exceedingly touching in this, coming as it does through one now matured in the school of Christ. God has *His* heritage here, and it is exposed to waste. God has *His* flock here, and it is exposed to present danger. It is very difficult indeed for us to get our thoughts into the channel of God's thoughts, so as to become interested in that which belongs to Him, because it belongs to Him. It is a thought too large for selfish man to entertain, to be interested in the flock of God, so that the elders themselves were in danger of falling back on the littleness of their own hearts, so as to care for the sheep, not because they belonged to God, but as though they belonged to themselves. Hence the danger of lording it over God's heritage. The actual state of the Church painfully proves the total disregard of the Apostolic admonition. There is a present reward in taking the oversight, or feeding the sheep of Christ *as a congregation*. It tends to produce much reciprocity of kindness and sympathy. But the human element so predominates, justified as it is supposed by necessity, and unquestioned from its generality, that *the accidents* of locality and of congregations have become *the essentials* of pastoral care; so that even the thought of caring for *the flock of God* is scarcely entertained. We are all great losers by this.

The attempt to care for Christians as the flock of God appears almost hopeless and chimerical; so much so, that if a servant of God is led of the Spirit to act simply for the flock of God, he is regarded either as a suspected person or a disturber of peace and order.

The flock of God has ever been "a little flock." It is of little consequence in the estimation of men, and has its only claim to be cared for, that it belongs to God. But what a claim this is; and how happy, as well as honourable, any service rendered to "the poor of the flock" on such a claim. It is the thought of the value and preciousness of the flock to the chief Shepherd which gives such an interest to any present care of them. Who can estimate the sheep as He does, who says, they are "my sheep"; "I lay down my life for the sheep"—"My Father gave them me"? He is responsible for bringing every sheep safe to the Father; and among His many crowns, His Shepherd crown will not be the least, when He shall say—"Of those which thou gavest me, I have lost none." It will be His crown of joy and glory too, that not one of the feeblest of the flock—not one of the most erring, has, through His vigilant and tender care, been plucked out of His hand. True pastoral care may perhaps appear more rare than it actually is, because its exercise is often most unobtrusive. There are, however, occasions when the watchful Shepherd sees the wolf coming, when the sheep are unsuspecting, and even dislike to be alarmed. Nothing short of the deep persuasion that the sheep of Christ are to be cared for because they are His, and because His affections and interests are occupied with them, can lead either to efficient oversight or diligent feeding. It is the lack of this essential element—namely, responsibility to Christ, in caring for that which belongs to Christ—which so enfeebles pastoral ministry in our day. The true genius of such ministry is that the flock of God is of more consequence than the individual who tends it. The present glory of the Christian Shepherd is thus expressed: "Your servant for Jesus' sake." To watch over the flock, to warn of coming danger, and if the wolf is coming boldly to meet

him, is not to lord it over God's heritage, but to act in duty to Christ. The glory of Christ personally, and care for the sheep as being His, are inseparably connected; but when the thought of man having propriety in the sheep is introduced, so that they are regarded as "his flock" or "his people," the glory of Christ often becomes secondary to the desire of keeping the flock together, and Christ's own sheep are cast out. When the Shepherd of Israel Himself visited His people, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and "were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." The shepherds of that day "fed themselves, and not the flock." "They had trodden down the pastures and fouled the waters." When one sheep heard the voice of the chief Shepherd and followed Jesus, the accredited shepherds "cast him out" (John ix.) It is a mournful spectacle when the honour of Christ is sacrificed professedly for the care of the flock; for true care for the flock of God cannot exist without a paramount regard to the honour of Christ Himself. Jesus was forced to lead out "His own sheep" from that fold which was maintained against His own honour, and to set up a new fold in heaven, because the old earthly fold afforded no longer any security for His sheep (John x.) In heaven He is now known, as "the great Shepherd of the sheep brought again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant"; and His own sheep on earth own Him in the same blessed title. He not only exercises His Shepherdly care, and oversight, as risen and glorified, but as having laid down His life for the sheep, the sheep being thus His own by purchase, as well as by distinct gift of the Father. What deep interest, what loving care must He necessarily take in the sheep; and now, as "seen of angels," what glory must be His, in not losing sight of the feeblest saint, and in counteracting all the power and wiles of the adversary. Faith *now* owns Him as "the good" and "the great Shepherd," and will He not be manifested as the crowned Shepherd? And Israel will then know their rejected Shepherd, whose heart yearned with compassion over the multitudes, as the only true



Shepherd-King. "Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

How perfect is the order of divine teaching! It is Peter the Elder who speaks to the elders. He had been a witness of the sufferings of Christ, when He laid down His life for the sheep. He duly estimated the value of those sufferings, and could speak with divine certainty on such a ground, as about himself to partake of the glory to be revealed. But he knew how closely connected that glory was with the flock of God. It was after he had witnessed the sufferings of Christ, and had seen the Lord alive from the dead, that he had learned how dear to the heart of Christ were His sheep. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? he saith unto Him; Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto Him, Yea Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto Him, Lord, thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep." Peter thus learned the value and preciousness of the sheep of Christ to Christ Himself. He could very feelingly associate the flock with the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow; and how suitable for him who had received the thrice repeated commission to feed the flock, to say to the elders with his own eye on the glory, "Feed the flock of God." How suitable, also, for him, in the deep knowledge of the value of the sheep to Christ Himself, to connect the humble service of tending the flock with the crown of glory! It was the shepherd lad whom his father thought not of bringing before the prophet, on whom the Lord

had set his eye. "He chose David, also, his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands." The humble office of tending the flock was the suited preparation for the crown of royalty. David, the shepherd, becomes the Lord's anointed king,—true picture of the great and good Shepherd King! And where can the varied grace of Christ be so deeply learned as in tending the sheep of Christ? No trial, no sorrow, no temptation, no feebleness has escaped His forethought; and tending the flock is the application of the manifold grace of God in Christ, to the manifold need of His sheep. Such ministry may be very unobtrusive, and one which brings no present honour; its proper sphere is by no means necessarily one of publicity. Public ministry has its honoured place; but tending the flock will lead a great deal more into private and individual ministry. An elder physically disabled for the active ministry of public testimony, may still find an honourable retirement in watching over the flock of God; warning of coming danger, comforting the feeble-minded, restraining the impatience of youth, rectifying disproportioned truth. If an elder be indeed "a father," he knows "Him that was from the beginning;" having learned, by long experience, his own need of all that Christ is, he will be jealously alive to His glory, and will often see a danger unperceived by others, of some passing subject of interest displacing Christ. How many once absorbing objects, even in the Church of God, have passed away; how many fond expectations have been disappointed. The interest in Christ's sheep, in that which they were to the elder himself, has been superseded by the more healthful interest in them as belonging to Christ; and the crown of glory which fadeth not away is held out as an encouragement. A pet-lamb often grows to be mischievous, whilst the flock, which has had the common care of the shepherd, are gentle and docile. Christians have been injured almost

as much by being petted as by neglect. They often think of their pastor, to the practical forgetfulness of Christ Himself being the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, and that His under-shepherds are responsible to Him for the care of His sheep. For the most part, pastoral care has too much in it of the human element; personal regard for the man himself is more prominent than esteem for his work's sake. Hence pastoral care has often much present reward—so as not to render needful the encouragement of the crown of glory. If pastoral care is bestowed on Christ's sheep, because they belong to Christ, it will feel and value such a blessed encouragement.

It is interesting to notice how inseparably these crowns are associated with the appearing of Jesus Himself. He is the Giver of the crown; and what would any crown be if it was not His gift, that we might wear it or cast it down in His own immediate presence? Does the apostle speak of a Crown of Righteousness? he says, "which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will *give* me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His *appearing*." It is said, "he shall *receive* the Crown of Life, which the Lord has promised to them *that love Him*." "When Christ, who is our life, *shall appear*, then shall we also *appear* with Him in glory." And, lastly, it is written, "When the Chief Shepherd shall *appear*, ye shall *receive* a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away." The thought of personal or official glory can never displace in the soul the more blessed thought of seeing Jesus as He is, being like Him, and enjoying His immediate presence for ever. "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." PRESBUTES.

---

EXODUS.—The word *Exodus* (ἐξόδος\* *way out*), would find its solution, as the LXX name of the book, in chapter xii. The Hebrew name ואלה שמות, *these are the names*, or more usually שמות, *names*, is taken from the first verse of the book, and is perhaps merely a technical guide to it.

\* See its use in Luke ix. 31 — as interesting and peculiar — applied to the Lord's death.

N<sup>o</sup>. IX.

## CRITICISMS.

*To the Editor of the PRESENT TESTIMONY.*

DEAR SIR,—I have been struck with the apparent connexion between the two following passages of Scripture, Isaiah lxiii. 9, and 2 Cor. vi. 12. I will first assume that there are reasons for a new rendering of the Hebrew, and give the rendering, and then state the grounds on which I would deviate from the authorised version.

Let us look at the verse in 2 Cor. vi.—“Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.” I would propose considering this as a reference to Isaiah lxiii. 9, the first words of which I would read as follows: “In all their straitening he was not straitened.” I do not know what reasons our translators had for adopting the *keri* reading “to him” instead of “not.” They may have been good ones. But it is remarkable that the textual reading סָׁ falls in very closely with the sense of the verse quoted above from 2 Cor. The difficulty with many will probably consist in finding “he was straitened” as a meaning of סָׁ. Retaining the kamets, there may be a difficulty; but I suppose, in investigations of this sort, we are free to consider what the meaning may be, unfettered by points. Now I find one meaning of סָׁ (and even סָׁ in a pause) to be *arctus*, *angustus*. We have only then to supply that most frequent of Hebrew omissions, the verb substantive, and we have the sense I am pleading for—“In all their straitening He (God) *was* not straitened.” I may add, that if this supposition is correct, it furnishes an additional instance, and an interesting one, of what sometimes occurs with the New Testament writers—their taking up the words of the Old Testament descriptive of God, and applying them to themselves, *i. e.*, to the Church—(compare Eph. vi. with Isaiah lix. 17; Rom. viii., last verses, with Isaiah l. 8; 2 Cor. vi. with Isaiah xlix. 8; also Acts xiii. 47, with Isaiah xlix. 6.

B.

N<sup>o</sup>. X.“A LITTLE LEAVEN LEAVENETH THE  
WHOLE LUMP.”

I HAD heard this passage referred to in the latter place, where it occurs (Gal. v.); but I confess my mind was struck on a *comparison* of the two passages where it occurs in the Word. In the first (in 1 Cor. v. 6), it is in respect to evil walking; in the second (Gal. v. 9), it is evil doctrine. And what is said of one will clearly apply to the other.

Let us look, therefore, at the former passage (1 Cor. v.) Evil of a very flagrant character had manifested itself in one instance. Remark one ground on which he calls for judgment on it: “Do ye not know, *that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?*” It is the character of the leprosy to spread. This, therefore, concerns them all. “Ye have not mourned,” etc.

Next see the decided clearness and holiness that he calls for: “Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a NEW lump, even as ye are unleavened.” Now, mark the most important ground on which this is put. “For even *Christ*, our passover, is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast,” etc. So that the allowance, the tolerance of leaven is a *dishonour* done to that Paschal Lamb. Is it not fitting, that the unleavened bread should be eaten with the Lamb? Shall we allow the *little* leaven to begin to rise, and work, till the whole be leavened?

Nor is the fact that such and such a one is a *Christian*, any reason for allowing leaven in him? It is not the *persons* that are to be looked at, but the *fellowship* of the Paschal Lamb: that determines all. Is it worthy of *that*? Compare 1 Cor. x. 18 (Greek), “Are not they that eat the sacrifices *in communion with* the altar” (*κοινωνοι*)? It is just because he is outwardly in fellowship there, that we are called upon to judge him.

Now, apply this as the Spirit applies it in Galatians, to false doctrine, legal teachers there (verse 9): “ *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.* ” Will not what was said apply equally to false doctrine? Is evil doctrine less formidable than evil walk? No. Evil walk may be a solitary, detached thing, without any other definite root than the essential evil of the flesh in the individual. Evil doctrine is a root, a principle from which a whole course of action will necessarily follow. It is from principles that actions flow. It is, therefore (whilst I would observe, let the importance of judging the other never be depreciated), no less carefully to be removed.

And surely this is ground that appeals to the heart of every saint; the very presence of the Paschal Lamb, the Lord that bought us, demands it.

There may be question further, How far this searching, purging process is to go? I would remark, it must be no outside thing—no clearing of external symptoms only; it must meet the presence of the blessed Lamb. There is a passage to me very instructive in Levit. xv. 2 on this point: “ Speak unto the children of Israel, when any man hath a running issue out of his flesh, because of his issue he is unclean. And this shall be his uncleanness in his issue: whether his flesh run with his issue, or whether his flesh be *stopped from* his issue, it is his uncleanness.” As I said, it is not the question before God, Have the mere external symptoms been removed? but, Is *the fountain* of the evil removed? In short, is it healed?

But it may be said, Yes, but the apostle did not excommunicate the Corinthians because of that evil. I say, No; if the Corinthians were awakened by his summons to clear themselves from the evil, surely that was the thing he desired (2 Cor. xiii. 7); his authority was given for edification, not for destruction. It is the *Lord's* way,—“ If we would judge *ourselves*, we should not be judged of the Lord; ” consequently, it should be His servant's way, for “ we are fellow-workers with Him ” (1 Cor. iii. 9, *Θεοῦ συνεργοί*). “ I gave her *space* to repent ” (Rev. ii. 21). We do find (whether resulting

from that First Epistle, as is most probable, I have not time strictly to examine now), that the Corinthians were brought to a blessed state of repentance, and dealing with evil (2 Cor. ii. 6). They received Titus with fear, trembling, and obedience (vii. 7, 8). In all things they approved themselves clear in this matter. "For to this end," says he, "did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things" (ii. 9). He was in readiness to revenge all disobedience, when their obedience was fulfilled (x. 6). So in Galatians v. 10, "He had confidence in them in the Lord, that they would be none otherwise minded." But if they had refused at Corinth the apostle's attempt to rouse them to the putting away of evil from them; if, like the Benjamites, they had "refused to deliver up those who had done the evil" (Judges xx. 13), would the apostle then have recognised them as a Church of God, as in the *fellowship* of the truth? Assuredly not. How is the Church God's habitation but by the Spirit? And if they refused the Spirit in the ministration of Paul (1 Thess. iv. 8), refused his operation in the putting away of evil, were they then the habitation of God? and, if not His dwelling-place, can it be *our* dwelling-place (Numb. xxxv. 34)?

Again I ask, Is Christ's fellowship to bind us to fellowship with Satan? "What fellowship hath Christ with Belial?"

When I began this, I did not think to bring in what I have done. Some may shrink from it as being personal and controversial; but I would say, with regard to controversy, if it be a true thing, it is *God's* controversy, and surely, therefore, cannot be slighted by us. Nor can it be *unsuitable* to touch upon, if in wisdom, as though ephemeral, etc.; should we not rather think it is the most important lessons He is teaching us? thus, it may be the very things we *most* need. G.

---

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."—Rev. xxii. 11, 12.

## No. XI.

## THE HISTORY OF AHAB.

EACH fruit of the Spirit in a saint has its counterfeit in some trait or disposition of the natural man; and when declension has taken place, either in the Church or in the individual saint, there is a great proneness to substitute the counterfeit for the reality, and so deceive ourselves and impose on others. But God is not mocked. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Satan may succeed in leading us to confound them together now; but God has furnished, in His blessed word, unfailing tests whereby the faith that waits on Him and trusts His guidance, can distinguish the one from the other: and the day cometh "when every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." May we have grace to judge ourselves by the word in the light of God's presence now, that there may be the less for the fire of that day to burn up and destroy!

"Easy to be entreated" is one characteristic of the "wisdom that is from above." Precious, lovely, fruit of the grace of Him of whom it is said that He "pleased not Himself." Sweetly was it manifested, too, in Paul, that faithful servant of Christ, who could say, "Unto the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under ~~the~~ law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." But how different was this from the irresoluteness and want of principle which makes a man the sport of every influence which is brought to bear upon him. That Blessed



One who "pleased not Himself," yea, and who had no will of His own to oppose to the wishes of those who surrounded Him; who accordingly was at the bidding of any who asked Him, whether Simon the Pharisee or Matthew the Publican; who, in His childhood and youth, was subject to His mother and Joseph; and who, in after years, could say "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take and give unto them, for me and thee." That Blessed One was so devoted to the will of His Father, that neither maternal tenderness, nor the entreaties of His disciples, any more than the rage of the enemy or the clamours of the multitude, could turn Him aside. "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" proclaims even at twelve years of age how it was His meat to do the will of Him who sent Him, and to finish His work. "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come," was His language on another occasion; and when some would have interrupted Him in His work of obedience and love by conveying to Him the message of His mother and His brethren, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee," how did the depth and intensity of His devotedness to His Father shine out in His reply—"Who is my mother or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister and mother." His very yieldingness in all that merely affected Himself without compromising the glory of His Father, was but one result and expression of His entire, unlimited, unalterable devotedness to His Father's will. It was one part of that wondrous life of self-sacrifice by which, in His person, the Father was perfectly displayed and glorified.

So also, in his measure with the Apostle. Yielding, easy to be entreated, he could be and was, as we have seen; it was his delight to please every one for his good

to edification. But where the glory of his Master, and the foundations of the faith were concerned, he was firm as a rock. What considerateness of those who were in the faith before him—what modesty and humility on the one hand; and yet what unswerving fidelity, what bold uncompromising faithfulness on the other, do we see in the passage where he speaks of his second visit to Jerusalem after his conversion: “Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately [how beautiful!] to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. But neither Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you.” And though there were some of high standing and character among those who were enlisted on the side of error, it makes no difference to Paul. As a junior, and one who had been an adversary and blasphemer, he had shown all deference to those who were in the faith before him. He had first communicated privately with them of reputation; but when it came to be a question of the truth of the Gospel continuing with the saints, he sets his face like a flint, and can know no distinction. “But of those who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man’s person: for they who seemed to be somewhat, in conference added nothing to me.” Even Peter himself he withstood to the face, because he was to be blamed. Just as our Lord, in a former instance, when Peter would have dissuaded him from pursuing the path of rejection and sorrow on which he had entered, and which was to terminate in the Cross, turned round and said, “Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”

*The History of Ahab.*

There is such a word, brethren, as “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” There is such an exhortation as, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” All this is perfectly compatible with the tender, gracious considerateness of others, and readiness to yield every thing to their wishes, in which the glory of God and the honour of His Christ are not involved, which is implied in those words, “Easy to be entreated;” but it is altogether opposed to that pliability of mind, that unsteadiness of purpose, that want of decision for God, which, alas! so often takes its place. The false tenderness which, under pretence of not giving pain to others, really shrinks from the pain and trouble to ourselves of withstanding others in the cause and service of our Lord, how often is this passed off for the charity and tenderness which the New Testament inculcates! There is surely a solemn warning against self-deception like this in the fact, that one of the worst kings who ever sat on the throne of Israel was not so much an ambitious, cruel, sordid man, as one of easy, pliable disposition; weak, wavering, and irresolute; and thus the fit tool of another’s avarice, cruelty, and ambition; the instrument of a woman as energetic and decided in evil, as he was weak and irresolute in that which was good. “But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel, his wife, stirred up.” May the Lord grant us to glean, from the inspired history of this wicked man, those lessons of warning and admonition for which it has been left on record.

It was in the darkest period of Israel’s history that Ahab lived and reigned. The Ten Tribes, which had never rendered hearty submission to the rule of David’s house, at last openly revolted, and chose for themselves a king. They had adhered to the house of Saul for years after David was crowned, and reigning in Hebron over Judah. They took the first opportunity of throwing off their allegiance to him, when Absalom raised the standard of rebellion. When Absalom’s conspiracy was quashed, and the men of Judah were bringing back the king, the

men of Israel said, "We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more right in David than ye: why, then, did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back the king?" and again was the trumpet of rebellion blown, "every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba. the son of Bichri; but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem." And though this new insurrection was soon suppressed, and throughout the short remainder of David's reign, as well as throughout the prosperous, glorious reign of Solomon (blessed type of the kingdom of the true Prince of Peace to be set up ere long), there were no internal broils or dissensions, as soon as he slept with his fathers and Rehoboam reigned in his stead, the Lord let loose on Rehoboam, as chastisement for his father's sin, the suppressed elements of discontent and rebellion, and the Ten Tribes were permanently rent off and became a separate kingdom, Judah being still left to Rehoboam, that the house of David might not be without a light before the Lord in Jerusalem. This new kingdom of Israel, or the Ten Tribes, had hardly been set up, when an entire system of false worship and idolatry was introduced by the king, who thus earned for himself the title which from that point in the history he bears in the word of God—"Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Of this sin, the kingdom was never purged. Nadab, the son of Jeroboam was slain by Baasha; but he also "did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin." His son Elah is slain by Zimri, one of his captains; he, in his turn, is overthrown by Omri, and self-desperate, shuts himself up in the palace, and burns it over his own head, and dies; while Omri ascends the throne and reigns in his stead. But among all these, there is not one who returns to the Lord, and puts away the idols which Jeroboam had set up. Of Omri, it is said that "he wrought evil in the sight of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him." It was from this stock that Ahab sprang, and of him, the sacred historian says—"And Ahab, the son of Omri, did evil in the sight

of the Lord, above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger, than all the kings of Israel that were before him." Even Jericho is rebuilt in his days. As though the guilty nation would wipe out every trace of what God had wrought in His ancient mercy to Israel; as though they would make good, in every respect, their return to the ways of the nations which inhabited the land before God gave it to Israel; they rebuild that accursed city of which Joshua had said—"Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho; he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it." It was in Ahab's day that this cursed deed was done, and the Lord, true to His word, fulfilled the curse by which Joshua thus adjured the people; "he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun."

Sweet and refreshing it is to the heart, to see how, at this dismal era, the Lord raises up testimony for Himself in the ministry of that distinguished prophet, Elijah the Tishbite. The darker the scene in which he appears, the more brightly does he shine as a witness for the God of Israel. And it would be well for saints in the present day to weigh this singular fact, that in Israel, where there was such utter darkness, such terrible departure from God, the gloom uninterrupted by the accession to the throne of a single king who truly sought the Lord God of his fathers, or returned to Him, in Israel there was raised up a prophetic testimony unparalleled in its power by anything in Judah, where the national departure from God was not near so awful or complete. May we learn, beloved, to count upon the living God, and to use the

darkness of the scene around, not as a source of discouragement or dismay, but as a plea with our God to manifest the more vividly and conspicuously that He is indeed "the living God." The testimony in such a day may be less of an ordered and corporate character, but it will all the more display the sovereign will and living energy of Him who never forgets what is due to His own name and glory, however we may, alas! forget both.

1 Kings xvii. I pass over (precious and inviting as are its contents) as pertaining rather to the history of God's witness, than to that of the wicked and idolatrous king. Chap. xviii. brings the latter again on the scene. We find there, that while Ahab had lent himself to all the wicked purposes of his wife, and was, of course, fully responsible for them, it was she, Jezebel, who was the real authoress of those deeds of blood which had called down the chastisements of God: "For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord" etc. (verse 4). It was no excuse for Adam that Eve was first in the transgression; neither was it any extenuation of Ahab's sin that the energy which originated it was in Jezebel, not himself. There was in himself no effectual barrier against this evil energy; nay, he willingly lent himself, and the authority of his throne, to the execution of deeds which, though he had not purpose and decision enough to devise, were still in sad unison with the inclinations of his heart, and thus he was in every sense responsible for them. At last he meets the prophet—meets him with the question, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Alas! it is always thus. In the estimate of the doers and upholders of evil, yea, and of the connivers at it too, they who witness and protest against it are the troublers. "I have not troubled Israel," is the prophet's answer; "but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim." He calls upon the king to gather all Israel, with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of the groves, "which eat at Jezebel's table." And though one might augur well at first sight, from the readiness with which he acts

on the prophet's word, it is no real indication of a change for the better. He is awed by the presence and influence of one of immeasurably greater energy and decision than himself. The hand of God was doubtless in it, too, for his own glory; but, as far as any indication of character in Ahab is concerned, it is but another illustration of that pliability which was his sin and ruin. In the presence of Elijah, he is for the moment acted on by him, and the circumstances which attend his appearance before him, just as before he had been acted upon by his idolatrous queen. Wondrous indeed is the power with which the Lord endues His servant; king, prophets, people, seem all spell-bound before him; and whatever he prescribes they do, even in the end, after the demonstration before all, and the acknowledgment by all, that "The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God," to the destruction of the prophets of Baal, so that not one of them escapes. The glory of the God of Israel thus displayed, His name and authority vindicated, the prophet "prays again," as the apostle James has it, "and the heavens give rain;" and, at the prophet's instance, the king rides and goes to Jezreel; while he, the prophet, the hand of the Lord being upon him, girds up his loins and runs before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. And is Ahab, as the fruit of this marvellous display of the power of God, a new man? Does he stand by what the acclamations of all proclaimed, "The Lord, He is the God," and put away his idolatrous queen, and henceforth worship and serve the Lord alone? Alas! "Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done; and, withal, how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, Lo, 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." It was Jezebel's message, but it was the fruit of Ahab's conference with her, and it was clothed with the authority of Ahab's throne and sceptre. Thus did he, in compliance with his wife's cruel and revengeful wishes, drive out one of the most distinguished among all those, "of whom the world was not worthy."

Chap. xx. affords us a serious lesson indeed. We see  
VOL.II. PT.I. 5

there, that while the internal condition of a body of people standing in acknowledged relationship to God may be corrupt in the extreme, and all but ripe for judgment, God, in sovereign goodness, may still use it to humble the pride of his avowed enemies and blasphemers. It is to Ahab, the wicked king of Israel, that a man of God is deputed to say, "Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, the Lord is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys; therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord." And so it was: twice were the Syrians defeated before Israel; and in the second instance, no fewer than "an hundred thousand footmen of the Syrians" were slain in one day. And this was not a deliverance wrought for Israel without their knowledge or any communication between God and them as to it. God uses them as instruments in this overthrow of His enemies; He condescends to send "a prophet" and "a man of God" to Ahab, assuring him beforehand of the victory, and instructing him how to set the battle in array. And it is in compliance with these directions that Ahab gains this glorious victory. Now, would any one in that day have been warranted to conclude that because Israel and Ahab were thus externally owned of God, the internal affairs of the kingdom and the character of the king were such as God approved? The Lord keep us, beloved brethren, from glorying in our success, instead of trying our ways, and judging ourselves in the light of the Lord's presence, by His Spirit and word! Even in this chapter we have further proof of Ahab's characteristic sin. The prophet is driven out in the previous chapter, because Jezebel vows vengeance against him, and Ahab lends himself to be the tool of her wickedness. Now, Benhadad finds the weak point in this unhappy man, and plies him therewith as successfully as Jezebel. He flatters him, crouches to him, teaches even his servants to practise upon him, and in the end effects his escape from the destruction to which he had been doomed. The terrible message which Ahab receives from God in consequence: 'Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go out of



*The History of Ahab.*

thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people," sends him home heavy and displeased; and thus, through his sinful pliability, a day which began in such signal triumph ends in sorrow and in gloom. He is the instrument of his wife's malice in persecuting God's faithful and honoured witness; while a little flattery prevails upon him to spare God's sworn enemy, appointed of God too, to utter destruction. Such is the pliability of mere human nature. Cruel to the saints and servants of the Most High; tender and indulgent to His foes and blasphemers. May our souls, beloved, tremble at God's word!

Chap. xxi. discloses to us a scene of wickedness surpassing all that have preceded it. Ahab sets his eye and heart on Naboth's vineyard; and when it is denied him by the godly owner of it, like a spoiled petted child he goes home and lies down upon his bed, turns away his face, and refuses to eat bread. Jezebel receives not disappointments thus. She upbraids him with his weakness, and volunteers to put him in possession of what his heart desired. "Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." Who can fail to trace here, in bolder relief than in any former instance, the leading traits of each character. It was not Ahab that conceived the horrid plot against Naboth's life: so far from it, he was pettishly lamenting the apparently unavoidable disappointment of his wishes. A bolder and more determined spirit both conceives and executes the scheme by which his wishes are to be fulfilled. But she "wrote the letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal"; and when the vineyard has been procured at the cost of the innocent blood of its owner, Ahab is not loth to avail himself of the fruits of his wife's cruelty and cunning. How frightful too, the use of God's name in this transaction. A fast must be proclaimed, and Naboth arraigned before the nobles of his city. All the forms of justice must be mimicked; and for the crime of blaspheming God and the king, falsely laid

to his charge by Jezebel's command, Naboth must be stoned! And what a view we get of the moral degradation of both nobles and people, that such a command should be so unhesitatingly and implicitly obeyed. How analogous to another transaction in which One greater than Naboth became the victim of equal cruelty and cunning, and all under the cloak of judicial forms and high religious pretensions. They, like Jezebel, could suborn false witnesses, and pay the price of innocent blood, even the blood of God's holy Lamb; but they were too scrupulous to cast it into the treasury of the Lord, or to enter the hall of Pilate, lest they should be defiled!

Successful wickedness is next door to utter destruction. Again is our prophet introduced into the scene. "The word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. And thou shalt speak unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." Elijah meets him. The guilty king trembles in his presence, and asks not as before, "Art thou he that troubleth *Israel*?" No, his conscience makes it much more a personal question than that. "Hast thou found *me*, O *mine* enemy?" "I have found thee," is the prophet's reply; and he then proceeds with the awful denunciations of wrath and judgment from God against Ahab and Jezebel, and their household. But oh, the grace of our God! Because Ahab, terrified by these predictions, humbles himself and puts on sackcloth, and goes softly, the evil is not to come in his days; but in his son's days the evil is to be executed on his house.

But Ahab, though for the season humbled, is not converted. Of this we have ample and mournful evidence in chap. xxii. There we find, that pliable as was this wicked king when in the presence of his wife or Ben-hadad, Micaiah is as much hated by him as Elijah. And for the same reason. They were not pliable. They

had set their faces as a flint, and could yield nothing, no, not an inch or a hair's-breadth, of the testimony of God entrusted to them. "There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophecy good concerning me, but evil." And how sorely was Micaiah's fidelity tested on this occasion. "The messenger that was gone to call Micaiah, spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth; let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good." As though he had said, in more modern language, "Do not be so morose and eccentric, Micaiah. Do, in this instance at any rate, go with the stream. There are four hundred prophets all of one mind. Do not set up your single voice against so many, as though you were wiser, and knew better than any one besides." "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak." This is all that the prophet can reply. The sequel of the history shews us that Micaiah had been allowed of God to be behind the scenes. He could account for the unanimity of the prophets. It was a lying spirit from the Lord which had put words into their mouths, by which Ahab was to be hardened to go up to battle to his own destruction. The prophet's testimony, however, is disregarded, and he himself shut up in prison. Ahab, and alas! Jehoshaphat, go up to Ramoth-Gilead. Jehoshaphat is there made the tool of the wily king of Israel. The latter disguises himself, while the former enters the battle in his royal robes, a mark for the arrows of the enemy, who have been instructed to aim only at the king! But God defends Jehoshaphat. He is humbled, yea, disgraced. He has to cry for his life. But God delivers his poor erring, failing child; while all the craft of Ahab avails him nothing. No one can aim at him as the king; his disguise prevents that. But "a certain man drew a bow at a venture," and the arrow, guided by an unseen hand, "smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness." He is borne, wounded and bleeding to Samaria, and he dies; and the dogs lick up his blood, as Elijah had spoken to him by the word of the Lord.

The Lord grant us, beloved brethren, Elijah's and Micaiah's firmness and decision; and keep us from the yieldingness of the unhappy man who "sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up"!

---

### A FRAGMENT.

ON THE POSITION OF SATAN, OR RATHER, OF THE CHURCH IN CONFLICT WITH SATAN.—"The warfare in Eph. vi. really supposes an elevated position of the saints, themselves delivered and raised up to a heavenly position with God,—they have to contend with Satan *there*, for he is not yet cast down nor bruised under their feet. No doubt, being in such a conflict, the fullest vigilance and the spirit of dependance is needed not to succumb; internal, practical truth being first called for,—and then, power; but, whatever the diligence called for, the *position* is one of entire deliverance and enlistment on God's side,—brought into heavenly questions and standing. I judge there is a different measure in the deliverance from Satan, according to the different character of the epistles in Peter, Colossians, and Ephesians. He is roaring about as a lion, on earth, in Peter, where the saints are pilgrims; triumphed over, in the cross, in Colossians, where they were in danger of not holding the head; and led away captive in Ephesians, where the heavenly place of the saints is given, but then the combat, practically, has not ceased, but we are in God's army with His armour, in a heavenly warfare."

## Nº. XII.

SYNOPSIS OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE.—  
LEVITICUS.

THE book of Leviticus will not require entering quite so much into detail as the first two of the Pentateuch; one of the most interesting parts having been examined in the tract entitled “Types of Leviticus.” We shall, however, endeavour to look at this book as a whole. The subject of it is essentially the Priesthood, that is, the means established of God for drawing near unto Him, and the discernment of the defilements unbecoming those who were thus brought into relationship with God; the function of discerning these, being, in any case that rendered it necessary, a part of the priesthood. There are also in Leviticus, the several convocations of the people in the feasts of the Lord, which presented the special circumstances under which they drew near unto Him, and lastly, the fatal consequences of infringing the principles established by God, as the condition of these relationships with Him.

Here the communications of God are consequent upon His presence in His tabernacle, which is the basis of all the relationship we are speaking of. It is no longer the law-giver giving regulations from above, to constitute a state of things, but one in the midst<sup>a</sup> of the people, prescribing the conditions of their relationship with Him.

<sup>a</sup> This is the character in which God puts Himself thus into relationship. Consequently most of the directions given suppose those to whom they apply to stand already in the relation of a people recognised of Him as His people. But the people being truly without, and the tabernacle presenting the position in which God was putting Himself in order to be approached, the instructions which are given in cases supposing the people or the individual to be thus placed, furnish those who are without with the means of drawing near to God, when they are in that position, though no previous relationship have existed. It is very important to observe this: it is the basis of the reasoning of the

the trumpet of the jubilee would sound and God would re-establish each one in his possession, according to His (God's) rights; for the land was His. Their persons also were to be free then; for the children of Israel were God's servants. It was not so with those not belonging to God's people. And although Israel have sold themselves to the stranger, He who made Himself nigh of kin has redeemed them from his hands. The day of jubilee will free the people, whatever may be the power of those who hold them captives.

CHAP. XXVI.—We have a touching picture of the ways of God in patience and in chastisement, if Israel walked contrary to Him. When they acknowledged their fault, then He would remember the covenant made with their fathers, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with the land. Then He would remember the covenant made with their ancestors when they came out of Egypt under His name of Jehovah. God will take these two titles in their restoration:—Almighty, the name of His relationships with the fathers; and Jehovah, the name of His relationships with the people, as taken to Himself at their coming out of Egypt.

The last chapter treats of the rights and the appointments of God in all that relates to the things which are devoted to Him through the medium of priesthood. This necessarily finds its place in that which treats of priesthood; but it has a much wider meaning. I doubt not. It is a question of Him who devoted Himself to God and of the land which belongs to Him—of the rights of Israel, whose possession it was not, and of his selling it to others. As to Christ, He offered Himself without spot to God; He was valued at a low price. Israel by right belonged to the Lord. As Emmanuel's land, Israel only enjoyed the land without being proprietors; he could only pledge it till jubilee. It shall return to its possessor as Emmanuel's land.

Israel, looked at as the possessor of the gift of God, not having redeemed it, where sold to the stranger—when the jubilee comes, the land will be absolutely the Lord's;—the priest will possess it. In Zech. xi. Christ is thus valued, "whom they of the children of Israel did value."

*Leviticus.*

129

I only point out the principle presented in the chapter, without pretending to enter into all the details of application which may suggest themselves. The principle is the important thing to enable one to understand the purpose of God, in the case of any vow, whether they redeem it or not, or of land, whether it shall return in the day of jubilee when God shall take possession again of His rights in the land of Israel, and cause to enter those whose right it is. It is to be observed also that the judgment is according to the judgment of the priest. But although this be attributed to the priest, it is to the King in Jeshurun (the upright) that the appreciation is intrusted. This shows plainly who is to do it and under what character, though being according to the discernment, the grace, and the rights of priesthood. It is Christ as priest, but Christ as King in Israel who will order all that.

---

LEVITICUS.—The name Leviticus seems to be derived from the Septuagint, or translation into Greek of the Old Testament. *ΛΕΥΙΤΙΚΟΝ* is, in that translation, given as the name of this book. Taking “Levitical,” as it seems most naturally, to mean “that which pertains to the Levites”—the title would seem too *loose* as the name of this book, which is rather “the *Priests’* Law Book” than “the Book of the Law of the Levites.” For as Moses gets a most peculiar place marked in Exodus as his; so have the high priest and priests for them in this; but the service of the Levites comes out in Numbers. The Hebrew name of the book וִיקְרָא (vay-yik-rah, *and he called*) is the *conventional* adoption of the first word of the book as its name. In this case, perhaps, such an anomaly is rather happy than otherwise, because it stamps upon the exterior of the book, that it cannot be understood apart from the Sanctuary, etc. as written about in Exodus, the book which immediately precedes it.

## No. XIII.

## THE GOLDEN CALF.

HOWEVER much controversy may be needed for the preservation of the faith once delivered to the saints, it is at best a sorrowful necessity; it not only endangers the spirit of those engaged in it, often clothing self-glorying under the garb of zeal for the Lord, but it extends its influence beyond the immediate actors. The age itself may assume a controversial character, so that everything is viewed through a controversial medium. At the era of our Lord's ministry, the age was characteristically religious; but at the same time so controversial, that one ignorant as the woman of Samaria had caught the spirit; and the effect on her was to hinder any exercise of conscience before God. The present age presents too just a parallel to the one mentioned. It is also characteristically a religious age, and at the same time so systematically sectarian, that the truth of God is only viewed through controversy; and it thus fails of reaching the conscience, and hinders very effectually the ascertainment of the state of souls, individually, before God. There is a remarkable impatience of resolving things into their principles, so that some of the most important truths fail to affect the conscience, because that which embodies them is supposed to be attacked; and in this manner a great deal of the most searching truth is deprived of its point. It is even difficult to apply principles to the consciences of Christians so as to avoid the appearance of controversy, for time has sanctioned so much evil which is not suspected to be evil, that principles have never been tested. Now if, as individual Christians, we know that the principle of every manifested evil is to be found in our own hearts, so as to induce the need of self-judgment and constant watchfulness (for grace alone maketh us to differ), so is it equally true that all the *corporately* manifested evil in Christendom has arisen from some wrong desire working unsuspectedly in the hearts of real Christians; so that there is quite as great need to watch against the working of those principles among Christians



*The Golden Calf.*

131

*corporately*, which eventually lead to the worst form of evil, as for an individual Christian to watch against the principle of hatred which, if cherished, might lead to actual murder.

The principle embodied in the golden calf is one which most readily insinuates itself among real Christians. It may indeed be recognised when it has received a gross and tangible form, but spiritual wisdom is able to detect the working of the principle before it becomes embodied in form. The golden calf is one of "our figures."—(1 Cor. x. 6, margin). Its history has been recorded for "our admonition." Israel, outwardly and typically redeemed, serve to show, in a great variety of ways, those who are eternally redeemed to God through the blood of the Lamb, their peculiar dangers. That which "*happened*" to Israel is "*written* for our admonition." And thus their failures become beacons to us, and at the same time "figures" of those forms of error to which, as redeemed, we are liable. It is important, therefore, to seek to ascertain the germinant principle of evil which led to the setting up of the golden calf.

The people had sung the song of redemption on the banks of the Red Sea. They had murmured—but their murmurings had only been answered by the grace of God, in supplying their need. They had fought with Amalek, and prevailed through the uplifted hands of Moses. After all this, they receive the law by the "disposition of angels," and by the hand of the Mediator. The covenant between Jehovah and Israel is solemnly entered on and ratified by blood—the people on their part with one voice, saying—"All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, go up to the mount with seventy of the elders of Israel, and were permitted to see the God of Israel on the mount, and to eat and drink; but Moses is called up into the mount of God, with this express injunction to the elders—"Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you; and behold Aaron and Hur are with you; if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them." The people had seen the glory of the Lord at a distance—"and the

sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel." Here we have brought before us the position of the several parties (see Exodus xxiv).

Moses, hidden from the sight of the people, was still occupied with God *for* the people. He was at that very time receiving instructions from Jehovah for the construction of the beautiful tabernacle, and the ordering of their needed priesthood. He was still blessedly serving them, although they did not see him.

The evil commences with the people; but is consummated by means of the very leader, in whose charge they are left, during the absence of Moses. The people do not mean to disown Moses—they fully recognise him as the man who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt—but he was not then present to their sight. This was their need—some present visible prop on which they might cast themselves so as to be relieved from dependance on that which was invisible. They said to Aaron, "Up, make us gods which shall go before us." Their desire was urgent, and to be gratified at any cost. Without a murmur they bring their golden ornaments to Aaron. How deeply rooted is this principle in the human heart; that which men pay for, they think they have title to use for their own ends; and if it promises relief from dependence on God, they will purchase it at any cost. That which the people demanded received its shape and form from Aaron. He received the gold "at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf." It is remarkable, how little definiteness there was in the mind, either of the people or of Aaron, as to what would be the result of their gratified desire. The people said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." How soon is Moses forgotten in this new and present object. At first they only desired gods to go before them, to carry on that which Moses had begun to do, even to complete their deliverance out of Egypt, by leading them into Canaan. But now they regard these gods, and not Moses, as having brought

*The Golden Calf.*

133

them out of Egypt. How deeply, how solemnly instructive is this. One departure from the fear of God may lead to incalculable mischief.

The feelings of Aaron are different from those of the people. "When he saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To-morrow is a feast to Jehovah." How subtle is sin. Aaron, on being remonstrated with by Moses, excuses himself on the plea of simply humouring the people in what he did. "Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and *there came out this calf.*" Alas! what amount of evil may not a good man occasion by acting unfaithfully in a case of emergency. Aaron was left in charge of the people, to meet any difficulty which might arise; but the leader falls in with the desire of the people, and unintentionally leads them into idolatry. He himself had no idolatrous object in that which he did, neither was idolatry the intention of the people. In vain was Aaron's proclamation, "To-morrow is a feast to Jehovah." The calf, and not Jehovah, had the homage of their hearts (see Acts vii. 41). "And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." On this is grounded the solemn warning to us, "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them" (1 Cor. x. 7).

We must now turn to the thoughts and judgment of God Himself on this scene. And at the very outset, we are instructed in a solemn and searching truth—that God does not measure things by the intention of human agents, but by His own glory. The thoughts of God are not as "our thoughts, neither are his ways as our ways." Our simple and plain duty is to acknowledge Him in all our ways. There is no such thing before God as innocence of intention, when any man presumes to prescribe for himself the mode in which he thinks

God can be honoured, or the work of God can be furthered. In such instances, the means employed are quite as important as the end intended. God is to be honoured in the means we use, "for to obey is better than sacrifice." And it is in the acknowledgment of God, by waiting upon Him in His own appointed way, that we shall find the most searching test of our obedience to Him, and the uprightness of our heart before Him. And may it not with truth be asserted, that the deepest corruption, both in Israel and the church, can alike be traced to some individual or corporate act<sup>a</sup>, the only fault of which was, that it was unauthorised by God. But this is a fatal fault. It is the introduction of the will and wisdom of man into the very sphere, where the will and wisdom of God are pre-eminently displayed in carrying out his own work.

We must now transfer our thoughts from Aaron and the people, and their feast below, to Moses standing in the presence of Jehovah himself, within the cloud of glory on the top of the mount. And well would it be for us frequently to do this practically, so that we might form a godly judgment of our own ways. We should then be enabled, when inclined to rejoice in the work of our own hands, to detect the danger of secretly departing in our heart from God.

"And the Lord said unto Moses. Go, get thee down, for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto and

<sup>a</sup> It would be interesting to trace this from the Scriptures; but here it can only be briefly glanced at. "And Gideon made an ephod thereof [i. e. of his share of the Midianitish spoil], and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and *all Israel went thither a whoring after it*: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house." There is nothing which our hearts will not use to displace God. The brazen serpent itself was so used by Israel. And Hezekiah "brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel."

said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

The desire of the people, the surrender of their gold, the act of Aaron had together ended in corruption. How fearfully instructive. The people of God cannot interfere with the things of God; but they corrupt them and themselves by them. They cast aside their proper glory, and become occupied with that which debases them. That Jehovah was their God was their glory; but they would make to themselves gods.

In their after-history, they desired to be as the nations, and to have a king over them, when Jehovah was their King. They corrupted themselves, and lost their distinguishing glory. And when do we find corruption stealthily creeping into the early Church. Is it not in "philosophical wisdom, and admiration of teachers?" The glory of the Church is the presence of the Holy Ghost in the midst of her. The gospel needed not the extraneous support of wisdom or the schools—it came "in demonstration of the spirit and of power." The introduction of human wisdom, admiration of teachers, and all that was most esteemed among men, would virtually displace the Holy Ghost, so that His power, His teaching, His guidance would practically be superseded. "If any man defile [corrupt] the temple of God, him will God destroy [corrupt]." How rapidly it spread. Evil communications speedily corrupted the manners of the Church. And surely it does not require depth of learning, but subjection of mind to the Scriptures and the guidance of the Holy Ghost, the spirit of truth, to trace back to this germinant corruption in the Church, suppressed at the time by apostolical power, the full-blown corruption yet to be manifested, when that day of the Lord God Almighty comes, "that he should destroy those who destroy<sup>b</sup> the earth." (Rev. xi. 18). Viewed in the light of heaven, and as from heaven, this introduction of human wisdom in the Church was by the Apostle seen to be corruption. Those who would have introduced it, thought it a help and an ornament.

<sup>b</sup> *Corrupt* (see margin).

“They have turned aside *quickly* out of the way which I commanded them.” The rapid inroad of corruption into that which God has set up in purity is remarkable. The people of Israel awe-struck by the Majesty of God, had heard the solemn words, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” To this they had responded, “All the words which the Lord has said will we do.” And yet after the lapse of a few short days, they turn aside out of the way, and make to themselves gods. Does this surprise us? Is it not rather too faithful a history of the ostensible people of God in all ages and in every dispensation? God has not been pleased to record how long man stood in innocence—but the sacred narrative proceeds from his exercise of dominion over every living creature, and his reception of the blessed gift of a help-meet from God, to state his grievous fall. When Noah, who had in the Ark passed safe through the judgment, is set up as head of a new world, how quickly there is his fall into drunkenness recorded!<sup>c</sup>

And has the latest intervention of God in the revelation of the Gospel of His grace proved an exception to the general rule, of *immediate* failure on the part of man? If we proceed to the period after the Holy Ghost had come down from heaven—what says the Apostle of that which would be after him? “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise,

<sup>c</sup> How strange, how unlike man, that the chosen instruments of God to introduce anything from God, should themselves predict its failure in man's hands. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me and break my covenant which I have made with them . . . . Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness *against* thee. For I know thy rebellion and thy stiff neck; behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death?” (Deut. xxxi. 16, 25—27.)

speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." The mystery of iniquity had begun to work in the Apostles' time, when there was spiritual discernment to detect its beginnings, and infallible authority to meet the evil. But how *quickly* had the disciples turned out of the way. And this is solemnly important to mark; the worst evils which have arisen in the Church, were detected as secretly working in their *principles* by the Apostles themselves, so that we dare not go back to any form of the Church as a pattern subsequent to the days of the Apostles; because the evil which so secretly was at work in their days would only become more formed, when their discernment and authority was no longer present to detect and to resist it. It is indeed a curious feature of the mind of man, that in the things of God, he prefers stopping at secondary authority when access is open to its primary source. Both Jews and Christians have alike resorted to antiquity for their pattern, when the thing needed was to judge antiquity by the light of the Scripture. Jewish antiquity was the tradition of the elders—"vain conversation received by tradition" from their fathers—for this they vehemently contended, even at the expense of nullifying the Scriptures. And so among Christians, the most bitter contention has been for traditional religion, and "the faith once delivered to the saints" has been little regarded. Christians forget how early was the departure from the faith once delivered to the saints, and propose to themselves as a pattern of excellence some age of the Church in which there must have been deterioration; and thus virtually set aside Scripture and neglect the guidance of the Holy Ghost, to unravel the intricacies of time-honoured tradition and enable them to find that path which is pleasing to God. When tested by Scripture, it surprises us to find how much of that to which we have clung will not bear its uncompromising light.

But how solemn is the judgment of God on the people—"I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them." But if Moses was in the place of righteous judgment, he was also in the

very atmosphere of grace, and there he could take the place of intercession, and prevail because his plea was the honour of the Lord himself. This must ever be a prevailing plea, because it acknowledges the righteousness of the judgment of God. "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." Moses can neither excuse; or extenuate the sin of the people. It is not the place of intercession to do this, because every thing before God must be truthful. What comfort for us to know of Christ that—"He is at the right hand of God, and *that He also maketh intercession for us.*" He knows the righteous judgment of God—He knows, too, the evil of our sin, but His intercession is grounded on the way in which He himself has vindicated the righteousness of God in putting away our sin. The intercession of Moses brings out a new feature; viz. the long-suffering of God with his redeemed people—with that (*i. e.* Israel as now the professing Church) which has the responsibility as well as the privilege of bearing His name. This was shown in the mount, and afterwards proclaimed by Jehovah himself to Moses. God had previously shown His long-suffering in bearing with the world for a hundred and twenty years, while the ark was preparing. He had borne with the abominations of the Canaanites four hundred years, "because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full." And now, when He has redeemed to Himself a chosen people out of Egypt, this very people corrupt themselves and become the objects of His long-suffering. And is it not the same in the present time? Is not God now showing forth "the *riches* of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering" towards man as man, and this only to be scorned and despised, while those who are outwardly by profession his people, and bearing His name, are quite as much the object of his long-suffering as the world? The outward professing body has not continued "in the goodness of God," and all which awaits it is to be "cut off"—to be spued out of His mouth (Rev. iii.)

But we must follow Moses down from the mount to the scene of Israel's sin. The eye of Jehovah had seen it from heaven, His dwelling-place; there also Moses had



heard the report of it, and interceded for the people, and not in vain. But when Moses leaves the immediate sphere of the grace of God, and becomes himself a spectator of Israel's condition, his feeling is that of indignation and not of intercession. "His anger waxed hot," and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount." How had Moses interceded when the Lord had said "Let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them." There are deep lessons to be learned here. "God, the Judge of all," who must ever *judge* according to His own holiness, can at the same time *act* according to his own grace. He cannot extenuate sin—and "indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish," are revealed by Him as "against every soul of man which doeth evil." God has revealed to us *how* He is both faithful and just in forgiving us our sin. But how different is man from God! The sin which God had seen and pardoned at the intercession of Moses, when Moses himself sees he cannot bear with. Here we may learn the infirmity of the creature, and something beside this—that the saint cannot bear in himself the very sin which God had pardoned; nor will the servant of God tolerate in the people of God the sin of that people. What indignation had the godly part of the Corinthian church evinced against themselves for tolerating sin among them, even after the sin itself had been punished? Indignation is dangerous, because it is so allied to human infirmity, and "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God"—but indignation is godly when arising from the sense of an insult cast upon God, or the shamelessness of saints as to their condition before God. We dare not think of man, however highly honoured of God, above what is written; and we gain deep instruction from Moses in this instance, it may be shewing human infirmity, or from Moses acting as "the servant of the Lord." How constantly do we find the practical truth of that word—"when I would do good, evil is present with me." Honest zeal will often find close by its side, self-satisfaction or self-exaltation. Real kindness of feeling may readily associate itself with disregard for the honour of Christ. What need of walking

in the fear of the Lord, and habitual exercise of soul before him, in order that we may "judge righteous judgment!" In that which follows there is a typical action, embodying deep practical truths. Moses "took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it." Their "sin" (and I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire," Deut. ix. 21) thus became inherent in them. It was the "original sin" of the dispensation, and hung over them all the time of their prophets and their kings, and during the whole period they were in the land. They never recovered from its effects. At length, after the lapse of centuries, this original sin was met by due punishment in the Babylonish captivity (Amos v. 25—27. Acts vii. 41—42).

It has not pleased God ever to reverse an original sin. He allows it to take its course, and during the progress of the development of its effects, he takes occasion to unfold more and more of His purpose in Christ. This is true of the first great original sin, as we are so wonderfully taught (Rom. v.); where we find the important statement that there is no such thing as the reversal of one sin without the reversal of all—no reversal of original sin without the reversal of actual transgression as well. "And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment was by *one* to condemnation, but the free gift is of *many* offences unto justification." It is one of the many ways which human wisdom has devised to nullify redemption, to assign to the work of Christ the reversal of original sin. It is said, that man is placed in a *salvable* state, so that as to actual salvation it must be uncertain, because salvation is again contingent on conditions to be performed by man. Men use such knowledge as they "naturally" have of Christ, not to see their increased responsibility, but to elevate their own state before God, so that when redemption is preached as a divine certainty to faith, such a testimony invades their self-complacency, and upsets all their theory. Blessed indeed to know that "by Christ all that believe are justified from all things."

*The Golden Calf.*

141

The position which the Church of God occupies, is very remarkable. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom *the ends of the world* are come." The ages had all run their course. Under whatever favour of God man had been placed, he had never answered his responsibility. Some fatal sin had invariably occurred at the commencement of the age, and continued throughout its downward course; and the special failures of the typically redeemed people of God, which marked their downward course are "written especially for our admonition." But has the Church been admonished? Or, rather, neglecting admonition, has not the Church followed in a course answerable to those very sins by which we are admonished in Israel's history? The apostolic testimony too plainly and painfully proves, that in their days the Church had already taken the downward course. Early in the days of the apostles, there was manifested what may be regarded as the original sin, or original sins of the Church, even when there was power to detect and expose evil, and to obviate also its baneful effects, by the only way opened under such circumstances—the confession of the sin, and faith in the ability of God to bless by his grace for His own name's sake. We find this instruction blessedly set forth in Israel's history. "And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king. And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart, and turn ye not aside, for then should ye go after vain things which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain. For the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you his people." The *original* sins of the Church have held on their course for eighteen hundred years; and have produced as a result the present actual state of the professing Christian world, in the midst of which the Church of the living God is nevertheless to be found. The full results of these sins seem to be on the eve of

manifestation; and when fully manifested, will be met by direct judgment from God, analogously to the judgment of God on Israel's sin in the wilderness, viz. subsequent Gentile domination—a judgment still in actual force against Israel, since their sin also has been fearfully aggravated in again rejecting Jehovah, even Jehovah Jesus, that they might maintain their own traditions.

But to return to the scene into which Moses had come from the presence of Jehovah. After making the children of Israel to drink down their own sin, Moses turns to Aaron and asks him—"What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" In Aaron we find a representation of the fatal principle of expediency, or of man's attempt to manage the things of God. His excuse is, that he thought it best to humour the petulance of the people. He had no intention to make them gods. "Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me; then I cast it into the fire, and *there came out this calf.*" And have not the greatest corruptions in the Church originated from the effort of *good* men to try to consecrate some popular feeling, little thinking what they were really sanctioning; for image-worship itself was "but the calf which came out" of the homage which was rendered to the memory of saints, and which good men tried to turn to good account—but which is idolatry in the sight of God. Human expediency in the things of God speedily turns to discomfort and weakness. Aaron had listened to the people's cry instead of resenting it, and by listening, he had made them "naked to their shame among their enemies." And is it not always so? In every case where the will of man has worked, and worked successfully, it has produced weakness; the desire may be gratified but leanness enters into the soul. But here it is not the discomfiture of enemies; the Lord uses another rod, the most painful and humbling for those who are disciplined by it. The watchword is—"Who is on the Lord's side?" and brother is armed against brother—the commission is "Slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour." He whose name is "Jealous" is a jealous God; and well indeed is it for us to

have a godly jealousy, especially in a day when lukewarmness as to the honour of Christ so generally prevails.

Moses has now but little heart for intercession, when on the mount he breathed the very atmosphere of grace; but now he is in the actual scene of sin, and sees it as the Lord had seen it on the mount, when Moses had interceded with Him for the people. But now, nothing but the sin of the people is before Moses. "Ye have sinned a great sin:" he must needs get out of the scene of sin, in order to get into the place of intercession. Blessed instruction for us—such a high priest became us, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens"! Ever able to estimate sin as it must be in the sight of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and at the same time to throw the glory of his own person, and the value of his own work, into his own prevailing intercession. "And now I will go up unto the Lord: peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." Surely Moses the servant of the Lord goes up to the mount dispirited and dismayed. He had not personally sinned the sin; but for that very reason he felt it the deeper. "And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now if Thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me I pray thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." There was the truthful consciousness in Moses that he could find no plea in himself or in the people to present before the Lord; his only alternative was either to find forgiveness in the Lord's own grace, or that he himself might be blotted out, so as not to witness the shame of his people. How strongly does this consciousness of worthlessness in Moses bring into relief the dignified consciousness of worth in Jesus—"I have prayed for thee." But the Lord has His own ways: when corporate failure has come in, He can deal with individuals in the midst of it according to His own righteous judgment. "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book." At the same time it is clearly announced, that the corporate sin would in due time be punished corporately; "nevertheless, in the day when I visit I will visit

their sin upon them." These are principles of God of deep and solemn importance. God is pleased to commit to man's responsibility certain corporate blessings. Such blessings become speedily forfeited through the failure of man. God still bears on in protracted long-suffering, dealing with *individuals* according to His own grace, but at length the time comes for *corporately* visiting the failing body. "And the Lord plagued the people because *they* made the calf which Aaron made." Aaron laid the blame on the people; but it is regarded by God "as with the priest, so with the people." God knows the amount of guilt attached to the several parties, and where they may lay it the one on the other, God charges both alike.

The principle embodied in the golden calf was early manifested in the Church; and is in fact the principle of idolatry. "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." This admonition was given to those who were "called saints." Is it unneeded now? Are we in no danger of idolatry? We are aware of the fine-drawn distinctions of the Romanist to justify picture and image-worship; and we know also that it is not the meaning which they attach to such homage, but the light in which it is regarded by God, which is the truth. Many also most confidently believe, on the authority of the word of God, that the corruption of Christendom will end in open, gross, and palpable idolatry. Neither the progress of civilisation nor the emancipation of the mind of man are any safeguard against gross and palpable idolatry. It was the wisdom of man making the Godhead the subject of speculation instead of the object of faith, which originally introduced idolatry. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations [reasonings] and their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Surely man will never find his way back to

*The Golden Calf.*

145

God, by the very road of his departure from God; and the veneration of ordinances and intellectual rationalism may meet in the end in palpable idolatry. The word of admonition still applies to saints, "Neither be ye idolaters," for the principle of idolatry is some present palpable object between the soul and God, which effectually hinders dependance on God; and this is the principle embodied in the golden calf. We find in the days of the Apostles the original elements of this principle of idolatry under several modifications; and in the progress of declension these elements have received more or less tangible form. The grossest form of the original sin of the Church is found in the Galatian error—an error held up to us as a beacon, but which really has been followed as a pattern, so as to have been in great measure the formative power of the great professing body. It is the grossest form of the principle of the golden calf, being the natural expression of the feeling of the human heart, as though God was served with man's hands as needing something. It is said of the people when they made the golden calf, "they rejoiced in the work of their own hands," the same in principle as the Galatian error. But how strongly does the Apostle rebuke it. He knew of no middle way between the grace of God in Christ and idolatry. The Galatians had been turned from idolatry to the true God by faith in Christ Jesus. They were now in danger of relapsing in principle into their old idolatry, by adding the law to Christ. "*Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods; but now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again [back, marg.] to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?*"

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have the same principle in another form; the virtual setting aside of the perfectness of the work of Christ on the cross, and his present perfect priestly ministry, by recurrence to Jewish ordinances of worship. It is but the golden calf in another form. "As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what

is become of him." Even so now; Christ, received into the heavens, is forgotten in His ministry *there*, and early indeed did the Church desire to have some visible and tangible helps to worship, and they took their pattern from the sin of Israel. Stern and solemn is the warning rebuke of the Apostle (Heb. vi. and x.), so that scarcely a saint has been unexercised by it; and yet how little has it been aptly applied. These warnings are manifestly against the tendency to relapse into the old form of worship, to go back to the shadow and lose the reality. "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." "He that despised Moses law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?"

Judaism christianised, is a large and extensive characteristic of the great professing body; men have assimilated the very things which God has contrasted, and that by putting together such heterogeneous materials Christ has been dishonoured, even as He, as Jehovah, was dishonoured by Israel setting up visible gods, which really rivalled Jehovah Himself.

The principle of the golden calf was detected by the watchful eye of the Apostle, working among the Colossians in a more subtle form. Such foreign helps as philosophy and asceticism were there intruded; but in reality they hindered the simplicity of the Gospel, instead of helping the soul to realised union with Christ; such helps took it away from dependance on Christ, so that those who esteemed them, did not "hold the head." This form of the original sin of the Church has worked its way in the downward course of the Church; the fleshly mind has intruded its own conceits into the



*The Golden Calf.*

147

revelation of God; under the garb of affected humility, or it may be even under the semblance of spiritual aspirations we find the glory of Christ in His own person, as well as the glory of his work, virtually superseded. It is the exercise of the human mind on the great facts of revelation, instead of staying the soul by faith on these great facts, which especially marks this principle; and it is one which readily insinuates itself. Direct "holding the head" is the only safeguard against it.

But by far the most subtle form of the idolatry of the golden calf, is that which we find in the Corinthian church; the "glorying in men" or idolatry of man. Not of man as man, but man as the minister of Christ. How nice the line between esteeming such very highly in love for their works' sake, and putting them between the soul and Christ, according to the desire of Israel to have gods to go before them, when Moses who brought them up out of Egypt was lost to their sight. It is very possible to find this principle lurking where priestcraft is loudly abjured. The desire is deeply rooted in the human heart to have some tangible medium between itself and God, which, while it may be the medium of communicating the truth of God to the soul, is nevertheless used by the soul to hinder its coming into immediate contact with Christ Himself, and to keep it in measured distance from God. Paul, Apollos, or Cephas, the gracious gifts of Christ Himself to the Church, the moment they severally became regarded as *the* minister of so many persons, were by this very means put between the soul and Christ, they were gloried in *as men*. This was to their own dishonour, and at the same time to the deep damage of the souls of those who thus set them up over themselves. For by thus misplacing the channel of His grace, Christ Himself as the fountain of all grace is lost sight of. "All are yours." The infinite fulness of Him in whom dwelleth all fulness is little known; because men only regard one, instead of the many channels, by which that fulness is communicated, "All are yours" (1 Cor. iii.). And thus, virtually, it is not the truth itself which is so much regarded, as the person who testifies

to it. The truth is accredited by the person, and not the person by the truth. "And," said 'the Truth' Himself, "because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." Any dogma of an accredited teacher would have been received; but the truth was unpalatable in itself and not received because of Him who spoke it. In what little power is the truth which we do know held; because doctrines are received rather on the credit of man than of God.

The revealed order of God's dealings with his accredited people shews that, notwithstanding His long-suffering, He allows things to take their course and to work out to their legitimate end; and not only is it positively stated in scripture, but it is confirmed by analogy, that the end will be idolatry. The long-suffering of God affords indeed the occasion for separating that which is essential, and cannot fail from that which, by being entrusted to man's responsibility, has failed, but it does not hinder evil principles introduced at the outset of the Church working out to their necessary result.

The perversion of the gospel, as among the Galatians, is the almost accredited order. Rituals, formed from Judaism, prove that the Church has fallen into the very form of error against which the apostle so solemnly warns in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Religious sentimentalism, mysticism (and asceticism in measure), the Colossian danger, have well nigh supplanted "the head;" and the glorying in men, ministers of Christ though they be, tends to eclipse the glory of Christ himself, and to nullify the great doctrine of the other present Comforter, "the Spirit of truth to guide into all truth."

"Neither be ye idolaters as were some of them." It is a standing, and not a temporary warning. Let us give it a due place in our souls. There is but one safeguard,—the occupancy of the soul immediately with Him "who is the image of the invisible God." Has the person of Christ its due place in our hearts? Has He no rival there? Is there a holy craving to "know Him?" Is the thought of everlasting blessedness associated in our souls with being "ever with the Lord?" What is there lacking which we do not find in Him? Are we lost in the immensity of contemplating the Godhead? "In Him

dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Do we find the need of a medium of communication between our souls and God? "There is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Only let us be alive to our danger—our own hearts—our own reasonings—the reasonings of others who combine with Satan himself to intercept the *immediate* intercourse of our souls with Christ. Even service, apparently done to Him, may distract our souls from Him. We need the exhortation "to continue in the grace of God," and "with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord." We need awakened jealousy for His honour. The duty of upholding the dignity of His person and the perfectness of His work is as incumbent on us as on the apostles. May the unction from the Holy One deeply teach us the words of the beloved disciple—"We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. **LITTLE CHILDREN KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS. Amen.**"

PRESBUTES.

A FRAGMENT.—"God has not forgotten the Church which he gave to Christ; neither has the Lord forgotten it, nor yet the Holy Ghost.

If Satan decked the flesh in worldliness once, and made a counterfeit of this church, in Romanism,—God owned it not as His Church. And if, by actings of God in providence, and of the Spirit by the word, many have been delivered, through grace, from the counterfeit—have they got into the enjoyment of the privileges and position God has reserved for them while still on the earth, as *thus escaped*? Protestantism, if it presents the proof that God is redeeming from Babylon, no where presents the redeemed in their *proper* scriptural position together as such.

If escaped from Babylon, let them look to it that they are not in Egypt, like Sarai in Pharaoh's house; and if consciously seeking the Lord's glory, let them not think they have escaped while on earth from the enmity and malice of the adversary. He hates them still, because he hates their Lord and all that is His. Hinder their coming into the glory he cannot; but he will do all he can to hinder their *abundant* entrance into it, and to mar the present testimony of the Lord for Himself, in and through them while on earth as *an escaped few*."

## No. XIV.

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER OF JOHN, ETC.

TRULY wonderful and infinite is the blessing which is opened out for us in the fourteenth and following chapters of John. I desire to trace it a little.

We will notice first the commencement of all, *the way to the Father*, "I am," says Jesus, "the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me." No way, but through Him—through his blood—the new, and living way now made open for us into the holiest of all, even the presence of God (the point of connexion between this and ver. 1 to 3 being, that they who have access or entrance to the Father by him, have of course entrance also to *the Father's house*.)

We next learn the blessed truth, that by coming through Jesus, we not only come to the Father, but we *get* the Father. "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also, and from henceforth ye *know* him, and *have seen* Him." The poor weak heart, ignorant of its full blessedness in Jesus, would embody its soul in that language, "Shew me *the Father* and it sufficeth me." Only let me know that the *Father* too is mine, and it is enough—it is all. And that satisfaction is nigh at hand—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." We cannot separate between the two—we cannot get Jesus, without getting the Father. Because the Father was—is, in Jesus. If by faith we have looked upon Jesus crucified and risen for the forgiveness of our sins—if we have thus seen Jesus, we have seen the Father, if we have thus got Jesus, we have got the Father. Too much have these things been separated between—Jesus looked at as an *Averter* between us and an offended God; so that the love of Jesus has been honoured, to the *disparagement* of the love of the Father that *gave* Him (John iii. 16),—that *raised him up* from the dead when his work was completed (1 Pet. i. 21), "that our faith and our hope might be in God."

It was the *Father's* love that provided the Son's *satisfac-*

*The Fourteenth Chapter of John, etc.*

151

tion—the sheet is let down from Him and takes us back to Him.

Surely therefore here we find full satisfaction. Blessed truth!—to know that God even our Father's countenance ever rests upon us now in love (2 Cor. iv. 6). It can never, in reality, change. As Christ is, so are we; and His position now is so blessedly opened to us in spirit (Ps. xxi. 6). And the Lord says, "*Ye know him.*" What a nobility there is in the saint! It is not only that our sins are forgiven, and we are in an acceptable relation to him; the poorest saint can say, what the proudest, most lofty amongst men cannot say with truth, *by nature*, "*I know God.*" And surely this is eternal life in its truest sense. to know Him the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. "*I know him,*" and "*He is mine,*" I suppose constitute the full blessing of our portion.

This thought of the union of the Father and the Son brings in another thought, I think, viz. of our union in them. But I will pass on now to preserve more order. The next truth I notice is union with Christ. This is our full joy. "*In that day [the Spirit being come] ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*" Blessed truth! We may say it is the centre truth of God. Union for the Church—union for the individual. The Church His body—the individual bone of His bone, etc. I would notice here that I believe the Spirit is here spoken of as the *Witness* and *Agent* of this our union with the Head, taking ver. 17, 18, 20. in connection. He is the Jacob's ladder.

I would notice now what two important truths we have here together, opposite, yet connected. As to our union with Christ, we know, blessed be God! that it does not depend upon our walk and doings; it is settled and secured for us by Him in Christ Jesus. It does not depend upon our frames and feelings. It ever *exists*. But the *realization* of that union is closely connected with our walk. "*He that hath my commandments and keepeth them,*" says the Lord, "*he it is that loveth me (ver. 21); and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*"

Yea He has something more than *manifesting* to speak

of. He does not come alone in the 23rd verse, but another *with Him*; and they come to abide. "We [the Father with Him] will come unto him, and make our *abode* with him." How important to see these two! That our union is established irrevocably in Him, thus giving full rest to our souls, independent of our works,—and yet so to walk as to have its full joy in us.

This union with Christ brings in another thing, which I passed over before:—our position here of power as in union with Christ, having the Spirit, (ver. 12) "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

Our place now in the world, if we use it aright, is one of *power*. I do not mean necessarily *external* power, at all; because we are united with Him who is in the place of power, "gone to His Father" (ver. 12), "exalted by the right hand of God," says Peter (Acts ii. 33.), "glorified" (iii. 13.) This was, I judge, a great power of *their* testimony just then. I suppose this was quite verified at Pentecost, when the Spirit was given, when three thousand souls were added to them in that day. "The time of power, the demonstration of power was come, because Jesus was glorified" (perhaps this thought is a little conveyed to us in the words "the day of Pentecost was *fully* come"). The fruits of the seed which He had sown were quickened. Remark in (John vii. 37, etc.) the beautiful connexion between Jesus glorified, and the Spirit present—the power of our union with Him; "He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And let us remark, this is equally our portion now, though it may be modified in application by apostasy—"we *are* in union with Jesus, we *have* the indwelling Spirit." We ought therefore to shew forth the power of Him with whom we are in union, that good Vine, into which we have been grafted. Our *power* to do this is shewn in John xv. 4, 8.

A further way of our power is shewn in xiv. 13,—how *regulated* xv. 7.

When I add to this the teaching of chap. xv. our power of service as in the living Vine,—our relation to

*The Fourteenth Chapter of John, etc.*

153

Him as *friends*, having the full knowledge and communion of His mind, "the mind of Christ," the Spirit's agency, as "the Revealer" (xvi. 7, 12, 13)—the boundless store that in consequence of our position belongs to us (xvi. 14, 15)—the simple, naked position of love in which we stand before the Father, so as, in one sense, to need nothing to support us (xvi. 26, 27)—(though we know in His wisdom and grace there is something more to support us, quite indispensable, even the Priesthood of Christ)—and finally presentation unto Him in glory, according to His own will (xvii. 24), we may truly say, "Who hath heard such a thing, who hath known such a thing?" "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered *into the heart of man* to conceive, what good things God has provided for them that love Him," "the called" Paul, adds "according TO HIS PURPOSE." G.

---

*"But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."*—Matt. xix. 14.

How sweet, dear Lord, to hear thy voice  
 Invite our children near;  
 Well may a parent's heart rejoice,  
 That such to thee are dear.

How full thy love; how kind, how warm,  
 Thine invitation free:  
 "Forbid them not," Thy word's a charm,  
 To draw them unto Thee.

No mother's smile could win so well,  
 Their simple, guileless love;  
 No other voice than Thine could tell,  
 Their destined home above.

Hushed were the children, calm and still  
 They hung about Thy breast;  
 Thy presence soothed their playful will,  
 They could but feel at rest.

How cherub-like their infant smile!  
 How winning was Thy way!  
 The love that glistened in Thine eye,  
 Enchanted them to stay.

These gracious words our hearts incline  
 To bring them unto Thee;  
 We pray, dear Lord, they may be Thine,  
 From sin and death set free.

Thou, who a parent's love could'st feel,  
 A parent's prayer will hear;  
 Our children Lord, we ask Thee seal,  
 For mansions bright and clear.

N<sub>o</sub>. XV.

## FELLOWSHIP AND ITS RESPONSIBILITIES.

THE principle of *fellowship* is one of exceeding importance to us. And if we ask what the unity or fellowship of the church is, it is I believe answered in that one word—"the unity of the Spirit"—"endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit" (Ephes. iv).

We have too much, I think, looked on unity as *our unity*, instead of the unity of the *Spirit*. The two things are very different. *Our* unity would indeed be a rope of sand, as many have supposed it to be; yet had it something durable in it, because, though not seeing, perhaps, our full strength, it was held as to God. But, as I say, we want a bond, and that bond is the Spirit<sup>a</sup>.

What then is the position—the unity—of the church in the world? It is "the temple, the habitation of God by the Spirit." The position of the Church, as it *should* be in the world, is this,—it is the one body of Christ animated and guided by the Spirit. The promise of Christ, in departing from His Church<sup>b</sup> was, "I will send you another Comforter [which I should be much more inclined to render "another *guardian*"] that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth." And *His* care for the Church, in guarding and guiding them, may be nicely suggested, I think, by those words "He shall guide (ὁδηγήσει) you into all the truth." "As many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God." This shews it is our privilege to be *led* by Him. Thus it is therefore with the whole Church (if it would *allow* it), and thus it is with every assembly gathered

<sup>a</sup> I take the opportunity, and beg leave to press upon attention a tract which may be familiar to some, and to others perhaps will not be so, called "Letter to the Saints in London as to the Presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church." I did not see it until writing this; but it contains a statement of that truth more full than I hitherto remember to have seen, and in a way calculated to warm and gladden the heart of every right-minded saint.

<sup>b</sup> I use the word prospectively.



upon true ground, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God;" it is, under the guardian hand, and care of the Holy Ghost, the indwelling Spirit, "the habitation of God by the Spirit."

And let me say, we shall find the benefit, the *necessity*, in these last times, of standing for the whole truth, the full truth. Let us not be deterred by the charge of presumption. We are either that, *or nothing*. Our choice is between *God's foundation* and man's expediency.

I will *resume*, by adding, in reference to what I said just above, that, if gathered upon true ground, though not *the Church*, yet are we upon the ground of the Church, and therefore in a position to act upon the principles and to receive the full blessing of the Church. "Where two or three are gathered together *in my name*, there am I in the midst of them." Alas! one has to reassert every principle which we once held.

Further, I remark, I fear it is the thought and language of many now, that it is impossible to carry out the unity of the Church now. To which I reply simply, Is it *the truth*? Because if it is so, it is simply unbelief to talk of its being impossible to carry it out. It is saying, the Lord is not able to help us to carry out the truth. Let us look at it in its *undisguised form*. But I say, this is the very ark for us, that must be carried through, though it be through fire and water. I would suggest. What promise or prospect is there of security from evil and delusion apart from the unity of the body? I see (Ephes, iv. 4). "there is *one body*, and *one spirit*." I believe from that passage taken in connection with ver. 3, and from other passages, that God has been pleased to connect the Spirit with the Body here on earth. And we cannot have the fullest power and guidance of the Spirit apart from the Body. This may seem delicate ground: it is so; we ought to feel it; yet it is nevertheless *true*. And let me say such will be the working of evil in these last days, that we shall find we have *nothing to spare* to meet it. "Except those days were shortened for the elect's sake, no flesh should be saved," true of Israel's remnant literally hereafter, has distinctly, I believe, its moral application for us now.

But to talk about not carrying it out now; how beautifully does the language of the Israel-remnant contrast with this in the time of their trouble, which with regard to personal suffering in one sense, will be infinitely more trying than ours. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the heart of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake at the swelling thereof" (Ps. xlv.). "They shall glorify God in the fires, even the name of the Lord God of Israel." Yea, instead of being discouraged, "they shall lift up their voice, and shall sing for the *majesty* of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea."

I simply add, in conclusion, that to give up the unity of the Church, is, in plain terms, in consonance with what has been said before, to give up the field to the devil.

Now then the question arises, why when evil comes into a body, and is not judged, *will* not be judged, *why* do we separate from all, why do we refuse *fellowship* to any? For this reason—that the Spirit is grieved in the Body, yea, is sent away—he is no longer the Animator, the RULER. For when evil is *tolerated*, there He cannot dwell. "In many things we all offend," whether individually, or collectively. But our infirmities, and sins in that way are one thing, and the deliberate refusal to judge, and put away our evils is *quite* a different thing. Tender truly is that Spirit, so that even corrupt communication (Paul tells us in Ephes.) grieves "that holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed;" but as to the other, wilful evil, truly it is of the character spoken of in (Heb. x.); it is "doing *despite* unto the Spirit of grace."

If then, I say, the body refuse His guardianship, if it reject Him thus, what follows?

Why it is no longer His fellowship, the unity of the Spirit.

To the question, then, "Why do you separate from all?" I answer, Because we have no security about any. They are no longer under the care of the guardianship, the hand of the Spirit, that other Guardian—they have re-

fused it. We cannot own whom He does not,—those who do not own Him.

I will not dwell upon the truth, that surely the wolf will catch and scatter those who are thus defenceless—on the truth that a little leaven leavens the *whole* lump—*this* shews there is no security. I confine myself to the present thought—but I add, that where the Spirit is not the animating guiding One, it is the solemn fact that Satan does get that place. He becomes the animator.

This, I think, is decidedly shewn in Babylon, i. e. the professing Church. That is how it *ends*. “Babylon the great,” says the word, “is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” That from which God goes out, Satan enters. John xiii. 27. may be very instructive as compared with verse 2. See also 1 Sam. xvi. 14; xviii. 9, 10.

This may perhaps be slow, and imperceptible save to the really spiritual eye. But this, I think, should make the saint the more careful of meddling with it; for such a beginning yet leads surely onward, and *blinds* to its own progress.

And here let me observe, the great danger one has of letting natural feelings and thoughts come in to lead him to any such compromise or meddling. It is, I judge, the enemy’s plan, when *resistance* has been successfully offered, to soften by kindness. Look at the prophet at Bethel. Jeroboam, when the testimony had been given with power, next says (1 Kings xiii. 7.) “Come home, and *refresh* thyself, and I will give thee a *reward*.” What a change! What apparent kindness! But his thought, I judge, simply was to soften the prophet’s testimony, to screen *his own* conscience, to persuade himself that it would not be so bad after all as the prophet had said,—in short, to bribe God in the person of his prophet. Such very likely too was the motive of the old prophet, to bolster himself up in a false position (compare 2 Chron. xi. 13, 16.)<sup>d</sup>

<sup>d</sup> I would remark, in conjunction with this reference, his dwelling at Bethel, I think, would be instructive. He dwelt where *the altar* was the fixed proof of Israel’s sin. He could not there-

I may add, by way of analogy, that I think we find the same principle shewn in Israel; for when Achan sinned (Josh. vii. 1), "the Lord said, *Israel* hath sinned, and they have also transgressed," etc; "neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you." They are all called "accursed" in the 12th verse. For *unity* is always God's truth, and responsibility consequent upon unity. So also (Josh. xxii. 31). And I will add, I suppose Joshua, with Acts v., will give us the important thought, that the more entirely *God* is at work himself, the more thoroughly will he have holiness amongst his people, the "fellow-labourers."

Let me suggest, in accordance with what has been now said, that it is a serious thing to acknowledge, and accredit any assembly as in *real* fellowship, where there is not thus full *liberty* for the Spirit and His rule. It may be getting to ourselves a point of weakness, "opening our side to the countries."

One word I would say as to the seven churches: I have heard it said there was evil there, and there was no command to separate. I observe any one who has had to contend much with *evil* has probably before this had to shew that a negative argument often is *no* argument. For instance, there is a positive direction (1 Cor. v. 11—13). But one may say I find evil spoken of (Phil. iii. 18, 19), but there is *no* command to put them away. And so forth. But I would say, the Lord says at Ephesus, where there was *no positive* evil, but the whole thing *decaying, love* departing (Rev. ii. 4) where read "I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love," instead of—"Nevertheless I have *somewhat*," the Lord says, "Except thou repent, I will remove thy candlestick" I say, if,

---

fore, we would judge, have had much real zeal respecting the abomination. It is no use testifying against Sodom, if one voluntarily chooses their lot there. "This one fellow *came in to sojourn*, and he will needs be a judge." They could quickly perceive that. The Lord would not, we would judge, employ this one therefore to give his testimony against the altar there. Very instructive too, perhaps, that the one is called "a man of God," whilst the other is called "an old *prophet*;" the latter denoting the mere official character, the other perhaps the tone of soul that accompanied his work.

*faith* had perceived that the candlestick was removed (which however, probably, the *general* declension of the Church *together* would prevent), would it have staid there? I judge not. Surely it is the *living* God we have to do with. Though of course only in great wisdom and carefulness could such a thing have been done. It is not, let me further remark, the Lord's way to *force* things upon us. He gives enough for the willing mind to see and act upon. So constantly, when on earth, He commanded them not to *make Him known*.

I now commend these thoughts to the consideration of brethren. It may be, such like truths are being brought before us just *in time*; for abounding evil will surely characterize "the day approaching" (1 John ii. 18); but there is light present and in prospect to cheer us through (Jude 24).  
G.

---

### "The Basket."

THE CHURCH is not merely the congregation of the redeemed. There was and will be redemption of none, save by the Spirit, through the blood of the Lamb. But while my soul as an individual thankfully owns such a communion with all the redeemed—it owns a peculiarity of communion with those who are partakers of this grace, according to the peculiarity of the Church—Bride and Body of Christ Jesus. The Church is the body to and by which alone the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is opened: and (Bride of the Lamb) to her how dear and honored should the *person* of the Lord and the personal presence of the Holy Ghost the Comforter be! In ruins all around us may be; but if we understand what communion of saints means, surely not only must the works of God by the Son and by the Spirit be dear to us; but we know ourselves as parts of this body connected with the revelation of that name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and these are dear and to be honored.

As gathered amid ruins, we have, in the obedience of faith, to beware of in any wise compromising this name,—being ourselves witnesses of the unfailing faithfulness of God amid all the declension of man.  
G. W.

## No. XVI.

## THE CHILD OF RESURRECTION.

2 Kings iv. 8—37.

EVERY child of faith in past dispensations, as well as in the present, may be truly termed a child of resurrection. God, whose voice faith hears, and who is Himself its object, is the One “who quickeneth the dead and calleth those things which be not as though they were” (Rom. iv. 17). Of this our father Abraham is the great example. But examples of this abound in the Old Testament; examples, too, similar in circumstances as well as in principle to that of Abraham. Manoah and his wife—Hannah, the wife of Elkanah—and, not to mention others, this godly woman in the history before us, were each of them examples in their day of the all-quickenings power of that God in whom they believed. Their faith might not be strong like that of Abraham; but it had (like his) for its object the power, and for its warrant the word, of “God who quickeneth the dead.” And so now, every poor sinner who through grace receives God’s testimony to His Son, believes in Him “who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. iv. 25). Yea, and “by Him” (Jesus) all such “*do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God*” (1 Pet. i. 21). Christ risen and glorified, and God who raised and glorified Him are thus the objects of our faith; yea, and more than that, the very faith which does thus rest on Christ and believe in God who raised Him from the dead, is itself the result of the quickening power of the Holy Ghost. It is “the faith of the operation of God” (Coloss. ii. 12.) Us, “hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. ii. 1). So that in every sense, and that from the very outset, the child of faith is the child of resurrection.

But the God of resurrection, thus known to faith from the first, has to be known as such all through. Blessings

*The Child of Resurrection.*

161

which, when we receive them, are felt to come not from any resources of our own, nay, nor *through* any natural power we possess, but direct from Him "who quickeneth the dead," when we have enjoyed them for a season, come to be regarded by us as things of course; we fail to realise that the tenure on which we hold them, as well as the ground on which we received them, is the resurrection-power of God. Hence many of those dealings of God with us, by which we are brought to sympathise with Paul when he said, "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us" (2 Cor. i. 8—10). Is not this the lesson, brethren beloved, which our God designs that we should learn from all that has occurred? When our souls first drank of the deep joy of fellowship in the Spirit, was it not in direct and conscious dependence on the resurrection-power of God? Was not the flesh, the old man, accounted by us, even as it is accounted of God, crucified with Christ? Was there not, as the fruit of this, the practical denial of all the resources of nature, of self in its fairest forms, as competent in any way to worship or serve God acceptably? And was there not a simplicity of dependence on Him who having given His Son for us, and given us to His Son, had given us besides, as the seal of His love, that Holy Spirit, the Comforter, by whom we were conscious of being vitally united to Christ and made members one of another? Was there not, I ask, a simplicity of reliance on His presence, on His teaching, on His power, as that by which alone there could be wrought in us or amongst us what would glorify our God, or refresh and edify one another? But when he had thus wrought, and we had tasted a joy which many of us had never expected on this side the glory, was there not a transfer (gradual, and so almost imperceptible, but not less certain) of our confidence *from Him* whose presence

gave this joy, *to the joy which His presence gave*, and to all its varied fruits in the happy worship and living service of those amongst whom He had thus manifested Himself? Did there not creep in a looking upon these things as a matter of course without the continued and deepening recognition of the source from whence they flowed to us poor saved sinners, and of the Power by which alone they could be maintained and increased amongst us? And why the blighting which has followed? Is it that our God would resume what His royal bounty had freely bestowed? No; "His gifts and calling are without repentance." But He would have us learn that we can no more *retain* than *obtain* blessings of ourselves; that we can no more keep out *death* than we could at first rescue ourselves from its dominion: that it is with God *who quickeneth the dead* that we have to do; that it is Him and Him alone we have to trust. Happy for our souls, beloved, if we should be taught this lesson. Bitter and humbling as may be the process through which our God conducts us, the lesson of resurrection twice learned will more than repay all the sorrow of learning it; and what is of infinitely greater consequence, our God will have all the glory, all the praise. But let us turn to the narrative. There are sweet truths unfolded in it besides this great one, for which, doubtless, it is specially recorded.

To trace the family likeness among God's people is a refreshing and heart-cheering exercise. Nor does it in the least derogate from His glory whose "workmanship" the saint is, to observe in Scripture the marks by which His "workmanship" is distinguished. Works, except they be the result of faith, the fruit of the Spirit, are worthless, and worse than worthless; but the work of *faith* and labour of *love* and patience of *hope* are precious in God's eyes; and it is for our profit to meditate on the records of such in God's holy word. A lovely specimen of the workmanship of the Spirit is presented to us in the Shunammite, whose faith, with its fruits, trials, and triumphs, forms the subject of the narrative before us.

One fruit of faith much commended in Scripture is that enjoined upon us in such passages as the following;



*The Child of Resurrection.*

163

"Given to hospitality" (Rom. xii. 13). "Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (1 Pet. iv. 9). "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. xiii. 2). "I was a stranger, and ye took me in" (Matt. xxv. 35). What a beautiful instance of such hospitality is presented to us here. "And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread." The lowly husbandman of Abel-Meholah a welcome guest with the "great woman" of Shunem is a lovely illustration of what grace can do. Nor did she know, as it would appear, anything of him when she first "constrained him to eat bread" save the homely garb, the unpretending exterior of the man.

Another fruit of faith much noted in Scripture, is the capacity of discerning and owning "like precious faith" in others. Its very first exercise is discernment—discernment of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. When He was here upon the earth, while He was faith's object, so was He God's great test of where there was faith and where there was not. Where there was not faith, His person and His glory, were unknown and unconfessed. Where there was faith it perceived, through the veil of His humiliation, the glory that it enshrined, and confessed Him as the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. To as many as thus received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God. So now, whosoever is quickened by the Holy Ghost to behold the glory of God in the once marred face of Jesus Christ; in beholding that—receives the assurance of salvation and everlasting life. But the same faith that beholds the glory of God in its fulness there, can discern its transmitted and reflected rays in those of whom it is said, "Ye are the epistle of Christ;" of whom Christ Himself says, "Ye are the light of the world." This capacity of discernment exists, of course, in very various measures as faith is strong or weak. But more or less of it there must be in order to "love as brethren." Plainly, I must discern who are my brethren, or I cannot love them *as*

*such.* Who could give a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple, if he had not the capacity of discerning the badge of discipleship? Beautiful is the display of this spiritually intuitive discernment of where God had set His mark and put His honour, in the case of this godly Shunammite. She had shown him hospitality as a stranger, "as oft as he passed by afterwards, he turned in to eat bread;" but in these repeated interviews she saw enough of him to make her long on other and higher grounds to provide for him more permanent accommodation. "She said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither." The Lord grant us, beloved, to be so in communion with Himself, that wherever His name is truly confessed, and His Spirit dwells, we may be quick to discern and joyful to own His handiwork.

The Shunammite's appreciation of the tastes and habits of her guest, is another lovely trait which the Spirit has been pleased to note in this delineation of her ways. It was Martha's failure, that, while she really and devotedly loved the Lord, she so little appreciated what His glory really was, and the errand on which He had come from heaven to earth, that she thought to please Him by providing for Him a sumptuous feast. To think of entertaining God manifest in the flesh with a feast! Not so Mary. She knew that He had come, not to be ministered to, but to minister; and to give His life a ransom for many. She spread the table and provided the feast that He had really come for the purpose of enjoying, by sitting at his feet, and opening her heart to drink in the words of eternal life from His lips. Like-minded with her was this godly Shunammite. She had Martha's hospitality with Mary's appreciation of her guest; and her guest was but a mortal, a child of God indeed, but still a mortal man. Martha's and Mary's guest was the Lord from heaven. Elisha has a hearty welcome to the hospitalities of the Shunammite; there is even an apart-

*The Child of Resurrection.*

165

ment set aside for his use, where he may turn in and tarry as long as he will. But what a tale does its furniture tell! No provision for the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life. A bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick, are all that it contains. A pilgrim's accommodation shews how entirely the Shunammite had appreciated the pilgrim character of her guest. Would that there were more of this heavenly simplicity amongst us, beloved. Would that our hearts were so in heaven, that we might feel, as to one another, that even our hospitality must be after a heavenly sort; cordial, large-hearted, without grudging, as the Apostle says; but yet, not as though we looked upon each other as in the flesh, or thought we could gratify one another by making provision for its lusts.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have," is the exhortation of the Apostle. How the spirit of it was exemplified by the Shunammite. Elisha instructs Gehazi to say to her, "Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care, what is to be done for thee? Wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?" God had wrought a great deliverance by Elisha for the king and his allies but a short time before; and thus, for the season, he could doubtless have had of the king whatever he had asked. But the Shunammite wishes for nothing that the king or the captain of the host can give. "I dwell among mine own people," was the reply of her contented spirit. Can we, in any way, so powerfully testify to the world of its vanity, and the emptiness of all its prizes, as by this holy superiority to its attractions and its offers? If anything can tell on the conscience of a worldling, it is to see a child of God so conscious of his portion in his Father's love, that he declines, when it is in his power, to accept of a portion here.

But if the prophet of Abel-Meholah, like an Apostle of later days, be destitute of silver and gold; and if the Shunammite cares not for what Elisha's temporary favour with the king might have procured her, he has interest at another court, and she refuses not what the prophet

promises on behalf of that "God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth things which be not as though they were." She is childless, and her husband is old; but the prophet assures her that at the set time she shall embrace a son. The promise thus given, God fulfils; and a child direct from His hand, crowns the faith which had already produced such lovely fruits. What that child must have been to the Shunammite. With what inexpressible tenderness must she have nursed him in infancy, and watched the unfolding of his faculties, as from infancy he passed to boyhood, and from that to youth. The mother only that loves the Lord, and nurses and brings up her offspring for Him, can form the least idea, and even hers must be but faint, of what that mother's feelings were; the deep throbbings of her heart, as she looks onward to the future in connection with the prospects of her child; and the calm but deeper joy which must have often pervaded and filled her heart, while encouraged by the occasion and circumstances of his birth, she trusted in God that that future was charged with blessing. But she had to learn the lesson already referred to, as the great moral of the history; and well will it be for us, if God's record of His dealings with her should be used of Him to aid us in learning that lesson too.

"And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head! And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died." What a stroke was this! The child with the birth of which her faith had been crowned, and which she had received, as it were, direct from God's hand, snatched from her embraces and cold in death! And was this God's reward of the care which He had put into her heart to have for his servant, the prophet? Was it for this that God had made Himself known as the Quickener of the dead, causing the barren to bear, only that when the child was grown, he might be suddenly torn away? No, she has better thoughts of God than this. It is not that she questions His right to resume what His mercy had bestowed. But her faith gathers from the

*The Child of Resurrection.*

167

past, what God's meaning and purpose were in dealing with her as He had done, and she is not without hope even now. "But her son is dead." What then? It was from God who quickeneth the dead she had received her son. "But what can she do?" Nay, that is not the question. What can, or rather, what can *not* God do? That is faith's question, and thus there is no case too extreme for faith, because there is none too extreme for God. Faith knows and trusts. "With God all things are possible."

A brother once wrote me, "Faith rejoices in a dead lift." And so it is. Circumstances which produce utter despondency where there is not faith, are but to faith the occasion for more singly and entirely trusting God. "And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him and went out. And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God and come again." The husband remonstrates. It is neither the new moon nor the Sabbath day; and his faith goes not beyond the ordinary exercises of devotion, if indeed he be a man of faith at all. Faith like his wife's, who does not give up her son though dead, because she knows Him who quickeneth the dead, he seems to have no thought of. But his wife can neither be detained nor turned aside. "It shall be well;" is all the reply she makes, and hastens to the man of God to Carmel.

But here she is to meet with other trials of her faith. If there was any one or any thing in danger of being between her soul and God, it was the prophet, the man of God. To own him as the prophet of God was indeed at that time the test of faith in Israel. Singularly had God honoured him in fulfilling His promise in God's behalf that this woman should have a son. But it was possible then, as, alas! we find it now, for the channel more or less to have the place with the soul which only belongs to the source from whence it is supplied. At all events the Shunammite is to learn that even the man of God of *himself* can do nothing for her. To all the inquiries of Gehazi she has but one answer "Well:" she

is not to be detained by him. "And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet; but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the Lord hath hid it from me and not told me." One word from her reveals the whole, and the prophet at once despatches Gehazi with his master's staff to lay upon the face of the child. Whether the prophet did this under Divine guidance for a lesson to Gehazi as well as to try the Shunammite's faith; or whether, as the case had been hid from him by the Lord, so now he was left to act in his own wisdom and strength without any direct guidance from God, I would not say. It is suggested as an inquiry for the prayerful consideration of brethren in the Lord. In either case the result is plain. The Shunammite can no more be put off with Gehazi and his master's staff than before she could be detained by her husband's expostulations, or Gehazi's inquiries. "And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose and followed her." They meet Gehazi returning from his fruitless journey, one of a cloud of witnesses that the forms and circumstances by which the actings of faith may be attended are all nothing apart from faith itself, and the power of the living God on which faith rests. Elisha's staff in Gehazi's hands is as powerless as any other piece of wood. The prophet's staff without the prophet's faith accomplishes nothing: there was neither voice nor hearing: wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, "The child is not awaked." The Lord grant us to lay to heart the serious lesson which these words convey!

What a scene ensues! There had been enough already to make even Elisha feel that it was no ordinary case, and that through it God was dealing with him as well as with the Shunammite. That it should have been hid entirely from him—that Gehazi's journey with the staff (undertaken at the prophet's instance) should have proved entirely unavailing—was enough to awaken the inquiry in the soul of the prophet, whether God would teach him too that the power was not in him, but in God Him-

*The Child of Resurrection.*

169

self. But even if Elisha had to learn this lesson more deeply than he had as yet learned, it was not that his faith in God might be shaken or weakened, but tried and strengthened. Tried it was; but not shaken. "When Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed." The mother's faith had placed the dead body there. "He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord." Brethren, do you know what it is thus to retire, with some matter that can only be settled between God and you? There are times when the presence of the nearest friend, even the most valued saint, is felt to be an incumbrance. He shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. The prophet, a dead corpse, and the living God, the Quickener of the dead! "And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he stretched himself upon the child." So completely does he identify himself with the one for whom he intercedes. It is as though he would tell God that if the child were not restored to life, he could only lie there with him in death. What faith! What holy boldness! Nor is it left without encouragement—"the flesh of the child waxed warm." There were some signs of returning vitality to strengthen the prophet's faith and encourage him to persevere. "Then he returned and walked in the house to and fro; and went up and stretched himself upon him." What is all this the witness of, but of that agony of prayer, that energy of faith, of which, alas, in our day, and in our poor souls, we know so little? "But the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." "The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes." Prayer was heard; faith was crowned; God showed Himself once more to be in very truth the God of resurrection; and when the mother came in to the prophet into the chamber, he said, "Take up thy son." "Then she went in and fell at his feet [her heart too full to utter a single word], and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out."

The Lord grant us, like her, to know nothing, to

regard nothing, but Himself—privileged as we are to know Him, the Resurrection and the Life, unknown to saints in any former dispensation, in an intimacy of communion. May we acknowledge indeed, and mourn, the sins which have turned our joy into lamentation; but may neither these, nor anything, be allowed to hide from the view of faith “God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth things which be not as though they were.”

Y.

---

### PRINCIPLES AND PERSONS.

PETER was an Apostle—the Apostle of the circumcision; he was also a most fervent disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ; one dear to the whole church in his day, as one able to exhort the elders, himself an elder, to feed the flock of God—not as being lords over the heritage, but as being ensamples to the flock.

Paul—he, too, was an Apostle—the Apostle of the Uncircumcision. What a character of his discipleship and service do we find in the Second Epistle to Corinth.

While the Spirit was walked in, by both, and the truth of the gospel (Gal. ii. 14) honoured,—though each of them might have a line and a measure peculiar to himself,—there was no conflict between them. But what if either of them put his apostleship, and the personal influence which attended God's grace and gifts in him, to a use, which neither grace nor righteousness, even in the feeblest saint, could justify — and even turned all that attached to himself, as an individual, *against* God, the Lord, and the Spirit,—so destroying the foundation on which poor sinners (saved by grace alone) were resting? What then? “Impossible,” many would say: alas, it was possible then, and similar things must therefore be possible now. Peter did so at Antioch, and Paul withstood him. *Faith* must act as God acts in such cases; and disavow the acts and oppose the course: such a conflict may fairly be said to be one between God and Satan. Yet I may remark, that though the real question was really one of PRINCIPLES, and not of persons, then, as at every time when the flock of God is in danger, *principles* are exhibited in and illustrated by, *men*: and so Paul became at Antioch, through grace, the vindicator of grace against the human righteousness, which another lent the sanction of his name to. The question always is, “Where is God, and Christ, and the Spirit in this controversy?”



## No. XVII.

## "WHERE IS THE LORD GOD OF ELIJAH?"

2 Kings ii.

THE chapter under consideration is replete with instruction. The communion of saints and the object of it is unfolded. Two eminent servants of God are introduced to us in circumstances unequalled in interest: the one on the eve of his rapture to God in His glory: the other thirsting for a double portion of God's presence and power upon earth. How glorious the destiny of the one, how perfect the aim of the other—God, the object of fruition to each. Blessed was their fellowship with one another, thrice blessed the bond of their union. On the eve of separation in time, yet bound up in the bundle of life for eternity.

How striking the grace of God in his dealings with the people of Israel. He would not leave Himself without a witness. When His worship was corrupted, the priesthood defiled, the place of His Holiness set at nought; when darkness, gross darkness, covered the land, how suddenly is Elijah introduced on the scene. When darkness was upon the face of the deep, God said, "Let there be light." And now in the worse than Egyptian gloom which hid *Him* from the eyes of the people, *His* witness is prepared in the secret of His presence, and burst upon the nation with words of power, and the spirit of power, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand;" He was to the nation as one forgotten. They had thought He was as a dead man, out of sight. The testimony of Elijah was to the living God, in opposition to the formality of ordinances or their superstitious idolatry. So Paul to the Thessalonians, commends them that they had turned from idols to serve the living God., So, writing to Timothy, he exhorts them that are ~~sick~~ to trust in the living God.

An age of apostasy can have much of the shew of religion. "Having the form of godliness, but denying

the power.” Such is prophetically announced in the New Testament, as the sign of the last times. But, blessed be God, “when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him.” So it was in the work of Elijah, “A man of like passions as we are,” yet endued with the Spirit from on high, he stood alone in his testimony borne up in the strength of the Almighty, a swift witness against the evil around him; yet bearing a marvellous testimony to God’s grace and faithfulness to a remnant amongst it. “He abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself.” Happy resting place for his poor distracted people! The darkness which covered the earth, served but to display the light of His Holiness more strikingly. “The Lord hath made all things for Himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Prov. xvi. 4).

The path of Elijah in service is not the object of this paper. He was introduced abruptly on the scene of his labours, and makes his exit in a manner equally striking. His mission was in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. His course is fulfilled, and the version of His service attained. Our chapter briefly announces his departure. “And it came to pass, when the Lord would take away Elijah into Heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the Prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace (iv. v. and vi.)

The conduct of Elisha is the subject of our meditation. Perseverance in the pursuit of an object is laudable, or the contrary, according to the character of that which is sought. Just as all the praise of union is in the subject; if good, it is commendable; if sinful, it is of the Devil. Whenever unity is pleaded for, and the truth of God made to bend to it, instead of IT to the truth of God, there is sin. The course of Elisha is striking; The rapture of

*"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"*

173

his master was at hand, and he knew it. God had communicated it to His Prophets; they were expecting the event. "Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal; and Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel." And Elisha resolutely persisted in bearing him company. Attachment to his master would vindicate his refusal to leave him. This is beautiful in its place. But Elisha was eager to learn more of Elijah's Master. He had dwelt with the servant of God, and rejoiced in the Grace and Power bestowed upon him, but his desires were quickened after the Lord God of Elijah. If such beauty and power was seen in the measure of God's gift to him, how earnestly might he desire a double portion! To "covet earnestly the best gifts" is enjoined as a precept, as well as to be "zealously affected in a good cause." This pre-eminently characterises Elisha. There are these trials of his constancy at Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho; but he was proof against the most urgent entreaties. "And now they reach Jordan, and Elijah took his mantle and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground."

The goal is reached; his faith shall be rewarded. "And it came to pass when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask, what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." The secret of his heart is discovered; first led to desire, then encouraged to expect, he asks largely, as assured of the power and goodness of God to dispense freely. "Elijah said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on and talked." What a picture is this, and yet how interesting, on the verge of separation yet eternally united. Their topic upon Earth, the communion of Heaven. Their conversation in Time, the theme of Eternity, God, the blessed union of both. "They still went on and talking"—how faith exalts poor humanity into calm, quiet dignity of deportment. Since the time of Enoch, had it not happened that one

alive in the body was caught up into Heaven. Yet great as was the event, and large as was their expectation, communion with God lifted them above it. They "still went on and talked." So it is, expectations from God find their answer in Him. The consciousness of being nobody, leaves the soul free to act above circumstances, and, leaning upon God to do away with human weakness. The one who could thus hold fellowship with his companion, on the eve of such a change, was the only man fit for it. Man has hard to struggle, to acquire equanimity of soul in seasons of excitement; the power of God bestows it. "Behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into Heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." And he saw him no more: yet, how stable his soul, how steadfast his purpose!—"and he took hold of his own clothes and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back and stood by the bank of Jordan. And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? And when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither, and Elisha went over."

How well he understood the word, "that in God's favour is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life." How eager to ascertain that he was the possessor of *that*. He was not content with the cloak of Elijah, his office and ministry; as the hart panted after the waterbrook, so his soul thirsted after God, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" It was the presence of God in the midst of His Saints, which brought about that excellent beauty and order which we read of in the acts of the Apostles, "Great grace was upon them all, and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul. "The kingdom of God is not in word only, but in deed and in power." "The Gospel was preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven."

Alas! Lord, how are our expectations to-day? How far short are we from honouring God by expecting

largely from Him. Not so with Elisha. He asked for a double portion of God's Spirit, and his faith is rewarded. Endued with powers from on high, he enters on his ministry; having received gifts he is eager to dispense them. How, with many, the character and the credit which arise from it, are the objects sought after! The form of godliness has no cross attached to it. The power of godliness, whilst leading into trial, yet gives strength to endure it. "Partakers of the sufferings, so also of the consolation." We lose sight of this.

Far different was the conduct of the sons of the Prophets. It is written in verse 7, "And fifty men of the sons of the Prophets, went and stood to view AFAR OFF, and these two stood by Jordan." Confidence in God brings His servants to draw nigh unto Him. If the sick and afflicted participated in the blessing, they must draw near to Jesus. "Then drew near publicans and sinners for to hear Him" (Luke xv.).

"But the sons of the Prophets stood to view afar off." Faith honours God, and is bestowed that we may honour Him. Faith apprehends His resources, and is encouraged to apply to Him. We can gather the state of heart of these sons of the Prophets, by their unbelieving request, as recorded in the 16th verse. "Lest, peradventure, the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send; and when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not; and when they came again to him (for he tarried at Jericho) he said unto them, Did not I say unto you, Go not?" Unbelief led them to stand afar off when Elijah was taken to God; and unbelief led them to search for him after his rapture.

And now we have Elisha in Jericho. We read, in 1 Kings, chap. xvi. and verse 34, "In his days [Ahab's] did Hiel, the Bethelite, build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram, his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which He spake by Joshua, the son of Nun." Thus marked was the presumption of Abiram

with the indignation of God, on his rebuilding Jericho. “Yet where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Rahab, the harlot, found favour of God, and was spared on the general destruction of Jericho (Joshua vi). The city was raised from its ruins in the presumption of man, and again should be a landmark of the grace of God to poor sinners. How blessed His ways, how past finding out! Elisha, endued with a double portion of God’s Spirit, is residing at Jericho. There was need in the city: there is grace and power to meet it. “And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of the city is pleasant, as my lord seeth; but the water is naught, and the ground barren.” How the soil of the human heart answers to this. God made man in His own image. “How is the fine gold become dim!” “The water is naught, and the ground of the human heart barren.” “The imagination of a man’s heart is only evil, and that continually.” “All flesh has corrupted its way.” But there is help in Israel concerning this thing. Our Lord Jesus said to the woman of Samaria by the well of Sychar, “Whosoever shall drink of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” There is bitterness in the cup of human existence. Very “smooth” do men find the ways of the world; vanity also, and vexation of spirit. The water is naught, and the ground “causeth to miscarry.” (see margin). Whatever is right in purpose is resisted by the will. Blessed announcement—“When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”! (Rom. v. 6.)

“And [Elisha] said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters, there shall not be from thence any more death; or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.”

He had received blessings, which he lives to dispense. He desired a double portion of God’s Spirit, and now he

makes use of it. His ways are the ways of God—how ignorant we are of Him. "Our foolish hearts are darkened. Professing ourselves to be wise, we become fools." Yet "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" hath shined in Jesus. Blessed heralds of His coming were such witnesses as Elisha. Blessed proofs do they give us of His ways. Alas! how sin has defaced our apprehension, and blinded our judgment. Oh for the faith of Elisha in the goodness of God, to bestow upon us all that we need. "He is able to supply all our need out of his fulness in Jesus." It is to be desired for its own sake, but far more for the blessing of others. God, happy in giving, would have His children like-minded. He would fill us, that we might overflow to others, according to that word in John vii. 38, "He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The inhabitants of Jericho accredit God's servant, and bring their need before him. The presence of God is with His servant; and their wants are supplied. "The waters were healed." Very different the reception he met with at Bethel. Unbelief had hardened their hearts. The form of godliness was attached to the place. It was in Bethel that Abraham had raised up an altar. It was there that Jacob renewed his vows unto the Lord. *Luz* (departure) was its name at the first, Bethel "the house of God" it was now called. But now, with the latter name still attached to it, its former character is sustained, "the form of godliness denying the power." "Jesus came to His own, and His own received Him not." So it was with Elisha: we read, "And he went up from thence into Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up thou bald head."

Alas! if these children could thus treat the aged, what character had their parents? Double infamy attaches to them. God's prophet despised, God's word set at nought—how certain the consequences! "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." There was blessing for the inhabitants of Jericho; there is wailing, lamentation and woe, for the

dwellers in Bethel. The mouths of the children were full of cursing and bitterness. The tenderest of hearts once bid them welcome—"Suffer little children to come unto me." How bitter the sorrow to behold such hardened in sin, the living epistles of their parents' iniquity. "God is not mocked." "As a man soweth, so shall he reap." In Leviticus xxvi. 21, it is written, "And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children." The witness for God's grace was also the witness of righteousness; "and Elisha turned back and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tore forty and two children of them. And he went from thence to Mount Carmel, and from thence he returned unto Samaria." "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Tim. iii. 16.)

---

## THE WRECK.

"God is a living and a present God. If His people on earth (where alone they can) have forgotten God, even the Father in heaven, and ceased to walk in the light of a risen and ascended Lord—so owning the gracious presence of the Spirit—they may, as men, have *wrecked* themselves and their circumstances in time; but God is God still, and in Him is their hope.

"And here (I take it) a question arises, '*How are we to get on in this state of things?*' We cannot walk as though there had been no wreck: the vessel, if not in atoms, or gone even into the separate pieces of which it was formed, is not what it was, or what God made it at first; neither would it become us, as those connected with the sin of marring it, to deny this. Moreover, God is not now walking in *that* path. His testimony is not now in the unshattered church of Pentecost; but it is in grace and mercy, shown in a people *preserved*, spite, and in the midst, of the wreck. To make the wreck, or the *perception* of it, the centralising point, were madness and sin. If the mercy of God in preserving in Christ Jesus, and entire separation from the sin (moral and spiritual) around, are our solace—'The obedience of faith' will solve all our difficulties."

B.



N<sup>o</sup>. XVIII.

## RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD.

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.”

THE Lord Jesus, in his conversation with Nicodemus, assumes his own singular place, as the authoritative teacher, and at the same time as the great doctrine of God. These are inseparable, and we may almost say reciprocal truths. The knowledge of Him as the great doctrine of God, necessarily leads to the acknowledgment of His authority as a teacher; and if he really be owned as a teacher come from God, then, as a necessary consequence, He will be owned as the grand comprehensive doctrine of God. It is thus that the Apostle speaks, “But ye have not so *learned* Christ; if so be ye have *heard* him, and have been *taught by Him*, as the truth is in Jesus, etc.” The Lord, as the teacher, teaches Himself, and he that hath an ear hears Him, and by faith receives Him into the heart. He is *the* truth. *Reality* is only to be found in Him. “Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are *a lie*; to be laid in the balance, they are altogether vanity.” “Verily, every man in his best estate is altogether vanity.”<sup>a</sup>

In death we learn the reality of man. “In Adam all die.” But so emphatically is Jesus “*the* truth,” that

<sup>a</sup> Ps. xxxix. 5. The note of Bythner on this passage is interesting—“*τα συμπαντα ματαιοτης*. Sept: quoad omnia vanitas, ita ut vanitas et miseria, quæ per alias creaturas frustatim spargitur, in uno homine aggregata videatur: sicque homo evadit compendium omnium vanitatum, quæ in creaturis extant. Cum inanimis, subjacet mutationi, corruptioni; cum animatis, alterationi, morti; cum sensilibus, lætitiæ, mœrori; cum angelis (qui non servarunt suam originem, sed reliquerunt suum domicilium) inconstantia, etc. Sicque in barathrum peccatorum ruit.” Blessed contrast—“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!”

the only blessed knowledge of God is obtained by knowing Him. He is the reality of God to us, especially to us as sinners. "God manifested in the flesh." "Immanuel, God with us." And the only one who ever stood in personal acceptance with God as man is the same Jesus—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Church is set by God as "the pillar and ground of the truth." It knows the mysteries on which it is founded from the Incarnation to the Cross; from the Cross to the Ascension at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. By this knowledge, the Church is enabled to judge things in the light in which they are regarded by God. When *the* Light came into the world, it cast its rays upon "every man," and shewed what he was in the sight of God; and when "the truth" came, it superseded those things which were merely its shadows. Gracious and interesting indeed were the ordinances of Israel. They were rightly cherished by them; the fathers might, in the fear of God, recount their origin to their children;<sup>b</sup> the spirit of Nationalism was found in these ordinances, and it was in them a godly spirit. But when the reality came, even Jesus, "the truth," then, to maintain these ordinances against Him, the substance of them, was not only a proof of their blind infatuation, but was also the deepest insult to God. How touching is the word of Christ by the Spirit. "Israel would none of me." "He came to His own, and His own received Him not." But He goes on in the world as the Light of the world, casting His own light on one object and another as He meets with them. "As long as I am in the world I am the Light of the world." How interesting it is to trace Him displacing one highly prized ordinance after another, by presenting Himself; and in one instance, at least, superseding a venerated tradition. John the Baptist gracefully retires, in order to render Jesus the prominent object, bearing witness to Him as the Lamb of God, the Son of God, and the Baptiser with the Holy Ghost. He owns Him to be the Bridegroom whose voice cheered him, and he took indeed an

<sup>b</sup> Exodus xii. 26. 27.

*Rudiments of the World.*

181

honoured but retired place, as the friend of the Bridegroom. When Jesus enters on His own ministry, after allowing His own glory to show itself in Cana of Galilee, and casting out from His Father's house the buyers and sellers, he sets aside the ancient ordinance of the Brazen Serpent by taking its place Himself. In the close of their wilderness history, the Brazen Serpent stands forth as the gracious intervention of God on behalf of a disobedient and gainsaying people, and under the shelter of which, they had entered Canaan. But Jesus connecting the Brazen Serpent with His own proper person, presents it in a wider range than to Israel, even to all the world, that "*Whosoever* believed in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

As He goes on, He comes to Jacob's well, a place hallowed by the most interesting traditions; but how do they all vanish before Him who is "the Fountain of life," and by the knowledge of Himself communicating a well of living water to others. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Israel's God had not forgotten his ancient name. "I am the Lord that healeth thee;" although Israel had by their disobedience forfeited such a relationship. The Pool of Bethesda from time to time proved to "the disobedient and gainsaying people" that Jehovah remembered that name; whilst the waiting and oft-times disappointed "impotent folk" too plainly proved to them their broken relationship with the Lord in this character. But the time was now come for their God again to present Himself, as "I am the Lord that healeth thee." He appears at the Pool of Bethesda, and says not as of old, "If thou wilt diligently hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians, *for I am the Lord that healeth thee*;" but in the consciousness of His own healing and life-giving power, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Thus He sets aside the Pool of Bethesda, by presenting Himself in His own abounding

grace as the Healer, not only of bodily malady, but of that as a palpable demonstration that there was in Him and in Him alone, healing virtue against the deeper ills of death and judgment; and as the reality of the Pool of Bethesda he complains, “Ye *will* not come to me that ye might have life.”

At the feast of the Passover, and in the wilderness, in the sixth chapter of John, Jehovah Jesus has to do with the same unbelieving people as He had to bear with long before His manifestation in the flesh, forty years in the wilderness. They boasted of the manna on which their fathers fed, but forgot that their fathers had loathed it, as they did now in His person, “*the true bread* which had come down from heaven.” In His flesh and blood there was to be recognised the true Passover, and that which answered to the flesh and water given in answer to the murmurings of their fathers in the wilderness. But when in Himself he took up all these interesting ordinances, and presented Himself as their reality, “This is the bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead; he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever”—it only served to call out from the Jews the same “murmuring” and “striving” as in their fathers of old. “Massah” and “Meribah” were acted over again.

The Feast of Tabernacles, the joy of the land enhanced by the remembrance of the wilderness, is also taken up by Jesus, and displaced by Him. It is the knowledge of Him by Israel which in due time will enable them to have real joy and gladness in their own land, when penitent, converted, and restored, they will “see Him and believe.” And it is the knowledge of Him *now by faith*, which can alone bring the joy of heaven to cheer the tedium of the wilderness. “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, 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. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified).”

*Rudiments of the World.*

183

It is the knowledge of Jesus as *the truth*, which alone manifests the character of rudiments or elements of the world. The expression is applied by the Apostle Paul to ordinances instituted by God Himself, as well as to the current philosophical dogmas or ordinances. As elements or rudiments simply, it is applied by the same Apostle in the Hebrews, to that measure of the knowledge of Christ, great and blessed as it was, which might have been gathered from the ancient oracles of God, but which fell amazingly below the fulness of that gospel, preached "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."

The very expression "rudiments of the world," until Jesus cast His own light upon it, could have had no intelligible meaning. There is a suitable reverence in speaking of the things of God by inspired men; and the difference is great whether they be spoken of absolutely or relatively, as regarded according to their original institution, or as superseded by Christ. Jew and Gentile without any minor subdivision, are regarded as "all the world" by God. The first stood in a distinct covenant relation with God. Jehovah was the God of Israel. The Gentiles stood only in natural relationship to God, "that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him." Christ is ushered in as "a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel."

Nothing can be more solemn than the giving of the law on the part of Jehovah, or its reception by the people by the hand of Moses. But after the people had corrupted themselves, how gracious as well as solemn are the ordinances given by Jehovah to Moses "out of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Lev. i. 1). It was by these ordinances that they were separated from other people to be the people of Jehovah. The observance of these ordinances was their holiness. "Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean; and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast or fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean, and ye shall be holy unto me; for I the Lord am holy and have severed you

from other people, that ye should be mine." Their holiness consisted "in meats and drinks."

The distribution of the law into moral and ceremonial, will not account for the Apostle speaking in so disparaging a tone of the ordinances of God; because the jealousy of Jehovah was especially manifested in vindicating the sanctity of the *ceremonial* law. "Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not, and there came out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." The soundness of the distinction between the moral<sup>c</sup> and ceremonial law is questionable in itself; for so far as access to God was opened to Israel, it was through the ceremonial law; and it was by this law also that the blessed truth of "righteousness without law" was most prominently witnessed (Rom. iii. 21). But God is to be sanctified in them who come nigh Him; and it is for Him alone to prescribe the way. To neglect that way, or to attempt another, is the highest insult to God. The "holy ointment," and "the perfume," were both most minutely ordered, and so solemnly sanctioned, that the imitation of either of them was to be visited with the sentence, "He shall be cut off from his people" (Ex. xxx. 22. 28).

The knowledge of the glory of the person of Christ casts such a light on the ancient ordinances of God, as to make the things which in themselves were a burdensome yoke, to be viewed by faith as lively pictures. There were typical persons, and typical acts, which foreshadowed Christ in his offices and acts. But no *typical person*,

<sup>c</sup> That the end of the commandment is charity, perfect love to God and to man, is a truth recognised alike by the Law and the Gospel. But the Law lacked power to enforce the carrying out of its own commandments. It was "weak through the flesh." It could not "*give life*," which was the thing needed. The Gospel is "the Law of the Spirit of Life;" so that there is, in every believer, that life communicated by the Spirit, which has in it the principle of perfect love to God and to man; and when the time comes for deliverance from the flesh, and actual conformity to Him unto whose image the Saints are predestinated to be conformed, the practice will be co-extensive with the principle, and not only as now will "the righteousness of the law be fulfilled *in us*," but *by us* also. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

could properly foreshadow the person of Christ. The *revelation* of the glory of the person of the Son by the Father was the one thing needed. All was enigmatical till He came, of whom it was written in the volume of the book, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God." "The Light," even Jesus, throwing its rays on Jewish ordinances turned bondage into liberty; but the converse is solemnly true—the removal of the eye from Christ, and recurrence even to the ancient ordinances of God, was not merely turning back from liberty to bondage—but, it was a nullifying of the grace of God, making the sacrifice of Christ needless, and an insult to the Holy Ghost. Such has ever been and is still the principle of making "religious duties" supplemental to man's defective righteousness. It is this principle which calls forth the most cutting reproof from the Apostle, and at the same time leads him to speak in terms so disparaging of the ancient ordinances of God.

Again all the ancient ordinances failed, except in the faintest shadow, to convey the idea of the reality of the sacrifice of Christ. These ordinances testified aloud the purifying power of blood, and that "without shedding of blood is no remission;" but their repetition testified their own inefficacy—the victims commanded to be offered could never remove guilt from the conscience; for there was no *real* transfer of guilt to the head of the victim. Let but "the One to come" appear, covering all these sacrifices by his one sacrifice, and forbidding repetition by such a sacrifice as his own being needed only *once* to be offered, and what an interpretation is afforded of the Jewish ritual! The soul is almost lost in contemplating the reality of the Holy One become the sin-bearer, bearing it in his own body on the tree; bearing it in his innermost soul under the waves and billows of the wrath of God, when it pleased God to make his soul an offering for sin. When shall we learn *the truth*, the *reality* of the sacrifice of Christ? What is it that hinders our having continually before our eyes Jesus Christ evidently set forth crucified among us! Is there a shade of suspicion as to His proper personal glory as the Son? such a suspicion subverts the truth. Is the

thought harboured that He did "need" something to be done on His own account? then is the very idea of His suffering *for us* nullified. Is it that the anguish of His soul under the stripes of divine justice is overlooked in contemplating His exquisite bodily torture on the cross? then will there be hesitancy in the soul as to the actual removal of the guilt of sin by the offering of Christ. Is it hard to receive the truth that every sacrifice and offering was answered and covered, and therefore set aside by the act of Christ offering HIMSELF once on the cross? then the dignity of the Sufferer is feebly apprehended. Is it that there is backwardness in the soul to regard the one offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all as the only answer to God for all and every sin? then is the doctrine of God inverted; and the sacrifice of Christ is made to be the remembrancer of sin, instead of being the speaking testimony of God to the conscience, as that by which sin is for ever put away. Is it that we take our own instead of the estimate of God as to the perfection of Christ's sacrifice? then are we off the ground of faith, and peace is morally impossible.

Israel, comparing itself with the nations, might well glory in their advantages, "their civil and religious privileges," as men say; but the moment the glory of Christ bursts on the soul, then that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. The attempt to re-introduce the past and fading glory is characterised by the conclave of the Apostles, "as subverting the soul" (Acts, xv). The Apostle Peter speaks of his Jewish privileges as "a yoke, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear," and at the same time testified unto one power alone of purifying the heart, even faith in Jesus presented by God himself as the substance of all sacrifices. Peter and his fellow Apostles had all stood in a certain relationship to God, although they might little understand what the relationship really was—but it was a relationship of *nearness* to God compared with that of Gentiles; as the Apostle testifies—"and came and preached peace, unto you which



*Rudiments of the World.*

187

were *far off*, and to them which were *nigh*." But when one like Peter had seen "the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," then was the discovery made to the soul, that however well adapted were these ordinances to man as *in the flesh* and *in the world*, they were entirely destitute of any efficacy to meet his case as a condemned sinner, or to bring him in his own conscience into real nearness to God. He became conscious that he needed redemption out of that very religious standing in which he had gloried. Peter addresses the abiding principle announced in Leviticus—"Be ye holy, for I am holy"—but with what an intensity of meaning to believers in Jesus; "forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, *from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers*—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

In strict keeping with the statements of Peter as to the light in which the holy ordinances of God are regarded by one who "knew the Lord,"—even "a yoke,"—"vain traditionary conversation,"—we find Paul writing to the Galatians. He speaks of such ordinances as infantine "even so we, when we were children (infants) were in bondage under the elements (or rudiments) of the world, but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." It is in this passage that first in order we find the expression "elements (or rudiments) of the world," applied to the law, and there are several very significant statements in it. First we have the same idea of "bondage" (as Peter had expressed by yoke) amplified by the idea of utter incapacity to rise above the spirit of a servant. A person might be a son and heir under the law, but by the very fact of being under the law, he was hindered from acting as well as from having the spirit of the one or the other. Again these very ordinances bound down the spirit to the world; they were a hindrance instead of a help to the soul's rising above the world into direct intercourse

with God. The Apostle is here illustrating great leading principles—he is showing what the *principle* of ordinances is. He was correcting those who were tempted to go back from “the liberty which they had in Christ to be again entangled in the yoke of bondage.” The peculiar force of the temptation was, that it appeared to reverence God by engrafting the ancient institutions of God on faith in Christ. This he sternly resisted. With Christ before his eyes as the blessed reality of all these institutions, he hesitates not to speak of them as infantine and slavish, as hindering access to the Father and preventing intercourse with heaven. He is not speaking of them absolutely, for they were beautiful in their time and place (i. e. the world). But God was now bringing out heavenly and eternal realities. God had sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the law. In order to this, it needed that Christ himself be made a curse. Every thing followed from such a real redemption, deriving its efficacy from the real glory of Him who was made a curse. Such a redemption delivered from the curse of the law, and from out of the world, into the real liberty of children in the actual presence of God as their Father. The slightest recurrence to the old institutions would mar the reality of all these blessings. This stands out in stronger relief, when the Apostle rebukes the Galatians, for observing “days, and months and times and years.” These in themselves were holy joyous and solemn seasons to Israel (see Lev. xxiii). But the fulness of time had come—God had sent forth his Son, and in virtue of His Person, the blessings which flowed forth from his redemption were eternal; “eternal redemption,” “everlasting righteousness,” “eternal inheritance,” “eternal life,”—in a word eternal relationship with God—sons—*now* crying “Abba-Father,” and waiting for the manifestation of Jesus to be like Him. After the light brought in by the Son, and his work on the cross, and the reception of the Holy Ghost in consequence of that work, by faith in Him, and not by works of the law, we discover the reason of the Apostle’s using language so depreciatory in speaking of the law itself. “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are

*Rudiments of the World.*

189

known of Him, how turn ye again [back] to *the weak and beggarly elements*, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"

God is pleased to profane his own ordinances when his people have polluted them (Ezek. xxiv. 21); but he often uses this profanation to set forth the excellent glory of his Son. When men, however, turn back to ordinances they *profane* the Son—to uphold them is to tread under foot the Son of God" (Heb. x. 29).

In writing to the Colossians, the Apostle classes Jewish ordinances and Gentile philosophical dogmas under the same category, "*rudiments of the world.*" But he does so in the way of contrast with that which is immeasurably higher. It is not needful for Christians to ascertain the measure of influence exercised on the moral condition of the Gentiles by the philosophical schools. It is difficult to believe that such an accumulation of wisdom was of no real benefit to mankind (Rom. i. 32), but the difficulty lies a great deal more in the offensiveness of such a statement to the pride of intellect, than in want of evidence as to the fact. The Apostle, however, had not to discuss the question as to the influence of philosophy, but to state the humiliating result. "For after that in the *wisdom* of God the world *by wisdom knew not God*, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The introduction of human wisdom into the church was regarded by the Apostle as a foreign element, the tendency of which was to degrade the church of God, and to reduce divine certainties to the level of human speculation. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, *after the rudiments of the world*, and not after Christ, for in him dwelleth *all the fulness* of the Godhead bodily, and ye are *complete* [filled to the full] in him." It is through philosophy, that Christ, as the great doctrine of God, Christ, as the infallible teacher, teaching that which none other could teach or even guess at, "for no man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven," has been dragged down from His lofty eminence; and the saints themselves *spoiled*

of their choice blessings and high study; "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge being hid in Christ." Christianity, as it passes in the world, is regarded as one among many systems for the benefit of mankind. It has a place given to it among various moral and philosophical schemes, as "a rudiment of the world." But its very grandeur, which makes it so comprehensive and at the same time so exclusive, is either unseen or disputed. It was the dignity of the Head, and consequent dignity of relation to the Head, which so occupied the soul of the Apostle, that made him fear the introduction of that which was most prized in the world, as loss and degradation. Men value (as they say) *practical* Christianity, because it is beneficial to man; but they know *it* not, as respects the dignity of Christ, and the great purpose of God with respect to Him. Is the soul resting on a single object, the heart's affections drawn out to that object, the mind intently bent on the study of that object—even Christ? Is that practical Christianity in man's estimation? Is the fulness of Christ as the Head in which everything centres, "wisdom and knowledge," "principality and power," so sublime a thought, that every other subject of study becomes secondary? Is it possible that after the revelation of Him, "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," that the only science of which men are contentedly ignorant, should be the science of eternal life? "This is life eternal, that they might *know* Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Alas! philosophy and vain deceit have indeed "*spoiled*" Christians. These "rudiments of the world," received at first as an aid, have displaced Christ and degraded Christianity. It is not needful to speak disparagingly of the power of the human mind, or of the wonders achieved by these powers, when we speak of them absolutely. But in speaking of them relatively, that is "according to Christ," what have they effected? Have they led man into the path of happiness? Have they discovered "the truth?" or does not the problem remain to this day to be solved, so far as the human mind is concerned,—"*What is truth?*" It was man's reasoning which led him to "change the truth of God into a

lie" (Rom. i. 21, 25). And if the attempt has been made in more recent times to reclaim man from superstition by the mere powers of the human mind, it has only led to scepticism, infidelity, or practical atheism. "God," says the preacher, "made man upright, and he has sought out many inventions." But none of his inventions serve to deliver him out of the actual condition in which he is as man. Death and judgment are still before him, and he remediless against both the one and the other. When the soul once grasps the meaning of "not after Christ," many a profitless speculation is dismissed, and much prying curiosity prevented. It is not the haughty superciliousness of ignorance under the garb of wisdom, which causes us to see on what level the highest powers of the human mind necessarily stand, but the consciousness of divine teaching respecting the Son of God, His work and His fulness, so far beyond the reach of any stretch of the human intellect, which causes the Saint to regard many things of intellectual interest as "*rudiments of the world.*" We do not attain the end of shewing the vanity of man by degrading him, and denying his powers; but by contrast between man in his best estate, and Christ risen and glorified. It is not by any induction of facts, although that might go a great way, that we prove the utter disappointment of man with the result of his own efforts; but by bringing the coming glory of the Lord Jesus to shed its truthful light upon them. "*Behold, it is not of the Lord of Hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity; for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*" But there is no disappointment to faith. "He that trusteth in the Lord shall never be ashamed." Faith is conversant with the blessed result of the wisdom of God in redemption, and thus by the power of "things which are not, brings to nought things which are."

The Apostle is led from warning against Gentile philosophy, to warn against the more plausible seduction of Jewish ordinances; by shewing the reality to be in Christ of that of which those ordinances were only shadows (Col. ii. 17). It is a strange phenomenon to see how the wise and prudent in the things of this world grasp at

that which is solid, but in the things of God they grasp the shadow and reject the substance. With Christ before him as the substance, the Apostle classes the Jewish ordinances and Gentile dogmas together, as alike vain and profitless. “And you, being dead in your sins and *the uncircumcision of your flesh*, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of *ordinances* that was *against us*, which was *contrary to us*, and *took it out of the way*, nailing it to His cross.” There was no more life even in the ordinances of God Himself, than in the philosophical dogmas. They alike barred access to God; so far from being helpful, they were discovered by the light of Christ, to be *against* and *contrary* to the Saint. The very things which man has called in as aids, are discovered by the light of Christ to be hindrances to the exercise of spiritual life. *They bind down to the world*; “truth alone makes free indeed.” Herein is the misery of many real Christians—their souls are occupied with rudiments of the world, instead of the heavenly realities which are in Christ.

Are “we dead to sin” through Christ, in that “he died unto sin *once*.” Blessed truth! But do our souls know the equally important and connected truth, that we are “dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world,” and are introduced as risen with Him into the realities, “which are above?” Then “why” (asks the Apostle), “as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?” Rites, ceremonies, decency, and order, as men insist, and the philosophy of the schools, are, in the Apostolic sense, “rudiments of the world,” to which the believer has died, in order that he may “hold the Head,” and draw from Him in whom “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”—all that pertains to life and godliness.

The passage (Heb. v. 12) may be reviewed in connection with the preceding passages. “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first *principles* of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat.” We have not actually the expression “rudiments of the world,” but there is

substantially the same thought. The great danger to which believing Hebrews were exposed was relapse into their old forms, justly indeed venerated by them, until superseded by the glorious person of the "Son." They were in danger of bringing HIM down to the level of their hereditary thoughts of Messiah; and adjusting their worship accordingly. The grandeur of the opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews, at once defines its object. An Israelite instructed in his own privileges, "much every way," could only forego them by the apprehension of a dignity proceeding from the same God immensely higher than that which he already possessed. Such a dignity the Apostle presents as held out by the God of his fathers in the person of "the Son," one in whom there was *essential* glory. By how much He excelled in his own person angels, Moses, or Aaron, by so much is there a dignity and efficacy in his ministry, work, and offices, in every respect above all which was to be found in their own ordinances. Others had been dignified by the glory set on them, it was his sole prerogative to throw his own proper glory into all that which he undertook. This consideration explains the awful solemnity of the warnings found in the 6th and 10th chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews, warnings so awful that hardly a saint in one stage or other of his experience has escaped being exercised by them. And well it is that it should be so, for how readily is Christ displaced from his rightful supremacy in the heart. If He be, as assuredly He is, the grand ordinance of God, the recurrence to the ancient ordinances of God Himself, which in their highest sense, were bare shadows of a wondrous reality, must be deeply offensive to God. It was really "drawing back unto perdition;" turning aside from Him, who in Himself and by what He has wrought, is the salvation of God, to "dead works" which have no power "to purge the conscience." How much the solemnity of these warnings was needed, let the downward course of the Church testify, boasting of its temples, priesthood, rituals, and ceremonies, things which when viewed in the light of these warnings plainly declare "a falling away."

These warnings admit of a pointed application to our own consciences. They present to us a great principle,

viz. the great danger of resting in those truths which are common to believers under every dispensation, to the neglect of those which are characteristic of our own dispensation. The result of neglecting the truths which are special and characteristic, is uncertainty even as to the truths which are common to all dispensations. "Repentance from dead works, faith towards God, the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment," are presented by the apostle as "the principles of the doctrine of Christ" (or as in the margin, "the word of the beginning of Christ") such truths as a believer, before the manifestation of the glory of the Son, and of his accomplished work, might fully have recognised. These are the truths from which, as a basis, the apostle would lead them on to perfection, so as to instruct them in the new and higher order of priesthood, in order to sustain and refresh their souls in the course of struggle, temptation, and conflict. Besides this, the knowledge of this priesthood would actually lead their souls *into the same order* of worship on earth, as they would more happily know in heaven. It would be their alone power of deliverance from "the rudiments of the world." Actually we do find a large portion of those really quickened by the Spirit, in much uncertainty as to the peace of their souls. They have not "gone on to perfection," so as to realise the present priestly service of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, as the gracious provision of God to maintain their souls in realised nearness to Himself, even in that very nearness into which they are brought by Christ, who "suffered *once* for sins, the just for the unjust to bring us to God." It is an undeniable truth, that we cannot learn in heaven itself a deeper truth than the cross of Christ; but it is by following on to know the Lord in all His present gracious ministry—a ministry, the value of which unfolds itself, in proportion as we are learning experimentally what we are in ourselves, and *where* we are, that our souls alone enter into the depths of the cross. On the other hand, the very liberty of entering "into the holiest of all," only magnifies the wondrous power of that cross, as being the path which leads us into so privileged a place.



*Rudiments of the World.*

195

But in fault of "going on to perfection," the soul becomes busied about many circumstantials, which the Spirit characterises as "rudiments of the world," and instead of enjoying and living in the power of heavenly realities, has need to be taught what be "the first principles of the oracles of God."

Such, alas, is the fascinating power of "rudiments of the world," that at the present moment it appears the peculiar danger of the church. Wherever they are introduced, it is truly sorrowful to witness in those who are really Christ's, the manifest decline of spirituality. Such expressions as, "Beware lest any man spoil you,"—"Let no man beguile you," become pregnant with meaning. The real point at issue is now, as it ever has been, whether the world civilised, or even Christianised, or Christ himself is the object of our hearts. Are we content with perfection in Christ? or do we seek something besides what we are, and what we have in Him? The arduous ministry of the apostle was to present "every man perfect in Christ Jesus," by not allowing any foreign element, which, pretending to embellish, would in reality obscure the dignity of the believer in Christ. If we are desirous of attainment, and O that it may be so! may it be according to the tenor of the apostle's prayer, "That we might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that we might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good word, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

PRESBUTES.

---

\*.\* Note, page 179. Hebrews xiii. 8. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever:"—How blessed a contrast is this to "All things are vanity," as to every man — LXX. Ps. xxxix. 5, on which Bythner thus remarks:—

"Every man is all vanity;" as all is vanity, so the vanity and misery which are scattered piecemeal among other creatures, seem in man alone to be collected together. And thus man stands forth as the compendium of all the vanities, which exist in creatures. With inanimate, he is subject to change—corruption; with animate, to alteration—death; with those which have feelings, to joy and grief; with angels (who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation), to inconstancy, etc.; and thus he rushes into the sinners' abyss.

N<sup>o</sup>. XIX.NUMBERS.<sup>a</sup>

THE Book of Leviticus contains—the revelation of God sitting upon the throne, where He places Himself that He may be approached by the people—that of the priesthood brought into proximity to the throne, as far as men could have access to it; and then, the promulgation of the commandments relative to these two great facts, in that which concerned the generality of the people.

In Numbers, we have the service and walk of the people, consequently, that which relates to the Levites and the journey through the wilderness. Now, as Leviticus ended with regulations and warnings respecting the possession of the land, and that with regard to the rights of God, and consequently to the rights of His people, the book of Numbers brings us to the entrance of the people into the land at the end of the wilderness journey, and speaks of that grace, the effect of which was to justify the people, notwithstanding all their unfaithfulnesses.

The first thing to be noticed is, that God numbers His people exactly, and arranges them, once thus recognised, around His tabernacle: sweet thought, to be thus recognised and placed around God Himself!

Three tribes on each side of the court kept the tabernacle of the Lord. Levi alone was excepted in order to be consecrated to the service of God: therefore the tribe of Levi encamped according to their families directly round the court. Moses, Aaron and the priests were placed opposite the entrance whereby God was approached. The least things in the word deserve to be noticed. Ps. lxxx. is entirely opened by the position of the tribes. The spirit of the Psalmist asks, in the last days of the desolation of Israel, for God to lead them and to manifest His power as He did when He led them through the wilderness; he asks for the power of His

<sup>a</sup> This has been perused by the Author since being translated and printed. ED.

presence on the ark of testimony, as God manifested it when it was said, at the moment when Israel set forward, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered." Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh were the three tribes nearest the ark in the camp of Israel; that is why it is said, in the second verse of the Psalm, "before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh."

In the setting forward of the camp, the order given was, that the tabernacle surrounded by the Levites, should be in the midst of the tribes, as it was when the camp was at rest.

In chap. ii. we find that another arrangement took place as a matter of fact.

In chap. iii. we have the Levites set apart, according to the thoughts of God, for *service*. They are a figure of the Church, or rather of the members of the Church in their service, even as the priests are the figure of the Church drawing near to the throne of God.

The Levites were first-fruits offered to God, for they were instead of the first-born in whom God had taken Israel to Himself, when he smote the first-born of the Egyptians. Thus it is, that the Church is as the first-fruits of the world, holy to the Lord. The number of the first-born being greater than that of the Levites, those that were over were redeemed, as a sign that they belonged to God, and the Levites became God's possession for His service (ver. 12, 13). It is the same with regard to the Church: it belongs wholly to God to serve Him down here. But, besides, the Levites were entirely given to Aaron the high-priest; for the service of the Church or of its members is wholly dependent on Christ in the presence of God, and has no other object but that which concerns Him, and that which is connected with the service which He Himself renders to God in the true tabernacle. The service of the Church has no value (on the contrary, it is sin), except so far as it is united to the priesthood. Consequently our service is absolutely good for nothing, if it be not linked, in its details, with our communion with the Lord and with the priesthood of Christ. Christ is "a Son over His own house"; "there are differences of administrations, but the

land, according to the government of God, his heart was there nevertheless. He recalls the contempt of the pleasant land at Kadesh-barnea, and severely rebukes Reuben and Gad. However the tribes engaging to go equally forward until the land be conquered, he grants their request and settles them in the land, with the half-tribe of Manasseh. Nevertheless, the history of the holy Book shews us that these tribes were the first to suffer and to fall into the hands of the Gentiles. "Do you not know," says Ahab, "that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and the possession of the Syrians?" Happy they who patiently wait for the blessings of God, till they have gone over Jordan, and who, in the meanwhile, take patience for their portion, rather than the blessings which are on this side, though they are the gifts of the providence of God! They are less secure. There are no frontiers like Jordan, appointed by God as such in His counsels of grace. If God numbers His people name by name, He shows at the same time His government and His faithfulness; for, while keeping them, yet there were none of the first numbering left, save Caleb and Joshua. Also does He remember all their long journey through the wilderness; each stage is before His eyes and in His memory; and now He lays down, in principle, the possession of the land by the people, and the total destruction of the inhabitants who were to be entirely driven away and not abide in the midst of Israel, else those who were left would be a torment for the people, and God also would do unto Israel, as He had done to those nations. It is a dangerous charity, then, that which spares the enemies of God, or rather which spares itself, through unbelief, in its conflicts with them, and which is soon led to form with them connexions that bring the judgment which those enemies have inherited, and themselves also deserved. Finally God takes care of His people in all respects; He marks the limits of the country they were to enjoy. He settles the taking possession, the portion of His servants, the Levites, which were not to have any inheritance. Six of their cities were to be refuges for those who had unwilfully committed murder; a precious type of Israel

themselves, who, in their ignorance killed the Christ. In this sense, God judges them to be innocent. They are guilty of blood which they could not bear; but guilty in their ignorance like Saul himself, who is a striking figure, as an abortion (*εκτρωμα*, 1 Cor. 15, 8), of this same position. Such a murderer, however, remains out of his possession, until the death of the priest living in those days. And so it will be with regard to Israel. As long as Christ retains his actual priesthood above, Israel will remain out of their possession, but under the safe keeping of God. The servants of God at least, who have no inheritance, serve as a refuge to them, and understand their position and welcome them as being under the keeping of God. When this priesthood above, such as it is, ends, Israel will return into their possession. If they did before, it would be to pass over the blood of Christ, and the land would be defiled thereby. Now, the actual position of Christ is always a testimony of this rejection, and of His death in the midst of the people. Therefore God keeps the inheritance such as He has appointed it (xxxvi). All this then presents, not the passage itself through the desert, but the relations between that position and the possession of the promises and of the rest which follows. It is in the plains of Moab that Moses bore testimony, and a true testimony, to the perverseness of the people; but where God justified them, shewing His counsels of grace, in taking their side against the enemy, without even their knowledge, and pursued all the designs of His grace and of His determinate purpose for the complete establishment of His people in the land He had promised them. Blessed be His name! Happy are we, in being allowed to study His ways!

D.

---

### NUMBERS.

The name NUMBERS is probably taken from the LXX, in which *Ἀριθμοί* is the title of the Book. In Hebrew *במדבר* is the title; which is the fifth word in the first verse of its first chapter, "And the Lord spake unto Moses *in the Wilderness*."—Ed.

12\*

N<sup>o</sup>. XX.

## NUMBERS, CHAPTER VI.

SINNING BY THE DEAD AND ATONEMENT MADE;  
OR, THE NAZARITE DEFILED AND RESTORED.

THE 6th of Numbers is here presented arranged in this manner, followed by a brief explanation thereof, in order to show its typical application to the WHOLE ELECT FAMILY—to those destined for *Heaven*, in the first place; and next, to those for whom *earthly blessing* is prepared in the kingdom.

---

## THE THREEFOLD VOW OF SEPARATION.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord” (verses 1, 2).

## ABSTINENCE FROM WINE.

He shall separate himself from WINE and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk” (verses 3, 4).

## THE HAIR SUFFERED TO GROW.

“All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head; until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of THE HAIR OF HIS HEAD GROW” (verse 5).

## SEPARATION FROM THE DEAD.

“All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall come at NO DEAD BODY. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die; because the consecration of his

*The Nazarite Vow.*

237

God is upon his head (ver. 6, 7). All the days of his separation he is HOLY UNTO THE LORD" (ver. 6—8).

## THE DAYS OF SEPARATION.

An undefined period, according to the *Nazarite's choice*, during which he keeps his vow, as above.

## THE NAZARITE DEFILED—HIS CLEANSING.

"And if any MAN DIE VERY SUDDENLY BY HIM, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration; then he (having been *unclean seven days* see Numb. xix. 19), shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing (namely, by the ashes of the *red heifer*, with the *water of separation*, see Numb. xix. 12), on the SEVENTH DAY SHALL HE SHAVE IT" (verse 9).

## SEVEN DAYS

Of uncleanness.

## THE DAYS OF SEPARATION BEGIN AFRESH.

"And on the EIGHTH DAY he shall bring TWO TURTLES, or TWO YOUNG PIGEONS, to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the priest shall offer the one for a *sin* offering, and the other for a *burnt* offering, and make an atonement for him, for that he SINNED BY THE DEAD, and shall hallow his head (as in verse 5), that same day. And he shall CONSECRATE UNTO THE LORD THE DAYS OF HIS SEPARATION (as in verse 8), and shall bring a LAMB of the first year for a *trespass* offering: but THE DAYS THAT WERE BEFORE SHALL BE LOST (see verse 8), because his separation was defiled" (verses 10—12).

## THE DAYS OF SEPARATION

Repeated, an unlimited period as at first, during which the threefold vow is again observed.

## THE OFFERINGS AT THE END.

"And this is the law of the Nazarite when THE DAYS OF HIS SEPARATION ARE FULFILLED: he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; and he shall offer his offering unto the Lord, one HE LAMB of the first year without blemish for a *burnt* offering, and one EWE

*The Nazarite Vow.*

LAMB of the first year without blemish for a *sin* offering, and one RAM without blemish for *peace* offerings, and a BASKET OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, (namely) CAKES of fine flour *mingled* with oil, and WAFERS of unleavened bread *anointed* with oil, and their MEAT offering, and their DRINK offerings. And the priest shall bring them before the Lord, and shall offer his sin offering [the ewe lamb] and his burnt offering [the he lamb]: and he shall offer the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the Lord, with the basket of unleavened bread : the priest shall offer also his meat offering and his drink offering” (verses 13—17).

## HIS HAIR DEDICATED.

“And the Nazarite shall SHAVE THE HEAD OF HIS SEPARATION at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall *take the hair* of the head of his separation, *and put it in the fire* which is under the sacrifice of the PEACE OFFERINGS” (verse 18).

## WAVE AND HEAVE OFFERINGS.

“And the priest shall take the sodden SHOULDER OF THE RAM [namely, the *peace* offering, verse 14] and one unleavened CAKE out of the basket, and one unleavened WAFER, and shall put them upon THE HANDS OF THE NAZARITE, after the hair of his separation is shaven ; and the priest shall wave them for a WAVE OFFERING before the Lord : this is holy for the priest, with the WAVE BREAST AND HEAVE SHOULDER [both of them belonging to the ram of the *peace* offering. See Levit. vii. 30, 32], and after that THE NAZARITE MAY DRINK WINE” (verses 19, 20).

## A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE ABOVE.

“This is the law of the Nazarite who hath *vowed* (see verses 3—8), and of his *offering* unto the Lord for his separation (see verses 10—17), beside that that *his hand shall get* (see verses 19, 20) according to the vow which he vowed, so he must do after the law of his separation” (verse 21).

## THE BLESSING.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto AARON, and unto HIS SONS, saying, On this wise ye shall BLESS THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, saying unto them, THE LORD bless thee, and keep thee: THE LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: THE LORD lift



*The Nazarite Vow.*

239

up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (ver. 24—26).

"And they [AARON AND HIS SONS] shall PUT MY NAME UPON THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL; AND I WILL BLESS THEM" (verse 27).

---

EXPLANATION OF THE FOREGOING CHAPTER.

THE object of throwing this 6th of Numbers into the foregoing form, accompanied by the following brief explanation thereof, is to show that the Nazarite, as he is here represented, under *three distinct aspects*—namely, devoting himself to the Lord; then becoming defiled by the dead; and lastly, after seven days of uncleanness (the number *seven* denoting his *perfect* defilement), shaving his head, beginning his vow over again, and then with sacrifices, and so on, bringing all to a close—presents, in his single person, a type of all the elect, through the whole course of their history upon earth, from the entrance of sin to their ascension to heaven, and the times of restitution of all things.

Renunciation of the world, power in the Spirit, and moral separation from death, here shown by the *threefold Nazarite* vow as to abstinence from wine, the growth of the hair, and not touching the dead, were ever the great leading characteristics of the people of God. The world at the fall became wholly defiled; hence, though outwardly linked with an earthly order of things, such as the Jewish dispensation especially was, the saints all the while were *not of the world*, they were a *Nazarite* people set apart for the service and glory of God, their hope and their home being *in heaven*. An hour however arrived, when the whole of this elect family found themselves suddenly and unexpectedly defiled; when they, together with others, became involved in a sin of the deepest atrocity—even the sin of PUTTING JESUS TO DEATH! Human nature in that solemn moment was tested, and fearfully failed: hence they were not exempt from the general guilt. They took no part, it is true, in

that act; *personally* they were innocent; but *having a nature in common with those who were wilfully guilty*, besides being *nationally one, or connected, as the Gentile proselytes were, with that apostate race* who impiously said, "His blood be on us, and on our children," the sin of that deed was *imputed to them*. Nazarites though they were in heart and affection, devoted to Him whom their people had killed, they, in the typical terms of this chapter, "SINNED BY THE DEAD." Hard as it is to realise this of the beloved disciple, of the devoted Mary, and others whom we could name, it was not the less true, — all in that dark hour of this world's history, all, in a sense, stood on one level.

Hence they had to be cleansed, and to begin all over again. And this they did at the feast of Pentecost—seven weeks after Christ had been slain. Then on this "*eighth day*," for such it literally was, the day of *resurrection-life* to the saints (the link of connexion between the *old* and the *new* dispensations) the Spirit being given, the saints by his power were drawn out of association with a world defiled by the blood of "the just one," as well as with the outcast nation of Israel, and brought into *a new, a nearer relation to God*. And this we believe to be all expressed in this chapter. The Nazarite, as we here read, having defiled the head of his consecration, having come in contact with death, and passed through a perfect period, a full week of uncleanness, shaves his head in token of his renunciation of all his past work, and *begins the days of his separation afresh—the time before being lost*; and in doing so, gives us a glimpse of the great mystery hidden from ages and generations—even THE CALLING OUT OF THE CHURCH OF GOD IN THIS AGE—of that heavenly people who are one, both in spirit and in hope, with that blest One whom the world hath slain. Thus, then, in a figure, the new dispensation commences; the sacrifices, here offered *at the beginning of these days* being expressive of our *present apprehension by faith* of the value of Christ; while those *at the end*, on the other hand, mark *our future communion with him*, declare our joy in his person and work, after the days of our separation are ended, after we are

*The Nazarite Vow.*

241

translated to heaven. And here we may notice two instances in Scripture which bear on this point.

1st. When St. Paul undertook the Nazarite vow (Acts xviii. 18; xxi. 23—27), he did not begin, in the regular way, by *letting his hair grow*, but, on the contrary, by *shaving his head*. He commenced at that point here contemplated in the Nazarite's course, after he had contracted defilement, and was purified again. And this, it would seem, he advisedly did,<sup>a</sup> because, according to the explanation here given, this was the point in the ordinance wherein the position and calling of the *Church of God in this dispensation*, of which St. Paul himself was the apostle, was foreshown. This, on his part, was, as it were, the recognition of himself as a Nazarite, morally speaking, belonging to the *present*, and not to the *past* dispensation.

2ndly. We have an eminent instance of Nazarite faithfulness in Jeremiah xxxv., where Jaazaniah, his brethren, his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites, refuse to drink wine in the temple, rewarded, as we find, with an especial promise on the part of the Lord, that Jonadab the son of Rechab should not want a man to stand before him for ever. A promise which doubtless is fulfilled to this day, not only as to the literal preservation of this family, but also as to the favor of God, in a spiritual way, to these children of Rechab. Many a true Nazarite, unknown now as such upon earth, will perhaps in the end be found to have sprung from his loins.

Now, then, returning to our chapter, we find the Nazarite quite in the spirit of *liberty*, seeing that the period is *left to his own choice*, keeping his vow, abstaining from wine, letting his hair grow, and avoiding the dead, as before, and then, *the days of his separation being fulfilled*, bringing his offerings—namely, two lambs and a ram, for sin, for burnt, and for peace offerings, together with

<sup>a</sup> Whether St. Paul was right in separating himself as a Nazarite at all, may be a question. One thing is to be considered, namely, that in Acts xviii. 18, we find that he had “shorn his head in Cenchrea, for he had a vow,” which vow he fulfilled on his arrival at Jerusalem in company with four men who had a similar vow on them. Thus then it is clear, that his undertaking it in the first instance, was not the result of the enmity of the Jews, “zealous of the law,” but of *his own choice* altogether.

a basket of unleavened bread, all expressive, as before said, of our full unhindered apprehension of the value of Christ in the glory.

After which, as we read, the Nazarite *shaves the hair of his head* (the symbol of *power in the Spirit*), and devotes it, together with the peace-offerings (the especial type of *communion*) to God. This is most blessed. It shows the saints in the kingdom rendering all praise, all honour, all glory, to Him to whom alone it is due, *casting their crowns at His feet*, the language of their hearts being, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory!" And here, as to the hair being expressive of spiritual power, the instance of Samson may be taken. As soon as he was shorn of his locks, seeing that his strength lay *in his hair*, he was utterly powerless, the helpless victim of others. This, in his case, was *miraculous*, herein he differed from the common order of Nazarites; this, however, with regard to the ordinance in general, showed that the hair, as here stated, was the symbol of *strength in the Lord*; while shaving the head, after he had been defiled by the dead, on the contrary, denoted *weakness, prostration, humiliation*, on the part of the Nazarite. Different from this altogether was the *same act* at the end; there, shaving the hair, and burning it under the sacrifice of the peace offerings, being expressive of *praise*, of the Church in resurrection hereafter giving the whole glory to Christ, and saying, "All things come *of Thee*, and of *Thine own* have we given thee" (1 Chron. xxix. 14).

Then again the priest, having presented the wave breast and heave shoulder, one being, it appears, expressive of the *love*, the other of the *power* of Christ, as apprehended by the saints in resurrection, the separate one at length tastes the juice of the grape, "THE NAZARITE MAY DRINK WINE," the symbol of earthly joy and of earthly communion. So it will be in the kingdom, this world being then the abode of the visible glory of Christ, being redeemed by that blood which defiles it at present, the reproach having passed away from the land of Judea where Jesus was crucified, the Church of God, though in Heaven, will have association therewith,

*The Nazarite Vow.*

243

will rejoice in its deliverance from the power of the spoiler, and so take the lead in the mingling chorus of Heaven and earth in that day. And here, in connection with this, we may turn to notice the case of *Jesus Himself*. He when on earth *in heart* was a Nazarite of course; a heavenly stranger in the midst of a corrupt generation. *Ostensibly*, however, he was not so, unlike John, who both ceremonially and in spirit was such, he “came eating and drinking” (Matt. xi. 19), offering earthly joy, as the heir of the throne of Judah, to Israel. *Now*, however, His grace being rejected, He is morally such, in the full sense of the word, having taken upon Him His vow, when, on the night of His betrayal, He said to His disciples, “I will not henceforth drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt. xxvi. 29). This marks the calling of the saints in this dispensation, namely, that of a *separate people*, waiting like Christ, with whom they are one, whose elect body they form, for the day when they, together with Him, “*may drink wine*,” may take that joy in this earth, which because of its defilement, it denies them at present.

Then lastly, at the close of this chapter, shifting our view of the subject a little, we see in AARON AND HIS SONS, *another type of the Church*. Here Christ and His people appear *as Nazarites no more*—no longer as strangers and pilgrims on earth, but as exalted to heaven, and there (like Melchizedec, the king and the priest, greeting Abraham in the day of his victory) pronouncing a blessing on Israel. Thus, in this beautiful figure, we see that as the elect nation of Israel hereafter will be made to minister blessing to the rest of the world, so the elect Church, on the other hand, the Bride, the Lamb’s Wife, one in spirit with Him who is the Fountain-head of life to His people, will wait in that day on her blessed ministry of love to the earthly people of God.

The above is the more *enlarged* view of this subject, embracing, as it does, the *whole elect family*, from the days of Adam to the catching up of the Church. In which case the *seven days of uncleanness* (see verse 9.;

Numb. xix. 11), correspond with the brief interval *between the crucifixion of Christ and the descent of the Spirit* (also, be it remembered, a *sevenfold* period, of forty-nine days—one of *perfect defilement*). But if, on the other hand, restricting our view to *one nation* alone, this type be regarded as *more especially Jewish*, as relating, in the first place, to the imputed transgression of the faithful remnant of old, and next to the quickening and blessing of the remnant hereafter, then these seven days would denote the *present period of Israel's estrangement from God*; while the rest of the chapter (with the exception of verses 22—29, wherein the house of Aaron, as in the other case expresses *the Church*) traces the course of the elect seed from the point when they will repent and believe, to the time of their full acceptance with God as a nation.

Thus in the same way that as, on applying the microscope to some object in nature—to an insect or flower, for instance—we discover wonders and beauties therein which the naked eye could never have seen; so, in this chapter, which, superficially viewed, merely presents us with an ancient Levitical ordinance, we are surprised and delighted to discover secrets of grace for which we were little prepared. “Few there are,” it has been observed, “who make it their business to search the Scriptures for unheeded prophecies, overlooked mysteries, and strange harmonies;”<sup>b</sup> and this chapter is a proof, that were we more diligent in this way than we are, our search would be amply repaid; seeing that herein we trace *our own history*—yea, the upward path of the saints from this death-defiled world into the very sanctuary of God. Thus the Lord takes delight in tracing His ways for our instruction and comfort. Thus he teaches us, however deep and hopeless our defilement by nature may be, that there is, in the atonement of Christ, *far more than a remedy*. Here we learn that His is not merely a *sin* offering, but also a *burnt* offering, yea, a *peace* offering, even the communion of the Church, by the *Spirit*, with the *Father* and the *Son*; and that the day is at hand

<sup>b</sup> Robert Boyle.

*The Nazarite Vow.*

245

when we shall fully enter into, and rejoice in the value of all that *He is*, and of all that *He has done* for His people. The Lord give us grace more and more to feel a oneness of spirit with the Nazarite of old when he devoted his hair to the Lord, and together with him and also the sweet psalmist of Israel, to cry, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake." E. D.

---

A FRAGMENT.

If, after examining the Scriptures to see what they call "the church" (set up at Pentecost), we turn to that which man calls "the church" now-a-days, what a contrast! and how searching to one's own soul the differences! 'Tis well to take heed—for the power of circumstances—mighty, whether for good or for evil, upon man—is mighty, in proportion as a man fails in practical self-judgment, and in discernment (according to God), of that which is around him.

"The church" *was* a body called out from the world, and from under him that is the god of this world (Satan). God, the Holy Ghost, was the mighty Power of energy, in every way, in it; the Lord Jesus, gone on high for it, was its Head—Securer and Revealer in the glory of its *charta* of privileges, as His life here below was its ensample; and God, even the Father, was at once its Object and its Counsellor. And the theory *was* practically exhibited in living men, spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

What men now honour in its place, whether endowed or only tolerated by the State—is it a something separated from this present evil world? Is it a place where self is crucified? Is it that in which Satan is detected and judged? Alas! Is it not rather . . . but no, I will leave to conscience and to faith the question of whether man's church, or churches, approximate most in energy, character and objects, to the Bride of Christ, or to the Whore that sitteth upon many waters.

*Then* a man had more especially to give himself up to the energy, plans and objects, which pertained to that which was a habitation of God through the Spirit; *now* he has more especially to keep himself from the energy, plans, and objects of that which boasts of being the temple of the Lord, but is fast rolling on toward that confederacy which is the perfection of man's apostasy from God, both in civil government and in worship.

G.

## No. XXI.

## THE WORTHINESS OF THE LAMB.

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living-ones and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”—Rev. v. 11, 12.

RICH and blessed as are the associations in the mind of every saint of God connected with Christ's title of “*the Lamb*,” it may be questioned whether that which stamps it, in the mind of Heaven, with its peculiar significance, has, so fully as it ought, its place and bearing in the soul. The emphatic exclamation of the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God!” indicates the grace and beauty and lowly virtues of Him who bears this name, and marks His title to the adoring worship of our hearts. But this title, as borne by the same blessed One, *on high*, unfolded in the book of Revelation, brings us associated with other glories and other scenes than those that, it is likely, met the holy musings of John, when he gazed on the blessed Jesus walking by the banks of Jordan, and said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”

This title, familiar as it is to our hearts, is almost exclusively connected with the book of Revelation; and is unquestionably designed to indicate the special character in which the bearer of it is there presented. The observance of this may present no unuseful key to the understanding of that wondrous book, which may be “called the book of *the rights of the Lamb*;” for, certainly, it may be affirmed, that the whole of the details and principles of the prophetic part of it are knit up with this title; while, on its first occurrence in the book, we see *heaven, earth*, and all *redeemed creation*, roused by it in joy to accord to Him who bears it, this seven-fold ascription of praise: “saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and



*The Worthiness of the Lamb.*

247

blessing." He *alone* is declared *worthy* to receive the whole tribute of the universe and to become the centre of its universal praise.

There is, doubtless, a marked difference in the presentation of "the Lamb slain" in this book, and in his presentation by the same title in John i. 29, 36, the only other place in scripture in which *as a title* it occurs.<sup>a</sup>

In the expressions of John, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" we see the *person* of the Lord Jesus, as God's Lamb, presented to the eye of faith, as the substantiation of all that had been prefigured in the way of atonement. He is here pointed out as the full and perfect provision of God for man's need as a sinner, and the only basis on which the mercy of a holy God can restore the guilt-stricken and polluted to his presence. This, there can be no doubt, was the immediate bearing of John's pointing to Jesus, as "the Lamb of God." But in the breadth of the terms, "*that taketh away the sin of the world,*" it seems as if the Spirit would lead us on beyond the speciality of individual redemption, to the ultimate purpose of the manifestation of the Son of God—in the destruction of the works of the devil—to that point in the counsels of God, in which the blessed stream of redemption reaches its limit; and creation, brought back from subjection "to vanity," is again made capable of receiving and reflecting back the rays of its Creator's goodness and glory, rejoicing in "the glorious liberty of the sons of God."

The Lamb *slain* in sacrifice, from Abel downward, had declared on the part of the righteous holiness of God, that "Without shedding of blood is no remission;" and on the part of the love of God, the spotlessness of the victim and its being as a burnt offering "A sweet savour unto the Lord," declared as fully His delight in the perfectness of Jesus—that "Lamb without blemish and without spot"—and of His satisfaction in His

<sup>a</sup> Nowhere else, indeed, is the *exact* expression; for in John i. 29, 36, it is "*ὁ ἀμνὸς*;" but in the Revelation throughout, it is "*τὸ ἀρνίον*." Acts viii. 32, and 1 Peter i. 19, are comparisons, expressive of a blessed moral truth, but not applied by way of *title*.

wondrous, perfected, atoning work. "Christ hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour." "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." But in the Revelation, the "Lamb slain" is not presented so much as God's provision of love to meet a sinner's need, or as the perfect Doer of His *Father's* will, as He is shown, by His rejection and suffering on earth, to have gained a title in heaven to universal homage, and to be the holder of universal power. In the revelations of God to His church, things in reference to Jesus have passed beyond the limit of grace and atonement now; and we are called to contemplate what are the righteous claims of this suffering and rejected victim, as recognised on high. It is true that the heart of a saint knows Him still as "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The *cross* abides still in all its wondrous mystery of love, as the attractive point of mercy to meet a sinner's heart. "Pentecost," as the pledge and seal of the resurrection and ascension-glory of the church's Head, tells, by the presence of the abiding "Comforter," of present union, and of coming glory as the portion of the church. But beyond what the gospels reveal of incarnation and suffering; and the epistles unfold of grace untold, flowing down as the church's present portion, from her head in glory, and presenting the brightness of her hope in being "for ever with the Lord,"—we have, in this book, the lifting up of a curtain, and shewing things beyond the Spirit's direct testimony in the church. First, Jesus is shown in the position of rebuke and chastening, through the hour of the church's decadence, as His witness in the world, until rejection comes of that which was wholly unworthy of His care. And then, in the prophetic part, it is not so much the Spirit down here testifying of Christ, as seen on high, in close connexion with "the Lamb," who is in the midst of the throne; and as the spirit of prophecy telling indeed of the progress of things here on earth; but that not so much in regard to the events themselves, as in connexion with heavenly counsels, which result in the vindication of the claims of "the Lamb." The progress of evil is noticed; but it is noticed

*The Worthiness of the Lamb.*

249

only as giving occasion to the introduction of the hand of power by which "the mystery of God" is finished. The opening of the seals, and the sounding of the trumpets, and the pouring out of the vials—whatever may be their effects on earth—have for their one central object, either the declaration or the enforcing by the hand of Divine Power, of the claims of the Lamb. It is, in a word, the blessed accomplishment, *in power*, of that word in Philippians, "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that *Jesus Christ is LORD*, to the glory of God the Father." Though there is this difference in the aspect in which this result of the Lord's humiliation and death are presented—here it is the *reward* of Christ's perfect obedience to the Father's will. In the revelation it is the vindication, on the part of God, of the claims of Him, who, as to man, had been but a suffering victim—"led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearers, so He opened not His mouth." Therefore, necessarily, judgment, in this vindication, falls on the world that had inflicted His injuries, and still resists His claims. The most cursory study of the book of Revelation must teach us that its object is not so much to unfold the character and fruits of redemption in relation to those who are its happy subjects, as to present the rights and claims of Him by whom redemption was, in "the travail of His soul," accomplished—His right, through redemption, to "inherit all things." And therefore it is, throughout, that Christ, as "the Lamb," in the midst of the throne, and the actings of the throne itself, are in connexion with the earth and creation, rather than directly with the church.

The fifth chapter, in which this worthiness of the Lamb is proclaimed, appears to give the entire outline of the prophetic part of the book. Nothing, as it seems, in accomplishment, can go beyond this. Heaven, earth, and all redeemed creation, in this anticipative song,

recognise the full claims of Christ's mediatorial glory, as the "Lamb that was slain;" and, in accomplishment, we are brought by it down to the point, "When He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power;" and when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto *the Lamb* for ever and ever."

In the challenge which brings the Lamb upon the scene, however symbolic the action, there seems to be but little difficulty in ascertaining the simple truth conveyed. The question—"Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" is designed to present, in strong relief, and in contrast with the hopelessness that springs from all besides, the worthiness and the power of Christ to enter into, and declare the whole mystery of God concerning the course of evil in this world, and its final redemption from its power. And more than this, to show, on whose behalf it is, and on account of whose worthiness it is, that Creation shall be delivered from the thrall of Satan, and the tribute of its praise be restored to Him whose right it is.

"No man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." The redemption of God's inheritance from the power of Satan, is no work for man. Neither is it in the creature's power to declare through what appliances of power and wisdom the whole craft and power of Satan should be set aside. But there is *one* and one *only* found, to accept this challenge; and thus is relieved the oppressive sorrow that hung upon the prophet's heart. "I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon; and one of the Elders saith unto me, *Weep not*; behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

"And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living ones, and in the midst of the

*The Worthiness of the Lamb.*

251

Elders, stood a LAMB as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne." Here the mystery is solved. In *redemption* Christ has obtained a title to be the whole creation's LORD, as well as the church's blessed Head. As the suffering, meek, and unresisting Victim, Heaven accords to Him the title to universal power and praise. Already—though hidden in the throne—He is manifested to the eye of faith, as being possessed of the perfection of power—"having seven horns"—and also of the controlling, all-pervading energy of God's universal Spirit—"having seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth." Here, therefore, there is One equal to solve this problem; unsolvable by all besides; and to accept a challenge that must be declined by all besides. For who can undertake to save the rights of the eternal God, and to bring back a sin-stained universe to His favour? And who can expel the power of evil by which the scattering and dissevering from God of His creation had been achieved? Before this can be, sin must be atoned, and death undone, and Satan bound. But all this power and worthiness is found in Him who was David's Son and David's Lord. "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." In death, this title of Redeemer has been sealed as the Lamb's; and in redemption-power will all God's glory, in connexion with the creature, eventually stand. The tribute of the universe must be paid alone to Him, who to the death asserted the glory of God in a world of evil; and who, in the administration of the affluence of His power and glory, will turn every stream of creature-good back to the Creator's praise.

Happy is it for the saint, thus instructed in the mind of heaven, to rest in the love and grace of Him who is in the midst of the throne; and happier still, in seeking now to uphold the honour of His name, to count on His power alone, who has the "seven horns and the seven eyes." For how surely is His power and grace directed

to sustain the heart that counts on His goodness in seeking in a world of evil to do His will. Soon that power, which now secretly sustains, controls, and overrules, amidst the confusion of Satan's power, will be openly displayed. And how is the heart's joy augmented by the thought, that then the worthiness of the Lamb will not be a secret carried feebly in the bosom of the saint, and contradicted and gainsaid on every hand besides; but evil being removed by the hand of Power, every eye shall gaze upon His beauty, and every heart shall own His claims, and every voice re-echo His worthy praise! And O how soon will this bright scene of glory burst upon our dim anticipations! "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." "And He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." But there is another side of the picture. Heaven's counsels about the Lamb, alas! are fraught alone with sorrow for great Babylon in her luxurious glory, and for the thoughtless dwellers on the earth! When power Divine shall be put forth to vindicate the claims of earth's rejected Victim, what but dismay and displacement can be the result to those who despise His name, and will at last be found in martial array to resist His claims. "These shall make war with the LAMB, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for He is King of kings, and Lord of lords!" But before this hour arrives what a picture of the world's dismay does the *Lamb's* opening of the sixth seal present! "And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that

*The Worthiness of the Lamb.*

253

sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the LAMB: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

It would be too wide a field, to comment in succession on each instance in this book in which, in different aspects and varied connexions, we are brought into contact with *the Lamb*. In tracing through, from the fifth chapter to the end, "the Lamb" is ever in the ascendancy.

The song of Heaven is, "Worthy is *the Lamb* that was slain" (v. 6—13.) It is from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of *the Lamb*, that the men of this world seek to hide themselves in fear (vi. 15, 16). The palm-bearing multitude, before the throne, have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (vii. 9—14). It is *the Lamb* that feeds them and leads them (as a shepherd) "to living fountains of waters" (vii. 17). It is the blood of the Lamb that answers all the accusations of Satan, as the accuser of the brethren day and night, on high (xii. 10, 11). It is in the book of life of *the Lamb slain*, that the names of the faithful are found written amidst the corruptions of the beast (xiii. 8). It is *the Lamb*, also, on Mount Zion with the sealed-ones, whose honour and privilege it is, to "follow *the Lamb* whithersoever he goeth" (xiv. 1—4). Again, whoever worships the beast or his image, and receives his mark in his forehead or in his hand, will be tormented in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of *the Lamb* (xiv. 9, 10). It is the song of Moses and the song of *the Lamb*, that is sung with the "harps of God," by those who, in victory over the beast, stand on "the sea of glass" (xv. 2—4). It is against *the Lamb*, that the beast and the ten kings make war; and *the Lamb* shall overcome them; for he is "*King of kings, and Lord of lords*" (xvii. 12—14). It is the marriage of *the Lamb*, that strikes the note of joy in heaven; and to be *called* to the marriage supper of the Lamb, is the mark of honour and blessing then (xix. 7—9). And, after the seals are loosed, and the trumpets are blown, and the vials poured out, when Satan is bound and the clangour of earth's judgment is hushed, it is "*the bride the Lamb's wife*," that is the

wondrously glorious spectacle on which the Apostle is called to gaze (xxi. 9). They are the twelve *apostles of the Lamb*, whose names are in the twelve foundations of the "holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" (xxi. 14). Of this city the Lord God Almighty and *the Lamb* are the temple, and "*the Lamb* is the light thereof" (xxi. 22, 23). There is to be no inhabitant in this glorious city "whose name is not written in the Lamb's book of life" (xxi. 27). And, onwards, "the river of the water of life" flows out of "the throne of God and *the Lamb*" (xxii. 1). And finally, there is to be *no more curse*, because the throne of God and of *the Lamb* are to be there (xxii. 3, 4, 5).

These are but brief and desultory notices of the wondrous character and claims of Him who in heaven is seen as "*the Lamb*." A suffering victim here on earth, now hid for a season in heaven, but about to be brought forth in full investiture of heaven's glory; and in vindication of His claims, no place to be allowed for any that refuse to bow in homage to His name. "I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living-ones, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." The scattering and confusion, and sorrow, and death, that sin has brought into the universe of God, admit of no remedy but in redemption. And accordingly the *Lamb's* title to the glory and praise of restored creation is founded in this. "They sung a new song, saying, Thou art *worthy* to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain, and hast *redeemed* us to God by Thy blood." This estimate of Heaven of the Lamb's worthiness and the preparations on high to enforce His claims, cast a dreadful shadow over



*The Worthiness of the Lamb.*

255

the ease, and glory, and power, and security of the world! "*Redemption*"—alas! the world knows not the meaning of the word! And as to "*the Lamb*," its whole peace hangs only on the abeyance of His claims!

While the main subject of this book is the presentation and enforcement of the claims of Christ to universal homage, and to universal power, as the suffering Lamb, there is that which gleams forth, as it were incidentally in the vindication of His glory. Far away from the scene of conflict, and before the Lamb comes forth sitting on "the white horse," as "King of kings, and Lord of lords, in righteousness to judge and to make war," there is seen in the peaceful courts of heaven, "*the marriage of the Lamb*," and, it is added "*his wife* hath made herself ready!" For *his* glory cannot be asserted, and *another* not be with him in the scene. That "we may be glorified *together*," is the strange word of scripture! The joy must begin on high, before the glory is displayed below. *From heaven* the Lamb comes forth to redeem the inheritance, and to take possession of His glory; and "when Christ who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory."

And how does this teach the heart of one who knows the espousal of the church to Christ, how little it has to do with all the busy aims of men; and how little reason it has to covet the world's wisdom, power, or glory, which are but the usurped rights of Christ; while another Lord and Prince is owned. It is not the earth in the power of redemption yet, and yielding its willing homage to the Lamb; but it is the world which made the Lamb a suffering Victim, and still retains its opposition to His claims. D.

## A FRAGMENT.

"The unity of the body is so great a truth, and is connected collaterally with so many other truths of deep and vital moment, that we need not wonder (in a day of so much ignorance of Scripture and worldliness as the present) if the Enemy should succeed in leading many to deny and pervert it. "A holy unity in the Spirit," and such it is, can be denied in more ways than one. Readiness of separation, may mark in some the self-will of the flesh, which can never apprehend either the holiness or the unity of *the Church of God*, or the Spirit's presence with the body. Worldliness in others may appreciate *union*, for according to the world's motto (and motto for the day) "Union is strength:" but the largeness of its tolerance will, before God, amount to unholiness; and the presence of the Spirit it must, surely, practically deny, for it sees Him not, nor knows Him. If Satan be more immediately at work, there will be a holiness according to the letter of Scripture, perhaps, admitted; but unity will be so put as to shut out grace, or truth, or the Holy Ghost. A basket of good fruit, however precious, is not the emblem by which the church's unity could be illustrated; but the branch—a fruit-bearing—is rather the picture. In vain will man essay to make *that*: God and God alone can do it."

N<sup>o</sup>. XXII.SOME THOUGHTS ON READING THE  
OPENING CHAPTERS OF THE ACTS OF  
THE APOSTLES.

MIGHT not this part of the Divine Testimony—The Acts of the Apostles—be called the Actings of the Holy Ghost? What interest this Book is clothed with as opening to us the dispensation or economy of the Lord the Spirit—which we may term the dispensation of resurrection in contrast with the dispensation of the flesh which preceded it. Man is wholly set aside as to any capacity or good thing in him. The name of Jesus, wonderful and mighty, and the presence and power of the Holy Ghost, are the absorbing themes. God is thus exalted, and becomes all in all. In fine, it may be said, that to the Saints—to the Church—the Divine Name (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost) is duly proclaimed; and the mysteries of the faith (now alas! so lost or forgotten) are revealed. Our Lord Jesus spoke to His disciples of the operations of this blessed Spirit—the “other Comforter,” as told to us in John’s Gospel—and of further development of the Spirit’s power and acting, which the few weak ones around Him could not then bear (John xvi. 12, 13), but which the day of Pentecost and its results made manifest. He had spoken to Nicodemus (John iii) of the regenerating power of the Spirit, connected even with Jewish or earthly things, in contrast with heavenly things (see ver. 12). He had declared to the poor Samaritan sinner at the well (iv. 10, 14), that He was the Giver of living water, which was to be, in those who received it, “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” But He revealed further and deeper truth, when He spoke by promise of a future thing connected with His glorification (vii. 37), “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. But this spake He of the

*Some thoughts on reading the opening Chapters, &c. 257*

Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Here we find not only the well springing up to refresh and cleanse, but further, its streams flowing out for the benefit of others; the Divine thought and arrangement evidently as to ministry during this dispensation, by the power of the Holy Ghost acting down here through the members of the body, witnessing to them, as He does, the resurrection, Lordship, and glory of Jesus, as the Head at the right hand of God. The Lord unfolded more still to the disciples, as we well know, in chapters xiv. to xvi. of this Gospel; and two points might be mentioned in passing on:—One (which, indeed, we are learning our need of), that blessed declaration and promise, that the other Comforter would "abide with them for ever," notwithstanding all the failure and ruin which, as in everything entrusted to man, shortly began. Compare Haggai ii. 5—a precious word spoken in that low state of Israel, "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not." And let us heartily justify God, and say, "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; that Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and be clear when Thou judgest" (Rom. iii. 4). The other truth, which may be alluded to is practical (compare John xvi. 7. 11. with Acts ii., 1st Cor. xii., Ephes. iv.). If it was expedient that Jesus should go away, that the Paraclete, the other Comforter, might come to form, and dwell personally in, the Church, and to in-dwell in each member of the body; *and being there, to be the power to convince the world of sin*, it is very manifest, that the objects of this amazing care and blessing, or believers in the Lord Jesus, *ought to have a conscience void of offence*. The Saints truly are responsible to walk in the Spirit, because they have got the Spirit; and to maintain a good conscience, as Paul insists upon, both for himself, and as exhorting and beseeching others.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Should the reader wish to follow this subject, he can consult, amongst many passages of Scripture, Acts xx. 17, etc.; xxiv. 16.; Rom. xii.; 1 Cor. ix. 20—27.; 2 Cor. i. 12.; Ephes. iv. 1—3.; and chap. v.

258 *Some thoughts on reading the opening Chapters*

In Acts i. we read the parting words of the Lord Jesus, before "a cloud received Him out of their sight." It seems to be quite clear, that the baptism of the Holy Ghost, of which He spoke (ver. 5), "the power of the Holy Ghost" coming upon them (see margin, ver. 8) was the descent of that Blessed Spirit on the day of Pentecost (chap. ii.) when the disciples were all "filled with the Holy Ghost," "the promise of the Father" (ver. 33) as testified by Peter, who now had understanding—the Church formed (though doubtless it was not till after Paul's conversion, the disciples fully knew Church-place, speciality, real standing and glory), and God Himself in the midst. From this, we have a gradual but wonderful development of truth, until it becomes wide and deep indeed; and bearing this mark—the largeness of God's heart and goodness. And this seen the more as contrasted here and there with man's narrow and contracted measure. After the descent of the Holy Ghost, with what energy does He testify by Peter (compare 1st Peter i. 12) when "three thousand being pricked to the heart, believed." With what boldness does Peter (who before denied Christ, and forsook Him) now charge these blood-stained men with the murder of Jesus; the Lord, in His amazing grace, having directed that the first proffer of mercy should be made here; "beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke xxiv. 47), and these three thousand having *gladly* received the good news, that there was remission of sins in His name, are at once baptised, and introduced into the fellowship; and continue stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer. Chap. iii. shews us the testimony of the Holy Ghost to Israel yet to repent, with offers that Jesus would come—for that Lord who delighteth in mercy, to whom judgment is "strange work," who wept over Jerusalem "in the days of his flesh," lingers as loth to leave the ancient people. But Israel, the wicked generation, resist the Holy Ghost; and consummate this resistance by stoning Stephen, the proto-martyr. Still many believed (iv. 4.) till about five thousand were inside; when Satan stirred up people, priests, (*religion* so called, being always the bitter enemy of Christ), and the Sadducees against them; and in this trial and per-

secution, the power of the "name of thy holy child Jesus," and their faith in that name is manifested. The place was shaken where they prayed, and all, filled with the Holy Ghost, spake the word of God with boldness. "And with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all" (ver. 33). We see the Church standing for a time in corporate integrity; producing the blessed fruits of the Spirit, and obeying that word: "Ye are members one of another" (Ephes. iv. 25). "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John xiii. 35). But failure in measure sets in, in chap. v., where we find the manifested power and presence of God in the assembly, when He avenges, by judgment, the insult offered to His present Majesty. "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts v. 4). Let it be remarked, in this place, that these truths of God are not altered by man's failure and folly. The *unbelief* of *believers* in Christ, does not impair truth a whit; and when the Holy Ghost does bring these things in His own vivid power to the consciences and hearts of saints,—when He is pleased to work with energy in any little company of His own,—there will always be the effects—surely something of them all we read of in chap. ii. 42—47,—even in this day of weakness, confusion, and failure; the family scene—the mutual care of the members—the pleasant fruit of love (loving with the powers of eternal life)—the fruits of the Spirit will surely appear. So likewise, when real faith is at work (not the *quantity* so much as the *quality* of faith) as to the presence of God—as to walking with, and serving the Living God, and waiting for His Son from Heaven; when there is true abiding in Jesus, and communion in and by Him—surely just in proportion will that word be revered: "Holiness becometh Thy house for ever." The Church, or assembly of Saints—the habitation of God by the Spirit—will be a place of discipline and godly care. Nothing would or could be allowed, no, not for an hour, in doctrine or walk—much less in doctrine—which would dishonor God, and lower the standard of His Truth. The name and glory of Jesus—the presence of the Spirit—the genius of the

260 *Some thoughts on reading the opening Chapters*

dispensation—the grace in which we stand—the real welfare of God’s people—the word of God—all cry out with many tongues, against the allowance of any evil thing whatsoever—any leaven, which if allowed “leaveneth the whole lump,” for “ye are unleavened” (ἀζυμοι, 1 Cor. v. 7.) God’s thought about the people—without leaven—therefore suffer it not to come in and defile. When found, put it away; and if the case need such truth as this, walk in obedience to it—“from such turn away.” “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use” (2 Tim. ii. 21). “Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly” (2 Thess. iii. 6). The sad and perpetual tendency of our hearts, is just to slip out of the sense of grace and the Lord’s presence. The lively living apprehension of our standing and of Him who called us with a “heavenly calling,” soon may be lost or forgotten. Then, in an hour of difficulty and of Satan’s power—natural feeling, expediency and policy—the unjudged flesh begins to work—wheel within wheel, difficulty, perplexity—men, and what is of man, are found getting between the conscience and Christ; and then Christian men, under the plea of Christ’s honor and the good of His people, really are opposed to godly discipline and order. But sad and woeful is the condition, the low sunk-down state, when souls object to dealing with evil in the house of God, and prefer in reality their own things (Paul’s sorrow in Phil. ii. 21, “For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s”) to the things of God.<sup>b</sup> “Buy

<sup>b</sup> In recent sorrow and trial amongst the saints, when many have been perplexed, and objected to discipline, and averred that no scripture warranted separation from bodies or assemblies where evil was allowed,—there seems strange forgetfulness that there is a present living God, whose Spirit teaches and leads the Saint to apply precept and word to the circumstances he is in, whatever they may be. In a day of apostasy and ruin as to Church order, or any corporate integrity, there may be difficulty in acting, throwing a saint upon God for wisdom and guidance. He cannot find in the word the exact order for the exact circumstances; but there is the obedience of faith and spiritual intelligence, where literal order or command there is none—(supposing it to be so), surely the Holy Ghost will apply, where there is faith and a single eye, truth suited

*of the Acts of the Apostles.*

261

the truth, *and sell it not*," said the wise man in Proverbs. Those who stand in God's truth, and are contented to abide with him, though many go back, may find a still darker, and (to others) more confused time. But the Jude-position, ver. 20-25, is a very good one, and throws one at once on the only wise God, our Saviour, "to whom be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen."<sup>c</sup>

In chap. vii. we find a great advance in truth. The heavens opened; and Jesus "received" by a cloud "out of their sight" in (i. 9) is seen by His faithful servant and martyr Stephen (ver. 55); "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; and said, Behold I see the Heavens opened," etc. Israel, utterly rejecting the testimony of the Holy Ghost by Stephen, proceed to stone him: "he fell asleep" (ver. 60). And, therefore, instead of the Lord Jesus coming down to them, as offered in chap. iii. (noticed above), we here see that Holy One ("who, when He had by Himself purged our sins, *sat* down on the right hand of the Majesty on high") *standing* to receive, as it would appear, the spirit of His martyred servant. In chap. viii., let it be noted, that, in the largeness of God's heart, He could not have the waters of life pent up as it were in Jerusalem. He therefore permits persecution (He may have seen His chosen ones inclined to *nestle* together) that the streams of salvation may flow out. The nation reject, but God will follow the individuals. O what a God is our God! Saul of Tarsus "made havoc of the Church;" the one who soon becomes

---

to the position. In recent sorrow, I believe there is precept, warning, doctrine, various scripture, either direct or by just inference, bearing on this point, separation from evil, if thousands of saints allow it. If men in Christ say, "We cannot see it; shew us the exact words to meet the exact state;" we must pray for such: faith is wanting, spiritual discernment, teachable aptness; they are not in the position assumed for saints in God's word.

<sup>c</sup> Two or three only gathered together really in His name, have the power of worship and the power of discipline. It is by faith, the energy of which is the very characteristic of the risen man. "We walk by faith and not by sight."

262 *Some thoughts on reading the opening Chapters*

a special witness and illustrious vessel of mercy, not only to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, and that faith which he destroyed (as far as he could), but to be specially the Church's minister or servant (see Col. i. 24, 25), "Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went *everywhere* preaching the word" (ver. 4). These holy fugitives carried the lamp of truth into dark places, and the Spirit tells us of them (chap. xi. 19-21), they preached unto the Jews only, and "the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord."<sup>d</sup> In chap. ix. we advance into still deeper truth. Saul of Tarsus breathing out slaughter, in his mad career, is arrested by seeing Jesus, the Heavenly Son of Man, from whose face streamed down the glory of God, and that light—too effulgent for human sight (Saul is blind for a season)—shines into his heart (compare 2 Cor. iv. 6). He sees the Lord of Glory, who begins to unfold to him the great mystery (*το μυστηριον μεγα*, *the great mystery*, not *a great*, as translated, Eph. v., 32, but *the mystery*, of which Adam and Eve in the garden were a type), that He had a Bride, the Bride of the Lamb—a glorified body, whose members Saul was persecuting, but whose union with the Heavenly Head

<sup>d</sup> May it not be inquired whether at present, as to the testimony of the gospel of God's grace, there be not too much abiding in one place, building, locality, when the word of command is, "*Go ye out into all the world.*" Centralisation belonged to Israel, aggressive inroad on dark places seems to become the Church and the Saints who may have any evangelising gift. In the former, Israel, the light was stationary, those seeking light must come to the fixed place. In the latter, would it not appear to be the contrary? Go ye out, "*preach the gospel to every creature.*" One would not wish to define or place limits, far from it; certain classes of people, now for instance, can only be addressed and reached in certain places, but it does demand serious inquiry from those who would evangelise, and desire to please God, whether the heralding of the good news, testing men's consciences in every place, as Paul seems to have done, and striving to reach a multitude, would not seem to be more in accordance with the genius of "the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God." Out-door preaching, or heralding, seems very scriptural—a more excellent way, when possible. However, the Lord the Spirit, alone can direct, as He alone can open any heart to receive the message—"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."



was so complete and indissoluble (Paul's great theme afterwards), and marked by such living sympathy, that whoso touched them, touched the apple of his eye; whoso served them even with a cup of cold water, served Him. We can at once perceive the difference of revelation made to Peter and to Paul. Peter knew the Lord Jesus in the flesh; the One of promise and prophecy; who by suffering entered into glory. Paul knows not Jesus after the flesh at all. He beholds the Lord of glory, and straightway preaches that Jesus is the Son of God, not before preached. It is a fuller, clearer revelation of the Divine Person of the Lord, and of the result of His work, it was Redemption-glory. Peter could testify of the sufferings of Christ, and the *glories* after these [sufferings] see Greek, 1 Peter, i. 11. (Note, not glory, as translated, but *glories*, for *Our* Lord Jesus will be crowned with many, many diadems of glory; He will bear all the glory—glory connected with each dispensation). But Paul sees Jesus as the One who had completed His work—who was at once the foundation, deeper than Hades and Hell—for His own—the Head, the centre, “Christ is all and in all,”—who had reconciled all to God, and upheld His body, the Church, before God, in His own righteousness, beauty, glory, and strength. “I am Jesus,” was the electrifying word to reach, quicken, and search Saul's heart and conscience. ‘And I have a body, whose members struggling through the wilderness, are yet so identified with me, that in hurting them, thou persecutest me.’ It was this full revelation of Jesus, which, while it crushed Paul's flesh, through the working of the Holy Ghost in his soul, gave him that strong grasp of faith for all saints, enabled him to endure the petulance of some, while he could not bear any doctrine which touched the gospel, the work of Christ, as we see in Galatians; led him through such sufferings (2 Cor. xi. 23, etc.); qualified him to be a minister of the Church (see Col. i. 23, et seq). Peter did indeed confess to Christ (Matt. xvi.), His divine glory as Son of God; but in his testimony we never see more than Jesus as the glorified Head. The saints risen were as pilgrims and “strangers scattered abroad,” looking for a heavenly

264 *Some thoughts on reading the opening Chapters*

inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled. Paul had a key given to him to open the mystery, not before known, of an elect heavenly bride—Jew and Gentile in one—the Church—the Body of Christ—the fulness of Him “who filleth all in all,”—and it may be observed, how, to the end of his course, we find him speaking of *our* gospel, *my* gospel,—“The glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God.”—“My gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest” (Rom. xvi. 25). It would seem to be clear indeed, that after Paul’s conversion and preaching Jesus to be the Son of God, deeper instruction is given to the saints, and we read, “the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts xi. 26). Antioch seems to have been the scene of work from which Paul started with a fuller revelation, and more glorious gospel: and though I ought now to look at chap. x., which was the limit proposed in this paper, I would just follow Paul on to two eventful epochs in his course, as shewn in the Acts, in which one traces what he got from this glorious gospel, how strikingly we find displayed in him the power, conscious ease with God, joy in deep trial, and real standing in the dignity put upon him by virtue of his union with Christ” (Acts xvi. and xxvi). In the former, we read of the commencement (in Lydia and the Jailer), “according to the grace of God given to Paul as a wise master builder” (1 Cor. iii. 10), of the Church at Philippi, so endeared to the apostle, as we find in his epistle to them. Satan strives to weaken and nullify the testimony of the apostle (ver. 16, 17), as if he was in league with the apostle, and approved of the preaching of the way of salvation; and Paul being grieved, commands the evil spirit to come out in the name of the Lord Jesus. Satan changes his opposition to violent persecution. The apostles are, as far as bodily trial went, in wretched plight; the stocks, according to historians, were high, and Paul and Silas it would appear, must have been lying on their flayed backs, with their clothes rent off, but God is present. They prayed and sang praises, and the Lord answers as it were with a voice of thunder (ver. 26), symbolical truly

of that mighty gospel of Christ, which "Brings out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house" (Isaiah xlii). In chap. xxvi., how vividly and blessedly Paul shews out what was in his heart and soul: he stands in chains, a prisoner before the mightiest monarch of the world, and all the state surrounding him. Yet Paul evidently is the one possessed of conscious dignity and ease and happiness. *He can afford* to wish that all that heard him were "almost and altogether such as he was, except these bonds." What joy in God, what blessedness Paul stood in, as having simple faith in that of which Festus spoke, "Of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive" (xxv. 19). In chap. x. Peter also sees "Heaven opened." God works a miracle to meet the prejudice of his narrow heart! The "great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth," in a lively manner represents the heavenly calling of the Church,—its heavenly origin (though filled with unclean creatures in themselves)—its having no resting-place on earth—but moved about, waved, as a bough of a tree, as it were, is received up again into heaven. Another has suggested whether the expression, "Knit at the four corners," may not be delicately significant of the heavenly calling of the saints, inasmuch as those inside the sheet, whose corners were thus knit, could not possibly look down on the ground.—*They must look up, and that of necessity.* Such is the Church's standing and portion. How soon "we which are alive!" (1 Thess. iv. 15) may be caught up, solemn yet joyful thought—"to be for ever with the Lord!" Observe in this and the preceding chapter of Acts, man's narrowness, God's largeness. Ananias (ix. 13) pleads with God against the reception of so bad a man as Saul of Tarsus—"But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me." In this chapter Peter evidently does not like that the unclean Gentiles should enter the kingdom (compare ver. 14, and 28). The Divine answer is,—O what mercy for our poor souls!—"What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."

There is nothing new in these thoughts beloved reader, but there is old truth, which we cannot meditate on too

much (read 2 Pet. i. 12), and never more than in such a day as this is. As the Lord spoke to Jeremiah (vi. 16), "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and ask *for the old paths*, where is the good way, and *walk therein*; and ye shall find rest for your souls." "Surely I am coming quickly, Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you all." Amen.

A.

## THE BLESSINGS OF THE TWELVE TRIBES.

Genesis xlix.

THE following outline of Genesis xlix, is given in order to show that this chapter traces in type, as we believe, the history of the Jewish nation from beginning to end, from their redemption out of Egypt to the establishment of Messiah's kingdom.

Observe, as to its order, that *six* out of these tribes, get the blessing; the remaining *six* get none. Of the former, *three* express Christ, and *three* the faithful remnant. In order to mark this distinction, the letter B here indicates blessing; BB double blessing, in connexion with CHRIST; the cypher 0 no blessing; 00 the same thing in connexion with Dan, the type of ANTICHRIST.

Apostate Israel of old.	{	REUBEN .....	0	}	
		SIMEON .....	0		
		and			
CHRIST at His first coming, and <i>now</i> .	{	LEVI .....	0	}	Leah's Sons.
		JUDAH .....	BB		
The dispersed Nation <i>now</i> .	{	ZEBULUN .....	0	}	
		ISSACHAR .....	0		
The Antichrist.	{	DAN ("I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."*) .....	00	}	Son of Rachel's Handmaid.
The Faithful Remnant hereafter.	{	GAD .....	B	}	Sons of Leah's Handmaid.
		ASHER .....	B		
		NAPHTALI .....	B		Son of Rachel's Handmaid.
CHRIST, just <i>before</i> , and <i>at</i> His second coming.	{	JOSEPH .....	BB	}	Rachel's Sons.
		BENJAMIN .....	BB		

\* Why this utterance of the Spirit in connexion with Dan? The answer appears to be this.—Dan is here seen as the type of that false one whose kingdom will precede the kingdom of Christ; and hence, at the mention of his name, the hopes of the Patriarch, in reference to the deliverance of Israel, are awakened. Thus, though encompassed with trouble, the remnant hereafter will lift up their heads, because their redemption draweth nigh.

N<sub>o</sub>. XXIII.THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE FULNESS OF  
TIMES.

Ephesians, i. 10.

CHRIST is the true and only centre of the purposes of God, as it is only by Him the Holy Ghost reveals them. Hence it is, and must be in the proportion of our Spirit-taught acquaintance with Christ, that the divine plans are understood and appreciated. When He is not steadily kept before the soul, what becomes of the study of scripture itself? It is no longer truth which sanctifies, but a barren theology which puffs up. And why has prophecy been perverted to unfruitful and injurious speculation? Because God's grand object has been lost sight of ("that in all things he might have the preeminence;" one might perhaps apply here); and thereby the Spirit has been grieved, and has blown upon the busy exercises of man's mind. "He shall glorify ME," said the Lord, "for He shall take of MINE and shew it unto you" (John xvi. 14). The moment the view of the glory of Christ is supplanted by researches into providence, for instance, important as that may be in its place, the temple of prophecy degenerates into a counting-house of human intellect; and the tables of those who traffic in mere erudition crowd its courts, until, by the just judgment of God, it is left desolate. But by His grace a better sanctuary is opened for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see Jesus crowned with glory and honour in the heavens. May we have grace to draw near through the rent veil, and there by our Master's side, with unshod feet and worshipping hearts, follow His eye and finger as they rest upon the spheres of His varied but harmonious glory!

"Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him." There the Jewish prophet

necessarily stopped. “*But,*” says the Apostle (1 Cor. ii.), taking up the words, “*God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.*” “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world [or the ages] unto our glory.” How often we hear a member of the body of Christ quoting the words, “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard it,” to justify an ignorance which the Spirit of God takes pains to shew us is no longer excusable. The things which God hath prepared for them that love Him are now disclosed. Our position is the contrast of that of the Jews’. God hath revealed them UNTO US by His Spirit: for His Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. True, these things are not the things of man, and are therefore undiscoverable by human ken. But a Christian is called no longer to walk nor to think *κατὰ ἄνθρωπον*: if he seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. “The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” And what is that to the Christian? Everything. “For we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. We have the mind (*νοῦν*) of Christ.”

So in Ephesians, God “hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence: having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He had purposed in Himself for the administration of the fulness of times, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in the heaven, and which are on the earth, even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose,” etc. The great and precious revelations of the Old Testament, as Moses told the Jews (Deut. xxx. 29.) belong, in an emphatic sense, unto them and their children. Jehovah their God had reserved the secret things unto Himself. Hence the force and importance of the verses just cited from this epistle. His grace has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. He has made known *unto us* the secret of His will, according to the good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself for the administration of the accomplishment of the set times.

And what is this purpose of God? It is to gather in one Head, in Christ, all things which are in heaven, and which are on earth; in Him in whom also we have obtained an inheritance. That is, the mystery of God's will consists of two great parts: first, Christ is to be the Head of all things heavenly and earthly; and secondly, the Church is to be associated with Him in that inheritance. And so the apostle, having treated of the design of God to re-head all things in Christ, turns also at once to the collateral purpose of joining the Church as heir with Him, first alluding to the Jewish saints brought into this relationship and then to the Ephesians themselves, the Gentile saints whom he was actually addressing:—"that we [i. e. the Jews now believing] should be to the praise of His glory who are pre-trusters in Christ; in whom ye also" [i. e. Gentile believers], etc

In the closing verses of this chapter, we have the same two-fold truth, with this difference, that it is not in connexion with God's future purpose respecting the heading up of all things in Christ, when the appointed times are completed, but with Christ's present exaltation at the right hand of God. Nevertheless, here as before, is seen the double glory of Christ. God hath given Him as head *over* all things *to* the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all; and thereupon chapter ii. enters into the manner of God's display of His grace in His kindness towards Jew and Gentile through Christ Jesus.

If we turn to Acts iii., it is clear, that the times of refreshing and the restoring of all things were no secret of God's will. Peter speaks of this restitution of all things as the familiar hope of the Jewish nation. God had spoken of them by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began. This therefore must be a distinct thing, however closely connected with the mystery of Ephes. i. 9—11. Let us take one of these prophetic testimonies, and the difference will be plain.

"Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was

profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that *were* not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I *this*, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause *you* to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities *are become* fenced, *and* are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined *places*, *and* plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken *it*, and I will do *it*. Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet *for* this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do *it* for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I *am* the LORD" (Ezekiel xxxvi. 22—38).

This citation is the more observable, because it is the one doubtless that the Lord had in view in his conversation with Nicodemus (John iii). Jesus had laid down the necessity of regeneration as the condition of seeing the Kingdom of God; and to the questions of the Jewish ruler, answered, that except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter that kingdom. Flesh and Spirit admit of no modification in the nature of each, which remains unchanged and distinct: and so Nicodemus was not to marvel if *Jews must* be born again in order to have part in God's kingdom, for the question is about



the kingdom, and not salvation merely. When then Nicodemus still inquires, "How can these things be?" the Lord says, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?" Thus it is clear, that when the Lord spoke of the need of the new birth, a Jewish teacher ought to have understood; for so had the prophet Ezekiel shown. Before Israel enjoys the earthly blessings in the promised land, Israel will be born again. Israel will be sprinkled with clean *water*, and will have a new *spirit* put within them. It is afterwards they have the earthly things of the kingdom of God. "I will also save you from all your uncleannesses; and I will call for the corn, and will increase it," etc. "And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden." The important thing to notice, is, that in all this the Lord had not gone beyond the earthly things, or what was essential to their enjoyment, i. e. the new birth. Of course to have blessings in heavenly places, a man must *à fortiori* be born again; but even the Jewish people, as we have seen, must be regenerate to have the earthly promises in God's kingdom. In speaking of regeneration, He had not gone beyond the range of earthly things and what a Jew ought to have learned from the prophets. "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not; how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" On the latter, the Lord does not touch further than to intimate the lifting up of the Son of man, and the gift of the Son of God in His love not to the Jews only but to the world; which things involve, as we know, the exaltation of the Lord into glory on high, and the union of the church with Him there, as the fulness of that Heavenly man. The lifting up of the Son of man, was, so far as man's responsibility is concerned, the demolition (though in the marvellous wisdom of God the security) of all the earthly hopes of the Jews. In Christ all the promises of God found their meeting-place; and if He had been received, all would have been

made good to His earthly people. But He was rejected. Wherefore God also highly exalted Him. The promises remain to be accomplished, based as they are upon the blood of the Mediator; but before that accomplishment takes place, a new and extraordinary work goes on; namely, the formation of a body to share the dominion of Christ, when God's purpose is fulfilled, of gathering all things, heavenly and earthly, under the headship of Christ, the Church sharing that inheritance with Him. This, then, was the mystery of the will of God: not the kingdom of God, not regeneration, indispensable even for its earthly promises. Of these the Prophets had spoken; but they were silent on the purpose of God which destined Christ and the Church to rule over all things in the heavens and on the earth. The restitution of all things was not in any sense a mystery; but this was.

Let me observe by the way, that 1 Peter 10—12 does not at all refer to this mystery, but to other privileges which formed the burden of many a prophetic strain. The salvation of souls was certainly no hidden secret—"of *which salvation* the prophets," etc. They searched, no doubt, what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify; but it is manifest that the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow, testified before-hand by the ancient prophets, *cannot be* the mystery which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Ephes. iii.). Here were things testified before-hand, ministered unto us, and not unto themselves; for it was so revealed to them, but clearly these previously revealed privileges are totally different from another sphere of blessing which from the beginning of the world was kept hid in God; nor do the epistles of Peter once allude to our fellowship with Christ as His body. The mystery is nowhere introduced. We are regarded "as begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled . . . kept by the power of God," etc., and exhorted to diligence, sobriety, confident hope, and obedient holiness, and withal to pass the time of our sojourning in fear, knowing our

redemption with the precious blood of Christ. It is not doubted that the persons whom Peter addressed were members of Christ's body; but it is certain, that the Spirit here dwells upon the blessings which spring from the resurrection of Christ—our new and incorruptible life, holy and royal priesthood, pilgrim-calling, and the like, but never upon our union with Christ in heaven. Hence also, when the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven is referred to, it is as the power of preaching the gospel unto us, never as the One who constitutes us, Jew and Gentile, God's habitation (Ephes. ii.), or baptises us into one body (1 Cor. xii). In other words, the mystery is not treated in the Epistles of Peter, whereas it is the main subject of Ephesians.

The administration, we have seen, awaits "the fulness of times," or the expiry of the various periods appointed by Divine Wisdom. All things are out of course, and waxing worse and worse, until Christ takes the reins. The only Righteous One is still an outcast from the world, though known to the Church as crowned with glory and honour in heaven, and those who love the Lord of glory suffer here below. God's favoured earthly people is a proverb and a by-word among all nations, and driven out from a country of which God delighted to be the landlord. And what has been, what is the history of that people and land? Their oppressors, the Gentiles, have they walked in abasement or in pride? Have they honoured the King of heaven? And how fares creation? Does not the whole of it groan and travail in pain together until now? And where is Satan? Is it on earth merely that he walks about, or is there spiritual wickedness in heavenly places? Well, there is a set time for each of these things; and these times shall have a full term. Satan shall lose his sway over the air and the earth; creation shall be delivered into the liberty of the glory of God's children; the broken Gentile image shall give place to an everlasting kingdom; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit; the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and Christ shall appear and we with Him in glory. This will be the fulness of the times spoken of.

When that fulness of times arrives, how great our joy, beloved, to see Him, not only as the Melchisedek blessing God and blessing man, but actual Possessor of heaven and earth, all things therein being headed up in Him who, though He is the most High God, administers as the exalted Man: to see Him ourselves so near Him and so truly one with Him, that then we shall at length forget all save His love and His glory. And yet, O wondrous grace! is it not so now, as regards His love? Are we not here and now members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones? Yet surely we may long for the day when, seeing Him, we shall be for ever like Him, according to that working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

Yes, all things in heaven and earth shall be headed up in Him, and even things under the earth, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Worthily has He won such a place, that blessed One —

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Philippians, ii. 6—9).

It is false, utterly false, that Jesus took this place when He was born. It is true, that then was the fulness of the time come for God to send forth His Son. The very children were enslaved under the rudiments of the world, and all were shut up under sin. Man had proved himself competent to ruin himself under the law of God only the more readily, because it was good but he was not. But was God's business done when the Son came, made of a woman, made under the law? By no means. The incarnation was but a means, not the end. Redemption was the grand point to which God turned. Therefore the Son was thus sent and made “to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye [the Gentiles, who had not been under the law] are sons” (Gal. iv. 4.—6).

Turning to the higher and larger sphere of Colossians, we hear the same truth. In the Son of God's love we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins; "who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature." Is that His highest title? Is this His Divine glory? No; but founded upon it. He is the first-born of every creature, not because He became incarnate, not because He was the holy Man who triumphed over all the consequences of the first Adam's sin, and conquered him that led the first man captive at his will: in a word, not because He was a creature, be it the most faithful and glorious, but because He was the Creator. He is the first-born of every creature, FOR by Him were all things created. Here is His right to supremacy:—

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. i. 16, 17).

His primacy over all creation flows from His Divine creative power. He asserts it as man; but His title flows from another and higher source. But He is more than first-born of every creature. "He is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead," which, as we have seen, is the glory especially dwelt on in Ephesians.

Sin was here below. Man, who ought to have been the first, was the lowest of all; and creation itself, by reason of him, was steeped in the bondage of corruption. And those whom God was about to bring into the Church, what were they? Alienated and enemies in their mind by wicked works. Hence though the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, though ALL THE FULNESS was pleased to dwell in Him, even *that* could not meet the evil and misery of man, nor the holiness and the heart of God. The light of God was there, His love was there; in Him was life, and the Life was the light of men. Alas! it was manifest that the Jews, that all, were irreparably blind.

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth

me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John xv. 22—24).

What was to be done? "Verily, verily," saith the Lord, "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." His death could alone deliver. But this was ever before the soul of our blessed Master. "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood" (1 John v). Hence in Colossians i. 20—22.

"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight."

The Church is being reconciled now. To the living members of Christ it can be said, "You hath He reconciled." Creation is not so yet, though the blood of the cross is shed on which the reconciliation is grounded; it will be so in the fulness of the times.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> It is almost needless to say that these set times are not yet completed, and that Christ has not yet all things in the heavens and on the earth headed up in Him, and that the Church is not yet reigning joint heir with Him. The translation, which has been supposed to involve one, and which to be consistent ought to involve all of these consequences is a mistake. "That for the dispensation of the fulness of times, He hath headed up for Himself all things in Christ," is a version founded upon a misconception of the force of the aorist infinitive. The infinitive being abstract, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι is as capable of referring to the future as to the past. You cannot gather the time of actual occurrence from that word in itself. I believe that the authorised version gives the sense quite correctly. The purpose of God was, "that He might together," or "to gather together" etc. The object was not to express the time of the gathering; and this is so true, that usually the aorist infinitive is expressed in Latin and English by the present. Moreover, as here, the infinitive of the aorist is often em-

At present, no such administration takes place, though we here learn God's purpose that it shall. Christ is, no doubt, head of angels, of Jews, of men, of creation. But is He now exercising these rights? Now it is of the administration when the periods are ripe that our verses speak. But none of the things are being yet gathered. On the contrary, there is yet to be a deeper crisis of rebellion than ever. It is now the time when all things are severed from Christ, or if gathered, gathered only in the ruin and wretchedness which the guile and power of Satan, have introduced. It is the time of another gathering, the gathering of the joint heirs who shall be glorified with Christ. But this is the gathering of Ephesians ii.,<sup>b</sup> not of Ephesians i. It is the gathering of the members of His body, not of the subjects of His rule.

Some, I know, have conceived that by "all things in heaven and earth" is meant the Church. But first of all the expression "all things," etc., forbids the thought. The Church never was and never will be "all things." And though now the calling is being effected on earth, it is not a gathering there, but out of it; and, even when complete and in heaven, still it will not even embrace all things in heaven, where the gathering in Ephes. i. 10., is a gathering, at the same time, of all things that are in the heavens and that are on the earth under the headship of Christ. Again, not only is the Church an elect body, but in verse 11 we have members of it referred as an additional thing to the heading up all things in Christ, "in whom *also we* have obtained" etc., and in verse 22 we have "all things" again spoken of as put by God under Christ's feet, who is given as head *over all things* to the Church, which therefore, far from being merged in all things, enjoys and shares His supremacy,

---

ployed, where we might have expected that of the future, because the action is considered in itself as concluded; and its future occurrence is sufficiently indicated by the governing verb, and the context generally. Besides this, the infin. aorist is generally used if the principal verb is in that tense.

<sup>b</sup> I might add also, that it is the gathering of the scattered children of God, in virtue of Christ's death referred to in John xi.

278 *The Administration of the fulness of the Times.*

as His body and glorious Bride. And this is entirely confirmed by the verses immediately before and after verse 10; in the one case where the mystery of God's will is made known touching all things in heaven and on earth, and in the other, because we are spoken of as having the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest of our inheritance*. Such is what we have in the mean time: not the actual possession which comes at the fulness of times, not previously, but the Spirit meanwhile, as the earnest until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory. For when that fulness arrives, it will be *glory*, His glory, and not as now the dealings and riches of His grace. The Lord hasten the glorious day!

---

THE PROSPECT.

Head of the Church, Thy body,  
 Jesus, our great salvation !  
     Sweet to Thy saints  
     It is to think  
 Of all thine exaltation !  
 All power to Thee 's committed,  
 All power in earth, and heaven,  
     To thee a name  
     Above all fame,  
 Above all glory 's given.

Thy saints with Thee are raised,  
 With thee on high are seated,  
     Poor, sinful now,  
     But soon with thee  
 (Blest thought !) to be completed ;  
 For when Thou, Lord, and Saviour,  
 Shalt come again in glory,  
     There by Thy side  
     Thy SPOTLESS Bride  
 Shall crown the wondrous story.

Then comes the final Kingdom,  
 No bound, nor end possessing,  
     When Heaven, and earth,  
     Entranced shall lie  
 In universal blessing;  
 No murmuring tongue to sadden,  
 No breath of sin to wither,  
     In earth—on high—  
     Be nought but joy,  
 And blissful peace for ever!



## No. XXIV.

## MOSES' SONG.

Deuteronomy, xxxii.

THERE is a whole system of divine lyrics in the word of God; and the one theme of them, I think I may state to be—God in connection with his people. They vary as to the degree in which different points of them are put forward in prominence; but the highest order is where God is dwelt upon more fully in His own glories and worthy praises. I do not mean God *abstractedly*; with that I think the scripture has little *indeed* to do. But perhaps we should find this thought characterise such Psalms as I refer to—God in His own greatness and glories, yet still the *covenant-God* of His people. For this reason, I think I should put such Psalms as 1 Chron. xvi., Psalm cv., and the song of Moses (Psalm cxlv. is something of this *character*, though scarcely of the *kind* now spoken of) among “the high places” of the word. I will take an example to illustrate: very glorious is the strain of triumph in which Moses says, by faith, in Exod. xv. “Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth *Thy people*, whom Thou hast redeemed; Thou hast guided them in Thy strength to Thy holy habitation.” And very beautiful is it in Balaam’s song (which is more akin to the subject now in hand), the aspect which Israel holds in the divine mind; “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob; thy tabernacles, O Israel” (Numb. xxiv.) But higher still are the thoughts when God is dwelt on, and gloried in by his people, for his own glories and worthiness (1 Chron. xvi. 10), “Glory ye in His holy name, let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord: seek the Lord, and His strength; seek His face continually. Remember His marvellous works, and the *judgments of his mouth*.” And ver. 27, “Glory and honour are in His presence; strength and gladness are in His place.” We should not value God, if I may so speak, only for what we can get from him (I mean as to our wants, etc.); it is our privilege

to feed upon the wondrous manifestation which He has made of Himself. In its highest sense, it is indeed "eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent."

Yet, let me add, it is wonderful too, to see in what terms the Spirit of God, the true *Psalmist*, speaking by his people, hath set forth what God has done for us *personally*, in the riches of His grace. "He lifteth up," Hannah says (1 Sam. ii.), "the *beggar* from the *dunghill*, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." How true this is every way: we, the *beggars* from the *dunghill* (may we keep it more before our eyes!) are indeed raised up with Christ, and shall indeed, according to His own promise, "sit down with Him in His throne."

But to come now to this song of Moses. In sweet and blessed numbers truly is it introduced to us. "My doctrine shall distil as the dew; BECAUSE I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness to our God." *Because*; aye, that's what gives sweetness and power to His people's song. It is not singing about themselves, but Him—"He is the Rock; His work is perfect." The great object of the song seems to be this; to vindicate God, to shew that His work is perfect, though in connection with an evil rebellious people, the people of His choice. "Are not My ways equal, are not your ways unequal, saith the Lord?" And with what strong shining does the character of God, and that of His people stand out here in contrast! Of God he says, "All His ways are judgment," etc.; but of His people, the first word we get is, "They have corrupted themselves." They have corrupted themselves! And is that all about man? That's all, "He hath *corrupted* himself." "They have turned aside quickly out of the way," says the Lord (Ex. xxxii. 8), "they have corrupted themselves." And is that true of the Church too! Yes. Men, blind as bats, talk of *the succession* in the Church: but how was it when Paul was permitted of God to take a look into the dark future of the Church? "I KNOW that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in" (Acts xx.) "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." "In the last days *perilous* times shall come."

*Moses' Song.*

281

None ought surely, so deeply to have learnt this lesson of man's corruption, inherent *and proved*, as we who stand in the close of our dispensation. It is an *unvarying* truth; and let me say, it is the most important lesson we can learn for our guidance and stability in every way. It is, indeed *essential*. Forget it, and we are gone, "Be not high-minded, but fear; thou standest by *faith*;" was written on the very forehead of our dispensation. But truly recognised, while it opens out to us the abyss of iniquity into which the Church has fallen, yet does it open to us deeper joys; for they are not in circumstances, but in God.

He then begins the history—the *unchanging* truth, God's obligation and man's responsibility, "Is not he thy *father*," etc. He begins it from the beginning, where God began with them; as in Eph., for us (to which part indeed this song is very similar). He begins with God's *foreknowledge*—His predestination for His people, He had been ever thinking of them, "For when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, He set the bounds of the peoples, according to the number of the children of Israel." Just as I think we get in Eph. iii. 9, that the Church was in God's view and deliberation, when he created all things by Jesus Christ, see also chap. i. ver. 11. How sweetly that "*for*" comes in (ver. 9)! it says to our faith (and why should not God think thus of His people?) "for the Lord's *portion* is His people: Jacob is the lot of His *inheritance*." So in Ephes. i., we have to learn what is "the riches of the glory of His *inheritance* in the saints." Then do we get some of His dealings with this chosen one. "He found him in a desert land," etc., where He found us too; but He delivered us out of it by the cross of Christ (Gal. i. 4). Then their education, "He led them about, He *instructed* him." Then what incomparable beauty in that description, "As an eagle," etc. So it is with us; the Lord flutters over us, so to speak, when the child of grace is being born. With what care does He watch over our first starting forth; as I think that word tells us so beautifully (Hos. xi. 3), "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms." How does He teach us to fly! Many awkward attempts, perhaps, we may make, and come down; sometimes failing through

the weakness of the flesh; or having overflowed ourselves through the *strength* of the flesh; but still the Lord leads onwards; He takes us on His own wings! Such, I have read, is the actual practice of these birds. Blessed position to be in! This is our security; He will teach us to fly! Thus do we indeed learn, waiting on the Lord, to mount up with wings as eagles. Joshua (chap. x. 24), after the capture of the five kings, called for Israel and their captains, to come near; the captains to put their feet upon the necks of the kings. Our Captain will have us associated with Him in His *victorious strength*.—"The Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." For that is one condition that the Lord always makes when He is dealing with His people, that He alone shall have to do with them (Ps. lxxxi. 8), "O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me, there shall be no strange god *in* thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god." We then find the rich place into which the Lord brought him. "He made him ride on the high places of the earth; He gave him butter of kine," etc. All these are the good things *into* which the Lord brought His people. And let me say, there are two great principles attached to the people of God in His word—the narrow door through which we enter; but then the boundless field into which we are introduced!

Rest first, and then blessing: so with Joseph. His two children he called, first Manasseh. "For God," said he, "hath made me forget all my *toil*, and all my father's house." Here was *rest*, and then comes *blessing*—Ephraim. "For God," said he, "hath caused me to be *fruitful* in the land of my affliction" (Gen. xli. 52).

So also 1st Corinthians, we get in chapter i. the narrow door, even the cross, by which we enter, leaving behind all our own wisdom, all our own righteousness. Then in chap. ii. we get the boundless field into which we are brought in the Spirit.—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what good things God hath prepared for them that love Him." All scripture bears witness to this boundless place, into which we are brought, when once introduced in the love of Christ.

*Moses' Song.*

283

"Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep, whereof every one bears twins, and none is barren amongst them" (Cant. iv. 2; Gen. xlix. 11). John xvi. 15, teaches us this as positive matter of doctrine. May we thirst and drink more deeply!

I will just notice, to maintain the parallel between Israel and the church, that as *they* were made to ride on the high places of the *earth*, feeding on butter of kine, etc.; so our *essential standing* is, "blessed with all spiritual *blessing* in *heavenly places* in Christ." And what are we called upon to do, but like them, "to walk worthy of the *vocation* wherewith we are called" (Ephes. iv.)?

But then comes man's part in it. Though thus set of God, yet trusting in himself, forgetting that by faith he stood, he forsook God which made him, and *lightly esteemed* the Rock of his salvation. Yea, more than that, (for evil can never be merely negative) "they provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they Him to anger." For when we forsake the fountain of living waters, we are sure to *hew out* to ourselves broken cisterns that can contain no water. "To gods that came newly up" (ver. 17). Aye, men may boast as they like of antiquity, antiquity in faith and worship; but when God and His *word* are departed from, it is but after all to "gods newly come up" that men are turned. Antiquity and tradition, it should be noticed, will ever be on the side of evil, not of good; for, alas! in man's history, good is the exception, but evil is the rule.

A simple reference to God's word carried the returning remnant of the captivity over the heads of all antiquity to the days of Joshua, the son of Nun (Neh. viii. 14—17), the first time when it could have been observed probably, as being a feast for *the land*. There were men of antiquity and tradition in the time of our Lord, "the true Witness." But what does He tell them? "IN VAIN do they worship me, teaching for *doctrines* the *commandments* of men" (Matt. xv).

Then comes the Lord's visitation upon all this evil; for we know that He is a God who takes vengeance upon their *inventions*, though He forgives His people. And

what does all the midnight darkness of popery, darkness such as could be felt; what does all the distress of His people since; the distress of the truly awakened, because they are looking endlessly into an *evil heart* for peace, and racking their consciences for evidences *there* instead of looking to the finished work, the blood of Christ, that speaks peace,—what does all this, with all our present and *necessary* trials in the church, that have been and shall be, tell us, but that God has been chastening His church with its own rod? “They that observe lying vanities,” says Jonah, when restored, “forsake their own mercy.” It is a pithy lesson but a *deep* one. Still God has been mindful of His people, and will be. He will surely honour them that honour Him; He does not forget (ver. 27) that they are His people, and that He has linked His name with them. “The Lord will not,” says Samuel, in those blessed words of comfort (1 Sam. xii. 22) “forsake His people for His great name’s sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people.” “The Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up and left.” So that our wisdom is clearly to acknowledge fully our ruin and helplessness, that we may have His power put forth for us.

How worthily does the song end! “Rejoice, O ye nations with His people.” We find, I believe, apostasy proved both in the nations (the Gentiles) and His people (ver. 32. and ver. 37), yet in the end both are called on to rejoice together. According to that word in Rom. xi. 33., “O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. He hath concluded them all in unbelief [or disobedience] that He might have MERCY upon all.” And it is blessed indeed to know, that through all the manifold painful history of man’s evil, God will yet finally get glory to Himself, and will manifest Himself to the very uttermost worthy alone to be praised; God over all, blessed for evermore! He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee.” He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment. A God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is He. G.

## No. XXV.

## GRACE TRIUMPHANT.

2 Sam. xi.—xix.

"HE restoreth my soul," says David, while recounting in the twenty-third Psalm, the wonderful ways of his Divine Shepherd. And who, among all the sacred penmen, could be better prepared than David, to sing of restoring grace? Precious was the grace that had chosen him when least in his father's house, and taken him from the sheep-fold to be ruler over God's people, Israel. But surely the grace which restored his soul, when, through his own sin and folly, he had fallen from the eminence on which he had been placed, shines more brightly still. May our hearts be humbled and refreshed while we meditate a little on the above scripture, unfolding to us, as it does, a part of the process by which the Lord restored the psalmist's soul; as well as revealing something of the tone of his soul when thus restored.

Nothing can be more solemn than the proof afforded us by David's history, of what our poor hearts are. Does it not rehearse to us the serious lesson which, alas! we are so slow to learn, that no past experience of the Lord's goodness, no measure of communion with Him in bygone days, no amount of favour shewn us by the Lord, is any safeguard against present temptation? Nay, that without the present exercise of His gracious, preserving power, to keep and to uphold us, all the blessing we have enjoyed in the past, is in danger of being perverted by our wretched hearts into an occasion of self-complacency and self-indulgence. It was when David had been brought by the hand of God, through all the dangers and trials of his exile under Saul, when he had obtained undisputed possession of the throne, to which God had appointed him;—it was after he had celebrated the Lord's dealings with him thus in a number of those wondrous Psalms in which we may see how his soul had been leaning on God, and learning God, amid the many trials which had

marked his path;—it was after all this, when God had given him rest and prosperity on every side, that he forgot God, and was left of Him to experience the meaning of that word, “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin! And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James. i. 14, 15).

Not to dwell on the well known circumstances of David’s fall, there is one fact claiming special notice, as shewing that there is no more natural or inherent power of recovery in a saint, than there is in an unconverted sinner. A saint when fallen, can no more restore himself, than a poor sinner can save himself at first. The alone Saviour is the alone Restorer too. When David’s eye had enkindled the unholy flame in David’s heart, and when, left to himself, he had plunged headlong into sin, were there immediate risings of compunction in his breast? Did he at once perceive how deeply he had fallen, and how terribly he had dishonoured God? Did he at once confess his sin, and return to the Lord with weeping and supplication? Alas! no; we read of no such thing. So far from this, when David had defiled himself, and dishonoured his God, his only thought seems to have been how he could shield his own character from infamy by the concealment of his sin. And it was thus he was led into still greater enormities. If, by pretended kindness, he could have made Uriah the instrument of hiding the wrong which had been done to him, as well as the dishonour done to God, David was willing enough that it should be so; and he tried this plan first. But at any cost his character must be maintained, and his shame concealed. And hence, when Uriah’s fidelity to his master, and his deep sense of the honour put upon him, as a soldier of Israel, leads him to decline the king’s offers, and prefer fellowship with his comrades in the hardships they were enduring in the open field, to resting comfortably in his own house, and in his own bed, this noble, self-renouncing fidelity makes him the victim of David’s pride. Uriah’s life must be sacrificed rather than David’s character be stained. He is to be slain too by the sword of the children of Ammon. And as a still



further illustration of the hardening effect of sin upon the conscience, Joab is selected as the agent to execute the king's will. As I remember another to have observed, when David's heart was right, the sons of Zeruiah were too hard for him; but now the most crafty and cruel of Zeruiah's sons is the instrument well suited to the work in which it was in David's heart to employ him. And all was permitted, for the time being, to succeed. Everything occurred exactly to his mind. The voice of the only one, as he thought, who could bear witness against him, was hushed in death. His faithless wife, when she hears that her husband is dead, mourns for him. "And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son." "But," adds the sacred penmen (and how it falls upon the ear like the death-knell of all David's prospective enjoyment) "the thing that David had done displeased the Lord." Better for us, infinitely better, to be wading through deepest waters of trial, with the smile of God upon our ways, than in circumstances of ease and prosperity, to have it recorded of us, "the thing that he had done displeased the Lord."

Nearly twelve months, at least, had elapsed, and there was not the slightest symptom of contrition on the part of David. Nay, so deep was the slumber into which he had sunk, that when Nathan, commissioned of the Lord, had addressed to him the parable of the rich man who passed by his own flocks and herds, to regale himself and his friends on the one ewe lamb of his poor neighbour, the indignation of the monarch arose, and he passed immediate sentence on the wretch who had done this; never perceiving that he was thus passing sentence on himself. It was requisite for the prophet to apply the parable as well as to speak it, before the least vitality was manifest in David's conscience. "Thou art the man," however, comes home to his conscience; and David at once acknowledges "I have sinned against the Lord." As immediate is the response to this confession, "the Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Thus does the Lord meet in full grace the first motion of the wanderer's heart towards Him; yea, knowing as he

did, that that heart would never have moved towards Him at all, if left to itself. It was the Shepherd who had sought the sheep, not the sheep that had sought the Shepherd. And now that the first bleat of penitential sorrow bears witness that the stray one had been not only *sought* but *found*, how does the joy of the Shepherd's heart flow out, in the consolatory assurance "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Would that this touching display of the perfect grace of God might be used of the Holy Spirit, both to break and to comfort the heart of some stray sheep of His flock, whose eye may rest upon these pages.

Here then let us pause for a moment, and contemplate the first stage in the restoring process. Bitter and heavy, and long continued chastenings from the hand of God, are to follow this first step; but before a single stripe is inflicted, the soul is brought to perfect rest before God in the assurance that it is for edification, not for destruction, that it is thus dealt with. A ministry is needed, it is true, to make David sensible of his sin, and willing to acknowledge it; but the moment that ministry is successful, and David acknowledges his iniquity, that moment he is assured of full forgiveness. "The Lord hath put away thy sin." All the chastening follows in the train of this. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Grace rescues David, so that he dies not; but the child must die. The Lord's enemies have had fearful occasion given them to blaspheme; and before all the Lord must make it manifest that He neither sanctions David's sin, nor winks at it. David himself, moreover, has to learn through all this, what an evil and bitter thing it is to forsake God. All these, and other objects, have to be accomplished; and in order to them, the sword is never to depart from David's house. The indignity and wrong he had done to Uriah secretly, has to be done to him openly before the sun. But needful, yea, *indispensable*, as all this is, 'ere a single stroke of the rod descends, David is assured that his sin is put away, he shall not die. And is not this the Lord's way with us still, beloved? Many a question He may have to settle with us in detail; He may have, as it were, to disown our ways in the sight

*Grace Triumphant.*

289

of all; that so His name be not dishonoured; but is it not still his way to strengthen us to endure all this, by assuring us of free forgiveness for all; and that, however he may have to sift and chasten us, it is not in anger, but in love; that it is because he is *for* us, and not *against* us. Yea; and the heart, thus strengthened, can take God's side against our own crooked ways, when his grace has assured us that it is against *our ways*, not *our persons*, that His dealings are directed.

And yet let us give ear to the exhortation which speaketh unto us as unto children, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." It is no trifling matter to be under the chastening hand of God. He is not like the soft and indulgent parent, who spares the rod and spoils the child. True, he afflicts not willingly; nor does he administer a single stroke that is not absolutely needed. But then on the other hand, He does not withhold a single stroke that is needed. He has no false tenderness. Think of what David passed through—the death of his child, after all his fastings and prayers, and wearing of sackcloth, in the vain hope of turning aside the stroke:—the dishonour of another child of his, leading as it did to the slaughter of the guilty Amnon, by his brother and hers, the wilful Absalom. What a voice must all this have had in David's conscience! How, at every turn, it must have reminded him of his own sin. And then, after the lapse of years, Absalom, first exiled, and now restored, rebels against his father. Having stolen the hearts of the people, the conspiracy being ripe, he gets himself proclaimed king, and David has to flee for his life from Jerusalem. His long tried and hitherto faithful counsellor, Ahithophel, is banded with his own son to destroy him. And when Ahithophel advises to pursue after the hoary-headed king, and come upon him while he is weary and weak-handed; "and I will smite," says he, "the king only;"—this infernal counsel meets with the warmest response from Absalom and his followers. "And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel." What must David's heart have felt, when, in banishment from his beloved Jerusalem and the house of his God, he hears of Absalom's thirst for his blood. And Israel, too,

ready and eager to fight the battles of the rebellious son against his father, the Lord's anointed. Little did David anticipate this when fulfilling the lusts of his flesh and of his mind. But such were the bitter consequences of his ways; and if by all this God was shewing his hatred of the sin which, nevertheless, he had put away, surely David must have learnt by it all, with deepening horror and self-loathing, what the true character of his sin was.

And so he did. Beautiful is the meekness with which he bows to the hand that smites him. See his care for the ark of God. "And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness. And lo, Zadok also, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God: and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city. And the king said unto Zadok, carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation." Precious as it was in his eyes, he would not have the ark of God to be the companion of his wanderings, when these wanderings were occasioned by, and the witness of, his sin. If it please God, he shall be brought back to it; but if not, still let not the ark of God be disturbed. "But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee: behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him." What prostration of soul is here! How conscious is David of having no claim by nature, and of having forfeited every title resulting from the relationships which grace had established. He is cast entirely on mercy, and mercy is not to be, cannot be, dictated to. He is content that it should be with him in everything as the Lord pleases. "And David went up by the ascent of Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered; and he went barefoot; and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up weeping as they went up." What a procession. At Bahurim, Shimei curses him and casts stones at him, crying after him, "Come out, come out, thou bloody

man, and thou man of Belial: the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man." How every word must have gone to his heart. It was not, indeed, as the reviler said, because of the blood of the house of Saul. David had never taken pleasure in their blood; he had spared Saul himself once and again when he had his life in his hands. But this is no comfort to him now. He knows that he has shed blood, innocent blood, and though Shimei be ignorant of it, every word he utters, revives the whole scene in David's memory, and gives it a voice in David's conscience. And see how softly he treads and how meekly he bows. Abishai would go over and take off Shimei's head. But what says David? "What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say; Wherefore hast thou done so? . . . Behold my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life; how much more now may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him." And what is it that enables David thus to "accept the punishment of his iniquity?" The next verse discloses the secret. "It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day." His soul has drunk in the consolation of that word. "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die;" and now, severe and complicated and *apparently* interminable as his trials are, he has in the depths of his soul a confidence in God which keeps him from fainting under the rebukes of His holy hand. And now that in the depths of his distress, this expression of confidence in the Lord's grace has been drawn out of him; now that he has fully bowed to all that has come upon him ("I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it") the fact becomes apparent that the worst is over. From this time, the Lord turns his captivity. It is not that it is all over—that he has seen the last of it. No, the sword is never

to depart from his house as long he lives.<sup>a</sup> But there is in important turn in his affairs. Instead of being, as at were, given up into the hand of his enemies, the Lord begins now to act manifestly on his behalf. Ahithophel's prudent counsel is rejected by Absalom, and in despair he goes and hangs himself. The two armies of David and Absalom are drawn out for battle, and David receives an affecting proof of the place he fills in the hearts of those who still cleave to him. They insist that he shall not go out to the battle. "The people answered, Thou shalt not go forth; for if we flee away, they will not care for us; but now thou art worth ten thousand of us; therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city." The battle is set in array, and very soon the followers of Absalom are discomfited before David's servants. But alas, victory, in a case like this, has its pangs and its sorrows, scarcely less pungent than those of defeat. When the just judgment of God has armed brother against brother, and father against child, even though victory should be on the side of righteousness, at what a fearful cost is it won. Twenty-thousand men of Israel dead on the field can be no matter of rejoicing to Israel's king. Nor is this the worst. David had charged the captains concerning Absalom. (It may be that it was tenderness of nature, but what, save tenderness became one in David's circumstances?) "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, with Absalom." Such were his words; and he returned into the city to await the result. Tidings are brought him of the victory which God had graciously wrought. "Is the young man Absalom safe?" was his only reply. Another messenger arrives and proclaims the victory; the same question is proposed to him; and when he replies, "the enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is," he can contain no longer. He sees in himself the cause of all these calamities to the nation and to his household—he thinks not of his own deliverance and triumph but of his son's destruction—

<sup>a</sup> And thus, when on his death-bed, he hears that Adonijah is in rebellion against Solomon who had been chosen of God to be his successor.

*Grace Triumphant.*

293

and he goes away to weep. "And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" The people catching the spirit of their king and taking his tone, mourn with him. "The victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son; and the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle." Joab, consummate politician as he was, fears the result of this, and remonstrates with the king. But how apparent in what he says is his total want of sympathy with the feelings of the king, and with the true character of that day's victory. It was the victory of grace, delivering David out of the hands of his wilful, rebellious son; but delivering him in such a way as to speak most loudly and distinctly to his heart, that it was for chastisement on his own sin that all this had been permitted to take place. But what is all this to Joab? His heart has not been softened and broken and moulded by *restoring grace*; and so he can taunt the heart-broken parent with his grief. "For this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well," David makes no reply to his reproaches; but for the people's sake he arises and sits in the gate. The people strive with each other as to who shall have the honour and the joy of bringing the king back. "So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan." There he is met by Shimei of Bahurim. Not that Shimei's heart was changed, or that he had any more love for David than when he had cursed and cast stones at him as he went. No; he was one of those whose conduct changes with the change of circumstances. He went with the stream. When David was fleeing for his life, he would heap reproaches and curses upon him. Now that he is returning in safety and triumph, he crouches at his feet, and sues for mercy. "Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou re-

member that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart." Abishai would fain have him put to death. But what says the king? "What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries to me? Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? For do not I know that I am this day king over Israel?" Have we not here two precious secrets as to the spring whence flow the forgiveness of injuries, the long-suffering, the forbearing one another in love, which are so largely enjoined on us in the New Testament. David was here acting on principles altogether beyond the dispensation under which he lived. His personal need and failure had made *grace* everything to him. And if there was a triumph that day it was the triumph of *grace*. And shall he celebrate the triumphs of the *grace* that had delivered him out of the pit which he had dug for himself, and was now restoring him to Jerusalem and the sanctuary and the throne from all which his own sin had banished him—shall he celebrate the triumphs of *restoring grace* like this by avenging his own quarrel and executing *justice* on Shimei? His heart recoils utterly from the thought. "Shall there any man be put to death *this day* in Israel!" Besides, what need? Is it questionable whether David is to wield the sceptre and fill the throne? If it were still a disputed point, there might be some ground for proceeding to extremities with one like Shimei. But when God has fought our battles, we surely have no need to fight them ourselves. "Do not I know that I am this day king over Israel. Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him." Thus did the *grace* which had restored his soul, and the *assured certainty* of all the blessing which that grace had bestowed, become with David the ground on which to act in full grace to his now humbled and crouching adversary. It was not a question of what Shimei deserved, no, nor whether Shimei was really humbled. His deservings were evident enough, and his humiliation was sufficiently questionable. But was it for the one who owed all he



had *twice over* to the boundless grace of God, and who had all secured to him by the certainty of that grace, to avenge himself or enforce the claims of justice on another? The Lord grant us, beloved, to walk towards each other, and toward all, in the deep and abiding sense of what *grace* has done for us; not *saving* grace alone, but *restoring* grace as well.

But another scene invites our attention here. Mephibosheth, the son of Saul, whom David had taken into his house, and fed at his table, to shew the kindness of God to him, comes down to meet the king. Ziba, his servant, had belied him to the king. The provisions which Mephibosheth had prepared for the king when he was leaving Jerusalem, Ziba, his servant, had carried (taking advantage of his master's lameness), as though they were his own gift to the king, and, misrepresenting his master, had obtained possession of his master's inheritance. Now Mephibosheth comes out to meet the king. And it is the Holy Ghost, not Mephibosheth himself, that says, "he had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed, until the day he came again in peace." How affecting is this testimony! And what a specimen of what we should be, beloved, during the absence of Jesus. Rejected by his own people, and by the earth, as David was driven from Jerusalem, what joy can we, poor debtors to his love, find in anything here, till the moment of his return? "Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come," said Jesus, "when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them; and then shall they fast in those days." Surely this is the period of the Church's fasting; and to the heart that knows the Bridegroom's love, what joy can be afforded by the world that once crucified and still rejects Him? Would that we were more constrained by the love of Christ, Mephibosheth-like, to value nothing, care for nothing, attempt to satisfy ourselves with nothing, short of meeting the Bridegroom on his return with joy. Mephibosheth now had what satisfied his heart. He had the king back again. He makes no complaint of Ziba, save in answer

to the king's enquiry "Wherefore wentest thou not with me, Mephibosheth?" He says enough to explain the cause; but he leaves all in the king's hands. "He hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God; do, therefore, what is good in thine eyes. For all my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king; yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right, therefore, have I yet to cry any more unto the king." Blessed reasoning! All that Mephibosheth had to look for naturally at the hand of David, was death. But David had shewn him mercy. He had not only spared his life, but set him at his own table, and treated him as though he had been his own son. What right then has he to complain, or to cry any more to the king? Nothing slays the disposition to assert our rights and defend ourselves, but the knowledge of the grace which, when we had no right to anything but death and perdition, placed us amongst God's children at our Father's table. But there is something more blessed still. Not only does the sense of the degradation of his own natural condition, reconcile Mephibosheth to forego any vindication of himself; his joy, his delight in the king's presence, leaves him no motive for self-vindication, no wish for anything but what he has. The king says, "Thou and Ziba divide the land; and Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house." Oh that there were more of this spirit in each of us, beloved. When Jesus actually returns, and we meet him in the air, how insignificant will all those things appear about which so many are so anxious now. And what is the province of faith, but so to realize in the present, what we know will be in the future, as to be enabled to act as though it were existent now. The Lord grant us all that deadness to the world, that weanedness from its pleasures and its cares, which we should feel became us, if we were actually present with Jesus, and beholding His glory. He is as really ours, and His love should be as distinctly the one satisfying portion of our hearts, as though these eyes had actually beheld Him, and these

ears heard His shouts of gladness, as He descends into the air to take His ransomed to Himself. Who are they that will participate of His joy in that day? Who but they that like Mephibosheth, have been waiting, with world-weaned affections, and longing eyes, and breaking hearts, for His return. Surely to such, that return will leave nothing to desire or ask.

One scene more is opened to us in this scripture to crown the triumphs of grace. David, in his exile, had not only a Mephibosheth behind him, whose love made him a stranger to all joy till he returned; he had those, who with equal love, ministered to his refreshment, and that of his followers, when they had crossed the Jordan. "And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi, the son of Nahash of Rabbah, of the children of Ammon, and Machir, the son of Ammiel, of Lo-debar, and Barzillai, the Gileadite of Rogelim, brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse, and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat; for they said, the people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness" (chap. xvii. 27—29). Before this, when the king was just setting out from Jerusalem, Ittai, the Gittite, came after him. "Then said the king to Ittai, the Gittite, wherefore goest thou also with us? Return to thy place, and abide with the king; for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? Seeing I go whither I may, return then, and take back thy brethren; mercy and truth be with thee." But Ittai could not be dissuaded. His attachment to David was independent of circumstances. It was an attachment to his person that made him covet a share in his sorrows and his toils, as much as in his honours and his joys. "And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be" (chap. xv. 19—21). What does all this remind us of, beloved. Surely there are lessons for us

here. This is the period during which David's royal Son and Lord is rejected by Jerusalem and the earth, just as David was exiled and driven across the Jordan, by a rebellion of a great part of the nation in that day. An interval occurred between his journey from Jerusalem and his return to it in peace and triumph. Was his exile altogether unpitied and uncheered? No, there was a Mephibosheth to mourn for him, an Ittai to accompany him, and Ammonites, Gileadites, and others, to minister to him. Is there nothing here to remind us of Jesus, cheered and refreshed during his exile from the earth, by the faith, the devotedness, the service, the longing of heart for His return, of poor sinners, chiefly of the Gentiles, like Ittai and Shobi, whose hearts have been won by His grace, and made to prize HIM, and covet to know HIM, and to serve HIM, even though it be in the fellowship of His sufferings; and in being made conformable to His death. And what is the issue of this on his return? "Now Barzillai, the Gileadite, came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan . . . And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem." Barzillai's reply shews clearly enough that it was love to the king, and the joy of ministering to him, which had been the spring of his service; not any selfish eye to a reward. "Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king; and why should the king recompense it with such a reward?" He asks that Chimham, his son, may go. "And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee; and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, that will I do for thee." And will not Jesus, when He returns, have His rewards for those who have continued with Him in His temptations, who have shared the fellowship of His sufferings, and who, in the patience of hope, have waited for Him till then? Oh yes! Whether we view the Church as a stranger to all earthly joy, like Mephibosheth, her heart breaking for the return of her absent lord; or whether we regard her in the activities of affectionate service, like these honoured Gentiles, and others, who ministered

to David in his exile, the perfect answer to all will be found in His return. The heart that has sighed for HIM will find in HIM then the fulness of eternal joy. The cup of cold water administered to any in His name, will not fail of its reward then. They, who through grace, have known, and loved, and owned, and served Him, now, during His rejection, will be owned, and blest, and rewarded both *by* Him and *with* Him, then. May He Himself be more singly the object of all our hearts!

---

HEBREW PROPER NAMES.—It is almost impossible to study the writings of the Prophets without observing how the meaning of the name of the writer coincides with the drift of his writings.

Let us see this in a few of the more studied and better-known books.

The name EZRA means "help of Jah"; his book gives a specimen of the "Lord's help," namely, His gracious aid to a little remnant to return from captivity and re-build *the temple*.

NEHEMIAH means "the comfort of Jah"; his book describes how a remnant having been made willing to seek the things of the Lord first (read Haggai), the Lord gave to them the comfort of their *own* things; and so the city and the wall were rebuilt.

ISAIAH means "the salvation of Jah." What book has as its objects the exposition of *salvation* and its principles more manifestly than this? Proof of this may be seen in the way it is constantly the hand-book (not only of the Jew in his conversion, but) to the Roman Catholic when seeking an answer to "What is Truth?" and to the Protestant when seeking life.

JEREMIAH means "the Lord will raise"; the history is that of the upholding, by the Lord, of a poor *servant*, and the principles thereof. Type of something far deeper—he is humbled and broken, through the evil all around, yet sustained as set a witness for the Lord. 'Tis the book of those, now-a-days, who are in the battles of the Lord.

EZEKIEL means "the strengthening of God." His testimony is indeed a wondrous epitome of the ways, resources, and end of God, in removing obstacles to blessing and in strengthening the people of his love.

DANIEL signifies "Judgment of God." His narrative is of the setting up of the Gentile dynasty in judgment against Israel, and then the judgment upon the Gentiles for the abuse of their privileges.

The same is true with the rest of the Prophets' names and writings.

N<sup>o</sup>. XXVI.THE FOLLY OF TRUSTING TO EGYPT FOR  
HELP.

“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord.”—Isaiah xxxi. 1—3.

THE importance of Israel's history to the church of God, arises from its peculiar character as a nation, in contrast with the other nations of the world by which it was surrounded, and from which its special glory and privilege was to be separate and distinct.

Israel, as a people, was God's elect nation, of whom He says, “This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise.” And, again, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; *therefore* I will punish you for all your iniquities.” Hence their obedience or failures come to be most instructive to God's people now, because they exhibit the effect of God's principles, either in subjection to them, with all its happy issues; or in departure from them, with all its calamitous results.

This, it will be admitted, is true of their history generally; while, in one special part of it, the Scripture expressly teaches, that “they were types of us.”—“All these things happened to them for ensamples<sup>a</sup>; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”

This is the point of importance in Israel's history, that they were a people in connexion with God. Their conduct had its main importance in this respect. It had its bearing on their own national welfare, or the reverse; but it had a much higher importance in relation to God, as it exhibited His character and principles before the nations around. “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord.”

<sup>a</sup> “τυποί,” types.

*The folly of trusting to Egypt for help.* 301

The nations of the world were the witnesses of the power and policy of *man*, and they exhibited the ways and principles of *man*; but Israel should have been a witness before the nations of that truth. "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellency, and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee."

It is on this ground that Israel and "*Egypt*" are found, in their national character, so frequently presented in contrast in the Old Testament, just as the church and the world are set in constant opposition in the New. The principles of *God* had their place in the one, and the principles of *man* were working in the other, which necessarily placed them in opposition.

But Israel had another character besides that which was stamped on them by their connexion with God. They were *men*, and they had, naturally, all the feelings and propensities of *men*. Hence, whenever their faith failed, and they were left to their own unrestrained action, they invariably displayed nothing but human tendencies, and sought for help in the natural resources of *men*.

It required the knowledge of God, and the recognition of the special relations he sustained towards them, and an active trust in His power and protection—in a word, *faith* in Him as *God*, and *their* God—to enable Israel to walk on God's principles, and to act in character before the nations. In like manner, now, it requires faith on the part of the church of God, in all God's blessed relations toward it, and the sense of His presence, in order to walk with Him, and to exhibit a heavenly character before the world. "They that *know* Thy *name* will put their *trust* in Thee"! And what wonders of love and grace are wrapped up in the knowledge of *that name*! "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

But saints are *men*, as well as Israel of old, and in that character have been schooled and trained in the *world*, as Israel was trained in *Egypt*, and in either case the effect is seen, for the certain result of acting on the principles of the world, is to lose the principles of God. The

302      *The folly of trusting to Egypt for help.*

world is a definite sphere, where the principles of man, under the influence of Satan, "the god of this world," are paramount and in action; while the church is the only sphere in which the principles of God are working. "Egypt" had its wisdom, and policy, and power; but Egypt could be only the oppressor or the corrupter of the people of God. Indeed, there is nothing more affecting in Israel's history, than their constant hankering after Egypt, after all that they had suffered there, and after all that God had done to deliver them from it. It only yields, in infatuation, to that which has been manifested in the history of the church, in its turning from the grace and presence of a divine Comforter and Guide, to the miserable shifts and appliances of "this present evil world."

The earliest mention of Egypt, except in Gen. x., in the division of nations, is as the place whence Abram, the child of faith, sought help from the famine which pressed upon him, when a sojourner in "the land of promise." And, indeed, it was the land of *earthly* plenty. The comforts of this life were there in abundance; but we learn, in Abram's sojourn there, what a price must be paid by the believer for its "cattle, and silver, and gold," and for the favour of its prince! The faith of the patriarch and his altar belonged not to Egypt, but to the land of Canaan, which he had now left behind.

Egypt was the land of plenty. It was well watered, and the fruitfulness of its river was proverbial. But it did not drink of the "rain of heaven;" nor did it enjoy the fertilising dews from above. It is coupled with *Lot's* portion in the plain of Jordan; of which it is said, "it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of *Egypt* as thou comest unto Zoar." Still its river bore only "the *fatness* of the earth;" and in this respect it is contrasted with Israel's portion, as chosen by the Lord. "The land whither thou goest in to possess it, is *not as the land of Egypt*, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot as a garden of herbs: but the land whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and *drinketh water of the rain of heaven.*"



*The folly of trusting to Egypt for help.*      303

Accordingly, in after times, when their moral corruption was hastening on the sorrows of the Babylonish captivity, the Lord, by His prophet Jeremiah, expostulates with them thus:—"The children of *Noph* and *Tahapanes* have broken the crown of thy head. Hast thou not procured this unto thyself in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God *when He led thee by the way?* And now what hast thou to do with *Egypt*, to drink the *waters of Sihor?* Or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?" Israel (had they known how to value it) had their own "*fountain of living waters;*" and ought never to have been indebted to the streams of Egypt, or the nations around them.

As to Egypt, *Joseph's history* may indeed cast a halo of glory over it;—as even the world itself will be changed in its character when the humbled One comes to take His power;<sup>b</sup> still its real character is to be found only in the hard and bitter bondage of Israel. For how often is that word repeated in the books of Moses, "Remember ye were bondmen in Egypt!" And their redemption is thus characterised in Deuteronomy iv. 20, "The Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the *iron furnace*, even out of Egypt, to be unto Him a people of inheritance as it is this day."

It required the plagues of Egypt, and the blood of the Passover, to put God's captive people and their oppressors,

<sup>b</sup> So, in God's prophetic purposes, there is another destination for Egypt, when Israel under Messiah becomes the head of the Gentiles, and "they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord to Jerusalem." This is presented in Isai. xix. "And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt; every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts, which he hath determined against it" (ver. 17). "In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord, in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord" (ver. 19). "And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation" (ver. 20). "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a *blessing in the midst of the land*; whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt, my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine *inheritance*" (ver. 24, 25). The whole chapter is one of the deepest interest in connexion with the millennial glory and blessing of the earth.

304      *The folly of trusting to Egypt for help.*

into their true relative position towards each other. And accordingly, God's relation to Israel, in redemption, is thus expressed, "I am the Lord thy God that brought thee out of Egypt;" while the confession that was connected with the offering of "the basket of first fruits" was designed to be the constant memorial of this. "Thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish, was my father; and he went down to Egypt to sojourn there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous; and *the Egyptians* evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage; and when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked upon our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression; and the Lord brought us forth out of *Egypt* with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs and with wonders; and He hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land that floweth with milk and honey." (Deut. xxvi.)

Still, almost as soon as ever they had reached the wilderness (the place of earthly destitution, and of heavenly supply), *Egypt* assumes another character in their eyes than the land of their oppression, and the place of God's judgment. "The children of Israel said unto them [Moses and Aaron] would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full." And they were not ashamed to say, "*it was well with us in Egypt!*" The reason of all this is obvious and instructive. To walk with God in a wilderness requires faith, and that spirit of dependence which nothing but faith can give. But to be satisfied with the supplies of Egypt is a thing which is perfectly understood by sense. Thus, whenever the necessities of their condition demanded the exercise of faith—and faith was not there, they, "in their hearts, turned back again into Egypt." And on one occasion, they said, "were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." Nor was this all: their *religion* was corrupted by *Egypt*. The worship of "the calf" was Egyptian idolatry;

*The folly of trusting to Egypt for help.* 305

though Israel knew that the Lord had said, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the GODS of Egypt I will execute judgment; I am the Lord." But, alas! Israel had learned to commit fornication in Egypt; and they practised the lesson in the wilderness, and ever after. For when the Lord presents before them their course, in the days of Ezekiel, in the parable of the two lewd women, He says, "they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth." The infidelities of Judah and Israel were multiplied in their after history; but it was only a fruit of their not having left their whoredoms brought from Egypt." <sup>c</sup>

On their entrance to the land under the leadership of Joshua, this is noticed though in grace, by the Lord. After the people were *circumcised* anew, "the Lord said unto Joshua, this day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day." And nothing but the power of circumcision can keep the heart of the saint separate from the world now; for if the flesh be allowed, the world at once has an open door.

But, in another form, Egypt still was Israel's snare, after their settlement in the land. *Outward weakness* was the designed characteristic of Israel's polity by Jehovah; that the people might know that "they got not the land in possession by their own sword; neither did their own arm (at any time) save them; but *Thy* right hand and *Thine* arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour toward them." And the song should have been ever heard in their midst, "Thou art my King, O God; command deliverances for Jacob. Through *Thee* will we push down our enemies; through *Thy* name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But Thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast

<sup>c</sup> The father of the man that blasphemed the name of the Lord in the camp of Israel was an Egyptian (Levit. xxiv). Hagar also, Abram's bondmaid, was an Egyptian.

306      *The folly of trusting to Egypt for help.*

put them to shame that hated us. In GOD we boast all the day long, and praise Thy name for ever."

It was for this intent that they were forbidden to multiply horses, and that three times a year their coasts were to be left entirely unguarded; while all their males were brought together in solemn assembly, to Jerusalem, before the Lord. But *Egypt* was celebrated for its horses and chariots; and this is noticed in the Lord's prohibition to the king, "he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to *Egypt* to the end that he should multiply horses; forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you ye shall henceforth return no more that way." Their redemption from Egypt and all its power should have been final; nor should any thing have tempted them to return. But, in the reign of Solomon, we find that horses were one chief article of commerce with Egypt. In 1 Kings, x. 28, 29, it is recorded that Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt:—"And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for an hundred and fifty." While in the days of Isaiah, the Lord complains, amongst other tokens of departure from himself, that "their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots." But in the following chapter of the book of Kings, there is opened a still further effect of Solomon's affinity with Egypt. This wisest of men was corrupted by it. "King Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh. . . . . For it came to pass when Solomon was old that his wives turned away his heart after other GODS." How near is the neighbourhood, and how subtle the connection of "the flesh," the world, and the devil! And how instructive is the lesson, that as to Israel, the first enemy that invaded their land after the death of Solomon was Shishak king of Egypt! "It came to pass in the fifth year of King Rehoboam that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem; and he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house: he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of silver and gold which Solomon had made." What force do these historical notices give to that statute of the kingdom (already partly

*The folly of trusting to Egypt for help.* 307

quoted) "he shall not multiply *wives* to himself that his heart turn not away; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself *silver* and *gold*!" And how full is the illustration of a part of the passage which is the subject of the present comment, "Yet he also is *wise* and will bring evil, and will not *call back* his words!"

There may be the silver and the gold, and the "tapestries, and carved work, and fine linen of Egypt"—but it is *Egypt* still! There may be its wisdom, and policy, and power; its horses and chariots—but still the word of the Lord remains in all its force, "Woe to them that go down to *Egypt* for help; and stay on horses and trust in chariots because they are many; and on horsemen because they are very strong; . . . now the Egyptians are men and not God; and their horses flesh and not spirit." And as a ground of trust to Israel, Egypt's character is most accurately given by a heathen man. "Now behold thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon *Egypt*, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it; so is Pharaoh *king of Egypt* to ALL that trust on him." And this judgment is entirely confirmed by the Lord, through Ezekiel, who says, "And all the inhabitants of *Egypt* shall know that I am the Lord, because they have been a *staff of reed*, to the house of Israel. When they took hold of thee by the hand, thou didst break and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand." Nor should this instructive warning to Israel be allowed to lapse while the saint has this significant note of divine wisdom concerning the world through which he is passing, that it is "the great city which spiritually is called *Sodom and Egypt*, where also our Lord was crucified!" Heaven-bestowed names and titles are more unchanging, and more significant, than our careless hearts are wont to conceive. But finally, as to *Egypt*, when God speaks of it in all its glory, he speaks of it only as "the tabernacles of *Ham*!" "He smote all the first-born of Egypt: the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of *Ham*!" And it may be said, that the example of Moses gives the only proper action of faith towards it. "By faith Moses *forsook* Egypt, not

308      *The folly of trusting to Egypt for help.*

fearing the wrath of the king." He esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

All this recorded testimony to Israel about Egypt gives especial pungency to the denunciation of the prophet;—

"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because *they are many*; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord! Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: but will arise against the house of the evildoers, and against the help of them that work iniquity. Now the Egyptians *are* men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down and they all shall fail together" (Isaiah, xxxi. 1—3).

The special and instructive contrasts here, are "*Men*" and "*God*;" and "*flesh*" and "*spirit*." Man with his horses, and chariots, and horsemen presenting an array of strength, resistless in the estimation of the natural mind; but "when the LORD shall stretch out his hand both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together." How deep is this infatuation of a people whose privilege and strength is thus presented to the eye of faith, that they should look to Egypt or horses and chariots as their strength!

"*There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.*" (Deuteronomy, xxxiii. 26—29).

This was *Israel's folly*, to turn from God and his Spirit to trust in Egypt and in an arm of flesh, because they walked as *men*. But what is this to the church's folly that is associated with her head in heaven, and is blessed with the ever-abiding presence of the Holy Ghost on

*The folly of trusting to Egypt for help.* 309

earth; and has *God* for her, and the infinite treasures of his grace as her resource; and Eternal glory before her; when she is found turning to seek the world's friendship, and practically trusts in the flesh and in carnal wisdom for her guidance and help! The Lord teach our hearts more the force of that word, "If ye then be risen with Christ!" And lead us to beware of following the course of "Demas," of whom the apostle says, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." "If *GOD* be for us who can be against us." There is nothing more certain than this, that every degree of confidence that is reposed in man by a saint or *in himself*, is so much of his trust withdrawn from "the *living God*." "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through *God*." But *faith* alone can use those weapons; and when faith fails, there is always the practical turning to the world and its strength and wisdom for help. This only is the right position of our souls, "to have the sentence of death in ourselves; that we should not trust in ourselves; but in *God* that raiseth the dead." And again let it be said; "if *GOD* be for us who can be against us!" "There is no king saved by the multitude of a host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. A horse is a vain thing for safety; neither shall he deliver any by his great strength . . . our soul waiteth for the Lord; he is our help and our shield."

D.

---

A FRAGMENT.

"ONE thing is evident: *God* is now working in the last days. Dissolution is, on all sides, not only going on, but *felt* to be going on. If we are faithful, and have sufficient power to blend large-heartedness with faithfulness, we shall be *the first of blessings* in this state of things. Otherwise, except for a certain individual blessing and faithfulness (which is always something), we shall be nought. But we ought to love the church (the beloved Bride of Christ), and seek its good; surely, more than a David, or godly Israelite, or Jew, could, or did, that of Jerusalem; and seek its good for Christ's sake."

N<sup>o</sup>. XXVII.

## ELIJAH, "A MAN SUBJECT TO LIKE PASSIONS AS WE ARE."

1 Kings xix.

THE testimony to the goodness of God in "not sparing His only Son, but freely giving Him up for us all"—even Jesus our Lord, was that which attracted believers together. They were added to the church; God was in all their thoughts; their hearts overflowed with the sense of His love; and their union was sustained in their sympathy of soul about Him. They had before their eyes Jesus, evidently set forth "crucified among them" (Gal. iii. 1); the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts. Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they were changed into the same image. The multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul. Selfishness was obliterated. Beholding the love of God—their hearts were inflamed with love one towards another, and towards all men. Their light shone; and a testimony for God existed upon earth, created by the contemplation of Himself, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts ii. 41—47).

The Church was called into existence on earth, by a testimony to Jesus, risen at the right hand of God. The gospel preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from



*Elijah, "a man subject to like passions as we are."* 311

heaven, accomplished such effects on a multitude of persons, as we read of in Scripture.

How is the fine gold become dim! How sad the change! Where is the Church answering to the description recorded in the Acts? Surely the salt has lost its savour! Yet the very circumstances in which we are found, are being overruled for palpable blessing. We cannot take comfort in any witness for God. We cannot rejoice in any results. There is no ox in the stall, no fruit in the vine; therefore we are brought back to elementary principles, the only true principles recovered of our very necessity, even we must rejoice in *God*.

Strange and wonderful, indeed, is the wisdom of God in the control of circumstances. Opposites in His hands contribute to the same results. In this His very being as God is demonstrated. When Moses put his hand into his bosom at the command of God, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. Ordered to put his hand into his bosom again; it was turned again as his other flesh (Exod. iv. 6, 7). The very place where it became leprous is the very place where it is healed. The failure of the church shall contribute, in His hands, to direct believers to *Himself*, just as being at first occupied about Himself, formed the church. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom. xi. 33).

Paul, in the twentieth chapter of the Acts, taking leave of the elders at Ephesus (after saying that he knew that "after his departure grievous wolves should enter in"), commends them to God, and the word of His grace. Peter, writing in his second Epistle, chap. i., says, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God." The revelation of God is the object of scripture. "The world by wisdom knew not God;" hence the necessity of revelation. "Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name." Our blessed Lord himself says, speaking to the Jews, "Had ye believed Moses, you would have believed me; but if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words," thus placing the written word as equal in authority with Himself, as indeed it is, being from Himself.

How comforting this, in the general confusion around!

312 *Elijah, "a man subject to like passions as we are."*

The recognition of the ruined condition of the Church in its earthly manifestation, should lead to dependance upon God. The circumstances connected with our failure imperatively call for this. "He only is our rock and our salvation" (Ps. lxii. 2). "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble" (Ps. xlii). And when our souls are at peace with Him, through the blood of Jesus, realising by faith our portion, having and enjoying the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Father," how sweet to wander in the green pastures of His word, tracing His gracious ways with the children of men, using their very failures to bring before our eyes His love and faithfulness, His overflowing grace. Now, the portion of the Word before us is an illustration of this: "Elijah, a man of like passions as we are," is put before us in circumstances of weakness and failure. It is the grace of God to him in them that we desire to dwell upon. The 17th chapter of 1st Kings introduces Elijah, full of the energy and power of the Spirit of God. This sustains him through a season of unwonted trial. A witness of the righteous judgment of God on an apostate nation; supported, through the deep sufferings of which he was a spectator, by a deeper sympathy with the injured majesty of God: the rights of God vindicating His righteous judgment, and the servant fully entering into this. The 18th chapter is the triumph of his testimony over the prophets of Baal, or rather of God's faithfulness to Himself, and His own glory. In answer to the prayer of Elijah, for three years and six months the fountains of heaven were closed up; and, in answer to his prayer, there was the sound of abundance of rain. "And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel." This closes the 18th chapter, and unfolds the secret of Elijah's power: "*The hand of the Lord was on Elijah.*" And just so long as He keeps us, we are kept. "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." We forget this. After service for God, we are apt to take importance to ourselves, apart from our testimony, and then we must needs learn our weakness. The standard we bear ought to command respect; but the

*Elijah, "a man subject to like passions as we are."* 313

standard-bearer must have little regard for himself in concern for the standard. When God gives a testimony, it surely will bring into prominence before others those who are witnesses for Him. But this is far different to self-importance because of such prominence. When men have to witness to the failure of others, it is not a time to seek respect for themselves. How full of instruction is the failure of Elijah! The Lord enable us, whilst meditating upon it, to profit thereby!

"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, 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. And when he saw *that*, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which *belongeth* to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I *am* not better than my fathers."

Here, indeed, is a strange contrast from the Elijah of to day with Elijah of yesterday. Fear had taken hold upon him, where no fear was. The words of Jezebel appalled the man who had slain the four hundred prophets of Baal, and stood alone confronting the whole nation of Israel. *He* arose and went for his life, who the day before had put "his life in his hand" as a witness for God. How are the mighty fallen! Left to himself for a season, his weakness is manifest. And in him we may see ourselves when out of communion with the living God. Unbelief for a moment in the protection of God—and to what a sad state of soul is Elijah brought. He left his servant in Beer-sheba and went a day's journey into the wilderness, and sat down under a juniper tree, and requested for himself that he might die; and prayed to God to take away his life for he was "no better than his fathers."

The signal election of God to His service, the three years' and a half of testimony, the victory over the false prophets, the answer to his prayers in abundance of rain, the sign of God's mercy to Israel—all were forgotten. He was no better than his fathers. Ill at ease with him-

314 *Elijah, "a man subject to like passions as we are."*

self, he falls out with his master, and his life, the gift of God, he requests may be taken from him. "Lord what is man? that thou art mindful of him," God's grace to himself is forgotten under the presence of a danger which only existed when he looked at himself, and would cease the moment his eye was directed to God. But he should learn himself and for our profit, "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." Well for us that we have such a God, gracious and full of compassion. "He remembereth our frame, he knoweth we are but dust." "A wind passeth over us and we are gone."

Striking is His grace towards his runaway servant forgetful of God's ways in the past, and perverting his sense of them in the present. "Take away my life," was his prayer to Him who lived to sustain it. "I am no better than my fathers," is his language to Him who would not see iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel.

The heart of Elijah was overwhelmed. His own sin and weakness the cause of it. Yet God in his pity looked only at his sufferings, and yearned over the sufferer. "And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat."

How touching this kindness! How seasonable the refreshment! Words of welcome, and deeds of love, aroused Elijah, who had fallen asleep, out of love with himself and the kindest of Masters. "Arise and eat" sounded in his ears, and he looked; how vacant his gaze, how half-wakened his attention; and "behold there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again."

Sullenly he partook of his refreshment, and as gloomily he went to rest again. Such attention, at such a time, should have been doubly welcome, and called forth double gratitude; but not a word of response: his heart was too full of himself and his troubles. But the Father's eye was upon him, that eye so tender and pitiful. He knew what was in man, and his weakness could only

*Elijah, "a man subject to like passions as we are."* 315

be met out of His strength, and his wants from the storehouse of His abundance. Needy we are, and our God has grace and ability to supply all our need.

"And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee." How well is our nature understood. He who gave us our sympathies, how aptly can He strike the chord which awakens them—"The journey is too great for thee."

Wonderful grace! Elijah and his labours filled the heart of Elijah, and here was one admitting the weight of his burden, and soothing the sorrowing one with sympathy under it. "The journey is too great for thee." Who would not praise Thee, thou King of saints? Who is a God like unto our God? "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord." "And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb, the mount of God."

And not until he was strengthened to stand before Him, would the Lord plead with Elijah. He would speak to him about his failure in the light of the grace which could pass it by. "And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away." Surely we have in these words the secret of his failure disclosed. "*I* have been very jealous; *I*, even *I* only, am left; and they seek *my* life to take it away." One is not surprised that the servant in service should be wholly taken up with it, when we remember our weakness and folly; but we may well wonder at the grace of God in bearing with such. "And he said, Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the

316 *Elijah, "a man subject to like passions as we are."*

wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."

How frail and insignificant is man in the presence of the power of God. How striking His omnipotence. "Fire and hail; snow and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word" (Ps. cxlviii. 8). But it is not the way of God to strike terror alone by the display of his greatness. Almighty he is, yet so gracious to his children as to speak in a whisper. His power can only be delighted in when manifested for protection, as the heart of the child in the presence of danger delights in the consciousness of the ability of its father to protect it. Surpassingly gracious was this still small voice to Elijah: wonderful too its effects upon him. "It was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away."

Still *himself* in contrast with others, and *himself* surrounded with dangers, occupies Elijah. The wind, earthquake, and fire, had not shaken it out of him, nor the still small voice as yet fully humbled him. But the purpose of God to Elijah is fraught with blessing, and his way of doing it should be the comfort of after-generations, for children as yet unborn:—

"And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay."

The servant who ran away from his service, and repined at his Master; who wished that he might die and have done with it, this servant should still be re-

*Elijah, "a man subject to like passions as we are."* 317

tained in his place; honourable commissions were entrusted to him; two kings should be anointed for the sceptre by him, and a prophet sealed for his mission also. How wondrously gracious is this! Not one word has reached his ear of reproof, not one hint of his failure, until, in the recognised character of his service, and set apart for great works, in the consciousness that he was still the called of God, and approved of by his Master, with his heart full of the blessedness of his station, then, and not till then, does the word of reproof fall upon his ears,—so gentle in the manner, yet so pregnant with meaning. When Elijah is setting off for the further manifestation of the power and will of the Lord, the Lord arrests his attention, and gives him ballast for his journey: "Yet I have left seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." How potent the communication. "*I, even I,*" is amongst the seven thousand, levelled down with the rest in his standing, but exalted by the grace of God to be a sign-post of His gentleness, and to kindle in the hearts of others a longing for the service of Him who swayed by His grace, and that so touchingly, the weakness and self-will of Elijah.

"So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who *was* ploughing *with* twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and *then* I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him."—(ver. 19—21).

---

#### A FRAGMENT.

"Surely, it is as much of *God* that our lot is cast in these days, as that Paul's lot was cast in his days. And the works prepared for *us* to do are as much prepared of God, as were the works prepared for Paul. Let us take heart; strengthen ourselves in God, and do His present will."—I.

N<sup>o</sup>. XXVIII.

## THE RESURRECTION.

THE following arrangement of 1 Corinthians xv. is given, accompanied by an annotation or two, with the hope that the *order* thereof, may help to throw it into stronger and clearer relief, than that in which it is commonly seen. Here we discover a chain of reasoning, so exquisitely framed, and linked together with such wonderful skill, that it is impossible that it can be the work of any but ONE HAND ALONE. It naturally divides itself, as will be seen, *into eight leading subjects*, each comprising a series of *parallelisms* and *contrasts*, all bearing on the main point—the doctrine of THE RESURRECTION; and as the believer, having proceeded, step after step, through the argument, reaches at last the close of the chapter, he will, in reviewing all the power, the goodness, the love here displayed, gladly echo the words of the apostle, and exclaim, “Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!”

## 1 CORINTHIANS XV.

## “THE GOSPEL.”

(VERSES 1—4).

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you THE GOSPEL which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he ROSE AGAIN THE THIRD DAY according to the Scriptures.

## CHRIST'S APOSTLES AND MESSENGERS (αγγελοι)

OF WHOM HE WAS SEEN WHEN RISEN (VERSES 5—11).

And that *he was seen of* CEPHAS, then of THE TWELVE: after that, he was *seen of* ABOVE FIVE HUNDRED BRETHREN at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some



*The Resurrection.*

319

are fallen asleep. After that, he was *seen of JAMES*; then of ALL THE APOSTLES. And last of all he was *seen of ME ALSO*, as of one born out of due time (see 1 Cor. ix. 1). For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, *so we preach, and so ye believed*—(*“preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world”*—1 Tim. iii. 16).

**THE RESURRECTION DENIED.****ANSWER.—A CHAIN OF HYPOTHESES AND CONSEQUENCES**

(VERSES 12—19).

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is NO RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD?

{ HYP.—But *if* there be no resurrection of the dead,

{ CON.—Then is CHRIST NOT RISEN:

{ HYP.—And *if* Christ be not risen,

{ CON.—Then IS OUR PREACHING *vain*, AND YOUR FAITH IS ALSO VAIN. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ:

{ CON.—Whom he raised *not* up,

{ HYP.—*If so be* that the dead rise not:

{ HYP.—For *if* the dead rise not,

{ CON.—Then is not Christ raised:

{ HYP.—And *if* Christ be not raised,

{ CON.—Your faith is vain; ye are yet IN YOUR *sins*. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ ARE PERISHED.

{ HYP.—*If* in this life only we have hope in Christ,

{ CON.—We are of all men MOST MISERABLE.

**CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.****ITS RESULTS IN THE KINGDOM, AND FOR EVER, ETC.**

(VERSES 20—34).

But now IS CHRIST RISEN FROM THE DEAD,  
And become the FIRSTFRUITS OF THEM THAT SLEPT.

For since by *man* came death,  
By *man* came also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in *Adam* all die,  
Even so in *Christ* shall all be made alive.

But every man in his *own order* :

(1.) CHRIST the firstfruits ;—

(2.) Afterward THEY THAT ARE CHRIST'S at his coming.—

(3.) THEN COMETH THE END, when he shall have DELIVERED UP THE KINGDOM TO GOD, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. THE LAST ENEMY THAT SHALL BE DESTROYED IS DEATH (see Rev. xx. 13, 14). For he hath put all things under his feet. (But when he saith, All things are put under him, it is manifest that HE IS EXCEPTED, which did put all things under him.) And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL (see Rev. xxi. 3—5).

Else what shall they do which are BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD (or “*over the dead*,” *ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν*), if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?

And why stand we IN JEOPARDY every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die.

BE NOT DECEIVED: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some HAVE NOT THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (see Matt. xxii. 29): I speak this to your shame.

## TWO QUESTIONS, AND ANSWERS

(VERSES 35—44).

But some man will say,

(1st Question).—How are the dead raised up? (*answered in verses 36—38; 42—44*).

and

(2nd Question).—With WHAT BODY do they come? (*answered in the parenthesis, verses 39—41*).

*The Resurrection.*

321

**FIRST ANSWER (VERSES 36—38).**

Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die : and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain : but God *giveth it a body* as it hath pleased him, and to every seed *his own body*. (*N. B. This shows, whether the human body or wheat be considered, that while a wonderful CHANGE is effected, IDENTITY nevertheless is maintained—that, in both cases, the original germ is preserved*).

**SECOND ANSWER.—A PARENTHESIS (VERSES 39—41).**

Flesh or Bodies.	{ All FLESH is not the same flesh : But there is one kind of flesh of <i>men</i> , Another flesh of <i>beasts</i> , Another of <i>fishes</i> , And another of <i>birds</i> . (So) There are ( <i>or will be</i> ) also <i>celestial bodies</i> , (i. e. <i>spiritual bodies in heaven</i> ), And bodies <i>terrestrial</i> : i. e. ( <i>natural bodies on earth</i> ).	ILLUSTRATION of the following fact.  FACT illustrated above by the varieties of <i>flesh</i> amongst men and animals.
	{ But The GLORY of the <i>celestial (or spiritual body)</i> is one, And the glory of the <i>terrestrial (body)</i> is another. (Just as) There is one glory of the <i>sun</i> , And another glory of the <i>moon</i> , And another glory of the <i>stars</i> ; For one star differeth from another star in glory.	FACT afterwards illustrated by the gradations of <i>glory</i> in the planetary system.  ILLUSTRATION of the above fact.

**FIRST ANSWER RESUMED AFTER THE PARENTHESIS**

(VERSES 42—44).

So also is the RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

It is sown in corruption ;

It is raised in incorruption :

It is sown in dishonour ;

It is raised in glory :

It is sown in weakness ;

It is raised in power :

It is sown a natural body ;

It is raised a spiritual body.

There is a natural body,

And there is a spiritual body (see verses 39—41).

**CHRIST THE SECOND ADAM (VERSES 45—50).**

And so it is written,  
 The first man Adam was made a *living soul*;  
 The last Adam was made a *quickening Spirit*.  
 Howbeit that was not *first* which is spiritual, but that which  
   is *natural*;  
 And *afterward* that which is *spiritual*.  
 The first man is *of the earth, earthy* :  
 The second man is the *Lord from heaven*.  
 As is *the earthy*,  
 Such are *they also* that are earthy :  
 And as is *the heavenly*,  
 Such are *they also* that are heavenly.  
 And as we have borne the image of the earthy,  
 We shall also bear the image of the heavenly.  
 Now this I say, brethren,  
 That *flesh and blood* cannot inherit the kingdom of *God* ;  
 Neither doth *corruption* inherit *incorruption*.

**THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS.**

**THEIR BODIES BEING CHANGED AND FITTED FOR HEAVEN**  
 (VERSES 51—54).

**BEHOLD, I SHOW YOU A MYSTERY ;**

We shall not *all sleep*,  
 But we shall *all be changed* (i. e. *the living, and the dead*), in a  
   moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump :

**FOR THE TRUMPET SHALL SOUND,**

And the *dead* shall be *raised* incorruptible,  
 And *we* (in *LIVING bodies, though "mortal"*) shall be **CHANGED**  
   (see 1 Thess. iv. 17).

For this corruptible must put on incorruption (i. e. *the dead*),  
 And this mortal must put on immortality (i. e. *the living*).

*The Resurrection.*

323

So when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY (Isa. xxv. 8).

## THE SONG OF VICTORY, ETC. (VERSES 55—58).

O DEATH, where is thy sting?  
 O GRAVE (*or Hades, ᾍδης*), where is thy victory?  
 The sting of death is *sin*;  
 And the strength of sin is the *law* (see Rom. iv. 15).

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory  
 THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

E.D.

## \* \* THE PRESENT TESTIMONY: What is it?

*Not* so much the testimony of good entrusted to man's responsibility (like seed in sowing-time); nor so much the testimony (consequent thereupon) of exhortation, encouragement, and warning (as in the time of growing, or while men slept, and an enemy was sowing tares); nor again the testimony against evil in man as failed: but rather the testimony *for* God—the living God; as to what is true *of* and *in* Him, spite of all that Satan has done, by man's flesh, in this world,—the salvation of the lost and ruined who own Him;—the destruction (when the acceptable time has passed, being despised) of all that know Him not.

It is *the testimony*, as I take it, *of the interval* between the entire failure in principle, and the judgment consequent upon the development in action of that failure. And this present testimony of what God is in Christ, it is which, I conceive, the Spirit will use to right the people of God, and to make the wrong of the world exceedingly wrongful.

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Jude 20--25.

N<sup>o</sup>. XXIX.

## "SALVATION IS OF THE LORD."

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."  
Ps. cxv. 1.

ONE special object of the attacks of Satan in the present day, is the truth of the quickening operations of God, the Holy Ghost. I refer not to the doctrine of His indwelling, and sovereign rule and authority in the body, the church; though, of course, the distinctly seeing the latter is a great preservative against what would undermine, or deny the former doctrine. Still, it is well for saints to be fortified with the direct testimony of scripture against error, by which Satan is really working; though, as to ourselves, no danger with regard to it may seem to be immediately impending. Even if we were individually safe, charity to others would lead us to search the word for that whereby error, in which many are entangled, may be met. And as to ourselves, a very small amount of observation would satisfy us that usually saints are *preserved from error* by the blessing of God on the truth which has already got a place in their souls, rather than delivered from the entanglements of error by truth newly presented to the soul. He, to whose keeping and guidance the church is entrusted during the absence of her Lord, does deliver as well as preserve. Still, to be enabled to say with Paul, "I have kept the faith," is more blessed than to have turned from it, even though sovereign grace should rescue and restore us.

The indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the body, the church, is one thing; the operations of the Spirit by which the individual believer becomes such, and so a member of the body, is another thing; and it is this latter point of which I speak as being the object of Satan's vigorous attacks in certain quarters. Be it observed too, that it is not a defective statement of the truth—

*"Salvation is of the Lord."*

325

correct, as far as it goes, though defective—such as would be commonly made by a large class of Christians; but the active and assiduous denial of it, and the maintaining, with great earnestness and zeal, that the faith which saves is a mere act of the mind of man—an act of which all men are by nature capable. This is connected, too, with a very bold, and often a very full presentation of the work of Christ, much more full and scriptural than in the ordinary evangelical preaching of the day. The love of God to sinners—to the world—descanted on in the most glowing terms; the atoning work of Jesus presented with great clearness, the only exception here being the application to the world of some things which are true only of believers; the whole being urged upon sinners as that which they are quite competent to receive—not merely that they are responsible for the rejection of it; these constitute the main features of a work which, in certain districts, is proceeding with uncommon energy, and the results of which are just such as might be anticipated. Doubtless, there are many whose hearts have been previously ploughed up by the Spirit of God, who get real peace by His blessing on the measure of truth which is presented as to the love of God and the work of Jesus. But even where this is the case, along with the gospel which thus brings peace to the soul, there are thoughts imbibed of the adequacy of man's mind to receive and to deal with the things of God, which cannot fail to nourish a spirit of self-sufficiency most alien from, and adverse to, the life of God in the soul. Then, besides, numbers suppose that they are converted, who are really self-deceived. The heart of man will not always refuse assent even to God's truth about Christ, if it may have the credit of receiving this truth by its own native capacity, and if such assent to it, such reception of it may pass for the faith that saves. Hence, numbers imagine themselves to be believers, with hearts entirely unbroken, and without any sense of what sin is, as viewed in the light of God's holy presence, or of what their nature is as utterly opposed to God. They are acted upon by rousing appeals to the affections, and taught that there is nothing in their nature to prevent

their reception there and then of the truth that saves. They are taught that they need no new power, no further operation, or even help from the Spirit of God to enable them to believe; and their hearts, flattered by what ministers so largely to their self-complacency, drink in the terrible delusion that they have passed from death unto life, while the only proof of this they can afford, is the zeal and earnestness with which they assert these pernicious doctrines, and urge them upon others as the high-road to peace of conscience and certainty of salvation. These errors (in the special form spoken of here) have not been working long enough for all their fruits to be manifest. Some results, however, sufficiently sad, are plainly enough developed. Censoriousness, bitter zeal, love of disputation, and intense aversion to doctrines which really humble man and exalt and magnify the grace of God, are amongst the most conspicuous. But, as in every case of self-deception, the only persons unconscious of the existence of these unlovely traits, are the persons thoroughly imbued with them, and manifesting them at every turn.

One point I would notice, before turning to the direct and copious testimony of Scripture on the subject before us; that is, the distinction between capacity to receive a testimony, and responsibility for rejecting it. A person who is, in fact, every way trust-worthy, asserts that he has witnessed a certain transaction. I immediately exclaim, "I cannot believe a word he says." Now this may be quite true; and yet I may be altogether culpable for my incapacity. I may have hearkened to false reports of this person—I may have suffered my mind to be prejudiced against him—I may have got such thoughts of him, and such feelings towards him, that as a simple matter of fact, I am incapable of believing a word he says. But does all this exonerate me if he be really a credible witness, and if, in this particular instance, his testimony be true? No, nor does it shield me from the consequences of my unbelief, supposing that my life depends in some way upon the reception of his testimony. I am incapable of receiving it, and yet I am responsible



for rejecting it. I am responsible for the state of heart which incapacitates me for receiving it. Now this is precisely our natural state as it respects God. The melancholy fact, as largely and uniformly taught in Scripture, is, that Satan has so poisoned all the springs of thought and feeling in our nature—that we have so hearkened to his lying representations of the character of God, that by nature we do not believe a word he says. His word goes with us for nothing. We prefer believing Satan’s lies to receiving the truth of God. And this is the natural state of all men since the fall. Does this destroy our responsibility? Not in the least. That for which we are responsible, that for which we are condemned, is, that we have such thoughts and feelings towards God, as render us incapable of receiving His testimony; that our hearts are so blinded and hardened, that our own imaginations and Satan’s lies seem to us more credible than the truth of God. Can it be any excuse for giving God the lie, to urge that we have such injurious, unworthy thoughts of Him, that we can do nothing else? No, this is not our excuse, but our condemnation. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and *men loved darkness rather than light*, because their deeds were evil.”

If any should urge that we cannot be responsible for doing what is beyond our power, the plain reply is, *you contradict God’s word*. Nothing can be more plainly stated, than that the law was given on purpose to prove that men could not keep it, and that men could not be saved by keeping it. And yet who will assert that men were not responsible for obeying God’s law?

What is the consequence of all this? Why, plainly, that by nature we are *lost*. This is what the Word of God declares; and that our only resource is, not any capacity in ourselves of any kind—not any capacity we possess in our unconverted state, but the power of God to quicken those who are dead in trespasses and sins. It is by the Word that He does this; and the way in which he does it is, leading us by the Word to believe on Jesus. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Still it is HE who does it, *not our-*

*selves.* It is to the proofs of this in the Word of God that I would now call attention.

"All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 27). The connection in which this passage stands is deeply interesting. The message from John the Baptist by two of his disciples, gives our Lord occasion to speak to the multitude of John and his mission. From this the transition is easy, to the results of both John's mission and His own. He compares the men of that generation to children sitting in the market-place, and calling to their fellows, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." Nothing would suit them. John had come in all the austerity of a witness for God's righteousness against a sinful people. He came neither eating nor drinking. This was too strict for them; and they said, "He hath a devil." The son of man came in full grace, not requiring what man owed to God, but proclaiming and manifesting the riches of God's love to man. He, in consequence, was free from those austerities which marked the conduct of his forerunner. In the freedom of social intercourse, He mixed with people of all classes, eating and drinking with them, whether they were Pharisees or Publicans. This was too wide, and left no place for any of those distinctions on which they prided themselves; and they said, "Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." But while such was the general rejection of every testimony from God, whether a testimony of righteousness or a testimony of grace, there were some who received God's word; and of them He says, "But Wisdom is justified of her children." How does our blessed Lord account for the difference between them and the mass? Is it that by dint of greater industry, or as the reward of greater faithfulness, they had become acquainted with the truth? Or is it that they had some natural capacity for the reception of it of which others were destitute? No;

after pouring out a strain of holy lamentation over Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, He turns to His Father, and says, “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” It was not that the wise and prudent had *discovered* who Jesus was; *the Father* had *revealed* Him, and that to *babes*—to those most ignorant and incapable. He proceeds, “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” It was not that the proof was lacking in any wise, of the glory of Jesus as the Son of God. His works made manifest who He was. But what use are light and colours to a man who is utterly blind? There was the total want of capacity on man’s part to appreciate the evidence which was presented to him. No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, *and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him*. If, therefore, any knew the Son, it was because he was one of the babes to whom it had pleased the Father to reveal Him. If any knew the Father, it was because he was one of those to whom the Son had revealed Him. Is there, however, a poor broken-hearted sinner, conscious of his helplessness and utter ruin, and feeling that he can neither enlighten nor save himself? Does the eye of such an one rest on these words, and is he asking, Can I hope to be one of those to whom the Son will reveal the Father? Let him hear the voice of Jesus. “All things are delivered to me of the Father,” we have heard Him say already. It belongs to Him to reveal the Father to whomsoever He will. And who are they to whom He will reveal the Father? “Come unto me,” are His blessed words, “all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” May some poor burdened spirit receive this gift of perfect rest—rest in the Father’s bosom—while listening to those words of grace and consolation from the lips of Him who spake as never man spake.

The next passage I would refer to is Matt. xvi. 13—17.

Our Lord proposes to His disciples the inquiry, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?” The various and conflicting thoughts and conjectures of men, are reported by the disciples to their Lord. He then asks, “But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And what is the reply of Jesus? “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Nothing can be more explicit or decisive than the testimony of this passage. Of all the various thoughts of man’s mind concerning Jesus, there was not one really according to truth. Peter discerns and acknowledges who He really is. And what does our Lord immediately declare? That it was by revelation of His Father in heaven that he knew this—“flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

Should it be objected that Peter’s was an individual case, and for aught we know an exceptional one, we have only to turn to John, chapter i. for a full and decisive answer. There we find, indeed, that “the light shineth in darkness;” but alas! “the darkness comprehended it not” (ver. 5). There was no lack of testimony, if there had only been in any the heart to appreciate and receive it. John “came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (ver. 7—9). But though the Light thus shines on all, every avenue to man’s heart is closed against it. “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not” (ver. 10). Even Israel, His own nation, have no heart to welcome Him. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (ver. 11). It is true, that in the next verse we read of some who do receive Him; and we are told that “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” But how came they to receive him—to believe on his name? Mark the answer:—“Which were

born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Peter’s was no exceptional case. It was universally true then, and it is universally true now, that whosoever receives Christ, whosoever believes on his name, “flesh and blood has not revealed” him to such an one, but his Father which is in heaven. All such have been born, not of blood—i. e. of natural descent; nor of the will of the flesh—any choice or decision of the person himself; nor of the will of man—any act which another chooses to perform upon him; *but of God*. Those who are thus born of God, and those only, receive Christ or believe on his name in truth. Any believing on His name which stops short of this—any faith which is the mere result of the exercise of our natural faculties, is nothing worth. A remarkable proof of this we have in the next chapter.

“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man” (ii. 23—25). Here were persons to all appearance believing just the same things as those which the true disciples of Jesus believed. But their belief was a mere natural thing. They saw his miracles; and by the exercise of their reasoning faculties upon the facts before their eyes, they came to the conclusion that Jesus had come from God. But He did not trust them. He did not commit himself unto them? And why? Because he knew all men. He knew what was in man, and that there was nothing in man that he could trust. He knew moreover that the faith of these people was a mere human thing; and because merely human, not to be trusted. Hence when Nicodemus comes to Him professing just this kind of faith, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him,” instead of owning it at all, he urges on Nicodemus the necessity of the new birth. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus marvels

at this, and asks how a man can be born when he is old? "Whether he can enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" How solemn is our Lord's reply. He again declares how indispensable it is to be born again; but now adds "of water and of the Spirit." It is a new nature produced by the Spirit and word of God, not any exercise of the faculties of the old nature, that is absolutely necessary. It is as though he said, "What if a man could enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? A second birth in nature would be of no more avail than the first. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and it is because the nature you received at your birth contains nothing, and is capable of nothing, pleasing to God, that you need to be born again." The faith of Nicodemus and of the persons mentioned in (chap. ii. 23), could not be trusted by our Lord, because it was just the fruit of something that was in man; it was not produced by this new, this second birth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh [and so incapable in its very fairest forms, of pleasing God; while] that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." "Marvel not," says our Lord, "that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." What does all this amount to, but a formal contradiction of the thought, that any reception of the truth by the mere natural mind of man, is saving faith? There must be a birth from above, a birth by the word and Spirit of God.

The fourth of John beautifully exemplifies both the need of this new birth, and the way in which it is brought about by the revelation to the poor sinner (utterly dark and ignorant in himself) of Jesus the Saviour. But as there is no formal statement on the subject, I pass it by. In the fifth we have the declaration from the lips of our Lord Himself, that "as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will" (verse 21). And that this is not the quickening of bodies merely, in order to their resurrection, but the quickening of souls also, is evident from verses 24, 25.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and

*"Salvation is of the Lord."*

333

believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. 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."

How obvious that true faith is not the mere reception by the natural mind of statements presented to it, but that it is produced in us by the all-quicken<sup>g</sup> voice of the Son of God. The dead hear the voice of the Son of God and live. It is evident, therefore, that where any do really hear his words, and believe on Him that sent Him, *they have passed* from death unto life; and the Saviour declares, that the life which such have received is *everlasting* life. But how different is all this from the vain thoughts of man's proud heart. It is not the earning of life by the fulfilment of the law. Had it been possible, man had the opportunity of securing life in that way. But it was to demonstrate that this was not possible that the law was given. In like manner, life is proclaimed to man as a gift, a free gift, and there is no obstruction on God's part to his reception of it. But is it in man's heart to come to Christ to receive it? Nay, says our Lord, in this chapter, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." John had borne witness of Him. The Father Himself, who had sent Him, had borne witness of Him. Christ's own works bore witness of Him. So did the Scriptures, in which the Jews boasted that they had eternal life. "They are they," said Jesus, "which testify of me." But all was in vain. They had not the love of God in them. Their proud hearts preferred the honour that came from men, to that which cometh from God. The result of all was, they would not come to Christ that they might have life. And that is the case of all. The Jews were not worse than others. Their nature was not more averse to God than ~~ours~~. What remains? Clearly nothing remains for any man, but hopeless, irremediable perdition, if there be not something more in the Gospel than the presenting life as an offer for man's acceptance. But there is more. The Son of God has the right, the prerogative, even as He has undoubtedly the power, to quicken whom He will.

And this is what He does. He *imparts* life, even when the *offer of it* has met with nothing but the coolest and most determined rejection. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." Blessed words! May we more deeply realize what our condition by nature is, to need the quickening power of the Son of God. And may we have a deeper sense of that grace which has reached to the very depths of this condition, and imparted life to our poor dead souls.

John vi. is full of instruction on this subject. There we see how everything fails, that may for a time resemble the faith that saves, if it has its source in motives and principles natural to man. The popular excitement, which would have issued in taking Jesus by force, and making him a king; the self-interest which followed him for the loaves, as well as all the exercise of the intellect and affections, which led some to exclaim, "Lord, evermore give us this bread": all this failed. Those who had clustered around Jesus from no other causes than these, all, sooner or later, forsook him; many of His disciples even, those who had formerly united themselves to the company that followed Him, went back, and walked no more with Him. None continued to the end, but those who could say truly with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (verses 68—69). How Peter came to know, and to confess this, we have already seen. And in this chapter we are repeatedly assured of the same thing as to all who can unite in his confession. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (verse 44).—"Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (verse 45).—"And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come to me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (verse 65). Thus we see, that to any one who can truly make Peter's confession, it may be said, as truly as to Peter himself, "Blessed art thou, flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."



*“ Salvation is of the Lord.”*

335

In the eighth chapter, our Lord addresses himself very solemnly to the Jews, accounting for their unbelief by the awful fact (as true of us, by nature, as of them), that they were the children of the wicked one. They were slow to apprehend his meaning. First they claimed to be Abraham's seed. “ Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, . . . this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father ” (verses 39—41). They then claim to have God for their Father. “ We have one Father, even God.” What is our Lord's reply to this? “ If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came down from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do ” (verses 42—44). So completely had Satan blinded them, that the very reason why they ought to have believed in Jesus was their reason for rejecting him. “ And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not ” (verse 45). He sums up the whole case in verse 47. “ He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.” How harmonious is the testimony of God. May our hearts bow to it unfeignedly!

In the tenth chapter we have a passage equally plain. The Jews had said, “ If thou be the Christ tell us plainly.” “ Jesus answered them, I told you and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand ” (verses 24—28). In the seventeenth chapter, He speaks of this gift of eternal life, and defines what it is. He addresses his Father here. “ As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent ” (verses 2—3).

How absolutely He speaks of eternal life as his gift. And how his description of what it is reminds one of his words before quoted, “ No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”

In the Acts of the Apostles we have rather the historical record of the means by which, and the order in which, men were converted to the faith of Christ, than any doctrinal statements as to the source from whence their new life proceeded. Still, there are occasional intimations in perfect harmony with all the passages we have been considering, and shewing plainly enough, that while God is pleased to use the preaching of the gospel in bringing souls to Christ, the energy by which it is in any case effectual, resides neither in the person presenting the truth, nor in the person receiving it, but proceeds entirely from God himself. In a word, whatever instruments he may use, or in whatever manner he may act, it is HE who does the work: it is by his power, and by that alone, that any are really led to Christ. Thus Peter preaches of his Lord, “ Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins”, (Acts v. 31). Not only is forgiveness of sins the gift of the exalted Jesus, but repentance also, *i. e.*, the turning of the heart to him to receive forgiveness at his hands. The one is as much his gift as the other. In the conversion of Cornelius and his house, as recorded in Acts x., the hand of God is so manifest that nothing but utter blindness can hinder any from discerning it. It is God who assembles the congregation, who prepares and commissions the preacher, and who, while he preaches, opens the hearts of the favoured family to receive the message, and then crowns their faith by visibly baptising them with the Holy Ghost, as He had done the apostles at Pentecost. When all this is reported to the brethren in Judea, what is the conclusion they come to? “ When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life ” (Acts xi. 18). Thus do they own the conversion of these first fruits of the

Gentiles, as the fruit of God's grace. He had *granted* unto them *repentance unto life*. When, afterwards, Peter is giving an account of these same events, he thus speaks, "Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe" (chap. xv. 7). It was as much God's choice that by Peter's instrumentality they should be brought "to believe," as, that in order to this, they should by his mouth hear the word of the gospel. In the case of those who were scattered by the persecution which arose about Stephen, and went as far as Antioch, preaching the Lord Jesus, it is noted that "the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." Surely the former clause of this sentence is a full explanation of the fact recorded in the latter. At Antioch in Pisidia, Paul preached the gospel; and while the Jews contradicted and blasphemed, "the Gentiles," it is said, "were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed" (Acts xiii. 48). What but subjection of mind to God's holy word, can be needed in order to the reception of so definite and explicit a testimony as this?

Even in those cases, as that of Lydia, in which the use of means and the attention given to the truth, are made most prominent, God's own almighty agency is distinctly owned; "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (Acts xvi. 14). Of Apollos it is said, "who, when he was come [to Achaia] helped them much which had believed through grace" (chap. xviii. 27). In this incidental way, have we statements scattered over the whole book, which shew plainly enough that the faith which received the gospel was as entirely the gift of God's rich and abundant grace, as the gospel itself, and as the Saviour whom that gospel revealed and proclaimed.

In Rom. i. 16, we have an expression much used by those who oppose the truth we are now considering. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that

believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." This passage is used as though the power of God essentially and inherently resided in the gospel, so that in every presentation of the gospel there is all the Divine power which ever attends it. But why should it be said "to every one that believeth," if the power of God was inherent in the gospel itself. Besides, while such construction put upon this passage would make it contradict the whole mass of scripture we have been reviewing, we shall see in other portions yet to be examined, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe, not by any power essentially inherent in the gospel, but by the operation of the Holy Ghost, vouchsafed according to the good pleasure of God's own will.

The earlier part of the epistle to the Romans is occupied with the unfolding of all the truths which relate to a sinner's justification before God, and the grounds on which this can take place. The origin or source of the faith which receives this wondrous blessing is not discussed. And yet, in view of the portrait presented to us, of man's natural condition, in chapters i. to iii., one may well inquire, how is it possible for faith in Christ to spring up in the hearts of such by the exercise of any mere natural capacity? "There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. iii. 10—12). How can faith be the natural product of hearts thus described by the pen of inspiration? Surely as the evil of man's heart was manifested in the violation of God's law, and in the rejection of God's Christ when he was here on the earth, so is it sure to be manifested in the rejection of the gospel of his grace. To suppose that there is in man, while in his natural state, any aptitude to receive the gospel of God's grace, is to nullify every statement here made as to what man's condition is. Nor are we left to mere inference as to this. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (chap. v. 6). Not

only are we *ungodly* while in our natural state, we are *without strength* also. And such is the plain and absolute declaration of God's holy word.

In 1 Cor. i., we have an inspired explanation of who they are to whom the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and also of how it is that it becomes such to them. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God” (verse 18). “For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” It has often been urged, indeed, that all men are called by the gospel. But is not the apostle plainly distinguishing here between this outward universal call, and another, of which he says, “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” In the sense of preaching the gospel to them, these are called just the same as all others. And, indeed, it is this preaching of the cross which the apostle declares to be a stumbling-block to some, and foolishness to others, of those who are called in this outward universal sense. But he speaks of another calling; “*unto them which are called*, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” And why is this? “That no flesh should glory in his presence” (verse 29). No, the flesh is neither to have the glory of saving us without Christ, nor the glory of accepting Christ when proclaimed to us in the gospel. We have neither the credit of saving ourselves without Jesus, nor of saving ourselves *by believing of our own accord, or our own choice, on Jesus*. It was God who gave Jesus for our salvation; and it is God who, by his Spirit, brings us to Jesus. “But *of him* are ye in Christ Jesus, who *of God* is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (verses 30—31).

In the next chapter, we have a very definite and emphatic statement:—"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14). How evident that there must be a new, a divinely imparted capacity to receive the testimony of God.

In chap. iii. 5, it might seem, at the first glance, as though Paul attributed their believing to himself, and his fellow-labourers. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" But he does not close the verse without disclaiming such a thought, and attributing all the efficacy of their ministry to the grace of God: "even," says he, "as the Lord gave to every man. I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." What language could more plainly attribute the whole efficacy of the truth on the souls of any to the sovereign pleasure and free gift of God, than this!

If we turn to 2 Cor. iii. 3, we find the apostle speaking of the Corinthians as his epistle. But how *his* epistle? "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." The Spirit of the living God, by means of the apostle, had written Christ on their hearts!

In chap. iv. 3—6, we have a statement, perhaps the most definite and solemn of any in Scripture, as to the cause of the rejection of the gospel by some, and the cause of its reception by others. It doubtless, comes right across many of the most cherished thoughts and feelings of men; but the believer will not on that account turn away from the voice of his God. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." We did but affirm in other words what is here declared, when

we said that Satan has so poisoned all the springs of thought and feeling in our nature, that we do not believe a word God says. And what is it that rescues any from this fearful condition? Let the reader mark the answer, And the Lord grant him to know by experience what it means: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Why are we referred here to the all-creating mandate and its effect, "Let there be light, and there was light," if it be not to shew us, that it is in the exercise of no less a power that God shines into the heart of the poor blinded sinner! Reader! has God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, thus shined into thy heart? The Lord grant thee to have no rest without a satisfactory answer to this all-important question.

In Gal. i. 15—16, the apostle avows, distinctly enough, what the source of his own conversion was: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me," etc. Equally explicit are his statements as to the conversion of those whom he wrote to: "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather, are known of God," etc. (chap. iv. 9). It is as though he was reminded, as he wrote, of the danger the Galatians were in of trusting themselves, and so, having mentioned their knowing God, he is in haste to add, "or rather, were known of God." How entirely does this stand in contrast with the thought of the faith by which we come to know God being a mere exercise of our natural faculties. No, had we not been known of God, we had surely never known Him.

In the fifth chapter, ver. 22, faith is declared to be the fruit of the Spirit.

In Eph. i. 19—20, the apostle prays to God for the saints, that they may know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." In chap. ii., we are taught that it is by this same power that we are quickened: "And you hath he quickened

who were dead in trespasses and sins" (ver. i.). Then again: "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (ver. 4 and 5). Again: "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." I know it has been attempted to be said, that the "that not of yourselves" refers not to faith, but either to grace or salvation. But what plain person without a system to defend would so understand the words? Besides, consider the next verse: "*For we are his workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." The combined testimony of all these passages can never be gainsaid.

In Philip. i. 6, God is owned as the one who had begun a good work in them. In ver. 29, the apostle says, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." It was given to them on Christ's behalf to believe in him. In chap. iii. 12. he speaks of himself as having been "apprehended of Christ Jesus." It was not that he, by any natural capacity he possessed, apprehended Christ; it was Christ who had apprehended him.

In Col. ii. 12—13, we have statements analogous to those already quoted from Eph. ii.: "Buried with him [Christ] in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses."

To the Thessalonians, Paul says, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. i. 4, 5). This is a very important passage. If the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, because of that power being inherent in it and inseparable from it, how could the apostle know the election of the Thessalonians by the fact of the gospel coming to them not in word only but in power? If it comes thus to all, how could its coming thus to the Thessalonians prove anything special.



as to them? No, there is such a thing as the gospel coming to men in word only. And it is when it comes not thus, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, that it saves the soul. Then, and then only, is it the power of God unto salvation.

We have a very full and blessed passage in the second epistle: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. ii. 13, 14). The faith that saves is here most evidently shewn to be a belief of the truth which is produced in us *by the Spirit*, and to which *God calls us* by the gospel.

Writing to Titus, the apostle says, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus iii. 4—7.) This is not a contrast between works and faith as the means of justification, such as we have in Romans and Galatians. No, we have here the source of our salvation, the kindness and love of God toward man. We have our need of it, exhibited in the detail of what we were by nature. We have the divine principle according to which our salvation has been accomplished: according to *his mercy*,—"being justified by *his grace*." We have the object of it unfolded, at least as far as we are concerned, "that we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." We have the blessed person too through whom all this is effected, "Jesus Christ our Saviour." But we have, besides all this, what bears immediately on our present subject, the process by which we are personally brought

into the enjoyment of it all, as well as the agent in this process: "the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he [God] shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Surely the "washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost" is not the mere assent of the natural mind to propositions of truth placed before it!

The testimony of James is, "Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures" (James i. 17, 18). True, indeed, it is, that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God; but hearing the Word of God only produces faith, *where He, by the word of truth, begets us according to His own will.*

Does Peter speak of the believers to whom he wrote, as having purified their souls in obeying the truth? It is through the Spirit this had been accomplished. "Seeing ye have purified your souls, in obeying the truth *through the Spirit*, unto unfeigned love of the brethren" (1 Pet. i. 22). This second epistle is addressed "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (verse 1.) In verse 3 he speaks thus: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." Surely faith must be included in the "all things that pertain unto life and godliness."

Nor is the testimony of the beloved disciple wanting: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John v. 4). Again, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true: and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ" (verse 20). Thus are we taught, that the faith which overcomes the world is something which is born of God; and, also, that if we have an understanding to know Him that is true, it is because He Himself has given it.

“*Salvation is of the Lord.*”

345

Thus have we examined the sacred writings of the New Testament, from St. Matthew's Gospel to St. John's epistle; and their unanimous testimony is, that “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” This is a passage we omitted to quote while 1 Corinthians was passing under review; and it may well find a place here as the summing up of the whole matter. It is, of course, the saying so, *in truth*, that the passage speaks of. Hypocrites may say so in pretence; and we know that certain will say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? to whom he will profess, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” It is, of course, the saying truly, from the heart, that Jesus is the Lord, that is here spoken of. And most absolute is the declaration, that no man can thus truly own Jesus as the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Blessed assurance for those who are conscious of thus owning from the heart, the Lordship of Jesus. Such will joyfully acknowledge *by whom* they have been taught to own Him thus. Fearful, alas! is the delusion of any who suppose that His all-quickenings power is not needed. The Lord grant to any such who may read these pages, repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. And may brethren everywhere be fortified against this, and every other delusion of the enemy! May our loins be girt about with truth! Yea, may we take to us the whole armour of God, and strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, may we be enabled to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, stand!

---

\* \* John xiv. 20. The leading thoughts developed in the three epistles to Ephesus, Philippi, and Colosse, seem distinctive and marked.

That to the Ephesians gives the moral picture of the shooting of the corn of wheat—God's corn of wheat (which fell into the ground, and died, that it might not abide alone),—the church seen *in* Christ in heaven. That to the Philippians is a specimen of what fellowship with the Father and the Son is, as found displayed in the Apostle while in the wilderness; Christ's Spirit in the believer. The third gives us God and the Father's estimate of Christ. Thus these three letters contain a sort of Divine paraphrase on the promise (John xiv. 20):—

“At that day [that is *now*] ye shall know that I am *in my* Father [see for the opening of this, Colossians], and ye in me [see Ephesians], and I in you [see Philippians].”

N<sup>o</sup>. XXX.THE OFFERINGS VIEWED IN CONNEXION  
WITH LUKE XV.

THE evil effect of unbelief in the heart of a saint, will often appear in the being satisfied with a small measure where God offers a large one, or rather where He offers a fulness of blessing without any measure at all. Unbelief will even assume the language of humility, and protesting that a very little is "enough," will readily and confidently disavow any longing for more. But the very word "enough" is ambiguous. In one sense, any, the least, measure is "enough" for sinners, because if they were rewarded according to their iniquities and demerits, destruction itself would be a sufficient portion. But we are not to confound what is enough according to man's deservings, with what is enough according to the grace of God and the fulness of His promises. This would be to confound the merits, or rather the demerits of man with the merits of Christ. Humility will claim nothing as due to itself: faith will reject nothing that God has promised.

I have been led into this train of thought, from observing how low and unworthy are the views which sometimes even true Christians entertain of the Gospel. Gospel-redemption with them is little better than a mere rescue, the plucking of a brand from the burning, which is then, as it were, tossed aside as of no value, as worthless, and as inapplicable to any work as the branches of the vine (Ezek. xv), of which men would not even "take a pin to hang any vessel thereon." But such are not God's thoughts. "Let my people go" (not because Egypt is an iron furnace, or a house of bondage, or a place of suffering, but) "that *they may serve me*."—"This people have I formed for myself, that they may show forth my praise." Speaking according to the language of the Book of Leviticus, we might describe such persons as I have alluded to thus—they are satisfied

*The Offerings viewed in connexion with Luke xv.* 347

with the sin-offering, knowing, and caring to know, little of the burnt-offering, and scarcely anything at all of the peace-offering.

Let it be distinctly understood, that this is not the same thing as being unduly or prematurely satisfied with the *antitype* of the sin-offering. That would be impossible. These offerings have only one antitype. And he that hath the Son hath life. "All things are yours." I speak of an unhappy tendency to separate in imagination, and so to lose the comfort of those things which God in reality has for ever joined together. Let us now trace something of the distinction I speak of in the parable of the prodigal son; not that the several offerings are distinctly specified there only; the blessings corresponding to the sin-offering, burnt-offering, and peace-offerings are easily traced. I omit here all reference to the trespass-offering and meat-offering. Of course, if there is reconciliation at all between the father and the son, especially if the *father* is reconciled to the son, there is the virtue of the sin-offering; i.e. atonement (reconciliation) has been made; not that atonement, in the sense of *expiation*, is mentioned in Luke xv.; only as the father of the prodigal is clearly designed to represent God, we may assume the reconciliation was not unholy; and the holiness of God requires, that without shedding of blood there should be no remission. Here, then, it would seem many stop. They need forgiveness, the Gospel gives it—what lack they yet? (If they said, they *have* forgiveness, therefore they *will* not lack anything, the Lord being the shepherd of all whom He forgives, the case would be widely different.) I would now, then, by the Lord's help, notice three blessings, where many seem to see only one; in other words, specify two remaining ones, so powerfully set forth in this interesting chapter. The prodigal, then, *has been* pardoned—the brand has been plucked from the burning—the blood has put away sin. But this alone, if we could conceive of the sin-offering apart from the burnt-offering (and we may only disjoin them in thought for the purpose of illustration), would be merely a negative advantage. He would not be condemned. Imagine an accused

348 *The Offerings viewed in connexion with Luke xv.*

person in our own country, recently a prisoner at the bar, *only* not found guilty by law—his moral character known to have been positively bad—would the judge or the prince *honour* such a one? Would he ask him to dine? But God's ways are not man's ways. The prodigal, then, is not only forgiven and reconciled, he is *accepted*. And here comes in the sweet savour of the burnt-offering. *Mere* forgiveness is negative, acceptance is positive. The father *delights* in the prodigal. The father will have the servants bring forth, not an apron to cover the beggar's nakedness—not even a coat of skin (token of the sin-offering)—not a robe according to the mere *need* of the half-starved swine-herd, but the best robe in his *own* wardrobe—something, not to make the poor prodigal glorious in his own eyes, but something to render him glorious according to *the father's* thoughts. Whatever “enough” may signify according to man's dictionary of unbelief, according to God it must be that which will satisfy *God* Himself. The *father* knows and chooses the robe—the son is to be honourably appareled—is to have the ring on his hand, and the shoes on his feet, not for the sake of the son's eyes, but the father's. Here, then, we have the privileges of the burnt-offering—acceptance—sweet savour—perfection; not that *we* are to be offered up wholly (though it may be well to learn that lesson also by the way; the Lord grant we may learn it more and more!), but that the full acceptance of Jesus, the fire of God having searched Him through and through, and brought out nothing but a sweet savour, should rest on us. And here it might be said, Surely this is all. Nay, but the two blessings already noticed are but steps to a third, the crown (in one sense) of all the offerings, just as the killing of beasts, and the mingling of wine, and the furnishing of the table, are but the preliminaries to the feast—and a feast, as the Preacher tells us (Eccl. x. 19), is made for laughter, or joy. Hitherto it might be supposed that mere compassion dictated the dealings of the father with the son, though indeed not according to our view of the burnt-offering, which we have just stated. And it might have been supposed that compassion, and the natural yearn-

*The Offerings viewed in connexion with Luke xv.* 349

ings of the parent's heart, would lead him to see that his son should be *filled* as well as *warmed*, and thus that he should order the servants to provide meat for the hungry one, and strong drink for the lost one who was ready to perish, and wine for the relief of his heavy heart. But no—this would be to deny desire in the father, or only to allow it as naturally stirred up by compassion, at the sight of unsatisfied desire in another. But this is not according to God's account of Himself. God has his desire and his joy, of which our poor desires after Him, and our joy in Him, are but the faint reflection. Redemption was not a makeshift, as men say, the last resource of a foiled contriver, but the grand and perfect counterpart of the original design of the mind of God. But to return to the parable:—"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and" (mark what follows) "let us eat and be merry"—not "Let the prodigal be kept from merely starving", but "Spread the feast, for I will dine with him, and he with me," many others rejoicing at the same time. Surely there is meaning in that expression in Leviticus, "the food of the Lord's offering;" the Lord Himself enjoys communion with His recovered people. I would add, that the longing of God for communion with His own is expressed in various parts of the Word, especially Cant. ii. 4. How often do Christians dwell with comfort (and rightly, if they do not *exclusively*) on the Bridegroom's assurance of the *spotlessness* and beauty of the bride, and on the bride's desire for the Bridegroom, who, it is to be feared, think little of the Bridegroom's desire for the presence of the bride.<sup>a</sup> I would just remark, in conclusion, that the names of the offerings in our English version are easily misunderstood, especially those of the meat-offerings and the peace-offering. The words "meat-offering," convey to modern ears the very opposite of the real meaning, i.e. it is almost the *only* offering in which *meat*, in the usual sense of the word, that is, animal food, or as we say, *flesh*, was absent. A

<sup>a</sup> See again Cant. viii. 13, where the sex of the dweller in the gardens, and consequently the force of the passage, is lost in our English version. It is the Bridegroom longing to hear the *bride's* voice (see Heb.)

350 *The Offerings viewed in connexion with Luke xv.*

more appropriate term would be *meal-offering*, or as the French neatly express it, "*le gâteau*." Again, *peace-offering* sounds to unlearned ears, as if it were the same as the sin-offering—an offering of atonement, or for *making* peace. Prosperity-offering, or thank-offering, would be nearer the truth. Perhaps the *character* of the offering would be well expressed by the name *communion-offering*, i. e. an offering, in the partaking of which communion was enjoyed, *on the ground* of the prosperity which the Lord had granted.

---

 SCRAPS.

1. THE TESTIMONY.—“I would put it to your conscience whether it must not be so, that God has ‘*a testimony for to-day*,’ even to-day. I mean not merely that He bears witness by His servants, both to those general truths which the being of a God, and *such* a One as He is, and the present fallen state of man necessitate, and to the blessed truths of grace and glory as displayed in the Gospel;—but this rather, that the grace of God vouchsafes to apply, by the Spirit, a word to things as *they* are; and the Lord thus gives by His servants a present testimony. This supposes neither a new revelation nor any addition to the perfected standard of truth—the Scripture, but only wisdom from on High to see how the written word bears upon things around us, and power to set this forth: but that God has a distinctive, and in some respects, peculiar application of the word of His grace to the passing hour—is my conscientious conviction. Faith is wanted and faithfulness.”

---

2. HOPE STILL IN GOD.—“Perplexed oft as to my steps, amid the anarchy around, through want of more singleness of eye within,—yet this is my comfort, ‘I am part of the Bride the Lamb’s wife, and I must, therefore, be brought there where His glory requires the presence of the Bride in her perfectness.’ Faithful is He who has called, who will also perform. Yet a little while (how little a while!), and I and we shall all appear in His glory—shown out, loved even as He is loved.”



N<sup>o</sup>. XXXI.

## PHILIPPIANS, CHAP. I. 1—7.

THE object of this paper is to dwell a little on the state of the Church at Philippi, which was such as to furnish joy to the mind of the Apostle; and in doing so to trace its history. In Acts xvi. the Spirit details to us the work of God in the formation of this Church. The Apostle was fulfilling the work whereunto he had been separated by the Holy Ghost; and it is in connection with his labours at Philippi that the sovereignty of God is manifested, not only as regards the objects of His grace, but also with respect to the locality where He would have His servants labour and His Gospel preached. They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. "They assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not." Paul had a vision. "There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us;" and after he had seen the vision they immediately endeavoured to go into Macedonia assuredly gathering that the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel unto them. They reached Philippi and abode there certain days; and now we have the proof of the Lord's guidance. He opened the heart of Lydia that she attended to the things spoken of Paul. In this, the first fruit of the Apostle's service here, how simple is the work of divine grace, and how cheering is it to the servant of the Lord to find his hand thus making a way for his own truth. This is how the Word of the Lord finds free course and is glorified. We may hear the truth of God, may find ears ready to listen; but it is the Lord alone can open the heart to receive it. The seed had fallen on good ground and brought forth fruit, as recorded in the case of Lydia and her household. Then we have the conversion of the jailer; and here we have another proof of the wisdom and grace of our God in sending the light of His gospel to the soul of one who from his occupation seemed out of its reach.

Perhaps the last person that even Paul would have thought of, would have been the keeper of the prison. The ways of God in reaching the hearts of His chosen ones display the exceeding riches of His grace. "I am found of them that sought Me not." The servant of God knows not what may have to be his path, or what may be his sufferings, when his answer to the question, "Who will go for us?" is, "Here am I; send me." Paul and Silas were the Lord's; and it was his purpose to give light to the jailer, to him that "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death." The wrath of man was made subservient to His purpose. They were thrown into the inner prison, after having been beaten with many stripes, and given in to the charge of that one who was so soon to know the blessedness of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The hardness of the jailer's heart was proved, in that he *thrust* them into the inner prison and made their feet *fast* in the stocks. But this was his last service to Satan in his kingdom. By the power of God the question is raised in his soul, "What must I do to be saved?" and God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, shone in his heart, to give "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." His household, as Lydia's, was also saved. Of such was the kingdom of heaven. We see the goodness of God in giving us so full an account of this part of His Church, and in the Epistle of Paul to them, carrying our thoughts forward. The joy of the Apostle as expressed in ver. 3—5, was not that they, through Him, had been brought to know Christ, but as he writes "for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now." The joy of his heart was in the increase of God.

It may be that he had had little to do in bringing them to the state in which they were; for he had learned that Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase; and he could say, further, "so that neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase;" a humbling lesson for us all! The fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, manifested the grace of Him who guides and feeds His flock, though passing through a barren, trackless wilder-

*Philippians.*

353

ness. Their hearts could understand the Apostle, when he wrote, "What things were gain to me, I count loss for Christ," etc. His soul had learned that when in Damascus. His sins, thrown on his conscience, so distressed him, that for three days and three nights he did neither eat nor drink. Here he learned the emptiness and good-for-nothingness of all that he had so zealously contended for. What was the Jewish religion to him? What relief could the blood of bulls and goats furnish? He might have used, once for all, the language of our little hymn—

"Not all the blood of beasts,  
On Jewish altars slain,  
Can give my guilty conscience peace,  
Or wash away my stain."

"What things were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss . . . and dung," etc. He himself rejoiced in Christ; and his joy in the Philippians was their fellowship in that. And now, how sweet is that fellowship souls find in the gospel. Our communion is not in sentiments and views, because, on this point, or on that, we see eye to eye, but as the redeemed of the Lord, as those who can unite to sing, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." So whatever mars the gospel, will disturb fellowship. "What communion hath light with darkness?" Harassed as the Apostle had been by trials and failures, his heart found its joy in turning to the Philippians; and it was because of their abiding fellowship in the gospel. This led to that earnest contention for the faith which characterised them. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers with me of grace." That soul that knows most fully the value of the gospel of Jesus Christ, whose only rest is under the shelter of the cross, will be the last to dishonour His precious name; the first to maintain His glory. It was not in the power of persecution to turn

away the Philippians from the gospel, to rob their hearts of the joy they had therein. The feeling the Apostle had—"None of these things move me"—was responded to by them. Was he ready not to be bound only, but to die for the name of the Lord Jesus?—so were they. 'Tis wonderful to see what sympathy this happy company had in all the Apostle was engaged in—their full reception of his gospel at the first, their continuance therein, their service to him in communicating to his wants while bearing that gospel to others, proving the value they set on it, and the love they had to him as the Lord's messenger, and lastly, as the prisoner of the Lord. They realised that it was given to them in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake. The day is coming which will try every man's religion of what sort it is. Indeed, the trial has set in; and only those will stand witnesses for God, and witnesses for Christ, who, by His own blessed Spirit, have had their hearts opened to receive Christ, and are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places."

---

#### A FRAGMENT.

"When we look up from amid the present confusion and wreck to God—the living God, let us remember, that He who set up at Pentecost, a new arena, in which He proposed to man to have Himself as the One who should reign and rule, is the same God, who is leading on believers now home to the scene where all rule flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. If the kingdom has failed in its *subjects*—if in their corporate standing they have not owned Him alone, and have owned another (and He therefore has ceased to own them in that position), *still* to faith there is but one God and one Lord, even as there is but one Spirit; and the kingdom, set up at Pentecost, which failed in the subject, stands in the Head, and in the end will be displayed before all among the faithful. For when we come to the new Jerusalem, the throne is the throne of God and the Lamb: and faith owns it to be so now."

## THE WARNING.

“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them.”—1 Thes. v. 3.

SPEAK not of “*The good time coming* ;”  
 Say not, “Happy times draw nigh.”  
 Lo! the clouds with terror looming,  
 Darken o’er the future sky!  
 Undeceive thyself, O mortal!  
 To the winds such dreamings give!  
 Think upon the fearful purging  
 That the earth *must first* receive!

Rather tell of *wrath* and *vengeance*,  
 Pending o’er this guilty race;  
 In its shame still glorying—boasting;  
 Deaf to all the calls of grace—  
 God forgetting—God dishonouring—  
 Guilty world, thy doom is nigh!  
 Fear unknown will seize upon thee,  
 When He shakes the earth and sky!

Sodom’s fall but faintly pictures,  
 What thy awful lot will be;  
 It had not so many warnings,  
 As the Lord hath sent to thee.  
 Grace refus’d, makes judgment sorer—  
 O what grace hast thou refused!  
 Guilty world, thy judgments hover,  
 All escape for thee is closed!

Yet, as in the case of Sodom,  
 Lot departed ere it fell;  
 So, the Lord will come from heaven,  
 Take His Church with Him to dwell,  
 Ere destruction’s work commences,  
 On *this* Sodom’s guilty ones:  
 They, the salt, alone preserve it—  
 They removed—the judgment comes.

Lu. 17:26, 30.  
 2 Tim. 3:1.  
 Rev. 1:7.  
 2Thes.1:7, 8, 9.  
 2Tim. 3:13.  
 Eccles.5: 7.  
 Mat. 13:40, 41.  
 Mat. 13:43.

Isa. 13: 9.  
 Jude 14, 15.  
 Phil. 3:19.  
 Lu. 14:16—24.  
 Ro. 3:10—23.  
 Ro. 2: 5.  
 Pro. 1:24—30.  
 Hag. 2:6, 7.

Jude 7.  
 Lu. 10:12.  
 Mat.24:39.  
 Mar.16:15.  
 Pro. 29: 1.  
 Joh. 3:16.  
 2 Pet. 3: 7.  
 1Thes.5: 3.

2 Pet. 2: 6.  
 Gen. 19:29.  
 Joh. 14: 3.  
 1Thes.4:17.  
 2Thes.1: 7.  
 Rev. 11: 8.  
 Mat. 5:13.  
 Lu. 17:29, 30.

To the Ark and <i>from</i> destruction	Gen. 7: 1.
All who 'd be preserved, then, haste!	2 Pet. 3: 9.
Christ's <i>alone</i> the Ark of safety—	Acts 4:12.
Come—and full salvation taste:	Rev. 22:17.
Tarry not for reformation—	Ro. 4: 5.
( <i>Sinners</i> —Jesus died to save),	Mar. 2:17.
Art thou <i>lost</i> ? He came to <i>find</i> thee;	Mat. 18:11.
Thou, believing, life shalt have.	Acts 16:31.
Then, amid the coming glory,	Rev. 20: 4.
Which the Church with Christ shall share;	1 Thes. 4:17.
Thou shalt have thy happy portion,	Eph. 2:6, 7.
Bride of His—His image bear—	1 Joh. 3: 2.
Then, His earthly people gathered,	Eze.37:24—28.
Earth made clean, and Satan bound;	Rev. 20: 2.
Thou shalt, with thy Saviour, reigning	Rev. 5:10.
O'er a happy world be found!	Rev. 11:15.
	A. M.

---

### THE HOPE.

“I have waited for thy salvation.”

1. Worthy of homage and of praise;  
Worthy by all to be adored:  
Exhaustless theme of heavenly lays!  
Thou, Thou art worthy, Jesus, Lord.
2. Now seated on the Father's throne,  
The Lamb once slain, in glory bright;  
'Tis thence Thou watchest o'er thine own,  
Guarding us thro' the deadly fight.
3. To Thee, the Lord, our song we raise,  
Tho' mean the tribute now must prove:  
No mortal tongue can tell Thy ways,  
So full of life, and light, and love.
4. Yet, Saviour! Thou shalt have *full* praise,  
When we have met Thee on the cloud;  
For when we see Thee face to face,  
We then shall praise Thee as we would.

“*Launch thy bark, mariner.*”

357

[The two following little pieces, though not *new*, may be welcome to some who have not seen them before.]

1. LAUNCH thy bark, mariner,  
     Christian, God speed thee,  
     Let loose the rudder bands,  
     Good angels lead thee.  
     Set the sails warily,  
     Tempests will come,  
     Steer thy course steadily,  
     Christian, steer home.
2. Look to the weather-bow,  
     Breakers are round thee;  
     Let fall the plummet now,  
     Shallows may ground thee.  
     Reef in the foresail there,  
     Hold the helm fast,  
     So let the vessel wear;  
     There swept the blast!
3. What of the night, watchman,  
     What of the night?  
     Cloudy, all quiet—  
     No land yet—all's right.  
     Be wakeful, be vigilant,  
     Danger may be  
     At an hour when all seemeth  
     Securest to thee.
4. How gains the leak so fast?  
     Clear out the hold;  
     Hoist out the merchandise,  
     Heave out the gold.  
     There, let the ingots go:  
     Now the ship rights;  
     Hurra! the harbour's near,  
     Lo! the red lights.
5. Slacken not sail yet,  
     At inlet or island;  
     Straight for the beacon steer,  
     Straight for the high land.  
     Crowd all thy canvass on,  
     Cut through the foam;  
     Christian, cast anchor *now*,  
     Heaven is thy home.—MRS. SOUTHEY.

THE DYING BELIEVER BIDDING FAREWELL TO  
THE BIBLE.

O BOOK! life's guide! how shall we part,  
And thou so long seized of my heart?  
Take this last kiss; and let me weep,  
True thanks to thee before I sleep.

Thou wert the first put in my hand,  
When yet I could not understand,  
And daily didst my young eyes lead  
To letters, till I learnt to read;  
But as rash youths, when once grown strong,  
Fly from their nurses to the throng,  
Where they new consorts choose, and stick  
To those, till either hurt or sick:  
So with that first light gain'd from thee,  
Ran I in chase of vanity.  
Cried dross for gold, and never thought  
My first cheap book had all I sought.  
Long reign'd this vogue; and thou, cast by,  
With meek dumb looks didst woo mine eye,  
And oft left open, would'st convey  
A sudden and most searching ray  
Into my soul, with whose quick touch,  
Refusing still, I struggled much.  
By this mild act of love, at length  
Thou overcam'st my sinful strength;  
And having brought me home, didst there  
Shew me that pearl I sought elsewhere.  
Gladness, and peace, and hope, and love,  
The secret favours of the Dove;  
Her quickening kindness, smiles, and kisses,  
Exalted pleasures, crowning blisses,  
Fruition, union, glory, life,  
Thou didst lead to, and still all strife.  
Living, thou wert my soul's sure ease,  
And dying mak'st me go in peace:  
Thy *next effects* no tongue can tell;  
Farewell, O book of God, farewell!

*From Silex Scintillans, or Sacred  
Poems, by Henry Vaughan.*



N<sup>o</sup>. XXXII.

## DEUTERONOMY.

WE now come to the Book of Deuteronomy, a book full of interest in its moral warnings as to testimony, but presenting fewer subjects for interpretation and exegesis than those the summary of which we have sought to give. This book takes up Israel just on the borders of Canaan, and insists upon the maintenance of their relations with God, and on obedience to his commandments, as the only ground on which Israel can enter and continue therein; adding warnings as to the consequence of failure in obedience. The book may be divided into three parts. The first eleven chapters insist upon obedience, presenting various motives to lead the people to it. Then come, as far as the end of the twenty-ninth, divers commandments; to which are added, by way of sanction, the consequences of obedience, and the curse upon disobedience. From the thirtieth to the end we have things to come, the blessing of the people, and the death of Moses. Of the first eleven chapters, the first four form rather a distinct part. That which strikes one in the first chapters is, the pains that the Lord takes to present all possible motives to that poor people to lead them to obedience, in order that they may be blessed. These things, which ought at least to have touched the heart, served, alas! only to prove its hardness, and to show that, if man is to be blessed, God must give him a new heart, as it is written in the chapter which closes the second part of his exhortations to obedience. "Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day" (xxix.4).

Deuteronomy is, then, of all the books of Moses, that which is the most essentially conditional; that is to say, the first two divisions which I have pointed out. Chapter xxix., which is the last of the second division, ends

himself, to put himself above the evil, and to shelter himself from it, because he is not above it.

He no longer glorifies God, by exalting himself he is abased. If Moses, instead of acting according to the flesh, had remembered that the question was not about himself (and how often had He told them so!), but about God, he would have felt that the people could not touch the glory of God; and this unfailing glory would have sustained him, looking only at that glory which ever maintains itself; so that if we only seek to maintain it, we may rest upon it.

But he lacked faith, and was forbidden to enter into that which only the perfection of glory could open to men; and indeed, what could lead Israel safely through the desert and into the land of Canaan? Pure grace alone. Moses was not able to apprehend the height of that grace, that conquers everything. It was according to that grace, as we have seen, that God acted at Meribah. Now, the law could not lead into life; and therefore the flesh, the world and the law, ever correlative in the ways of God, were found in the journey through the wilderness; and Moses remains there. He might, as a man of God, and a prophet, tell of grace, as making sure the blessing of Israel (chap. xxxiii. 26-29). Faithful in all his house, as a servant, he remains on this side Jordan, a proof, in these touching circumstances, that an absolutely new creation is needed, to enjoy the promises of God, according to that grace, which can alone, after all, bring one in safety even through the wilderness—the unfailing grace of our God.

Moses dies, and, buried by the Lord, no longer serves, as an object of carnal veneration, to a people at all times ready to fall into this sin, when his name gave them honor according to the flesh; just as they continually opposed him, when his presence according to God thwarted the flesh. He was a man honored of God, who scarcely had his equal (Him of course excepted who had none); but nevertheless he was man, and man is but vanity.

\*.\* DEUTERONOMY, i.e. *Second Law*, as in LXX., Δευτερονομιον is called דברים (*words*) in the hebrew bible, see chap. i. 1, "These are the Words," etc.

N<sup>o</sup>. XXXIII.“THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S AND THE  
FULNESS THEREOF.”

1 Cor. x. 26, 28.

It seems an important point of spiritual wisdom, rightly to understand the principle of quotation made by the Spirit from the Old Testament in the New. The Spirit of God can never be less than perfect and infinite (and this, perhaps, is *one* reason why no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation), but it is no dishonour to the Holy Ghost to say, as scripture says of Him, that He can be grieved, resisted, and, in one sense, quenched.

Now, just as the sin of man may have power to limit the Holy One, so the abounding grace of God may bring out into fuller significance, and more extensive application, the inspired words of the prophets, when they are repeated by the apostles under the new dispensation. I would take, as an instance, the quotation from Psalm xxiv. 1, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.” These words, in an Old Testament context, may have an Old Testament meaning; there is a glorious truth legible upon the very surface of the passage; but in Paul’s day Jesus was glorified, the Holy Ghost was sent down, and He was now ready to take out of the Old Testament treasury things new as well as old, but all of them things of Christ, and to minister largely and freely to the necessities of the children of God. We seem to have some confirmation of this view in 1 Pet. i. 11, 12. It is not that an unholy person sees nothing and a holy person everything in the word, but holy men of old (the very channels and instruments of inspiration) had one measure of intelligence, and another and a fuller measure was now revealed to *another* class under *another* dispensation, even to the holy apostles and prophets, by the Spirit (Eph. iii.). Accordingly,

we may distinguish between three different aspects of Psalm xxiv.

1. To the unconverted, the passage, like the rest of Scripture, is without form and void. The letter may convey a meaning, but nothing of interest or of spiritual intelligence.

2. To the godly Jew it spoke of Jehovah's present rights, and future manifested dominion.

3. But though this was the very teaching of the Spirit, there was deeper instruction which the Spirit would bring out by the hand of Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. A question had arisen, requiring exquisite dexterity in the answer, concerning meats offered to idols. And the answer is so contrived, in the wisdom of the Spirit, as not merely to solve the particular difficulty the Corinthians were in, a solution that would have been of little use when the emergency was over, but to lay, in the broadest and clearest manner, the deep foundations of gospel truth.

The question was, "May I eat meats offered to idols?" "Yes," says Paul, "only with due regard to the *conscience of another*." "*For* [and this little word has probably occasioned much difficulty to many in the interpretation] the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." The Spirit in Paul looks abroad over the whole surface of the globe, and sees *not one* spot that is not the Lord's. But this is not all; the words themselves require a fuller explanation. The Son might say, as Jehovah, "All the beasts of the forest are mine, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills." But this would only be the right of the Creator. And so, when sin had found entrance into the world, while Jehovah would retain His rights as Creator, this very fact would be against man's liberty. The earth is the Lord's, and, therefore, man is *not* free, for on every spot of ground where he can plant his foot he is a trespasser. His very existence upon earth is, in a manner, a trespass; and if he dares to touch any of God's creatures, instead of a partaker by grace, God only knows him as an intruder upon his ground, as a thief and a robber. The key, then, to the connexion of this passage with conscience must be found

in the interpretation of the word "Lord." *Creation* and conscience do not correspond; but conscience and the *Lordship of Jesus* do, and this is one blessed portion of teaching in the New Testament.

Let us first look at Romans xiv.9, "For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." Christ, as Jehovah, was Lord from eternity. Christ, as the *risen* man (and, of course, not merely man), has *acquired* a lordship, whereby (having by Himself purged our sins) He has power to give us a dispensation to eat freely, asking no question for conscience' sake. Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. Had not man been a sinner, the first clause might have been sufficient; every *creature* of God is good, therefore, I may use it. And thus many an impenitent sinner is apt to justify not only the use but the abuse of God's creatures. "God," say they, "has given us all things richly to enjoy, *therefore*, we may enjoy ourselves and forget God." But Paul has not so learned Christ or creation either. He does not say, "Why am I evil spoken of for that which God has made?" but, "Why am I evil spoken of for that for which *I give thanks*." Here is his warrant. He looks abroad upon the surface of creation, and sees nothing unsanctified by the blood of Christ. *Therefore* he may use all things. The lordship of Jesus is the liberty of the saint. The blood has *cleansed* all things to the believer; but the lordship of Him who died, manifested by resurrection and ascension, has *pronounced* all things clean. A saint will often, in grace, refuse to *exercise* his liberty, eating no flesh, if need be, while the world stands, lest he cause his brother to offend. But he cannot *deny* his liberty, for this would be to deny Christ, if it were but concerning the lawfulness of eating one morsel of meat. We seem to have similar teaching in our Lord's words (Luke xi.41), "But rather give alms of such things as ye have; *and*, behold, all things are clean unto you." Not that alms-giving could *purchase* liberty; but it would seem as if our Lord had said, "Act in grace, and so prove you are on the ground of grace; if on that ground, all

390 *The Earth is the Lord's and the Fulness thereof.*

things are clean unto you." I may add, that, in the two verses of 1 Cor. x. 31, 32, we have, in the clearest light, the largest extent of Christian liberty, combined with the strictest rule of Christian practice. *Everything* is cleansed to me, if I can use it with thanksgiving. *Nothing* is allowable that is not done to the glory of God. If we have grace to act on these two principles, we shall neither be Legalists on the one hand nor Antinomians on the other.

I would not conclude this short paper without a few words on the peculiar force of the word "Lord" in this passage. First, the inspired writer of Psalm xxiv. has declared, The earth is *Jehovah's*. The uninspired authors of the Greek version have rendered the word "Jehovah" by "Lord," as their manner is. But, lastly, the New Testament has pronounced Jesus "Lord"; and now the Spirit in Paul has, as we may say, set to his seal, that those translators were right (in that passage), and that Jesus who died and rose and revived was Jehovah as well as Lord.

---

"YET A VERY LITTLE WHILE."

"YET a little while,"—the Lord  
 Thus hath promis'd in His word,  
 Christ, the Lord, shall come again,  
 Take His ransom'd ones—and reign!  
 Yet a little while—shall come  
 What to each must fix their doom,  
 Give to saints eternal bliss,  
 Sinners, endless wretchedness.  
 Yet a little—saints of God,  
 Have ye heard the solemn word?  
 Bride of Christ, art thou awake,  
 Waiting, watching for his sake?  
 As the children of the day,  
 Do ye tread your heav'nly way;  
 Girded loins, and lamps of fire,  
 Shewing still your soul's desire?  
 O! abide in Him, be wise,  
 Flee the world, avoid its ways,  
 So, His coming, saint, shall be,  
 Only <sup>a</sup>joy, and peace to thee!

<sup>a</sup> 1 John ii. 25.

N<sup>o</sup>. XXXIV.ILLUSTRATION OF TWO ACROSTIC PSALMS,  
CXI. AND CXII.

ANYTHING illustrative of Scripture is most precious to the Christian: it is the chart he sails by. I desire to add a mite; and will not be deterred by the feeling of either its littleness or my want of competency to present the subject in a way worthy of itself.

In Hebrew, the 111th and 112th Psalms are acrostic; and there is this singularity about them, that each of them has twenty-two clauses in ten verses, and each of these clauses begins with a letter of the alphabet. I have sought to translate them as *verbally* as possible, and thus, so far as possible, according to my power, to present to the eye of the mere English reader the appearance they have in Hebrew,—retaining the acrostic memorial. I am not aware of having forced the sense at all. That they are remarkably connected together cannot be doubted. They correspond in subject, or are responsive; and to the *eye* they are the one like to the other, as are a pair of wings in a bird, though the colouring may differ [Perhaps the fanciful *pairs of wings* of George Herbert's day were borrowed hence;—*shape* being added by the poet.] All I seek is to present to the mere English reader the sense of the Hebrew in such form as that his eye may have the same benefit as has the eye which peruses them in Hebrew.

Observe and compare verses 3 in both; also verses 4.

Are the character of Jehovah in a certain aspect, and the character of His servant, the two subjects?

The Reader is advised to turn back to Volume One, pages fifty and three hundred and twenty. There he will find reference to the two Psalms, now under consideration, in the observations made concerning

First:—*The Titles* of the Psalms.

Secondly:—*The Acrostics*.

And Thirdly:—*The Orphans*.

*Illustration of*

## PSALM CXI.

## HALLELU-YAH.

			ver.
Aleph	א	A ( <b>A</b> ye), I will praise Jehovah whole-heartedly:	1
Beth	ב	<b>B</b> efore the counsel of the upright and the congregation.	
Gimel	ג	<b>G</b> reat (are) the works of Jehovah:	2
Daleth	ד	<b>D</b> iligently sought of all that delight therein.	
Heh	ה	<b>H</b> onorable and glorious His work:	3
Vau	ו	<b>V</b> erily <sup>1</sup> His righteousness stands for ever.	
Zain	ז	<b>Z</b> ealous remembrance made He for His wonders:	4
Cheth	ח	<b>C</b> haritable and compassionate (is) Jehovah.	
Teth	ט	<b>T</b> o his fearers he gave the prey:	5
Yod	י	( <b>Y</b> et) He remembers for ever His covenant.	
Caph	כ	<b>C</b> aused He to declare to His people the might of His deeds:	6
Lamed	ל	( <b>L</b> ooking) to give them the heritage of the Gentiles.	
Mem	מ	<b>M</b> ade things of His hands truth and judgment:	7
Nun	נ	<b>N</b> ourished[or nursed up] all His appointments.	
Samech	ס	<b>S</b> tanding fast for ever and ever:	8
Ayin	ע	<b>'A</b> cted in truth and uprightness.	
Peh <sup>2</sup>	פ	<b>F</b> reedom he sent to His people;	9
Tzadec	צ	<b>'T</b> is He commanded for ever His covenant:	
Cooph	ק	<b>C</b> onsecrated and fearful His name.	
Resh	ר	<b>R</b> uling in wisdom is the fear of Jehovah;	10
Sin	ש	<b>S</b> uccess [ <i>or sense or skilfulness</i> ] have all that do them:	
Tav	ת	<b>T</b> he praise of Him stands for ever.	

<sup>1</sup> "Verily," *lit.* "and."<sup>2</sup> Or *Pheh*



## PSALM CXII.

## HALLELU-YAH.

		ver.
א	<b>A</b> man that fears Jehovah is blest:	1
ב	<b>B</b> y his commandments greatly delighting.	
ג	<b>G</b> rand in the earth shall be his seed:	2
ד	<b>D</b> escendants of the upright shall be blest.	
ה	( <b>H</b> e has) riches and wealth in his house:	3
ו	<b>V</b> erily his righteousness (is) standing for ever.	
ז	( <b>Z</b> est <sup>1</sup> ) to the upright, light rises in darkness:	4
ח	<b>C</b> haritable (is he), merciful, and righteous.	
ט	<b>T</b> he good man is charitable and lends:	5
י	<b>I</b> n judgment he will accomplish his matters.	
יא	<b>C</b> ertainly for ever not shall he be moved:	6
יב	<b>L</b> asting shall be the remembrance of the righteous. <sup>2</sup>	
יג	<b>M</b> alicious [ <i>lit.</i> evil] report not shall he fear:	7
יד	( <b>N</b> ow) established his heart, trusting in the Lord.	
טו	<b>S</b> tablished his heart, not shall he fear;	8
טז	<b>U</b> ntil he look (down) on his enemies.	
טז	<b>P</b> ortioning out, he gave to the needy;	9
יז	( <b>T</b> is) his righteousness (is) standing for ever:	
יח	( <b>K</b> nown) his horn is exalted in honor.	
יט	<b>R</b> ages the wicked when he sees it;	10
כ	<b>S</b> urely with his teeth he will gnash and melt away.	
כא	<b>T</b> he desire of the wicked shall perish.	

<sup>1</sup> I have put in Zest.<sup>2</sup> *Lit.* For a remembrance of eternity shall be the righteous.

I give now the Hebrew of these Psalms, with the translations.

הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה אֹדָה יְהוָה בְּכָל־לֵב־בְּסוֹךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַדָּה : נִדְלִים מַעֲשֵׂי  
 יְהוָה : דְּרוֹשִׁים לְכָל־חַפְצֵיהֶם : הוֹרֶה־דָּר פַּעְלֹו וְצִדְקָתוֹ  
 עֲמֶדֶת לְעַד : זָכָר עֲשֵׂה לְנַפְלָאֲתָיו : חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם יְהוָה : מֶרֶץ נָתַן  
 לִירָאָיו : יִזְכָּר לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ : כַּח מַעֲשָׂיו הַנִּיד לְעַמּוֹ : לָתֵת לָהֶם נַחֲלַת  
 גּוֹיִם : מַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיו אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפָּט : נֶאֱמָנִים כָּל־פְּקוּדָיו : סְמוּכִים  
 לְעַד לְעוֹלָם : עֲשׂוּיִם בְּאֱמֶת וַיִּשֶׁר : פְּדוּתֹו שָׁלַח לְעַמּוֹ : צָוָה לְעוֹלָם  
 בְּרִיתוֹ קְדוֹשׁ וְנוֹרָא שְׁמוֹ : רֵאשִׁית חֲבֻמָּה יִרְאֵת יְהוָה שֶׁכֵּל טוֹב  
 לְכָל־עֲשֵׂיהֶם : תִּהְלָתוֹ עֲמֶדֶת לְעַד :

1 PRAISE ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly  
 2 of the upright, and in the congregation. The works of the Lord are great, sought  
 3 out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious:  
 4 and his righteousness endureth for ever. He hath made his wonderful works to be  
 5 remembered: the Lord is gracious and full of compassion. He hath given meat  
 6 unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant. He hath shewed  
 7 his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.  
 8 The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure,  
 9 They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. He sent  
 redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and  
 10 reverend is his name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good  
 understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for  
 ever.

הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה אֱשֶׁר־אִישׁ יִרְאֵה אֶת־יְהוָה : בְּמַצּוֹתָיו חָפֵץ מְאֹד : גִּבּוֹר  
 בְּאַרְץ יְהוָה וְרָעוּ : דּוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל יִבְרָךְ : הוֹן־וְעִשָׂר בְּבֵיתוֹ :  
 וְצִדְקָתוֹ עֲמֶדֶת לְעַד : זָרַח בַּחֲשֵׁךְ אֹר לַיִּשְׂרָאֵל : חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם וְצַדִּיק :  
 מוֹב־אִישׁ חוֹנֵן וּמִלּוֹה : יִכְלָל דְּבָרָיו בְּמִשְׁפָּט : כִּי־לְעוֹלָם לֹא־יִמּוֹט :  
 לְזָכָר עוֹלָם יְהוָה צַדִּיק : מִשְׁמוּעָה רָעָה לֹא יִירָא : נִבּוֹן לִבּוֹ בְּטָח  
 בַּיהוָה : סְמוּךְ לִבּוֹ לֹא יִירָא : עַד אֲשֶׁר־יִרְאֶה בְּצָרָיו : פִּזְרוֹ נָתַן  
 לְאֲבִיּוֹנִים : צִדְקָתוֹ עֲמֶדֶת לְעַד : קִרְנוֹ תְרוּם בְּכִבּוֹד : רָשָׁע יִרְאֶה :  
 וְכַעַם שִׁנּוּ יַחֲרֹק וְנָמָס : תִּאֲזוּת רִשְׁעִים תִּאֲבֹד :

1 PRAISE ye the Lord. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth  
 2 greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the genera-  
 3 tion of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and  
 4 his righteousness endureth for ever. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the  
 5 darkness: he is gracious and full of compassion, and righteous. A good man  
 6 sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he  
 shall not be removed for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.  
 7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.  
 8 His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he sees his desire upon his  
 9 enemies. He hath dispersed; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth  
 10 for ever: his horn shall be exalted with honour. The wicked shall see it, and be  
 grieved: he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked  
 shall perish.

## No. XXXV.

## “FAINT, YET PURSUING.”

Judges viii. 4.

“AND Gideon came to Jordan and passed over, he and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing.” The opening of a campaign, the carrying on of the struggle, with endurance to the end, are all included in Paul’s memorable summary — “I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day” (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8). A ship may be making little progress and yet answer her helm; ready to take advantage of a favourable breeze. Delays unlooked for may occur: yet her log-book of the course she kept, with the winds that blew, may justify the master and crew in the eyes of her owners that all had been done that could be accomplished. In our Christian career unlooked for difficulties may arise (and necessarily so for the trial of our faith). We may have to encounter opposition where we looked for assistance. We may have to suffer most from those with whom we once held sweet fellowship. It may be our lot to have bitter experience of the words in Psalm lv. 12: “For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance, we took sweet counsel together and walked to the house of God in company.” How little, after all, have we been prepared for it; how impatient under it! What scope has been given to the exercise of reason: how little for the exercise of faith? We have held truth in the head, and it could not meet the necessities or trials of the heart. And it is gracious of the Lord to shew this to us, and to bring us

to acknowledge it before him, and to have bowels of sympathy for those who entered into conflict without tried weapons of war (1 Sam. xvii. ~~9~~).

Yet, let us not be misunderstood. Strength to pursue a course depends upon the course being right. The right object attracts forward, has propelling power in it, because it is right. Hence the momentous importance of truth simply as truth. How well does it repay any real regard for it. What provision for necessities, what charges it undertakes! In Proverbs iv.: “ Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. . . . Exalt her and she shall promote thee to excellent honour.” And what is here advanced of Wisdom is true also of the Lord Jesus. A due regard to His glory and His honour is the charge of His people’s safety. The precept given by Him, “ No man goeth a warfare at his own charges,” is made good in His service. He amply provides for every emergency. It is true wisdom to apprehend this. And here the simplicity of faith enters. The doctrine of justification by faith may be peremptorily insisted upon and Scripture ransacked in support of it; yet the very ablest advocates of this truth, and convinced, too, of its being true, may break down in the sister fact, that we must walk by faith, put on faith;—have faith in God, and whatever we enter upon or undertake, perform it in dependance upon God.

What mistakes arise from forgetfulness of this! How men plunge into the Lord’s battles with their own weapons: bringing their own artillery to play upon their antagonists, and exposing, in their censure of other men’s motives, the whereabouts of their own. But the Lord hath no need of this. The dignity of the truth is above this. Faith will act the part of a general who makes his observations before entering into the *melée*, and disposes his forces for the attack, and continues his plans unmoved by the din of conflict, or the clouds of smoke and dust. Combatants there will be in the ranks who fight on for fighting’s sake. Without principle to lead them into action, and having no energy but their self-will to maintain them there; and if this be crossed, and their own

importance interfered with, are forward to throw aside their weapons in disgust, or discharge them, when retreating, in the faces of those who had been companions in service. Alas! how sorrowful is all this to the heart quickened of Jesus to have sympathy with Him. The triumph of the truth swallows up in its grandeur, the individual share in promoting the victory. So the fall of an opponent in such a struggle gives no room for self-exultation, but rather for commiseration. Victory is hallowed by tears of regret for those who, from love of ease, carnal security, carelessness of walk, error in judgment, or weakness of faith, were led into a position where they were sure to be vanquished.

Still, while it is the privilege of faith to anticipate the end, ever assured of blessing from God, yet the way is weary, and often the hands are heavy, the spirits droop, and then the trial of constancy of purpose comes on; and, though faint, yet to be found pursuing, is the precursor of blessing and triumph. And this is the turning point of the career. Unbelief sheers off when difficulty threatens. Faith escapes none of these trials, yet holds on her course "though faint, yet pursuing." Let us beware of misjudging our condition by our feelings or perceptions; of putting our enjoyment in the service, in the place of the service itself; and so, contrariwise, of confounding our trials, which necessarily arise from it, with the end in view. It is easy to do this. How many are the ways by which men delude themselves into supineness. It is the cause of a controversy which justifies one. It is at all times unpleasant in itself, but still it may be imperative duty to engage in it. The plea of the evil of it, as such, may be made an excuse of by some. Its tendency to lead bystanders to mock at the truth, the apology of others. Yet if it comes in the way of duty, we cannot avoid it. To everything there is a season; "a time of war, and a time of peace" (Eccles. iii. 8), but servants have no right to be choosers, much less to refrain from action, when the service is arduous and attended with difficulty, seeking into the future for excuses for inertness, instead of being earnest and zealous in the work of to day.

The book of Judges gives the history of man's unfaithfulness in the very place of blessing, sinning in the very face of the bounty and grace which had put him there. It gives also the dealings of God with His people, in chastisement and repeated deliverance. Such was His love and regard, that He pitied them in their sufferings, which their own sin brought upon them. "Yea, many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath" (Ps. lxxviii. 38). The sixth chapter of Judges opens with a renewed account of Israel's iniquity, and the consequences of it. "The hand of Midian prevailed against Israel, . . . and Israel was greatly impoverished; . . . and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord." How gracious His ways! He sent a prophet unto them, to remind them of His goodness, how He had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all them that oppressed them, and gave them their land. "And I said unto you, I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice." The testimony to their evil is recorded. The bounty of His grace is unfolded to meet it. Gideon is appointed a deliverer. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." And Gideon said unto him, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?" It is hard, in the midst of the chastening for departure from God, to realise that it is because relationship had existed that this had befallen them. To recognise His hand, was the germ of faith; to see His deliverance in purpose, the growth of it. "If the Lord be with us, why then has all this befallen us?" When he was grieved with their sins, and insulted by the setting up of false gods, He left them to reap, as they had sown, confusion and strife—to be scattered and peeled. Yes, He noticed them in chastening, because they were His. And Gideon said, "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said unto him, **SURELY I WILL BE WITH THEE**, and thou

shalt smite the Midianites as one man.” And it is just here that the spring of confidence rises,—“*I will be with thee.*” It was so with Moses of old. If the Lord be not with me, carry us not up hence. The starting point of faith is “God with us.” Without this, all contest is in vain and worthless. He met them as they were, and acted on His faithfulness to His promise to their fathers, passing by in marvellous grace their own sinfulness and unbelief.

But how should Gideon be assured of this? The Lord would accept of his offering; and so little did Gideon apprehend his ways, that the seal of his acceptance was regarded by him as the knell of his death; for he said, “Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face.” And the Lord answered him. “Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.” And Gideon built an altar there. His soul is awakened for his work. There is struggle for establishment, and the Lord condescends to his weakness, and submits to be proved, that his servant might trust him (verses 36 to 40). He has evidence of His favour, and starts on his career. What wretched confusion was around! What prospect of remedy! How hopeless, to reason, the task! Yet faith laughs at impossibilities, for they exist not before Him with whom we have to do. Omnipotence sees hills as the plains, and water in the flinty rock. Now Gideon had got hold of a great principle—the Lord with his people in chastening them, and therefore His hand in deliverance. Being *His*, they were sure of the *former*, and equally safe for the latter. Looking at troubles amongst saints apart from the Lord’s hand in permitting them, the eye discerns no remedy; the heart is overwhelmed with consternation. Fear enters; and that which in communion would have been the precursor of blessings, becomes to unbelief the harbinger of defeat. But, blessed be God! it is not so, the name of the Lord invoked, the two or three assembled together in that name, the Holy Ghost recognised in the body, surely the Lord will shew He acknowledges us by chastening when needed, that He may bless us the more. “Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall not we receive evil.” But, as was before stated, this is the trial of faith, it is a step in the right

direction to discern the Lord's dealings with His people. “The Lord with them” becomes recovered strength to Gideon; and accordingly as this was discerned, there was blessing in his career. How his faith sought encouragement, and how the Lord dealt graciously towards him, the scripture records.

How pride should be hid from man, and salvation of the Lord fully manifested, the sequel discloses—three hundred only of the many thousands of Israel, and with such weapons of war as appeared very folly in the eyes of the world. But the deliverance would be more manifestly of God, and the hearts of the people brought back to *Him*; for this was the object, not the triumph of a party but the blessing of the whole people of Israel. We lose sight of this. We are apt to narrow our views to our localities. The blessing we have enjoyed belonged to the body, we sought to keep it in our own hands, hedging ourselves in, and stipulating conditions of access which the Lord had not imposed upon us. Now the pulling down of our fences and tearing up of our stakes, creates no little consternation among us; but what if the Lord's purpose (as surely it is) is only that our area may be enlarged, our charity widened, our affections called forth for the church as a whole? Surely there is encouragement for faith from the very fact of our chastening. Let us beware of writing (as has before been observed) the sentence of death upon our *position* and *privileges* instead of upon ourselves. To recognise the hand of our Father and to acknowledge the needs be, is the first step towards recovery.

This was attained to by Gideon. The Lord's hand was seen in permitting the chastisement; the Lord's hand made bare to faith in working deliverance. But the position of faith is the path of trial, and that, too, because it is the one of faith. We have forgotten this in our folly. We have asked, with Gideon, if it be so, why, then, has all this befallen us? And, instead of the language of Nehemiah, “Should such an one as I flee?” (Nehe. vi. 11), “we have run every man into his own house,” whilst the Lord's house lay waste (Haggai i. 9). Trial by the way, is no excuse for getting out of the way; failure in man, no reason for quarrelling with God.



But the rather, our every discomfiture should quicken our feet to our hiding-place. “Thou art my hiding-place” (Ps. cix. 114). But the path of faith is one of trial. Service for God can only be sustained in the power of God. There is danger whilst working ostensibly for Him, of ceasing to abide in Him; and then leanness of soul enters, and the heart, unsustained by communion, shrinks under trials which, in a healthy condition, would have had no pressure upon us. Now, Gideon had eminent service, and consequently trials in it. He had wrought a victory in the energy of the Spirit of God, and this exposed him to the envy of Ephraim (ch. viii.). He came to Jordan and passed over, he and the three hundred men that were with him, “faint, yet pursuing.” And he asked bread of the men of Succoth and he was mocked of them; the princes of Succoth saw nothing imposing in the small band of the faithful so wearied and famished, for whom unbelief had no sympathy, and less of discernment, when acting for God. And he passed on to Penuel, where a like reception awaited him. There are few allies for faith, and few spirits to lead on a forlorn hope into conflict. Yet pursuing God’s enemies, and employed in His service, though faint, *He* sustains them. “He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increases strength.” The hosts of Zeba and Zalmunna are defeated in Karkor, and the two kings taken (chap. viii. 11) and slain; the elders of Succoth taught with thorns and briers in the wilderness (verse 16); the men of the city of Penuel slain, and their tower beaten down (verse 17), and all this by a feeble few, “faint, yet pursuing.”

What comfort and encouragement is here! Have faith in God. How imperative the precept! How certain the results! The Lord strengthen the hands that hang down! *May the good of His church be the object of pursuit, the truth of His presence where two or three are gathered, the testimony borne;* and though Ephraim wax wroth in the spirit of envy, and Succoth and Penuel will furnish no sustenance, yet onwards is the word,—“Speak to the people that they go forward.” May the Lord encourage us that we may be found though “faint, yet pursuing.”

## Nº XXXVI.

“ THEN WILL I MAKE THIS HOUSE LIKE  
SHILOH.”

Jeremiah xxvi. 6.

THE question, I apprehend, which is troubling many minds now, is suggested in this denunciation of the prophet Jeremiah. The breaking up of formal unity, the breaking up of a testimony really coming in great measure from God, troubles saints. They are not prepared for it. They count it a strange thing. Yet let us look at God's ways, He guiding us. The general truth of the failure of every dispensation in man's hands used to be very familiar with us: we begin with the first, “man made upright;” and we find (Gen: vi. 6), “And it repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth, and it grieved him at his heart” (because of man's corruption). And then comes the flood. But without going into the great outlines of dispensation, let us look more intimately into the record that Israel affords us. In Numbers xiv. we find that, God, having brought up Israel out of Egypt, next year orders spies to be sent up to search the land. They are to have definitely before them, what is the nature of the land they are going to possess. Ours is a *reasonable* hope. God likes us to know what we are *labouring* for (Heb. iv.). They do learn this: it is a good land, but they despise it. They deliberately turn back in heart into Egypt. Well, God says (verse 28), “As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land: your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness: . . . . and ye shall know (verse 34) my *breach of promise*.” So then, there is such a thing as *breach of promise* with God. In one sense, we know with joy, “His gifts and calling are without repentance.” But as to testimony and blessing upon earth, there is such a thing as those entirely failing to whom that testimony and blessing is committed, and God committing it to others, that His purposes may be ac-

“ *Then will I make this house like Shiloh.* ” 403

complished. “Your little ones, they shall *know* the land which ye have despised;” and by them was God’s promise really fulfilled.

Look onward, as to Eli: the question, I suppose, of priesthood. What says the Lord? (1 Sam. ii. 30). “The Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me: for them that honour me I will honour; but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” And mark how searching is that question of *honouring*. “Thou honourest thy sons above me,” etc. The Lord’s quarrel was “against the iniquity which he [Eli] *knoweth*: because his sons made themselves vile, and he *restrained* them not.” He did speak, and speak *very solemnly* to them. He *said* (ii. 25), “If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, *who shall intreat for him?*” Still he did not use the proper means and authority which God had given to him as a father, and a priest, to *put down* the evil, which he knew, which was deeply dishonouring God. God will be dealt with in a true, *bonâ fide* way. Words, even felt in some measure, will not do when actions are called for. *We* may make light of sin; but *He* never does.

In this breach of promise, we see again God’s substitution, to carry on his own testimony, etc. etc. (verse 35), “And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart, and in my mind.”

Heavily, therefore, I apprehend, would this denunciation come upon the ears of Israel by the prophet Jeremiah, “Except ye repent, I will make this house like Shiloh;” so vii. 12—15. It was a national witness to them, that, whilst they were resting in the external thing, as though it was theirs by right,—clinging to their land, though but a *waste*, and saying, as man ever does, “Abraham was *one* and he inherited the land, but we are *many*; the land is given to us for inheritance” (Ezek. xxxiii. 24),—I say, it was a witness to them that God had once before given up His own house, “the tent which He placed *among men*” (affecting thought!); He had given up His

404     “ *Then will I make this house like Shiloh.*”

own glory apparently because of the iniquity of those to whom it was committed. They might send, in bold and unprecedented self-confidence, for the Lord's ark from Shiloh; but “the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were *there* with the ark of the covenant of God.” This is the Spirit's record; and a preparation for all that followed. “The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain, for the wicked are not plucked away” (Jer. vi. 29).

How unaccountable, doubtless, has it often appeared to many souls, that God can so let His name be dishonoured by His own people, who should testify for Him. And yet so it is. God would rather give up His own glory for the present, and give up His strength into captivity, in the words of Psalm lxxviii. 61, than His children should go on unrebuked, and suffer damage. He loves their profit better than His own present glory, though all will finally be to His glory.

In passing on to our own dispensation, I only remark, that *our* standing is simply and entirely that of *faith*. We have no other. We are Gentiles—the wild olive-tree. The moment that we begin to think that we have a standing-place, apart from faith, we forget the fundamental principles of our calling. “Thou standest by faith,” Paul said at the first to the church. And so the first word that Jesus said to the church, when he came to visit it at Ephesus, and found it declining from first love, was, “Repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy *candlestick* out of his place, except thou repent.” The candlestick, the glory, could not stand apart from faith.

In conclusion, I would just say, Let these things speak for themselves. Alas for us, if we will not let God's word speak to us simply, nakedly, and by its own power! Only one thing I would say—surely it says to *all*; “Be not high-minded, but fear.” However free we may be, by grace, from the present condemnation of such truth, still the *lesson* will surely be of little value to us, if we affix it upon others and neglect to apply it to ourselves. Sweet to be driven from “confidence in the flesh,” yet know who to look to in the sustainment of our

“*Then will I make this house like Shiloh.*” 405

responsibility (Rom. xvi. 25). And yet one word further. Whilst thus seeing the incompatibility of God's presence and blessing with evil, let not these things make us *careless* about separation. Separation is never the thing that God loves, unless it be forced upon Him by man's evil. Especially is it needful to dwell upon this now; because Satan's aim always is, *whatever* truth God is working upon, to throw us into *the extreme* of it. I doubt not this is an *invariable* wile, and one just now to be guarded against. Let us not forget, that though faithfulness *must* be used when called for, yet *love* still has its own indispensable place in the church. It is the cement of God's habitation by the Spirit. We may mistake a quick finding-out of others' faults and weaknesses for spirituality. It is not so. Love still “hopeth all things, believeth all things; rejoiceth not *in* iniquity, but rejoiceth *with* the truth.” Love will still cover a multitude of sins, though it will not *cloak* any.

I say these things. Yet let the solemn passages adduced leave that thought upon the mind, that there can be no trifling with positive evil. May we still maintain our true standing as *unleavened* in connection with the Paschal Lamb. May we still eat with it the bitter herbs, and thus know all the better the pure joy and blessedness of that Paschal feast, until the day dawn, and the shadows flee away.

ABERGELE.

---

EXTRACTS.—“IN the Lord's table we see not only the remembrance of His death, but the results of it—Life, Unity, and Glory—‘till He come.’ It is communion *essentially*, and testimony only *as a consequence*. We dwell in the land of unwall'd villages—a pasture of faith—even liable to invasion. We can only count on Him who is a wall of fire round about us; and glory in our midst. O that we might realise it so, despite of circumstances.” S.

“All things are possible to him that believeth. Faith never stumbles at difficulties or trials; but always looks to where God is, which is the bright side of everything. Godward trials are bread for Faith. Paul knew this well—Christ knew it—may we know it also!” S.

N<sub>o</sub> XXXVII.DIVINE NAMES AND TITLES.<sup>a</sup>

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS..

It would suppose great want of even natural observation in a reader of the Bible, to imagine that he had not noticed that there are many names used by the Spirit, who, through the inspired writers, indited Scripture, for the God with whom we have to do. God; Lord God; Jehovah; Jah; I AM; God Almighty; God of Abraham—of Isaac—and of Jacob; God of Israel, etc. etc., occur in the Old Testament; and those of God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; LORD GOD Almighty, etc. etc., are too observable in the New Testament for any one that at all knows the book not to have noticed them.

The believer, moreover, will be conscious of there being, not only *many* names, but of a *difference* in the variety which the number presents. He may have thought of God, in time past, merely as “GOD all-mighty,” and of the Lord Jesus as “the appointed Judge of quick and dead”; but now he knows, as having tasted, the *grace* of this *Almighty* Creator, and Jesus is owned by him, not only as Judge for a day to come, but now, as Lord and *Saviour*. His earliest lessons in the school of Christ have enabled him to discern the *difference* between the God of Righteousness at Sinai, proposing that, which, while it described the Perfect Man (and, there never was since but One such) measured and condemned every mere child of fallen Adam,—and, the God of Grace at Calvary, shewing Divine Perfectness in the seed of the woman, the Man Christ Jesus on the cross, and there teaching the remedy for ruin, as it is written:—“But if the ministration of death, written and

<sup>a</sup> Reference has already been made to this subject, briefly, Vol. I. p. 424.

engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: but their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 7—18). His early lessons thus have taught him a difference between the glories proper to God as the Creator, as the Upholder (God of Providence), and as the Saviour-God; while his very possession of salvation supposes *some* knowledge, at least, as to the places, and offices, and works respectively peculiar to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the work of redemption: and, further, the plain teaching of the double glory to be given to the person of the Mediator, God manifest in the flesh, a glory celestial *and* a glory terrestrial, a new heaven and a new earth, in [BOTH] which [*ἐν οἷς*, wherein, or in which — *which*, in plural] dwelleth righteousness, must, early in his learning, have come before him:—  
 "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the

fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him" (Ephes. i. 8-10). "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. i. 19, 20).

That some names, as being descriptive of that which is *essential*, are and must, in the nature of things, be *incommunicable* to any save Deity; and that others, descriptive of offices or works, or even of parts of character or attributes, may, in a secondary sense, be communicable, will not surprise us. Perhaps *name* would be the more accurate appellative for the former, and *title* for the latter; for, correctly, a name should describe its subject, and it alone; whereas a title has a more adjectival character, as being descriptive of a known subject, and frequently, therefore, shared by that subject in common with others. The Jews considered, correctly as to the fact, that the name of Jehovah, or LORD, was a name of essence, and incommunicable<sup>b</sup> to any other; and the facts as to the use of the name prove this (as we shall see), and prove the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth, too; for this name belongs to Him, as the Messiah prophesied of as both to come and suffer about the time that man crucified

<sup>b</sup> Many of the Jews went even further, for they considered that the "sacred name," "the Tetragrammaton" (i.e. *the four-lettered*) name, יהוה (which we render by Jehovah, or LORD), was not *communicable*, even by lip; i.e., that it could not be pronounced, if even known, by man. Many have stated this as their reason for not attempting to pronounce it when they read the Hebrew Scriptures, though others, who proceed not so far in their superstition, assign only the fear of violating the third commandment, by a too frequent use of that name, and they therefore substitute Adonai or Elohim for the name when it occurs; as if the sin of taking the name *in vain* was not in the irreverence of spirit in which a man might speak of the God of Israel, but in the empty or needless use of that one particular name under which he revealed Himself to Israel. That I have not overstated the superstitious (not reverential) feeling of *some* Jews, may be seen in "Histoire de l'établissement du Christianisme; tirée des seuls auteurs Juifs et Païens." Par M. Bullet. Paris, 1814.



Him, who is now the Lord Jesus. But of this more in its place; compare Zech. x. 12, 13; Matt. xxvi. 15 and xxvii. 3-10; also Zech. xiii. 6, 7; Matt. xxvi. 31; Isaiah vi. 6, 10; and John xii. 40, 41, as shewing that Jesus is Jehovah.

On the other hand, our Lord's own word will show us that the title "God" is not *always* a title of the Supreme Being. "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John x. 34—36).

Now, whether, or not, we understand this "calling of them gods, unto whom the word of God came," matters not for the argument: "the scripture cannot be broken," and the term "gods" is used, by our Lord Himself, concerning those to whom the word came.

The list of names might easily be given, and the distinctive peculiarities of each (as likely to have been felt by the believer) noticed; but this would be to anticipate: enough has been said to bring before the mind of any simple person the two thoughts, that names divine *are many*, and that they *vary* in their significancy.

It is this subject, however, into the details connected with which I desire to enter, persuaded that, blessed as are the vague thoughts which the Scripture reader feels to attach to these various names, yet much blessing is to be found in the clearing away the vagueness and obtaining the power of presenting our thoughts definitely with "Thus saith the Lord," or "It is written," as the known basis, the firm stones in the pavement, beneath our imaginings. It is not, however, as a teacher, that I would write; but rather I would seek, as being myself, on this subject, really an enquirer still, to hold that place while writing; the place of an enquirer with those who will enquire with me. And blessed is it to know the fulness of the field of revelation, the richness of the harvest, and *yet* know our liberty either to reap or glean

in it, under the hand of the Boaz to whom it belongs. No human heart or mind, though divinely fed and taught, *could*, surely, ever contain all the fulness of the testimony which the word of God presents as to our Lord: and yet it is the blessed privilege, of even the least of the saints, to glean their individual modicum, and to enjoy it, too, in the renewed affections they have received; and, conscious of their Lord's sympathy in their joy, to communicate the little they may have observed to their brethren. I would present, then, my own *observations* in the word, thankful, if I state the thoughts of my own mind instead of the truth of the word, to have this pointed out; and thankful if the perusal of this leads others to add fuller and more perfect instruction, or even only awakens, in some, enquiry upon subjects, surely blessed subjects in themselves, to which attention had not been awake.

---

I.

---

The divine name which meets us first in Scripture is that of "God:"—"In the beginning *God* created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. i. 1).

Without denying that the word אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*, GOD), may be significant (according to the meaning of the root from which it is and ought by us to be derived), of certain things which it is more particularly the pleasure of God to present, as connected with Himself, when He so names Himself,—I do question the propriety of deriving our first and leading thoughts about this, or any other divine name or title, from the root from which we suppose the word derived. The subject is too high, and we are too foolish for such a process; and, moreover, He who is the subject, in gracious consideration to us in our littleness, has made the understanding of His names and titles to hang upon faith in His word (which all His people have), and not on skill in the analysis of Hebrew words. Man loves to *define*; but He who made man, if He would teach man concerning Himself, gives, not a definition of His being, or various displays of Himself, but presents to man a record of His actions and doings, and they teach to faith its lessons. Let us, at all events,

1. *Elohim—God.*

411

examine the Scriptures first, even plain passages of Scripture, in the light of their contexts, before attempting to analyse the meaning of the name. There are passages enough for our instruction, if we find grace to be teachable and, in trust upon God, expect His Spirit's guidance.

The whole of the first chapter of Genesis speaks only of the title "God," or Elohim; so also the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd verses of chapter ii. In this portion we have the origin of the world traced up to Elohim; and we may say, boldly, "that which may be known of God is manifest to men; for God has shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even His eternal power and godhead*;" so that men are without excuse. But the portion which follows, shews us other truth; for in Gen. ii. 4, and onward, man is not looked at, as in the preceding portion, as merely a part of creation, but man's distinctive position, as a centre in a system, is the subject, his position and relationship in Eden with Elohim; and here a new and another name is added, and Jehovah-Elohim (יהוה אלהים) is the name in the Garden of Eden. It is no longer "Elohim," nor is it "Jehovah,"<sup>c</sup> but "Jehovah-Elohim," that the scene presents.

Much learning, and no little reading, would it require ere a simple mind could feel that it understood at all what the meaning of the words Elohim and Jehovah *might be*, according to the words whence they are respectively derived;—very little observation does it suppose to say, I see that Genesis i. 1, to Gen. ii. 3, present A Subject, A Part of which is taken up in Gen. ii. 4, and onwards in a *different* aspect; the shoot of this latter portion, found folded up in the former portion, is here A Subject, germinating, and has peculiarities distinctive to itself—it is man's portion and place in Eden, the centre of a

<sup>c</sup> This is to be observed, because in Exodus vi. 3, it is written, "but by my name of Jehovah was I not known to them," *i.e.* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To them he appeared by the name of God-Almighty (El-Shaddai). Myself, I cannot doubt that the display which reveals the compound name Jehovah-Elohim, is different from that which reveals the single name Jehovah.

system, as distinguished from the rest of creation; and if Elohim's glory is proclaimed by the six days' work, and the rest of the seventh day . . . Eden's tale, speaks forth something concerning Jehovah-Elohim, or LORD-God.

If any one doubt whether there is *weight* in this remark, let him consider what it is which his doubt implies? *To me* it seems to be nothing short of this,—a doubt of the accuracy and intelligence of the Spirit in the use of the language of man as his medium of presenting truth. I know the Spirit's accuracy and intelligence must be perfect, with them that are "perfect"—I observe that this use of names has varied. Is there not a reason? What is that reason? To any inquirer pausing at this step, I would suggest two questions for examination.

1st. What is the difference of Ps. xiv. and Ps. liii?

2nd. Why is it *the rule* in the Gospels to speak of "Jesus," and in the Epistles to call the same person "The Lord Jesus?" By *the rule* I mean the common and more frequent custom, one from which indeed the exceptions are comparatively few.

To my own mind, the invariable use and oft-repeated occurrence of "God" in the portion Gen. i. 1 to ii. 3, *i. e.* in the history of the creation or origination of the world, and of "Lord God" in Gen. ii. 4—25, *i. e.*, in the account of the owning and placing of man in his peculiar sphere in Eden, has great weight, as pointing to a *difference* between the two names.

To look, now, more closely at our subject, as presented in the former portion, the history of the creation or origination of the world—

1. ORIGINATION seems *the* peculiarity of the chapter. "By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water" (2 Pet. iii. 5). This passage is distinct. So, perhaps,<sup>d</sup>

<sup>d</sup> I say, *perhaps*, merely because the term rendered "world," *here* (*αἰών*, so also in chap. i. 2), has been understood by some to tie this passage down to dispensations; if so (as, however, the word "were made," *γεγονεῖναι*, might seem to contradict), this passage would then prove, not that the substance of the globe, with its heaven, but that the changes or dispensations upon it, were by the power of God; which, of course, is true also.

1. *Elohim—God.*

413

on the same subject, is, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb.xi. 3).

That which human wit could never ascertain with certainty [though one may have argued, from creation works, of One first great Cause of all, and written with the clearness of a Paley upon it, and sealed it with his blood, too, though he forgot not, ere he died, to pay his vow of a cock to Æsculapius, and though many may have had traditions of the same, the corrupted reports of that which was truth] God here reveals to us. And He reveals it, not as solving the riddle, “*Whence are we?*” but, in revealing part of His own glory, as the Creator, to us: that so, knowing what was done, and how it was done, we may see and learn about the God from whom the world proceeded, and consider whether or not we are to Himward now as His glory requires.

It is one thing to be “creating”; another to be blessing Abram, as he wandered a pilgrim and a stranger, seeking a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God, amid a people amongst whom he was as a sojourner; and it is a third thing to take up a people under circumstances of oppression and resourcelessness, and to make them an irresistible and successful people, under relationship to a self-existent Blessor, as was the picture of those whose exodus from Egypt, led to a march through a waste-howling wilderness, into a land flowing with milk and honey. And there were three names for these three displays: “Elohim” (God); “El Shaddai” (God Almighty); and “Jehovah” (LORD).

Surely the variety in the way pursued during the process of originating is observable:—

Ver. 1. “*God created* the heavens and the earth”; ver. 3. “*God said*, Let there be light”; and ver. 6. “Let there be a firmament,” etc.; and ver. 26. “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”

In all that *bursts into being*, while it bespeaks the

Eternal power<sup>e</sup> of its Originator, how do Wisdom and Beneficence likewise find their place of testimony? "He saw that it was good" (vers. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, and 25);—"And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. i. 31);—"And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Gen. ii. 2, 3);—bespeak his goodness; and the little phrase, "and it was so," after his "let there be," was spoken, presses home his power; and the testimony of Wisdom—is it not, as in other things, so in the marvellous oneness of the whole.

POWER IN ORIGINATING is the first thought<sup>f</sup> of this Elohim character, of whom are all things. But, then, not only was the plan, the counsel, the originating OF Him, but all also was *through* him likewise; for no power, save His own, was used, He subserved himself of none that we read of. His Spirit brooded on the face of the waters, and by His word *it was*—all was through him. And, further, it was all *for* Himself. "The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun; which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof" (Ps. xix. 1—6).

And, more than this, His sympathies were in His

<sup>e</sup> Power, as in, and from the fountain-spring, before the world was.

<sup>f</sup> Read Job xxxviii. and xxxix. to see how God uses mans' ignorance of the origin of things around him to convict of folly, and how the wisdom and goodness unsearchable of God are to be seen there.

works of creation; and he rested and blessed, and set apart on it, a season for His own honouring; when man, in its weekly return, remembering His joy, rest, and blessing of the earth, might rest in hallowed remembrance of it. “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.” Power, eternal power, displaying itself *wisely* towards the end sought and beneficently, combined with an exclusion of all power save itself, and having the honour of Him from whom the new scene flowed—is my thought of the name Elohim (God), as derived from this Scripture. I would presently show how this harmonises with one derivation of the word Elohim, though not the one most commonly, perhaps, adopted. But first I would desire to say a little upon the first verse, more in detail.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (verse 1).

How important a clue, context is in interpretation, may be seen by comparing, “In the beginning,” as here found, with the same expression in John i. 1. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” In Genesis, “*the beginning*” is limited by “creation of the heavens and earth;” in John there is no action or thing done to limit, and the “In the beginning” (of John i. 1), refers to the being of the Word. “In the beginning *was* the Word.” The same remark is confirmed by a comparison of Luke i. 2, “from the beginning,” with 1 John i. 1, “from the beginning,”—the beginning of Christ’s course *here below* in the former, but in the latter we are *out of time*, in eternity; out of humanity, in deity.

On the word “*God*” see below: only let me remark here, 1st, that the three persons in the godhead were all engaged in this, as in every other of their works. The plan and counsel may, in the Divine economy, be attributed to One Person; the agency to bring forth that counsel to another; and the accomplishment of the work be ascribed to the agency of the third. The eighth of Proverbs with John i. 3, “all things were made by,” (or rather *through* δι’ αὐτοῦ), refers it to God (even the

Father) as to counsel; the rest of John i. 3, "All things were made by Him: and without Him was not anything made that was made;" and Col. i. 16, "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him," attributes it to the second person in the Trinity, and other Scripture to the Holy Spirit; as says Job, "By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens" (Job xxvi. 13). "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Ps. xxxiii. 6). 2nd. And further, in answer to a question thus put to me, "Does the plural form of the word 'Elohim' (the Hebrew word rendered by God) mean the Trinity?" I would make a remark or two.

1. While there may be in Hebrew what is called "a plural of excellence,"<sup>g</sup> by which the use of a plural form

<sup>g</sup> As some may like to look at this "plural of excellence," I present the theory of it, as concisely as I can, from the writings of Moses Stuart. Hebrew Grammar, fourth edition. Oxford, Talboys, 1831, says, p. 155, "§ 437. [Number] (1), The Hebrews often employ nouns singular in a *collective* sense, especially national denominations; e.g., הַכְּנַעֲנִי, *the Canaanite*, i.e., the inhabitants of Canaan, etc.

"(2) For the sake of emphasis, the Hebrews commonly employed most of the words which signify *Lord*, *God*, etc., in the plural form, but with the sense of the singular. This is called the *pluralis excellentiæ*.

"*Examples*—אֲדֹנָי, *Lord*, in all the forms of the plural except אֲדֹנָי, *my masters* [as in Gen. xix. 2, and perhaps also xix. 18 the same, only in pause—Ed.]; the form אֱלֹהֵי is always used, with the sense of the singular, for *God*. (b) אֱלֹהִים, *God*, in all the forms of the plural. (c) בָּעַל, *lord*, in all its forms. (d) קָדוֹשׁ, *the most Holy One* (Hos. xii. 1; Prov. ix. 10; xxx. 3; Josh. xxiv. 19). (e) שֶׁדֵּי, *the Almighty*, is probably of the plural form, § 325, b. (f) תְּרַבִּים, *household god*, as singular (1 Sam. xix. 13, 16). (g) Occasionally, in a few other words, as Job xxxv. 10, 'God, עֹשֵׂי, *my Maker*'; (Eccl. xii. 1) 'בְּרָאִיךָ, *thy Creator*.' (See also Is. xxii. 11; xlii. 5; Ps. cxlix. 2; comp. § 484).



in connexion with a subject in the singular number would be justified, such a theory would not, in Gen. i., meet the difficulty. Because, while all the verbs, “created,” “moved on,” “said,” “saw,” “made,” etc., etc., are in the singular number, we have, “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness” (ver. 26), in the plural number. Now, instances cannot be adduced from Scripture, I think, that royalty or dignity was wont to express itself in the plural by such expressions as, “we will,” or “it is our pleasure that,” etc. The

---

“(3) The plural, especially in poetry, is not unfrequently used where we might expect the singular.

“E.g. Job vi. 3, ‘The sand יָמִים of the seas’; i.e., of the sea. Even where only *one* can possibly be meant, is this the case; as Judges xii. 7, he was buried, בְּעָרֵי, in the towns of Gilead;’ i.e., in a town. Gen. viii. 4, ‘the ark rested, בְּהַרְרֵי, on the mountains of Ararat,’ i.e., on the mountain; Job xxi. 32, קְבָרוֹת, the graves,’ i.e., the grave.”

The references in the above are these:—

1. “§ 325, *b*. [*Under unusual forms of the plural*], (*b*) e.g., חַלּוֹנֵי, Jer. xxii. 14. . . . which coincides ‘with the Chaldee and Syriac plurals.’ The word in Jer. xxii. 14, is rendered ‘my windows.’

2. “§ 484, [The article is headed, “Anomalies in the concord of verbs”—ED.] 1. As to number. The *pluralis excellentiæ* commonly, but not always, takes a verb in the singular. § 437, *b*.

“E.g. Gen. i. 1, בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים, God created; Ex. xxi. 29, בְּעָלָיו, his owner shall be put to death. But, in a few cases, the *pluralis excellentiæ* takes a verb in the *plural*; e.g., Gen. xx. 13; xxxi. 53; xxxv. 7; Ex. xxxii. 4, 8; 2 Sam. vii. 23.”

But he adds—

“§ 425. Plural nominatives of the feminine gender (which relate to *beasts* or *things*, and not to persons, frequently take a verb singular, whether it precedes or follows them.\*

“E.g., Ezek. xxvi. 2, נִשְׁבְּרָה דְלָתוֹת, broken is [are] the gates; Joel i. 20, בְּהִמּוֹת תִּעָרֵן, the beasts cries [cry]; Gen. xlix. 22; Jer. iv. 14; xlviii. 41; li. 29, 56; Ps. cxix. 98; lxxxvii. 3; Job xxvii. 20, etc.”

\* This construction of the feminine plural with a verb singular is technically called the *pluralis inhumanis*. (Compare, in Greek, the neuter plurals joined with the verbs singular.)

contrary, I think, is the case, *viz.*, dignity loved to individualise itself as much as possible. See Pharaoh in Egypt in the Book of Genesis, and the language of the heads of the Gentile image, in Daniel, or that of Cyrus, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23, and Ezra i. 1, 2, etc.

2. To suppose that the Trinity is so alluded to here, as to be legible without further Scripture, would be to underrate the value of Scripture, and to overrate the measure of illumination vouchsafed by the Spirit to the reader of Scripture. He, the Holy Ghost, had not here revealed that truth, neither was the time come to do so. On the other hand, though this blessing on the word to those that have it, is a secondary blessing, quite distinguishable, and to be kept distinct in our minds, from His grace in giving Scripture, for the written word is the alone perfect standard of truth,—it does seem to me,

3rd. That he so wrote as knowing what is now a matter of revelation to us; namely, that the persons in the Trinity were, though One, yet more than one; and all interested in Creation.

Passages might be adduced, shewing the term אלהים used as equivalent to Deity, as contrasted with humanity, or to other beings of a spiritual nature. “Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; *but* ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God’s: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring *it* unto me, and I will hear it” (Deut. i. 17). “There is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me . . . tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? *who* hath told it from that time? *have* not I the LORD? and *there is* no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside me” (Isa. xlv. 5 and 21). “Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; *I am* God, and *there is* none like me” (chap. xlvi. 9). So also I think, that passages may be adduced in which this term is predicated of each of the respective persons in the blessed Trinity. *E.g.* compare Psalm xlv. 7, which is quoted in Heb. i. 9. “God, thy God, anointed thee”; *i.e.* the Redeemer spoken of; also Psalm lxxviii. 56, with

1. *Elohim—God.*

419

1 Cor. x. 9., and Exodus vi.; and 2 Samuel xxiii. 2, with 3.

To some minds a reference to the New Testament uses of the term *God*, in the highest sense, may be a help here. It is used as of Deity,—(John iv. 24) “God is a Spirit.” And the Father is God,—(Ephes. i. 3) “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus:” the Son is God. (John i. 1), “the word was God:” and the Holy Ghost is God (Acts v. 3, 4). While, if I may with reverence say it, *officially* the Father is God, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Ghost is the Spirit—that is, God, Lord, and Spirit are the distinctive names, as connected with redemption to the church, of the three persons in the Godhead (see 1 Cor. viii. 6, and xii. 4).

This may be a good place for me to advertise the mere English reader, that in all the places in the English Bible where he finds “God,” he would *not*, if he turned to a Hebrew Bible, find the word I am now speaking of—*Elohim*. Part III. of the Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance will show him, page 1543:—

1st. That there are three, four, or more Hebrew words rendered “God;”<sup>h</sup> and

2ndly. That the idioms of the two languages so far differ, that there are expressions in English which contain the word *God*, the equivalent expressions to which do not contain any such word in Hebrew, e. g. “God forbid” in Hebrew חלילה *profanity* (*ad profana i. e. absit*) rendered “far be it” (Gen. xviii. 25: 1 Sam. ii. 30). Compare Rom. iii. 4. *μη γενουτο* (may it not be so) “God forbid!”

As to the word *Created*:

Observe: 1st, that it is *not* the order or circumstances of the heavens and the earth—but the heavens and the earth themselves, which were spoken of as created.

Secondly, in Hebrew there are three verbs which appear to be synonymous in meaning, 1. יצר *yatzahr*, 2. עשה *ahsah*, and this verb 3. ברא *barah*. That is, in some contexts they might be interchanged; but yet each has a meaning

<sup>h</sup> For the occurrences of *Elohim*, see page 79 “English Hebrew Concordance.” The other words may be considered hereafter.

distinctively peculiar to itself—1. would mean to make or “to mould like a potter,” 2. to make or “fashion,” as one’s beard in trimming, etc. 3. to make or “*create*.” This third verb is sometimes confounded with another in which the last letter is ך (signifying to cut out) and not ם. That there are *some* verbs the third or last letter of which may be ך or ם, I do not dispute, but I doubt whether this is the case here. Be this as it may in other occurrences of this verb ברא, —to state that in this passage it means *to cut out* (so implying that Gen. i. is not the account of *creation*, properly so called, but of a remodelling of an old thing) seems to me nonsense. It is contrary to Scriptures before adduced; contrary to the old Hebrew school of lexicography; and to my mind savours of a love of novelty worthy of the neologian German school whence it came. The Jews, in their new translation of Genesis, (sold at Bagsters’, Paternoster Row), have this note on the word in question: “*Create*, to produce something out of nothing.” If it ever means to “*cut*,” then Jos. xvii. 15, 18; Ezek. xxi. 19 (24); xxiii. 47, Piel, are the ensamples: and so our translators, perhaps, thought. But I see not why in Jos. xvii. 15, 18, “*cut down*” the wood should not be rendered “*make it* (your portion).” And Ezek. xxi. 19 (24), “*choose* thou a place, *choose* (it)”, I should read “*make*”: and Ezek. xxiii. 47, “the company [of the righteous men] shall stone them with stones and *dispatch* them [Query, why not *make* them (*scil.* for a booty and a spoil)?] with their swords.”

In the same way, I should have rendered 1 Sam. ii. 29, not “to *make* yourselves *fat*,” but “to make yourselves;” but this others must judge.

That there is peculiar *force* in the word ברא in many passages, seems to me obvious; take for instance Num. xvi. 30, “created a new thing,” the earth swallowing Korah, etc.; so, in Jer. xxxi. 22, “a woman compassing a man;” and Is. iv. 5, “a cloud and a smoke by day”; and Is. xli. 20, “trees in incongruous places”; and “a clean heart.” Ps. li. 10 (12).

Lastly. With regard to the meaning, by derivation from the root of the word Elohim; the clue to its

1. *Elohim* — *God*.

421

meaning being taken from the Scriptures, which relate, as I judge, to the scene chosen for its first display as to man, I have no difficulty in supposing it derived from אלה or אול bearing, as many derivatives do, from some such word a sense of Power.\*

\* Since writing the above, I see the Jews in their new translation of Genesis, give the same idea; (Gen.i. 1), אלהים God; אלה derived from אל power, comp. 2 Kings xxiv. 15, a *pluralis excellentiæ* applied to God as the concentration of all powers, "Omnipotent."

---

 THE CHRISTIAN'S PROSPECT.

"HE SHALL GO NO MORE OUT."—3. REV. 12.

To go no more out from the Lord,  
 No more from his presence depart,  
 What joy does the prospect afford,  
 To the grief-burden'd, sorrowing heart!  
 To be with the angels of light,  
 To share in their glories divine,  
 No more behold darkness or night!  
 This state, will it ever be mine?  
 To be changed from this body of death,  
 To be free from the power of sin,  
 Its load to escape from beneath,  
 And rise without blemish or stain,  
 To leave all corruption behind,  
 And faultless for ever to be,  
 What joy to the sin-opprest mind!  
 And is it in prospect for me?  
 No more to feel sickness or pain,  
 No more to know hunger, or cold,  
 Nor ever of thirst to complain,  
 Nor Sun's scorching beams to behold;  
 To be where the Lamb is the light,  
 And the glory of God shall be known,  
 With lustre transcendently bright,  
 Such bliss, will it e'er be my own?  
 The harp of my God in my hand,  
 His praises, for ever to sing,  
 Amongst the redeem'd ones to stand,  
 Where Jesus, my Saviour is King,  
 His face in the glory to see,  
 His name in my forehead to wear,  
 Is this mark of honour for me!  
 Shall I in these glories appear?  
 Yes, if I on Jesus rely;  
 The word has gone forth from my God,  
 Himself he can never deny,  
 But what he has said will make good;  
 That he who believeth shall live,  
 And share in these glories divine,  
 Then, if while I live, I believe,  
 How can they be other than mine?

N<sup>o</sup>. XXXVIII.

## SHILOH, BETH-SHEMESH, AND MIZPEH.

1 Sam. i—vii.

THERE are two truths which stand very prominently before us throughout the sacred volume. The one is that of God's fore-knowledge: and the other is, that in accomplishing his purposes, God always acts worthily of Himself. It is in the redemption, which is by Christ Jesus, that both these find their special and definite display. They are variously and amply illustrated, however, in other dealings of God with men; and amongst the rest, in the events detailed in the narrative before us.

It is in the redemption by Christ Jesus, we have said, that they are fully displayed. Many, indeed, seem to suppose, that redemption was an after-thought with God, —a resource to which he turned when Satan's cunning, and Adam's weakness, had spoiled the workmanship of His hands. But is this the light in which the subject is presented to us in the word of God? Nay, so far from this, we are told that the very end for which God created all things was, that he might be glorified in the church. "God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by (means of) the church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephes. iii. 9—11). So also as to the other truth. Where else can we learn the holiness and righteousness of God, as they are to be learned in the cross of Christ? Man was ruined. God was resolved to save. Grace must reign. But how? At the expense of righteousness? Nay, but "through righteousness!" Before man fell, God knew he would, and determined to make man's sin the occasion of unfolding depths of compassion and riches of grace in Himself, which otherwise must have been unmanifested and unknown. But is he, therefore, to be unrighteous? Can He make light of sin, as though there were little, if any, difference between sin and holi-

ness? God forbid. He is indeed gracious, and His grace must reign and triumph. But it must be in such a way as vindicates His glory and manifests His holiness; and hence the cross of Christ. There we behold grace indeed; but there we see holiness as well. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign [not at the expense of righteousness, but] *through righteousness*, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. v. 20, 21).

So in the narrative before us. Israel's condition was not only evil, it was desperate. The measure of their iniquity was full, and judgment was at the door. But before we hear a word of their wickedness, or of the judgment which was impending over them, we have the touching display of the fore-knowledge and grace of God. The instrument of deliverance is prepared. The despised and mis-judged Hannah, the woman of a sorrowful spirit, becomes the joyful mother of the one chosen and appointed of God to be the channel of deliverance and blessing to Israel, when the judgment shall have done its work. Samuel thus becomes to us the witness of sovereign grace—grace that foresaw the crisis, and provided for it; yea, grace that informs us of this provision, before the circumstances are recorded which made such a provision needful.

Still, God cannot act unworthily of Himself. He has resources in Himself to meet the need of His people, deeply as they may have fallen, widely as they may have departed from Him. But He cannot sanction their iniquity. He can forgive. He can restore. He can bring in richer and fuller blessing than that which, by their sin, they have forfeited. But He can neither sanction iniquity, nor wink at it. Before the blessing, which in His grace He has prepared, can be actually introduced, He must in His righteousness dissociate Himself from His people's sin. Grace may—shall—must—triumph; for God is grace. But in all this He will still manifest Himself to be of purer eyes than to behold evil—the One who cannot look on iniquity.

The condition of Israel at the period of our narrative was mournful in the extreme. It was not merely that

the nation was wicked; but the priesthood, which was God's ordinance for the blessing of His people, had become the instrument of corruption and apostasy. The house of God at Shiloh had become the scene, and its most solemn services the occasion, of wickedness sufficient to shock the conscience of the natural man. "Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord; for men abhorred the offering of the Lord." When that which bears the name of God becomes the instrument of corrupting others, we may be sure that the measure of man's iniquity is nearly full. But before the stroke of justice falls, due and repeated warning is administered. First, a man of God is sent to Eli, to declare to him the judgments which the wickedness of his sons is hastening on; and then the child Samuel is sent with the same terrible message. Chapter iv. presents to us the accomplishment of these threatenings.

"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Now, Israel, we are told, *went out* against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Eben-ezer. They did not wait to be attacked. Neither did they wait on God to learn whether He would have them attack the Philistines. They went out. Vain and self-confident, they judged themselves more than a match for their adversaries. But when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines; and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men. And what is the effect of this terrible discomfiture? Are they deeply humbled before God? Do they inquire of Him the cause of so solemn an event, and wait on Him for deliverance? Alas, no. The elders do indeed say, "Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines?" But, without waiting for an answer; without any searchings of heart or confessions of sin; yea, and without seeking counsel of God, they immediately add, "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." Serious, indeed, for our souls, are the lessons taught us here. Surely, too, it is for us to learn, that God's ordinances are not God himself. While He, the living God, is known, and



trusted in, and obeyed, His ordinances are channels of blessing to our souls. But when we have ceased to lean on Him, and to walk in His presence; when we have ceased to enjoy that living communion with God which alone can sustain us in conflict, and make us more than conquerors,—then how easily do we transfer to ordinances the confidence which we have ceased to place on God himself. Baptism, the Lord's Supper, ministry, the church—how all these are substituted in our own day for the present power of the living God! How is this? Ah! we may trust in these, make much of these, boast of these, and never have our consciences searched by the light of God's holy presence. We can go on with all these, and the heart all the while be unhumbled and unbroken; yea, our very diligence and zeal with regard to these, more completely blinding us to our real state before God, and puffing us up with pride and self-conceit. "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," is not more expressive of the last state of the professing body now on the earth, than it would have been of Israel's state when they carried the ark into the camp, and made the earth ring again with their shouts. But Israel had to find, by bitter experience, that they were "wretched, and miserable, and blind, and poor, and naked." Their sin made them so, to their shame, in the presence of their enemies.

Yes, God is not mocked. When his people have so far forgotten him as to use his name and ordinances for a sanction and a shelter to their iniquity, he shews that he has not forgotten what is due to the glory of his own holiness. He can suffer even his ordinances to be profaned, his sanctuary to be polluted, and his ark to go into the enemy's land, rather than have HIS HOLY NAME associated with his people's sin. The Philistines tremble at the first when they hear that the ark has come into the camp. But they have no need. He who dwelleth between the cherubims, whose name is Holy, has forsaken his chosen seat; and the ark has no power to defend itself, much less the people who, in their pride and iniquity, are putting their trust therein. "And the Philistines fought; and Israel was smitten, and they fled

every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain." How fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!

But we have not yet seen the worst. There are deeper and more solemn lessons for us still. Eli had not personally participated in the sin of his nation and his sons. He, himself, was evidently a godly man. With what earnestness did he entreat the child Samuel to keep back from him nothing that the Lord had spoken. How meekly did he bow when the fearful message was communicated to him. "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." How evidently paramount in his esteem was the glory of God and the honour of His house, when his soul was tested by the tidings brought him from the field of battle. "What is there done, my son?" was his question to the messenger. "Israel is fled before the Philistines." These are sad tidings for the high-priest and judge of Israel. "And there hath been also a great slaughter among the people." This is worse still. "And thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead." What must the aged patriarch have felt on hearing this! But all this he can bear. And is this not all? No; there is another announcement still. "And the ark of God is taken! And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward, by the side of the gate; and his neck brake, and he died; for he was an old man and heavy; and he had judged Israel forty years." Now, would any one suppose that this venerable man, to whom the ark of God was thus dear, was himself the cause of its capture and of Israel's overthrow? Yet it was even so. And this brings to view a most solemn principle of God's government of his people: viz., that he holds us responsible, not only for the sin we commit, but for the sin we *allow*. *To have fellowship with iniquity is to make ourselves chargeable therewith; and the more holy the individual is personally, the greater sanction is given to the dishonour of God's name.* It was not that Eli transgressed personally. Nor did he fail to reprove

and protest against the sin of his sons. He did remonstrate with them. "Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" Thus did Eli see the evil in his sons, point it out, rebuke it, and expostulate with them respecting it. But still he allowed it. His sons went on with their priestly ministration, and no hand of authority was stretched out by their father to prevent it. He did not, by discipline on them, dissociate himself, the priesthood, the name, and the people of God, from the iniquity of his sons. And so long as in false tenderness he held back from this, all that he did say was but so much solemn testimony against himself. How many in this day think to excuse themselves from the pain of actually separating from evil, by bearing testimony that it is evil, and protesting in word against it. But, surely, the word before us may shew, that the more we see of evil and speak of evil in those with whom we still hold fellowship as God's people, as "*priests to God*," the more evil and inexcusable is our own course demonstrated to be, in thus accrediting what we do so judge to be evil in the sight of God. "In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever FOR THE INIQUITY WHICH HE KNOWETH; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever." Awful words! And as awfully fulfilled! The Lord grant that they may sink deeply into our hearts.

"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged of the Lord." It was because Israel; yea, because Eli failed thus to give glory to God, that God had to vindicate His own glory as we have seen: to vindicate it, by delivering it into the enemy's hand.

“When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: so that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy’s hands. He gave His people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with His inheritance.” Such are the awful results of unjudged evil in the house, and among the people of God.

The triumph of the enemy was short-lived. They had no need to be afraid of the ark when polluted Israel brought it into the camp, as a sanction for their iniquities, and a substitute for the living God Himself. God saw it then to be for His glory, that the ark should pass into the hand of the Philistines, rather than it should remain with the guilty people, who abused the very fact of their possessing it, to strengthen their hands in evil. It was then a question between the Philistines and Israel, and Israel was in such a state morally, as that God could not own and defend them, and they were utterly discomfited, and the ark itself borne away in triumph by the enemy. But when the Philistines place the ark in the house of Dagon their god, and think to celebrate its capture as a victory of Dagon over the God of Israel, they find at once what a terrible thing it is to have God for our enemy. It is no longer a question between the Philistines and Israel, but between Dagon and the God of Israel. “Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. And He smote his enemies in the hinder part; He put them to a perpetual reproach.” Dagon is cast to the ground, and nothing left of him but his stump. The Philistines are smitten with a loathsome disease; and the ark is sent from one city to another by the affrighted inhabitants, till at last they agree to send it back to the land of Israel altogether! And how wonderful are God’s ways. The lords of the Philistines devise a mode of sending back the ark, by which they hope to ascertain whether it is really by it that their calamities have been occasioned. And God stoops to make manifest in this way His glory. The milch kine yoked by the Philistines to the new cart on which the

ark was placed, forget the very instincts of their nature, to bear to the land of Israel the sacred treasure with which they are charged. "And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home: and they laid the ark of the Lord upon the cart; and the coffer with the mice of gold, and the images of their emerods. And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh." Thus did God, *in the sight of the enemies*, vindicate His glory, and make manifest, that their victory over transgressing Israel was no victory over Him. And what grace to Israel! The ark, forfeited by their wickedness, is restored to them by the Philistines; with offerings, too, on their part, in acknowledgment that their capture of the ark had been to their own utter shame and discomfiture. Thus did God get glory to His own name, by the apparent temporary obscuring of His glory. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!"

We have now for a moment to inquire what was Israel's estimate of those ways on receiving back the ark of the Lord. "And they of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat-harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it." "They clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt-offering unto the Lord. And the Levites took down the ark of the Lord, and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone; and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the Lord." There was joy in the recovery of the ark, and acknowledgment in some sort of God's mercy in restoring it, in the sacrifices which they offered. But, alas! it was the superficial, carnal joy of hearts unbroken by a sense of sin. They were glad to have the ark back again; but their souls had not recognised the needs-be that had been occasioned by their sin for the capture and captivity of

the ark. They were not humbled and broken under a sense of their own sin, and of the holiness of that God with whom they had to do. This was soon made manifest. So little did they think of their own sin and shame, in having made it needful for God to "deliver his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand," that they could even use the opportunity afforded by the return of the ark, to gratify their unhallowed curiosity by looking into it! And the hand of God was upon them for this. "And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and three score and ten men: and the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter. And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? And to whom shall he go up from us?" Surely there had been enough in the battle of Aphek, with all its sorrowful results, to have led them to exclaim long ere this, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? But no; they had failed to learn this lesson, so wholesome and indispensable; and now they must learn it by experience still more bitter than any which had preceded it. Four and thirty thousand were all who fell in both the engagements recorded in chap. iv. Fifty thousand and seventy are smitten for their rashness and presumption, at Beth-shemesh! Now they are obliged to say, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" But, alas! they add—"and to whom shall he go up from us?" The heart, unhumbled by "grace reigning through righteousness," when it is at last compelled to bow to the majesty of God in holy judgment on evil, bows in the sullenness of despair; and just as the Philistines had sent the ark which afflicted them (as they thought) from city to city, so now the men of Beth-shemesh say, "to whom shall he go up from us?" And they sent to Kirjath-jearim; and the ark was taken there.

"There is forgiveness with thee [not that thou mayest be trifled with or despised, but] that thou mayest be *feared*." Solemn words! May they sink deep into our hearts. It is one thing to grasp at the thought of for-

*Shiloh, Beth-shemesh, and Mizpeh.*

431

givenness, and selfishly rejoice in it, merely as meeting our necessity, and rescuing us from death; another thing to enter into God's thoughts of what sin—*our sin*—is as revealed in the cross of Christ. The blessedness to us of being forgiven, and the freeness with which forgiveness is imparted, are both blessed subjects for meditation, and we may well rejoice—yea, and God would have us rejoice—in view of them. But still, unless we apprehend something of what it *cost* Jesus to accomplish our salvation, and of the necessity there was in the Divine glory, we being sinners, that Jesus should suffer what he did, our joy will be of little power and of short duration. *We must learn what sin is, and what God's estimate of it is too.* Failing to learn this *by faith* where God has fully revealed it, even in the cross of Christ (where we not only read the evil of sin, but see it entirely put away), we have to learn it by bitter experience under God's hand, extorting from us the exclamation, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? The Lord grant us in lowliness to bow to his hand as we see it stretched out against *our sin* on our Sin-bearer's head on the Cross.

The seventh chapter presents us with another scene. The ark abides twenty years at Kirjath-jearim, and the children of Israel lament after the Lord. Samuel urges on them the putting away the strange gods, and preparing their hearts unto the Lord. The children of Israel do so, and Samuel gathers the whole congregation to Mizpeh. There they fast and humble themselves before the Lord, and say, "We have sinned against the Lord." The Philistines hear that they are gathered together, and come up against them. Israel, no longer self-confident as at the beginning of chap. iv., are afraid of the Philistines, and entreat Samuel to pray for them. It is no longer the ark they trust in, but God, the living God, himself. "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines." Samuel takes a sucking lamb, and offers it for a burnt offering wholly to the Lord; he cries also to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord hears him. "And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering [the sweet savour

of the perfect work of Christ], the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel; but the Lord thundered with a great thunder that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel." In chap. iv. Israel, strong and self-confident and trusting ordinances, with unhumbled, unbroken hearts, making God's ordinances a sanction for their iniquity, are smitten before the Philistines, and the ark led captive into the enemy's land. In chap. vi., God, having vindicated his name against the Philistines, and brought back his ark in triumph to the land of Israel, the men of Beth-shemesh, glad to have the ark back again, but still unhumbled as to what had occasioned its capture, they have to learn in yet deeper trial what a holy Lord God they have to do with. In chap. vii., Israel, humbled, broken-hearted, confessing and putting away their iniquities, cry to the Lord, and to him only, in their distress. The sweet savour of the work of Jesus (typically) ascends up before God—the people say, "We have sinned"—and God, who has no controversy with those who are on their faces, trusting in Jesus, and crying to himself, thunders on the Philistines, and utterly discomfits them before Israel. Samuel, who had been raised up before the judgment descended on Eli and on Israel, takes his place as judge; and the Philistines came no more into the coasts of Israel; but the hand of the Lord is against them all the days of Samuel. "And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Ramah, for there was his house; and there he judged Israel, and there he built an altar unto the Lord." Blessed, peaceful close of a narrative, unfolding at its commencement, and in its course, such scenes of wickedness, of judgment and of sorrow. The Lord keep us, beloved, from the vain presumptuous confidence and false-heartedness evinced at Shiloh and at Aphek! May we be preserved also, from the unhumbled joy, even in the Lord's deliverance, which met its terrible rebuke at Beth-shemesh! And oh, that we may know, one and all



of us, the broken-heartedness, the confession, the putting away of evil, the fear and trembling, the crying to the Lord, and the presenting His perfect work in the sweet savour of it, which God so owned and blest at Mizpeh! May these holy, gracious lessons, not be lost upon us; but may our hearts know the power of them, by the Spirit, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

---

### THE TWO LAMECHS.

In Gen. iii. we see what man, *as a creature*, was. How powerless, foolish, without purpose! Man, the good,—yet but *a creature*, left to himself, where every blessing was his, did not stand,—would not hold his blessing. And now he is out of Eden and is there where sorrow and trial make his corrupted self to feel the fall.

In Gen. iv. we see the course of man on the earth.—Out of Eden, God would still have to do with man, fallen though he was: but Cain had a way of his own, would not bow to God, and became the seed of the *world*, driven out from the presence of the Lord upon earth. Corruption marks the whole.

In Gen. v. we see the people, among whom God set light, in the family of Seth.—But how suddenly does the bright flame which flickers in Enoch expire! What a light was this Enoch! He names his son, too, who died just before the deluge, Methuselah: (At) his death, He sends (it).

In the family of Cain there was a Lamech (Gen. iv. 18, 19), and in the family of Seth there was a Lamech (Gen. v. 25, and 1 Chr. i. 3, and Luke iii. 26). Both held the place of *last but one* in the pedigree. And both evinced the same folly; that of allowing *their own minds* to make *deductions* from the truth of God. The first argued, and gave it out as a testimony, that as God was pledged to vindicate the wilful murderer, Cain, sevenfold; He would vindicate him (an unwilling man slayer) seventy times seven. The second cheered his friends by a testimony that Noah, his son, whose name was well called (*Rest* or) NOAH, "Shall comfort *us* concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." But *they were all swept away in the flood*,—not when Noah comforted those to whom God had given sorrow, but—when God gave *rest* to Noah in the ark. In the infidel world there was a Lamech to reason upon Revelation; and in the Seth channel of light, there was a Lamech to do likewise; for man is ever a corrupter, and the corruption of religious man differs little from the corruption of irreligious man. Compare also Rom. i. 29—31, and 2 Tim. iii. 2—5.

May we take heed to the warning!

N<sub>o</sub>. XXXIX.PROPHECY, ISRAEL'S ENCOURAGEMENT TO  
BUILD THE TEMPLE. COMPARISON OF  
EZRA, HAGGAI, AND ZECHARIAH.

THE peculiarity of the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah is, that they present, especially, the Lord's recognition of a remnant in Judah, who were delivered from the Babylonish captivity, under Zerubbabel, and whose history is given in the early chapters of the book of Ezra,<sup>a</sup> so far as it is connected with these prophecies.

The decree of Cyrus which gave the occasion, and the authority, for this movement on the part of the Jews is thus strikingly given in the words of the Persian conqueror. "Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth: and he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you *of all his people?* his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is the God) which is in Jerusalem."

This decree became a test of the moral condition of the people: for it presented, in the foremost place, an object attractive only to the heart that was in alliance with God; and could therefore esteem its own ease and comfort as nothing in comparison with His glory. The language of the decree was, "Who is there among you

<sup>a</sup> It should be observed that the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah related only to the period of Zerubbabel's governorship; the history of which concludes with the account of the dedication of the house of God in the sixth chapter of Ezra according to the prediction of Zechariah; "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, his hands also shall finish it." The mission of Ezra, which is recorded in the seventh chapter, to the end, introduces us to a much later period;—perhaps near eighty years after the decree of Cyrus; and Nehemiah's coming to Jerusalem was a few years later. Malachi, presents us with the last inspired glimpse of this remnant which the Old Testament affords.

of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and *build the house of the Lord God of Israel*, which is in Jerusalem." This was the specific object for which deliverance was proclaimed for these captives:—and the result was, that the majority of the people preferred to remain in the ameliorated circumstances of an ignoble captivity in Babylon to going up to Jerusalem, for this at least, afforded them the means of present ease and comfort; which outweighed, in their esteem, all the honor and credit of building the house of God, amidst circumstances of trial and difficulty. This had its attraction only to the eye of faith. It required the spirit of Ezra to say, "Our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended *mercy* unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and *to repair the desolations* thereof, and to give us *a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.*" "*A wall in Judah and Jerusalem*" is estimated as a greater proof of God's mercy than a palace in Babylon.

The first movements of this remnant might be in weakness and indistinctness of apprehension regarding the purposes of the Lord;—as we see in the sorrow of the ancient men when the foundation of the house was laid—so inferior was it in their eyes to the glory of the former house:—nor did the joy of those that shouted arise from a clearer view of its being again the resting-place of the divine glory. But when the light of prophecy and divine revelation began to shed its beams upon their undertaking, it was found that this feeble movement was connected with all God's future purposes relating to Israel's final blessing and glory.

"Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? [says the Lord by the prophet] and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts. According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens,

and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."—Haggai, ii. 3—9.

There was one special object, which was to hold the foremost place in returning to the land of their fathers:—it was "to build the house of God at Jerusalem." This is alike marked in the decree which opened the door of their captivity, and in the prophecy which afterwards roused their spirit to the work. Upon this hung all their fortunes; and as it was prosecuted or neglected, their prosperity ebbed or flowed.

This is only in accordance with what Moses at the Red Sea, in prospect of Israel's entrance into Canaan, sang, "The Lord is my strength and my song, and He is become my salvation; He is my God, and *I will prepare him a habitation.*" And now, on their return from captivity, which was a chastisement for their sins, the Lord says, "*build the house*, and I will take pleasure in it." However, it was not on their immediate return from Babylon that the direct encouragement of prophecy was given. This came in several years after the opposition of their enemies had caused them to relinquish the work which the Spirit of the Lord had led them to commence, but which their faith was not sufficient to continue.

For it will be seen—as is ever the case—when the light of God shines in, that it was the failure of *faith*, and not the power of the enemy, that led to the discontinuance of this work, which had so directly His sanction.

His secret power had been with them, as captives in Babylon, when "they hanged their harps on the willows," and refused to sing "the Lord's song in a strange land." And it was his hand that led them forth on their return from captivity, however weak their condition, and contemptible their numbers. This was their strength. And it is said, on the passing of the decree, Ezra i. 5. "Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them *whose*

*spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem."*

It is only by the power of God that even his people's hearts are turned from the pursuit of their own selfish objects, to be occupied in that which He can take pleasure in. Every true revival, in every age, must be traced up to GOD, and not to man; and it should be ever remembered, that it was said of *Christians*, and *not of the world*, "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's."

As to this remnant, it may be said, the Word of the Lord was their guide in what they did, and they were marked by the spirit of dependence upon the Lord:—the invariable characteristics which accompany a work of God—though, as it afterwards appears, they failed to apprehend how fully His presence was with them in the work.

Their first act when they reached Jerusalem, all unprotected as they were, was to "set the altar upon his bases (for fear was upon them because, of the people of those countries), and they offered burnt-offerings thereon unto the Lord." "And they kept also the feast of tabernacles, *as it is written*, and they offered the daily burnt-offerings by number," etc. "Their altar [as one has said] was to them in the place of walls." And surely the presence of God was their only adequate protection; though with that they might well be raised above the reach of fear. As afterwards, it was said, though their circumstances were unchanged, "Be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: *for I am with you, saith the Lord.*"

Still, when opposition presented itself, their *faith* did not rise high enough. They refused, it is true, to be confederated in building with those (whatever their pretensions) who were the "adversaries of Judah and Benjamin;" but through fear of their power and opposition, the work at length was caused to cease. Their faith gave way under the storm, which the spirit of separation had raised. The same opposition was again

roused, when, fourteen years afterwards, the work was re-commenced; but then, though the power of their adversaries, and their hatred of the work was the same, yet the sense of the Lord's presence rose far higher. And they answered with *boldness* to the challenge of their enemies, "*We are THE SERVANTS OF THE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up!*" Here their commission is derived from its true source, and this was everything as to their success. Formerly their answer only recognised the authority of the king:—"Zerubbabel, and Joshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God: but we ourselves will build unto the Lord God of Israel, *as king Cyrus the king of Persia commanded us.*" Faith in *God's presence* will alone carry His people through the opposition which is at all times raised against the prosecution of *God's objects*.

But when faith fails, every thing as to the work of God fails. Our own objects may be pursued without it, but farewell to all those with which God can connect His name and power. The very end for which this remnant was delivered from Babylon, and brought to Jerusalem, was in abeyance when *the building of the house of God* ceased; and yet they could be occupied in "running every man to his own house," and were found dwelling in their ceiled houses, while the house of the Lord was lying waste. The enemy's opposition is always directed against what is done for the name of the Lord; and if this be set aside, we may occupy ourselves without hindrance in schemes and efforts for our own glory and ease. A few years were sufficient in these circumstances to cause this remnant practically to forget the very object for which they came out of Babylon; or at least, if they had other thoughts, to silence them with the ready answer, "*the time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.*"

But when, in the mercy of the Lord, the voice of the prophet is sent to rouse them from their lethargy, every excuse vanishes, and it is found that a lack of faith, and

*to build the Temple.*

439

the natural love of ease, were the real grounds of the cessation of the building, and the cause of their backwardness in resuming their labour. But the history does not present this. It only presents their adversaries, in the reign of Artaxerxes, causing them to cease by force and power (Ezra iv. 23). So important is it, for the practical use of Scripture, to connect the light of prophecy with the events narrated in the histories of the divine word. Prophecy generally brings out the *moral condition* of the people, and lays open the springs of action from which the events of history take their character and bearing in the sight of God.

In comparing these prophecies with the history (for our present object), the first in order is the book of Haggai. The characteristic difference between the two seems to be this, that Haggai encourages the people to build the temple, by the assurance of the Lord's presence with them in the work, and Zechariah unfolds what the glory of the house would be.

In Haggai the great principle enforced, and reiterated, is, that *God was with the people*, in the work. This was the whole secret of their strength. Every external circumstance seemed to contradict it; still, amidst all their weakness and apparent failing, the prophet is commanded to assure them of this truth, "I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts." Faith alone could discern this; but that is only in character with all the present dealings of the Lord with His people. By and by, it will be different; and it will be said, "*The Lord is known by the judgment which He executeth.*" But it is not so now. "We walk by *faith*, and *not* by sight." This is a universal principle, and has its special illustration in the path of a remnant seeking to walk with the Lord.

Their enemies might conclude that the work could not be of God, as there were no proofs of His manifested power; and their brethren in Babylon might conclude, in favour of their own wisdom in not quitting Babylon when they saw the work stopped by the adversaries, and the people discouraged at the thought of its further prosecution. But God has a lesson to teach His people, which faith only can learn, that "*it is not by might nor by*

*power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."* Where this is learned, it will be felt that it is better (in the language of men) to fail with God, than to succeed by ourselves. But, indeed, this is impossible. Those who are acting *for* God, and *with* God, however feebly, cannot fail. And this is the great lesson which Zechariah brings out. For it is manifestly the object of the prophecy, to show that the work of this poor remnant, in building the house, was so in a line with God's counsels, that he could connect it with all those blessed pictures of hope which gleam through the vista of prophecy, and point to the time when the enemies of Israel shall all be overthrown, and the glory of Messiah's reign will fill the whole earth with blessing, as well as Jerusalem with praise.

The moral lessons that are interwoven with the prophecies, both of Haggai and Zechariah, are most instructive, and are plainly not of secondary importance in the mind of the Lord.

Before encouragement is given in the work, the people are called to consider their ways (chap. i. ver. 5, and also ver. 7), and the Lord declares that a secret blight had been upon all their labours in consequence of their neglect of what he could take pleasure in, while they had been employing their efforts to promote their own ease and comfort. "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes....Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands" (chap. i. ver. 6, 9, 10, 11). This is no obsolete principle in the Lord's dealings. There is not a more effectual way of defeating our own ends than to be intent, only



*to build the Temple.*

441

upon our own personal comfort or advancement. While in the case of the Apostle Paul, who utterly lost *himself*, in his zeal for Christ and his service of the church, we see a man daily “comforted of God,” on his way; and living in the unclouded brightness of coming glory. In the midst of all his labours and weariness, he could give the exhortation, “Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

In the plenitude of power and wealth, and in the enjoyment of unbroken peace, Solomon laboured in building the house of the Lord at first; but now a poor remnant in poverty and weakness, and beset by the opposition of enemies, are called to engage in the same work. Nor is this without instruction. For it shows that their resources must alone be in God. The contrast of circumstances might be painful to their minds—as *now*, when contrasting the altered circumstances of labourers in the church of God with those of Apostolic days—but the Lord encourages their hearts by saying (ver. 8), “Go up to the mountain and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified.” While in chap. ii. ver. 3, he graciously takes notice of these thoughts of discouragement, and says, “Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts” (ver. 3, 4). And how graciously does he speak in like manner to the church at Philadelphia, in Rev. iii. 8—12, saying, “I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 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. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. 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."

Here the encouragement does not rest in the promise of *present help and sustainment*, but goes on to the final issues of all service in conjunction with the glory of the Lord. So in the prophecy of Haggai, the Lord does not allow the minds of the remnant to rest in the work in which they were engaged; though he was with them in it, and he delighted to own it; but he carries them forward to the time when his own power would give peace to Israel, and permanence to the house, and establishment to the glory. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." And again in ver. 21, 22, 23, "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts."

There is one point, in this encouragement to the remnant to build the house, which is deserving of special

*to build the Temple.*

443

notice. In addition to the inspiring word, "I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts;" there is the declaration (chap. ii. 5), "According to the word that I covenanted with you *when ye came out of Egypt*, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear not."

Amidst the most entirely altered circumstances, the presence of the Spirit with this remnant is associated with Israel's deliverance from Egypt, where "He rebuked the Red Sea, and it was dried up; and He led them through the depths, as through the wilderness."

There was nothing in their outward condition corresponding to the displays of His power in His first leading forth the chosen tribes; yet is He present in undiminished energy, and, according to all which He then displayed, were they now encouraged to count on his sufficiency for every emergency. There is no *cloud*, it is true, to guide them, nor *rod of power* to protect them, and to plague and overthrow their enemies; neither is there any *ark* to precede their march, *nor manna* to fall around their tents—these were all gone; they had been sinned away, and their absence told of departure from the Lord; yet in divine mercy the Spirit remained,—the same Spirit, and with the same power, that led them forth from Egypt! Outward tokens of strength there were none; but there was a secret divine energy in their midst revealed to faith, and available wherever there was faith, and a heart to care for the glory of the Lord. Outward tokens of strength could not be given where the purpose of the Lord was to witness against departure from Himself. In such a case the people must be "stripped of their ornaments," and God's holiness must be vindicated, even when He acts in grace. Moreover, in His dealing with a remnant in the midst of apostasy, His purpose is to draw out their faith; and consequently He takes away all that the flesh can rest upon, which has been the occasion of the evil he would correct.

With such, "the joy of the Lord is their strength;" and the acting of Ezra by "the river of Ahava," will give a sample of their ways: he says "Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of Him a right way for us,

and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God *is* upon all them for good that seek Him; but His power and His wrath *is* against all them that forsake Him. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and He was intreated of us" (Ezra viii. 21—23). This was like the proving of Gideon's army; for the Lord's ways are at all times equal; and it is His mercy, if He at any time makes the *external circumstances* of His people a test of faith, where the *power of holiness* has not been sufficient to keep out the spirit of the world.

If we for a moment think of the ulterior history of this remnant, and of the fate of the house which they builded, it seems wonderful that their work should be thus acknowledged of the Lord. But then, it was not what the work was in their hands, but what it would be in the hands of Him "whose name is the BRANCH:" for "HE shall build the temple of the Lord: even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne."

The Temple had been once builded, and the city had been once established, though both were now in ruins; and it was in the counsels of the Lord to build the house again, and to fill it with His glory; and to establish Jerusalem again, and to make her a joy and praise in the whole earth; and between these points in the Lord's counsels, this remnant is encouraged by the voice of prophecy to act. The *church*, also, has been *once* manifested on earth in grace; it has failed to maintain its position; but it is the final purpose of the Lord to exhibit it gathered in glory. Christians, *now*, like this remnant, live in the middle history; and what should be their aim? The counsel of the Lord is clear. The word of Haggai, by which the remnant of Israel was encouraged to build the house, is now incorporated with an epistle in the New Testament; and in Heb. xii. 26, 27, the word is addressed to us, "But now hath He promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing

of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

It is consequently of the last importance for us to ascertain, whether our efforts and aims are coincident with the purposes of the Lord. For if they are not, disappointment and failure *must*, in the very mercy of the Lord, be the issue. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The "more sure word of prophecy," is to us—as the prophet's to this remnant—"a light that shineth in a dark place." There may be said to be a "former and a latter glory" of *the church* as well as of *the temple*; though the one will be exhibited according to its character in heaven, while the other is displayed on earth.

In Zechariah, as in Haggai, the first note of the prophet's message is to call the minds of the remnant to a recognition of the hand of the Lord in their present ruin; while, at the same moment, he is commissioned to assure them of the unchangeableness of the divine counsels. These two things are invariably connected with every revival of the work of the Lord amongst His people.

Accordingly, chap. i. presents a review of the moral condition of Israel, and connects their present dispersion with the threatenings of the Lord by the former prophets; for though their fathers were gone, and the prophets did not live for ever, yet the words and statutes of the Lord, which He commanded by the former prophets, "*took hold of their fathers.*" They were not vain threats; though their fathers had said, "Let Him make speed, and hasten His work, that we may see it, and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!" So may it be said now, "*the day of the Lord will come* as a thief in the night," in spite of all the scornful questionings of "the last days," saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" His "words and statutes" *will "take hold"*; and men will be compelled to say, "Like as the Lord of Hosts thought to do unto us according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath He dealt with us!" In like manner also shall His word be accomplished concerning His poor remnant, "Yet setteth He

the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock. The righteous shall see it, and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth."

The vision of "the horses" among the "myrtle-trees," presents the condition of the whole earth as contemplated by the active intelligence of God; and shows that his heart is not *indifferent* to the report of the riders, that "*all the earth sitteth still and is at rest*;"—while Jerusalem, the city of his habitation, is desolate, and his people are in captivity and oppression amongst the heathen! Nothing can be more touching than the answer of the Lord to the cry of intercession on the part of the angel of the Lord, saying, "O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with *good words and comfortable words*. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, *I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease*: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith the Lord, *I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies*; my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem!" What a scene is here opened to the faith of this poor despised remnant! To the eye of man, everything betokened Israel's being forsaken by the Lord, while he had turned an unobstructed tide of prosperity on their oppressors. But "the Lord seeth not as man seeth." "*Zion* said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me"—but the affecting answer is, "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have *graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls* are continually before me." There is one who stands on the part of Israel, indicated here by the angel that intercedes, of whom it is said, "in all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in *his love* and in *his pity* he redeemed them;

and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." God's thoughts are not like man's thoughts: and mistake and discouragement always result from scanning His ways by the eye of sense. In the midst of Israel's deepest sorrow—and while the iron hand of Nebuchadnezzar held them fast in captivity, Jeremiah, the prophet of their calamity, is commanded to say, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, *thoughts of peace and not of evil*, to give you an expected end."

The instruments which he uses for the correction of His people do not enter into his counsels; but they are nevertheless subject to his control. Of the Assyrian he says, "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few" (Isaiah x. 5—7). Also ver. 12, "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." And again, ver. 24, 25, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction."

The deliverance and establishment of Israel which the prophet is commanded to announce, in verse 17, "Saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem" make way for the vision of the "*horns of the Gentiles*" (verse 18—21). It is necessary that these should be set aside, in order to the accomplishment of the promises of God concerning Israel's portion in the earth. The final blessing of Israel is incompatible with power remaining in the hands of their Gentile oppressors. And in this is

manifested the wonderful harmony and clearness of the great outline of prophecy, which relates to God's actings in the earth; and it shows the final pointing of the predictions by which this poor remnant were encouraged.

As in Haggai, the Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophet, could not stop short of the "shaking of the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land," and the shaking "of all nations," which Hebrews xii. shews to be yet future, though his present purpose was only to encourage them in the building of the house, which was so soon to be overthrown; so the same spirit in Zechariah necessarily predicts the "*fraying and casting out the horns of the Gentiles,*" when he speaks of God's final mercy to Israel, though his present purpose is only to shew them the glory of the house. For *this* is Zion's final position in the earth; "the *nation* and the *kingdom* that will not *serve thee shall perish*; yea, these nations shall be *utterly wasted.*" So also the whole of Isaiah lx. "The work of *righteousness* shall be peace, and the *effect* of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever!" In this brief but impressive vision, therefore, the four oppressive powers of the Gentiles are seen in their whole course as "*horns,*" and their destruction is shown, that the measuring line may again be "stretched forth upon Jerusalem." Thus, within the compass of these four verses, we find a summary of Daniel's vision of the "*four beasts,*" with their extinction, in order to the establishment of the Son of Man's kingdom; and also of *the image of Nebuchadnezzar*, whose smiting on the feet, with the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, is the token that "the God of heaven [is about to] set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed."

The second chapter but expands the promises of the "*measuring line,*" when the Lord shall inherit Judah, his portion in the Holy Land, and shall choose Jerusalem again. And O how expressive is that word with which the chapter closes! And how does it teach us, that "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation"! "Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for He is raised up out of His holy habitation!" Let the whole chapter be read, that the pleasant picture of hope may be before



the mind, with which the Lord strengthened the hearts of His poor remnant in their feebleness, while they were called to labour in building the house. And let not the hearts that may labour and sigh now over the church's desolations, forget what are the predictions of her glory. "We are saved by hope!" If in feebleness I care for Christ's church now, I am caring for that which engages the affections of the heart of Christ, and in which His glory shall soon "be made to centre." "Come hither (says the voice of prophecy), and I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife" (see Rev. xxi. 9, to the end).

Let it not be forgotten, that all this unfolding of the glory, when "the Lord is raised up out of his holy habitation," and "all flesh is commanded to be silent before Him," is connected with the poor movements of the remnant that came out of Babylon. But when we look at them in their weakness and reproach, and in the feebleness of their faith, and then consider that the temple they were now building was again to be overthrown by the Romans, and lie in ruins for so many ages, it seems hard to think that these were the means to the accomplishment of the magnificent heralding of the prophet! But the solution is easy. God "sees the end from the beginning;" and this poor movement was so in a line with His ultimate counsels, that he could spread out the whole panorama of Israel's glory before those connected with it, and use it for their present encouragement. Just as He can say now, when pointing to the resurrection-glory, "forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Chap. iii. gives a vivid and lovely picture of God's dealings in grace with a poor sinner through Christ; and as a *picture*, or an *illustration*, every feature of it is stamped with preciousness and beauty. But the immediate and proper object of the vision, is to display the way of the divine mercy to Israel. It shows the Lord's cleansing of Israel; and thus presents their moral preparation for the blessing, and for the sustainment of the glory, which is to be established among them by the Lord's presence in their midst. The means by which He will bring in the final blessing is, we know from

other Scriptures, by priesthood. As Aaron, in the type, was to bear the iniquity of the children of Israel, and they were to be accepted through him—so we have here Joshua, in his filthy garments, as the type of the moral condition of the people; as it is said in Haggai, “so is this people, and so is this nation before me; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is *unclean*.” But there is one to plead, in the presence of the Lord, for Joshua against Satan; and his “filthy garments” are taken from him, and he is “clothed with change of raiment;” and “a fair mitre is set on his head;” and the judgment of the Lord’s house, and the keeping of his courts, is promised on condition of obedience. But all this is only *the type* of *Israel’s* cleansing, as “a brand plucked out of the fire;” as is seen in the word of the Lord to Joshua, “I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment,” connected with verse 9, “For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes; behold I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, *and I will remove the iniquity of THAT LAND in one day.*”

But *the power* by which this is actually accomplished is seen in the declaration, “Behold, I will bring forth my servant, the *BRANCH*;” and the “stone that was laid before Joshua,” with “the seven eyes,” points to the foundation which God would lay in Zion, and marks out *the person* of Him on whom Israel’s and the church’s salvation and glory rest. “I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne . . . . a lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns and *seven eyes*, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth” (Rev. v. 6). When this “*stone*” is owned by Israel, and the engraving of “the seven eyes” upon it, is discerned to be the engraving of the Lord, “the iniquity of the land will be removed in one day.” Just as in Psalm cxviii, when the “stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner,” and is so discerned by Israel, the confession follows, “This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will be glad, and rejoice in it.” So

it is added, in the last verse of this chapter, "In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine, and under his fig-tree." Peace shall then be upon Israel.

After the cleansing of Israel, which makes Jerusalem the place of peace, and "a quiet habitation," through the presence of the Lord, the fourth chapter presents "the vision of the golden candlestick" and the "two olive trees," through which it is supplied with oil. This vision appears to be the presentation of Israel in the position of divine *testimony* and *order*, through the outpouring of the Spirit, in millennial times. There is a significance in this vision, indicated by the question of the angel, when it is first presented to the prophet: ver. 1, "What seest thou?" and in the subsequent enquiries of the prophet, as to its meaning in ver. 4: "What are these, my Lord?" and again, ver. 12: "I answered again, and said to him, What are these two olive branches?" etc. There is, also, to be noticed the way in which the vision is introduced: ver. 1, "The angel that talked with me came again, and *waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep.*" The same thing occurs in Jeremiah xxxi. 26, connected also with Israel's restoration under the hand of the Lord: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. *Upon this I awaked, and beheld, and my sleep was sweet unto me*" (Jer. xxxi. 23, 24, 25, 26).

In both these cases, the action seems to be expressive of what takes place with regard to the nation when the divine mercy is turned fully toward them. This accords with Daniel xii. 2: "Many of them that *sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,*" etc.; and also, with Isaiah xxvi. 19: "Thy dead men shall live, my dead body shall they arise, *awake* and sing ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew

is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

The answer to the prophet's question about the meaning of the candlestick and the two olive trees, as to its *present* force, is given in ver. 6: "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might nor by power, but *by my spirit saith the Lord of hosts.*" But its full bearing is alone seen in chap. vi. 9—15, in connexion with "the man whose name is the BRANCH;" and with Israel's position in the latter day. For the Spirit, even in his ulterior and most glorious actings in the latter day, is identified with the power which was working in the time of Zerubbabel; and the plummet in his hand was made effectual in the building of the house "*with these seven*; they are the eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the whole earth." Yet Jerusalem, in a fuller sense by far, is to become "the place of the throne of the Lord;" and "the man whose name is the RBANCH . . . . . even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory." And moreover, as the place of testimony, "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." In the vision of this fourth chapter, we see the beautiful order of this testimony, and the power by which it is to be sustained. It was "*not by might nor by power,*" that aught was accomplished at this time, when there was a danger of men's "despising the day of small things;" it will not be "*by might nor by power,*" but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts that Jerusalem's glory will be finally established, when her sons "shall be named the priests of the Lord, and men shall call them *the ministers of our God:*" "Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city: because the palaces shall be forsaken: the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field" (Isaiah xxxii. 13—16).

But when this is accomplished, the fulness of the

Spirit in testimony is connected with the two great offices of Christ—his *kingly* and *priestly* power and glory. As the great Melchizedec, he will sustain all the mediatorial blessings of Israel and the nations of that coming age. This seems to be presented especially in a fuller degree in chap. vi. ver. 12, 13.

In chap. iii. which presented Israel's cleansing, it was Joshua, *the priest alone*, like Aaron, clothed anew and a "fair *mitre* set upon his head." Here it is said, "Take silver and gold and make *crowns* and set them upon the head of Joshua [*still*] the son of Josedeck the high priest:" and the substantiation of all is presented in that which follows, "and speak *unto him*, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech. vi. 12, 13).

Christ is here seated on his throne, in Melchizedec glory; and "the counsel of peace between them both," seems to be, between *the king* and *the priest* now united in the person of him who is Israel's hope.

These two great offices, now attaching to the person of the Lord, I take to be the "two olive-trees," or "sons of oil," which supply the oil, as from its true source or fountain, to the golden candlestick, of which the Spirit is declared to be the power. But it is the Spirit *then* connected with the manifestation of this supreme exaltation of Christ as Israel's Messiah, as He is *now* the witness of His hidden glory to the church.

The connection of this with Rev. xi, in the testimony of the witnesses is interesting, inasmuch as the testimony of the witnesses is to the kingly and priestly rights of Christ, invaded by Anti-christ, and by his usurpations sought to be set aside. But in the book of Revelation this testimony is not in *order*, there are no "golden-pipes," etc., but merely "two olive-trees and two candlesticks which stand before the God of the earth."

The *sources* of the testimony are there, in the "olive-trees;" but it is not a testimony established in peace and

in glory, as in Zechariah, by the presence and glory of Him before whom all opposition must bow.

But all this it should be observed again is connected with Zerubbabel. The plummet in the hand of this weak man is the index to point the hearts of this poor remnant onward to all this glory ! “ Who hath despised the day of small things ? ”

Chap. v. seems to go back and to trace the progress of evil which will be the subject of judgment in the latter day. It appears to be a parenthetical interruption to bring in the moral character of that evil which is to be judged and set aside by the Lord's appearing, when “ He will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” The secret working and the disclosed character of the evil are indicated, by the closed-ephah and the building of it a house and its establishment on its own base in the land of Shinar. The mystery of iniquity must be closed in judgment before the glory of the Lord can be established in the earth.

Chapters vii. and viii. hang almost entirely upon the question of Sherezer and Regem-melech, “ Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself as I have done these so many years ? ” And through the seventh chapter, the Lord teaches them the moral judgment they should form of themselves, and shows them the path of blessing for their souls. *His* ways are brought before them, that they may learn in their circumstances to acknowledge His hand. In chap. viii., “ the fasts ” become *pleasant “ feasts ”* to Israel ; and, again, the glory of Jerusalem as a holy nation is portrayed to encourage their hearts ; and it concludes by the animating prediction, “ Thus saith the Lord of Hosts ; The fast of the fourth *month*, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts ; therefore love the truth and peace. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts ; *It shall yet come to pass*, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities : and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts : I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to

pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard *that God is with you.*" I do not pursue the comparison of this prophecy any further; as its bearing on the remnant, in the remainder of the book, is not apparent: and it has been questioned whether the remaining chapters are not rather the prophecies of *Jeremiah*, suggested by the quotation in Matt. xxi. 9, 10, which are from the eleventh chapter of Zechariah, 12th and 13th verses.

But how wonderful is it, and beyond all the poor thoughts of man, that the blessed and stupendous events of the full display of the Messiah's glory and Israel's blessing, should be brought to bear upon the despicable (in any other light) movements of these forlorn men, whose highest praise, almost, was that they had preferred Jerusalem in its ruins, to ease and comfort in Babylon, where God's Spirit, and God's Temple were not! "Who hath despised the day of small things?" How striking are the words of chap. viii. 9—12, to men in their circumstances, and how comforting to the heart of all who in their feebleness make the Lord's glory their aim. "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Let your hands be strong ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of Hosts was laid, that the temple might be built. . . . For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things" (chap. viii. 9, 12). Amongst many others, there is especially one practical lesson resulting from this comparison of the ways of the Lord; viz., that it is a point of the last importance to be able to recognise the present tokens of the Lord's hand in living power; and amidst our actual circumstances, at any given time, to be able to understand the leading of His Spirit.

This is essential, both for the effective service and for the quiet rest of soul of the servant of the Lord. For

456 *Israel's Encouragement to build the Temple.*

surely it is but the language of atheism to say, "God hath forsaken the earth;" or to question whether there is a present application of the exhortation, "Be ye not unwise, but *understanding what the will of the Lord is.*"

Many a cloud and perplexity may hang over the pathway of a saint, through not "walking in the light, as he is in the light;" and the dimming effect of present things on the spiritual sight may be to be deplored; still, nothing is more important to be maintained than the truth, "*the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.*"

It is no difficult thing for mere natural men to acknowledge God in *the past*, or to confess Him in *the future*, for this gives no trouble to conscience; but it is the part of faith and divine illumination alone to discern *the present* tokens of His hand. This can only result from present association with Him in His ways. The Jews could say, "We know that God spake unto *Moses*;" but of Christ, *present* with them, they added, "As for this fellow, we know not whence he is." So the woman of Samaria could say, in vagueness, "I know that Messiah *cometh*, which is called Christ; when He is *come*, He will tell us all things;" but it was the part of Christ to say to her, "I that speak unto thee *am He.*"

There is no doubt that the Lord acts in grace in leading His people far beyond the measure of their spiritual intelligence; still Abraham's communion with the Lord, who said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" is what His people should seek, rather than be contented with the position of Lot, a righteous man too, who only "vexed his righteous soul from day to day with the unlawful deeds of the wicked," but was a stranger to the counsels of the Lord. The secret spring of Israel's departure from the Lord in the wilderness is disclosed in the expression, "It is a people that do err in their heart, and they *have not known My ways.*" While in the history before us it was the discernment of the Lord's hand in their captivity, in the circumstances of a common exile, which marked and developed the remnant that were thus prepared to quit the place of their captivity, and to repair to Jerusalem, when the hour of their deliverance came.



N<sup>o</sup>. XL.

## JOSIAH AND JEHOIAKIM.

2 Kings xxii.; Jeremiah xxxvi.

IT was when Israel mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and misused His prophets, that the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy. Josiah and Jehoiakim reigned over Judah just before the Babylonish captivity. The judgments of God were at the door; and we have, in the history of these two kings, the "important contrast" in the way each received the testimony given to them. In Josiah we have the subjection of heart which God always honors; in Jehoiakim that insubjection which he always judges. The history of man proves, that, whether God speaks in the way of commandment, or in the way of threatening, or in mercy, that His words are despised. There are, indeed, many exceptions, as the case of Josiah, the inhabitants of Nineveh, etc.; but generally rebellion is the course he takes. This has been, from the beginning, continues to be so, and will continue so long as the god of this world blinds the minds of men. There is something deeply interesting in the whole of Josiah's reign; but especially so, when the message was conveyed to him that the Book of the Law was found in the House of the Lord. "Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law that he rent his clothes." His heart was not unmoved; he trembled at God's word. In that light, what were his circumstances? That law made manifest Israel's rebellion, brought to light their guilt, revealed the judgment of God against sin, and filled Josiah's heart with sadness. Whither could he flee for help? Only to God. And blessed it is, that when the heart is thus made truly sensible of its condition by seeing light in God's light, there is a refuge in God. "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared. . . . Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption." (Psalm cxxx. 4—7). Josiah sends to inquire of the Lord and receives this answer, "Thus saith the Lord, Behold

I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the Book which the king of Judah hath read . . . . But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, as touching the words which thou hast heard; Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord, Behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place." Such is the grace of our God! The bruised reed He will not break. He giveth grace to the humble, "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust!" Josiah might use the language of the Psalmist, "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings, and he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."

Painful, indeed, is the contrast in turning to the history of Josiah's son. Of him it may be said, "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, that trusted in the abundance of his riches and strengthened himself in his wickedness." The 36th chap. of Jeremiah opens with the goodness of God towards His poor rebellious people. He presses upon their attention the solemn condition they were in, causes a roll to be written containing all the words Jeremiah had spoken against Israel, saying, "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."

This roll of a book reaches the ears of Jehoiakim (21st verse). "So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber: and Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Now the king sat in the winter-house in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him.

And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words."

How solemn is all this, after seeing the tenderness of heart in Josiah. Jehoiakim rushes from the sound of God's word into the darkness of infidelity. He supposes to escape the judgment of God, by disbelieving the testimony concerning it. This is where Satan is fast leading the world into open rejection of the word of God. There may attend it what Jehoiakim realised. He was not afraid, nor rent his garments. "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Jehoiakim had quietness, but it was not that peace which Josiah knew, of condemnation put away, sins forgiven. There is a message for him. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah, He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him, and his seed, and his servants, for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not." Pride and unbelief shut out from all blessing, and leave their victims exposed to the wrath of God. "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (see Jer. xvii. 5—8). The only place of blessing is that Josiah took. There the Lord ceases to have a controversy. He knows the claims of His own truth. He will not relinquish them. "He has magnified His word above all His name." Saul sought to uphold his own integrity when the word of God was against him. His heart bowed not before the truth: the Lord cast him off. It is a vain thing to strive with God. May the Lord guard His children in this day of evil! Give us tenderness of heart to "*all*" his truth, so that we may hold our proper place of testimony for him. M.

## Nº. XLI.

## THE DELUGE.

## REASONS OF IT—ON EARTH, IN HEAVEN.

GOD made man *upright* and set him in Eden, as no angel was set in Heaven, as no other creature was set on earth—viz.: as the centre and head of a system; which, if not formed around him, was suited to him, and was given into his hand—he being made ruler over it. His tenure of it hung upon *obedience*; but upon an obedience which in no respect was onerous or burdensome; it was an obedience which did not claim from him deeds of arduous labour, or any service which supposed painful privation. Abstinence from one tree was the test of dependance: but this test was a constant challenge as to the uprightness of his mind, the affectionate repose in God of his heart;—and, really (though that is generally overlooked) involved in it the principle of *faith*; not of faith as now, in an unseen God, whom we in a world of confusion may own and trust to; but still of faith in God. For though all around bore witness to His beneficence and love, there was a warning and a prohibition upon one point, the reason of which Adam could not scan; it afforded to him the opportunity of showing the voluntariness of his subjection; and it would be the proof, if he did not so, that he not only forgot the claims of Divine glory to the obedience over every creature, but that he did not believe what God had said, “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” The prohibition was put in such form as to test his faith in God, and to prove whether or not he would count God to be true; and all that promised fair to be lying, if it came into collision with that word of God.

His failure we know: but it ought to be remembered what was the *first* mark of failure:—even his loose tenure of the word which God had spoken.

No violence from without could move him; nor was it thus he fell;—self-betrayal was his folly, as it has been,

*The Deluge.*

461

ever since, of every thing which God has since set up on the earth. The antediluvian world corrupted itself. Noah, to whose hand, on a new earth, the sword of government was entrusted, was disgracefully intoxicated in his own tent, and before his own children. The post-diluvian world built the tower of Babel from mistrust of its saviour God. Abram went down into Egypt and betrayed his Sarai; Israel danced before the golden calf; and how soon, after Pentecost, was it seen, that, while men slept instead of watching for their Lord's return, an enemy came and sowed tares. So it always has been, and will be. That which God sets up, however feeble it may seem, is invincible, unless self-betrayed. And more than this, pressure of circumstances from without, if the heart and inner man remain true to God, do but give emphasis and power to its allegiance to God, and make them manifest to all around; yea, even as the darkness around makes more striking the light with which it is contrasted. And is it not a privilege from God that, when He has declared Himself for us, He leaves us where we may declare ourselves *for* Him? So was it in Eden. But the subtle foe was there; enemy of God, and active assailant of every fair work of His. That *new*, that fair scene—testimony, as it was, for and of God, escaped not his notice. Garbled quoter of the Word he now is, and was then. What so fitted as the Word of God for his purpose? What less likely to arouse Eve's suspicions? but it was a garbled quotation. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was the word of the Lord God. All is yours, but sorrow and judgment rest on your eating of one tree. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" God has measured you a restricted portion, was that serpent's twisted version of it. Eve's reply, too, was no fair quotation. "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden [which was the tree of life], God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

This was her version. Her liberty had too forward a place, and there was surely laxity of spirit in the quotation altogether. Now the word, corrupted or diluted, cannot test the thoughts of the heart, and the notion gets before her of advancement. Poor thing! What reason had she yet had to trust to her own intelligence, to her own energy, purpose, or planning? What had she hitherto done for herself? What is a creature (because it is a creature) but a dependant? But laxity as to the word loosed the girdle of her mind; implicit subjection was not her object; and he who was fishing for her soul, stirred the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, and, deceived, she was beguiled. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Gen. iii. 6).

What is lust but the expression of independance upon God? Lust is grasping (unbidden of God) after any thing; whether the stirring of desire which leads to it is through flesh, the eye, or pride. Laxity as to the word left the heart and mind open to the adversary, and led Eve eventually into open rebellion against the God as to whose word she was careless.

No scripture seems to be better fitted to purge one's heart of all its natural self-confidence, than this chapter, Genesis iii. Or shall man, when fallen, have more purity of intelligence, love and purpose, than man unfallen had. If in Eden, man stood not against Satan, how can I, outside of Eden, sold under sin as I am in nature, justly count upon anything in myself? The folly and madness of so doing are apparent. But there is a rest for the weary and the lost, in that which was not shaken in Eden; even in that which found in the very ruin which man introduced into Eden, a scene in which it could unfold His own glory; I mean the mercy of God. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion: but more than this, He was even when creating the earth, preparing scenes in which, according to His own good pleasure,

*The Deluge.*

463

He would show forth mercy; and that Seed of the woman, first named on earth after the fall, was the one for whom this globe was made, in order that its heavens and earth might become parts of His glorious mediatorial kingdom. No creature could stand if out of God or independant of Him, and be blessed; this was one lesson taught by the fall; but brighter light gleamed and sparkled in the fall,—for then came there forth a testimony of *redemption*. God would become manifest in the flesh. The God-man would take up and redeem, from out of the fall, a people for God and Himself: the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Aye! the triumph of that blessed One shall be complete, and all headship shall be broken down before Him: none shall be allowed in the end, to walk abroad in heaven or on the earth, which bow not to His name.

Scene may follow scene, upon earth, showing the unmendableness of man. He goes from bad to worse; and the brighter the light, and the greater the privilege vouchsafed to him, the more vile does he show himself. But all the evil upon earth changes not, cannot change, God's pleasant purposes concerning His Son, manifest in the flesh, Lord of heaven and earth;—the one in whom it was purposed to set up in Him, and for Him, by the Spirit, a heaven and an earth, in which man should find perfect blessing: perfect blessing not out of God's presence nor with an occasional and transient visit, but centralised around Christ,—in the various circles of blessing ordained for that blessed time, and therein abide for ever. Man shall be blest, and permanently so; because He who is the Blesser then, able Centre for all God's counsels and plans, is God manifest in the flesh.

The mode chosen for the announcement of this truth is to be observed. “It” (the seed of the woman) “shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel,” was not a promise given to Adam or Eve, but an announcement, in their presence, to the serpent;—for *he* lay at the bottom of the mischief done; and the evil of the mischief was not chiefly in the marring of man as a vessel, but in the dishonor to Him whose workmanship man, the vessel marred, was. The gospel never will be seen clearly or

be held with full blessing, unless looked at in its native width and magnificence of scope. If we look at it merely as suiting ourselves, or fallen man, or the human race, we look not at its unity and greatness. These are found in it, when it is looked at as the developed action of the Father's counsel for the Son. *He* should be the one who, in defeating Satan and pouring contempt and shame on him, should pour forth the blessedness of a display of the character of God as the God of mercy and grace, such as never had been before,—such as it required a new sort of vessel to contain, namely poor sinners, plucked by the power of the quickening Spirit, from the ruins of the fall.

Wonderful as the excellency and beauty of all in Eden was,—great and glorious as were Adam's possessions there, man brought forth, with all his ruin and misery, out of Eden, something that was more glorious, wonderful, and precious, than all that he left behind. Aye! that predictive declaration about the Seed of the woman was a bright light,—the germ of all mediatorial glory in heaven and on the earth. Unfallen, with every blessing of Eden his, Adam was not so rich or richly blessed as he was afterwards, *if* that word was in his heart. He brought out of Eden *a word*, which when unfolded contains all that victory over Satan and his power which God has ordained for Christ,—a word, too, which is a sure prize to every one that receives it,—their security of being partakers in the blessings of His triumph.

And here, clearly, begins the trial of man in grace,—by the word of *grace*. It is important to remember, that God has not given up, as to man, his original relative position. He is God, and must be God; and if man is to be blessed by Him, man must be subject to Him, and be a receiver,—simply a receiver,—from Him. *How*, without impugment to His holiness, God can deal with a sinner *at all*, was still wrapped up in darkness; but to suppose any other fountain or source of blessing and benefit, besides God, is to deny his glory as God. Man may do it,—does so every day, under the delusion of the fall. “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” is still the delusion; and, until grace enters the heart, man not only accredits himself, though he is fallen, as being



*The Deluge.*

465

higher, wiser, and stronger, than he was when first created and unfallen, but also, he goes a step further, and assumes that he is as God,—having a spring inexhaustible in himself; yea, and that he it is who is to be the giver to God Almighty. Nothing but grace can open a man's eyes and deliver him from the delusion of the fall, and give him to own God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—in their proper place, as to counsel, salvation, and power;—nothing but grace can deliver us from our own delusive idol, self.

But man is out of Eden; and GRACE is the only thought consistent with God's plea for dealing with man or man's plea for approaching to God: the very fact of the continued existence of Adam was the proof of *grace* in God.

Let us now look at Gen. iv. and v. Short and concise history of man's conduct under the first display of grace! And here, as ever, man utterly fails. Yet, fail as he may, God changes not his counsel and plan about the mediatorial glory of redemption for his Son, and those that are his; for *He* had not failed; nor did the fresh proofs of the badness of that which the serpent had done induce the thought that, therefore, *he* should go unpunished. Surely, it was contrariwise; and, if man was allowed to develop and make manifest before all, in heaven and on earth, what the evil of the fall was, while God's patience was perfect,—[because, his power being perfect (and perfect, not only over all around, but perfect in self-possession too), He could wait—Wait, that man might hear of grace and live—Wait, that the real imbecility against Himself of the adversary might become the more evident;—] *still the counsel remained unchanged.*

No sooner is Adam out of Eden, than we read of the birth of children. The first-born, Eve, called Cain, saying, "I have gotten the man from the Lord." And did she really think that this was the Seed of the woman promised—that he was Cain indeed (a possession)? Bitter delusion, if so she thought. Bitter counterpart, out of Eden, of the same haste she had made in Eden. Cain, the bandyer of words with God;—Cain, the murderer;—Cain, whose hand, hot with a brother's blood, should

display the first sample of that death to which Eve had sold herself—What a possession was Cain! Righteous and true is the Lord in all his dealings; and his moral government often brings home first to the very bosom which carried forth seed prohibited to be sown, the harvest of its own folly. She had brought in death. The mother of death to her race, she should be the mother of the murderer, and should nourish and nurture in her own bosom the first murderer and the first victim of death! How must “*possession*” and “*a passing breath*,” the names of her two sons, have, oft, in after-times, recurred to the mother’s mind.

I do not say Satan is not to be traced in Gen. iv. Surely, to the eye of faith, he is seen there present,—lurking beneath the surface; but his power is not *the* thing which is sought to be illustrated, or which stands out in prominence in this portion. Neither, again, is the question at all about man’s circumstances;—that is settled,—he is *out* of Eden, and in the sweat of his brow has to eat bread. *The* point of instruction, of Gen. iv. as a whole, I conceive to be, *man*. How will man act, if left to himself, out of Eden? How will man there treat the long-suffering of God, who, waiting to be gracious, may still be manifesting his goodness? Alas! sad picture! we have that question answered here.

And, as in Eden, I see what the unfallen man is, as a *creature*, if left to himself; so here I see what the fallen creature’s course will be, while on earth, and allowed to abide there.

1. We have to notice the simple guidance of faith, and its contrast, the error of nature. The firstlings of the flock bespoke faith, or the apprehension of that which was now in the Divine mind, the basis of every man’s approach to him,—new as it might be to man; and the fruits of the earth, bloodless offering, though more venerable, told of a mind unguided by God, and left in nature’s darkness.

2.<sup>a</sup> It was the younger who was taken, the elder who was left, according to electing love.

<sup>a</sup> The expression, verse 3, “in process of time,” *lit.* “at the end of days,” is remarkable. Verse 8, “Cain talked with,” is rather, “Cain spake it to.”

*The Deluge.*

467

3. And this appears—"The Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering." "He had respect," *that* was the point: but then it says, "To Abel and his offering;" not to the offering of Abel and to himself. The person is set before the way of approach, that grace might have its mark on the page.

4. See the effect of God's judgment upon the heart of unrenewed man. "And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."

5. What gentle dealing on the Lord's part! what grace shown! if, haply, the wanderer might yet return; if, yet, the assurance that one way was open to him as to Abel, and to all, might win Cain into the path of blessing. But man, as man, has no heart for God, no will to bow to Him, and own his absolute dependance for every thing. The question is not, Has he a free will? but will the free-will of fallen man turn to God? That is the question.

6. We find he goes out—talks with Abel about it—and then murders him. Lawless putting forth of power this! even if he meant not that which would follow; and sad reason that which the Word of God (in 1 John chap. iii.) assigns for the deed; viz. because his own works were evil, and his brother's good. Affecting truth! but truth it is: there is nothing which more provokes enmity in the mind of fallen man, than a savour of godliness in another man.

7. "And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel, thy brother? And he said, I know not: *Am* I my brother's keeper?"

What gentleness on the Lord's part! what seeking after conscience! but conscience was seared; hard as the nether millstone. Alas! the folly of man's wisdom! With whom was this infuriate bandying words? Against whom was he restlessly throwing up the shoulder, as if He were unjustly assuming that he (Cain) had a duty to his brother? It was the Lord omniscient, almighty, who had made men to be helpers, the one to the other: who had, as yet, given the power of life and death over man to no one, and whose rights Cain had just infringed, assuming to himself the right to slay

Abel, because his works pleased God, as his own did not.

8. The judgment was just;—a curse, *from* the earth. But let it be observed, how this sentence upon Cain told of how precious, in God's sight, not only was the blood of the martyr Abel, but how precious was the earth still itself in his sight. For Adam's sin he had said (Gen. iii. 17, 18), "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." But now he says (chap. iv. 11), "Thou art cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth."

9. Cain fears for his own life, and turns to see what he can gain for himself. Fair subject he, in the school which Satan was conversant, and to which he alludes (Job ii. 4), "And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life."

Without deference to God; without one natural affection which will answer to that name *brother*; without a chord to respond and vibrate in unison with the heart of a father and mother, so bereaved and so afflicted, Cain has yet his fear for *himself*. And he turns, a suppliant, to the avenger of his brother's blood.

10. Touching occasion this for the Lord to show—how open His ear, how ready His hand to give freely! Cain is heard, and the much loved life is protected by a mark and a proclamation of the Lord. He gives to the unthankful and to the evil; causes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust—and is good to all His works.

But Cain was untouched by the goodness, and ver. 16 we read,—

11. "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord." Aye! the presence of the Lord suits not man when he is bent upon wickedness and self-will. But as it was the younger son who, having asked "for the portion of goods which falleth to me," ... "not many days

*The Deluge.*

469

after" . . . "gathered all together and took his journey into a far country"—so likewise, here it is written. "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord"—the action was his own. He went out thither, where his own way, —the way of Cain (Jude),—might be undisturbed.

Fallen human nature has a religiousness of its own as had Cain. Among the heathen, it is to be seen in full development. It will not bow to the living and true God, nor own His way of grace and mercy in Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent; it cannot bear his people; its pleasure leads it out from the divine presence, and there it gets a name on the earth.

12. Let us glance at the family of Cain.

His first-born he called *Enoch* [or dedicated]; built a city and named it after his son "Enoch." Was it like Absalom that he desired the name to be remembered? *Dedicated* to whom? for what? Whatever he thought, the city looks like an overt act of rebellion against the Lord, though a sorrowful confession of his own distaste to the fugitive wandering life to which he himself had been doomed.

If he thought that himself would become a settler, then he showed his insubjection to the sentence recorded against him. If he sought to make a name on the earth for his family, dwelling outside of the presence of the Lord (wanderer as himself might be), he was rearing a pillar out of God's presence, to make his family to be a testimony of his own discontentment in being a wanderer. But his family had a name on the earth; for the city was called by Enoch's name. How unlike the heavenly Enoch of the next chapter, who passed over the earth lightly, and left no record save a heavenly one behind him!

Next, we find in Cain's family, polygamy, "which was not so at the beginning" (Matt. xix. 8); as said our Lord. But, here (verse 19) we read, "Lamech took unto him two wives."

The name Lamech is said to signify *strong*. That he was a remarkable man, one greatly characterised in his place, day, and family, for *energy* and *wisdom* of a certain kind, cannot be doubted.

In one branch of his family, leaving the city, there was a son, who was the first ensample of a Nomad cattleholder; in another son was found the head of the science and art of music,—“the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.” His other wife’s children, too, were not without name; and one of them (Tubal-cain) was “an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron.”

Thus polygamy, character on the earth, and the arts and sciences, were found in Cain’s family.

Lastly, as was said (vol. ii. page 433) in the paper, entitled “The Two Lamechs,” this “*strong*” one knew how to subserve himself, in his day and generation, by a self-made application to himself of those parts of God’s former sayings to Cain, as might suit his own purpose.

Such was the family of Cain; a little *WORLD* (or *orderly system*) set up by man, in which to make himself happy without God, and out of God’s presence. Solemn thought! that reprieve of judgment should be frittered away in self-devised conceits and fading pleasures. Poor world! all its pleasures are but for a season; its day of reckoning is coming, and then where will be Cain’s family? Where will be those that have walked in *his way*?

If man is left to himself in the day of grace—*the world* is what is produced. Thus far as to chap. iv. 1—24.

A few words now on what follows.

As is the divine *way*,—the insignificant thing is spoken of first, and afterwards that which is of importance. Cain’s family is chronicled, and then comes Seth’s family—that is, the world first, and then the line of promise, blessing, and descent.

“And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.”

Cain was under sentence; and of his own accord he had “gone out from the presence of the Lord:” a new line is *placed* or *set* (Seth) in the place of Abel, who had been the representative of the household of faith. To Seth a son is born, and “then began men to call themselves by the name of the Lord”—so I read it:—that is,

*The Deluge.*

471

as Cain was recorded as remarkable for cities, arts, sciences, character, etc. etc. out of God's presence; so the family of Seth took up *this* as their distinctive mark, "*We are the Lord's.*" Sweet privilege for the meek and lowly *this*! But if it were done in pride of heart, it would be the harbinger of judgment. The Lord takes care to put in juxtaposition with this, "And Adam begat a son in *his own likeness, after his image,*" and he called his name Seth.

*The likeness and image* of fallen Adam clave, still, to those who on earth were the Lord's,—and were *his* line for blessing and for testimony. First, observe how far from brilliant, either as to the things of God, or the things of earth this line of Seth was. As to the earth, nothing glorious is recorded: no city was built and named; there was no bettering of the human race, by discoveries, inventions or the effort to strike out some new path or to bring in some new convenience or pleasure into the family. And this was no bad token for it either. For, *What is the power by which all these things are cultivated?* It is the knowledge of good and evil, which came with the fall,—and nothing else. Yes; men may hide their own shame, if they will; or, they may foam out their own shame, in witty inventions; but after all, where gat they this power, and, what in their present condition, does it speak? It was *stolen*, stolen under the suggestion of Satan, sacrilegiously stolen from God, against His orders. That God may have used witty inventions, as printing for the Bible, and ships, and railroads, etc., for the passage of his servants, is quite true; but they owe not their existence directly to Him; and, if flowing out of the knowledge of good and evil which marks Him, as He said, "they are become as one of us knowing good and evil" (Gen. iii.), they have flowed out, through that power, fraudulently and sacrilegiously stolen by man under Satan's guidance, from God. And what do they, in our present condition, bespeak? Of nothing but expediency to meet felt and confessed necessity. In Eden there was no necessity, and until the fall no expedient. The first thought of blending circumstances together so as to meet need which we read

of, is in Gen. iii.—“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”

And the second is like unto it, ch. iii. ver. 8. “And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.”

A cover from their own eyes and a covert from the presence of the Lord, was what in these two *expedients*, these two wise blendings of circumstances, they sought; and is not *a cover from our own eyes* and *a covert from the presence of the Lord* (something which, by darkening our minds, may make the sense of His presence less painful) to be seen, by faith, on all that man thus glories in—arts, sciences, etc. He seeks them *for himself*, he being in ruin, and without the manifested presence of God with him, as it was with Israel when it went up out of Egypt and passed through the Red Sea, tarried forty years in the wilderness, and then entered the land in triumph. In the new heavens, on the new earth, what will be the place such things will have? One need not ask—where God shall be all in all—they could not live.<sup>b</sup>

Down to verse 18, the birth, the living till marriage, the becoming parents, the living after that, the number of children and the deaths, is pretty much all that we read of.

The continuity of the line of blessing which would be found in *the Seed to come*; that was *the* great thing for man; though, to grace divine, every little circumstance of the people of His choice is dear; every hair numbered; every circumstance cared for; and precious in His sight the death of his saints. Still, though the Lord's people are not to be great in the earth in its things, it is, and ought to be, a most humbling thing to see how few of them attain to any place of distinction in Him or in His things. Six links in the pedigree and no

<sup>b</sup> To use such things *as are*, is our privilege, and that, without a question; for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof: to glory or take delight would be incompatible with *seeking, minding*, things above.



Enoch yet: none, as yet, of whom the Lord could speak as that they had found grace publicly to identify themselves with Him. I speak not now as to the question of standing in the line of testimony, or as to that of being individually blessed; but of this—why so many of those who are in the line of testimony, who are individually blessed, keep not practically their position of testimony, and the power of their blessing, so as to make it manifest to all? Why, alas, do so very few keep it at all, so as to be manifested to others, and to have their good works go before them? God is not unmindful of any work and labour of love for His name's sake; and that He loves to say the most He can for His servants, who can doubt? He made good the standing of Job before his friends, better than Job could; and how graciously, withal, does He make them taste the pre-eminency—they must be blessed through Job. He gives Job, too, a better character than he could give himself (see James v.11). And who can read the seventeenth chapter of John's gospel and not be astonished at the thoughts which the blessed Lord expressed to His Father about His poor feeble disciples. It is the mother's eye which makes the first-born babe so *peculiar* to her sight; it was faith-estimate of the people which made Balaam say such things about Israel (Num. xxiv.1—9); and it is the Lord's own heart makes him speak so of his disciples. There is no unwillingness in God to praise us—quite the contrary; but, as for us, there are fifty Lots for every one Abram. And who of us, judging the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, are walking in heavenly spiritual Nazariteship, as we should?

2ndly.—As to Enoch. His name signifies *dedicated*. If he was dedicated to the Lord of heaven, and for a testimony upon earth for Him, then his name was as well chosen as was that of the other Enoch in Cain's family, if *dedication* to human interests on the earth was that which he was meant for.

We may notice, as to this Enoch, the name of his son. Methuselah—“(At) his death (he) sends:” as if some great event were before his mind. And, as has been

observed, the death of Methuselah just preceded the deluge. Then observe the testimonial for Enoch. His excellency consisted not in deeds wrought or service (as man counts service) done; but he had chosen the better part—God was in all his thoughts, and his life told it—“He walked with God.” He walked with God! blessed privilege *open* to every member of the family, in the household of Faith, in every age—*enjoyed*, however, by but few. “He walked with God, and he was not, for God took him”; and, “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Heb. xi.5); and the testimony in Jude closes his history—“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (ver. 14, 15).

Brilliant exception to the rest of those whose honored place was in the line of testimony and of blessing before the deluge. How soon after Philadelphian praise and beauty does Laodicean failure and pride appear upon the stage; and how soon after Enoch does the night close in upon the antediluvian world. Indeed, it may be, that, like the testimony of Peter and John in Jerusalem, at Pentecost, Enoch was the token that evil had risen to its measured limit, and that judgment was at the very door: for oft, as has been remarked by others, a display of light and power are not the harbinger of blessing to that, before which they are set, but of judgment on it and of salvation to others.

Lamech, who—self-deceived and deceiving—prophesied smooth and soft things, (as has elsewhere been noted), was one sign of those last days. And who can read of his conduct in this respect, and think of the way in which, in our own day, the professing church is using prophetic Scriptures, and not tremble? If men will have “a rest” on this earth,—if they think to have glory, under the

*The Deluge.*

475

present heavens,—and the exaltation of man, as he now is,—they will find it in Babylon—the harlot and city; but all there is Godless, Christless, and without the Spirit; earthly, sensual and devilish.

This is not our rest; it is polluted. Noah's inheritance and prospects lay under another canopy, in another sphere altogether, to that which Lamech supposed: but Lamech's tone of speech and thought, though different from the overt wickedness, which is afterwards spoken of, chimed in with it; and tended to blunt the edge of the prophetic word of judgment coming. As one might have answered Noah, when he was a preacher of righteousness and busy preparing for judgment, "Nay, your own father and family correct your folly—hear what he said and how piously he spake." Infidelity does not always scoff openly. The *second* mark of the last days is recorded, chap. vi. 1, 2, "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they *were* fair; and they took them wives of all they chose."

The sons of God, were, I presume, those who called themselves by the name of the Lord, and the daughters of men were in Cain's family. And observe the corruption was *from within* the separated body. It is not said, "The sons of men took of the daughters of God"—but the reverse. It was God's witness which was betraying *itself*, was mixing the lines which God had separated. And what wonder, when a Lamech was the preacher? Earnestly did Paul warn upon this same subject (2 Cor. vi. 14—18). "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? 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 I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and

I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Alas! if I spake here my thought as to ourselves, it is this:—The world has too much hold over *us*, for us to see how much association with it we have. I condemn no one; I speak for myself and the church of God—the saints are not heavenly and divine in character as their Head would have them,—they are not, here below, like the widow that is desolate and trusts in God.

Thirdly, man had tampered with God's word; had trampled down, for the sake of indulging the lust of the eye and the flesh, the barriers which God had raised for His testimony upon earth. The next thing (and what wonder?) there is violence against his fellows: "the earth was *filled* with violence." When the people who are separated unto the Lord outwardly and in profession, become known on earth for their giants,—their mighty men, their men of renown,—it needs no great acquaintance with the human race, or with the Divine government, to be able to say that violence among men will soon plentifully show itself; and, then, judgment from the Lord will quickly follow. The boast of our day is not in height of stature or width of shoulder, but its boast and glorying is not in the Lord alone;—intellect is man's pride now. How perfect is the word of our God in warning as in guidance, and it has said, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited" (Jer. xvii. 5, 6). It is impossible to trust to man *and* the Lord. "No man *can* serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. vi. 24). And again, "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth

*The Deluge.*

477

me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord" (Jer. ix. 23, 24). See also the character of the king in Daniel xi.

The pride of man has *already* lifted him above family, title, and wealth, in this land and, in Europe, at least; but not above *intellect*. And when that comes to be honoured, as it will be ere long, with full homage, then will men's hearts be blinded *thoroughly* to every folly. Let the French revolution be heard, if men will not hear Scripture, and let the stupid follies of the age of *reason*, and its immediate connection with the reign of *terror* be thought of. No considerate mind can doubt that we are on the eve of most eventful times in the history of both Christendom and the world. The entire revolution of everything throughout Europe, which the last twenty-five years have brought, cannot be hid. What, then, are the saints of God about, and where are they? There is but one Power which can keep them free from other influence, and that is the Holy Ghost. Are they led by Him,—are they walking in Him,—or are they loose and lax in their walk, yielding now to one influence, and now to another, as it may chance to suit their convenience? Never, perhaps, was there a time when the value of a sure guide, a faithful *Eliezer* [*my God the helper*, which is not far from the idea which John xiv. and xvi. give us of the Spirit's gracious services] was needed. In our scenes at home, we have seen and been made to feel the value of One who can detect "angels of light" (falsely so called), and can unravel the mass of truth tangled with error. The Spirit of God knows all the land-marks of truth; can detect every shoal and sand-bank of error. What a blessed thing to have such a one for Guide in such a day as this!

May the saints of God humble themselves under Him, and He will enable them to see and understand far more of the written word than they now do, and give them more power, too, to use what they have. But let them get and keep themselves entirely separate from evil. Let "cease to do evil, learn to do good," be the guide of their lives.

*The Deluge.*

One word more. Not only is God's pleasant purpose about making the heavens and the earth to become scenes for the display of the glory of Christ, the ground (which never can be shaken) of all his dealings with the earth; but, it is just because that never can be given up, that there have been, from time to time, acts of judgment upon various generations of men. The accomplishment of that purpose, and the development of that plan of redemption-glory, supposed God to be present, dealing (more or less directly) with man, in testimony, until the time came which was fixed for the display of the glory. To give up the testimony would have been to have shut out man from the glory. But man is so base, that without a check the world would have destroyed itself and its inhabitants, and, so far as it could, it would have driven God from it. Upon this ground, the Divine government has from time to time interfered to keep evil in check, and make it possible for God to continue *dealing in grace*, and for man to continue where the long-suffering of God is salvation.

And thus, these solemn judgments, before which the heart quails, overwhelming as they are to a whole generation, speak in the language of heaven, not only judgment, but the fixity of the Divine purpose to bless, under Christ, the human race, both in heaven and on earth.

---

NOW UNTO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO KEEP YOU FROM FALLING, AND TO  
PRESENT YOU FAULTLESS BEFORE THE PRESENCE OF HIS GLORY  
WITH EXCEEDING JOY, TO THE ONLY WISE GOD OUR  
SAVIOUR, BE GLORY AND MAJESTY, DOMINION  
AND POWER, BOTH NOW AND EVER.  
AMEN.

Jude 24, 25.

---

END OF VOLUME II.