

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.

לא בחיל ולא בכח כי אִם־בְּרוּחַי

Zechariah iv. 6.

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CORRECTIONS.

THE reader is requested to make the following corrections in Vol. IV.—

Page 423, line 8 from bottom, *for* "Israel. That," *read* "Israel, that."

„ 427, „ 1 from top, *for* "spotless Lamb," *read* "the blood of the spotless Lamb."

„ 432, „ 3 from top, *for* "was a shadow," *read* "was there a shadow."

THE PRESENT TESTIMONY,

ETC., ETC.

Nº I.

1 CHRONICLES.

THE Books of Kings have given us the general and public history of God's government in Israel; and, from Rehoboam to Hezekiah, the history of the kings of *Israel*—a history in which the result of the fall of the kingly power is manifested in the presence of God's long-suffering. That which is said in these books respecting Judah, only extends to the connection of Judah with the house of Israel, during this period.

The Books of Chronicles give us the history of the same period under another aspect, i.e. that of blessing and of the grace of God; and, more particularly, they give us the history of the house of David, with respect to which this grace was manifested. We shall see this verified in a multitude of instances. These Books, written or drawn up after the captivity (see 1 Chron. vi. 15), preserve God's history of His people, recorded by the Holy Ghost, as He loved to remember it, exhibiting only such faults as require to be known in order to understand the instructions of His grace. He records, at the same time, the names of those who had gone through the trials mentioned in this history, without being blotted out of the Book. Here, indeed, it is but the outward figure of this; but, in fact, this is what we find here. All Israel is not there; but all are not Israel who are of Israel. At the same time the Spirit of God goes farther back, and gives us the genealogy, from Adam, of the generation blessed by grace according to the sovereignty of God, with that which belonged to it outwardly, or after the flesh. He puts into relief, sufficiently to make it

king of Egypt took possession of the land, and the iniquity of Jehoiakim, whom he made king in Jerusalem, was far from leading to restoration on God's part. One more powerful than the king of Egypt—a king by whom God would commence the dominion of the Gentiles—comes up against Jerusalem, and binds Jehoiakim in fetters, yet leaves him, after all, to end his reign and his life at Jerusalem. Three years after he carried away his son to Babylon. Zedekiah, whom this king had made to swear by the Lord—thus acknowledging the authority of that name over his conscience—more sinful in this respect, than Nebuchadnezzar, despises his oath and the name of the Lord; and, after an interval of fruitless resistance, in which he perseveres in spite of Jeremiah's testimony, he falls into the hands of the king of Babylon, who utterly destroys the city and the sanctuary; for both people and priests were thoroughly corrupted: they dishonoured the Lord and despised His prophets, till there was no remedy, and the land enjoyed her sabbaths.

Sad and solemn lesson of the sin and iniquity of man, and of the just judgment of God.

“ You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” But, in His judgments, God remembers mercy; and, in the counsels of His grace, He had already prepared, and even proclaimed by His prophets (and that by name) an instrument to give His people some respite. After the seventy years which Jeremiah had announced as the period of Judah's captivity, the Lord puts it into the heart of Cyrus to proclaim publicly that it was the Lord, the God of Heaven, who had given him all the kingdoms of the earth, and that He had charged him to build Him a house at Jerusalem. He invites the people of God to go thither, assuring them that the Lord their God will be with them.

Thus it is by mercy—but by a mercy which recognises that power has passed into the hands of the Gentiles—that the history of Israel's downfall concludes; the downfall of a people placed in the most favourable circumstances, so that God could say to them: “ What

2 Chronicles.

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could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?"—a people that had already been pardoned once; and who, after having allowed the ark of the Lord to fall into the enemy's hands, and after God had forsaken Shiloh, His habitation, had been re-established in blessing, but re-established in vain. The long-suffering of God, the restorations He had granted them, the establishment of the house of David in grace, all was fruitless. The vineyard, for they were men, brought forth wild grapes. Its walls were broken down; it had been laid waste. Jerusalem has ceased, for the present, to be the throne of the Lord; and government and power in the earth have been entrusted to the Gentiles.

 FRAGMENT.

The system which denies the existence of a responsible church, even from the Day of Pentecost, upon earth, because, according to the Divine counsels, the Church will not in truth be gathered together in one, save in the heavens, at the end, is false and absurd. 'Tis false; because Timothy had to be instructed how to conduct himself in the Church of God; certainly this referred not to the Church assembled in heaven. And the body of Christ increased (Eph. iv.) by joints and bands, etc.; and certainly this is not in heaven. 'Tis absurd; because no one dreams of corruption in the heavens; and the reasoning of every man of sense, and of the Bible, is occupied with the Church upon earth.

But, alas! the errors which crept in among true Christians (Gal. iv. 11 and 20) were such, that Paul, for a moment, stood in doubt of those who had adopted them. 'Tis true, also, that there is corruption *now* in the Church; for the sins and errors of the beginning have gone on augmenting, although God has often raised up in the midst thereof special light and testimony.

them the coming of Christ, and the presence of the Lord at a still future period. Chap. viii. of the same prophet connects these two things together, to encourage the people to walk uprightly; but it will be seen, in reading it, that the fulfilment is clearly marked as taking place at the end of the age; the rejection of Christ (chap. xi), becoming the occasion of the judgments that were to fall upon them, and to give occasion, in a still more striking manner, for that sovereign grace which will use the power of the rejected Messiah, for the deliverance of His people, when they are utterly ruined in consequence of their sin.

The prophecy of Malachi, which was uttered after this, declares and denounces the corruption already brought in, and the coming of the Lord in judgment.

To these remarks it may be added, that neither in Zechariah nor in Haggai, does the Lord call the people my people. It is said, prophetically, that this shall be the case in the time to come, in the latter days, when Christ shall come to establish His glory. But the judgment pronounced in Hosea has never been revoked, and there is not one expression used that could gainsay it.

The Book of Nehemiah gives us, then, the partial and outward re-establishment of the Jews in the land, without either the throne of God or the throne of David, while waiting for the manifestation of the Messiah, and His coming to seek for the fruit of so much grace; in a word, their restoration, in order that He may be presented to them. The people are provisionally in the land, on God's part, but under the power of the Gentiles who possess the throne.

FRAGMENT.

IF it be impossible to find anywhere the primitive position and pristine glory of the Church, if one seeks it in *form* as the dissenters have done; it is not impossible, if we seek it in principle, according to the obedience of faith, to withdraw from all the evil; for God is faithful, and faints not in His love towards those who seek Him.

Nº IV.

ESTHER.

THE Book of Nehemiah has shewn us the people reinstated in the land, but deprived of the presence of God, except as to general blessing, and unacknowledged by God as His people; so that, whatever time may elapse, this condition leads us morally up to the moment when the Messiah should be presented to seal up prophecy, to finish the transgression, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. That book gave us the last word—until the coming of Christ—of the history of Israel; and that, in grace and patience on God's part.

The Book of Esther shews us the position of Israel, or, to speak more accurately, the position of the Jews out of their own land, and looked at as under the hand of God, and as the objects of His care. That He still cared for them (which this book proves to us) when they no longer held any position owned of God, and had lost all title to His protection, is an extremely touching and important fact in the dealings of God. If, when His people are in such a state as this, God cannot reveal Himself to them—which is manifest—He yet continues to think of them. God reveals to us here, not an open interposition on His part in favour of His people, which could no longer take place, but that providential care which secured their existence and their preservation in the midst of their enemies. Those who were in danger were of the captivity of Judah (ii. 5, 6), and of those who had not returned to the land of Canaan. If this betrays a want of faith and energy on their part, and of affection for the house and city of God, we must see in it so much the greater proof of the absolute and sovereign goodness, the absolute and sovereign faithfulness of that God Himself.

We see, then, in this history, the secret and providential care that God takes of the Jews, when, although maintaining their position as Jews, they have entirely fallen from all outward relation to Him, are deprived of

No V.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE BOOK OF JOB.

I HAVE no idea that the uprightness of Job was mere natural uprightness. It was surely an uprightness which grace had wrought in Job's heart. It was an uprightness to which God Himself bore witness; first, by the pen of the historian in chap. i. 1; and then, in the most solemn direct statement of it, in proposing the case to Satan—"Hast thou considered *my servant* Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil." One special expression of this uprightness, noted by the Holy Spirit in chap. i., is his praying and sacrificing in verse 5 for his children; for Job said, "It may be, that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. *Thus did Job continually.*"

To accomplish the purposes of God's love to Job, He [*God*] *proposes to Satan* a question concerning him; and let me say here, I believe we often have vague and unworthy thoughts of God's ways in this. We speak of God permitting this and that, and, in one sense, it is well to speak thus. "God is not tempted with evil; neither (in this sense) tempteth He any man." So far, it is well to speak of Satan as the agent, and of God as permitting his operations. But if we get the idea of Satan's *originating* a plan of trial, as though He were the architect of the fortunes of God's people, and think of God as looking on, and permitting what has had its *origin* in Satan, we get wrong, and lose the comfort and strength of what God has revealed to us. Satan *originates* nothing. God has plans of discipline for His children, in the conducting of which He avails Himself of the malice and envy which ever exist in the heart of the enemy, who is ready *to do for his own wicked ends*, what God would have done for ends of holiness and love. It was not Satan who invented the thought of putting Job into the furnace, and asked permission of God to carry it into effect: it was God who

saw good for His own glory, and the deepening of His work of grace in Job, that he should be tried in the fire. *And HE SAID TO SATAN*, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" etc. The trial *originated* with God. God, who saw it needful for His child to be thus tried, proposed the case to Satan for his consideration!

Then there is another thing:—God's question with Job, was as to an undetected root of evil in his nature, which it needed the sifting of the enemy to bring to light. Satan's question with Job was, as to the reality—the genuineness of what God had wrought in Job. Satan said, "Self-interest was at the bottom": God said, "You may try, if you can get at it." God knew that there was a secret root of self-confidence which Satan's sifting would make manifest in the end to Job himself, the detection and cure of which would be the prelude to far fuller blessing which God had in store for His child. But with Satan, God vindicates Job. So long too as Satan's direct assaults, as the adversary—the oppressing adversary—are continued, God upholds His servant, and Satan gets no advantage. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." It was in this part of the trial that Job, through God's grace, earned the character he bears in God's record of him in the New Testament. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." When was this manifested?—After his failure and his restoration? No; there was no need for *patience* then. *It was while the secret root of evil was still undetected in his heart, and after he was put into Satan's sieve for the detection and cure of it*, that the grace was manifested, which God has been pleased to notice with such sweet words of approval in the New Testament.

As to what the root of evil was, that was brought to light in this devoted servant of God; chap. iii. 25, 26, makes this evident enough. It was not that he desired freedom from evil for himself and his children; it was not that he earnestly and anxiously sought it by prayer—real prayer to God. It was, that he thought his prayers—his solicitude—had made God his debtor, to preserve him from what he, notwithstanding, found coming upon him. It

was well to desire—well to seek—well to pray. But it was not well to reckon on his having desired, sought, prayed, as *the reason* why he should have the object of his heart. “I was not in safety (i. e., I was not careless and remiss); neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; YET trouble came.” Evidently he had trusted his anxiety, and all it led to, for preservation from that which he was anxious about? What did this betoken? That he had not learned to have entirely done with himself, and to rest in the full consciousness of God’s perfect love to a perfectly good-for-nothing sinner, as the infant rests on its mother’s bosom. Now God is glorified in our dread of evil—our desire to be kept from it—and prayer to Him that it may be so. But there is that which honours Him much more than this. “It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He giveth His beloved sleep.” And who are they, on whose lips we hear this sweet lullaby? They of whom Job was no doubt the type. The remnant of Israel, who connect in their own persons the two distinct histories of the *nation*—who for all these centuries have been at school to learn this lesson; and the *generation* that *shall yet be born*—the afflicted and poor people who shall trust in the name of the Lord, and over whom “God will rejoice with joy—silent in His love, joying over them with singing.” Think of the process through which they learn thus to rest in God’s love, while He is silent in His love over the one thus sleeping in His bosom.

I have spoken of the root of evil disclosed in chap. iii. 25, 26. But this was only *the root*. As the root may be concealed beneath the surface of the earth, and need warmth and moisture to cause it to put forth its latent properties, and these never be discernible till stem, blossom, and fruit exist, as well as the unseen root from which they spring; so in Job’s case. The state of soul expressed in those verses had *existed* in Job’s best and happiest days; but it needed all the deep sorrows that he passed through under the hand of God, by the agency of Satan, to make this manifest. The fruits we have in such passages as those which follow:—“God hath de-

livered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked. I was at ease, but He hath broken me asunder: He hath also taken me by my neck, and and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for His mark. His archers compass me round about, He cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; He poureth out my gall upon the ground. He breaketh me with breach upon breach, He runneth upon me like a giant. I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust. My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death; not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure" (xvi. 11—17). "He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes. I cry unto Thee, and Thou dost not hear me; I stand up, and Thou regardest me not; Thou art become cruel to me; with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me" (xxx. 19—21). "When I looked for good, then evil came unto me; and when I waited for light, there came darkness" (xxx. 26). See also the whole of chap. xxxi., especially verse 35—37, "Oh that one would hear me! behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written a book. Surely I would take it upon my shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me. I would declare unto Him the number of my steps; as a prince would I go near unto Him." What an attitude for mortal man to take with God!

And yet it must be remembered, that along with the above and many similar words that fell from Job's lips, there were others of a widely different character. The whole of chap. ix. is perhaps as beautiful and touching an expression of the state of a soul humbled and gracious through grace working in it, yet ignorant of redemption, as can anywhere be found.

But immediately after, as he continues his strain in chap. x., he begins to call God himself in question (see verses 1 to 8, or rather the whole of the chapter). The same admixture of good and evil is very observable in chap. xiii. The xxiii. chap., too, affords affecting proof of the confusion of Job's thoughts. The estimate he has of God's tenderness and condescension is wonderful; but he

talks of using it to come to his seat and argue with him (ver. 4 and 5, also 7). He is confident in his own integrity (11, 12); still he cannot find God, and knows it is vain to attempt to turn him. Altogether it is a wonderful chapter, and shows how God could say of Job, that he had spoken of Him the thing that was right, even while the great question between Him and Job was as to his judging God's ways, instead of bowing implicitly to God's judgment of him.

Then besides, Job was not what Satan had represented, nor had he done what Satan laid to his charge. Ch. xxviii. shows blessedly how Job was in the secret place of separation *from evil to God*, which Satan could neither see nor have access to. "Where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and *kept close from the fowls of the air.*" "God understandeth the place thereof," however, while "death and destruction have but heard the fame thereof with their ears." And what was this way of understanding—this place of wisdom? "And unto man he saith, Behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." In this place Job was hid. God himself had declared that he was a perfect man and upright, *fearing God, and eschewing evil.* Grace had *wrought* this in Job; but when wrought, *nature discerned, recognised, and relied upon* it; and all the trial through which he passed (whether direct from Satan's hand or through the accusations of his friends) demonstrated on the one hand the *reality of what grace had wrought*; but manifested, on the other, Job's *reliance on the fruits of grace*, instead of *utter self abasement*, and entire reliance *on the fountain of grace in God himself.* The controversy with his friends closes in chap. xxxi., where he indignantly repels all their accusations, and invokes the interposition of the Almighty, declaring his readiness as a prince to meet him, and declare to him the number of his steps.

Here God begins to act; first, in the ministration of Elihu (type of Christ in his humiliation); then speaking Himself immediately to Job. To Elihu Job makes no reply; he does not answer him as he had done the others.

After all the varied display in chaps. xxxviii. and xxxix.,

the Book of Job.

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of who He is that condescends thus to speak to Job out of the whirlwind, the Lord, in chap. xl., explicitly informs Job what the point of the controversy with him is. "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it." Satan misjudged Job, and God had made that manifest. Eliphaz and the others have falsely accused Job, and they are put to silence. Elihu has reasoned with him on God's behalf, urging the very thing now spoken to Job by God himself. But now he hears *God's own voice*, he can neither contend as he had done with the three, nor be silent as he had been before Elihu; he acknowledges his vileness, but so shrinks from the presence of Him whose interposition he had invoked, that he would gladly be excused any further conference. "Once have I spoken; but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." But Job cannot escape thus; he has called in question the rightness of God's ways, and called on God to clear them up, and terrible as is His voice now he does hear it, he must hear it to the end. Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said, "Gird up thy loins now like a man; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment—wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" Now this was the whole matter. Job's reliance on the fruits of grace, his hope to have been *because of these* preserved from evil (evil however which he still dreaded), betrayed him, when that evil had come upon him, into the disputing whether God had acted righteously in allowing all this to be. And now God meets him as above. And observe how He goes on to deal with him. It is the declaration of His own wondrous works, putting it to Job's conscience *where he must be* to have sat in judgment thus on God's ways, *not the explanation* of those ways, and his reasons for them, that we have in these chapters. If, as I suppose, the account of leviathan be a symbolic description of the power of him, in whose hands Job had been to be thus sifted, even here it is not the explaining to Job why or how it was he had been given into his hands; but the assertion of God's glory, as the Maker of this terrible one,

and Job is left to infer God's right to use the creature on his power as it pleases him. Be this as it may, however, this dealing of God was effectual. He entirely bows—he is willing to hear all God has to say to him—he takes unfeignedly the place of self-loathing and self-abhorrence; and he owns that he has uttered what he understood not, things too wonderful for him, which he knew not. The root of the evil having been thus laid bare, and Job having been brought to see and abhor himself in God's presence, instead of vindicating himself and calling God's ways in question, the controversy is at an end. God has no further question with him; and it becomes manifest that His only object, “the end of the Lord,” in raising this question with Job, was really that his servant might have greater blessing on a surer basis, and enjoyed with more quiet unquestioning confidence—confidence NOT that he had so prayed and sought, and that, therefore, God *must* answer—but that having been proved altogether vile—so vile as even to have condemned God, that he himself might be righteous; God was so good; His love and grace so perfect, as to have restored him twofold all that he had before; he could hold it now not on the tenure of his having so prayed that God must needs continue it to him, but that, being so vile and worthless, God had notwithstanding given all this. The knowledge of his own evil must have wrought two ways: first, should God take all away a second time he could not have a word to say; self-abhorrence has no complaints to make of any but self, least of all can it complain of God; secondly, if such vileness had not hindered God from giving, what should induce him to resume what he had bestowed.

FRAGMENT.

What is the state of things around us (called the Church), when it is compared with that which was displayed at first at Jerusalem; and what will be the result of it all in the day of the Lord's coming?

Nº VI.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND OF HEAVEN,—
THE CHURCH AND THE DISPENSATION.

THE expression the “kingdom of Heaven” is only found in St. Matthew; and when the Spirit of God would speak of what was already come to pass when Christ was on earth, He always changes the expression, and says “Kingdom of God;” thus in xii. 28. Never, on the other hand, do we find such an expression, as “for the Kingdom of Heaven is not meat and drink;” because although the Kingdom of Heaven is necessarily the Kingdom of God, the expression, *the Kingdom of Heaven* refers to an order of things in the dispensations of God, and contains an allusion, I doubt not, to Dan. vii. It is on this account that this expression occurs in St. Matthew, a gospel which constantly looks at things in a Jewish aspect, and which is peculiarly occupied in showing the accomplishment of the prophecies and promises made to the Jews. Hence it is always said, “the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” Jesus himself thus speaks, whilst it is said, “the Kingdom of God is among you”—for the King was there; but it was not the Kingdom of Heaven, so long as the King was upon earth. From the time of the exaltation of Jesus, this Kingdom of Heaven has taken a special character, by reason of the temporary rejection of the Jews; and it is this which is explained in the 13th chap. of St. Matthew, this rejection of the people having been stated at the end of the 12th chapter.

The rejection of Peter’s testimony, Acts iii., by the Jews postponed the times of refreshing, according to the counsels of God; but Peter’s word was, “Repent in order that the times of refreshing may come.”

It is not exact to speak of the Church as the Spiritual Kingdom. The saints are in subjection it is true: but Christ is never called the King of the Church; we come to the throne of the grace of God. There is one passage

66 *The Kingdom of God and of Heaven,—*

in the Revelation which might be cited,^a xv. 4, "King of Saints," but this passage is so uncertain that nothing can be founded thereon. That Christ exercises *royal* authority over the Church, is what can be sustained by not one passage of Scripture; and the instruction of Matt. xiii. makes this distinction important. The Church has no reference, no identity whatsoever with the kingdom, except that here below it exists in the field over which the authority of the kingdom is exercised. Hereafter she will reign with the Lord over the same field.

We often hear of corrupting the kingdom, of a pure kingdom—the kingdom become Babylon,—from those whose thoughts and phraseology are not subject to Scripture.

It is an evil to speak thus of the kingdom, as if it was a certain number of persons in such or such a state. The kingdom of heaven is a government, a reign; the King is there; His authority is there. He bears, for a long while, abuses in His kingdom; but His kingdom, His reign, cannot possibly be Babylon. Who would think of Christ being King in Babylon? True is it that the enemy acts in the kingdom whilst men sleep, because they are left there under responsibility; and this it is which makes so suitable the well-understood word *dispensation*, because the question is then only about man and his position, where God has placed him under responsibility: while the words *kingdom* and *reign* embrace also the government of the King, the sovereignty of God Himself. The kingdom was in the midst of the Pharisees, because Christ was there; the kingdom was at hand when the Apostles went forth in testimony in Israel (Matt. chap. x. 7.) The Church is never the Kingdom. The kingdom includes the King; and it is inaccurate to speak of the corruption of the kingdom. There are according to the sovereign counsels of God, certain scandals permitted in the kingdom; abuses which the King will remove at a later period, when He will take His great power and act as King. It is because, in truth, the principles of the

^a Griesbach absolutely rejects this reading, and substitutes King of *nations*.

kingdom are always the principles of God, that the Apostle can say, that the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and one can, for the same reason, preach the kingdom of God, although Satan may sow in the field, over which the kingdom extended. The Church, here below, can corrupt itself, because the flesh is found in those who compose it, although the chastenings and faithful grace of God may preserve it for the glory, into which neither flesh nor blood shall enter.

If, now, we turn to the church, it is indeed the body of Christ; but the word of God speaks of the church here below, and calls the assembly of believers here below *the church*, the *house of God*, in the which we have need of instruction how to behave, and wherein there is an energy of ministry by the which the body increases. I cannot give up this Scriptural application of the word because I see, on the other hand, that in the end the whole church will be gathered together on high by the faithful love of God. I consider it an evil thing to destroy the idea of an assembly here below, and of the responsibility of that assembly. If it be said, "But the body of Christ upon earth never has been really assembled here below; therefore there never has been a church upon earth, and there has never anywhere been seen upon earth an assembly which could be called, in the full and absolute sense of the term, the church or assembly of God"—I have nothing to say as to what man may call the full and absolute sense of the term; but for the Scriptural sense, which is much more important, there can be no doubt. For *the Lord added to the church* (not to a church) such as should be saved; and Timothy learnt how to conduct himself *in the church of the Living God*. For myself I am quite content with that which I find in the word. I would only remark, further, that it behoves us to be careful when speaking of such subjects as *the kingdom* or *the church* because of the place which Christ holds in relation to such.

Let us now speak of the term "the dispensation or economy" in which some find a difficulty. The word is simple enough, and signifies, in the original, *the administration*

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of a house; by extension, it designates the entire order of anything arranged by God, as when we say “animal economy,” “vegetable economy.” The two words of which it is compounded are *oikos* house, and *νέμω* to distribute, feed, etc.; and thus, in a house, there was an *economos* (steward) and *an economy*; a man who arranged, distributed, fed the family; and the order, as a whole thence resulting, was the *economy, the administration* of the house. Thus, when God has established a certain order of things on the earth, one is wont to call it, accurately enough as it seems to me, an economy. In Eph. i., the Spirit Himself uses it. It is possible that there is a slight shade between the Scripture and the conventional uses of this word; in general, the use of the word in Scripture is more closely connected with its original sense, and contains more the idea of an active administration. The word *dispensation* is often enough used in this sense, and has the same etymological signification; God *dispenses* His gifts.

In the conventional sense *economy* (or dispensation) is an order of things established by God: *the Jewish economy, the existing economy*, etc. But, up to the time of Christ's coming, these economies or dispensations are, as to their course, left to man and his responsibility, although God acts secretly to overrule all. See, for instance, how the Lord speaks of this dispensation; “the kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up he knew not how; for the earth bringeth forth of itself, first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear; but when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” As to all that appears to the eye, everything goes on without the intervention of Christ, from the seed-time to the harvest.

Well, the time which intervenes between seed-time and harvest, is what is ordinarily called *the present economy*. It may be called *the economy of the Church*, because it is the time during which the Church is called and subsists here below, in contrast with the Jews and the discipline of the law; and we see that although in truth God causes the wheat to ripen, in appearance He

leaves everything to its own course. Thus Satan could act in the midst of all this; man might sleep, and this state of things might become corrupted; and, in fact, it is corrupted, even as Israel also was corrupted; so also this economy, this order of things is in a fallen state.

According to 1 Tim. iv., and other Scriptures, the apostasy of this state of things has been partly spoken of. I do not press the use of the expression; but I would notice that in this connection there is not the same objection to be made, as when the word apostasy is applied to the kingdom.^b The kingdom includes the government itself, and the King and the harvest; while in ordinary parlance, the word *economy* does not present the same difficulty; the King puts an end to the existing dispensations, when he begins to reap in his kingdom.

We find the word in its primitive sense used by Paul of the ministry intrusted to him (Eph. iii. 2), "If ye have heard of the *dispensation* (*οἰκονομία*) of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward." Here we have the primitive sense of the word; it is used of a person to whom one has intrusted the administration of his house.

In the 1 Cor. ix. 16 and 17, the office of evangelist is the administration (*οἰκονομία*) dispensation committed to him. Clearly, here, as in the preceding passage (in Eph. iii. 2.) we have an idea quite distinct in its extent from that in which the word is commonly understood when used of the existing dispensation—that certainly was not committed to Paul's keeping. The Apostle used the word again in 1 Cor. iv. in a similar sense, applying it to his ministry.

The word says three things as to the existing economy.

First. By the existence and principles of this economy the world is placed in a new relationship toward God.

^b As to the evils introduced, it is worthy of notice, that it is in the Epistles called Catholic, and in that to Timothy, Epistles which are not addressed to Churches, that the Spirit of God speaks of these evils. These Epistles speak neither of the Churches nor of the Kingdom; a point of no little importance. The Apostles speak not of the Churches corrupting themselves, but of *a mystery of iniquity* which had begun to work, and which was not in such or such a Church.

The Gentiles are no longer “dogs under the table” in contrast with “the children.” It is the time of salvation for the Jew first, and after that for the Greek. Salvation is vouchsafed to the Gentiles: the fall of the Jews has been the reconciliation of the world. If the Church has not been faithful in acting according to that grace, in making it of avail to the poor world, so much the worse for her.

Secondly. Those who are called, but not elect, all the baptised, are placed in direct relationship with the Lord, and are responsible in general (I say in general, because the circumstances are various), for the privileges of Christianity. If those who really enjoyed these privileges have left to Satan the occasion of corrupting; or, if others have been able to enter by reason of the corruption which was already introduced, so much the worse for them and for the assembly. This is Christendom.

Thirdly. There is the body of Christ; those who are united to Him, who participate in His life, who will be saved in spite of all the difficulties they may encounter by the way.

The Gentiles have not, as a body, been grafted in. Those who believed stood by faith. Those who came in without real faith will be judged according to the privileges which they have abused; and, before the end, God will send the gospel of the kingdom, in order that the judgment may not take effect upon all, without a testimony having been rendered to that judgment.

I would remark, that the ways of God towards Israel, and towards the world, and the salvation of individuals, must be kept distinct. The three points above noticed, as connected with the dispensation, bring out that responsibility of *the Church* in which she has completely failed. She ought to have been *one*, in order that the world might believe: such she has not been. She ought to have been a testimony to all the nations: such a testimony she has not given. And, instead of being the source of blessing to the world, as she ought to have been, the world has been a source of evil to her; for here for *the Church*, properly speaking, for true Christians, Instead of being the light of the world, the Church has become, upon her own confession, the *invisible Church*.

On this account, alas! one can speak, correctly enough, of Christendom, and of the Gentiles grafted into the place of the Jews; because that which God had grafted into the place of Jewish branches, is become a worldly system; has failed in faithfulness; and is become, in the modern sense, Christendom; the little seed become a great tree, where the birds of the air make their nests.

Christians, at the commencement, were not faithful; the consequence has been that *the testimony* and *Christian profession*, as a whole, have been spoiled. If it were a question about the taste of wine, one bottle of the best wine put into a ton of water might, indeed, give occasion to many reasonings, as to whether or not there was there what we could call good wine. Those who love to drink such would not hesitate long in settling the question.

Some may separate from evil, and refuse to share the responsibility of the state of things which surrounds them; as for me, I bear the burden: yes, the burden of the responsibility of the Church here below; I speak not of unbelievers, nor of the members of the body of Christ; I speak of *the state of the Church*, nor do I speak merely of the unfaithfulness of the true members. The glory of Christ is not manifested. The Church does not shine before the world. The glory of Christ, is, as it were, concealed, trailed in the dust; the enemies triumph. The power of the enemy has been morally successful in the greater number of cases, as the enemies of Israel were successful when Israel was unfaithful; and there are not only individual unfaithfulnesses to deplore, but a state of things which dishonours God in the world. *The* question which lies at the bottom of the whole matter is the manifestation of the glory of Christ upon the earth by the Church. Was the Church responsible to manifest Christ's glory? Ought one to be ashamed if she has not done so? If NO is the answer, I am myself deceived; but if YES be the answer, the opposite system is profound iniquity, iniquity of which they that are in it are not conscious, I am persuaded; but which nevertheless is not the less iniquity, one which leaves the Church without a hope on the part of those who hold it.

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stock with that whereof in all our persons we are partakers, should be absolutely free from the contagion and guilt which, with it and by it, are communicated unto our persons from that common stock: unless it were so, there could be no undertaking in it for others, for it would not be able to answer for itself. But yet, in all these suppositions, no undertakings, no performance of duty in human nature could possibly yield that obedience unto God, or make that satisfaction for sin, whereon the deliverance of others might ensue unto the glory of the holiness, righteousness, and rule of God. In this state infinite wisdom interposed itself in the glorious ineffable contrivance of the *Person of Christ*, or of the divine nature in the eternal Son of God, and of ours in the same individual person. Otherwise this work could not be accomplished: at least, all other ways are hidden from the eyes of all living. This, therefore, is such an effect of divine wisdom, as will be the object of holy adoration and admiration unto eternity: but in this life, how little a portion it is we know of its excellency!"

COLOSSIANS I. 12—19.

GIVING thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 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. And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.

N^o VIII.

THE SON OF GOD.

“Received up into glory.”—1 Tim. iii. 16,

No. IV.

IN earlier days, the angels had desired to look into the things of Christ (1 Pet. i. 12). When these things themselves were manifested and accomplished, this desire was answered; for in the history, as we find it in the Evangelists, the angels are set to be eye-witnesses of that which they had thus long desired to look into. They are privileged to find their place and their enjoyment in the history of Christ, in “the mystery of godliness;” and to find it, just as, of old, they had found it in the sanctuary of God. In that sanctuary, all, it is true, was for the use and blessing of sinners. The altars, and the laver, and the mercy-seat, and all else, were provided for us. The action and the grace of the house of God were for sinners; but the cherubim gazed. They were set in that house to look at its deepest mysteries. And so, in the same condition, shall we find them, in the day of the great originals, or of the heavenly things themselves, when “God was manifest in the flesh.” For then, it is equally true, all was for the service and salvation of us sinners, or that God, so manifested, might be “preached unto the gentiles,” and “believed on in the world;” but still all was, as surely, for this end, that He might be “seen of angels.”

Thus they took the same place in the sanctuary of old, and in the great mystery itself. They gazed—they looked—they were eye-witnesses—And further, the sight they took of the mystery was of the same intense and interested character, as the cherubim had before expressed in the holy of holies. “And the cherubim spread their wings on high, and covered with their wings over the mercy-seat, with their faces one to another, even to the

exaltation above the whole creation of God, and above every name that is or can be named."

He was received up with the unspeakable love, and with the boundless unmeasured acceptance of God the Father, as He had wrought out and accomplished the purpose of His grace in the redemption of sinners.

He was received up in triumph, having led captivity captive, and spoiled principalities and powers—and there He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, with all power given to Him in heaven and on earth.

He was received up as the head of His body, the Church, so that out of the fulness of the Godhead which dwelleth in Him bodily, it "increaseth with the increase of God," through the Holy Ghost given to us.

He was received up as into a temple, there to appear in the presence of God for us, there to sit as the Minister of the true Tabernacle, there to make continual intercession for us, and in this and in like ways of grace to serve in His body before the throne.

He was received up as our forerunner, as into the Father's house, there to prepare mansions for the children, that where He is, there they may be also.

And further, as He sat down in heaven, He sat down as an expectant. He waits to come forth to meet His saints in the air that they may be with Him for ever. He waits till He is sent to bring times of refreshing to the earth again by His own presence. And He waits till His enemies be made His footstool.

Cold is the affection, and small the energy; but in principle I know nothing at all worthy of such visions of faith, but that spirit of *devotedness* that can say with Paul, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound," and that spirit of *desire* which looks after Him still, and says, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Beloved, our God has joined Himself thus by links which never can be broken, which His own delight and glory in them, as well as His counsel and strength, will secure for ever. These links we have gazed at, mysterious and precious as they are. Himself has formed them, yea Himself constitutes them, faith understands them, and

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on the Rock of Ages the poor believing sinner rests, and rests in peace and safety.

I remember the day when David brought up the ark from Baalah of Judah, how he did so unadvisedly, and sorrow and evil rebuked him for it. That unadvisedness, that carelessness of his, came from want of communion with the Lord. Had he been in spirit more in communion, he would not so have erred. On that great occasion he listened to nature. Joy attended it; for his conscience did not upbraid him. It was not profaneness but carelessness. And much of this may be betrayed by others of us, who are little indeed in other excellencies of David.

If any unadvised words in these meditations have offended the simplest soul, which, apart from the reasoning and liberty of the flesh, seeks Jesus in His person, and offices, and work, I am sorry. But the liberty of the mere mind of man is to be rebuked, though found in the saint. Faith owns the same Blessed One from the manger to the Cross, from the Cross through the grave and gate of death, in resurrection, and up to the highest heavens. The only begotten Son who lay in the bosom of the Father, God and yet with God, is known, by faith, in Jesus of Nazareth, having taken part of flesh and blood with the children, as kinsman of the seed of Abraham. Faith tracks this Blessed One on earth, but discerns the full unsullied glory that was His all the while. Faith further watches and follows the life He led here, in sorrow, rejection, temptation, but sees it all passed in a spirit of faith and dependence, answered by the supports and consolations of God. Faith understands the end of that life, in the death and woe unutterable of the cursed tree. And faith ascends with the same Blessed One into heaven, and traces His present life there until He come again.

With my whole soul, I say, May these meditations help to make these objects of faith a little nearer and more real to us! They will be worthless, if they tend

not to glorify Him in our thoughts, to give Him, with a fresh pressure, beloved, to our hearts.

“Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!”

May that be the breathing of our souls till we see Him!
Amen.

“THOU WILT SHOW ME THE PATH OF LIFE; IN
THY PRESENCE IS FULNESS OF JOY; AT THY RIGHT
HAND, THERE ARE PLEASURES FOR EVERMORE.”

ZECHARIAH XIII.

IN that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: but he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God.!

N° IX.

THOUGHTS ON THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER OF
ROMANS, AND ON THE RESPONSIBILITY
OF THE CHURCH.

THERE are several subjects of general interest to Christians, which it might be well to examine carefully. Two more especially present themselves at this time; the one is the existence of the Church on earth, and the sense in which it may be said to be responsible for the state in which it now is, though others have been the chief means of bringing it to that state. The other is the explanation and application of the eleventh of Romans.

Before, however, entering on the subjects themselves, I would call the attention of my reader to one point, viz., that these are subjects neither of secondary importance nor of slight differences of opinion, as some would have us to believe; but subjects of the utmost moment; subjects which involve the questions of the character of our relationship with Christ, and of the responsibility of Christians with regard to our actual state; questions, I repeat it, of the most solemn nature, and which ought to interest every soul and involve the glory of Christ himself.

It has, indeed, been objected by some, that we had better not waste our time upon such questions, as being but questions of second-rate importance. But let us not be deceived. These are not secondary questions: I repeat it again. Is the existence of the Church upon earth, and our responsibility, in relationship with its existence, a matter of second-rate importance? If we must have controversy, I bless God that we have so fundamental a question to consider, and also that that which sometimes produces painful separations among Christians is by no

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means a slight difference of opinion;—but the denial of the existence, and the responsibility of the Church of God upon earth. That the source of divisions will be found to be there, I have the most profound conviction. God will not have the truth upon this subject set aside. Is the existence and the responsibility of the Church upon earth a nice distinction—an opinion? Is it not clear, that if any one have a clear conviction on these points, it ought to be a motive in the presence of God, *the* motive which will affect the whole conduct of a Christian as such; and his entire manner of seeing things. Nay, the Christian's entire conduct and mode of seeing things will be moulded upon the existence of such a relationship. Could it be a matter of opinion to a woman, to know whether she was the wife of such or such a one or not? And if she is, how will she regard her responsibility? As a matter of second-rate importance? Is not the question one of *morality*, when relationships established by God exist? And is it not morality of the very highest kind possible, the morality which is based upon the relationship which God has established between his Son and the Church which he has given to him? Morality, I admit, which is not within the limits of man's natural responsibility, on which one could not insist when addressing the natural conscience, but which one may say forms the very life of a Christian in the most exalted part of his conduct. It is a responsibility which governs all others, and which is even the spring of them.

I would remark also, that if any one recognises the existence of the Church [for if it does not exist, there can be no question as to responsibility from connection with it—but if it exists] there is nothing uncertain or vague in our responsibility, when such a relationship exists as that which subsists between Christ and the Church. There is no need of proofs and analogies to demonstrate that the Church is responsible if she exists. Is it needful to prove the responsibility of a woman towards her husband? What, indeed, would one say of the wife who raised such a question (and towards such a husband), and who, when one had forced oneself (spite

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of one's shame to be obliged to do such a thing) to recall to her her duty, spoke of the responsibility as something vague and uncertain? Is responsibility a mode of thought? Is not responsibility the very basis of all morality, and is it not, along with grace, also that of even every doctrine which has to do with the relationships of God with man? If it be said—"Yes, individual responsibility, every one recognises and insists upon that." If the corporate responsibility in which each individual is involved, is that which is meant, it is well;^a but let care be taken lest we use this and such equivocal expressions from a desire to avoid that responsibility which refers to the state of the Church, which ought to glorify the Lord as such, according to the position in which God has placed it and its duty towards God in such position. Now I believe that to insist upon this at the present time, is the subject the most important and necessary which there can be for the Christian, and the most affecting for those who love Christ. It is a subject which brings with it consequences of the most solemn nature; I earnestly beseech my readers to pay attention to it; I speak of a testimony on the part of God. Time will show if I am mistaken, or if the testimony be of God.^b If it be, the culpability of those who

^a It is plain that even when the responsibility is one common among many—the responsibility presses upon the individual.

^b That there is ignorance of these things in many, one can well suppose: that there should be opposition from some, is indeed sad; but to say that these truths are secondary, is utterly to deceive oneself. To make little account of the glory of Christ manifested in the unity of the Church here below, is, in truth, a proof that that glory and the love of Christ for his Church are not dear to the heart. Such are not cases in which one can speak to the conscience. If, after having urged upon a son his duty towards a tender and affectionate father, and having explained to him the nature of filial affection, he should ask one to trace out accurately his duty, one might well refuse; he has not the mind to understand his position; the request is the request of a servant, of a hireling. The spirit of a son must be awakened if conscience is to act; but woe, woe, to him in whom it is not! It is just the same with regard to the responsibility of the Church; the grace of the relationship must be known;

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oppose the truth on this point is in proportion to the blessing which there is in the relationship of which that truth speaks—to its claim upon the soul. To withdraw the heart and conscience from under the influence of a relationship founded upon grace the most precious and astonishing—a relationship which should bear sway and mould every other, which it does not destroy, especially since that relationship is one known to faith only in such

and it is the heart taught by the Holy Spirit which understands it. I doubt not that there is enough to condemn, by means of the conscience itself, him who thus fails; but to do so is neither my task nor my desire. If the heart could be awakened so as to feel the force of this relationship, of this obligation,—that would be the most precious fruit of all the conflict in which I have had to engage on these points. Israel might have been condemned by the law; but is not the appeal of God much stronger, and Israel much more hardened, not to have replied to it, when it is said, and said in vain, “Go yet, love a woman beloved of (her) friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel.” For, as the first principle is love, if that fails, all fails. I admit, and I always have admitted, that one may understand the love which saves without knowing that the Church is the Bride of Christ: but under existing circumstances, this it is which the Holy Spirit in a peculiar way calls to mind: “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.” “And let him that heareth say, Come.” Such is the normal position, such the primary testimony which the Church renders. After that, it can turn towards others, and say, “And let him that is athirst come.” For living waters already flow there; “and whosoever will,” etc. But for Christians this is the Spirit’s last behest to the Church pointing out her true position. Her sentiments are based upon her relationships to Christ, and the Spirit demands that those who hear should be in unison with this desire of his heart. Is it wrong to engage those who have heard the voice of the good Shepherd, to take the position of the Bride and to join in the cry, “Come”?

But the doctrines of the presence of the Holy Spirit here below, in the Church, and of the return of Christ, are identified with its unity upon earth, with the position of Bride, or rather of her who here below is espoused to be presented as a chaste virgin unto Christ, and with the desire of his coming, which detaches us from all that is not of Him, and attaches us entirely, exclusively, to Himself.

It is easy to understand how those who are in national establishments feel themselves troubled by such a truth; they have quite another sort of unity, and with them division is that which separates from what is really union with the world, and

sort, that to enfeeble faith is to enfeeble the perception of this relation, and to call in question the responsibility which flows thence. I hold, I say, that it would be hard to designate such an attempt by an epithet too strong.

The two truths with which this question connects itself are: the return of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church; for the Holy Spirit is come down to earth, and this it is which gives to the Church its unity and corporate responsibility upon earth. It is with the Church as with a human body, all the component elements of which are said to be entirely renewed in a very short period of time; yet the individual remains the same man: the spirit of man which is in him attaches vitally to itself, and appropriates successively new heterogeneous elements, and the unity and the person changes not.

subjection to another than Christ. That dissenters—who, faithful in separating from that which is contrary to the precepts of the gospel, have made Churches, though they have never apprehended, but contrariwise have rejected, the idea of the Church upon earth—should be opposed to it, this also is intelligible enough; but it ought not to enfeeble the power of these two great truths upon our hearts, nor alienate us from them. Division in the latter case, is sometimes in appearance less reasonable, because the evil among them is less gross than elsewhere, but they have not accepted, and still do refuse to accept these truths. They have no influence upon their manner of acting. That there should be patience there can be no doubt; but that these two immense truths should not produce effects, that they should leave those who oppose them in tranquillity—will never be the case. It is well for brethren, and even for those who oppose, to understand what really is in question. Hitherto the unity and the responsibility of the Church have been denied; the return of Christ has had no practical effect upon the opponents of these doctrines; scarcely are they even now recognised as being strongly probable—which is not such a conviction as can furnish a motive for conduct; while all the affections of the Church ought to be formed upon, and her walk regulated by these doctrines while awaiting Christ's return.

I find two things presented in the word as the great means of judging of the state of the people of God:—1st. The comparing it with the state in which God placed them at the first. 2nd. With the glory of Christ who is about to return. Compare Isa. v. for the first, and vi. for the second.

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There are three great truths which are connected with Christ, the centre of all truth, or, if you please, three different positions, in which he is seen. Dead and risen;—then in heaven (with this corresponds, as its proof, the presence of the Holy Spirit upon earth, John xvi.); and lastly, returned to earth. Dead and risen—thus is the Church, his body, justified, risen with him. Such is the doctrine of justification; and although it is evidently true as to the whole Church, considered as a body, yet in its application day by day, and for each conscience, it is an individual matter for each. The Holy Spirit dwells, as the seal of this doctrine, in the body of the individual as in a temple. Then, in heaven Jesus is hid in God, yet crowned with honour and glory: the doctrine which thence flows, is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church upon earth, in his body; of the Holy Spirit who gives to this body its unity, and makes the terms “body of Christ. Bride of Christ—Church of Christ”—to be applicable to those who, upon earth, are united to Him who is in heaven, and who thus form a unity upon earth; the dead in Christ being for the moment out of sight. If this is understood (for one may be converted and not understand it), one desires, as bride of Christ, the return of the Bridegroom. Justification is connected with his death and resurrection; for we know that his work has been accepted on high. The unity of the Church, and her waiting for Christ as is becoming for a faithful bride, this it is which is connected with the glory of Christ on high, and the presence of the Holy Spirit down here. These are the two great truths which have been specially put forward, which, as I believe, God himself has put forward at the present moment, and which have produced so much disquietude in those who desire to remain without the sphere of their influence—whether in the national churches or in dissent.

Having shown of how solemn a nature the subject before us is, let us now turn to Rom. xi. This chapter contains, it is true, the proof of only one of the points involved in the subject; so that, if it is lacking in

evidence, or if it were entirely left aside, still the great truth, to wit, our position before God, would in no wise be changed. Yet the passage is important, and the making of its meaning clear is interesting to the believer.

And first, let me notice a palpably erroneous view held by some. The words, "Hath God rejected his people?" they would have to be a question—the reply to which is, "God has rejected Israel as a nation, but not as individuals; as Paul was witness."

Now that this view is entirely wide of the thought of the Apostle and of the Holy Spirit is clear; for how could the Church have entertained the question, if Israel had been rejected as individuals, since the Church was composed in great measure of Israelites. The supposed answer to the Apostle's question is absurd. For what answer to the question "Hath God rejected his people?" is there in, "Israel was rejected as a nation and not as individuals?" If Israel was rejected as a nation, and not as individuals, yet the rejection of the people was equally sure. It was a palpable fact that individuals were received; but the Apostle applies it in proof that the people were not rejected, a question which the substitution of the Church raised. He cites his own case, not to show that he had been received as an individual, but in proof of the interest he took in *his nation*; he was of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin; now what is the meaning of being of the tribe of Benjamin, if it is not the people, as people, whom God still loves? God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. What people? The people of whom He speaks in ver. 1—Israel! One cannot doubt it when one reads the end of the tenth chapter; and I ask, if the question was about the election of individuals, what ground could there be for proposing the question whether the people of God were rejected because the Church was called? No! but in that God had reserved an election from among the people of Israel, set aside for the moment on account of its sin, He had given proof that He still thought of that people; as the case of the seven thousand in the days of Elijah also showed; moreover, the verses 26—29 leave no doubt upon the subject; for he affirms, while speaking

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her bridegroom—Come! and he who denies them, denies at the same time the special privileges which link the Church to Christ, as well as the responsibility which flows thence, and to which the heart will adhere, in order not to renounce so precious a tie. Only let those who enjoy these things remember that the task laid upon us in our ministry of love, according to that which is entrusted to us, is to give meat in due season. That is charity—to think not of one's own ideas, but of the needs of the souls we meet with.

Ever guard, brethren beloved, according to this charity, the doctrine which is connected with the cross and resurrection of Jesus—the justification of the believer and of the Church—and seek to *awaken* the Church from her torpor, by the doctrine of her position, the beloved and only Bride of the Lamb. Take, as banner, this testimony of the Spirit—“The Spirit and the Bride say—Come!” such is our desire, which comes out of the fulness of the heart. Encourage in grace (for this is all in grace) those who hear, but who have not the persuasion of being the Bride of Christ, to come and join their cry to yours and to say with you—Come! And certainly if the heart has tasted the love of Christ in secret, the same Spirit which has made you to taste the joy of that love, will make you turn toward the world, and say, in the consciousness of that joy and of the possession of those living waters, “And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

The same Spirit which makes us enjoy Christ and desire His coming, urges us to call others to the same enjoyment. In truth, this verse (Rev.xxii. 17) is the expression of the position of the Church and of the presence of the Holy Spirit; and it has been left to her as a last testimony, on the part of the Lord, in order to define that position. The thought of the coming of Christ and the persuasion of our obligations to Him, as Bridegroom, give to our souls and to our testimony an energy which nought else could give. He who recognises the Holy Spirit down here, soul of the unity of the Church, which is the body and Bride of Christ, witness of His glory on high, and consequently ardently desiring

and on the Responsibility of the Church. 153

His return will not cease on this account (yet ardently), to taste that third great truth which is the foundation of the others:—Christ delivered on account of our transgressions, and raised again from the dead for our justification. On the contrary, he will enjoy it the more, he will understand it the better. But to avail oneself of the last-named truth in order to deny the others, is at least to provoke God to take from us the strength even of that which we desire to retain.

May Christians, then, plainly understand what is in question, viz., the existence, unity, and responsibility of the Church of God, of the Bride of Christ upon earth; and may those who believe these things use them not as a means of judging others, but of encouraging them in grace, as being those who hear, to come and hasten by their sighs the return of the Bridegroom.

As to him who opposes these things, after having heard the cry of the Spirit and of the Bride, whosoever he be, he will bear his own burden.

HEB. vi. 19.

A STRANGER launch'd upon this world's rude sea,
 My bark still wending to its port above,
 Wild winds detain her; but the spirit free
 Spans the wide waste to reach the ONE I love.

Whilst faith beholds thee, Lord, with strong desire,
 Tho' on the waters 't is my call to roam,
 The waves obedient from my feet retire,
 Since thy blest accents bid me, Saviour, come!

Anchor'd in Thee secure, thy light afar,
 Thou faithful beacon of my midnight way,
 Tracks the dark billows, till the Morning Star
 Wanes in the noon of yonder coming day.

A. S.

Nº X.

THINGS AS THEY ARE!

MEN are dealt with in Scripture as God sees them to be—circumstances detailed as they are. God and realities are identified on the one hand, vanity and the creature on the other. Sin has hidden from man the reality of his condition, and, ignorant of his disease, he cannot find out the remedy. With uncertain data, it is vain to expect positive conclusions. Things as they are and the wherefore is unfolded in the Word, God's judgment and remedy revealed. How early in Genesis (vi. 5) do we read "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually." An evil heart, an evil life (ver. 12). How early in our Lord's mission is the announcement, "Ye must be born again" (John iii.) The "flesh profiteth nothing!" How the testimony of patriarchs and prophets corroborates the truth. "Few and evil have been the days of my life," the language of Jacob (Gen. xlvii. 9). "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you," the testimony of Moses (Deut. xxiv. 19). "Born in sin and shapen in iniquity," the confession of David (Ps. li). This desperate condition beheld in reality, there is but one remedy. Sin as it is, and sinners as we are, God only can remove the former and save the latter. Things as they are, can only be met by God as he is revealed to us in Christ. Realities find their answer in God. The very basis of communion with God is reality. Our need of God's grace is real, and the grace of God for that need is real also. Christ died the just for the unjust to bring us to God. Grace had its existence in the object for which it exists. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." "He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Individually, then, our comfort arises from honest-hearted dealing with God in Christ, in the confidence of the grace

which is revealed there. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. iv. 6). "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James i. 5). Having been led into acquaintance with ourselves, and taught our utter emptiness, and this knowledge accompanied by the revelation as to where our help lies; responsibility is imposed upon us to seek it. Our very need is our recommendation, the more we want the more is revealed of the bounty of Him who bestows. We exist for grace to be displayed; and grace is manifested in our existence. Communion with God at the outset of our career is based upon our helplessness, and the fact of His grace to meet all our need out of his riches in Christ. To forget the former is to lose the enjoyment of the latter.

As was before affirmed, realities find their answer in God. Now this truth, in individual operation, cannot be gainsaid. The word of God asserts it, and the word of God confirms the assertion. The children of God bear testimony to it, and the lives of the children of God confirm their testimony. The latter end of Job was better than the beginning (Job xlii. 12); but he had travelled farther in the way of self-loathing, and lost by the way no little of self-importance. In his own words, "Behold I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. And it was so (verses 7-10). And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends, also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." The lower he got the more he had, "for before honour is humility."

Things as they are, seen and acknowledged, is a primary element in our individual dealings with God. This is doubly true in our collective assemblies. Saints gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus, have to do with realities. In His presence everything is exposed, naked and bare is everything before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. It is one thing to have got into our place, to have learnt the true whereabouts of believers, viz., as gathered together in the name of Jesus, "He is there in the midst of them," and it is another to learn what is

befitting the place; in other words, how to behave in it. Realities, not pretensions, have their answer in God. Now in our day, we have had too little reality, and too much pretension. We have thought the recovery of place to be the recovery of power, and looked for what once was as now to be realised, and reading how others were exercised, decided on imitating them. But realities find their answer in God. The knowledge of where Saints ought to be is understood, something of what the Church ought to be is apprehended; but alas, in our folly, we have overlooked what Saints are. The fact of the existence of gifts in the Church is recorded, the source of them revealed, but our ability to exercise them may be overrated.

The purpose of God, to bless His people for Christ's sake, is undoubted. God has a people, and the Head of that people He cannot, He will not forget. He ever lives before God, to receive and give down to us the blessings He receives for us. This is undoubted reality. He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself! But on our part too there is a condition, the precursor of blessing. In the history of God's ancient people, as in Judges, how often they turned aside from following Him, how often they hewed to themselves cisterns which could hold no water. In His mercy He visited them, exposed to them their condition, brought them to acknowledge it and to feel it, and then He brought their deliverance. As *then*, so it must be *now*. Believers need to see and acknowledge their nakedness, abandon their folly, and in humility own things as they are, not pretending to what they have not, but mourning over the little they have; waiting on God in His grace, to supply them with more. The presence of the Holy Ghost is a reality, and surely leads to acknowledgment of our real condition. But, alas, how slow we are to learn, how far from apprehending, how backward to take the low place, though the grace in the remedy imperatively requires it. The need felt is very power! How sweet is humility, how happy confession! Poverty is no crime in the kingdom of grace, unfitness no sin—but the presumption of place where the power to occupy does not exist—and how wretched the feeling! In the world men have their places and their occupations. To

be consistent in them is their distinction, to pretend to any other their discredit. In station, rightly to occupy the one God has placed us in, is an honour; to pretend to another, shews folly.

The very world has such in derision, who through weakness of character and the feeling of pride, would pass themselves for other than they are. Truly before God, then, His people should be candid. When disguise is impossible, confession is true wisdom, and far more when everything is to be gained by acknowledgment of weakness as it exists, and "things as they are;" to pretend to anything else, is to put the blessing far from us. The work of God by His Spirit to-day, is not to place men on an elevated position favourable for discovering the errors of others; but where they can have a better survey of their own. The existence of ministry by human arrangement is to be deplored; sectarianism is palpably wrong; and the assumption of power where it does not exist, is equally bad. But let none imagine that these difficulties justify the intrusion of self-will in the worship of God; but rather let saints seek from the Lord a ministry of the Word, in full accordance with the Truth and the Spirit.

But God is all-sufficient for the need of His people. Humility will characterise those who realise His presence. True ministry will seek to bring about communion; and in the reality of the intercourse with God, is the antidote to the evil. Every truth has its counterfeit. Liberty of ministry does not convey power, but allows the exercise where it exists. Deprivation of true ministry is to be deplored; but the lack of it cannot be supplied by pretension.

Many have left efficient ministry in system, in obedience to the Word as to the gathering of saints, and the sovereignty of the Spirit; it is hardly to be expected they should be satisfied with worse, however patient under the deprivation of any. There is then ministry, and that of the Word, and all are not gifted for it. If it is confined to few, when we may be safely intrusted with more we shall have it. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest."

But, meanwhile, let it be understood distinctly, we are

not bound to do without what we have, because some will say we are only, like others, leaning upon ministry; neither are we, by pretension to what we have not, to render our position false, and endanger the testimony, in obedience to which we have experienced edification and blessing. God works by instrumentality; and where He is using such, ours is to support them by prayer. The chiefest of Apostles needed this in the zenith of his power; how much more our feeble helps in these days of the "Church's weakness"! The position is of God, and must be abided by. Our weakness in it is most palpable to others; let us not hide the condition from ourselves. Things as they are, our God in Christ is all-sufficient; to confess them, is to find Him. Things as they are, and acknowledged as such, command the regard of those who are without. There is respect due to the faith which enters a path where difficulties must be encountered; but pretension to power where there is little but weakness, would only provoke derision and censure. But, still, things as they are, and God's help sought in them, and we are far better off than if we had things as we should like them, and His presence denied.

FRAGMENT.

THE proper and immediate trial of Gethsemane was the power of Satan—"This is your hour, and the power of darkness." The great point was, to get between his soul and the Father (as before with desirable things of this life); but he could not. Christ hence pleading with His Father—receiving nothing from Satan or man in the cup—receives it from His Father in perfect and blessed obedience—"Thou hast brought me into the dust of death." Hence his soul is entirely out of the darkness in respect of the enemy; and he can say, in perfect calm of others: "This is your hour and the power of darkness," and present himself willingly, that his disciples might go free.

How blessed the perfectness which, at his *own cost*, always kept them free! For in their position Satan would have caught them in his hour, had not the Lord stood forward in the gap. And so ever. And when needed, as for Peter, He can allow just so much as was good to sift; but stay, for him, the proud billows which were to go clean over his own soul.

Nº XI.

THOUGHTS ON THE RESURRECTION OF
CHRIST.

EACH distinct truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and His work has its peculiar blessing for the Church of God. It is by rightly dividing the truth that the servant of God shews himself approved to God—"a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." In the path of humiliation of Him who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor: "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 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, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" we can step by step follow Him with adoring hearts. His glory with the Father before the world was—His power and Godhead displayed in creation—His essential glory, as Son of God—all these are ever present to the believer. These truths are as much seen by faith, in Jesus, when on the cross as when on the holy mount. Again, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." How does the Spirit by the apostle make this special truth the groundwork of blessing to us (see Heb. ii. 14)! So His life (Heb. ii. 17, iv. 15). We may say that there are stages in the path of Jesus, from glory back to glory, where the Spirit of God bids us tarry and refresh our souls, and magnify His name. Do we not well know how the varied incidents in His life—His many acts of grace and love—carry to the soul the very sense of blessing which was enjoyed so abundantly at the time. His name is as ointment poured forth; He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth His fruit in His season. How thoroughly estranged from Him must the heart be, that could use any part of His humiliation to His dishonour (yet this is Satan's way,

and man's too), when every step downwards to the last, that of the grave, is the *wherefore* God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.

The resurrection of Christ is a fact full of special instruction and blessing. The effect on the hearts of the disciples is thus expressed by Peter—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The poor disciples had, by the cross and burial, been cast into gloom and despondency. The Lord had graciously forewarned them of all that would happen to Him: but their faith gave way; circumstances had shrouded their souls, and they forgot the words which would have been to them a lamp for their feet; but the resurrection to them was the renewal of all: their peace, their joy, their hopes revived when Jesus rose from the dead. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." It became the burden of their testimony. To us it is the truth that puts us into a place beyond condemnation—one of new life, associated with Him, raised up together with Him who was delivered for our offences, raised again for our justification. In His resurrection we have the pattern of our own: Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are His at His coming. In speaking to the Jews the Apostle could say (Acts xiii. 32, 33)—"And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is written, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee." But it is more especially in the testimony that is borne to the person of the Lord Jesus that I would refer. Faith does pierce the veil that thickens in every step of humiliation which He voluntarily took; and it has been the object of the Spirit of God to strengthen our souls against every assault of the enemy. Was He born of a woman? "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Was He tempted of the devil? "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." Did He eat with publicans and sinners? "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

“He knew no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.” For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son who is consecrated for evermore. When He died, was it as one subject to death? “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” Did He lie in the silent tomb? “He whom God raised from the dead saw no corruption.” It was not possible that the Holy One should see corruption. How needful it is that in contemplating the wondrous grace of Him who voluntarily underwent all this—who thus made Himself of no reputation—that we should have our hearts filled with God’s estimate of it all. A proper knowledge of the love that led our blessed Lord into the ignominious death of the cross—into the sepulchre—would have led His disciples to adore and worship their Lord and Master still the more, instead of into that despair, when they said, “We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.” It is instructive to see how both the apostles Peter and Paul use the resurrection in maintaining the glory of the Lord Jesus, and both instance the death and burial of David in contrast (Acts ii. 29).

“Men and Brethren, let me freely speak to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ; that His soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption.” And Acts xiii. 36, 37, “For David, after he had served his generation, by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised from the dead saw no corruption.” And the verse following shews the value of this to us. “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins,” etc. Great is the mystery of godliness—God was manifested in the flesh.

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The primary object of the Word is to glorify Christ, and the abounding wisdom of God for our souls is thus displayed in the light which shines around every part of the Redeemer's work. We are lost nowhere.

If, like the disciples, led by the darkness of circumstances we get off the word, we mourn where we ought to rejoice, we dishonour Him when we ought to exalt Him. Nothing can be more precious than the way in which the Spirit of God contrasts the person of the Son with David, in circumstances so truly the same.

David, a *saved sinner*, the victim of death—bound in the grave—still remains its captive—every way subject to its power till the trumpet sounds.

But *Jesus, the Saviour*, goes into the grave, not its subject (it was not possible that He should be holden of it), but to spoil it. It contained, in Him, one who defied all its powers, either to hold or to corrupt; hence, what to us is of all value, through this man is preached to us the forgiveness of sins.

We can repose in One, who all through his humiliation was never triumphed over, never the vanquished, but always more than conqueror.

Thus is Jesus ever set before us in the Word, and faith thus proves Him the Rock against which the gates of hell cannot prevail.

The Word having glorified Jesus, feeds the Church. It is strength to the soul, because it honours Him. Did the scriptures falter in speaking of Him, our souls would tremble too. In whom we have redemption through his blood. When David undertook to go up against Goliath, Israel might look on with trembling hearts, when they saw the ruddy youth standing before him who had been a man of war from his youth. But when they saw the monster fall, and David standing upon him, confidence and strength would return to every man's heart, and give energy to the song—"Saul hath slain his thousands, David his tens of thousands!" Such is the confidence of our souls in Him in whom we have believed.

'Tis this that nerves us to contend for the faith once delivered to the Saints. 'Tis not difficult to see what will be needed for the coming struggle. "If the founda-

tions be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" When Joseph spake words of peace to his brethren, he took them to God's goodness, in sending him before them to Egypt. So there are times when the Lord carries our hearts away from our sins to His overruling mercy; and notwithstanding our folly and guilt, in contending about and dishonouring our Lord, we have learnt more of Him, we have been driven to our hiding-place, and our souls have realised its security and strength more than ever. We have learnt more of Him, and we can tell more of Him than heretofore. "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"!

We may well understand how the resurrection was to the disciples a being begotten again to a lively hope. It restored Him whom they loved, in whom they trusted, and whom they served. Their souls breathed afresh, winter passed away, and every energy, affection, and hope reappeared. While, then, it had such blessed fruit in them, let us remember that it was because they found Him unharmed either by death or the grave; nay, that He had proved Himself the spoiler and vanquisher of both. "O Death, where is thy sting, O Grave, where is thy victory!"

M.

PARADOX.

THE Gentiles were received as a body—but not as a body were the Gentiles received. Both these statements are in a sense true. The house of Stephanas, or any other such, was not grafted as if it were the body of the Gentiles; yet, at the same time, God represents the whole of the Gentiles who were received as a body, responsible to God; and this the Gentiles will understand, when they are punished, in a frightful manner, by the just judgment of God.

Nº XIII.

2 TIMOTHY.

THIS Epistle especially commends itself to us as the utterance of the Spirit through the Apostle, not only in the midst of nothing but failure around, and of greater, as about to occur, but as instructing the servant of Christ in circumstances not then known in the church, namely, in that when the great organ of rule and order would be mostly wanted, he should be removed. When confusion and evil would increase, (and increasing they were) there should be no apostle to correct abuses, as at Corinth: he, in such critical times, was on the eve of departure; and it is in prospect of this event and its contingencies, that this epistle was written, and from hence it comes with deep interest to us as unfolding God's provisional care for us in such a time, as well as tracing our only safe line for service and blessing. I repeat the very fact of the Apostle's intimating the proximity of his dissolution, and simultaneously that great disorder existed and still greater was to be expected, should be sufficient to lead us, who know the love and care of our God, to search this epistle, assured that we should find therein manifest tokens that God hath not cast away His people; and that, though the great instrument by which he had hitherto guided the church, and suppressed, by the Holy Ghost, disorder as it arose—that, though he should be removed when to the natural judgment he was mostly needed, yet God was not without resource to meet us in such exigency; nay more, that in this epistle when our difficulties are declared, relief, abundant relief, is plainly communicated. The terrible storm is foreshewn: but what Jesus is, and what His power in such a juncture, is as plainly revealed to faith. God always sets His bow in the cloud, and "Fear not" ever reaches the ear from the Shepherd who feeds as well as saves. How little we know of God, or we should always expect this! We hear

2 Timothy.

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of decline and unfaithfulness and we are ready to say, "There is no hope;" we forget that God is equal to any emergency; that it is in it He is magnified, because *then* He only can do anything. God constantly allows men, used of Satan, to expend all their malice and then makes bare His hand to shew their wretched impotency. In this epistle, very explicitly to the inquiring soul, are detailed the dangers and disasters which shall occur, and the only remedies and modes of escape which the faithful can adopt.

In a time of weakness and failure, the first thing to be assured of is the simplicity of our own confidence in God, and consequently our ground for the same. The Spirit leads Timothy to this contemplation. He addresses him by an Apostle of Jesus Christ, one doubtless so by the will of God; but his apostolate characterised and directly so to Timothy, "according to the promise [or message] of eternal *life which is in Christ Jesus.*" In the former epistle, it was according to "the commandment of God our Saviour and the Lord Jesus Christ our hope." To Titus it is "according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness." I cite these instances, to show how characteristic with the circumstances in each case are the principles represented by the Apostle and forming the basis of his commission. The authority which addresses Timothy is based on "the message of eternal life which is in Christ Jesus." This is a well-spring of strength and refreshment, and unfailing in its supply, though every channel through which it flowed here was broken and gone. Here Timothy is to begin—from this source he must derive strength and hope; and when many turn aside and the faith of some is overthrown, his soul can rest undisturbedly on the message of eternal life which is in Christ Jesus. Hence the Apostle, in very touching language, alludes to "the unfeigned faith that is in thee;" and it is no novelty, for it "dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and in thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded in thee also." When is faith most wanted to sustain the soul? When all visible evidence of power is removed. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," were the words of Jesus when

He in person should no longer accompany His disciples. The real amount of our faith is proved when there is nothing visible to cling to. If our faith is unfeigned, the removal of order or other evidences of power do not affect our confidence in God, for it depends not on what we *see* but on what we *know*. Nor in failure are we discomfited for service according to God's gift to us, for "God has not given us the Spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind." And this is a sufficient reason for not being ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. This many may readily admit, because the Lord is worthy of all service; but there is more required,—that one should not be ashamed "of me His prisoner." This I believe few understand, and it is more our touchstone than the other. It is much easier to respect the Master than the servant; and he who receives the servant with honour will undoubtedly receive the master with more; our real respect for a person is best tested by our implicit deference to whatever emanates from him. Hence the true servant of Jesus Christ in unfeigned faith is not only not ashamed of the testimony of his Lord, but also he is not ashamed of Paul "His prisoner;" no matter whatever afflictions may await him in this service he will partake of them as of the gospel according to the power of God; and all because of the gospel—through it he has learned. The gospel gives power to do all this—saved and called with a holy calling, antecedent to all the ages and prior to any dispensation—not responsible to any, as before all—unprejudiced by any, as quite distinct and beyond all—and the effects of death may still remain—yet assured that it is abolished, and life and immortality our unalterable portion. As this was the ground from which the Apostle started, so is it the highest and most glorious to establish the saint on, and therefore if all they which are in Asia be turned away from Paul; if even Phygellus and Hermogenes are gone, the word to him is, "My son, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." In all your service revert to this, that Jesus was raised from the dead according to my gospel. This basis of rest, and strength, and service, he cannot too often be reminded of; alas, that it is necessary to say to us, "Remember"!—to remember

the groundwork of all our blessing! but still more sad, that some should be found to teach that the resurrection was past already, and overthrow the faith of some. Is Timothy to fear, then? Not at all; there is a seal, "the Lord knoweth them that are His;" but if you name the name of Christ depart from wickedness, "light is sown for the righteous," and if you are walking in wickedness you have no safeguard.

This is very important at this moment; light does not guide till it overcomes darkness. It is only when you have no part dark that you are as when "the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." Also, he is not to be surprised to see such characters in the Church. A structure which, whatever were its original constitution, is now designated, from its dimensions on earth, as a "great house," and according to the common law of all great human edifices, there are in it, "not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour and some to dishonour." This we are told is but natural to expect; we are not to be stumbled at the appearance of vessels to dishonour, nay, in the present unhealthy unconstitutional growth of the Church, we are to expect it, and having discovered them, our course is plainly laid down.

Will any say he sees no vessels to dishonour within the precincts of this "great house," or will any pretend to say, that the condition of a great house became the Church of the living God? However these questions are answered, it is plain that the Apostle instructs, not only Timothy, but any man (*τις*) who PURGES himself from these. "If any man therefore purge himself from these," if you have strength and decision to wash yourself from all association with vessels unto dishonour, if your separation be a clean one, the power which delivered you will constitute you a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work. If you can't purge yourself you can't rise to the surface—if you have not power to depart from iniquity and contact with evil, you can't be prepared for every good work, and, as was said above, that light is inefficient and ineffectual which cannot

counteract the darkness, and thus you are no servant at all. To be a servant you must purge yourself. Your efficiency depends on it. Nay more, in proportion as you accomplish it, in like proportion are you efficient; and, therefore, to this assuredly may be traced the inefficiency of many of us—we are not sufficiently purged from vessels unto dishonour—we have not been sufficiently anxious to be efficient, or if we have, we have not implicitly obeyed the injunction here so emphatically pronounced, or doubtless the results promised to obedience would be more practically known.

In every age of the Church, any little effort to obey this injunction has had its reward, whether observed by one or more; and whoever will take the trouble to investigate the course of any distinguished servant of the Lord, or company of believers, he will find that separation from surrounding evil was one of their leading characteristics, and that their service and honour was proportionate thereto, but declined and vanished as this key to service was neglected or unused. The rule is simple—true devotedness to Christ would easily adopt it, was our purpose simply to magnify Christ, this rule would not be regarded severe or excisory; nay, if we were rightly zealous and true-hearted, it would rejoice us to know that a certain action, no matter how painful, would ensure us so high, so distinguished a post as a “vessel unto honour.” To know, in the midst of coldness and apathy, in a day of rebuke and blasphemy, when there is not strength to bring forth, that the observance of a simple rule would place you in this position, with the energy and qualifications for effective service—I say, to know this, ought to give the largest relief to our distracted spirits. I own that in late days no passage of the word has given me such especial comfort, for I see God’s faithfulness therein, and that though great are the trials of His children in these days, yet there is a door of escape; and this is that door. O may many find it! It has been a difficulty with many, to whom or what “purge himself from them” may refer. The subject evidently begins at verse 16, where “to shun profane vain babblings,” is enjoined, “for they will increase

ungodliness the more, and the word (*λογος*) of them will eat as doth a canker, of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus." Now the transition here from the thing spoken to the speaker, is apparent. It is first, vain babblings will increase ungodliness; and then the reasoning of them will eat as doth a canker; and then, without any previous allusion to persons, Hymeneus and Philetus are presented as fearful examples of the unbridled utterance of "profane vain babblings;" and, therefore, I conclude, that "*these*," in this sentence, includes not only what we should "shun," but the aggravated form of evil which demands a more absolute separation, and designated by the very significant word "Purge," only used here and in 1 Cor. v.

How the soul, eager to please God, would drink in the instruction conveyed in this Epistle! What a chart to guide us this long starless night! But to resume: Timothy is not only told how he is to be a vessel unto honour, but as such his course is marked out for him. After the most complete and positive separation, "prepared unto every good work," he has still more to do. The Spirit has more to accomplish in him and by him. He must "flee also youthful lusts or desires." Alas, how needed this exhortation, how divinely appropriate to our poor weak condition. Paul, from a wondrous sojourn in Paradise, had to descend into all the teazings of a thorn in the flesh. His rapture to glory did not secure him against the lusts of the flesh. The greater the treasure committed to the vessel, the greater need to prevent the vessel from appropriating the honour due to the treasure, which the flesh is ready to do. Hence Timothy is warned as soon as he has set his foot on the ground of honour and distinction for the Lord's service, "to flee also youthful lusts." We are never so near failure as when we have acted faithfully. We are dissatisfied. The enemy surprises us. This is very marked in scripture. Hormah and the necessity for the brazen serpent, stand strangely near one another—we can hardly trust God in two consecutive instances. If we have trusted Him in one, and have known his succour, in the next we go a lusting—if we are at Elim, ere long we shall be found at Rephi-

dim. Surely it is well timed advice to say to one who has taken a great step, one involving glorious consequences—"flee also youthful lusts;" or in other words, "beware of nature." Now it is plain that not merely the grosser desires are here alluded to, the word "youthful," classifies them. The ardency and thoughtlessness of youth characterise them; therefore, wherever we see men who would purge themselves from all uncleanness, and yet carried away by the impetuosity and peculiarity of their wills, we may assuredly reckon that such have missed the course of the Spirit of God, and forgot the exhortation—"flee also youthful lusts;" and such can never follow out the remaining part of the admonition, however they may assay it.

The man who does not flee youthful lusts *cannot follow* "righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Here are laid down unmistakeable lines of instruction to guide one in any condition of the Church. Two things are very prominent—1st. Separation from evil under all circumstances. 2nd. Association with the faithful of God's people. It is not supposed that at any time these two grand means for maintaining testimony to the absent Jesus can be destroyed or be impracticable. Separation from evil must ever distinguish God's people in a world of evil. Surely we must say, "holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever." If separation from evil is paramount, to every faithful servant of Christ, it is but natural to expect that they who act alike would associate together, and for Christ's service they are commanded to do so. And as God does not require of us impossibilities, we must conclude, *that there never will be a time when there shall be none to meet with—never a time when we cannot follow* righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them who call on the Lord out of a pure heart; that however low or ruined may be the condition of things, that yet "them who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" *will ever be found*, and with them we must ever associate, if "purged" and superior to the influence of youthful desires.

It is evident, that the second chapter of this epistle

closes the instruction to Timothy in respect of things as they were; but in the following chapters we are made acquainted with the line of conduct which would become him even in "the last days." The utmost boundary is surveyed by the Holy Ghost, and the faithful servant is instructed as to his course in a region at once so dreary and so unknown. If this was a necessary and a welcome chart to Timothy, then so distant from these days, how necessary and valued ought it be to us, now on the border, if not really in them. We cannot say that the counsel suited to the "last days" was of no use to Timothy, as he flourished not in them, for doubtless he had to contend with the spirit of those days; and, if he did not survive to them, it is evident that it is contemplated by the Spirit, that some one filling the place of service *then* occupied by Timothy would do so. This is of great importance, teaching us that the Holy Ghost did not merely counsel Timothy, but the servant of Christ *then in being*, even in the state of things to which He adverts. Timothy derives instruction as far as he enters on such scenes; but if we are in them, to us *especially* is this word sent, for to us entirely and peculiarly it applies. The opening sentence corroborates this thought—"This also know." The apostle admits "the last days" had not come, but he desires that Timothy should be prepared in the event of their coming; and, if needful for him to be prepared, how much more so for us. The first point to be observed is the character of mankind, they would be *then* in uncontrolled selfishness; but, in addition, this unprecedented peculiarity, "having the form of godliness," this cloak would envelop the worst specimen of nature. Such was to be the aspect and character of mankind in general, from whom Timothy is summarily warned to "turn away;" but his attention is more especially directed to a narrower circle within this universal one. For out of this sort (*εκ τωντων*)—out of the mass above described, there should arise those who would attract female adherents; judged by the Spirit of God, as "silly women, laden with sins, carried away with divers lusts" (from which we know that Timothy was cautioned to flee), "ever learning, and never able to come

to the knowledge of the truth." Now these are evidently teachers; for their followers those silly women are "ever learning." There is a great appetite for acquiring knowledge, but to the knowledge of the truth they are never able to come. But, lest there should be any doubt in our minds as to the position of these men, it is recorded that they resemble Jannes and Jambres, the great ministers of false divination in the days of Moses; and, moreover, that they should withstand the truth, as the magicians withstood Moses. The apostle then sums up their character, as "men of corrupt minds (*τὸν νοῦν*), reprobate concerning the faith." All these delineations were afforded to Timothy as necessary to describe to him the characters with whom he, or any servant of Christ, would be surrounded in the last days, and thus be able to distinguish friends from foes. It ought to need no comment to enforce the importance of close observation and admeasurement of every teacher in such critical times; our safety depends on it. The features are here boldly and distinctly traced for us; and if we are too dull and indifferent to notice a likeness, we must expect to be ignorant and deceived. To the attentive observer, it will be very evident that all false teachers combine two great errors—a corrupt understanding, and practically devoid of simple dependance on God. It is surprising how these two evils emanate from one source, and are always found concurrent when the understanding is uncontrolled by the Spirit of God; it is corrupted—at best it is only "vain," as we see from the Apostle's exhortation to the Ephesians (chap. iv. 17); and as soon as the mind escapes from God's control, it at the same time ceases to depend on God, so that, I repeat, we may always be prepared for a surrender of simple dependence and waiting on God when the understanding is corrupted. And to these two heads can be traced all the systems and ignorance with which Christendom abounds; in fact, unless the mind is kept distinctly under the control of God's Spirit, its tendency, because it is "vain," is to adopt forms and systems, and act independently of God. Surely, saints had need to remember the exhortation—"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in

the vanity of their mind." It leads to alienation from God, and then forms and human plans take the place of God. Earnestly would I say, cannot we recall many instances in our own history, as well as (inasmuch as we know of the history of the church of God) of the practical distrust of God, and though unknown to ourselves, it was accompanied with a corrupted understanding. Alas! how often it is corrupted! How ready are we to take credit, and give credit for sincerity and an honest mind, when our acts clearly tell of distrust in God. We forget the latter is but the evidence and result of inward corruption, and excuse ourselves for want of faith, or failure in faith, as if we were only losers by the loss of it, and not actually proved as proceeding from a vitiated mind, which is really the case. Some may say, that "men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith," are not necessarily in apposition; but here I would remark, that in scripture, when the copulative conjunction is not used, we may generally say, that where two or more things are predicated of any person, that they exist at one and the same time together, but when "and" is used, a long term may transpire between the first and any of the following ideas thus conjoined.

It is extraordinary, the subtlety which Satan uses to distract the saints from simple confidence in God. It will probably commence by providing a fund for missionaries or labouring brethren. Or, as I have known, endeavouring to collect a sum for a poor widow, which being placed in the funds would, by the interest alone, afford her a maintenance. I plainly say, either of these acts are disguisedly originating in distrust of God's providing care either for His servants or His poor. Ministerial arrangement is a worse form. Faith says, that Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and any arrangement which denies the verity of this does not proceed from soundness of mind. Faith is much pressed in this epistle, and necessarily so, for if confidence is not in God when disorder and disaffection increase where will stability be? We see in the former epistle when men depart from faith where they end. The great secret of all power and permanency now is

faith in God—nothing visible, nothing tangible: the soul finds strength and encouragement as it reaches unto God. There are, however, to the waiting soul marked manifestations of the hand of God continually. These evil teachers which we are so warned of, are not always undiscovered. “They shall proceed no further, but their folly shall be manifest unto all”; but only as the magicians were in the days of Moses. This is important, for though their folly shall be manifest, and the seeing eye will perceive it, yet we know they will not discontinue their deceivings; nay, but “wicked men and jugglers shall wax worse and worse” (the same word as “proceed” above), “deceiving and being deceived.” The magicians, though exposed and their folly made manifest, *were not reduced to silence*, doubtless many a one still admired them; but *they ceased to be any difficulty in the mind of the faithful*, and so here, these evil men shall be exposed, those who have honest and good hearts, who understand the word and keep it, will not be deceived by them, nor stumbled by them, though they still pursue their old course, deceived and deceiving. While the apostle warns Timothy of the evils growing around him, he contrasts Timothy’s own course, “But thou hast fully *followed* my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions.” So that we may conclude, that this is the only proper contrast to the false teachers of the last days. Paul’s course was to the end to be an example for the Church. In the last days, in perilous times, the best evidence that you were not mixed up with the evil system at work, is that you are following in the tracks of the apostle of the Gentiles. Hence we see that the greater the departure from genuine Christianity, the more remote the reference to Paul. Peter is assigned as the head of the most glaring form of departure, with scarcely an allusion to the apostle whom Timothy so exactly and fully followed; and so important is it that he should do so, that he is still further exhorted neither to be discouraged by persecutions, for they are the portion of the godly in this world, but be prepared for evil men and seducers to wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived, and thus

prepared, "continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of knowing of whom thou hast learned." Timothy was hitherto a close follower of the Apostle; but this is not enough when Satan would work and by angels of light oppose the truth, he was to strengthen himself, not by new revelations, but by the things and subjects he had up to this fully followed. Let nothing shake him from them—let no argument as to their unsuitability, and so forth, cause him in the least to swerve from what he had learned and had been assured of, knowing of whom he had learned. It appears to me that the antecedent to "whom" is the Apostle, and that then he adds, as corroborative of what Timothy had learned from him, Timothy's own knowledge of the Scriptures. The Apostle could not have taught anything contrary to them—there must be sanction in them, for any new truth communicated by Paul—and I should say that when the apostle says "all Scripture," he includes the very epistle before us, for it is "all scripture"; not merely those that Timothy knew from a child, which "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"; and all for this distinct purpose, that as the servant in the second chapter was by "purging from these" prepared unto every good work, so also by the Scriptures he was to be "thoroughly furnished unto every good work." By the one act he is prepared; and, "being prepared," he is by the Scripture; "thoroughly furnished."

The fourth chapter of this epistle enters very minutely into the duties incumbent on Timothy as a servant. He is charged to render his service unmoved by anything; but all strictly in reference to the appearing and kingdom of Jesus Christ. He is forewarned that he will need all the qualities of a true servant; enunciating the word perfect and entire—ever ready to do so—not shrinking from the odium of a censor. "Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine," is his commission. "For the time will come, when they [I suppose not teachers so much as believers in general], will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts [here we have this word again, thus three times in this epistle, and in each

place shewing us what we may expect from allowing our own desires to lead us], shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears." For this time Timothy is to be prepared—and how he is to encounter this form of evil he is instructed, both in reference to them as in the second verse, and as to himself in the words, "Watch thou in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of (or fulfil) thy ministry." Timothy's example was to be distinctly in contrast with theirs who were walking after their own lusts; for surely, when our hearts have such power over us as to influence us in our selection of teachers, we must be eager to spare ourselves—we are on the highway to the spirit which can say to Christ in person, "Art thou come to torment us." They already say, Prophecy to us smooth things prophecy deceits. Timothy, in contrast to all this, was to "watch in all things;" every avenue to the heart was to be guarded with vigilance—nothing less would do in such a time. The enemy was abroad, the more disunion and disorganization, and little concert among the people of God, the more it becomes a faithful one to be especially alert. Nay, when it is wanting at such a time we may assuredly gather they are yielding to their own lusts, and in a little time it will be seen "where they bowed there they fell." Timothy's example is as one awake, not deceived by all the plots and counterplots of the enemy—he is able to deny himself—he stands forth as having mastery over his own lusts—he endures afflictions or hardness—for if he pleased himself he should not be the servant of Christ; such a course would stand strangely in contrast with theirs, who would not only yield to their own desires, but admit of no servant of God but the one who would sanction them. No preaching so forcible as practical preaching. Paul could extend his hands to the Ephesian elders, and say, "I have shewed you:" thus also was Timothy now. True, he was to preach the word—he was to declare the whole counsel of God—he was always to be ready—he was to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering; and so, intelligently: but in addition, his own personal walk was to be a living example of the course he demanded of others. However

many might fail and dishonour the Gospel, yet the Gospel was still to be proclaimed—the work of the evangelist was not to cease because of man's rejection—God's grace was still to flow—blessed be His name!—unto the end.—Timothy must not forget this. Nay, he must fulfil his ministry in spite of all hindrances—Christ is above all powers. His servant is to walk in the confidence of this, and unmoved fulfil his service, and the more especially, for the Apostle was now ready to be offered. The time of his departure was at hand. Timothy is now to work on without him—nay, to work more. The apostle then adds a natural and gracious wish as on the eve of his departure: “Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me.” And again touching on the various sorrows, vicissitudes, and anxieties connected with church service—very interesting and instructive, shewing also God's faithfulness amidst all human forsakings, he repeats: “Do thy diligence to come before winter;” his heart yearns after the one like-minded—and then, having assured him of the greetings of the saints, thus refreshing his soul, he prays that the Lord Jesus Christ may be with his spirit, “grace with you” [ὑμῶν] for him and us.—Amen.

EPHESIANS, v. 1—8.

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of the light.

Nº XIV.

THE LORD'S TABLE AND THE PULPIT.

THAT the pulpit commands the Lord's table amongst Christians of nearly every persuasion is obvious to all, or in other words, that the minister, or acknowledged teacher in modern churches, assumes the prerogative of presiding at the Lord's table, and dispensing the eucharist as a matter of right. The sanction of antiquity is pleaded in its favour. The plea of being necessary to order, insisted upon, and it is but of recent date that Christians have been led to question all this as incompatible with the universal priesthood of believers, and the sovereign presence of the Holy Ghost in the body the Church. Much has been written on both sides of the question. Diversity of judgment exists—collision has taken place, and the truth has been assailed under various pretexts, and with a show of reason. Now truth is harmonious with itself; gives place to all the members of the body of Christ, and displaces none; cherishes a becoming regard for the ministration of the word of God, and for the few whom he in grace endows with power to minister it, yet rigidly maintains the unity of the body as indwelt by the Spirit. It advances in the foreground the assertion, "Ye being many members, are one body," with "having therefore gifts differing according to the measure of the gift of Christ," combining respect for the parts with integrity of the *whole*. A capital error is committed when this distinction is not perceived, and the advocates of either extreme are wide of the mark, where the integrity of the body is assailed on behalf of those gifted amongst its members; and these, on the other hand, disregarded, or little thought of in the grand principle of the universal priesthood of believers. The body exists in its members, and the members make up the body.

The sadly fallen condition of the Church is advanced by some as a reason for limiting the exercise of its functions; and, again, the same ground is advanced by others for abandoning specific relations in the assertion of the rights of all. In political bodies, the fitness of the members of one state for the exercise of legislative capacity may be reasoned about; but, in "the body, the Church," it is far otherwise. It exists in the power which confers its privileges, and is manifestly healthy or otherwise as this is perceived. Its life and union with its Head is communicated by the blessed Spirit which manifestly develops it. It is not a question of power, but apprehension of the power, and unfeigned obedience to the word which is a guide to the life created by it, as such Scriptures as 1 Peter i. 23, and Acts xx. 32 shew. In the former passage life-creating power is ascribed to it. In the latter, the source of nourishment. It is impossible to overvalue the weight of scripture testimony as to the sovereign rule of the Holy Ghost in the body, the Church; it sets aside clerical pretension without personal controversy, and, where rightly apprehended, leads to the abnegation of human distinction in the clearer demarcation of that which is divine. It brings us into an atmosphere of light and blessing, liberty and joy. The dignity of the calling confers the lowliness of spirit befitting it; for "before honour is humility."

And in honouring God the Spirit, we are reminded of our life in and by Him, and reverence and godly fear are alike pleasure and duty. The right perception of this truth secures everything to us—harmonious disposition of parts, with the integrity of the whole. Circumstances never alter it, time cannot impair it. As eternal is its source, so enduring is its character, and (hidden or manifested) it is ceaselessly accomplishing the purpose of God, calling into being the members of Christ's mystical body, and guarding the life thus bestowed. But still the Church has a mission to fulfil: to witness to the grace which gave her such existence, and walk worthy of Him who hath called her into His kingdom and glory. And in what does service, true unfeigned service to the body of Christ, and that for His sake, consist?

What is the object of gift? What purpose is embodied in the liberty of action in its members? Is it not as in Ephesians iv. 13. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" and in verse 15, "speaking the truth in love may grow up into Him in all things which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

The purpose of ministry then is the development of the body; and this is accomplished by the various gifts diffused through its parts. The displacing of any is the injury of the *whole*. The standard of judgment is the written word; the guide to exercise gift is the written word; conduct befitting the place assigned is laid down in the written word. The duties of members to one another are found in the written word. Official assumption condemns itself; for, if there is real power, the place is imperatively assigned in the word. Neglecting to acknowledge such power is alike culpable and rebuked in the word. To prevent disorder by human arrangement, is to put down the flesh by setting up the flesh, in other words, to control the table by the authority of the pulpit. It is easy to say, the presence of the Spirit is a delusion, but difficult to prove it according to God's word. It is easy to prove from God's word pulpit authority over the Lord's table a delusion. But whence has arisen this confusion? We would concede to the advocates of either side earnestness and zeal for the Lord's glory. That with some the abuse has been worse than the assumed remedy, and the attempted order by human control appeared the only alternative for existing disorder. We have, it may be to learn, how to combine the diligent use of means so as to maintain gift in its place, and a proper place for gift. How to maintain order without appointing to office, and rule without clerisy. Innumerable difficulties beset the path; but as the path of faith, this must be anticipated. Faith of a right stamp is never discouraged by trials; it grows

stronger by every defeat, attributes failure to the weakness of man, and maintains intact principles which are divine, retreats, though vanquished, to the place whence it started to renew, again, the struggle for attainment, less confident in the resources of the creature, and more dependant on the grace and bounty of God. Yet failure has its regrets; want of success is damping to ardour; and, unless the embers are kindled afresh by the Holy Spirit, despondency is the consequence. Still "He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

Two evils have manifestly appeared, on the one hand, lack of discernment that the Holy Ghost works by instrumentality, and bestows gifts to men, and this too for the well being of the body; on the other hand, abuse of these blessings to the assumption of lordship over God's heritage by those possessing them. Where is the remedy? and how is it to be applied? The position is of God, "wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I." "I will send you the Holy Ghost, the comforter, and He shall abide with you for ever." What greater blessings could be bestowed? What firmer confidence excited than in such absolute assurance of divine presence, and divine aid? Still there is sad failure in it all. Does this spring from the fallen and ruined condition of the church? for such manifestly is the case; or is it that this real state of things has not been sufficiently apprehended? The fact of visible ruin is manifest; does this sanction contentment with a continued bad condition of things? Are we supinely to indulge in an acknowledged low state, tolerating laxity because of weakness, and finding an apology in the ruined condition of the Church for visible failure? It surely should not be so! Certainly in the Scripture great principles involve detail.

"The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness," etc. Here the great fact of the grace of God manifested, elicited holy living, in other words "detail." "The high vocation wherewith ye are called," sought corresponding effects in detail. "That ye walk worthy . . . with all lowliness and meekness." "Ye shall be my

sons and daughters, saith the Lord." Exalted privilege! But here again, "Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure." Here again, great facts involve corresponding results—a holy calling, a holy life:—this in detail.

Surely, then, the position of saints gathered together in the presence of the Lord, and having the promise of the Holy Ghost involves detail, that is, in those serving in word, and doctrine having a place, and that for the dispensing of the word. What, though we have lost the power to act as Timothy, and Titus were exhorted to by the Apostle in the setting apart of elders, and ordaining officers in the church, we have the word to guide us as to recognition of such whom the Head of the church may still give to us. Liberty to exercise ministry does not confer power, but allows its exercise when it exists. The universal priesthood of believers is maintained by assistants from the ranks, and these again have rank too in the body for whom they exist. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, they are ours; if able, to rejoice over; and if diligent, to be grateful for. The stimulus to service in the kingdom of grace is recognition of the loving bond which unites, golden chains to bind in mutual good-will the teachers and the taught. The former seeking by prayer the blessing of the body, the latter supporting by prayer those thus in service, reciprocal benefits one to the other, sustaining and being sustained, blessing and being blessed, caring and being cared for. Such tenderness of union did once prevail, in the flood-tide of blessing, in the harvest of the church; and if we are but the gleaners (fit likeness of our poverty), yet our fellow-sufferings demand fellow-sympathy; our general weakness, corresponding forbearance; if, but feebly apprehending the position of some, yet doubtless it is no time for dis-

regarding any. Again, there is mistaken use as to principles. Some say our principles give right to all Christians as such, and because such, to association with us. God forbid our platform should not be wide enough to embrace all believers; but are we not separated unto holiness; and what are we seeking, but growth in grace? And surely some sympathy is needed, some sense of our condition on behalf of those soliciting fellowship. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another." And (Psalm cxix. 63,) made conscience of obedience and trembled at His word, sought communion as a means of growth in godliness, not merely as a *speculative* right—got together to watch and pray together, keep guard over one another, submitting to God in the first place, and to His word as their rule in the rest, admonishing one another, stimulating one another; the greater need, the greater care, and sense of ruin leading to increased watchfulness over one another. Principles and results can never be separated; the one exist for the other. Apart, they are a nonentity. But what are the results? Surely enough to break a heart of stone, but when broken, fitter to receive divine impression, and holy impulse. Back to our hiding place, not again to leave shelter with uncertain aim and mangled proportions of God's word, but here and there a few knitting together in a fellowship of humiliation, making use of the knowledge of where we have failed in the past, to avoid shipwreck in the future; having a good conscience towards God and towards all men. A hearty few thus aiming at a definite something, strict over themselves and watchful over one another, having life in Christ, seeking how to spend it for His, enlarged in their spirit from the contemplation of boundless love, tender to the weak, and examples for the strong—separated by holiness, not unmindful of principles, but never resting contented in them without realising results. What might not such be used to accomplish? Surely, we may pray the Head of the Church to awaken His people. Heaven is a holy, happy place; for the will of God is the only rule there. Heaven on earth is only experienced as the will of God is the sole guide of His people. His will is revealed

in His word. Negatively we are taught what to avoid. Positively instructed in what is to be done.

Nor has the Spirit of God rest but in the fullest control of body, soul and spirit, sitting enthroned in the citadel of the human heart renewed by grace, and bowed into willing submission by the Omnipotence of love. "The love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

(A.) APPARENTLY DISCREPANT PASSAGES.

(1) 2 Kings xxv. 8, 9.

In the fifth month, on the SEVENTH day of the month, (which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon), came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem. And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house he burnt with fire.

(2) Jer. lli. 12.

Now in the fifth month, in the TENTH day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, which served the king of Babylon into Jerusalem, and burned the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burned he with fire.

Remarks have been made upon the apparent discrepancy of these two passages; the *seventh* day, in (1), being supposed to be called the *tenth* in (2); and *Syriac* and *Arabic* versions have been quoted on the subject, as also Josephus.

It would seem to me that in the English version there is necessarily no discrepancy; he came *unto* Jerusalem on the FIFTH day, and *into* Jerusalem on the *tenth*, is the statement of the English authorised version. [Oxford, Nov. 23, 1833. Exact reprint, page for page, of the 1611 Bible.]

In (1) the Hebrew reads: בָּא יְרֵמְיָהּ בְּיָמֵי נְבוּזַרְאֲדָן; in (2) it reads: בָּא בְּיָמֵי נְבוּזַרְאֲדָן i.e. in (1) comes "to...Jerusalem"; and in (2) comes "into.....Jerusalem."

The LXX. render both alike "ἦλθε... εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ."

So the vulgate has "venit...in Jerusalem," in both places.

So the French "Entra dans" Jerusalem.

And so the German, "kam....gen" Jerusalem.

I do not doubt that the nicety of the English translation is sustained by the Hebrew, and that the other translations are open to the objection raised.

Nº. XV.

RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD RESULTING FROM
REVELATION.

ISAIAH xxix. 11—14.

“The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.”

ONE effect of the possession of a divine revelation is to put men's consciences under responsibility to God. Its happiest end is to bring the soul into association with God Himself—the God of goodness—and into a recognition and an approval of His counsels and ways.

That an authoritative communication of the mind of God must needs place those to whom it is given in a position of direct responsibility to Himself, is a truth so simple that it could never be controverted by a mind in which the true ideas of *God*, and *a revelation from God*, held their place. Still there is no principle which wrong notions of religion lead men so invariably, in practice at least, to set aside.

The reason of this, one has not far to seek, if his thoughts and enquiries are guided by revelation itself. It lies in that desire for independence and self-aggrandisement which became the indelible characteristic of man with the fall. His proud efforts to achieve his own happiness may be shown indeed to be abortive as often as he is confronted by *death*: yet, of universal man, may it be

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said,—“ This their way is their folly ; yet their posterity approve their sayings.”

His necessities may be pleaded as a ground for seeking to subordinate the domain of physical nature to his control ; but the lust of domination which seeks to subjugate “ the bodies and the souls of men,” is the bitter fruit of an ambition which has no place in the universe of God, except as the companion and the consequence of sin.

Leaving aside, however, the path of those who spurn the idea of a revelation ; and of those who only quarrel with it when it crosses their pursuits ; it may be asserted, that where religion is the avowed business of men, and revelation is nominally received, there is nothing so infrequent as the recognition of the truth, that authority over the minds and consciences of men belongs alone to God.

Wherever religion or a formal Christianity is maintained, there will, of necessity, be the setting aside of this authority, because other ends are in question besides those of restoring the soul to God and God to the soul. In Popery this is the all-pervading principle, and effectually neutralises the power of every truth which yet exists in that enormous corruption of Christianity. For while the name and authority of revelation are used as a sanction of its arrogant assumptions, responsibility directly to God, in accordance with that revelation, is utterly and universally denied.

But apart from this, the walk of faith cannot be : and the liberty of the truth ceases to exist. When “ the truth makes free,” its characteristic is, that of entire independence of man, in order to absolute subjection to God.

The mischief of the reverse of this can hardly be estimated, since it is essential that God should be removed to a distance, that man may come in and fill up the space.

It is not an object in itself of the spirit of God doubtless to attack evil or to expose the errors of the professed teachers of religion ; but in order to guard the souls of God’s people against yielding to their authority, this is

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very unsparingly done both by the prophets in the Old Testament, and also in the Gospels by Christ Himself.

It was this which called forth the reprobation of the Lord, in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, of those which sat in "Moses' seat." For while he enjoins upon the multitude and his disciples subjection to them as dispensers of the law (for this is the force of "sitting in Moses' seat"), and thus establishes the authority of God's revelation in whosoever hands it may be found; He at the same time denounces woe upon woe against these "blind guides;" and deduces their utter corruption, which he discloses in so many points, from this source; "All their works they do to be seen of men." As, in another place, He had said, "How can ye believe who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?" And also in the fifteenth chapter of Matthew, He charges them with making the commandment of God of none effect through their tradition: adding, in the words of the prophet, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Now it is not so much the particular errors that were taught, that are aimed at in this passage, as the ground and source from whence all error flows: "Their fear towards me is taught by *the precept of men*." Or, as it is quoted by the Lord, "Teaching for doctrines *the commandments of men*."

Even truth ceases to have the power of truth, when it is taught by the precept of men; though error, in a greater or less degree, necessarily marks the stream that flows from man's authority as its source.

The evil of this principle, which is all but universal in the religious teaching of the present day, is, that it deprives the word of God of its just authority; puts man, in relation to the conscience, in the place of God; and extinguishes, both in the teachers and the taught, the capacity to judge aright of the revelations which the word of God contains. "Their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men; **THEREFORE** will I proceed to

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do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; *for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.*"

"If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." "If any man will *do his will*, he shall know of the doctrine." **But** if a right aim be not actuating the heart, the word of God cannot be allowed to speak its simple meaning. "The light that is in us becomes *darkness*;" and then both learning and ignorance must be content to look around for an excuse for not being able to understand what is simple enough to an obedient heart. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." "None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."

The difficulties of revelation are not the real stumbling-blocks in the path of the enquirers after truth. Greater difficulties are overcome in the investigations of philosophy and science; because in these cases the bias of the heart offers no barrier to a just conclusion. But as regards the revelation of God, a **moral condition of heart** is enough to induce men "to turn away their ears from *the truth*, and be turned unto fables."

It was the moral condition of both the teachers and the taught, visited, no doubt, by a judicial blindness, which gave occasion for the application of the words; "The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned."

Thus both learning and ignorance have at hand a ready excuse, for not being able to understand what the heart has no disposition to obey. The most opposite grounds are adduced; but this only serves to show, that it is the heart's subterfuge to get rid of a responsibility it is not prepared to own; and its effort to silence a voice, which if listened to, would only condemn.

Learning seldom owns itself at fault, or confesses that there are any *arcana* which it cannot penetrate, except when it is called to understand or teach the word of God.

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And on the other hand, the want of learning is seldom pleaded by the illiterate as a disqualification for not understanding anything but the word of God.

But the authority of revelation being thus disposed of, and religion still pursued—for it is added, “this people draw near to me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me”—there remains only this, to “teach for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Now it was against these “commandments of men,” or the traditionary teachings of the Scribes and Pharisees, that the Lord directs (Mark vii.) the force of this passage of the prophet; declaring that they made the word of God of none effect through their traditions; and even stronger than this, that they rejected the commandment of God that they might keep their own tradition. And he instances a case in confirmation of the charge of so flagrant a character, as to make the sensitive heart recoil from even a momentary allowance of a principle, which might land the soul in so fearful a conclusion: “Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is Corban*, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.”

But in the parallel passage in Matt. xv., the opposition is even more direct. “*GOD commanded*, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But *YE say*, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”

Alas! there is no corruption like that which, while it professedly honours God, under the guise of respect for tradition, sets aside the only revelation of his will, and perverts the only standard by which truth and error can be ascertained.

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It matters nothing as to the importance or insignificance of the point about which tradition is concerned; its mischief is still the same.

Nothing could be more indifferent in itself than eating bread with washed or unwashed hands;—but it was in this simple matter that the principle lurked which set aside the plainest commands of the word of God, that the authority of man might be established.

The evil of the principle is this, that the teaching being *from man*, it reaches, and *can* reach, only to the notions and aims and objects of man. It never can reach, even when it does not seem to oppose, the height of God's thoughts; whether of his holiness or his grace. Consequently it can never have the authority of God by his Spirit, nor the sanction of God by his blessing: while it seems superfluous to add, that to the soul the prime blessing of the death of Christ is lost. For "he suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might *bring us TO GOD.*"

As to all apostolic, or successional, or traditional *authority*, the Apostle declares that he was "an Apostle not *of* men, nor *by* men, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead;" and so the character of all authoritative teaching is the same. It is directly from God, and challenges obedience to God, for which His blessed revelation is the direct and only rule. "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them!" While in the 2nd of Peter it is said—"No prophecy of the Scripture is of any *private interpretation.*" Why? Because "the prophecy came not in old time (or at any time) by *the will of man*; but holy men of God spake as they were *moved by the Holy Ghost.*"

It is true, both in the prophet and in our Lord's application of this passage, the censure it contains falls mainly on *the teachers* of these traditions; but it must not be supposed that the responsibility of such a state of things rested with them alone. It is said—"This people draweth nigh unto me," etc. And again (in Jer. v. 30, 31)—"A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and *my people love to have it so.*"

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It is seldom that error is taught for error's sake. For the most part, it is a consequence of a previous state of corruption, in teachers and taught. Aaron, indeed, made the *object* of idolatry when he fashioned the golden calf; but it was only to meet the idolatrous feelings of Israel, before which his heart, through lack of faith, had quailed.

Where faith does not come in to give God, at all costs, His place, as in the three Jews before the golden image in the plains of Dura, there is nothing left but to seek to lower things to a human standard, and then to cover the corruption with the pretended sanction of revelation, whose authority has in reality been destroyed.

O did the children of God but know how much hangs upon it, how would they seek that God and His revelations might remain in their integrity! For here, and here alone, is found the power to bring heaven and heavenly glory to the soul. And here too alone are the springs and power of a life and walk of faith; and here is the only power by which the poor heart of man can be delivered from the mazes of a multiform error, and the wretched trammels of a growing superstition.

But this would be "to put forth the precious from the vile," which God's mouth always does.

But if otherwise, whether the fault be most with the teachers or most with the taught, there is but this melancholy conclusion for each—"If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

THE following *original* hymn is one of a selection now forming for children; and it is kindly communicated by the Editors of the selection. Its appearance in the Present Testimony will not be understood to affect its claim to be an original hymn in the collection referred to.

IT IS WELL.—2 KINGS, IV.

THERE'S beauty above, in the bright blue sky,
On earth is the reapers' glee,
'Tis harvest-time in Jehovah's land,
And the corn by the breeze is gently fann'd
Like the waves of a golden sea.

But sorrow shall wait on the reapers' mirth,
The lord of those fields shall sigh,
One only boy
Is his father's joy,
This day that boy must die.

It is well.

And the sun has look'd forth, in his morning pride
 On the child, with a scorching ray:
 "My head! my head!"
 'Twas all he said,
 'Twas all that the child could say.

And see, they are come, they have borne him home,
 And he sits on his mother's knee,
 But who can tell
 How her countenance fell
 Her alter'd boy to see?

He knows her not, with his dull fix'd eye,
 On her bosom he pillows his head;
 When the sun shines bright
 From his noontide height :
 The boy on her knee is dead.

But faith within the mother's breast
 Shall calm her agony,
 "The God who gave
 Is the God who shall save,
 And give back my boy to me."

Though sad be her heart, the bright lamp of faith
 Shall light up its innermost cell :
 The son lies dead
 On the prophet's bed,
 But the mother can say "*It is well!*"

'Tis well with the mother, 'tis well with the boy !
 His breath and his life are restored,
 The child is awake !
 Let her hasten and take
 To her arms this new gift from the Lord.

And I know it is well with the servants of God,
 Nought them from their stronghold shall sever,
 Whether Christ shall soon come,
 Or they're laid in the tomb,
 'Twill be well with His people for ever.

They fear not the arrow that flieth by day,
 Nor the plague that walks forth in the dark;
 The sun shall not smite,
 Nor the moon, by night,
 One who's hidden in Jesus, the ark.

They fear not to die, for the deep, dark grave,
 Is a bed where their Saviour has lain,
 They sink not to Hell,
 But with Him they shall dwell,
 For Jesus can raise them again.

And can I too hope to arise from the dead,
 And Christ as my Saviour to see?
 If I look to the Lord,
 And believe in His word,
 'Twill be well, then, *for ever* with me.

Nº XVI.

PSALMS.

I FEEL that the Book of Psalms contains so intimate an expression of the sentiments of the Spirit of God, that in speaking of it peculiar circumspection is required. Not that one part of the Word possesses more authority than another, or that the truth which it contains is less the truth, or less worthy to be received with absolute subjection of mind. But, evidently, there is a part which expresses feelings rather than teaches truths, and which unfolds the workings of a heart filled by the Spirit, rather than relates facts. Consequently, the appreciation of this portion requires a riper spiritual judgment, which, while giving all its force to the piety it contains, as being the same in all ages for every renewed soul, can yet recognise, at the same time, the particular position with respect to which the Spirit of God is speaking: a position which gives its form to this piety. Without this the true force of the Gospel of grace is lost, and the dealings of God are not perceived. This observation is most especially applicable to the Psalms, which, while full of those expressions of trust which have sustained the faith and piety of God's children at all times, contain, nevertheless, some sentiments which have been a stumbling-block to many Christians, sentiments which they have vainly sought to understand while considering this Book as a manual of devotion adapted to our present dispensation. But if the character of the book is rightly apprehended, these expressions offer no difficulty. We will examine the book as a whole, and some of its details. The most profitable manner of doing this will be—as I have attempted in the books we have already considered—to give the meaning and object of the Spirit of God, leaving the expression of the precious piety, which it contains, to the heart that alone is capable of estimating

which is united to the Lord before His manifestation, while He is still hidden in God. Let us remark in conclusion, that this last book is not so much the connected historical order of the last days, as the expression of the various sentiments of the faithful remnant during that period. We always find in it the name of Jehovah, that is to say, the relations of Israel with Jehovah are recognised by faith, although not yet re-established in fact. And all the sentiments which this produces, whether of sorrow, of encouragement, or of joy, find their expression in this last book. It is a moral supplement to the historical contents of the preceding books, and always supposes the last days and the personal exercise of faith in that which Jehovah is unto this faith.

I feel how imperfect is this development of that which is contained in the Book of Psalms, so rich in precious sentiments. I only hope that some principles are set forth which will assist in understanding them, and some keys to their application in reading the Psalms themselves.

FRAGMENTS.

WHAT is the state of things around us (called the church) when it is compared with that which was displayed at first at Jerusalem ; and what will be the result of it all in the day of the Lord's coming ?

“ PRAYER is prayer, let it come from the weak or from the strong. It is not the heart or the lip from which it comes, as the Ear that it goes to, which is the great thing.” D.

JOHN IV.

“ With Thee is the fountain of life.”

Who is that weary man, so lone and pale,
 Beneath the shade that falls on Jacob's well?
 A lowly pilgrim, from the noon-tide heat,
 He sitteth there to rest his aching feet.
 No more he seems: but heavenly hosts attend
 And wait on Him, where'er His footsteps bend.
 They looked with wonder when they sang his birth,
 The greatest marvel ever seen on earth.
 That humble man is Israel's promised King,
 Though for His head a crown of thorns they'll bring.
 Yes, He Immanuel is, The Eternal Word,
 Of heaven and earth, of men and angels, Lord,
 The Eternal Son hung on a woman's breast,
 The mighty God* beside the well takes rest,
 My soul tread softly! for 't is holy ground,
 No finite mind can this deep mystery sound,
 But worship and adore the wondrous love
 That could the blessed God so freely move
 Towards thee, a sinner, and an enemy!
 Yes, Lord, Thou hast revealed this grace to *me*.
 But see—a woman comes, unconscious, who
 Sits by the water, and as careless too.
 He asks to drink, and coldly she replies,
 Yet gazes on the stranger with surprise,
 For there was something in His eye and tone,
 That ever marked Him as the Holy One.
 Ah! didst thou dream, poor sinner, that for thee,
 Thus faint and weary, He's content to be,
 That for the joy of giving thee to know
 The living fountains from His heart that flow,
 The garden's agony, the Cross, the grave,
 He'll suffer all, His guilty ones to save.

But thou *didst* know, the grovelling heart was won,
 And found a treasure, ere the setting sun,
 Thy happiest hour, thou couldst rejoicing tell,
 That hour of noon, which brought thee to the well,
 Alone with *Jesus*,—from His lips to hear
 What drew the publicans and sinners near,
 The gracious words for which our spirits yearn.
 O blessed Lord! we too would sit and learn,
 And drink abundantly, yea, drink for ever,
 Pleasures of pure delight from God's own river!

PERSONNE.

* Isaiah xl. 28.

ACROSTIC PSALMS.

4.—Ps. CXIX.

Each of the verses from 25—32 begins with ׀ Daleth.

- D**own to the dust my soul cleaves;
 Quicken Thou me according to Thy word. ver. 25
- D**eclared have I my ways, and Thou heardest me;
 Teach me Thy statutes. ver. 26
- D**o Thou make me to understand the way of Thy precepts;
 So shall I muse of Thy wondrous works. ver. 27
- D**ropping-as-if-melting is my soul through heaviness;
 Make-me to stand according to Thy Word. ver. 28
- D**eceitful ways remove Thou from me;
 And graciously favour me with Thy law. ver. 29
- D**elighted I in [lit. *chose I*] the way of truth;
 Thy judgments have I laid (*before me*). ver. 30
- D**o not shame me, O Lord;
 I have cleaved to Thy testimonies. ver. 31
- (**D**irecting my steps) in the way of Thy commandments I will run;
 For Thou shalt enlarge my heart. ver. 32.

FRAGMENT.

How many neglected texts, texts hid away in corners, so to speak, half-sentences, may I say, parts of verses, obscure pieces or fragments of the word, were *realised* in the days of the New Testament. Generations had scarcely heeded them, but they were in the oracles of God, and God would treat them as real, however man might neglect them. "For what if some did not believe, shall their unbelief make the word of God of none effect: God forbid."

"Out of Egypt have I called my Son;" "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" "A bone of Him shall not be broken;" "Behold I and the children whom God hath given me;" "With men of other tongues will I speak," etc.; "He that gathered little had no lack;" "Rejoice, ye gentiles, with his people."

I only put down what just occurs to me at the moment; but they serve to illustrate what we are saying, How the Spirit of God, thus, in a distant age, made scripture to come forth from its hiding or secret place in the book, and from under the practical ignorance and neglect of man, and show itself as a great reality. Thousands of years had made no alteration, had had no effect upon them: they were as real before God as when His Spirit breathed them, and He would make them good, nor let a jot or a tittle fail.

So with us. What the ministry of the Lord and of the Spirit in the Apostles did, in those days, after this manner, for many and many a neglected scripture, the coming day of power and of glory and of Christ, will do for many a neglected scripture still. All shall be realised, and word after word shall come forth, whether of promise or of judgment; and God shall be found true, tho' every man a liar.

The price of the measure of fine meal, and the treading down of the unbelieving lord, in the day of the famine of Samaria, tell us these things in a solemn and yet interesting Scripture (2 Kings vii.).

things in principle ~~and in detail~~. I have not dwelt on the figurative character of the forms of evil. They are rather principles than figures. But the violent man of the last days, is continually found in the Psalms; and Babylon is the full accomplishment of the woman who takes the simple in her snares and leads them down to death; just as Christ is the perfect wisdom of God which leads to life. But these two things which manifest evil, proceed from the heart of man at all times since the fall. Only, we have seen that there is an active development of the wiles of the evil woman who has her own house and her own arrangements. It is not simply the principle of corruption, but an organised system: as is that of sovereign wisdom. *R. Catholice*

FRAGMENTS.

There are two ways in which we learn the knowledge of God—by enjoying Him—or by our needs, to which He ministers. At present it is chiefly the latter: by and bye it will be the former.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, note the *Father's love* in *falling on the son's neck*, and kissing him in all his rags; then *introducing him into the house*, clothed in the *best robe*. It would have been *discreditable* to the Father, had his son been in his house in rags.

An ambassador is not *of* the country into which he is sent: so we, having to bear witness for Christ down here, should do so according to the glory in which he has set us: and, as being born from above, carry out into the daily details of our conversation the great and heavenly principles of that country, to which by our new birth we belong.

All through the gospel of John we find Christ occupied with putting His disciples in the same place with Himself, before God and before the world.

Gal. 6:7

Nº XVIII.

ECCLESIASTES.

THE Book of Ecclesiastes is up to a certain point, the inverse of the Book of Proverbs. It is the experience of a man who—retaining wisdom, that he may judge of all—makes trial of everything under the sun that could be supposed capable of rendering men happy. That is, by enjoying everything that human capacity can entertain as a means of joy. The effect of this trial was the discovery that all is vanity and vexation of spirit; that every effort to be happy in possessing the earth, in whatever way it may be, ends in nothing. There is a canker worm at the root. The greater the capacity of enjoyment, the deeper and wider is the experience of disappointment and vexation of spirit. Pleasure does not satisfy, and even the idea of securing happiness in this world by an unusual degree of righteousness, cannot be realised. Evil is there, and the government of God in such a world as this, is not in exercise to secure happiness to man here below—a happiness drawn from things below, and resting on their stability. There is no allusion to the truth that we are dead in sin and transgression. It is the result of the experience which he has gone through, and which he sets before us. As to the things around us, there is nothing better than to enjoy the things which God has given us; and finally, the fear of the Lord is the whole of man, as the rule of his walk on earth. His own capacities do not make him happy, even when he has everything at command. “For what can the man do that cometh after the king?” Man fails to secure joy; and permanent joy is not to be found for man. Consequently, if there be any, it is with the sense that it cannot be retained. The moral of this book goes even farther than that of the proverbs—on one side at least; for we must remember that it is this world that is in question (*under the sun*). Wisdom avails no more than folly. The difference between them is as great as that between light and darkness. But one event happeneth to them all, and much reflection only makes us

to us. Only remark with what earnestness, with what tenderness He tells His loved one of all her preciousness in His sight, and of the perfection which He beholds in her. If Jesus sees perfection in us, we need nothing more. He re-assures her heart by speaking to her of this, when she had been justly rebuked and disciplined by the watchmen, and her heart compelled to seek relief by declaring to others, to her friends, all that He was to her. He reproaches her with nothing, but makes her feel that she is perfect in His eyes.

Practically, what deep perfection of love was in that look which the Lord gave Peter when He had denied Him! What a moment was that when without reproach, although instructing him, He testified His confidence in Peter by committing to him who had thus denied Him, the sheep and the lambs so dear to His heart, for whom He had just given His life!

Now this love of Christ's, in its superiority to evil, a superiority that proves it divine, reproduces itself as a new creation in the heart of every one who receives its testimony, uniting him to the Lord who has so loved him.

Is the Lord anything else than this for us? No, my brethren, we learn His love, we learn in these exercises of heart to know Him, Himself.

A WORD OF EXHORTATION.

2 Pet. i. 12—15. "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things *always* in remembrance."

The Lord has taught us much and many blessed truths, and when they were fresh and new what power they had upon our souls! They filled our thoughts; we spake often one to another about them: now, I am thinking that one great reason why we have become so weak, why so much failure, is just this, that what we have *known* we have not kept "*always* in remembrance." Had the church not forgotten what it did know, surely she would not have failed as she has. Did we individually walk as *always in remembrance* of what we learn from the Lord by His Word, I am sure we should find ourselves gaining strength, and increasing too, in knowledge of Him.

N^o. XX.

THE SON OF GOD.

“Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet.”—*Heb.* xi. 8.

N^o. V.

IN the opening of the Gospel by St. Luke, one is struck by the deep and vivid expression of intimacy between heaven and earth, which is found and felt to be there. It is man's necessity and weakness which open the heavenly door; but once opened, it is thrown wide open.

Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless. They were of the priestly family, the seed of Aaron. But it was not their righteousnesses that opened heaven to them, but their need and infirmities. Elizabeth was barren, and they were both now well-stricken in age; and their point of real blessing lay there, lay in their sorrow and weakness. For to the barren wife and the childless husband, Gabriel comes with a word of promise from heaven. But, as we said, heaven being once opened, is flung wide open. Angels are all action and joy; and no matter, whether it be the Temple in the royal holy city, or a distant village in despised Galilee, Gabriel with equal readiness visits either and both. The glory of God also fills the fields of Bethlehem, as well as hosts of angels. The Holy Ghost, in His divine light and power, fills His elect vessels; and the Son Himself assumes flesh. Heaven and earth are very near each other. The action and the joy, which had begun on high, are felt and answered from the scene here below: the shepherds, the favoured women, the aged priest and the unborn child, share the holy enthusiasm of the moment, and waiting saints go forth from the place of expectation.

I know no scripture finer than these chapters (Luke i. ii.) in this character. It was, as in a moment, in the twinkling

The Son of God.

that the *place* of the glory is so near that, in other days, a ladder measured the distance in the eye of Jacob, and so does it still measure the same distance in the eye of faith—and we know also that the *time* of it is so near, that the twinkling of an eye will be enough to accomplish the journey in its appointed season.

We only need the happy faith which realises it all to the soul.

Our Father's house! our Father's house!
 In spirit we are there—
 The gather'd of the Father's hand,
 The objects of His care.

Our Father's house! no more our souls
 At fearful distance bow,
 We enter in by Jesu's blood,
 With happy boldness now.

Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
 What there the Spirit knows,
 The draughts of bliss it drinketh there,
 Amid that blest repose.

Our Father! thought had never dream'd
 That love like thine could be—
 Mysterious love which brings us thus
 So very near to Thee!

May these meditations help our souls to know this nearness and this reality of the blessed things of faith. Amen.

“WE KNOW THAT THE SON OF GOD IS COME, AND HAS 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—THIS IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE. LITTLE CHILDREN, KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS.”

NOTE.—I have learnt that some things in No. II. of these meditations on “The Son of God” have been an offence to many. I am well aware, that in the heat, and under the influence, of certain feelings at the time, I was led to expressions which I should not now use, and have thus conveyed my mind too boldly and unguardedly. I am grieved if any child of God have been offended through this. I would not lead him from the place of the knowledge and worship of Christ, into that of speculation or discussion about Him. This unguardedness and boldness has led also, I believe, to a misapprehension of my mind to some extent. This is also my fault and and my regret.

I receive the manhood in the Person of the blessed Christ of God, as simply and surely as I do His Godhead. But I receive it in its purity and perfection, with no *taint* of sin, or *consequence* of sin in it. All the sorrows and the fears, the weariness and the pains, the conflicts, the cries, the agonies and the death of the Lord Jesus were deep realities. Never had I any other thought. And if my words in that paper, or any where else, have led any not to find in the Jesus that I have presented to them, their kinsman, in the sense of His having partaken of flesh and blood, because of the children, I would restore their soul with all care and diligence. No language that I could use would be too strong to convey the assurance I have of the reality of the manhood and of the death of that sacred Person, the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, and the Christ of God. He was the slain Lamb of God, the Son of Man by wicked hands killed and crucified, though He gave up His life; a mystery, which the mystery of His Person, “God manifest in the flesh,” suggests, and which Scripture reveals. To Him be praise for ever and ever!

N^o XXII.

GRACE.

How refreshing it is to our souls to think of the *grace* of God; for what do we not owe to that grace? May the God of all grace guide us, whilst for a little we dwell upon this blessed aspect of His character towards, us poor sinners!

The very fact that we are *sinners* at once brings in the necessity, that if God act towards us at all, it should be *by* grace. The Scripture recognizes but two ways of our dealing with God, and He with us, and those ways complete in themselves, either *all* works, i.e. obedience, or *all* grace, i.e. the ground of works being *entirely* forfeited, so that entire *grace* can alone reach the case. Now that there has been a flaw *somewhere* in his obedience, the most *hardy* would scarcely dare to deny, and, therefore, if we are to be saved it must be by *grace*. But without entering on that question now, let us trace a little the *stream* of grace. That it was *grace* that set God in motion towards us, for the purpose of our salvation and complete blessing, the Scripture declares to us. For speaking of the calling with which He calls us, "the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself" (Eph. i. 5), He says it is "to the praise of the glory of His *grace* wherein He hath *bestowed His favour upon us* in the Beloved." For so I believe it ought to be rendered. Not so much His bringing us to acceptance in Christ, as He subsequently does, as the original movement of His heart towards us in Christ at first. The word is the same as, "Hail, Mary, highly favoured," i.e. the subject of favour. And as He foreknew, and fore-provided for our case as *sinners* in the Lamb slain *before* the foundation of the world, this necessarily follows. And as it was grace that began, so grace has equally showed itself forth in all its ways. The dispensational wisdom, wherein God has brought forth His grace, shines marvellously forth. He waited till the law had run its full course, "as a school-

master unto Christ," until it had shewn by its heavy yoke, which they could not bear, the helplessness of the sinner, man, and the inefficiency of the blood of bulls and goats (Heb. x.), to meet the manifested need. He waited, and then in the *fulness of time* He sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under law. What forbearing grace and wisdom! How necessary for us—"For I knew thee, that thy neck was as brass"! It came, therefore, at the right time; for "when we were yet without strength (proved to be so dispensationally), *in due time* Christ died for the ungodly." And, indeed, as I said, God has taken occasion thus to *set forth* and shew forth His grace, and that it *is* grace. "God *commendeth* His love toward us, in that, while we were *yet* sinners, Christ died for us."

Nor is it this only; but look at the whole calling of the Church, look at what God did for the Church at once, in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ—He took it once from the horrible pit, out of which it was hewed (Eph. ii. 1—3), and at once, at one bound, taking us just as He found us, but putting away our sins by the blood of Christ, "even *when, or though*, we were dead in sins, He quickened us together with Christ (by *grace* ye are saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And, indeed, the next verse tells us this is to be the thing specially displayed and illustrated hereby hereafter, "That in the ages to come He might shew forth the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." And how it loves in that passage to dwell on this one thought of grace; cutting away everything which for a moment could intercept the view. "For by grace *are* ye saved through faith," and that very faith (the hand by which we receive it) not of yourselves: *it* is the *gift* of God. Not surely of works, for we are His workmanship, and how can the workmanship boast itself against the *workman*, as though it were anything in itself?

Then, again, look at the place whereinto we are brought by it. It is not merely a number of *blessings*, as we have it in our translation (Eph. i. 3), but one unbroken, un-

clouded *charter* of blessing—"all spiritual *blessing*, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

To return. The more we study the salvation and blessing of the Church in Eph. ii. and i., the more do we see that it is, *must* be of grace. The depth and height of it cuts every string of human claim or strength.

Take another view. Look at the *person* in whom this grace comes—God's Son, His only begotten Son, in whom He was ever well pleased, one with the Father; what do we read in that? It is the deepest of all. 'Tis an unspeakable gift. He spared not His own Son, but delivered *Him* up for us all. "Angels desire to look into it."

That it is grace alone carries on the work which itself began, we know to our joy. It is, indeed, God only that works in us, to will and to do of His own good pleasure: "Thou also hast wrought our works in us" (Isa. xxvi. 12). Further, we know that—

"Who *grace* has brought, will *glory* bring,
And we shall reign with Him."

He will *thus* crown His own work.

I say, then, it is well, often amidst the trials and corruptions of the Church, our own failures and trials, to look away from all to that grace, which stands forth bright and independent of all for us. It refreshes our souls, it animates us afresh, it inspires the freshest and the brightest confidence in God, and again girds us for our work. "Hearken unto me," says the Lord to *Israel's* remnant (Isaiah li.), "ye that follow righteousness: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and to Sarah that bare you: for I called him *alone*, and blessed him, and *increased* him." The result is full confidence. "*For* the Lord will comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."

It is both refreshing and profitable to think of the simple *grace* of God; for the same spirit that works the

unconverted to assert *salvation* by works, works also in us to bring us into bondage, to becloud our apprehensions of the simple grace of God, and thus to cut us off, more or less, from the fountain of all *joy*, and of *all* strength. For our strength will always be in proportion to our simple apprehension of the grace of God. If that fountain is disturbed, the waters will surely become muddy in our souls. And how decisive is the Spirit of God, knowing the importance of clearness here. He admits of no compromise. Gal. v. 4—"Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by law [wholly, or *in part*, for the Galatians did not give up Christ *altogether*, but would have Christ *and* something else]; ye are fallen from *grace*." That is, ye have left the ground of *grace*, which admits no compromise.

Yes; the sum of the Gospel will ever be found in its fulness in those words of the Apostle, Titus ii. 11—"The *grace* of God that bringeth *salvation* hath appeared to all men, *teaching* us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, godly, and righteously, in this present world; *looking for* that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar, or special people, zealous of good works." This is God's golden chain, grace running through all. That grace may, in every way, in heart, and life, have its full effect with us, may well be our prayer. ADELPHUS.

FRAGMENTS.

It is the saint or the church rather, which gives Christ His *character* before the world—the epistle of Christ to the world. We may know how to distinguish and understand how inadequate the representation; but the *world*, the *infidel*, judges of what *Christianity* is, by what *Christians* are.

Christ must be known by faith to the individual himself, in order that he may be *changed into the same image*: no ordinance can do this.

Nº XXIII.

THE CHANGE OF THE HEAVENS AND OF THE
EARTH WHICH NOW ARE.

THERE is a difficulty, to my own mind, at least, as one inquiring into prophetic subjects, upon this, viz., as to the time of the change taking place.

I might state my difficulty thus:—In Rev. xx. 11, it is written, “And 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.” This, apparently, is after the loosing of Satan, and, therefore, *after* the close of the Millennium. Perhaps, corroborative of this, is chapter xxi. 1, in which the naming of the new heaven and new earth (in which there is no more sea—which, if it is to be taken literally, points to something post-Millennial—for there is sea in the Millennial earth) immediately precedes the description of the descent of the tabernacle of God to be with men. But (as most are agreed) xxi. 9 onward, shews the New Jerusalem to be in the heavenlies *during* the thousand years.

Now (query) is the change of the heavens not synchronous with that of the earth; or is the New Jerusalem let down into *the present* heavenlies; Satan and his powers being chased first; out of them (Rev. xii.) and then out of the earth (xix. and xx.)

The character of the Millennium as on earth, has, I confess, changed much its aspect to me; I used to consider it to be the Adamic possession of the earth, fulfilled in the second Adam. *Now*, it seems to me, rather, the Noachic possession made good in Christ. That is, it is the sword, or power of government, wielded by Christ through *this* earth in God’s name,—a king reigning in righteousness. It is *a dispensation* put into the Son of Man’s hand, a deposit entrusted to Him, in which many a contrast will be taught between men and Himself, as

Change of the Heavens and Earth which now are. 351

entrusted by God. Satan removed, the world subjected, the earth filled with blessing. He will yet allow man to shew out his difference from Himself. And, perhaps, man never shews out more strongly what *man* is, than in the winding up of the Millennium.

If the change of the heavens is post-Millennial, my difficulty ceases; but then I have a new phase of the Millennium as to its *heavenly* glory to that which I have had; namely, it is the glory of God let down into *the heavens which are*. As the entire separateness of the city is marked,—it is a walled city—it may be so. The bearing of this upon “God’s testimony of grace” is important.

I should be really thankful for help on this subject from any one taught thereon. I only state my difficulty, as one inquiring into matters which are all settled of God, and are revealed for our learning; but as to which it is better to be an inquirer than, hastily, or wrongly, to decide without the full support of the word of the Lord.

 FRAGMENTS.

There is no *fear* when we see Christ in the glory above, because every ray of this glory says to me, *no condemnation.* It is because the sin is put away that He is up there.

Stephen was a true epistle of Christ, when he looked up into heaven, saw Jesus there, and said of his murderers, lay not this sin to their charge. If any man loveth, he is born of God. In no other way than by being made a partaker of the divine nature *could* he know what loving is.

A perfectly humble man would be one who was always thinking of the *Lord Jesus*, and never of *himself*.

God made man the centre of a system. Hence *fallen* man always seeks to make himself the centre of things: this is what we call selfishness. But now God has made Christ the centre of a system of blessing, and it is sin to make anything else the centre.

No. XXIV.

APOSTASY; OR, "THOU HAST LEFT THY
FIRST LOVE."

THERE can be no doubt, that there is a *particular* work, which the Lord has in view, at any particular period of the Church's history, when He is acting in any power. It becomes, therefore, a matter of particular interest, to know what is the particular truth, which the Lord has in view at a given time, because thus, with increased intelligence, we become fellow-workers with Him. As illustrations of the *fact*, I might adduce, I believe, the presentation of the original and entire corruption of man in Augustine's time, as opposed to Pelagianism, justification in Luther's, the necessity of Regeneration in the time of the Wesleys, etc.

With regard to ourselves and the Lord's special work now, it is clear that it is an *internal* one. The Lord's promise was, that previous to his actual return the cry should go forth again, "Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet him." That cry was to act upon *themselves*. "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed *their* lamps." What then the Lord has awakened our attention to now, is the solemn fact that *all* have slumbered, wise and foolish together, whilst the Bridegroom has tarried; in fact, the complete apostasy, and departure of the *professing Church* from the truth and position once delivered to the saints. We find that we have been enveloped in *corruption*, the question is how to escape that corruption.

It is not merely coming out of corrupt bodies, though that is necessary, we *must* come out of every body that is gathered on false principles, else we never can have even a fair start: still, if we carry with us the seeds of the corruption, unheeded and unjudged, the result will be the same again, only worse, by reason of our increased light, responsibility, and profession.

If we would get then the Lord's watchword now, I believe it is, "To Him that overcometh" (and that is

within), and if we would know *what* it is that is to be overcome, I believe it is indicated in that word, "Thou hast left thy *first love*." To suppose that we have not to overcome even *within*, because we have taken a position of separation, even if it were separation sevenfold, would only entirely betray us, and perhaps plunge us in the same corruption. If we then search from the word of God, what are the *causes* and principles of corruption, what the preservative, I believe we shall find them singularly simple. *Resting in present attainment*, I believe we shall find the whole, that is, the general secret of it. Look at Israel, and how distinctly do we find it traced! In Deut. xxxii., after all the marvellous grace of—"He found him . . . in a waste howling wilderness, he led him about . . . made him to suck honey out of the rock; butter of kine . . . and the pure blood of the grape"—how comes in the corruption? He rests *self-complacently* in the goodness of God to him, instead of resting on, and *walking-with* God himself, as a *present* thing, "Jeshurun *waxed fat*, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness;" and, as a *natural* consequence, "he forsook God, which *made* him, and *lightly* esteemed the Rock of his salvation." That whole song is of the last importance; it is, I think, God's anatomy of man's corruption. We get, I think, the same account of the process, and God's pain at this leaving of the first love in Jer. ii. 2. "Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the *kindness* of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase. . . . Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in *me*?" etc. He reminds them of the desert land he led them through (v. 7) "I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof, and the *goodness* thereof; but when ye *entered*, ye defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination." "They have forsaken the fountain of *living* waters (v. 13), and *hewed them out* cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." The same is traced with full distinctness in Ezek. xvi. "Thy father was an Amorite

thy mother a Hittite. . . . I passed by, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, . . . and said, Live, . . . I have caused thee to multiply, . . . thy breasts are fashioned. . . . thou wast decked with gold, *thy renown* went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which *I* had put upon thee, saith the Lord God. But thou DIDST TRUST in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot BECAUSE OF thy renown;” and so forth. In our Lord’s time, there He found them. “Think not to say within yourselves, We have *Abraham* to our Father.”

Turn now to the Gentile (Rom. xi). Its snare would be, “Be not high-minded.” In Rev. ii. we get Christ’s own delineation of the corruption. Every evil which you get in Thyatira, Sardis, or Laodicea, has, I believe, its germ in that simple word at Ephesus, “Thou hast left thy *first love*,” amidst all the height, to which the Ephesian Epistle evidently shews God had brought them, and Christ’s address bears witness too (ver. 2, 3).

Surely, then, these things are written before us with a pencil of light; and it must be of no slight importance to the saint to take heed to them. If we would get the preservative, “Christ’s love” supplies one, and Phil. iii. 13, another aspect;—“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this *one* thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I *press* towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as be *perfect*, be thus minded” (i. e. *perfect* in *not being* perfect, but aiming at it). This, therefore, should be our spring, kept simple and fresh to the *end*. “The love of Christ *constraineth* us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead (or perhaps “all died,” i. e., all believers died in, or *with* Him): and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto *themselves*, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.” This, I say, should be our motive, simple and fresh to the end. And then, as the Apostle says, “forgetting those things which are *behind*.” When this is not the case, when the soul rests in *attainments made*, it becomes self-satisfied: it

rests in the knowledge, perhaps, previously heaped up, which, like the manna, only breeds worms, and becomes corrupt, for want of being gathered day by day. And I would remark that all knowledge of truth gathered beyond our present communion, is not only not a blessing, but an *injury*. We can place *no* limit to the extent to which the Lord may teach and lead us on, but when once knowledge becomes an object to me apart from the Lord Himself, I may as well, and better, be employed about some other object. The hardest conscience of all often to deal with and arouse, is that which knows everything. You can tell them nothing new. Their previous knowledge without communion, is like a foil put upon "the sword of the Spirit," it makes it dull, ineffectual. Further, the being thus laden with vain knowledge, makes the saint restless, like an overloaded stomach, that does not know what is the matter with it. He has no longer an appetite for simple things. He must have something new and overpowering, or something to meet his particular taste. Well does the wise man say, "The full soul *loatheth* the honey-comb, whilst to the hungry soul every *bitter* thing is sweet." Oftentimes he mistakes this restlessness, and dissatisfaction for *spirituality*, not knowing that the complaint is in himself, he is not at the right point for satisfaction (John vi. 35), and therefore dissatisfied with everything and every one.

May we not well look to our own hearts; how is it with *our* hearts as to this? Are we as simple and fresh as we once were? The example of Ephesus is full to the point. May we then cultivate that simple taste, cherishing, loving, and receiving *all* that is of God, be it *weak* or *strong* (for one may err either way, Exodus xxiii. 3—6). Let us love the *whole* word of God, not forming to ourselves particular tastes, and choosing particular parts, for "*all* Scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine . . . that the Man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly* furnished;" neither having particular tastes in the saints we select for intercourse—this leads to a coterie and self-righteousness, and one-sided Christian character: further, the doing diligently what we have to do of worldly calling, the doing

diligently whatsoever God enables us to do in any way of *spiritual* service, not critically discussing about gifts; for real ability from God is gift.

“Preach the word,” says Paul to Timothy, “reprove, rebuke (2 Tim. iii.), do the work of an Evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” for the love of Christ, for the work of Christ? Do we take as much delight in His word, for its or His own sake, not for mere knowledge? Surely there ought to be an *appetite* about this—“as *new-born* babes *desire* the sincere milk of the word, that ye may feed thereupon, and grow”—and, in connection with that, putting away evil from our hearts, for it is impossible to grow without that; “laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings” (1 Pet. ii.).

I have endeavoured to shew then, that the root of all apostasy and corruption (and we know not to what length that may go—the more has been the knowledge, joy, and devotedness, the *deeper* it sinks when corrupted), is to be found in resting in *present attainment*, instead of being kept *freshly* in the *love of Christ*.

Nothing is more healthful to one's own soul than the carefully bearing forth of the Gospel, publicly or privately. Distaste for that is a bad sign indeed. “He that watereth others, shall be watered himself.” Finally, acknowledging the poorness of our endeavours, and the hopelessness of the ruin, which we still seek *in grace* to overcome, holding forth the word of life—to wait for that which alone will put all right. That “blessed hope, and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

And if our poor hearts at all feel that we have slipped back, and fallen under the power of this corruption, O how blessedly still does *Christ* meet us. “I *counsel* thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou *mayest* be rich, and white raiment that thou *mayest* be clothed.” To Him be glory!

Nº XXV.

“ONE THING I DO.”

PHILIPPIANS III.

THE life of Christ *in* the soul, and the presence of a rejected and glorified Christ *before* the soul, are the elements by which God associates us with His own objects, and sustains a testimony to these objects, in the world.

All real testimony for Christ in a world that has rejected Him, and all true service for His name—that is, the whole living power of Christianity in the world—has this simple ground for its spring.

This is enunciated, not as if it were a truth unknown and unacknowledged by those who are Christ's, but on account of the need there is, in the present day, for the mind to be recalled from man's complex thoughts, to God's simple power, of a living Christianity in the world.

“*Christ in you*, the hope of glory,” expresses infinitely more than a doctrine or a dogma. It is the simple exponent of a living and a transforming power.

Nothing is more false in Christianity than the *notion* of “the imitation of Christ.” A single sentence from an epistle teaches more, as to this, than whole volumes of “à Kempis.” Christ must “*live in me*,” if I am to live *like Christ* or *for Christ*. All else is pitiful mimicry. It is worse. It is to caricature Christ to the world, by an attempt to exhibit Him, while His real character and glory are unknown.

For what *was* Christ in His moral walk in this world? And what *is* Christ, as despised and rejected by the world, and about to be manifested in glory? I do not speak of His essential Godhead, which all who are orthodox, allow, as giving efficacy to His sacrifice, and validity to their hopes of heaven. But Christ's blessed person and glory have another aspect than this; and His cross has another power. “That I may *know Him*” indicates the one; and, “by which I am *crucified to the world*,” introduces to the other.

But *what* was the moral exhibition of the life of Christ here—if it was not a life whose every spring of action, and every motive and feeling and affection, was not so entirely from above—from heaven—as to be the utter reverse, and the rebuke, of all that has its spring from this debased and corrupted and corrupting world? I do not speak of “the moral sublime” of Christ’s character, which has won the admiration of infidels, and the *conception* of which—to their own condemnation—they have pronounced to be divine; but of that detailed, delineated, portraiture, which the Gospels give of His every-day life, where as the *loved* and *owned* of God, He is the *despised* and *rejected* of the world.

How can I be called to exhibit this; or how can I take my place with Him relatively *to the world*, if I am not, by His grace, put relatively in His position *toward heaven*? and if all the springs of heaven’s life and purity, and heaven’s fellowship, and heaven’s abiding peace, and sustaining joy, are not made mine?

But this *is* the real power of Christianity.

It is this which the full heart of Christ unfolds to his disciples, when, rejected by the world, His love puts them in the place of continuing a witness for God in the world when He is gone.

“Power from on high” to witness for Christ is another thing from that which the fourteenth of John, and the connected chapters, unfold. There, it is an absent Christ preparing for his disciples *a home* in heaven, but assuring them of his return; the certain knowledge of the Father; from what they had seen in *Him*; unlimited power of request in his name, and His own pledged love for the fulfilment; the presence of “another Comforter,” not so much the power of witness as the companion of their solitude, and to make them know the unutterable depth of the union of the Father and the Son, and *their* living union with Him; so that henceforth their life was knit up with His, “*because I live ye shall live also*,” and finally (though these are but the scanty streamlets from that gushing fountain), He tells them *His* place in the world is now to be *theirs*; but not to be theirs amidst its coldness and hatred and scorn, without “*His peace*,” and more—nor

without the visits of His love to cheer their obedient hearts, while they were sent into the world, in the sad consciousness that the world was not their place, but heaven.

It is this which explains that brief epitome of a Christian's course in the world, “he that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also to walk even as He walked.” May our hearts learn, in the only way in which it can be learned, its heavenly power! “The kingdom of God is not in word but in power.”

Few who have any heart for Christ, have ever gazed upon the picture of the *Apostle's* “imitation of Christ,” presented in this third of Philippians, without a just admiration. But few indeed have penetrated the secret of that blessed exhibition, so as to become followers of him as he was of Christ.

It has been observed that “every man, perhaps, at some period of his life, has been *a hero in purpose* ;” and in Christianity alas! how prone are we to live for Christ in *purpose* rather than in *act*! It is a rare exhibition of the Gospel to see a man intent upon “doing one thing.”

But let us look at the unfolding of those springs of action which formed the beauty of this moral exhibition of Christ in the Apostle. Too often the mind misses, by dwelling upon the exfoliation, what it was the intention of the Spirit in the Apostle to disclose; which evidently, here, was not the *result*, but the hidden *spring*, of a life of unlimited consecration to its object.

What he relinquished in his course is plain; what was his estimation of present things is equally marked; what was his future expectation is alike defined. He could say, “Our conversation is in heaven”—which was saying much, if its force be understood. He could further add, “from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ”—which stamped the sacred unworldly character on his hope. But his sorrow was unmitigated when he thought of “the Cross of Christ,” being associated with a lower aim, in “minding earthly things.”

But how did he reach this altitude? And what set in motion, and kept in motion, these unworldly sympathies? There is but one simple and unchanging element, whether

he be looked at in the outset of his course, its continuance, or its close. And the issue or result is as simple as its spring. If *Christ* was the *spring* of his action, the *end* of his action was also *Christ*.

It was the revelation of Christ in his soul that at first detached him from the world, and from self, and from all that self holds dear. It was the same undimmed view of Christ that kept him with unquenched ardour of affection following in the path of his rejection, and spending himself in unwearied service for that which was dear to Christ in the midst of an unfeeling and hostile world. It was simply and alone the same blessed Christ in glory that brightened the future of his soul, and filled the horizon of his earnest and unfailing hope. "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ," tells of the goal on which his eye was fixed. "*That I may know Him,*" in a single gush, reveals the first and last and only absorbing passion of his heart.

But is *this* the Christ *we* know? Is it the selfsame sun that warmed and cheered and brightened the day of Paul's earnest labour, which still shines for us? Or is it that, from length of time, his beams reach us but obliquely, which glowed in their zenith in the Apostle's day? Or is it that our hearts have, with the world, grown old, and with their feeble, palsied motion, say that *the time is past*, for *them* to revive beneath his genial glow?

It is not thus. But we have left the mountain-top, where still he pours his fervid beams, and have got down into the fogs and vapours and dampness of the marshy plains below.

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," is a truth that can stay the heart when all around is putting on the tokens of decay, and that which bears the name of Christ is verging fast towards Laodicean lukewarmness and rejection. But Christ must have a witness in the world till he comes again. And the truth that "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are," may well turn the lonely drooping heart in confidence to *Elijah's God*, despite of Israel's apostasy, and Ahab's wickedness, and Jezebel's corruption.

“ *One thing I do.* ”

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But the moral picture of our chapter is before our gaze.

“No confidence in the flesh,” is a leading feature in it, and one, if our souls would copy, we must not forget. It is the obverse of the medal, with its other inscription, “our conversation is in heaven.”

It is the first expression, the essential condition of being so owned of God, as to have “*His Son* revealed in us.” “Christ in you the hope of glory,” taught one who was not a whit behind the chiefest Apostles, that *he* was “**NOTHING.**” And when it pleased God to reveal His Son in him, immediately He “*conferred not with flesh and blood*”—so that the expression, “We are the circumcision,” or those who are acknowledged of God as in connection with Himself, is necessarily followed by, “who serve God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and *have no confidence in the flesh.*”

It is a negative effect, it is true; but as such it is essential to the possession and the display of God’s grace and Christ’s power.

Nothing but the bright revelation of a dying, living, crucified, glorious Christ—a Christ whose love brought Him from heaven’s glory to “the dust of death” for us; a Christ whom the world has rejected, and who now beckons us onward to His glory from the throne of our God, can ever produce this effect in us of, “no confidence in the flesh;” but this revelation, when true and bright to the soul, does and can. It alike displaces the claims and pretensions of a *righteous* or of a *sinful* self. It can, and must do so, because, “It is not *I* that live, but *Christ* liveth in me.”

It is not *the world*, whether in its riches, its ease, its reputation, or its esteem, that is in prominence here. That is a thing so alien from the thoughts of the Apostle, and has so utterly lost any hold it might have had on his affections, that he has only tears when he mentions those who imagined it could for a moment be associated with the cross. He dismisses such a thought with the stern declaration, “that those who mind earthly things,” are “the enemies of the cross of Christ.”

That blight of Christianity which has so thickly settled

down upon all that bears the name of Christ now, was seen only by the Apostle in absolute and deadly *antagonism* to the cross. And his emphatic condemnation of it is heard in the brief expression, "I am *crucified* to the *world*, and the *world* is crucified to *me*."

But in this "no confidence in the flesh," we see the cross, and the glory turning all that could be a ground of confidence, in natural descent—in the participation of divine ordinances—in the exactitude of religious observances, and the perfection of moral virtues—into "*loss for Christ*"; and "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord," turning everything he had lost for him, in comparison, into a heap of "*dung*."

"The righteousness which is of God by faith," "the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ," puts utterly outside the righteousness of self, or that which is by *the law*; and that through being "found IN HIM;" while the power of Christ's *resurrection* draws him on through a life of suffering, as the legitimate road to "the resurrection from the dead." And if he seeks to be made conformable to Christ's death here, it is because he sees in it the moral pathway to the glory, along which his soul is bounding, like a courser, to his goal.

His detailed life amidst such burning desires, such a contempt of the world, such unearthly motives, was still, in one sense, common-place enough; it had only this of pre-eminence in it, that in the ratio in which heaven and glory—CHRIST—possessed his soul, the *world* heaped upon him its neglect, and contempt, and scorn. "Even unto this present hour [he says] we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."

But did He sigh, that he was thus cast off by the world? No! He had neither time nor heart to think of it, except when some laggard soul, still lingering in the world, needed to be reminded that He who possesses heaven's glory, travelled to it through the world's scorn:

and that our God has called us to the same inheritance, “by glory and by virtue.”

One point was in his eye: *one* object, and *one alone*, bounded his view—“Our conversation is in heaven; *from whence, also we look for* the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ”—and though every step was bringing him nearer to it, nothing did He think He had attained while this was still before.

His own and the church’s relationship to Christ he had fully earned; the ultimate object for which Christ had *laid hold* on him was kept steadily before his mind, and neither successes nor disasters could stop him from reaching onward, until he himself had *laid hold* on this, “not as though I had already attained. . . . *this one thing I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

But is he content to be *lonely* in this ardent race? No! See how he stretches a friendly hand to those who, through faintness, are dropping in the rear, and says, in effect,—“Come on—come on!”—“Brethren, be followers together of me.” And see him, too, casting a lingering look towards those who have stopped in their course, through “minding earthly things.” He weeps at their condition, and sorrowfully vents the word of warning, “They are the enemies of the Cross of Christ their *glory* is their *shame*.” But he cannot stop. He dashes away the tears which, when looking downwards, dimmed with sorrow his eyes; and again looking upward and onward, his face beaming with the brightness of eternal hope, he exclaims—“Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

CONCLUSION.

BELoved brethren in the Lord, is this the simple character of the Christianity we profess? Is CHRIST so

simply, so singly the object of our souls, as to be the power of the displacement of all that we have clung to in the *past*; all that would entangle us, and make us turn our backs on the *Cross*, in the *present*; and all the schemes and expectations, the fears or anticipations of the *future*?

To *his* heart, whose aspirations have for a while arrested the current of our thoughts, CHRIST was all this. And, Oh! may the precious grace of that God who separated *him* from his mother's womb and called *him* by His grace, and was pleased to reveal *His Son in him*, that he might preach him among the heathen, make it the one object of our souls that CHRIST may be thus revealed, *restored*, to our hearts! Too often the measure of practical godliness which may mark us—the reading of the word, our prayer, our self-denial—look not beyond ourselves; or at least not beyond the limit of that service on which the heart may be set for Christ. These things are necessary to maintain a tone of piety, and to keep the heart from being driven backward by the world's adverse current. But this is not “*conversation in heaven*.” This is not CHRIST filling, from the centre to the circumference, our affections and our hearts! This is not “CHRIST *dwelling* in our hearts by faith!” This is not, with the Apostle, to do “ONE THING!”

There is a hand that can remove every film from our darkened vision, and make us “with unveiled face [to] behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, [and be thus] changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord:”—then, and then only, shall we be able to say, “This *one thing* I do!”

N^o. XXVI.

CONSECRATION TO GOD.

A FRAGMENT ON EXODUS XXIX.

WE stand in all that Christ was to the Father, when he said, "Therefore doth my Father love me." We stand in divine acceptableness in Him. Whatever there is of sweetness and excellency in Christ is upon us. Every act of Christ's was in the power of the blood of consecration; His obedience, His service, His walk; and ours should be the same. *His* devotedness is the standard and measure of our walk with God.

There is no sin-offering before Aaron is anointed, because he typifies Christ; but there is, before his sons are anointed, which shows its application to us. We are never to forget that we could not be consecrated to God, if Christ had not died to put away our sin. Still it is not the blood of the sin-offering that is put on the ear, the hand, and the foot, as it was when the leper was cleansed, and when putting away *defilement* was the question. Here *consecration* is the question. The value of Christ's blood in consecrating us to God, not the aspect of putting away defilement. His death is as necessary for the one as for the other; but consecration to God is here the aspect of it. There must be nothing in our thoughts, acts, or ways, inconsistent with that blood.

The blood and the oil were to be sprinkled on the garments. The death of Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost should mark that which appears before the world. The world should be able to recognise that we are devoted to the Lord, though they cannot understand it in its principle and spring. Still it should be visible to men, as it is obligatory before God. Christian practice is the fruit of what we are with God, and flows from it. *It is what we are* that shows itself in our walk.

All our privileges are the result of our union with Christ. The sons of Aaron and their garments are sprinkled with

Him. Observe, they were not sprinkled when they had been washed, but when *the blood* had been applied. The Holy Ghost is not the seal of regeneration, but of the work of Christ.

Aaron's being washed with his sons is like Christ uniting Himself with His people in John's baptism. Aaron was anointed without blood. The Holy Ghost could seal Christ as perfectly accepted in *His own person*; but to us He is the seal of Christ's work being accepted for us.

In being consecrated for worship, their hands were filled—but with what? Christ in His life and in His death. The one figured in the oiled bread and the other in the burnt-offering—"the fat." Every part of the value of Christ is thus put into our hands and offered up before God. It is not only that Christ is ever before God in all His sweet savour, and there for us; but we are to come and present Him afresh in worship—our hands are to be filled with Christ. We cannot go to God without finding Him already in the full delight of grace; still we may bring it afresh before Him. Noah's offering was a sweet-savour; and thus the very reason why God brought judgment on the world is given, why He would not any more curse them, now that the offering was accepted, "For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

The daily sacrifice was the provision, on God's part, for the sweet-savour being always before Him (ver. 38) whether we fail or not in our priestly action. This shews us the meaning of the taking away of the daily sacrifice in Daniel. When this is taken away there is no link with God left.

Unless we are willing to be consecrated to God, we shall never know the full value of the blood; at least not this aspect of its value. Self-will, however, is not consecration; but the reverse. There will be failure constantly in carrying it out; but there must be the purpose of heart to live wholly to Him, and not at all to self. Verse 43 shows that meeting God is the object; and this marks our title to perfect peace. For if there was one spot of sin left God could not meet us. If we are brought to God, sin must have been entirely put away; and that according to His estimate of it. For it is God's estimate and not ours; both of the sin and the blood, which gives us our place before Him. "*It is God that justifies.*" It is not *I* that justify myself by my sense of the value of this blood.

Nº XXVII.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS.

WE enter now, dear reader, into the field of prophecy; a vast and important field—whether in view of the moral instruction that it contains, or on account of the great events that are announced in it, or through its development of God's government, and by this means, its revelation of that which He Himself is. The Lord and His dealings, and the Messiah, shine through the whole. Israel always forms the inner circle, or chief platform, on which these dealings are developed, and with which the Messiah is immediately in relation. Outside of, and behind this, the nations are gathered; instruments of the judgments of God; and finally the subjects of His universal government; made subject to the Messiah, who, however, will assert His especial claim to Israel as his own people.

It is evident that the Church is outside of this scene. In *it* there is neither Jew nor Gentile; in *it* the Father knows the objects of His eternal election, as His beloved children, and Christ glorified on high, knows it as His body and His Bride. Prophecy treats of the earth, and of the government of God. If we measure things, not by our importance, but by the importance of the manifestation of God; whatever develops His ways, as unfolded in His government, will have much importance in our eyes. There can be no doubt that the Church is a still more elevated subject, because God has there displayed the whole secret of His eternal love. But if we remember, that it is not only the sphere of action that is in question, but He who acts therein; the dealings of God with Israel and the earth will then assume their true importance in our eyes. These are the subjects of prophecy.

This portion of the Word is divided into two parts. The prophecies that refer to Israel during the time that they are owned of God, and consequently that concern

things shall be demonstrated to the world, by the judgment and the sovereign blessing of God.

As to the coming of Jesus in humiliation, we have seen it as clearly revealed as His coming in glory. In short, all the ways of God in the government of His people, with respect to their conduct under the law, to the promises made to the house of David, and at last to their treatment of Christ, the Lord in humiliation amongst His people—the government, I repeat, and the ways of God towards Israel in all these respects, are developed in the clearest and most wonderful manner in the course of this prophecy.

FRAGMENTS.

The Christian has got a nature which all the motives *in the world* can never touch : which knows and is constrained by the love of Christ ; but we are apt to let a quantity of little earthly motives creep in again. Hence the charge, "Thou hast left thy first love."

In confessing Christ, we often fail through not keeping "*grace* and *truth*" in their proper harmony : *both* came by Jesus Christ : and in Him we never see them in collision.

Trial may force our thoughts to desire the coming of Christ ; but if we knew its full blessedness, we should love "that *blessed hope*" for its own sake.

Testimony for Christ must always flow from intercourse with Him—not simply doing things because we desire to bear testimony for Him, for then our hearts will be thinking about our testimony, instead of about Him.

In every Christian there *is* the grace which was in the Lord Jesus Christ : not indeed fully developed : even as *in* the heart of man there *is* every evil thing, though more or less developed.

No word of commandment can produce *fruit* : but the Spirit leads us as partakers of the divine nature to bring forth fruit.

Nº XXVIII.

ON THE CONNEXION OF THE FOURTEENTH
CHAPTER OF LUKE'S GOSPEL WITH THE
FIFTEENTH.

WHILE all who have tasted Grace, as set forth in the green pastures of the Scriptures, know and own the fifteenth of Luke as indeed affording a bright expression of that Grace,—I have thought that the fulness of the contents of this blessed portion can be little understood if it be studied apart from chap. xiv.

Chap. xv. contains a vivid, and I do not doubt, an intentional contrast to chap. xiv. A few remarks will elucidate the truth of this.

In chap. xiii. we see the putting forward, by the Lord, of His thoughts as to Judaism as it then existed around Him. In ver. 22, He was “journeying towards Jerusalem,” “teaching,” when the question was raised, “Are there few that be saved?” His answer was an exhortation to strive to enter at the straight gate, spite of its difficulties—and a solemn warning that “workers of iniquity” would be excluded, notwithstanding the place of privilege they might in this world have stood in; while those who, in this world, had not shared the same privileges might be found admitted from the east, west, north, and south (ver. 29). Hereupon (striking truth of what the Lord had been saying) a Pharisee (ver. 31) warns the Lord to beware of Herod, “Get thee out, and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee.” The Lord’s answer shews that the evil was not confined to Herod; the place of privilege, Jerusalem, was in question,—He gives its character and bids it a sort of farewell. “It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

But if Jerusalem was, for its sin and wickedness, made manifest in then filling up its guilt by the rejection of Messiah,—about to be rejected; *mercy* could not be prevented. That mercy which would even have gathered the inhabitants of Jerusalem to itself—which turned not back from proclaiming mercy even to them, such as they were—must have some objects to vent itself upon, objects whose very blessing would be the expression of what it, in itself was, the mercy of the Living God. It was meet and right for the Lord to linger among Israel, the people of the Lord—the chosen race; but if they took this place of rejecting him, others there were none to whom he could speak as having an outward standing before God. Let Israel prove that it could not attain to blessing by its own obedience of works, and Christ would not present that truth to another people, but go on to shew what the real ground and root of the matter of man's blessing was;—not in man himself, but in God.

In chap. xiv. we have, then, a series of lessons laid down by our Lord, which naturally flowed out of His wisdom in the then divinely ordered series of incidences which occurred: all the instruction of which tends to this great point, that He could see nothing in man on which any confidence could be placed for salvation. The best things, in man and of man, get their expression in this chapter; and get their expression too most fairly. They express themselves towards Him the One who was about to be rejected by Jerusalem; but He knew what was in man; and he knew that there was nothing in man which could be, when placed in the light, an adequate resting point for the salvation which He had to give, nothing in man which could be an adequate ground for the flowing in of salvation. And He not only saw this, but willed that we should know that He, the Saviour, saw it, and would that we also should see it and know it too.

Chap. xiv. When religion is in fashion—and it was so

most abundantly in those days and circumstances—power in any one connected with religion is sure to draw a certain measure of attention to him, even from those whose doctrine and lives accord not with the teacher's. In our Lord's day many a one thus ran after him, giving an unintentional testimony to the perfection of that testimony which He rendered. We find Him here, at the house of a chief Pharisee—Himself, rejected by His people, yet lingering in mercy, His heart bent on blessing, Himself the blesser—narrowly watched as to the mode and times of his grace. But He knew what was in man—knew that they wished to condemn Him for healing on the Sabbath-day—who, themselves led by self-interests, had no scruple to labour on the Sabbath in pulling an ox or an ass of *their own* out of the pit it might have fallen into. In their thoughts, He might not glorify God, by relieving a son of Abraham; they might each pull his own ass or ox out of a well. How vividly does His own zeal for God and mercy detect and set itself in contrast with their love to that which was their own cattle. But if the company present would venture to dam up the mercy which longed to vent itself, not only would its watching against Him bring out its own darkness into light; but, secondly, the general principles of man's conduct, first in receiving, and secondly in giving, should be placed in the light. How blessedly does all that laid down (ver. 7—11) of how one, a guest at a feast, should act, flow forth in harmony with His own gracious humble walk. Men around Him “chose out the chief rooms” and places—He had chosen the lowest place of all, and kept it—not come to be ministered to, but to minister unto. But, secondly (ver. 12), he turns to the maker of the feast, and as one whose full heart was in unison with the mind of Heaven, so he spake, for the principles of heaven and resurrection were fully His own.

Was there ever such a time, such an opportunity, for man to shew his own goodness if he had any; was there ever a time when a gracious heart (and the Lord was the fountain of all grace) would have better prized an expression of fellowship with him and his principles. He

was turning from Jerusalem, but vindicating God, mercy, and the principles of heaven (His own principles as the servant of heaven) to bring men there, and God's principles of preparing blessing for sinners in resurrection. What a time, what a good occasion, for a man to take part with him! We read of but one that did so. Struck by the blessedness of the truth he heard, and of the mind of Him from whom it flowed, there was one who practically committed himself to avowed fellowship with the Lord—with a "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

Here was a simple putting forth, though but in an exclamation, of his *taste* for, his heart's joy in, what was so heavenly. Surely he that thus spake was a blessed man; but Christ's mind was fully set upon bringing out what the *ground of blessing* is, that on which it turns; at this time he was not occupied with the preciousness of the fruits in a man of being blessed (as in chap. xvi.) but of the *ground of the plea* for blessing and mercy's flowing forth—the *WHY* mercy must show itself. Christ, therefore, goes on with the thought he had broached before—not praising the man, but plainly shewing that God's blessing will not be shared upon the ground that man has a taste for God, a will to share His blessedness, freely offered and presented before man, as it may be as a free gift.

"Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

How could the Lord more plainly and forcibly have set forth than He does here, the truth, that possession of a place in heaven is not to be any man's upon the ground of *his* willing, but only and solely upon the ground of God's showing mercy?

There was a mighty One who made a great feast, and bade many—marked his recognised circle by invitations; just as God had recognised a relationship with Israel in all that Christ and the prophets had said among them. It was no little thing to be so recognised of such a One. But when all is ready, all provided at the cost of the Inviter alone—and when the word reaches the bidden guests, “Come, for all things are now ready”—this made evident, alas! that there was no will, no taste, in the bidden, for the company, presence, or feast of their Inviter. Each turns to his own way; and so entirely do the things of self govern them, that they care not to dishonour and to expose themselves, if they can but have the indulgence of the lust of the moment. There is something too reckless in their course, for it to suit any save man—self-sufficient, self-complacent, self-exalting man. *My* piece of new ground, *my* new oxen, *my* recently married wife, sways more mightily on man's heart to turn him, if left to himself, from God, than the feast or the honour of being invited, than the place or the person of the Inviter, sways to incline man to go in. He must make them willing, or they will not come in. But when they all had made excuse—when none would go in upon the honourable plea, “I have been invited and go,” as counting it an honour to be invited—when the mighty One had not His table furnished with guests of His select, recognised circle—He would not have His table dishonoured; He sends out another invitation: any that need a meal may now come; and after that another mission goes forth, to compel all, of all sorts, to come in, *for His table must be filled.*

Marvellous and marked contrast between going to the feast as one who had been invited as worthy, and whose taste led him thither—and the going as one of the poor, maimed, halt, and blind, found in the streets and lanes,

called by an insulted Lord; or as one compelled to come in that the house might be filled.

Man's will, man's (fallen man's) taste finds its lure, its bait (not in God, but) in the world, when "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" have their answer.

But if man's getting into heavenly blessing is not of *him that willeth*, neither is it of him *that runneth*: this we see next.

"And there went great multitudes with Him: and He turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

Was the mob following the Lord wrong? Most surely not, if they indeed had taken His yoke on them and were learning of Him. To take a step or two after Him, in one's own strength, for the sake of a few loaves and fishes, or as carried along in a stream of senseless popular excitement—this, man could do. Loaves and fish are baits attractive enough for man; man can be acted upon *en masse* by popular feeling. But how long would this last? How far would this carry man in the wake of Him whose energy was not that of brute force, but of self-renouncing *obedience* to the will of another, unto death, the death of the cross? He who had left the glory of the Father's bosom, for a pilgrimage through such a world as this to the cross, knew that man's energy was not enough to enable man to renounce the loves of the human heart, without which none could follow Him. He was going to give up not only what was in itself bad, but to give up, to yield up, what was most good—even that which He must, if indeed He were perfect, have willed to keep: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." His obedience in suffering was the expression of His strength: He had moral power over Himself: He knew man had not—that the heart of man was not above itself, sunk in sin as it was; and He warned that

His path led where no human energy could suffice. Man has not power above himself. Blessing cannot come by man's running: first, because the course of the blessed One lay *through death*; but, secondly, because the work itself and the hinderers to its accomplishment are too many for human power or wisdom.

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

If Israel found the walls of Jerusalem and its towers hard in themselves to be reared, and impossible for them to complete, whilst the adversary was unrebuked and his power set aside by special aid from God—the task in hand was more mighty far, the enemy more openly in the field to prevent. The refuge of eternal salvation who should build, who triumph over the tyranny of the old serpent? This was not work for man. Human resources, wisdom, energy, and action are as inefficient in such things as is man's will.

The process was now ended, and the judgment of Him who judges righteous judgment could be recorded in the hearing of those who were around him. The creature (as a creature of the Creator) is saltless salt, that has lost its savour—fit neither for the land nor yet for the dung-heap; but which men cast out. Who could gainsay the word? Who reverse the judgment! But if that was the just, natural judgment, as to what was fit to be done with the creature, looked at in relationship to its Creator (it having lost all its saltiness), this could not prevent God having the right to pick up saltless salt, if He so willed. Not of him that runneth, nor of him that willeth, but of God that showeth mercy: He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and compassion on whom He will

have compassion. It is God that showed mercy, because He is the God of mercy; and it is *meet* that He should act worthily of Himself, and maintain his own prerogative of doing as seemeth Him right. Oh, the blessedness of such a basis for one's rest before God, ground that it would have been as presumptuous to have *thought of*, as it would have been blasphemous to have said, "If I have sinned, God must bear the penalty"—though such was the free grace of God, that He willed to show mercy; willed to give His Son, that Just one, to bear the sins of us, the unjust. What sin never dared to suggest, Grace stooped to proclaim and to accomplish.

The effect of the pressing thus of man's incompetency and God's claims is remarkable. The poor publicans and sinners, who had no righteousness of their own, bowed to the truth and drew near to Him who was thus showing them what utterly condemned them; the scribes and pharisees (worse in themselves than the publicans and sinners—for they added self-righteousness and guile to the sin they had in common with all men) hardened themselves even to judge the Lord, the appointed Judge of all. They were not cut down in their own consciences, so as to become guilty before God, so they felt free to condemn Christ for such intercourse with sinners: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." But even such hardness could not hinder Him who saw how the springs of mercy were in God Himself; and how Father, Son, and Holy Ghost had all and each their part in mercy; and how, if earth understood it not, heaven and they that had its mind delighted in it—from unfolding the real strength of Mercy. In the fourteenth chapter, he will allow nothing good to be in man; but sets aside every appearance of man's identifying himself with Him or with God: man is saltless salt, nor will, nor taste, nor power to keep or to get any place before God would Christ own in man. In the fifteenth chapter, in the presence of self-condemned sinners, in the teeth of judges, as self-righteous as they were self-constituted, Christ insists upon God and Heaven as being the grand plea for mercy. And it is this which is to me the *distinctive* point of chapter xv.; it does not present the blessedness

of the sinner saved by grace, which is the great aim of this chapter; but, on the contrary, a much higher and more important truth, namely, that while earth might not understand, a lost soul being found, heaven (in the highest range of it) did; for the Shepherd (true Shepherd of Israel) had those there that could fully sympathise with him, in His joy in the fruit of the travail of his soul, in a lost one found. The One from whom all light flows (Spirit of Light) has, in Heaven, those who can sympathise with Him, as no angel can, in a lost thing found.

The joy (v. 10) is "in the presence of the angels of God," not in the angels in the presence of God; though that, of course, is true too; but here, it is said to be in the presence of the angels of God; that is, as I understand, in God, who is in their presence, and they are, through grace, in His. And thirdly, the depth of the spring of mercy is shown up in the third parable.

The thought of this chap. xv., then, seems to me to be rather that Heaven and God delight in mercy, that mercy is suited to Heaven and to God, than that the inhabitant of earth and the poor sinner may find mercy or that they that find it are blessed. Preciously true is this last statement; but it is one which may be known apart from the Divine, Eternal, and Heavenly fulness, which I think this chapter presents of the suitability of mercy to God Himself and to Heaven.

FRAGMENTS.

The worship of the Heathen amounted to this—bribing their gods to countenance sin. All their offerings had this character upon them.

The Church ought to have been a witness for God in the world, exhibiting that "God is *light*," "God is *love*," and "God is *one*."

Nicodemus comes to Christ as a *teacher*; but he must be sent to the brazen serpent to learn the secret of *life for the dead sinner* before he can be taught anything else.

Nº XXIX.

THE END AND PURPOSE OF GOD IN THE CHURCH.

WE have often the question, What is the Church and what its testimony? put before us; and very necessary considerations are these. They should be recalled to our minds, for we are apt to forget what the Church is, and what its testimony is; but we do not see as often mentioned the end and purpose of God in the Church; and it is most needful, for everything is subordinate to this. Testimony is the duty and service of the Church, but much of its testimony should be in act, in conformity to the mind of God, in its position and doings. This testimony cannot exist without the end and purpose of God in the Church being before it. In a sacred body, holding the truth of Christ as to His work and person, practical evil is the greatest evil. The testimony by word flows fitly with a just position and confession; and often out of it. Testimony is often only considered to be testimony to the grace of God in Christ, to the sinner as first found. But if the testimony of the Gospel ends here, it is so far futile, that it becomes a primary work without result but in producing itself. Nor should the result be forming Christianity.^a It would be Christianising Jewish thoughts. The end and purpose of God far outstrips this, being to gather together a company as associates of Jesus in the glory; and the Church in its proper action, is the means of God to this end, as the body itself is constituted of those who are to be with Him. This is as far as the persons themselves are looked to. We find the expression of what regards the glory

^a Making the testimony only the testimony of the grace of God in Christ, in justification of the sinner *in foro Dei*, naturally results in Christianity as commonly witnessed; but Christianity has to fail yet farther than hitherto. Lutheranism, or the Reformation in general, is a remarkable special example of this. There was no right testimony to what the Church was; and it fell immediately, and at its very birth, into the world.

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of God in Christ by the Church, in Ephesians i.—that God, in the fulness of times, gathers all things in Christ, in heaven and in earth, among which, and at the head of all under Christ, stands the Church.

God, in His wisdom and prudence, makes all this known to us; His known end and purpose being most needful for our humble adoption of His will, and to our having a just conception of our place in reference to His glory. The higher we are carried, the lowlier becomes our bearing; the fitter is faith, not works, to what we receive. Our distinctness also from evil, and care of not uniting ourselves with an inferior dispensation, shew the wisdom and prudence of God in revealing thus His end and purpose for His own glory. It should have the first place in our minds, though its fulfilment stands necessarily last in order. On the rejection of Christ by Jew and Gentile, and of the Holy Ghost by Israel, the Gospel of glory came out. All was put on uncovenanted grace opening to glory, immeasurably distinct from all that could be offered to meet it; and it was in the way of, or through faith, and so necessarily by grace.^b We find one idea of the apostle that manifests the general result, as arising out of the position of those called and chosen; viz., that in every place, in earth as well as in heaven, they are a peculiar people, and as seen here, zealous of good works that became their calling. The world would not know them, as it knew not their Master. One born from above will not be comprehended, and His works not owned, or rather, probably, disowned by the world; being directed neither to its use nor accrediting the struggle it is engaged in. The world hears the sound of His confession, but it knows not whence such a One cometh, nor whither he is going.

^b There is a great difference to be seen in grace acting towards one unconscious of God, as dead in trespasses and sins, and towards one become conscious by the Spirit. "If" could never belong to the first; and it is happy when the soul does not inquire into the originating acts of God, but follows them: but the holy scripture of the New Testament abounds in "ifs" to those who are in fulness of conscience; and we must not vary the revealed way of God. There is no "if" with God. God never falls from his own grace.

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The next matter of consideration, is the Church in the point of view as the place of the education of the associates of the glory of Jesus, till they come in the unity of the faith to the Perfect Man—till they know Him who was from the beginning. But what is “the Faith”? I find faith used in several senses—Faith as opposed to works in justification—Faith as the confidence of conscience—Faith as linked with the power of miracles; and Faith as the sum of life, and walk and confession of those who are called and chosen. In fact, conformity to Christ, and obedience to Him, and separation in accordance with the “calling” they have by grace.

It is more specially connected with *calling*, but this can never be separated from what becomes it in purification of the soul by faith of His person, and the grace that is in Him. Purification is the oil of the five wise virgins, who were, nevertheless, asleep to the hope of the appearing of Christ.

We can easily feel, that there was a special qualification for the Bride of the Lamb required by God. However, grace is the only fountain; yet must there be a condition and confession in accordance with the grace given to us in the gift of eternal life, and of association with the glory of Jesus. How vainly do we see the strength of saints wasted in a thousand ways, and diverted from the object set before them by God—how much service attempted by those who are ranking only as “little children,” and who in the end manifest themselves not to have kept themselves in subjection, and, moreover, are ignorant of the way of righteousness, and have their senses unexercised to discern good and evil? It is a painful lesson to learn by looking back, how impure the way has been while the things of God have been in the mouth. The action of the Church as gathered to God has not been understood, or it would not have been thus. The end and purpose of God in it was not held as needful to be secured, or it would not have occurred.^c

^c I believe also, had the end and purpose of God in the Church been more distinctly held and followed in truth, that call to service would have been more manifest.

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We often find among Christians a thought, that the condition of doing what they would not, and not doing what they would, or that the flesh should be lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, in equal and doubtful balance, is the normal condition of the believer, to which they are necessarily subject. So far from it, these places are an exposition of the case of those who do not apprehend the power and extent of grace, viz., that grace has provided Jesus to be looked at, fed upon, and made the object of desire. It is this brings Christ as risen in his life and grace into the soul. Let them do so, and they shall be in no such condition. They shall thank God by Christ Jesus, and not be under the law. Few may be really inclined to have all that can be given; it would rob them too deeply of what they cherish, (which it would) of the affection as well as of the enjoyment of evil. But this is the only method by which I can pass by my affections, and reach and enjoy the power of God. The conflict is not with my sin, but whether I will come to Christ for its undoing or not. Many are ignorant of the way of God in this. They pray against their evil; but do not know that the glory of God seen as in a mirror in Jesus, will pass them on in an effectiveness they have not known to the object of their desire. God loves them; but the new creature is not established.

One thing may be held, therefore, as true, that, by the faith of Him, no evil need remain unovercome, or not displaced by Christ, or any grace remain unpartaken of. To use grace is eating and drinking indeed; and Jesus will be the one to raise those that eat and drink from the dead; for His life is in them. We are given access while yet but just born to consciousness; and we can be receiving from the first day of our admittance. Many a chastisement does the child receive from the father for sluggishness and forgetfulness in his progress. Servants receive reproof from the Lord for neglect of service. Service is a great place of perfecting, while a good confession is held to. God will, however, use what He finds to carry His word where He wills it should go; but it will be worse carried if not carried by instruments not

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only morally correct and zealous for the dispersion of the gospel, but purified by faith and called of God, and acquainted and exercised in the ways of God.

In considering what "the faith" is, we see it must necessarily (and mainly so, from the character of faith relating to the future) be found in all that relates to separation from this present evil age. "Be not conformed to this world, but transformed in the renewing of your minds." The action, disposition, and tastes of the Spirit are natural to the new man, because (in intelligence of the calling we have received) if these are maintained by the power and prevalence of them through faith (for it is of grace), they will never suffer the man to remain in accordance with the world, its action, tastes and dispositions. So nearly allied are the "not being conformed," and "being transformed."

The end and purpose of God in the Church in this respect are, that the intelligence of what becomes our calling, and the dispositions that are of God, should be educated in it. And what can a thing be that does not answer the end and purpose of its creator? *He gave gifts to this end.* Let us set out that remarkable word in Ephes. iv., "And he gave some apostles . . . some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

We find, in Philip. iii. a promise, that what was wanting to any, should be revealed to make them up. We see in Philippians ii., how, the suggestions of Paul for their growth in the faith being withdrawn, they must, with fear and trembling, make up the measure among themselves; for it was God that was to work to the willing and doing of it by His divine energy: thus, to render every man perfect in Christ Jesus, Paul laboured according to the working of God, which worked in him mightily. Christ is the full measure in all things, "as ye, therefore, have received Christ, so walk in Him." We see it said of some, that by the time they should be teachers, they were still ignorant of the first principles of the

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doctrine of Christ—"babes not having their senses exercised to discern between good and evil." To us it would be ignorance of what became our calling, should not our senses be exercised—"He that doeth righteousness is born of God." There is to us a righteousness according to that calling, and "he that doeth righteousness is righteous, as [after the same manner as, *καθὼς*] Christ is righteous." The faith that is the sum of life, and walk according to our calling, is necessarily nearly allied with the hope of the Gospel. If you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.

We hear also of "striving for the faith once delivered to the saints." Now we see one Lord and one faith joined one faith—that is a separation and obedience to our calling—necessarily one under one Lord.—One faith, that is of Jew and Gentile; of these two Christ having made one in resurrection, having destroyed all obstacles by death; the third chapter being a parenthesis, and the fourth a continuance of the second; and recollecting the unity of the faith which men were to be brought to by the *means appointed*, we see a consistency of path with our calling, in which it was necessary for full blessing to be agreed (see Phil. iv. 2); but it was practical. It is necessary in our evil day, to strive together to maintain it. I apprehend also that the works of faith of James ii., are allied with this. What becomes the Lord of *glory* is the point started from. The works of faith are then proceeded with; and his argument is, that if love, which fulfils none of its pretensions, is not love, so faith, that fulfils none of the purposes of redemption is not faith. "He died for our sins to redeem us out of this present evil age, according to the will of God and our Father"; and we are not redeemed out of it.

All this greatly affects the unity of the body—the Church. The *end* and purpose of God are as surely and more necessary, than primary qualification, so to speak. If I make the primary qualification, viz., being alive to God through faith of the Son, as the only ground of the oneness of the body (and many may be unawares let in who have it not), what an endless maze of varieties

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and measures do I admit professedly (though the progress of souls, I allow, may be different)—varieties that touch essentials, and sit down content with this, that one acknowledges the other, as it is termed, a Christian; yet it is the unity of the faith we are to come up to. Have believers this proposed to them amidst all the ruin and difficulties of the Church? If we read the beginning of 1 John ii., we shall see how in an evil day things had to be measured. How possibly can an assembly clear itself of evil ones, but by advance on the way among themselves. Nor can we put aside the vagueness and uncertainty of the condition of a soul who has feelings, even to say the inward testimony of grace, with knowledge in the truth. In a day of deadness and darkness, light was brought in and spread abroad as to the testimony of the Spirit to the Child of God. It can never be put aside; but in that day of darkness, this becoming a leading circumstance to go by, the time came, that under the name of experience, a door was opened for much feeling that was not of God; and I would only ask the experience of the sober-minded, if they do not find that disapproval of a project in the soul is more to be depended on than the approval. Gathering of assemblies has been affected by these tests and judgment of souls, though not so much so among brethren; but from the “calling” being neglected, and “the faith” as the end and purpose of God not being borne in mind how doubtful the soundness of the reception. To examine whether they were in the faith, was converted into a question which, if they *had* believed, should never be asked. The end and purpose of God in the Church, might be unrevealed to the neophyte. It might be unknown by those that received him, and what the action in the Church towards it might be still less known. Growing up into unity is, under such a state, impossible; and it must materially affect the true unity of the body.

If I take the primary qualification given of God to be of it as my rule of unity, what a vague, reeling, undirected action must ever be the state of it; the end and purpose of God being the very needful knowledge of *every one* that comes in. It is an obligation to reach a

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goal. It would secure, or would go far morally to secure, the humility that tends to practical unity; but the Church has not the elements of unity if the end and purpose of God is not before it. It would, in the knowledge of its calling, be abundantly engaged in the purification of the heart, and in the coming up to the mark of the calling to above which we had received. Without its being known, edifying (properly, building up) the body of Christ is known only as refreshing it in ministry. The knowledge of the end and purpose of God in the Church *binds* it, burdens its lightness, makes its eye single, and the need of Christ would hinder most debates about His person. Baptism would be known as separation, from all things else that are past, to Christ, and progress would increase thanksgiving for grace received and salvation waited for.

And what ruin more complete would exist of the Church when the end and purpose of God was not acted upon, and to what would it turn itself, and to what has it ever turned itself? What use is machinery without something to act about out of which it is to be the means of producing something; or what avails the power of God without direction to the just results for which it is vouchsafed? How different the striving together for "the faith." How intelligent the discipline; how lovely the mutual support; how easily judged the profit of all that is offered to the saints. How full of friendship for the results' sake; and the glory of God in it is the earnest exhortation of one another. How the judgment is helped to all clearness in receiving those that profess their share in Christ. What a blessed nursery for the forgiven children in the steps to manhood, and the knowledge of the Son of God. How wanting we have been in these things, and who will be patient in hearing them.

W. H. D.

Nº XXX.

SERMON ON THE MOUNT.*

JOHN THE BAPTIST having announced the kingdom of heaven as at hand, a kingdom which every Jew expected and knew was to be ushered in with judgment on the wicked and deliverance to the righteous—Jesus, upon the imprisonment of John, began to preach this “Gospel of the kingdom,” and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

The testimony of Jesus gathers disciples; and in chap. v. He begins to instruct them in the principles of *discipleship*.

Mark their position: they were gathered to the person of Jesus, who was born under the Law, and magnified it. “Think not,” said He, “that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets,” etc.; neither was He taking them whom He was instructing from under the Law; but He tells them that their righteousness must go beyond that of the Pharisees, to *enter into the kingdom*. Though Himself fulfilling the Law, He came to display graces far beyond the Law; He came in grace to save men’s lives; consequently, those who professed to be *His* disciples, must walk upon His holy, gracious principles.

He was speaking to a people who had departed from righteousness: He sets before them, and recalls them to, a walk of righteousness.

Redemption is not the subject. How they should be justified and accepted, is not brought before them. *We* learn the value of the atonement for acceptance first, and then how to walk as disciples; but the work was not yet accomplished, that the Holy Spirit could testify of; but Jesus was there in Person, announcing the near-

* This outline from the remaining papers of our beloved departed brother, C. C., will be read with interest by all who knew him.

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ness of the kingdom, and instructing them in those circumstances and in that position they were then in.

From ver. 3—9, He pronounces seven blessings upon those who possess those inward graces in the soul He enumerates, accompanying each with a suitable and cheering promise.

From ver. 10—12, the disciples are contemplated as suffering reproach and persecution from the world, and a blessing declared upon that position.

In ver. 13 they are declared to be the only savour of the earth to God, and a warning lest they lose this savour.

Ver. 14—16 they are set as a light *to the world*—this light (*i. e.* good works) is to be seen by men, and not hid.

From ver. 21, the grace with which they are now to act is contrasted with what the Law commanded: it does not set aside their obedience to the Law, but they must go beyond it.

From ver. 21—24, gifts and service are not acceptable to the Lord, unless accompanied with brotherly love.

Ver. 25, 26. If a man, through unrighteousness, had made another an adversary, he is exhorted to agree with him while he has the opportunity; for if not, righteous law shall be executed upon him, and he shall not be free till he hath paid the last farthing.

Ver. 27. Purity of *heart* as well as of act must now be considered.

Ver. 29, 30. Rather than offend or endanger the soul, that which is as dear as a right eye or hand must be sacrificed.

Ver. 31, 32. One sin only gives liberty of divorcement.

Ver. 33—37. The Law assumed there was some *strength* in the creature; swearing was permitted. The Lord and consequently His disciples were standing in weakness and grace; therefore, swearing became now unsuitable.

Ver. 38—41. Under Law, a man was permitted to demand an equivalent for an injury; *now*, he was not to resist evil, but bear spoiling and oppression with meekness.

Ver. 42. A merciful disposition and conduct inculcated.

Ver. 43. They were to love their *enemies*. The world love those that are kind to them; but the disciples were to love those who were unkind, because they were to have no less a standing before their eyes than their heavenly Father, who does good to the evil and the good, to the just and the unjust.

The fifth chapter sets before the disciples more their practical moral walk.

In chap. vi., from ver. 1—18, it is more with reference to worship—in giving alms—making prayer—fasting; all was to be done with reference to the eye of their Father which seeth in secret, and would reward openly; if done with reference to the eye of man, *that* was their reward.

The true elements of worship are then presented by the Lord in that beautiful prayer, based in His mind upon redemption, but not introduced in the prayer.

From ver. 19 they are exhorted not to lay up treasures upon earth, but in heaven; “for where the treasure is, there will be the heart.” Ver. 22, 23, a single eye is commended; 24, the impossibility of serving two masters—the world and God.

Ver. 25—34. Encouragement given to put all trust and confidence in Him who is the Maker and Sustainer of all things; for He is their heavenly Father, and knoweth all their need, and would have them without care and thought, and foreboding—leaving the troubles of a future day till they arrive. He thus exhorts them to seek the kingdom of God, to enter there; if that is the absorbing desire of their soul, “all these things shall be added unto them.”

Chap. vii. He then warns them against censorious judgment; exhorting them to be more careful to observe their own defects, than the failings of another.

Ver. 6. They are warned against conferring holy privileges upon the world, lest they trample them under feet, and turn again and rend believers.

Ver. 7—11. There was to be all activity of soul; they were to *ask*, to seek, and to knock. Again, the goodness of their Father which is in heaven is presented as inspiring confidence; and He closes, in ver. 12, the precep-

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tive part by this statement—that to do as they would be done by, is “the Law and the Prophets.”

Ver. 13. He then exhorts them to enter the strait gate. The multitudes go in the broad way, which leadeth to destruction. It is a narrow way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

The Lord, as if foreseeing that the effort of the enemy would be to lead disciples into the broad way and to profession, says, “Beware of false prophets,” with fair appearances, but devouring hearts; mark their fruits; for by their ways “shall ye know them.”

Ver. 21. “Not every one that says, Lord, Lord, shall *enter into the kingdom*; but he that doeth the will of my Father.” Many were mere professors in the days when He was upon earth. Many will deceive themselves in the last days, and think to enter into the kingdom; but the Lord will say, “Your *works* have been bad; I never knew you.”

Thus the great principle was established—that no amount of gift, zeal, or profession will avail without holiness.

Ver. 24. Therefore the Lord closes with declaring that *hearing* and *doing these sayings* shall so establish the soul, and make them so firm and unshaken, that they shall be like a house built upon a rock, unaffected by the rain and tempest; but he who *heareth* and *doeth* them not, shall be like a foolish man, whose house was built upon the sand, without stability or ability to stand against the floods and winds.

What a compendium of Divine instruction! Perfect in all its parts. Beginning with the inward graces of the soul—position in the world—towards God and towards the world—as to moral ways and conduct—and trust and confidence in God.

Chap. vi. As to worship, and heavenly affections and hope.

Chap. vii. As to righteous self-judgment, etc.

Hitherto the Jews had known the God of Israel as “Jehovah”; now, the Son came to make known the *Father*; and though the disciples knew not yet what would bring them into this relationship with God, Jesus tells them God is their Father; therefore they were to be

perfect as their *Father* was perfect; they were to do all to their *Father* which seeth in secret; they were to say, when they prayed, "Our Father"; they were to put confidence in God as their *Father*; they were to ask in the knowledge of the character of their *Father*. The Lord will not acknowledge any who have not done the will of the Father.

FRAGMENTS.

The saints have often very imperfect thoughts about the blessing of *Christ Himself* being theirs. When God tells Abraham, "I am thine exceeding great reward," Abraham asks, "What wilt thou give me?"

God acts in grace as One *above* all the evil, and places His children in a position to do so too.

The Christian's confidence is in the *living God*—the worldly man's in *Providence*. The Christian is taught, that the God of Providence is *his Father*.

Man may *think* he can do better than Christ in making men love God; but the result of His manifestation of the Father was, "The world hath not known Thee." The Gospel is powerful not to improve *the world*, but to bring out *the Church*.

The miraculous restoration of the sick, etc., was a little sample of what Christ will do when He returns to the earth, and sets all creation in order—destroying the works of the devil: hence they are called, "The powers (miracles) of the world to come."

Those who are enjoying a constant settled happiness, do not, except when it is a new thing, talk much *about* it; they talk *out of* it.

God begins with His grace with that which is farthest off—"enemies in your minds" by wicked works: other things follow.

In Isaiah you find *Israel* as the *servant*, up to chap. xlix.; afterwards, Christ is the *Servant*.

If man be a sinner, you may *polish* a sinner; but he is a sinner still.

Nº XXXI.

THE HABITATION OF GOD.

So thoroughly corrupt are the springs of human thought, that every true knowledge of God must reach and abide in the soul as a revelation. It is not a conception; it is light—the disclosure and teaching of the life of Him who is the light of men. The word of Scripture does not of itself impart this, for then every thinker of it would be enlightened; whereas it is a fact, that reason brought to bear on Scripture always leads to error and confusion. The spiritual man reads the Word which measures his thoughts; for the Word is God's limit of revelation. Anything more or less is not divine; because, though reason is not light, it is, in the pride of nature, always seeking to rank as such; and it is ever ready to take up even a position, obtained by the Spirit, which does not own it but as a servant; and here always the spiritual man needs holy discipline. The abundance of revelations, though of God, did not make Paul a less vain man. Nay, from the fact of being thus gifted, he required a buffeting—a depreciation of nature equivalent to the exaltation through grace. Seek the one, be prepared for the other. Nothing so marks the constitutional debility of the household of faith, as how few truths, compared with the many professed to be known, are held by them in all the vigour and influence of light; "light is that which doth make manifest;" light is the fruit of life, and declares that which produces it; so that there is constitutional strength with intelligence of its value and use. This imbecility is marked now, as in Israel. That the conscience may lose its sensibility long before the mere man loses the *habit* which the conscience had once led him to conform to. "They sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, and their heart goeth after their covetousness." The most important truths (alas, how the soul feels it!) are often

nothing more than "a very lovely song," pleased with the enunciation of a new truth as a problem of science. The conscience keeps aloof from the severe and holy demands of the Word of God; consequently the blessing of being a doer of the Word is little known—and, what is still more sad, the most important truths are spoken of with a lightness and flippancy, which shew what little grasp they have of the conscience—for when the conscience is acted on, the painful consciousness of imperfectness only finds relief where light finds its source and the soul its Saviour; hence, he who is doing truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God, and then, plainer than any place else, he learns that "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

In heading this paper with "THE HABITATION OF GOD," I cannot divest myself of the feeling, that this tritely acknowledged truth has little or no hold of our consciences. It is spoken of—it is admitted—nay, even wondered at—but does the great responsibility which such undeserved dignity imposes sensibly engage our souls? Do we contemplate in all its wondrous import that word, "I will dwell with them." The heart goeth after covetousness, that is, seeking something instead of God; and, consequently, the wonderful springs from which God would refresh the soul passing through this wilderness, are unheeded and untasted. God made man for Himself. Man may doubt—may refuse the glory—but God, in His blessed grace, is not diverted by either from the fulfilment of His purpose. This purpose, declared for a moment in the garden of Eden, when God, in the cool of the day (marvellous to behold!), sought association with the first man Adam, has never been surrendered on the part of God. True, Adam shrank from it (sin made him), and his children have been ever ready, wantonly and wickedly, to refuse it. Nevertheless, it is the purpose of God, and, opposition surmounted, only adds greater glory to the ovation. Man, in every dispensation hitherto, has retained this natural dread of the presence of God; and this fear is used of the enemy to encourage avoidance of what would

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excite it—yet God has never failed to present Himself to the man who was ready to hear and obey His counsels; nay, He has never set him, in the execution of His counsel or testimony, that He has not presented Himself at once to confirm and co-operate with him. Before the seventh from Adam fell under stern rule which reigned from Adam to Moses, God arrests its fatal course—and Enoch walked with God three hundred years. As soon as Abram declared his full separation from Syria, and committed himself without reserve to the hand of God to guide and succour him in an unknown territory, the Lord appeared to him; and it is edifying to study the occasions on which the Lord displays this readiness of His to be on personal intimacy with him. To Isaac, after the forced separation from Gerar only, after conflict, abandoned—the reward and solace were, “the Lord appeared to him that night.” I cite these instances in the earlier history of God’s people to shew, that though man had passed from the place where God could meet him without remorse, and though the time had not come when the breach was repaired, yet God discloses the desire of his heart, even livingly and personally, to connect Himself with His people.

A fuller example of this we get in the manifestation to Moses in the burning bush. There is shewn that the God of glory can dwell in the midst of what He could in a moment consume, and which He does not consume; that His mercy is as great as His power. Israel should learn to value His presence. That though He was consumable, and worthy to be consumed, yet the God of glory would come to their rescue and deliverance; consequently, when the deliverance is effected, and that the many witnesses of the achievement stand on the Canaan side of the Red Sea—what is among the first notes of the triumphal song? “He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation!” The soul had learned the blessing of Him who dwelt in the bush; and now it ascends to the desire which is always in him who has known in truth the salvation of God, even that He might dwell with him; but this is also God’s purpose; and hence, further on in this song we read, “Thou shalt

bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in." And again, "Thou hast guided them by thy strength unto thy holy habitation." Thus man in the ecstasies of salvation has common thought with God. God and he desire to dwell together. How much Israel departed from this sentiment afterwards, does not derogate from the blessedness and the purpose of him who is exulting in the grace and mercy of God. When law and assertion of competency to fulfil it came in, the spring of grace is closed and the song forgotten?

Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel are introduced for a moment into that wondrous presence, which a little while ago, all Israel in the fulness of their heart, desired an habitation for amongst themselves. Alas! in proportion as we lose a sense of what God is for us, do we lose perception or desire of His glory. The better we know His grace the better will we seek His glory. The tabernacle revealed heaven in a figure only open to the priests—God had His place there, but the high priest alone could enter it; still, though heaven in a figure translated to earth, yet it was amongst men, and God dwelt there; not surely as if He had found a resting-place on earth, but until then He sets His pavilion here with heavenly dignities. Thus the tabernacle never fulfilled the purpose of God as His "Holy habitation." It bore God in heavenly order among His people on earth, till that spot was reached, when the ransom being paid, the sin removed, the Holy God could set up His dwelling-place among men. This it was that David, "the man after God's own heart," desired to find, and for which he is told, "It was well that it was in thine heart." Many and glorious were the achievements of David; yet a commendation of none of them is recorded, but the desire to build God a house. This is distinguished as paramount to all His other services. May our souls appreciate the moral!

At length the time came—"Solomon built Him a house" on that spot where Abraham learned to estimate how God loved the world when he offered up His son—where David was taught that mercy rejoiceth over

judgment—where the spotless Lamb of God should flow and take away the sin of the world, there are laid the foundations of that house which was to be God's habitation. True, it was after all but a shadow of that which was to come—of that temple of which it could be said, "Destroy this temple and in three days will I raise it up." But if such dignity and virtue were attached to the type, how much and how great to the antitype? Who can read Solomon's dedication of that temple and not be filled with wonder and praise at the blessings stored up in that house for every soul in almost any shade, difficulty or distance, who would cast the eye of faith upon it. Surely not because it was a gorgeous edifice, but simply because it was the habitation of God. Daniel in Babylon—Jonah in the whale's belly—knew what it was to set their eye, the eye of faith, on that temple. May we echo, "We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple." God, if we may so say, had only obtained an instalment in the temple at Jerusalem of that purpose which is incomprehensible to us because of the magnitude of its mercy and blessing, even that He should dwell with us. And yet can we read down the page of Israel's history, and not be warned while we admire the jealousy with which they cared for that house. Seventy long years of bitter captivity did not eradicate their love for a temple built with hands. Nay, when their power was gone, never to return, having lapsed into the hands of the Gentiles, the undying zeal for the house of the Lord was still to be the harbinger of every blessing, as Haggai admonishes them. How it stirs the soul to see Israel, after the flesh, go up to the mountain and bring wood, and build the house of the Lord, which one day Antiochus should profane! Nothing so marks the fidelity of our soul's attachment to God—and a great spring in it—as our care for His house. Jesus began His ministry in Israel with this motto, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," and he ends it faithful to the same. The widow gave up all her living for the repairs of the temple. The Lord of glory gave His life because "the zeal of thine house hath eaten Him up"—and He that

was greater than Solomon would build an enduring house.

From Adam's fall till Jesus stood in the waters of Jordan, God did not abide with man in all the nearness which His heart desired. There, and then, the Holy Ghost, in a bodily shape, like a dove descending from heaven, abode upon the man Christ Jesus. The breach between man and God was now repaired, not on the frail basis of a creature, however innocent and good as Adam once was, but on the foundation of the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased. Here God now dwelt; and if even wicked hands should destroy this temple, He would raise it up again in three days. No purpose or act of wickedness must any longer frustrate the desire of God. The zeal of God's house is now the service of the Son of God. Man, in fatal madness, may reject, and cast out, and crucify the Son, who from the bosom of the Father has come forth to link for ever God and His glory with the human family—all who will accept of it. The Son will not succumb, or retire from His mission by any power or malice levelled against Him. From death, the stronghold of power, He rises at once pre-eminently powerful and persevering to fulfil all the counsel of God. The greatness of the power He exercised here in person is only exceeded on His departure. "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father."

Malice against God in the gratification of its passion, only calls forth more of the power of God, though the Son of God is rejected as the true resting-place of God upon earth. Yet earth is not abandoned. The link now established in the Son will be maintained by the Holy Ghost in that body, the Bride of Christ, which He now is building from the life of Christ, as Eve from the rib of Adam, to be presented ere long as God's gift from a world which rejected Him. In this body the Holy Ghost will always abide—not as in former times—the glory came and the glory went. He now is to abide ever, for the link is established on the everlasting foundations of the Son of God; and He, though in heaven, is the Head of the body, the Church, the fulness of Him

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who filleth all in all—the Church was thus to be a marvellous display of the grace of God—composed of materials once dead, in trespasses and sin rebels against God, crucifiers of His Son, yet now, quickened by the Spirit of the rejected but forgiving one, are builded together for a habitation for God through “the Spirit.” Can our souls measure this wondrous elevation? Is it not amazing to be a forgiven sinner, accepted in the beloved? But to be a component of that structure of which Christ is the Head, and in which God DWELLS! O how little do we understand! In the selfishness of our hearts Christianity is limited to our own necessities, and blessed be God these are not overlooked; but yet it has a wider scope, and he who knows most of God’s grace, will, as I have said before, yearn most after God’s glory. It is, at least, but a just requital; and when the Lord has quieted every fear, and the banner of peace is unfurled, He does expect us to glorify His Father. An individual may glorify the Father; but the Holy Ghost is on a service as Abraham’s steward in Syria. And any one in fellowship with Him will not limit God’s glory to a unit; but understand, that we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body. His spiritual tendencies will be always congregational with them for whom the Spirit has affinity. For the body is not one member, but many; and we are “builded together for an habitation of God.” It is not the question whether it is more for our blessing that we should shew ourselves as of the habitation of God, but it is plainly *our duty*—it is the service required of us. Paul writes various instructions to Timothy, not on the ground of promoting his own blessing, but as his duty, that he might know how he ought to behave himself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God—the pillar and the ground of truth. It is something most solemn for a man to contemplate that he is of the house of God; and hence should be with him an anxious *study* how there to carry himself, for “holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever.”

We never will get proper ideas of our responsibility till we understand something of the dignity imposed on

us. Corinth could be a Church coming behind in no gift, and yet it was needful to exhort them, that, as they were the temple of the living God, they should be separate and touch not the unclean thing, or God would not receive them. However hitherto decorated by the gifts of God, if defilement was overlooked, God's presence as a Father would be overthrown. The joy, the fulness of joy, the fellowship of the Father and the Son, which the Son would realise in His body, was to be lost. Alas! how often has it been forfeited by many a goodly company of believers. "The temple of God is holy" we do well to remember; because otherwise we shall have no principle to guide us in the ordering of that house, either how we are to work together with God—or how to avoid building on the foundation, wood, hay, or stubble; and it behoves us personally, for God is careful of His house, and if we defile the temple of God, so *likewise* will He do to us. Grace accepts us, and ever keeps us; but we *serve* a righteous God who loveth righteousness, and will render to every man according to his work.

These warnings to Corinth were not always attended to; and hence, ere long, the beautiful structure of the house of God loses the characteristics of the Church of the living God—the pillar and the ground of truth; and in its place there is the great house in which vessels to honour and dishonour are promiscuously collected together. Proper carefulness as to the principles which ought to guide the fellow-workers with God, would have prevented this ostensibly great, but intrinsically paralysed, condition of the house of God. We see the first seeds of this carelessness in 1 Cor. v. Wickedness glossed over such as would not be named among the Gentiles, and because of the discovery of such carelessness, classes of persons are specially notified as unfit for the church of God. Spiritual discernment, became so ineffective, that on record must be placed a list of cases to help to right the church discipline. True, in this case Corinth righted itself—repented, and was clear in the matter; but what if they had not? Surely God would not dwell amongst them. Need I prove that though a highly endowed

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church, it was declared that God was not among them, for levity, disorder, and leaven were in their assembly; but they repented, and all was right again. The house of God degenerates into a great human edifice; but God's vessels are never without rallying power, for the Holy Ghost abides, and to the last we are to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; we can ever call on the beloved to build themselves up in their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, *but with our eyes opened to see* (as we are taught by Jude), *the fearful association we have been involved in.* But again, how came all this to pass? Was there watching in all things when ungodly men crept in unawares? Watch was the duty of all, the duty of the fellow-workers with the porter. But watching was soon given up, and the church was puffed up, and not rather mourning because of inherent disorder and evil. Puffed up by God's gifts and blessings, it forgot that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, and that when once God deserted them, all the fair proportions would sink into a mass of confusion and jargon. And so has the church ostensibly! But the Holy Ghost still abides; there is still an opposing force to the manifestation of anti-Christ. To the last and worst state, even to an individual, it is, I stand at the door and knock, if any man open to me I will come and sup with him, and he with me. Let us be ever so refractory and failing, the Holy Ghost will not surrender his service; He is still the same, bent on the construction of a holy temple in the Lord, and building together the members of Christ now for a habitation of God. Faithful souls now, as Israel on the Canaan side of the Red Sea, will desire a habitation for God: like the man after God's own heart, they will seek a tabernacle for God. Like the Spirit of Him from whom all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, maketh the increase of God.

"The zeal of thine house," will deeply and solemnly interest them. Widowed and desolate, ONE act will command all their living—the last link with creature existence will be strained in the service of the house of God. The power of Darkness and his angels had raised

the storm to its height against the Lord of glory, and concentrated his lieges with resistless fury against Him; yet was a shadow of a rock in a weary land, and a covert from the tempest. Bethany was His retreat. Two or three there could lodge and tabernacle the Beloved of the Father. And there (see John xii), the grand characteristics of the house and church of God find *among so few* a faithful expression. Thus in early dawn, in the infancy of the church are exhibited the simple and glorious dignities of the house of God. The ark of His presence destined to brave all troubled waters, until that moment when the church will pass from this scene and take its place in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (all historically announced in this chapter).

The shadow of a great rock in a weary land will ever remain—the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. There will be always a Bethany, from which our Lord ascended till he returns again. When the two thousand cubits or sabbath day's journey shall be travelled by Israel, the ark of the covenant in the hands of priests having already opened a fair and safe transit from every wilderness sorrow, into the land of rest. Two thoughts ought to deeply engage our souls. Do our hearts desire God to dwell with us? Do we know the immensity which such a desire involves? See how David prepared, and what sacrifices he endured, even to prepare a habitation for God. Do our souls measure at all the gloriousness of the presence of God amongst us? And secondly, Do we set ourselves to be rightly instructed in the proper ordering of His house? Do we practically conform in all our ways, irrespective even of all our living, or all living people?—the only terms on which He will consent to dwell with us. If first, we desire His dwelling with us, a purpose so dear, so determined on by Him, are we prepared, not only at all sacrifices to effect it, but also in the undeviating maintenance of that holiness which becometh His house—to come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. No thought higher in the soul than the presence of God. Nothing to be regarded or spared that would grieve or hinder it. If God's presence was once known well, we could not

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make so light of losing it. Souls speak of communion with their brethren, and then allow themselves to be seduced from the only communion which can give value to any other. If we say we have fellowship, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, we have fellowship with God, and also with one another, so that the fellowship with one another only flows with our fellowship with God; but with God we have no fellowship if we walk in darkness. Be not deceived, much church duty and observance may go on without communion with God or the knowledge of God's presence. Corinth was an example of this. Israel in the days of Christ were still a more fearful example.

Brethren, repent, and let your care for the church of God exceed every other. It is God's sanctuary, while two or three remain; care for the nucleus of the body more than for the one who has done wrong, or the one who has suffered wrong; your eye only resting where Christ's heart rests—and only caring how and by what means you may habitate the presence of God where He desires. Be a David in desire, and a Solomon in accomplishment. Amen.

 FRAGMENTS.

Faith is faith in the person of Christ—not faith that I am forgiven.

God is the Sovereign. God can let Satan loose to suit his own blessed purpose: but he does not entrust to his saints to allow evil that good may come.

The temptation now is not to give up the name of Jesus, but to connect something else with that name.

The golden calf was not to put aside Jehovah. When Aaron saw it, he said, "Let us make a feast to Jehovah."

N. XXXII.

THE POTTER'S BROKEN VESSEL.

JEREMIAH XVIII., XIX.

I FEEL and judge very distinctly that there is a special character in this present time through which we are passing. The great powers which are destined to fill out the action of Christendom's closing day, are practising themselves, each in its several sphere, with great earnestness and skill. I mean, the *civil* and the *ecclesiastical*.

I do not doubt but that, for a season, the ecclesiastical will prevail. The *woman* is to *ride* again for a while—a prophetic symbol, as I believe, signifying ecclesiastical supremacy. And this present moment is marked by many efforts on the behalf of that which takes the place of the Church, or of the ecclesiastical thing, thus to exalt itself; and she is so adroitly directing those efforts, that success may speedily await them, and then the blood of the saints may flow afresh.

The *civil* power, however, is anything but idle. The wondrous advance that is making every day in the cultivation of the world, proves great skill and activity on *its* part. It is largely boasting itself, showing what it has done, and pledging what further it means to do.

At this moment, each of these powers is abroad in the scene of action; and the minds of men are divided between them. In some sense, they are rivals. There is the *commercial* energy, and there is the *religious* energy: the one is erecting its railroads and making its exhibitions; the other is extending its bishoprics, building its temples, multiplying its ordinances, and the like. The attention of the children of men is divided between these things; but the saint, who knows the cross of Christ as the relief of his conscience, and the reason of his separation from the world, is apart from them both.

I doubt not that the civil power will have to yield the supremacy for a time, and the woman will ride again—though her state and greatness will be but for a little; for the civil power will take offence, and remove her.

If we, in God's grace, keep a good conscience towards Christ and His truth, we may count upon it, that no inheritance in the earth is worth, as people speak, many years' purchase. If we consent to become whatever the times would make us, of course we may go on—and that, too, advancing with an advancing world.*

I have been sensible, lately, how much the spirit of Jeremiah suits these times. He lived in the daily observation of evil. Iniquity was abounding in the scene around him, though it was called by God's name, and was indeed His place on the earth. The house of prayer had become "a den of thieves," though it still cried, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these"! He knew that the judgment of God was awaiting it all; and he looked for happy days which lay in the distance, beyond the present corruption and the approaching judgment.

Over all this *corruption*, Jeremiah *mourned*; against it all he *testified*; and, like his Master, he was hated for his testimony (John vii. 7).

He was, however, full of faith and hope; and in the strength of that (anticipating the future) he laid out his money in the purchase of Hanameel's field (Jer. xxxii.)

All this was beautiful: the present sorrow over the corruption of the daughter of his people—faith's certainty of the coming judgment—and hope's prospect of closing crowning glory.

This is a pattern for our spirit. And I observe another feature of power in the prophet. He was not to be seduced from the conclusions of faith by occasional fair and promising appearances (see ch. xxxvii.).

The Chaldean army had broken up their camp under the walls of Jerusalem, because of the arrival of the

* I speak simply of things as they are in the earth. I know that at any time, independently of them, the saints may be taken up to meet the Lord in the air.

Egyptian allies. This circumstance flattered the Jewish people into hopes; but Jeremiah left the city, because he would still hold to the conclusions of faith—that Jerusalem was doomed of God in righteous judgment.

All this is a fine exhibition of a soul walking by the light of God, not merely through darkness, but through darkness which seemed to be light.

All seems to be quiet around us at present; and even more than that, things are greatly and rapidly advancing, as far as all the accommodations of social life extend. But the *moral* of the scene, in the eye of faith, is more serious than ever. The apostate principles of man's heart are but ripening themselves into their most fruitful and abundant exhibition.

There is something of rivalry in the different powers that are in action just at present. The secular and the religious are apart, to a great extent. Each has its respective worshippers. But, ere long, confederacy will take the place of rivalry, I believe. The world must, even for its own ends, adopt religion for a time, that man's system may grow solid, as well as extended and brilliant, and propose itself as that which has earned a title to conform all and everything to itself.

Separation is the Christian's place and calling—*Church* separation—separation because of heavenly citizenship, and oneness with an already risen Christ. Abraham's separation was very peculiar; it was twofold. He was separated from the *natural* associations of Mesopotamia, "country, kindred, and father's house," and from the *moral* associations of Canaan, or its iniquities and its idols.

In the thought of these solemn truths, beloved, may the Lord Himself be more real and near to us! May the hope of His appearing be found lying more surely and calmly in the midst of the affections and stirrings of our hearts! All was reality with Jeremiah, to whom I lately referred. The present corruption was a reality to him; for he rebuked it and bewailed it—the approaching judgment was a reality to him; for he wept at the thought of it, and deprecated it—the final glory was a reality to him; for he laid out his money upon it. He

had occasional refreshments of spirit. His sleep, and the dream that accompanied it, in chap. xxxi., was, as he says, "sweet unto him." It was a moment on "the holy hill" to him; for a light from the kingdom, or the glory, visited him. He had, likewise, revelations, and he could speak and write of them. But not only as thus refreshed and gifted in spirit—he was real and true in moral power. He testified against this "present world" unto suffering, and laid out his money, his expectations, and labours on "the world to come."

It was this which completed his character—and all would have been poor without it. We may speak of Christ, and teach about the kingdom—one's own soul knows it well; but to witness for Him against the world, and to be rich towards God—this is to fill out and realise our character as saints.

We may covet these elements of the Christian character. Some of us, if one may speak, are but *half* Jeremiahs. We can *talk* of Christ; but can we *suffer* for Him? We can *teach* about the kingdom; but can we *lay out our money* upon it?

All this may admonish us, beloved—But I have another word on my heart just at present also.

The parable of the potter, in Jer. xviii. xix., was designed to let Israel know that, though brought into covenant, they were still within the range and reach of the Divine judgments, and that such judgments would overtake them because of their sins.

In John Baptist's time, Israel is found in the like character of self-confidence. If in Jeremiah's day they would say, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these"—in the Baptist's day they said, "We have Abraham to our father." But John, like Jeremiah, would again teach them that, though in covenant, judgment could reach them.

In the Lord's ministry we find the same. Israel still boasted. They talked of Abraham being their father, and of God being their Father (John viii.); but we know how the Lord, again and again, warned them of the coming judgment.

All this has a lesson for our learning.

Christendom, or Babylon, has taken this ancient place of Israel. *She trusts in security in spite of unfaithfulness.* She boasts in the Lord, though her moral condition be vile. She says, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow"; though blood and pride and all abominations stain her (Rev. xviii. 7). But Rev. xviii. is another action, like that of the prophet in the potter's house. It teaches the unfaithful one, that the doom of the broken vessel, or of the millstone cast into the sea, awaits her.

This is for our learning.

God never sanctions disobedience. He did not go into the Garden of Eden to accredit Adam's sin, but to bring relief, in the way of grace, for it. So, in the Gospel; He utterly condemns sin, while delivering the sinner.

Nor does He ever commit Himself to His stewards. He commits Himself to His own gifts and calling (Rom. xi. 29), but never to His stewards. They are always held responsible to Him, and disobedience works forfeiture. Christ is the only Steward that ever stood and answered for Himself, in the *conditional* place: and in this respect, as in every other, He is the moral contradiction of man. In the temptation (Matt. iv.), the devil sought to inspire the Lord with confidence in spite of disobedience. He partially cited Psalm xci., quoting the *promised security*, omitting the *required obedience*. But he was utterly defeated. The Lord, in answer, cited Deut. vi., and acted accordingly; for in that chapter, obedience is declared to be Israel's ground of security.

In this way did Jesus keep His own blessings under Psalm xci., and His Israel's blessings under Deut. vi. But all other stewards, in their several turn and season, have failed; and Babylon's boast, which we have already listened to, is a lie.

All this may, now-a-days, be had in our remembrance seasonably: for we live at a time when Babylon is filling herself afresh with this boast, just before her overthrow, when she is to meet the doom of the millstone (Rev. xviii. 21).

For the boast of "the eternal city," as she calls herself,

only the more awfully signalises her for the judgment of God. It is a favourite thought with her, that while other Churches tremble for their safety, she is above such fears—she is God's city, and has His walls around her.

This is imposing. But when considered by the teaching of the Word, it only the more distinctly declares what she is, and witnesses her more advanced ripeness for the judgment of God. Because this boast is defiance. It is not faith in God, but disavowal of His rights and authority. It is the denial of her subjection to Him—of her stewardship, or place of being answerable to Him and His judgment. This boast of being “the eternal city,” so far identifies her with the Babylon that says, “I sit as a queen, and am no widow”; and it leaves her for the doom of the potter's vessel in the valley of the son of Hinnom, or of the millstone in the hand of the angel.

“Wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.”

FRAGMENTS.

Who is to *judge* of the word of God? Nobody: the word is to judge you and me. When this is *felt*, God takes His proper place in the matter.

One's own heart wants blessing. If always occupied with the contemplation of the evil, I could not get on and keep my heart tender. We must be occupied with the power of God in blessing, in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Law says, *thou shalt*; but does not give the *motive*.

The gift of tongues was not the restoration of the condition of things which existed before the curse of Babel; but it was the demonstration of God's power in blessing in the midst of the evil.

N^o. XXXIII.

THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD.

1 PETER v. 12.

THERE is not a single doctrine of Scripture that is met by so much repugnance in the human mind as the doctrine of divine grace. This repugnance is not confined to unconverted persons only; for the very same disposition, if watched, will be found to operate in the minds of those who are renewed by the grace which, in measure, is opposed and denied. It is not that the necessity of grace is altogether disallowed—a certain degree of it is admitted, as essential to acceptance with God; as even the Pharisee himself could allow, who thanked GOD for the difference between himself and others—but its absoluteness and completeness, *i.e.*, its real and divine character finds an unwilling reception in our hearts.

It will be found, I imagine, on strict enquiry, that the substitution of our own feelings and natural apprehensions, in the place of an absolute and simple faith in God's testimony, has much to do with wrong and inadequate views of God's grace. The natural bias of the mind, acquired, it may be, and strengthened by systematic exhibitions of truth, goes very far in restricting the breadth and freedom of thought in the divine word; and makes it a very hard thing for a man to "become a fool that he may be wise."

Two things are exceedingly needful to be understood and kept in prominence, in order to the right apprehension of grace, *viz.*, what the nature of man is, and has been proved to be, under the various trials to which it has been subjected in the dispensations of God, and the real nature and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, as God's full, and blessed, and only remedy for all this proved and manifested evil in man.

It is comparatively an easy thing to dwell on the sense of personal evil, and to confess in humiliation the

workings of a corrupt nature; but it is exceedingly difficult to connect the conscious evil of the flesh, with all that has been discovered by GOD to exist in that flesh, from the day of its first murderous outbreak in Cain, until its enmity found a horrid vent in the rejection and murder of God's only Son. If it were kept in mind that it is the very same nature that failed in Eden, and filled the earth with violence before the flood—that turned to the baseness of idolatry in the newly-peopled world, and exhibited itself in the filthiness of Sodom—which wrought in rebellion against the law of God when he thus dealt with the Jew—and, finally, in Jew and Gentile joined in crucifying God's Son when he was sent into the world—it would go far towards clearing the ground for the admission of grace in all its fulness and perfectness, as presented in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

If my apprehensions of sin are limited by the discoveries I may have made of my own evil, and are not corrected by the results of God's dealing with man, brought to an issue in the guilt of the cross, I shall stop far short of the proved abomination and wickedness of the flesh; and shall in the same measure practically fall short of a just estimate of the riches of God's grace—that “true grace of God wherein we stand.”

It is this which constitutes the special evil of wrong and inadequate thoughts of *grace*, that it disparages God's infinite goodness, and the value of Christ's work.

It is a right thing for a Christian to be desiring holiness, and to be mourning over his want of conformity to Christ; but what is it that gives the power of holiness, and that produces practical conformity to Christ?

The grace of God is not merely negative in its operations. There is a transforming power in the very gaze of the soul on Him, through whose grace we are saved, and who is the object of God's delight.

The true character of this grace can never be maintained in the soul, apart from walking in the abiding sense of the presence of the Lord. Out of that presence I lack the light that manifests it, and the darkness of the world produces a hebetude of the faculties that apprehend it.

It is the province of faith to be continually lifting up

The True Grace of God.

our souls out of this world, and all that is passing around us and within us, and to show us things—the only realities—in the light of God.

And it is just as we get above the region of sense, and are acted upon by the realities of faith, that we are established in grace, and that our comfort and joy as the children of God are advanced, and our walk and ways here are according to God.

What we *are* as the children of God can only be known to faith; and the infinite depths of grace, and the bright prospects of glory, are laid open only to the eye of faith.

It is a true and blessed fruit of the Father's grace "that we should be called the sons of God"—but then it is added—"therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew Him not." It is not in the scope of the world's knowledge to know the children of God.

But this knowledge is essential to all who would walk as the children of God. Without it, and without the constant exercise of soul on this most blessed truth, there cannot be the taking or the maintaining of our right place in the world, as exhibiting the grace that is to be God's witness to the world—"blameless and harmless the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

What we *are* is necessary to be known and cherished in the soul as the power and ground of exhibiting what we *should be*. It was so with the Lord. Had He not been *what He was*, his whole course through the world would have been altered by it. Could He have forgotten—or denied his claim that he was the Son of God—then (I speak not of his work but) his whole character and ways would have sunk to another level in the world.

But this is a truth known and admitted by us all. Still faith needs to be strengthened against the continual contradiction of the world and sense, and our hearts to be recalled to the grace in which we stand.

END OF VOL. IV.