

Paths of Righteousness

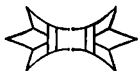
FOR

PILGRIMS HEAVENWARD.

BY

HENRY GROVES.

With Preface by James Wright, Bristol



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*Well known is all this land to Thee,
Through which we hasten home ;
Here, Thou wast slain upon the tree,
Here, buried in the tomb.*

*Thy grace our failing strength renews,
Thy paths are paths of peace ;
If thence we stray, Thy love pursues,
Thy mercies never cease.*

R. C. CHAPMAN.

P R E F A C E .

THE following Addresses will vividly recall to those who had the privilege of listening to the ministry of

HENRY GROVES

some of its most prominent features. No written or printed report of his discourses, however accurate, can, indeed, convey an adequate idea of the intense earnestness with which they were delivered. There was nothing artificial in them. It was the natural product of his veneration for the Holy Scriptures as God-breathed, and his deep sense of personal responsibility as one to whom their Divine Author had given His truth as "a banner to be *displayed*." His whole sympathies were with an undiluted Gospel, and with the triumphs of that Gospel as "the power of God unto salvation"; but he was keenly alive to the prevalence of a superficial profession accompanied with a very imperfect conviction of *sin*, as "exceeding sinful"; and, therefore the trend of his ministry was a protest against reliance upon a mere intellectual assent to certain Evangelical propositions, disjoined from practical obedience and holiness of life. He laid stress upon the fact that what is *objectively* presented to us in Christ, is to be *subjectively* wrought out *in* us by the Holy Ghost, and that we are called, as believers, to yield ourselves to the leading of the blessed Spirit of God, in order that this may be more and more accomplished. He urged the importance of confession by the *child* of God of his sins against his *Father*, pressing the closely-connected typical teachings of the Altar with the Laver and his foot.

We believe these lines of teaching to be particularly seasonable in the present day, and therefore commend these addresses to the prayerful pondering of the reader.

JAMES WRIGHT.

BRISTOL, AUGUST 22ND, 1899.

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**“ Be leadeth me in the paths—(ways, carriage=tracks)
of righteousness for His Name’s sake.”**

(Psalm xxii. 3. Newberry’s Bible, Margin.)

PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.



Salvation's Threefold Cord.

ALMOST all our misapprehensions and misconceptions in truth arise from a one-sided regard to one particular aspect of it. In nothing is this more perceptible than in our thoughts regarding the relation between *the work of Christ*, which faith immediately realises; and *the work of the Spirit*, which is gradually developed, from measure to measure, from grace to grace, from glory to glory. To illustrate this relation, around which, as a mighty paradox, hang so many apparently discordant and yet most blessedly harmonised truths, we would draw attention to the fifth of Romans; and may the simplicity of God's truth not be marred by our want of simplicity in the presentation of it.

The unity of thought in these verses has been broken by the same Greek word (*καυχασμαι*) being rendered by three different words in the places where it occurs. In verse 2, it is rendered "rejoice," in verse 3 "glory," and in verse 11 "joy." In all these places, and elsewhere generally, we would

use the word *boast*,* as conveying a more distinctive meaning.

The chapter begins with the results of faith to the believer in Christ Jesus, viz., *justification* before God, *peace* with God, and *access* to God, all of which are the *immediate* results of faith. By faith also we are brought into the grace of God, and *out* of it we can at all times draw; for out of Christ's fulness have we all received grace upon grace; grace flowing on, as wave upon wave, from the sea of God's infinite love.

The first two verses have to do with our standing in Christ, as the apostle writes, "in which we stand" (*ἑστηκαμεν*); that is, wherein we have stood, and do always stand; for we are herein pointed back to the Cross, and onward to the glory, our standing being in grace from first to last.

The result of this is, that we have three successive causes of boasting; and we say *successive*, because there is a Divine order in the relative positions they occupy, which we must not lose sight of. We will now take them up in the order in which they are laid before us.

I. The pathway of faith "*through our Lord Jesus Christ*," whereby a sinner is able at once to make his boast "in hope of the glory of God" (verse 2). There are no steps here, there are no measures;

* It is so rendered frequently (see Romans ii. 17, 23; 2 Cor. vii. 14; ix. 2; x. 8, 13, 15, 16, &c.); and it might be thus translated in other passages, such as 1 Corinthians i. 29, 31; 2 Corinthians xii. 1, 5, 6, 9, 11; Galatians vi. 13, 14, where it is rendered "glory," and thereby confounded with other words of very different significance.

all is absolute, and all is perfect. From the horrible pit and the miry clay, he is at once put on the Rock, and sings the new song that has been put into his mouth by his God, as we read in Psalm xl. 1-3, and are taught in Hannah's song when she sings: "He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dung-hill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory."

There is but one step from the dust to the throne; from the dust into which sin and Satan brought us, to the throne up to which God has taken all who believe in Christ. This is God's first lesson—a complete and perfect salvation, wrought out for all who are "in Christ Jesus," with Whom they have been *quicken*ed, *raised up*, and *made to sit* in heavenly places (Ephesians ii. 5, 6). It is that one step that seals for eternity; a step out of Adam, out of self, out of the flesh, into Christ, the last Adam, the quickening Spirit; and therefore it places the Christian, by virtue of the Divine union subsisting between him and his glorified Head, in heavenly places in Christ.

Thus, then, can the weakest believer make his boast in Christ, in hope of the glory of God; a hope that hangs not on himself for its fulfilment and realisation, but on Christ, in Whom it is fulfilled already; for he who believes is *saved already*,*

* In Ephesians ii. 5, 8, as elsewhere, it is the *perfect* tense which is used regarding those who believe; and this tells of a salvation which was accomplished on the Cross, and which is brought down to the present moment—we have been saved, are so still, and ever will be.

even as he who rejects Christ is *condemned already*, "because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten Son of God" (John iii. 18).

This, then, is faith's starting-point. He who believes is justified, and therefore forgiven; he is saved, and therefore has peace; he has access to God, and is called to stand firm in the grace by which he has been brought nigh. All this he has *already*, irrespective of personal feelings and individual experiences.

II. We have now to trace the pathway of faith *by the Holy Ghost*, and His mighty power inworking in all who believe. Living faith works, and real faith has its experiences. That which has been given to us in Christ, as an inheritance that never fails, has to be brought out in the believer as a personal realisation.

This is the subject of verses 3, 4, and 5, in which we find steps and stages that rise higher and higher, showing a progressive development of the Divine life. This process is the very opposite of that which we have been contemplating as the first subject of boasting of those who, like the little children in John's Epistle, rejoice in the knowledge of the forgiveness of sin, and therein see clearly their pathway to the glory secured in Christ.

The verses are as follow:—"And not only so, but we boast in *tribulations* also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh

not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

The boasting here is the result of the indwelling of the Spirit of God, in Whom we have been baptised into one body, and Who is now working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. The steps in the pathway of faith here given are four—tribulation, patience, experience, and hope, thus ending where the former pathway ended; but how different the course! It is this difference that we desire to mark, so as to help some who, failing to see it, are apt wrongly to estimate their position, by either setting aside the fact of the finished work of Christ for them, or by forgetting the progressive attainment realised by the inworking of the Holy Ghost.

The result of the former is to shake the believer's hold on the "It is finished" of the Son of God; and the result of the latter is either practical Antinomianism, or a delusive belief in an immediate attainment, without the steps necessary and appointed for its realisation. This is the king's highway of consecration, the royal road along which all have walked who have become truly set apart for God. This was the path Joseph trod, and in which Job, Moses, David, Daniel, and Paul walked. There is no exception—there can be none; and this was the pathway of the Son of God Himself, Who learned obedience by the things that He suffered, wherein

He, the Spotless One, has left us sinners an example that we should tread in His steps.

We notice in verse 3, that tribulations are boasted in and gloried over, not because of what they are in themselves, being not joyous but grievous, but because they work out patience, or endurance. The tried one learns to endure; but tribulation implies a process of sorrow and of suffering to which there is attached an "afterward," when the "peaceable fruits of righteousness" are realised by them who are exercised thereby (Hebrews xii. 11). The gold is put into the crucible again and again, before it comes forth meet for the refiner's use. The wine has to be emptied from vessel to vessel, before it becomes fit for the Master's service.

These tribulations meet us in all variety of ways, from the world, from the flesh, and from the devil; but, however they come, faith can glory, and take up the language of Paul, when there was given unto him "a thorn in the flesh," "the messenger of Satan," to buffet him. He felt the needs-be of the thorn; he knew the danger he was in; he was content with the mighty promise given: "My grace is sufficient for thee;" and he was able to say: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory (or boast) in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Thus Paul realised in his own experience what he wrote to the Romans, and tribulation wrought endurance under the all-sufficiency of the promise

that attaches to our whole life: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He who, in 2 Cor. xii., could boast in visions and revelations, had boasted before in chapter xi. of sufferings and perils, of watchings and fastings, that came on him in the path of endurance, as a vessel consecrated to the service of his Lord.

Thus endurance or patience is not fruitless; it works out *experience*, or proof—a twofold experience, first of God, and then of ourselves.

The trials of the way, when borne in patience, lead to an acquaintance with God, that were otherwise impossible. "Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace," expressed a needed counsel to tried Job; for as ignorance of God is the secret of all our failings, so acquaintance with Him is the secret of all our peace and rest.

But tribulations lead likewise to an acquaintance with our own hearts, not necessarily at all by failings or outward breakings down, but by that acquaintance with self and with the inworkings of a sinful nature that needs ever to be kept down and brought into forcible subjection, at the cost of pain and suffering to him who would so run as to obtain, and so strive as to win the incorruptible crown. These are dark and bitter experiences—the agonies of mortal conflict, that made the life of those worthies of Scripture a battle and a victory. Our experience should be of victory, and not of defeat, albeit a victory attained in a war both costly and

bloody, wherein many a cherished thing, near and dear as a right hand, a right eye, or a right foot, has to be cut off and cast away.

If the gate is straight by which we enter, the path is narrow along which we have to walk; as one of old, in giving his experience of the path, says: "In all things commending ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in affliction, in necessities, in distresses, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, in (*εἰ*, as before) pureness, in knowledge, in longsuffering, in kindness, in the Holy Ghost, in love unfeigned, in the Word of truth, in the power of God."

These were the conditions and the elements *in* which his path was trod; and he further adds the means by which the path was maintained: "By the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report"—all equally the means of commending the blessed man of God as His servant. The apostle sums all up with those paradoxes that to faith are so intelligible, and which yet are so difficult to reconcile in the experience of Christians, leading some to deny one side of the paradox, and some to deny the other: "As deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Such were the experiences of him whose life was a real consecration to God; but it was not a short and easy path, and all he could say four years later was: "Not as though I had *already* attained." In Christ he was complete already, but in himself he was not yet complete; for he was *not* "*already* perfected," nor would he be till he had put off the body of death.

But again, are these experiences fruitless? Far otherwise; they work out *hope*. They bring the experienced soul to a hope realised in his own conviction. That which came to him *in Christ*, in all the fulness of a salvation that was "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil" (Hebrews vi. 19), now comes as the result of the love of God having been, and still being, day by day, "shed abroad," or poured forth in the heart by means of the Holy Ghost, Who is given unto us.

The reference to the Holy Spirit here deserves special notice, and contrasts remarkably with the words, "by our Lord Jesus Christ," in verse 1. As we have already noticed, this cause of our boasting has to do with the work and the power of the Spirit, leading all who have come to Christ for salvation to the working out of the same salvation in themselves; and thus what was imputed in Christ, is now imparted by the Holy Ghost in the new nature, and in the new life that flows out of it, as in Romans vi. 4.

In the Cross we see the infinite love of God, forgiving us all our sins, justifying us in Christ, and making us heirs of His glory ; but in the Spirit sent down by the risen Saviour we have the witness of a present love, the seal of a present anointing, whereby the sweet fragrance of Christ is effected in us, an earnest of that ultimate conformity to the image of Christ which is the personal destiny and hope of every child of God.

The Spirit is the earnest of an as yet uncommunicable glory, the liberty of the glory of the children of God ; and although we have "the first-fruits" of it, we groan still, for we are saved by hope ; that is (in the aspect under contemplation by the apostle), our salvation is a matter of hope, and therefore in the future ; for what a man sees and possesses, he does not hope for (Romans viii. 24, 25).

III. We have lastly to notice the third ground of the believer's boasting, and that is, GOD HIMSELF. This we find in verse 11, where we read : "And not only so, but we also boast in God by our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the reconciliation" (see margin).

This is the highest attainment of the child of God : he has learned to know God ; and this will be the joy to be known fully hereafter only, when God will be revealed to our delighted sight, not as a stranger, but as the God Who called and chose us in Christ ; and Who by His Spirit walked with us, carrying us, watching over us, and making

Himself known to us every step of our way. What we need is to be found in the condition to get this present revelation. That condition is *obedience*. "If any man love Me," says the Lord, "he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him."

It is to this point that all the pathway through which we are being led is tending, and into which an ungrieved Spirit will ever lead the obedient, waiting soul. The Spirit never leaves; but the Spirit can only lead our spirits into the conscious fellowship of the Father and of the Son, when we are walking in the light as He is in the light: then have we fellowship one with another; and John says: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." This is our proper fellowship, and let us make its realisation a possibility by walking in the light.

We cannot now further dwell on this glorious theme, but let us seek to abide in this path wherein faith's songs can be sung with holy exultation, and we can say: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

These three sources of boasting and of triumphant joy to the child of God, form that threefold cord of covenant grace and glory in our triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—that secure to God and to us the ultimate fulfilment of all that has been promised, sealed to us by Christ in the

blood and in the Spirit. May we not miss in our conceptions of truth any one of the strands of this Divine cord of saving grace, or we shall mar its beauty and dim the bright light of God's truth upon our own souls.

The Liberty of Sonship.

BONDAGE and liberty are figures very frequently used in the Word of God. By nature, man, created in the image of God, enjoyed the liberty of a creature in the presence of his God; but when sin came into the world by man's disobedience, he passed under "the bondage of corruption." He was free no longer. Sin was the master; he was the slave. Death was the tyrant; he was the bondsman. Satan was the murderer; he was the victim.

Man of himself never learns this. The Holy Ghost alone reveals it; and when it is revealed, the sinner knows what it is to be lost. Satan's grand deception is to make man think he is free. This flatters his vanity; but behind self, Satan is ever hid. He has usurped God's place, and reigns, perhaps unsuspectedly, in a corrupted will and depraved affections.

In order to break this bondage, the Son of God has come, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem from the bondage of Satan, to save from the power of sin, and to deliver from the fear of death. Christ has come to destroy (*λυση*, unloose or untie) the works of the devil, which, in man,

have resulted in a *threefold* bondage; viz., of the *will*, of the *mind* (which includes the intellectual faculties), and of the *affections*. The Lord says, in Jeremiah: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which executeth loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth." Jehovah has provided a remedy from this threefold bondage and threefold apostasy. Freedom has been procured by the Son, Who says: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John viii. 36). This is "the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free" (Galatians v. 1), in which we are told to "stand fast," that we "be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage."

The old nature, the flesh, loves its chains still; "it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be;" and therefore, as long as we carry about "the body of death," we shall need the redemption-power of the Son of God, through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, to be continually exercised on our behalf. We too little remember this. We have not sufficiently learnt the lesson of our weakness. We realise not the danger of becoming again entangled with the yoke of bondage. We are prone to act as if the flesh were dead in us, because in Christ we are dead to it; and to imagine that

its influence is gone, because its mastery has been set aside in Christ.

Yet, though groaning within ourselves, we are the sons of God, and it will soon be manifested that we are such; but in the meantime redemption must be laid hold on with a firm grasp, if we would really and practically know what LIBERTY means, and what it involves. Redemption price is the precious blood, and redemption power is the Holy Ghost.

The water from the smitten rock illustrates the latter. The rock could be smitten but once, and that by the rod of the Holy God, Who cried: "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the Man that is My fellow: smite the shepherd, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. xiii. 7). Henceforth and evermore the command to us all is, as to Moses: "Take the rod [the symbol of Divine power] . . . and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth His water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock" (Numbers xx. 8).

It is this that fainting souls need. This it is which gives liberty from the bondage of wilderness circumstances and wilderness trials. This will make the wilderness and solitary place to be glad, and will cause the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. We are told: "It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: . . . they shall see the glory of the Lord,

and the excellency of our God." We may well read and ponder over this glorious chapter of liberty and joy (Isaiah xxxv.), if we would enter into the real liberty wherewith the Lord makes His people free. This is the liberty which the Gospel proclaims to the captive, to whom God would give "*beauty* for ashes, the oil of *joy* for mourning, the garment of *praise* for the spirit of heaviness" (Isaiah lxi. 3). Yes, truly the liberty of Christ *gives* beauty, joy, and praise; and, whether we have stood fast in our liberty or not, it *is* our portion—the very first-fruits of the Gospel to every one that believeth; for "all things are ours," because we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

The ashes, the mourning, the heaviness, *belonged* to us, as convicted sinners under the teaching of the Spirit of God. They were our proper portion while in the flesh, and again become our practical condition when we fall under the power of the flesh. Then the fallen one needs again the Gospel of liberty to be re-echoed in his hearing, and the presence of the mighty Advocate again to proclaim liberty.

This liberty is not only deliverance from "the *corruption* that is in the world"—from which the Cross once and for ever has separated those who are "partakers of a Divine nature"—but also from "the *pollutions* of the world" in daily life (compare 2 Peter i. 1-4, with ii. 18-22). The liberty of "the Divine nature" is according to a "Divine

power," which "has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness;" while the so-called liberty of the old nature is but the bondage of corruption, that returns like "the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." In the one, the human has been made partaker of the Divine, that is, is born again; in the other, the human has been washed, but left unchanged in the bondage of its inward corruption,

But to return. We have observed that in a threefold sense the Son of God is proclaiming liberty from the thralldom of sin over the *will*, the *mind*, and the *affections*. This He accomplishes by making God the Centre of all three, giving to our will His law, to our mind His wisdom, and to our affections His love; and this law, wisdom, and love, find their embodiment in Christ, and their communication in the Holy Ghost. They are objectively presented to us in Christ, and they are subjectively wrought out in us by the Holy Ghost. In God is the essence; in Christ is the manifestation; and in the Holy Ghost is the impartation. The Father gives the Son to reveal Himself, and the Son gives the Holy Spirit (Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son), to communicate Himself; and thereby He brings many sons unto "the liberty of the glory" of the family of God.

Liberty knows of no external coercion. Where that is, there can be no real liberty. All its restraints and constraints are with its full consent.

Of His own will, God loved us, and begat us through the Word of truth; and when begotten again, we love Him, because He first loved us. There is no fear in that love, for there is no bondage in it. We love, *not* because we ought to love, *not* because it is consistent with law and right, but because we cannot help loving. It is the intuition of the new life. It needs no law, for it is a law unto itself, just as wives are not *commanded* to love their husbands. Love must flow down before it can flow back; and the way to increase our love to our God and Father, is to remove the hindrances to the inflow of His love into our hearts, and then it will of necessity rise again to Himself, Whence it sprang. This is the liberty of Christ that influences the whole man, and sanctifies wholly spirit, soul, and body.

Sin brought in fear, and fear truly has torment. Love drives away fear, and fills the soul of him who loves, with joy and peace.

Let us now say a few words on this liberty in the three aspects already named.

First. *The liberty of the will* over the power of sin. The heart is, we believe, figuratively regarded in Scripture as the seat of the will. It is that which in animal life gives energy and power to the organs of our body. It would be a most instructive study to trace out in Scripture all that is placed in connection with the heart, that great depth in man which God only can search out, which He

only can fathom, and whose streams He only can turn. We are taught to say: "*Thy will be done;*" and when this is said in truth, it proves that God has regained His place in the heart of him who utters it, that He has fathomed the mighty springs of the human will, and brought that will into harmony with His own; and this *not* by an act of coercive power, but by such a manifestation of Himself that we believe He has no will towards us except for our blessing, and therefore we can have no will but His pleasure.

This is where implicit faith and unhindered trust would place us, and our joyful assurance then would ever be, that all things were working together for good under the all-wise guidance of our God and Father. There would then be no will but God's. This would be our yoke, and we should find it easy, and the burden light.

Thus it would be if the liar, the old serpent, did not beguile us with his whisperings, and his lies, even as he beguiled Eve. It was this that excited Paul's fears for the Corinthian converts, and it is this that may well excite our fears for ourselves, and for one another. Satan beguiles, and, though we are not ignorant of his devices, we often disregard them. "My son, give Me thine heart;" that is, give over to Me thy will, place it under My guidance, subject it to My will. This is God's requirement from us; and then the full response will ever be, as with the blessed Lord: "Not My

will, but Thine be done." Had it not been so with Him, what would have been the result? Because it is so seldom thus with us, what are the consequences? Loss here, and loss in eternity. May our hearts utter their loving "Amen," as we say: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

Second. *The liberty of the mind* from the influence of man's falsely-called science; for the foolishness of God is wiser than man. "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," was Satan's temptation to Eve; and ever since, the wisdom of the flesh has exalted itself against the wisdom of God—a wisdom that makes a man a fool that he may be wise. We say: "God *only* wise;" if we believed it more, we should more easily learn the lesson: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom."

We must not confound wisdom with reason. Wisdom may transcend all our reason; for reason necessarily has a creature limitation which is too often lost sight of, and the highest reason is to bend to a wisdom that often it cannot understand. It is but reasonable that a child should defer in things beyond its reach to those wiser than itself, and it is but reason that in matters beyond our consciousness we should bow to the wisdom of God. But here also Satan has come in; and as he has made man self-willed, so has he made him proud in his unreasonable claim to a right to judge of all by a measure of his own.

God is wiser than man; yet God requires not of

us faith in what is contrary to reason, but only in that which is above our reason. That which now *appears* contrary to reason, is only so because of the limitations that necessarily surround us. Man, by searching, cannot find out God; and nothing but the apostasy of the mind from God would lead the creature to exalt itself against the knowledge of God—a knowledge given by God, and not to be found out by the wisdom of the creature.

In contrast with this wisdom which comes up from beneath, welling up out of the depths of the darkness of the natural mind, is that which comes down from above—Christ, the wisdom of God. In the contemplation of the wisdom of God's ways in Christ, Paul exclaims: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever" (Romans xi. 33-36).

None had gone deeper, and none had soared higher, than Paul, who was taken up into the third heaven; but he who had sat at the feet of Gamaliel was now sitting at the feet of Christ, and all his wisdom became foolishness in the presence of His Cross. His mind found its liberty, for he could say: "We have the mind of Christ." The uncertainties

of opinions passed away, and the certainty of Divine fact occupied their place. Once he could say, as Naaman of old: "I thought;" but now he can say also with him: "I know."

Theories in the mind lead to thoughts that rise like mists and fogs from the swamps and quagmires of unbelief; but realisations of life and health in the soul (the effect of the sevenfold dipping in the Jordan) lead to a knowledge that no human wisdom can touch, and no scepticism assail with success. Infidelity is God's engine to lay low ungrounded theories. However right those theories may be, they are unreal to the doubting soul; however good the material may be, the house is built on the sand, and it falls.

Third. *The liberty of the affections and desires.* Sin has come in, and polluted every affection and every desire. We read: "All that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John ii. 16).

The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, shines into this moral and spiritual darkness, and the tempest of man's affections and desires is brought into a great calm before Him Who walks over its troubled waters, and says: "Peace, be still." After casting out the demon from the demoniac, who was so exceeding fierce that no one dared pass by that way, He presents the maniac to us sitting at His feet,

clothed, and in his right mind. He was enslaved once, and tyrannised over by Satan; now he is at liberty, and sitting at his Deliverer's feet. He once went as he was driven, as man in the bondage of corruption; he now goes in the impulse of a newly-found freedom, and tells what great things Jesus had done for him, and had had compassion on him.

So was it with us, when in our affections and desires, sin ruled, and "the works of the flesh" manifested themselves; but now Christ rules in the liberty of love, and "the fruit of the Spirit" occupies the place of the works of the flesh. That fruit is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's, have crucified *the flesh, with its affections and desires.*"

Thus, instead of those affections and desires which produce the works of the flesh, those new affections and new desires have come in which mark those who live and who walk in the Spirit; and its precious fruit is brought forth spontaneously through the fruitfulness of living fellowship with the Living Vine. Fruit is not made; it grows, like the lilies of the field, which toil not and spin not; and so the sweetest affections and desires of the soul grow, "fruit of His toil," not of ours.

What fulness of liberty there is here, of well-pleasing fruitfulness to God, that springs spon-

taneous, as flowers in the wilderness and roses in the desert, through the living waters that flow there!

Thus all is the most perfect liberty; His service is perfect freedom. The *will* is redeemed and brought into liberty, that only finds its freedom in the will of God; the *mind* is redeemed, and finds its liberty in unfolding and in drinking in the infinite wisdom of God; and as the child of wisdom justifies wisdom in all His ways, the *affections and desires* are also redeemed, and find their outflow and their enjoyment in that fruit-bearing unto God, wherein He is glorified, and whence is yielded the wine that rejoices the heart of God and man.

The principle of all heavenly freedom is *obedience*; and hence we read: "I will walk at liberty; for I seek Thy precepts." There can be no liberty elsewhere; all outside it is bondage.

But do we *stand fast* in the enjoyment of the liberty wherewith we have been made free? Are we in any measure entangled with the ill weeds of Hagar's bondage, and of the mind of the flesh, as typified in Ishmael? Have we cast out the bond-woman and her son? It will cost much heart conflict; and unless we rise up early to do it, we shall find them so firmly settled in the house that the probability is we shall never get them out of the house at all, till the house itself be taken down, and "we fly away;" and shall never know how much the spirit of bondage has marred our spiritual life, dishonoured God, and injured our usefulness,

until we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Then the whole-hearted, who have walked in the liberty of the Gospel, and the half-hearted, who walked in the footsteps of Ishmael that mocked, shall alike know what they have gained and what they have lost.

May God give us all grace to walk in the truth that makes free, and, standing fast therein, see to it that we become not again entangled in the bondage of the flesh.

The Believer's Daily Cleansing.

NO one who has read the blood-stained pages of the Jewish ritual, or who has in faith contemplated the mysteries of the Cross, can for a moment look upon sin as a trifle, a matter lightly to be thought of, or easily to be removed. Its burden has rested as a curse upon man, marring his joys, and pouring poison into his veins, so that the Almighty Sin-bearer cried out, in the agony of the Cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In the mysteries of redemption, every child of God sees the judgment of sin put away, and in the joy of forgiving love, can say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." But while this is true, a black cloud often arises from a consciousness of indwelling sin, which makes him cry out, "Oh, wretched man that I am!"

In reference to sin, we are exposed to two opposite dangers, which have equally to be guarded against—the one leading to presumption, and the other to despair. It is, however, the former of these that we purpose chiefly to consider, because we think it is particularly needed.

Salvation is free, infinitely free; it is complete

and for ever, so that he who believes can say, "All things are mine, whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are mine; for I am Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians iii. 22, 23). Yet do we read in 1 John i. 9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." At this "IF" not a few have stumbled; some from introducing uncertainties into the blessed Gospel, where to the sinner "all is yea and amen;" some by making the standing of the child of God in Christ a matter of uncertainty or doubt. These stumbling-blocks are found in the one-sidedness of our perceptions of Divine truth, and can only be removed by enlightenment from above. There is nothing more untrue than truth out of proportion.

It is necessary to observe the force of the "WE" in the verse alluded to. Throughout the Epistles, and particularly the Epistles of John, this word applies to the Church of God as opposed to the world, as in the verse, "WE are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Thus the apostle speaks of the children of God, and to them he presents that solemn "IF," as if he would impress on all the deep importance of confession of sin. It seems strange to have to press such a point as this, but it is no less necessary. To confess present sin in order to obtain a present forgiveness, seems, in the minds of some, to be

legalism, if not a virtual denial of the atonement; and the result of this tendency is necessarily a low consciousness of present sin, and a dealing lightly often in relation to it, which is alike subversive of personal holiness and of the Divine glory.

Let us, then, remember the solemn truth that unconfessed sin is unforgiven sin. But in saying this, there are two aspects in which forgiveness is to be viewed: the one as affecting the sinner, and the other the saint. In the one case, the unforgiven has no fellowship with the Cross; he is still an alien, a stranger, far off, without hope and without God in the world, and under condemnation. In the other, the unforgiven is a *child*, who cannot enjoy peace as long as sin lies between himself and the Father. This distinction it is most important to bear in mind. A child may be an unforgiven child with respect to particular sin or sins, who may yet have laid his hand on the Cross, and have a right to say, "There is now no condemnation." But when sin darkens the soul of the child of God, and removes the light and joy of salvation far from him, what is God's remedy? Not simply a pointing to the Cross, but a calling for confession. Of this state of unconfessed sin, David says: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture was turned into the drought of summer." This was no mistaken experience, no experience founded

upon a misapprehension of the power of the atonement; it was like the cry of Paul, "Oh, wretched man that I am!" We have to learn that sin in the child of God is even a more dreadful thing than ever sin in the unconverted can be; for it stands opposed, not to a law of condemnation that must judge the sinner, but to an infinite love that made a rebel a child, and that must save the child, even though through the fire.

The latter chapters of John have been well called the "holiest of holies" of the Gospels; and the well-known scene of the feet-washing, in chapter xiii., is given as if to show us what is ever needed, if we would enter into the secret place of the Most High, into the chambers of the King's infinite love and fellowship. There Christ takes the place of the servant, who, with loins girded, with the towel and the basin filled with water, waits at the door of this most holy place to wash the feet of all who would enter in. Does not this tell us of a daily need for which nothing can compensate—a work to be performed again and again as we come in contact with sin, and our feet thereby become defiled? If this cleansing be not performed for us (and we cannot perform it for ourselves), a barrier is raised up which prevents all access into the presence-chamber of God, and God, in consequence, has again to be viewed as from afar; for not until the soul that came to the *altar*, has come consciously to the *laver*, can there

be a restoration of the joy of lost blessings, and of the light of an unclouded peace. Let not the Christian, then, contemplate the possibility of possessing a sense of forgiveness, unless he is walking in the light where the blood daily cleanses. There may be the reality of a judicial pardon, but the sense of a Father's forgiveness is impossible.

In order to have this truth more deeply written upon our hearts, let us turn to the ordinance of the ashes of the red heifer (Numbers xix.) This will show us unmistakably that while the sin-offering on the day of atonement pointed to the Cross, on the ground of which the Aaronic blessing could come down upon the people of Israel, a particular ordinance was appointed which provided a daily remedy, always at hand, to do away with the uncleanness that man is ever liable to, from within or from without. There we see delineated the gracious remedy ordained of God to meet the necessities of His people's *walk*, as the day of atonement met the necessities of their *condition*. The one enables us to walk on our high places, as the other secured our standing in those heavenly places in Christ; telling us that if we are *alive* in the Spirit, we must also *walk* in the Spirit (Galatians v. 25).

We will not dwell at any length on the preparation of the ashes of the heifer, or the dust of the heifer, as it is also called. Like the other sacrifices, this offering was to be "without spot and without

blemish," typical of Him Who presented Himself without spot to God. On it must never have come yoke—the true type of our Lord, Who, from the cradle to the grave, was the Servant of God, the obedient Child of the Father. The devil's yoke never rested on His holy neck; and when Satan came, the Holy One could say, "he hath nothing in Me." Once he sought, by the offer of all the world and all its glory, to lay his yoke upon Him; but he was met with that reproof, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." The heifer was also to be red (*adammah*, in the Hebrew), a beautiful indication of its connection with mankind; for God formed man out of the ground (*adammah*, red earth), and, therefore, called his name Adam. Thus have we a type of a perfect humanity in Christ; and through His death (Psalm xxii. 15) came the "dust" and "ashes," which, "sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying," not of the flesh, but of the conscience, as the apostle tells us in Hebrews ix. 13, 14. It was further ordained that the red heifer, like the sin-offering, was to be brought forth *without the camp*, to have its blood sprinkled towards the sanctuary seven times, to be wholly burnt with fire, into which was to be cast the cedar, the hyssop, and the scarlet; and of this offering it is said, in Num. xix. 9, "It is a sin-offering."* Observe

* The English version has "a purification for sin;" the word in the original is that always used for sin-offering, and it is most important to retain the word in the chapter before us, as connecting the ordinance with the sin-offering in Leviticus iv.

further, that every step involved defilement—1st, of the priest who sprinkled the blood (verse 7); 2nd, of him who burned the heifer (verse 8); 3rd, of him who gathered the ashes (verse 10); and lastly, of him who sprinkled the unclean person (verse 21); while of the sin-offering, on the contrary, it is said, "Whatsoever shall touch the flesh thereof shall be holy" (Leviticus vi. 27). There is a deep mystery in this, the one saying, "He was made sin," and the other, "He knew no sin," but "He was made sin *for us*, that we might be made the righteousness of God *in Him*."

Thus much on the preparation of "the dust" and "ashes;" but what was to be done with them? We are told in verse 9, "It shall be for *a-thing-to-be-kept*" (Hebrew, *mishmereth*). This word is used in Exodus xii. 6, of the Passover Lamb, which was a-thing-to-be-kept from the 10th to the 14th of the month; and it is also used four times in Exodus xvi. of the manna, which was something-to-be-kept throughout Israel's generations in the golden pot before the Lord, and which was to-be-kept also on the sixth day, that they might eat it on the seventh day. From this we learn that, as Christ is kept for the Church as the manna of her daily bread, "the hidden manna," so is Christ kept for the Church as the ashes of her daily cleansing. The daily feeding on the one is no less essential than the daily employment of the other. Verse 17 tells us how the ashes were to be used:

“They shall take of the dust of the burnt heifer of the sin-offering, and they shall put living waters upon it in a vessel” (see margin). What have we here but death and resurrection—the dust of death mingled with the waters of life?—that mystery which the outpouring of the Spirit of life from the Lamb slain in the midst of the throne explains.

The yearly atonement, as we have already said, gave the Israelite access to the sanctuary; but that access had to be kept up, and hence the needs-be for some other ordinance than that of which the two goats of the sin-offering bear witness, when one was slain, and the other—the scape-goat—was sent by a fit person into the wilderness, bearing away the sins confessed upon his head. This provision we have in the ashes of the heifer. It is said in verse 11, that he who touched the dead body of a man should be unclean seven days, and so of any one who came into the chamber of death, or who touched a bone of a dead man, or his grave. And what does all this bear witness to, but that all contact with death defiles? The dead is but in type the “old man,” the body of sin and of death, that in the child of God has been crucified with Christ. To all others this dead thing is *living*. In every unconverted man the old man (Adam) is yet alive; but in the child of God it has been crucified, and, therefore, it is said of the saints, “Ye have died;” “The body is dead because of sin;” &c. But while this

is true, alas! how frequently is the child of God defiled by moral contact with the body, the bone, or the grave, of the old, dead Adam. All such contact defiles; it may happen often unwittingly, yet it is none the less defiling, and it is just this that the ordinance under consideration is calculated to meet.

As we have seen, the ashes were kept for Israel, and a clean person had to take of them, and to mix then and there with living water, and then to sprinkle the unclean. Observe, it was not to be mingled until the time of need came; the water of separation could not be reserved for future use, as were the ashes of the heifer, thereby conveying precisely the same truth as the ordinance as a whole teaches—that present uncleanness needs a present remedy; as it is so beautifully said in 1 John i. 7, that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses [or is cleansing] from all sin.” This action of the blood on the conscience is very precious. It is not a past “*hath cleansed*,” but a present “*is cleansing*,” that we need to be made conscious of.

We now come to the solemn warning voice, “He that purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and *that soul shall be cut off* from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean: his uncleanness is yet upon him.”

It may be asked, “Does not this militate against

the security of the position of the child of God?" Our reply might be, "We have merely to present the whole truth of God, withholding nothing, though our ignorance sees not how it can be made consistent with another aspect of Divine truth." We will, however, observe, for the sake of the weak, that God knows how to deliver His children out of Sodom, and He can bring them through untold sorrows to that point when their defilement becomes confessed, where they must confess or die, and where application is made to the Clean One, the Holy and the True, to sprinkle "clean water" that they may again be clean, and that they may enter at last the haven of rest; even though it be as in a barque dismasted, and well-nigh a wreck, that the mariner—"scarcely saved"—enters into port.

Let us seek, by walking in the light, as He is in the light, and by having constant recourse to God's ever-sufficient remedy for all defilement, to secure to ourselves an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

While the soul is saved "yet so as by fire," who can describe the present terribleness of that sentence, "cut off from Israel," which has been quoted, and that expression which is its counterpart, "*no part with Me,*" of John xiii? Can we be surprised that when immediate, daily application in faith is not made to Jesus, the Friend Who

is clean, and ready to sprinkle the unclean, a sense of distance and of separation is felt between the soul and God? Is it to be wondered at? A present application of the ashes and the water is needed; yea, we need as consciously to have our hearts sprinkled with "clean water," as we did in the first instance, as sinners fresh from the world, to be brought consciously to the holy altar.

The clearer our views of the altar and its services may be, the greater is the need of carefulness, lest "the laver and its foot" be lost sight of. Here, as everywhere, we have much need for watchfulness, lest one truth displace another, and, therefore, the great importance of typical Scripture, where God, speaking unto us as unto children, draws pictures of vital truths which otherwise we are apt to lose sight of, in their relation to one another.

The daily walk, the daily cleansing of the conscience, is no less a solemn concern to the child of God than was his first coming to God through the blood of the everlasting covenant; and hence the force of that word in Peter, "to Whom *coming*" (1 Peter ii. 4). Many who would shrink from putting sorrow for sin in the place of the atonement in the first instance, seem not to perceive that there is an equal reason to guard against putting it in the place of the daily cleansing, as if any water could cleanse, whether Abana or Pharpar, other than the living water and the ashes

of the heifer which God has appointed. Alas! how many saints go mourning all the day, walking in darkness, self-inflicted, and bordering on despair, because they realise not Jesus as their sanctification as they have already realised Him as their justification. It is worthy of notice that the apostle connects the act of sprinkling the ashes of the heifer with sanctification rather than with justification (Hebrews ix. 13).

In conclusion, we would again remark that sin in the child of God cuts off from communion, and that the only remedy is Christ, Who will daily sanctify, and thereby render possible that which is so essential to our happiness, as well as to our holiness, even to live and walk nearer and nearer to God. There are, alas! many who are content to live afar off, and such we would only remind of that solemn Scripture which ends with, "And they are *nigh* unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." But to all who have known the constraining power of love we would say: Be not content with anything short of the very innermost circle of that holy communion which has many circles and untold measures; in time and in eternity, seek to be among the chosen "three," remembering that of some it was said, "They attained not unto the *first three*."

The Anointing.

THERE are subjects in the Word so solemn and so profound that one dreads almost to write of them, lest by profane touch one should desecrate the precious truth that one desires to hallow. Among these stand pre-eminent those truths which are connected with the Holy Spirit, either in His personality or in His operations. Among these mysterious operations, we may mention the quickening, the indwelling, the sealing, the baptising, and the anointing, in all of which God is the Author, through the Lord Jesus Christ, by the communicating grace of the Holy Spirit. That which God the Father purposed, and God the Son wrought out by His incarnation, death, resurrection, and glorification, is made effectual in the believer by the power of the Holy Ghost.

The subject we purpose to touch on here is the *anointing*; and while we seek the pen of a ready writer, we pray for a heart penetrated with the solemn truth that we have been made partakers of quickening grace, and therein possessors of a Divine nature, which renders possible what were otherwise impossible, and which brings the believer into a position that would else be blasphemy to contemplate.

The apostle John tells us that we "have an

anointing from the Holy One" (1 John ii. 20); and again (verse 27): "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him" (*i.e.*, Christ; see next verse). Thus the great point in the Spirit's teaching here, is to *abide* in Christ. He taught us so to abide as His first lesson, and He teaches the same as the daily lesson of the believing soul.

This anointing is one of the grand distinguishing marks of the wonderful dispensation under which we live—a dispensation far more wonderful than that of sign and miracle which have passed away. In order to form an adequate conception of what this anointing involves, we need to contemplate it as revealed to us in relation to Christ as the Head of the Body—the Church; and, as we ponder, let us remember the Saviour's words: "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, so have I also sent them into the world." Thus shall we be prepared to understand that mighty promise: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

His name was THE CHRIST, the Anointed

One of God; and as such we read of Him: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him" (Acts x. 38). He was God's CHRIST, and His people were Divinely "called *Christians*," as the name whereby God wished His anointed family to be known (Acts xi. 26), to which Peter also alludes in his epistle; for the anointing is not only for service and for power, but likewise for suffering.

This anointing, as we find it described in the prophecy of Isaiah, has reference to character and to service. The passages to which we refer are in Isaiah lxi. and xi.: "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance [retribution] of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isaiah lxi. 1-3).

"The Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah; and shall make Him of

quick understanding [margin: scent, smell, *i.e.*, intuition] in the fear of Jehovah: and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears," &c. (Isaiah xi. 2-5).

The latter quotation shows the Divinely-developed character of the Man Christ Jesus, Who, under the mighty anointing of which He was partaker, grew in stature, and in knowledge, and in favour. What comes to us in regeneration was *His* as the Holy-born from His mother's womb; and as such we would contemplate what the anointing implies, what are its manifestations, and what its fruit, in those of whom it can be said that they have been anointed of God, as Paul tells the Corinthians they were (2 Corinthians i. 21).

In Revelation v. 6, the Lamb of God is described as "having seven horns and seven eyes," and these are "the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." This description is the more remarkable, as Isaiah xi. has special reference to the coming kingdom and to the glory of the advent, to which the vision in Revelation v. is preparatory. This connection, however, deserves special notice, as it has to do with the mission of the Spirit of God, Who thereby prepares His agents for the work that has to be accomplished by them. We would also connect these passages with "the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne" (Rev. iv. 5), and this again with the seven-lamped candlestick in the holy place.

The Spirit of the Living God is the anti-type of the oil for the anointing, and of the oil for the light. The connection between light on the one hand, and life, love, and power on the other, seems to embrace both sides of the truth of God; as the three branches on the one hand, and the three branches on the other, connected with the centre shaft, unite to form the seven rays of the one Light that burns before God, sending its rainbow glory around the throne, as the harbinger of an eternal covenant fulfilled in Christ.

Let us, then, consider the seven Divine characteristics of the Spirit's anointing in the order in which they stand in Isaiah xi., which we will present in the following manner:—

(1) The Spirit of Jehovah;

- (2) of Wisdom and (3) Understanding;
 (4) of Counsel and (5) Might;
 (6) of Knowledge and (7) Fear of the Lord.

These characteristics describe what the Spirit of God is, and what He gives to those anointed by Him, thereby to prepare them for their life, walk, and ministry, even as the Lord Jesus, through the eternal Spirit, accomplished the work given Him to do.

The first feature of this anointing is its Divinity. It is the Spirit of the Living God Himself. On this all hangs—all the efficacy and all the suitability for the infinite need that has to be met, and the infinite work that has to be done. The work,

whether accomplished *in* us or wrought *by* us, has to be done by the mighty Spirit of God, Who worketh all after the counsel of His will. But it must not be forgotten that it is the Spirit of the covenant-keeping Jehovah; for that precious Name has always a connection with God as the "I AM," of all that He has purposed and promised. Hence Genesis ii., which views creation in the light of an eternal purpose, contains the oft-repeated designation, "Jehovah God;" while chapter i., which regards creation as the act of Divine power only, has the single expression, "God," or Elohim. "Elohim" reveals God as the God of might and power; "Jehovah" reveals Him as the God of covenant and purpose. "Elohim," we read, "created man in His own image, in the image of Elohim created He him; male and female created He them." But when God's ultimate purposes and designs are contemplated, and to be unfolded, or rather enfolded in mystery to us, we read in chapter iii.: "Jehovah Elohim formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;" and further, after the rib had been taken from man, it is said: "And of the rib which Jehovah Elohim had taken from man, builded He a woman" (see margin, verse 22).* Thus do we connect together the covenant-purposing Jehovah of Genesis ii. (Who creates Adam and

* Nineteen times in chapters ii. and iii. do we get "Lord God," and never once "God" only, except in the lips of the serpent.

Eve each in a different way, and each in view of a revelation of Himself in Christ, to be made in the fulness of time), with the Spirit of anointing glory that rested on Christ, from Whom it flows down to all His members. Thus the holy anointing oil on Aaron's head flowed down to Aaron's beard, touching the jewelled breast-plate with Israel's names engraven on it, and going down to the very skirt of his garment (Psalm cxxxiii).

Bearing in mind that the essential feature of the anointing is that it is "the Spirit of Jehovah" that anoints, let us now come to the three pairs of branches. The first of these is said to be "the Spirit of *wisdom* and *understanding*." The connection between the two characteristics in each pair deserves particular attention; and it will be found that while one has an *inward* feature of height and depth, the other has an *outward* feature of length and breadth; and the mutual harmony and correspondence bear double witness that the anointing is *of God*. There is much that names the Name of Christ, the Anointed One, that has not this double testimony. But God's foundation, and all that is Divinely built upon it, "standeth sure, having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are His. AND, Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from iniquity."* This is God's foundation, on which the Church of the

* This seal contains two truths, both of which are needed to prove the impression genuine. One refers to "*The Lord*," and the other to "*Him that nameth*"—a double signature to the covenant bond.

Living God rests in the midst of the apostasy contemplated in this second epistle to Timothy. This is the seal, and this is the anointing wherewith God seals and anoints, and whereby He "establisheth us unto (*εις*) Christ" (2 Corinthians i. 21).

Wisdom is that inward spiritual faculty which James tells us comes from above (chapter iii. 17); and Proverbs viii. is the great key-passage to this subject, unfolding to us what wisdom is. But here and elsewhere understanding is connected with it. Understanding has to do with the outward exhibition of wisdom, or the putting it into exercise and use. Thus wisdom, when of God, can say: "I am understanding" (Proverbs viii. 14). Without wisdom there can be no understanding; but without understanding wisdom would be useless. Like faith and works, they must not be alone; for that which is alone is dead.

Wisdom and understanding combined, form the first development of the anointing, after its Divine character has been unfolded. He who possesses it has an infallible guide that at once testifies to what is of God, and to what is not of God; for love is keen to understand, and is wise to know. Hence, he who has the anointing, needs not that any should teach him as to what is of God, and what is not of God. He carries the verdict within himself. He may be ignorant, and may need teachers to teach him; uninstructed, and need others to unfold hidden mysteries; but the power

of detection of truth and error, of light and darkness, rests with those who are anointed with the Spirit of wisdom and understanding. Hence, the most uninstructed saints may be the most Divinely taught. They taste, they see, and receive, according as what they see agrees with the Divine revelation. Hence, wisdom is justified of *all* her children, if only the eye be single, and the heart and will subject to God. If otherwise, the glory of the anointing is lost; folly takes the place of wisdom, and misunderstanding leads astray.

1 John ii. 18-28 is of special value here. It shows how the "little children" (*i.e.*, babes, *παιδια*) are raised above all the deceivers that may come in, and all those who may seek to subvert the truth of God; they have a prerogative of wisdom and understanding to detect all falsehood, and unmask all deceit. They have it, because God and His anointing are with them; but on them lies the responsibility of *abiding in Christ*. All rests there; and only as we abide in Christ will the wisdom we have in Him (1 Corinthians i. 30) become an understanding wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, making us truly wise and understanding in the ways of God.

We now come to the second pair of characteristics of this blessed anointing, whereby we are prepared for our priesthood to God, and for our service here—"The Spirit of counsel and might."

It is important to note the combination here, and to observe how it corresponds with the character

of God, of Whom it is said that He is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." What would counsel be without the might to carry it into action? And what would the might be without the counsel to direct it? It is the union of these that consummates the excellence of the Divine counsels and workings; and it is the want of it that so often frustrates our plans and purposes. Hence, the importance of this Divine combination in the anointing of the Spirit of God, whereby the servant of God becomes neither barren nor unfruitful.

What a consolation, amidst the perplexities of life, to have in the anointing a counsel of Divine wisdom that need never fail, and would never fail if faith but laid hold on that which is freely given to us of God! For as Christ is given by the Father, so is the Spirit given by Christ. Christ is the gift of God, the Source out of which the living water, the Spirit of the Living God, flows unto us. *He* is the Fulness out of which we have all received, and may be always receiving.

He Who is "the Counsellor" is also "the Mighty God," the Son that is "*given*" unto us (Isaiah ix. 6). Oh, could we only thus realise the gift of God, and make use of the gift by faith, we should never be in uncertainty when called to act, and never be powerless in execution! He is the "Wonderful," upon Whose shoulders rests the government of all our little concerns, as well as of

all the greater ones of the Church and of the world. What is ours in Christ, is ours personally and subjectively by the anointing and inworking of the Holy Ghost.

The full realisation of this would enable the trusting soul at once to be content to wait as long as any uncertainty lasted, knowing that when the time for action arrived, the needed counsel would necessarily be forthcoming, if only there were the readiness to obey. He who desires to do shall know (John vii. 17), is a promise of unlimited application; and he who believingly lays hold on it, can afford to wait, knowing that "in the end," at the right time, "it shall speak and not lie;" and therefore God's Word ever is: "Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Habakkuk ii. 3). What rest this assurance conveys to the heart! what peace! when otherwise all is restless confusion.

God will not leave an obedient, willing child of His in the dark, *when* the time for action comes. Till then, patient, peaceful waiting on God is required of us, in the calm conviction that in due time God will point out the way. What lessons of dependent grace would thus be learnt! We may often have to remain, as our Master had, two days in the same place (John xi. 6), even though life and death may seem to hang on our delay; but we should then never be too late, and never too early.

As, however, the anointing secures to us counsel, so does it secure might. The anointed one learns by faith to say with Paul: "I can do all things in Christ Who strengtheneth me." We should hear nothing of the impossibilities of the Christian life in anything to which we are called of God, for all would be found to be possible to him that believeth. Faith says with the Psalmist (for in the Psalms Christ tells us His experiences for the comfort of our souls): "By thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall" (Psalm xviii. 29).

Hebrews xi. gives us a witness to the power of faith in the lives and deaths of those mighty men of God who had both counsel and might for the life of faith and all its issues, whether of conquest or of suffering, of life or of death; whether, like Abel, to bleed by the side of his altar; or, like Enoch, to be translated without seeing death.

Faith places itself at the absolute disposal of another, and triumphs in His will, whether to escape the violence of fire, or to fall under the sharpness of the sword. Faith finds counsel and might under all circumstances, as a part of its anointing and consecration, triumphing alike in deliverance or in death. God's anointed ones stand before Him, and if they live, they live unto Him; and if they die, they die unto Him. And let us remember the apostle's word: "Quit you like men, be strong."

The last pair of characteristics is, "*The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*" Here again it is of the utmost consequence to notice the combination, and also the order in which knowledge and fear stand. The tree of knowledge has taught us what knowledge without fear can do; and all around us we see daily proofs of what unsanctified truth can accomplish, puffing up the mind of the creature, which, like the cold light of night's moon, speaks of death rather than life. In sunlight we have light and heat; and all knowledge that comes from God combines both to the believing soul. We look around in the Church of God, and see the withering effect of light that lacks warmth, of knowledge that lacks fear.

The essential element of our life is godly fear—a fear that trembles at God's Word, a love that fears, lest it disobey. When God singles out the man with whom He will dwell, it is not the man who has the deepest insight into His truth, not the man who understands all knowledge and all mysteries, not the man of the highest intellect, but the man who is of an humble and contrite spirit, and who trembles at His Word. When pride gives place to trembling, and self-assertion to meekness and lowliness, when love trembles and godly fear seeks to obey, then, and then only, are knowledge and the fear of the Lord linked together, as they were in their full perfection in the Person and in the anointing of the Holy One of God.

These combined, form part of the holy anointing oil wherewith we are anointed; and in the measure in which we manifest these gracious gifts and operations of the Spirit of God, in that measure is the anointing abiding in us. Man can counterfeit many parts of the anointing; many of its separate features can be imitated by man in the flesh; but the combination here given never can be found but in the really anointed of God (see Ex. xxx. 22-33).

What terrible shipwreck has been made of some of the most precious truths of God's Word, by knowledge and fear being displaced in their relation the one to the other! When held together, they will always humble and lay in the dust the one in whom they co-exist. If this were remembered, it would bring down many high pretensions, and many high claims of superiority would crumble into dust. He who is the humblest is the highest, for One has said it Who cannot lie; and he who has most of the Divine knowledge will be the lowliest and the meekest. The devil *knows*; but with him knowledge is combined with subtlety, and not with fear; and this distinguishes knowledge from above and from beneath. He cares not how much we know: if only the heart be filled with pride, he has gained his object; for he has marred the beauty of the Divine reality. God's truth has lost its life; God's life has lost its love.

Every step in the life of Christ shows the blending of all these varied features of the anointing,

and we need to seek special grace that we fail not in the entirety of this most perfect description of the anointing of Christ, which, like the precious oil on the head of Aaron, that came down to the very skirts of his garment, flows down from our Head to the least and lowest of His members.

Such, then, are the characteristics of our anointing; and now for a few words as to the result of the anointing in the anointed ones. It will make them "of quick understanding" (*i.e.*, of good scent) "in the fear of the Lord," and the bright intuition of a living knowledge will raise above the sight of the eyes, or the hearing of the ears. There will then be power in service to preach the Gospel to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.

Such is the life and ministry for which this holy anointing prepares; it is not given to all to be manifested in the same way, but it is given to all for one end—to meet the miseries, sorrows, and darkness of a ruined earth, and to minister to every needy soul God's only remedy—CHRIST, as presented in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Those thus anointed are priests of the inner sanctuary, and are enabled by reason of it worthily to fulfil their place as priests. Thus we read: "And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed

the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them. And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all his vessels, both the laver and his foot, to sanctify them. And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him" (Leviticus viii. 10-12). And further on (verse 30), we read: "And Moses took of the anointing oil, and of the blood which was upon the altar, and sprinkled it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with him; and sanctified Aaron, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him."

Leviticus viii. shows the effect of the anointing as preparing for priestly service to God; Isaiah lxi. shows the power of the anointing in the service to be rendered in the world.

Prophets, priests, and kings, were all anointed with holy oil; so was Christ for this threefold ministry; and so are His people now anointed for the same; and hence our responsibility to maintain anointing power as priests, prophets, and kings; for thereunto have we been called.

Satan "The Prince of this World."

BEFORE threading our way through the dark subject of Satanic power and rule, it will be well to draw courage for our investigation of this terrible reality by seeing what Scripture says of God's relation to this world, which He made to show forth His praise.

Let us begin with this. All authority and power is from God. He it was Who divided to the nations their inheritance, and set the bounds of the peoples, placing some north, some south, some east, and some west, with relation to Israel's land, which was to be in the midst (see Genesis x. 5, and Deuteronomy xxxii. 8). It was God Who gave Mount Seir to Edom, the land of Egypt to the son of Ham, and the countries of the western seas to the sons of Japheth. Hence, when Daniel stood before the king of Babylon, and told him his dream, he drew from him the confession, "Your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings;" and afterwards, when Nebuchadnezzar had reaped the fruit of his pride in a seven years' deposition from his kingly throne, he learned that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to

whomsoever He will;" for His "dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation" (Daniel iv. 32, 34). And Daniel told godless Belshazzar, as he interpreted for him the handwriting on the wall, that it was the Most High God Who gave Nebuchadnezzar "a kingdom and majesty, and glory and honour."

Thus the nations of the earth hold their power at the will of God. Paul tells us in Romans xiii. that their rulers are His ministers; "for there is no power—*ἐξουσία** (*exousia*)—[authority] but by God, and the powers [authorities] that be are ordained of God." The actual holder of the authority may be a Pilate or a Nero, and yet of each we may say, "Thou couldest have no authority . . . except it were given thee from above" (John xix. 11). They hold their authority from God, and we are bound to submit to it in all that contravenes not His supreme will. At the same time, each act they perform, each command they give, emanates from themselves, and is the outcome of that which is of the earth. Hence, unregenerate man rules his fellow-man by the appointment of God, Who yet overrules all, to the accomplishment of His purposes. It is thus that God is the ultimate Governor of nations, though man "meaneth not so" (Isaiah x. 7).

* It is well to render this word always "authority," to distinguish it from "power" as an act of might. Authority points to what is according to law and under its restrictions.

It may be asked, If man's will acts, how can God rule? With the *how* we have nothing to do. It is impossible for us to say *how* wicked hands of sinful men, carrying out to the very fullest their own will, were, nevertheless, fulfilling God's pre-determined counsel at Calvary, but so it was (Acts ii. 23). Pilate was acting on his own authority, the chief priests were carrying out their own designs of envy and murder, and Judas was acting his own part of covetousness and treachery; but while the sin and wickedness rested solely with man, we see in the Cross of Christ God's act as well as man's; for He Who had taken upon Himself our sins, and was unrighteously smitten of man, was righteously smitten of God, because He became the sinner's Substitute. The smiting was the same, the object essentially different.

Extend this principle through the whole course of human affairs, and it will be found to satisfy the Christian who is willing to guide his thoughts by the Written Word, although the infidel may seek thereby to make God the author of sin.

Hence, is it not true that *all* authority, and *every form* of government, good or bad, is subject to God? The unrighteous rulers of nations, the most highly civilised (or "Christianised," as some would say), are "God's ministers," and so are the lawless rulers of savage tribes; for God has no more resigned His government in one corner of the world than He has in another. He rules

through His appointed ministers as much in Central Africa as in Europe, whether they be the occupants of a Roman throne, or the wielders of a savage despotism. Authority, power, and rule, are either of God everywhere or of God nowhere. From the fall, when God subjected the woman to the man, and Abel the younger to his elder brother Cain, authority has been from God, whether in the hand of the murderer Cain, or in that of David, the man after God's own heart.

God even says, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos iii. 6); and, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I, Jehovah, do all these things" (Isaiah xlv. 7). The moral evil rests with the creature, the physical evil with God, either directly, as the result of His immediate action, or indirectly, as the result of those laws which God has implanted in nature.

Let us now consider what Scripture says of Satan, and of his relation to the government of the world. God has not left us in darkness on this important matter. Our Lord gives us the key to it when He three times calls him "the prince of this world" (John xii. 31; xiv. 30; xvi. 11). The word here translated "prince" is *archōn*, also frequently rendered "ruler," "chief;" it is likewise employed by the Apostle Paul when he says, "Which none of the *princes* of this world knew" (1 Corinthians ii. 8), referring to this world's kings

and rulers. Our Saviour's use of this word prevents our regarding it as an empty title or an assumed authority not possessed in reality.

He who is "prince of this world" is also called "the prince of devils" or demons (Matthew ix. 34; xii. 24, &c.), and "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians ii. 2). In connection with this word (*archōn*) we have the corresponding word principalities (*archai*), used alike of God's dominion (see Ephesians i. 21; iii. 10; Colossians i. 16; ii. 10), and of Satan's (Ephesians vi. 12; Colossians ii. 15). Paul tells us that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood" (that is, human enemies or human rulers), "but against principalities [*archai*], against powers [authorities—*exousiai*], against the rulers of the darkness of this world [world-rulers of this darkness], against spiritual [hosts of] wickedness in high [heavenly] places." Thus we see that Satan's relation to the world, and to man, as well as to evil spirits, is one of authority, of power, and of rule.

We cannot now enter into what Scripture says of *the way* in which he became possessed of it, but content ourselves with the *simple fact* that the devil has an authority and a principedom acknowledged by the Son of God, Who, as One "mighty to save," came to deliver his *lawful* captives (see Isaiah xlix. 24) from his grasp. Pharaoh as a type very clearly explains this. Israel went down into

Egypt, into Pharaoh's land, sent there by God for discipline; and when the time of the promise drew nigh, we read that Pharaoh sought to destroy the male children; but doubtless the devil had a deeper purpose, and sought in this way to destroy the promised Seed. Pharaoh here becomes the type of Satan, the prince of this world. As a ruler, he exercised a lawful right over those who dwelt, and had multiplied, in his land. But God holds His claim as paramount, and sends the message, "Let My people go." Still, He does not ignore the fact that Egypt was Pharaoh's land; and it was not until He had in type redeemed Israel by blood, that God put forth His mightier power and brought them out of it. Thus Israel could sing, "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast *redeemed*." Pharaoh and all his host dead on the sea-shore presents to the eye of faith all Satanic claims against us answered, and all his authority over us set aside for ever. In Exodus xiv. we see in type the fulfilment of what we read in Colossians ii. 15: "Having spoiled principalities and powers" (or better, *having divested Himself* of them as a man divests himself of a garment), "He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (the Cross). Thus God triumphed over Pharaoh in the Red Sea; and God's ultimate triumph for us is eternally *secured* in the Cross, and will be manifested in fact and by power in the fulness of time. For this

Jesus is waiting, as He sits at God's right hand, till His enemies be made His footstool.

While, however, Satan's authority and power are now, by the Cross, set aside for all who have come to Christ, it is otherwise with those who are still Egyptians in nature, and of the seed of the flesh. Of all who believe in Him, we are told that the Father, Who made them "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," hath already delivered them "from the power [authority] of darkness" (*i.e.*, of Egypt, the world, and Satan), and translated them "into the kingdom of the Son of His love: in Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians i. 12-14).

Of this Satanic "authority of darkness," it is hard for us to write. Our blessed Master felt the terrible coils of its serpentine power when He said to those who came to take Him in Gethsemane, "This is your hour, and the power [authority] of darkness." This power is acknowledged in the first communication made to Satan in Genesis— "Thou shalt bruise His heel." It is a power and a right exercised by the prince of darkness on the heel of the Seed all through the ages; for, though the first advent has secured the redemption, it is only the second advent that can secure the establishment of God's final dominion. Till then the prayer is, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done;" for all creation groans under the tyranny

of Satan, as John writes: "The whole world lieth in wickedness," or "the wicked one," as in the embrace of a serpent. "The strong man armed keepeth his palace," and "his goods are in peace." The world is the palace of the great enemy. Individuals innumerable are being taken out of his dominion, and translated into the heavenly kingdom of God's dear Son; but the great dragon, "that old serpent called the devil and Satan," still wears the "seven crowns [diadems] upon his heads" (Revelation xii. 3). Those diadems are the emblems of a regal authority over this world, which is not set aside till the Lamb comes forth with His "many crowns" (or diadems) on His head, and sends His angel to lay hold on the dragon, and bind him a thousand years. Rev. xii. carries us back to the woman and the serpent in Genesis iii., and the points of resemblance between the dragon in that chapter and the last beast of Revelation xiii. 1 (the final head of the Roman world) are very significant, as linking him with the temporal power of the earth. He who will give the beast "his power, and his seat [throne], and great authority," has all through the groaning ages of a world's misery given these in a greater or less degree to Nimrod, to Sennacherib, to Nebuchadnezzar, and to others afterwards; albeit God claimed them as His ministers. It is thus that the simple human form of the great image of Daniel ii., representing God's will in government,

becomes, under Satan's controlling influence, the bestial forms of power of Daniel vii. In the former chapter we read, "The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory;" in the latter we read, most significantly, "The four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea." Here it is as if Satan, and not God, had the arrangement; and out of the storm of angry and hateful passion came up the four great wild beasts, fit emblems of the source whence they came, and of him who used them as his slaves to do his will.

Truly we see Divine instruction in these things, and heavenly distinctions, if we are prepared to heed them. Thus we can understand Satan's showing our Lord "all the kingdoms of the world," and saying to Him, "All this power [authority] will I give to Thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it" (Luke iv. 6). The liar never lied to the Son of God, knowing full well the lie could have no weight with Him. Truth might influence; and truth he told. Satan did hold a delegated authority, and this it is he here offers; but this was purchased back at the Cross, and is claimed by our Lord after His resurrection, in those ever memorable words, "*All power [authority] is given unto Me in heaven and in earth*" (Matt. xxviii. 18). It is *given*; but He has not as yet taken it, nor will He till the seventh trumpet shall sound, when it shall be said, "We give Thee thanks, O

Lord God Almighty, because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned." Then, and then only, will it be true that "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God, and of His Christ" (Revelation xi. 15). Till then the "prince of this world" rules, though his doom was sealed at the Cross; and the Holy Ghost, already come from heaven, testifies not only of sin and of righteousness, but also "of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." The time for the execution of this judgment (*i.e.*, the day of vengeance) has not yet come. It commences with the casting out of Satan from heaven, as seen in Revelation xii. He will then be cast upon earth, when the time of woe to the inhabitants of the world will take place, of which we read, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Revelation xii. 12). Meantime, every spirit cast out, and we may say every soul converted, is an earnest of the triumph that awaits the Cross of Christ after the accomplishment of God's purposes in the present dispensation. From earth Satan is cast into the bottomless pit, after the destruction of the beast and false prophet, and their followers. There he is bound for a thousand years, and is no longer allowed to deceive mankind till again he is loosed for a little season to rally round him those who remained his during the

millennial reign; and then he is finally cast into the lake of fire, where the beast and the false prophet already are, and where all will be cast whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Satan's moral relation to man as "the god of this age" (not "of this world") is another and a very different subject. This he will more fully assume when he brings in "the man of sin" (2 Thessalonians ii. 9). Then we read: "All the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon" (Revelation xiii. 3, 4).

Many important practical considerations in connection with our relation to the world arise out of the rejection of the earth's lawful King by Satan, as the prince of this world, and the god of this age, and these are treated of in our next article.

Satan "The God of this Age."

WE have already sought to consider the meaning of the description given by our Lord of Satan as "The prince of this world;" and we now come to a still darker page in the history of that mighty spirit, when we regard him as "The god of this age." By this title Scripture characterises the energy and working which Satan has set up, and maintains, in the face of God, over the moral and spiritual depths of man's fallen being. "If our Gospel be hid," says the apostle, "it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this age [not world] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4).

Of this "age" Paul also writes to the Ephesians, when describing their former condition as dead in trespasses and sins, "wherein in time past ye walked according to the course [*age, aiwva*] of this world, according to [*i.e.*, in obedience to the will of] the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." How little man dreams that his self-will and pride is none other than a flame kindled in hell, by

which he is set on fire by Satan! He thinks he is his own master, while he is really more completely a slave to an unseen, unknown master than ever man was to an earthly master seen and known.

The ordinary slave has some escape and some alleviations. There are hours and times when his tyrant sees him not, and can affect his happiness but little; and at length in death the slave is free from the master. Not so in the tyranny of Satan. His agents can always influence for evil all who are his, and death but delivers his servants into his hands with a more terrible certainty.

Self in the natural man is but a cover for Satan; and whenever it asserts itself, there is behind it the old serpent, who is God's enemy, and the enemy of man also, as God's creature. This awful truth is brought out in our Lord's solemn words to Peter: "Get thee behind Me, Satan: for thou art an offence [a cause of stumbling] unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew xvi. 23). Peter's word to the Lord had been, "Be it far from Thee," or "Pity Thyself." But whatever in us pities self, and seeks its interest, is of man, and what is of man is of Satan, who worketh (energiseth) in the children of disobedience; and this, which we are ever prone to overlook, the Son of God detected and exposed.

The presence and power of Satanic working will be but little recognised, except as the power of

the Spirit of God is known and felt. In these days of growing infidelity, when "the Spirit of Truth" and "the spirit of error" (or of the delusion) are not only too often denied by unregenerate men, but are only feebly acknowledged by too many of God's dear children, it is of immense importance that this question be taken up in the light of Scripture. Beyond its pages nothing is known, or can be known, of the spirit world by which we are surrounded, and of its mighty influence and control over human thought and action. Because unseen, it is unknown, and the awakenings of good, and the stirrings of evil, are supposed to be purely from the creature itself. The consequence of this ignorance in the Christian is that he loses sight of the indwelling of the Spirit of the living God, Whose omnipotence and all-sufficiency are ever ready to make him more than conqueror over "manifold temptations" and trials (1 Peter i. 6), because of the "manifold grace" (1 Peter iv. 10) of which the blessed Spirit is the administrator. And, on the other hand, he fails to realise that the terrible stirrings and strivings of sin and evil in him after his conversion, are caused by spiritual evil agencies working on the renewed soul; whereas before, these corruptions were only dormant, because unaroused by the malice of Satan. Again, this ignorance leads unenlightened men to regard what are really the stirrings of the Spirit of God, as the workings of the natural love of the good

and the holy in the heart of man, as if any true light or life could burn or shine in him whom God describes as dark and dead. In other cases, the sleep of death and the peace-dream of ignorance, which the wily one seeks not to disturb, are regarded as evidences of natural goodness and piety.

This rule of Satan is one of a positive blinding and darkening power. He now blinds the minds of those that believe not, as he bound with "a spirit of infirmity eighteen years" the woman whom our Lord healed (see Luke xiii.). But in the days of the man of sin the mysteries of the present will be unfolded in the full manifestation of things as they *are*, and not as they *seem* to be; and then Satan's consummation of evil will be that all shall worship him. Now he works, not openly, but in mystery; and he seeks for worshippers, blinding them all the while as to the real object of their worship. He is thus silently preparing the world for a time when openly men will worship the beast, and worship the dragon (*i.e.*, Satan) who gave power unto the beast, saying, "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" (Revelation xiii. 4).

In the reign of Antichrist, Satan will be owned and worshipped as God (2 Thessalonians ii. 4), and this terrible unfolding to us of *the future* is given that we may read aright the mystery of *the present*. Now Satan conceals himself under the Name of the blessed God; that which is anti-Christian is

called by the Name of Christ; the whore of Babylon is known by the name of the Church of God, the Bride of Christ. The Book of Revelation gives us the final form of these terrible realities of the future, that we may see more clearly than would otherwise be possible those *mysteries* of evil by which we are now surrounded.

Satan's being "the god of this age" is, therefore, the source and the substance of this world's idolatry, under every form of it, and by whatsoever name it may be known, whether that idolatry be gross or refined, whether heathen or Christian, whether outward or inward; and hence man's worship is called a sacrificing "to devils, and not to God" (1 Corinthians x. 20).

In Israel's days there were novelties—"gods that came newly up." And so it is now, for Satan has fresh forms for all developments of human life; and of his ways it is true, as of the ways of the strange woman, "They are moveable, that thou canst not [or mayest not] know them." It is these novelties in the worship of Satan that deceive the unwary. New names, new forms, new prophets, new christs, and new idols come up; but the dark reality is unchanged. It is Satan instead of God, with a greater or less measure of the "form of godliness," the more completely to deceive. In order to expose this, the prophetic Word is given, so that, though specious and godly names are used, we may not be ignorant of the

antagonism to God that underlies it all. Hence the prophetic portions of the New Testament, particularly the Book of Revelation, call for our prayerful study, if we would be wise and know the signs of the times in which we live, so as to avoid all the forms of evil which surround us.

In Babylon, Satan is god, as in Egypt Satan was king, Pharaoh's great anti-type; but He Who led us out of spiritual Egypt will lead us out of the spiritual Babylon if we are willing to be led. Our Lord is ever saying to us, "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." This cry will be literal in the future. It is spiritual now, while "Babylon the Great" is still a "mystery" which the eye of faith alone can see, and which the spiritual mind alone will understand. To all others Babylon is that "Christendom" to which they attach the blessed Name of Christ, and which they regard as the development of the kingdom of God; but those who say, "Thy kingdom come," know it has not come, and cannot come till the King of kings shall be revealed, to execute the judgment written, according to the estimate of God, and not according to the estimate formed in "man's day."

He will then lay "judgment for the line, and righteousness for the plummet," bringing everything to the test of God's straight lines and of His unerring plummet. The hail of the wrath of God

shall then sweep away the refuges of lies, where-with the god of this age has all along deceived the children of the age, and, alas! has well-nigh blinded many of the children of the age to come, on whom, as children of the light and children of the day, the light and the power of the coming world, to which they belong, should have shined with unerring clearness.

This false worship is among "the depths of Satan, as they speak" (Revelation ii. 24); yet these so-called "depths" are to faith the shallows of human self-will; for to God alone belong the depth and height, the length and breadth, of what is real and eternal. Many phases of this idolatrous worship are embraced in the three leavens against which our Lord warned His disciples, and they form the real "will-worship" which stands opposed to the first three petitions of the prayer our Lord taught His disciples; for this will-worship dishonours God, and desecrates His name, instead of hallowing it; hinders His kingdom, instead of advancing it; and frustrates the doing of His will in the earth by the putting of man's will in its place.

The three leavens that describe the spirit in which the god of this age is worshipped are—1st, *Phariseeism*. This substitutes for the commandments of God the traditions of men, and shows itself in the ritualism of the day. It makes the religion of man one of form and superstition, and

has in it nothing of reality, of truth, or of a living God. 2nd, *Sadduceeism*. This denies all that lies beyond the grasp and the comprehension of the creature, and makes the finite the measure of the infinite. We see it in all the religious free-thinking of the day, and we hear it in the "profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Timothy vi. 20), which proceed from those who exchange the truth of God for the lie, and who worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed for evermore (Romans i. 25). And 3rd, *Herodianism* is the hateful spirit of time-serving and of worldly conformity that prostitutes God's things to Cæsar's use, and profanes the hallowed things of "the Holy One of Israel" by making them subserve the selfish interests of human life. The leaven of Herod brings the Church, and its holy and heavenly realities, into subordination to the world for its patronage, its emoluments, and its honours.

The three leavens bring God's solemn light to bear upon the *high-churchism*, *broad-churchism*, and *low-churchism*, of the day, whether in the established or non-established forms of religious thought. These constitute the threefold form of man's will-worship, and they are the depths, the mysteries of the wicked one! The tangled thread of six thousand years of departure from God is alone disentangled by God's Word with perfect distinctness. In Revelation xvi. 13, we see the

same three forms of evil in "the three unclean spirits like frogs that come out of the mouth of the dragon [*i.e.*, Satan and spiritual wickedness], out of the mouth of the beast [*i.e.*, Cæsar, or political power], and out of the mouth of the false prophet" [*i.e.*, intellectual power and false teaching].

In conclusion, we would earnestly say to all Christians, that, bad as are the outer forms of this idolatry and will-worship, in virtual subjection to the god of this age, there is an inner working of the same that is found in the fleshly nature of every child of Adam, and has constantly to be guarded against. It forms the essential element of the unrenewed heart and the unbroken will, and those who have escaped *the outward pollution* have all the greater need to be on their guard lest they walk *in the inward corruption* of it.

Indeed, this subject has bearings which are very far-reaching, and intricacies that call for much searching of heart. Let us set ourselves to learn the length and breadth of John's last command in his first Epistle: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols"—an epistle which has an additionally solemn significance as written by him to whom the visions in the Revelation were given.

God preserve us from worshipping the prince of darkness, by enabling us ever to walk in the light, as He is in the light, and so see the trail of the serpent in what surrounds us. Then the Spirit of Truth will guide us into all truth, and preserve us

from all the subtleties of the worship of "the god of this age." Let us live for the God of the age to come, "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God," Whose Name shall be hallowed, Whose kingdom shall come, and Whose will shall be done as in heaven so on earth, when the god of this age shall be cast into the lake of fire.

God's Centre :

THE ONE NAME AND THE ONE PLACE.

IT is deeply instructive to see how God's thoughts are stereotyped in all His commandings and in all His dispensations. The outward form may change, and external circumstances may be ever so different, but God's purposes do not change, and the believer who is wise in his reading of Old Testament teachings, reads New Testament thoughts under them, and finds that Moses, no less than Paul, bears witness to Christ.

The feasts of Israel represent certain great truths, and as in these feasts God called Israel to appear before Him, so we are called to present ourselves to God in the spiritual apprehension of these truths, and in so doing we express our allegiance to the God of Truth.

In Deuteronomy xvi., all the males in Israel were commanded to appear before the Lord three times in the year, in the *place* that He should choose. There they were called to come, and there to worship ; not in any place of their own selection, but where the Lord chose to place *His Name*, for it was the Name that gave the place its significance. The Name stands for the Person, and Paul's

words in Philippians ii. emphasise this when he says that God has given to Christ "*the Name* that is above every name: that at the Name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth." He is the Angel of God's presence, of Whom God says, "*My Name is in Him*" (Exodus xxiii. 21).

But as the Name points to Jesus, so the *place* points to Jesus, for He is the Corner-stone of the true temple, the veritable Holiest of holies, into which we are called to enter with boldness in the power of His precious blood. The Name and place are in heaven, and we need ever to remember this; for, though we may have escaped the danger of giving sanctity to an earthly building, we may encircle our local assemblies with a heavenly halo on the ground of some outward circumstance or some pretentious creed, while the life, the power, and the glory of the heavenly reality are lacking. It is ever blessedly true that wherever two or three are gathered unto the Lord's Name, there He is, but there is more in gathering unto His Name than many suppose. Where His Name is, He is, and where He is, there is power—for with Him is the plenitude of the Spirit; and where He is, the arm of the Lord is revealed.

Let us, then, in the holy soberness of truth, seek to dwell on the theme before us, remembering that we are never true worshippers except as we worship in spirit and in truth.

The feasts to which all Israel were to gather were three—those of the Passover, the Pentecost, and the Tabernacles; and these point respectively to the Cross, the advent of the Holy Ghost, and the glory of the future kingdom at the marriage of the Lamb.

While meditating on these feasts and the truths they represent, may our hearts be prepared to listen to what the Lord would say to us in reference to them, for as were the feasts to Israel, so are their respective truths to us, and He who commanded Israel's attendance at the place where God had put His Name, likewise commands our fellowship at this threefold gathering place.

I. THE PASSOVER.

First, then, let us dwell a little on the Passover. The date of this feast is of special significance. It was observed in the month in which God brought His people out of Egypt. Again and again does God remind Israel of their deliverance from Pharaoh's bondage; and so does the Spirit of God, through Paul, bid the Ephesians and all saints remember the bondage of sin and of the world, out of which all who believe are delivered by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Redemption's feast begins a new era, on the ground of which the soul can sing, "Unto Him that loveth us and washed us from our sins in His own blood," to which we can also add, "and hath made us a kingdom and priests unto His

God and Father." In memory of the deliverance from Egypt, not only was the paschal lamb to be slain, but burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were also to be offered, whereby we are reminded of that fellowship and communion with God into which we are called in Christ Jesus. But while we are thus shown our position and our calling on the ground of what Christ is to us, we have, like Israel, to partake of unleavened bread, or, as it is called here emphatically, the "bread of affliction," which keeps us in remembrance of our condition as sinners. This aspect of the Cross we are prone to lose sight of, in the joy of our salvation in Christ; and we thus lose that fellowship in His sufferings which the remembrance of our condition as sinners would produce. The result of this is that we become puffed up, rather than humbled, as we contemplate our mighty deliverance from sin and Satan. Against this danger God specially guards us by the truth contained in the expression, "*bread of affliction.*" It is added: "for ye came out of Egypt *in haste.*" The word here rendered "haste" implies not merely speed, but the affright and alarm which lead to a hasty flight. The word always implies a danger lying behind, and very solemnly does this speak to our conscience of the doom of Egypt, and the need of an escape like that of Lot from Sodom.

If the power and craft of Satan were more deeply known, the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth

would be to us the "bread of affliction." The deep experience of Romans vii. would then be better understood; sin and holiness would relatively assume vaster proportions in our minds, and the gospel of our deliverance would be more like the prophetic roll, sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly. May the Lord teach us this profound mystery whereby the "unleavened bread" becomes the "bread of affliction" to the soul, and enable us to understand the experience that Paul describes in 1 Corinthians ix. 24-27, which led him to keep his body under, and bring it into subjection, lest as a servant he should lose his Master's approval, or as a disciple his expected reward.

The Passover, with its deliverance and its affliction, was never to be lost sight of by Israel, for God says, "Thou shalt remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life" (Deuteronomy xvi. 3). And we are called ever to remember what we have been delivered from, as well as what we have been redeemed unto; and as we think of both, we shall walk humbly, with "fear and trembling," but also joyfully. It is deserving of notice that "affliction," rather than "joy," marks the Passover, while joy especially characterises the feasts of Pentecost and Tabernacles.

As already stated, there was only one place where the Passover could be celebrated, and that was the place which God had chosen, to put His

Name there. This is a solemn witness against man's proud independence of spirit, which would say, Any place will do, if only the spirit be right. God will have His service performed in His own way, and not in ours; and that spirit can never be right which does not seek carefully to carry out the precepts of God's Word. When, in Hezekiah's day, Israel in their haste and ignorance kept the Passover without due regard to the appointments of God, and without having cleansed themselves, the Lord smote them, though he hearkened to Hezekiah's prayer: "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary." God heard prayer and healed the people, but we have to learn that rightness of heart and motive does not justify wrong action.

The Passover, then, is our first gathering truth.

II. PENTECOST.

We now briefly consider the "*Feast of Pentecost*," or the "*Feast of Weeks*," as it is generally called in the Old Testament, in its relation to the Name and the place which constituted God's centre for Israel, and around which they were called to gather in their second yearly feast.

The Passover might be held in the wilderness, but this feast could only be observed in *the land*. It was connected with the offering of the wave-sheaf

on the morrow after the Sabbath following the Passover; and as the wave-sheaf points to the resurrection of Christ, so Pentecost, on which the two wave-loaves were offered, presents to us the resurrection of the Church of God; for it is as partakers of resurrection life in Christ that we are "raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places" in Him.

This truth is essentially connected with the power of the Holy Ghost, which raises the child of God, in his new life, above the world, and makes him a citizen of heaven. It is, therefore, connected with "the land" into which by faith we are now called to enter, and to engage in the heavenly conflict, and in the power of the Holy Ghost to prove ourselves more than conquerors through Him Who loved us.

With this corresponds the experience given in Romans viii., which we have to learn out for ourselves, but our doing so will depend on the measure in which we are "led of the Spirit." It is not here a question of our being "in Christ," and of our being assured that "no condemnation" awaits us; our Passover-standing settles both these points by virtue of the precious blood of the Lamb. The question connected with the Feast of Pentecost is, as to our knowledge of the *power of the Spirit*; and this depends on us, in so far as we may grieve and hinder the Spirit's operations. All that the work of Christ effects for us is entirely

beyond our control, and we cannot lessen its efficacy. It is absolute, and hence our security in the new covenant is inviolable, for neither our failures nor our shortcomings affect our standing in Christ, if we are really born of God. It is thus that the "wisdom and prudence" of God's ways towards us are displayed (Ephesians i. 8). His *wisdom* makes our life absolutely sure, for it is "hid with Christ in God;" His *prudence* links the enjoyment of our spiritual blessings with our walking in the power of the Holy Ghost, and only as we so walk is our joy full, and are we perfected in love.

Hence, as has been already pointed out, the "bread of affliction" marks the Passover feast, and joy is never alluded to; while in the Pentecost, the prominent feature is *rejoicing* before the Lord; and it was not to be an individual joy, but there was to be a fellowship in it with others, reminding us of the communion of saints.

Thus Israel were commanded to gather at the Feast of Pentecost, and thus also believers are now called to gather together in the Name of the Risen Christ, and in the joy of that relationship in which we all stand before God, in the power of the Holy Ghost. On our apprehension of this precious truth, our spiritual condition depends.

"None of you shall appear before Me empty," was the command to Israel at the three feasts, but it has to be observed that this one was to be especially kept "with a tribute of a free-will

offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy God according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee." This, again, distinguishes the Pentecost from the Passover. In the latter the chief thought is that we are *receivers*, but here we are taught to bring to the Lord His tribute—a free-will offering. Thus blessings received become, according to our feeble measure, blessings returned into the bosom of our God. He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, and we echo the words, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We loved Him because He first loved us, and to all eternity God will reap as He has sowed.

Using a comparison from Ezekiel's vision of the holy waters, which flow from under the threshold of the temple by the south side of the altar, we may say that the blessings of the Passover, which belong to the whole heavenly family, are *ankle deep*. But the Pentecostal blessings run *knee deep*, and are the portion of those who enter the land of promise, and have wherewithal to fill their basket, as they come in their worship and service to the place where the Lord has placed His Name.

III. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

We have now come to "the Feast of Tabernacles," or, as it is called in Exodus xxxiv. 22, "the Feast of Ingathering." The year rolls on, and the closing feast arrives. So God's dispensa-

tions roll on, one following another, until, in figure, we reach the final stage—the glory of the kingdom, and the feast of heavenly joy at the marriage of the Lamb. Then, with hallowed memories of the past, we shall sit down under the bridal canopy of the blessings of the eternal covenant, and prove that nothing has failed of all that God has spoken, and, indeed, that the half had not been told.

At this last feast all Israel were to assemble; and *we* are called to gather in the precious hope of the coming glory, and even now by faith to enter into it, though in fact it is still future. Thus we have presented to us the *third* truth connected with the one name and the one place, namely, the glory to be revealed when the Lord shall come and receive us unto Himself. The light of the second advent is made to shine out upon our daily path, and we learn what it is to be “saved in hope,” a hope sure and certain, because it enters into that within the veil, for a Risen Christ at the right hand of God is the pledge to us of a coming Christ, Who will gather His people into the place He has gone to prepare. In connection with this feast, as with Pentecost, comes the command, “Thou shalt rejoice;” and, as if to make this command doubly strong, it is repeated, “Thou shalt *surely* rejoice,” or “Thou shalt be *altogether* joyful” (R.V.)

Let us now turn to Nehemiah viii., which may prove a word in season to some in whose experience

the joy of the future is clouded and overshadowed by the trials of the present.

In the days in which Nehemiah lived and laboured, the children of Israel were in weakness, oppression, and sorrow. Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem, and others, were doing their worst, while half-hearted Israelites and treacherous nobles greatly added to the perplexities, the difficulties, and sorrows of that time; but this chapter brings us to the feast of the seventh month, and it will be well for us to ponder the blessed record of it.

The law of God had been read, and where conscience was alive, there could but be mourning and tears; hence we read that "all the people wept when they heard the words of the law." But note God's word to them through His servant Nehemiah (whose name means "The consolation of Jehovah"): "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy unto the Lord; neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (verse 10).

In these tender, loving words, from the very heart of our God, the lesson He would teach us is, that while it is well for eyes to weep, and for hearts to be sad at the failure which His Word, if read with understanding, must reveal, it is essential for His glory, and for our blessing, that we should never allow our failures to eclipse in our souls the sense of the sure accomplishment of the eternal

purposes of God, and the joy that springs from the assurance of their final realisation. *The victory is His*, even though the Sanballats and Tobiahs of this day, the half-hearted fellow-Christians, the treacherous rulers and nobles, the false prophets, and lying prophetesses, all combine against the cause of God, His truth and His Word. Let us keep this ever in mind, and because the victory is His, it is also ours, and we can sing through our many sorrows,

" The victory is ours ;
For us in might came forth the Mighty One ;
For us He fought the fight, the triumph won ;
The victory is ours."

Surely there is fatness to be eaten, and sweetness to be drunk, by all who truly know what our feast of love is! "Consolation in Christ," "comfort of love," "fellowship of the Spirit," and "bowels and mercies," may still be enjoyed by those whose "citizenship is in heaven;" and to this we would direct all hearts, that they may find "the joy of the Lord" to be their "strength" and their sufficiency for all present need.

Here, then, is *our* third great gathering truth, which tells us at the Lord's table that we show forth His death "*till He come.*" "Till He come" we are down here, and when He comes we shall be up yonder.

In conclusion, we would reiterate some points connected with the command in Deuteronomy xvi. 16, 17: "Three times in the year shall all thy

males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose." Earnestly would we press upon our fellow-believers this point—that if we would know our calling in Christ Jesus and walk worthy of it, if we would attain the full stature of manhood in Christ, our faith must lay hold of (1) the Passover truth of the redeeming power of the blood of Christ; (2) the Pentecostal truth of the resurrection power of the Holy Ghost; and (3) the truth set forth in the Feast of Tabernacles concerning the future glory and triumph of the Son of God. While, however, all these truths are essential to him who desires to be "an Israelite indeed," "a man in Christ," a distinction has to be drawn as to the necessity of their being equally apprehended. While the command of Deut. xvi. 16, 17, includes the *three* feasts, there is an *imperativeness* connected with the Passover which does not extend to the other two feasts, and in our zeal for the truth this must not be lost sight of. Of the Passover it is said that "the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbearth to keep the Passover, even the same soul *shall be cut off* from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in its appointed season, that man shall bear his sin" (Num. ix. 13). Thus, while every Israelite was commanded to come to all three feasts, it was only absence from the Passover that would sever him from the people of God.

We are living in days when advanced truths are being applied as *necessary* to the fellowship of the Israel of God, but while we would yield to none in maintaining the absolute claim God has on our obedience, and our responsibility to have one mind and one mouth concerning the hallowed truths indicated in the feasts before us, yet we are bound to add that we have no authority to separate from our fellowship children of God who, so to speak, neglect to come to the feasts of Pentecost and Tabernacles; though they thereby disobey God, and wrong their own souls by this neglect of His truth. It was God, and God only, Who had power to say who should, and who should not, be within the camp of His people; and now it is Christ, and Christ only, Who has the power to exclude from His assemblies; and He Who "hates putting away," and would have us regard it as the cutting off of our own right hand, or the plucking out of our right eye, will not justify a discipline He has not enjoined, or the excision of disobedient believers whom He has not commanded us to exclude. To his own Master each believer stands or falls, and in such matters, if he will not heed our counsel from God's Word, we must leave him to be dealt with by Christ at His judgment-seat, and see to it that we set him an example of obedience, of lowliness, and of love.

There are moral and spiritual apostasies for which we have to exclude even a brother; and

there are other unseemly matters for which we have to withhold the intimacy of private fellowship, as in 2 Thessalonians iii. 12, 14, but in reference to which we can go no further. The sons of Levi took too much upon them in more ways than one, but as surely as they did so, judgment followed. We have seen the judgment of God fall upon false systems of discipline—false because not appointed of God; and may God give to us, His servants, lowlier hearts, and enable us to walk with gentler footsteps in His Church, and to think more of obedience in ourselves, than of disobedience in others.

Another point touched on here is, "They shall not appear before the Lord empty: every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee." We would remind our fellow-believers of the claim the Lord has on us, both in spiritual and in temporal things. Let us give as He has given. Let the precious stream of spiritual and temporal good flow on.

" Let the tide of blessing roll
Far and wide, from pole to pole—
Blessing deep, exhaustless, free,
Bringing glory, Lord, to Thee."

To let it stagnate in our souls, or in our coffers, is to turn God's blessings into curses. Alas! for the stagnant truth, the stagnant grace, the stagnant strength, the stagnant money, to be found in the

Church of God! May it roll on, so that each blessed one may be made a blessing in his turn.

The Lord bless this chapter, and the reflections it suggests, to us all in Christ Jesus, according to the need of each one.

“Living Hope” and “Joy Unspeakable.”

OUR joy should ever be in God Himself, and not in anything He gives us. Ours would then be a rejoicing pilgrimage, and we should not be found groaning over the thorns of the wilderness, and dwelling upon the difficulties and trials of the way; but our thoughts would be full of the omnipotence of God, and of the shelter of His outstretched wings. God did not remind Israel of the thorns, but of His promises, of His grace and love, of the pillar and cloud, of the manna, and of the water from the smitten rock.

We shall never know the Cross until we have borne it. One peculiar characteristic of the Church of God is, that we are not saved out of the sphere of sorrow, but inside it; and this makes the fellowship of the Church so much nearer to Christ, a nearness that the angels are unacquainted with. I am not aware that the fellowship of angels in the sphere of sorrow is ever named in connection with God; but *we* have a partnership of faith in the Cross and in the glory. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.” If we enter into this, then bereavements will lose much of their weight, and

we shall know the power of the Divine antidote for sorrow, given in 1 Thessalonians iv., concerning which Paul says: "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

To follow up these thoughts, let us turn to the opening words of Peter's First Epistle.

"*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" We are blessed in God, but do we realise how blessed God is in us? We scarcely understand the surface meaning of such words, to say nothing of their hidden depths. A blessed people with a blessed God! Not one of us is going to be disappointed. A thousandth part has not been told. We shall be satisfied; and shall Christ be dissatisfied concerning us? "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." These are wonderful things to read and speak of. Let us open our hearts to let in the love that all these blessings imply. More wonderful is it to think of the Hand that gives them to poor, condemned sinners. Let the most tried child of God realise how blessed he is, and how blessed God is in him, and sorrow will turn to joy.

"*Who hath begotten us again unto a living hope.*" Our regeneration is unto a purpose that lies beyond. There is a joy, a bliss, now; but it leads to something far greater hereafter. When we stand by the graves of our loved ones, and our tears are falling, it is well to look right up into heaven and think of our "living hope" there. May God write

in large letters that joyful, living, sustaining word HOPE. It has arms to it, and will embrace us in its joy.

“*By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*” It is this that gives to us the hope. The Cross began the work of our salvation, but the resurrection was the consummation of it, its seal and pledge. What a contrast between the tabernacle and the builded house! (2 Corinthians v. 1.) The pins of the tabernacle are soon taken up, and the cords are easily loosed. One letter tells us of a *tent* beginning to shake, and another comes to say the tent is down. But in blessed contrast is the eternal perpetuity of the *house* that lies beyond. As we think of this, and know that the tent *must* come down, we are tempted to say: “The sooner the better.” But not so; we have lessons to learn here which cannot be learned there. Rather let us increasingly value the instruction which God is patiently bestowing on us by means of the trials, toils, and difficulties of the wilderness.

“*To an inheritance incorruptible.*” In the midst of earth’s poor, transient possessions, let us dwell on the character of our inheritance. “Incorruptible” is a word which Peter loves to use. In contrast with corruptible “silver and gold,” he places “the precious blood of Christ,” and God’s Word in contrast with man’s—“born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” The

"meek and quiet spirit," as that which is incorruptible within, is also set over against all the outward fading adornments. May we learn, amidst the corruptions of time, the incorruptibility of the eternal kingdom to which we are hastening.

"*Undefiled.*" It cannot be contaminated. It is said of our Lord in the Revelation that His feet were of burnished brass, implying that He walked undefiled amidst the defilements of the churches. Where defilement is, corruption follows; but our inheritance is incorruptible, and nothing that defileth can enter it. Let us seek in this respect to be more in keeping with our inheritance.

"*And that fadeth not away.*" It is not like the flowers of earth, which are cut down and cast into the oven. The beautiful sun rises and sets, and sunsets fade and darken into night; vanity is written upon everything here; but we are going to a place where there is no withering and no fading.

"*Reserved in heaven for you.*" The use of this word *reserved* in Peter's Second Epistle may well remind us of the mercy that secures the inheritance for us. There we read of "judgment" reserved for angels that sinned, and for the unjust, and of the "blackness of darkness" reserved for those who are the servants of corruption.

"*Who are kept by the power of God.*" "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Nobody can touch it, for we are bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord. We are "guarded" as by a garrison.

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them" (Psalm xxxiv. 7).

Elisha prays for his servant that his eyes may be opened, and then he sees chariots of fire and horses of fire (2 Kings vi. 17). May we get Dothan revelations to our own souls! If it were not for the eye that sees all the dangers that lie before us, and for the guarding by holy angels, how should we do when the hosts of hell are engaged against us? But we are "kept by the power of God."

"Through faith." The stronger our faith is, the greater will be our assurance and our joy.

"Unto salvation, ready to be revealed." Not ready to be possessed by us, but awaiting an unfolding by-and-bye. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be" (1 John iii. 2). Present circumstances cannot affect what we are, but what we are cannot now be manifested. In our own present sense of weakness, we are waiting for the "moment" of rapture, and joy, and bliss, and love.

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, or exult." Exultation is a bursting joy; not the quiet stillness of rejoicing, but that which cannot be kept in—our hearts full, our lips full, our souls full. Oh, how little of this exultation of joy there is in our hearts!

"Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness." Peter knew how hard and bitter chastening is; he recalls it here; the exultation

needs to be qualified by an *if*. If there is "*manifold temptation,*" there is also "*manifold grace.*" Ye are kept "*through faith,*" says the apostle, but there must be "*the trial of your faith.*" Let us not fear the sorrows, the trials, the fire by which our faith is tested. Faith will have its full approval "*at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*"

"*Whom having not seen, ye love.*" The apostle recalls the Lord's words to Thomas, as to the blessedness of those who have not seen and yet have believed. He had himself seen the Lord after the resurrection, and in answer to His thrice-repeated question had said: "*Thou knowest that I love Thee;*" and here he unites in this same love those who had not seen and yet had believed.

"*Ye rejoice [exult] with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*" Even in the "*salvation*" (verse 5) there is exultation, but in the *Saviour* the exultation is with a joy that cannot be told out, and that anticipates the glory. May God teach us more of the love that leads to this exceeding joy, so that, come what may, the living hope may ever inspire our souls. May the Holy Spirit open our eyes, ears, and hearts, and may these words be to us what they were to the holy man who wrote them.