

TRUTH *for the* LAST DAYS

No. 14.

EXTRACTS
FROM LETTERS

Of the Late
J. G. BELLETT.

LONDON:
THE CENTRAL BIBLE TRUTH DEPOT,
5 Rose Street, Paternoster Square, E.C. 4.

PRICE NINEPENCE

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NOTE.

The greater number of the following letters have not hitherto been published. A few, however, were printed in leaflet form many years ago. It is possible that other letters from the pen of the late J. G. Bellett may be in existence, extracts from which would be profitable for publication. If such exist the compiler of these letters would be glad of the loan of same. Communications can be sent to the Publishers,

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THE KINGDOM.

WHAT a fact it is that when God looks for a kingdom in this world, He has to claim and assert it, by either the sword, or preaching. He cannot at once *take possession* of it, because man has revolted from Him, and He is a stranger in the earth; but He has to *acquire* it.

In the Book of Genesis, He does not seek a kingdom, He is a Stranger on earth, with His elect.

Seeking a kingdom in due time, as in the days of Moses and Joshua, He has to claim His people from Pharaoh, and His land from the Amorites—plagues under Moses' rod making good the first claim, the sword of Joshua making good the second.

His people revolt from Him; and though He calls upon them to repent and own His rights, saying "repent ye, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand," He is rejected. The Heir of the Vineyard is cast out as we know.

Now by His word and Spirit He is claiming and acquiring a kingdom for Himself among men. Preaching the Gospel is preaching the Kingdom of God—and faith, which is the answer to that preaching, accepts God's salvation and owns God's authority. To faith He is both Saviour and Lord—and thus the blessed One gains a kingdom for Himself here by preaching.

This kingdom is not in word, but in power. It is not meat, and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is within us.

By and bye, through judgment or the sword again, God the Lord will acquire His kingdom here. When the time comes for the kingdom being *manifested* again, and not as it now is, *hidden*, it will be acquired by judgments. The Pharisees in Luke xvii. 20 did not see this; the multitude in Luke xix. 11 did not see this; the disciples in Acts i. 6 did not see this. Each in their way judged that the kingdom might be set up at once—but this could not be. The Amorites of old had to fill up their sins, then to be judged, and the kingdom of God upon that judgment to be established (Gen. xv. 14-16); so again the world will fill up their measure, and the judgment of it will make way for the millennial kingdom (Matt. xiii. 41-43).

But thus it is. The Lord has to get Himself a kingdom on earth or among men. He cannot at once take it, for the scene has revolted from Him. But His kingdom He acquires by His word and Spirit now, and by and bye He will acquire it by the sword and judgment.

What a witness this is against man and the world, that the Creator instead of taking His kingdom at once, has to acquire it.

THE WAY OF THE LOVE OF JESUS. *Good*

The more perfect love is, the more entirely and without distraction will it regard its object, and this will give it at times a very different bearing, because its way will be determined by the condition and need of its object. Its way therefore, at times, may appear harsh and decisive, as when the Lord rebuked Peter in Matthew xvi., or when He reprov'd the two disciples in Luke xxiv. But this is only because love is perfect, and therefore is undistractedly considering its object.

Imperfect love will show itself otherwise—more attractively at times, but far intrinsically less true, because imperfect love will not in this way unmixedly consider its object, but itself—it will be set upon enjoying this object, rather than servng it, and this will give it a more considerate and tender bearing at times, and get for itself great credit, while perfect love has all the while forgotten itself and its enjoyments, and ordered its course and its actings in more undistracted concern and desire to have another blest and profited.

Where do we see the perfect love but in Jesus, in God! A mother has it not but will at times enjoy her child, but Jesus had it. He considered His disciples when He was with them—He ordered His way with them to their profit, and not to His own gratification. He will gratify Himself with them in that coming age, when He need no longer care for them as in a place of instruction and discipline. He will then have no occasion in the exercise of perfect love to consider only their profit, for their profit will then have been brought to its accomplishment in that place of their Lord's delight in them.

WITH THE LAMB.

Good

I find a beautiful company on Mount Zion in Revelation xiv. 1. In the midst of the corruptions which in the day there anticipated are to cover the earth, that elect company are distinguished by their being with the Lamb.

What a *simple*, but what a *significant* distinction! It tells us too, that all the world then were doing *without the Lamb*.

This has a voice in it for us. The church is afterwards in the same book called "The Lamb's wife." Is not this also significant to the same intent? The Woman, Babylon, may find companionship and pleasure with the things of the earth, but the church finds *her object* in the Lamb—she is the Lamb's wife.

REALIZATION OF GLORY.

Gently

It is some time since I sent a word of remembrance. But I desire to do so. Rapidly is time bearing us both along. I start at times to think how old I have grown, and yet how welcome should it all be?

There is the simple believing mind which dwells in all certainty and in all desire on the promises of glory. There is the thoughtful mind which turns occasionally to realize those promises . . . Our faith should deal with His promises. But beside this, I do desire to have thoughts of coming days.

"What will it be to dwell above,
And with the Lord of glory reign."

Nothing, I suppose, so immediately tends to make the heart long for the days of heaven, as the simple assurance of Christ's personal love to us; then, our sense

of the attractiveness that is in Him; and then our being found in such characters and attitudes as suit the characters that we are to fill and sustain in His presence when we reach it.

THE ASHES OF THE HEIFER.

The ashes of the heifer in Numbers xix. were but, or only, a remembrancer. The thing itself, "ashes," would intimate that. It was the remains of the victim, and not the victim itself. It is not atonement but cleansing. It is the washing of the feet and not the washing of the body. It is the present action of the Lord in heaven, upon the remembrance of His once accomplished redemption at Calvary.

But in the same chapter, Numbers xix., we see the sensitiveness of divine holiness. The slightest touch of anything dead conveyed pollution. Yea, the priest who prepared the victim, the Israelite who burnt the ashes, the Israelite who sprinkled the unclean were all alike unclean and had to wash themselves, for they had dealt with that which had dealt with sin, and that was enough to make washing needful. They were outside the sanctuary until they were cleansed.

But, beloved, how will all this magnify the Lord Jesus, when we think of His life in connection with this. He was ever dealing with sin and the results of it; He was raising the dead, He was cleansing the leper; He was touched by the polluted, He was allowing the approach and the contact of all kinds of defiled men. And yet, unstained in the midst of all, just because He took in relation to it all, not merely the place of a priest or an Israelite, but the place of the cleansing victim.

The Heifer is the only thing, (the ashes for sprinkling) that is undefileable in Numbers xix. And Jesus is the only One that ever was here, alike undefileable. Instead of pollution getting into Him through the touch, virtue went out of Him to dismiss the power of death and blot out the stain.

The Heifer was without blemish, and never had yoke. He was pure, and He was free. Beautiful premonitions of Jesus! He was free as well as spotless, which none are but "Jehovah's Fellow." Indeed Christ's relationship to sin, is God's. In Genesis iii., man became like God, knowing good and evil, but man knew it because he had brought himself under the power of evil; God knows it as being infinitely and essentially above it. Man touching it sympathizes with it; God touching it withers it. And so, Jesus.

Jesus was ever dealing with sin in the days of His flesh, but was as unspotted at the end, as He had been at the beginning, for He dealt with it, either as the victim that put it away, or as the God of holiness, that is in Himself supremely above it, in whose presence it cannot abide, and who touches it only to dismiss it and wither it.

THE SINNER'S NEED AND CHRIST'S SUFFICIENCY.

How sweet to see the Blind Beggar and the Rich Publican, each of them on his way to Christ, in Luke xviii. and xix. Each of them had a need, that none but Christ could answer—and as soon as they discovered their need, and His sufficiency, then they were set on the road to Him, and reached Him with earnestness.

The Beggar was blind. He carried his need or his necessity in his body, and believing that Christ had power, he urged his way through the crowd. The Publican carried his need, not in his body, but in his soul. He desired to see Jesus. But this sense in his soul acted on him, as the sorrowful necessity in his body acted on the Beggar, and like him, he urged his way to Jesus through the crowd.

Sweet, living pictures of what concerns ourselves. If sinners discover the two things, their own need and Christ's fulness, this will generate urgency and under pressure of that (through the Spirit) they will reach Jesus in spite of crowds and rebukes.

Let us in preaching seek for grace to open to the heart the discovery of these two things, that this journey may be taken. No disappointment can possibly follow. If need urges its way to Christ's sufficiency, that sufficiency must answer it.

THE SOLITARY ONE.

You have observed, perhaps, how the Lord in John's Gospel acts on the ground of this, that the world had not known Him, and Israel had not received Him, according to chapter i. 10, 11.

It is a matter of great interest to see this, how simply and yet how distinctly and fully He acts on these great facts; how He turns, as it were, away from both the world and Israel, and as the Son imparts Himself and His life to sinners who would (though the world and Israel had thus refused Him) receive Him in His grace as Son of God.

He is seen as a solitary One in the course of the first chapter: but in His solitude He is "the Lamb of God," i.e. in the character and plan of imparting life to all who seek Him as sinners, and being sought and found in that character, He promises the kingdom to those who become associated with Him (i. 51).

These are fine witnesses of what I am speaking of. Jesus has done with the world and Israel. He takes His separated place, but it is the separated place of Him who can give life and a kingdom to sinners.

So in chapter ii. He refuses the world. He refuses to shine in the eyes of man, according to the desires of the mother. But while he does so, He is seen opening His glories in the sight of His disciples (verse 11). He is the separated One, but His separation tells who He is, and that He has divine virtues and powers to impart or display.

In the third chapter, He has His face again turned away from the *world*. He would not yield to the flattering approaches of Nicodemus, any more than to the worldly suggestions of the mother, but taking a place apart from all that, He shews that it is the place of the life-giving Son of God.

In chapter iv. He has His back turned upon *Israel*. He knows them not, nor recognises them in their place or rights at all. He has done with Israel as completely as He has done with the world, but He opens the river of God in His separated place. If separated from the world or Israel, it is to give life to all who would receive Him or come to Him in His separated place.

Just so in chapter v. He is cancelling the prerogatives of Israel, but this in only that He may introduce Himself in all His life-giving virtue to the needy and helpless.

So in chapter vi. He will not be a King. He is a Stranger in the world and done with the world, giving up all expectations from it, will not even be sought or desired as a patron or worker of miracles, or as One that has power and resources for this world and this life. But He presents Himself as the help and eternal life of poor dead and ruined children of men, as the One in whom, and in whom alone, they can be saved.

And, not to pursue this further, in chapter vii., you find the two things again strikingly exhibited. In the opening of the chapter you see Him with this character and firmest decision turning His back upon the world; and then at the close of it, in some of the most precious features of it, unfolding His person as the Son of God in the separated place. He will not go up to the feast to shew Himself to the world, as His brethren desired, but being separated He reveals Himself as the Source of the river of God, the Imparter of the Holy Ghost to all who would follow Him by faith, and meet 'Him in His separated place and character.

Very fine this way, this picture of the Son of God is. He is apart from the world because "the world knew Him not;" He is apart from Israel or His own, because "His own received Him not," but in the separated place He is the Son of God, in conscious divine glory, imparting healing, life, the indwelling Spirit and the Kingdom, to all "who received Him."

How has He, beloved, the pre-eminence in all things! Yea, and in a great sense, not only the pre-eminence, but the character of glory in which He is and must be alone.

You and I are to be separated from the world as Jesus was, but we are separated to the place of saints merely, while He is separated to the place of the Son. We are separated from the world and from Israel, that we may *walk in the power of heavenly citizenship*. He is separated that He may *impart the life and the rights of heaven*.

HEAVEN.

We should think much of heaven, and seek to be near the Lord in spirit, so that heaven may be a reality to our hearts.

When the disciples report to the Lord that the devils were subject to them, He tells them not to rejoice so much in that, as in this, that their names were written in heaven. See Luke x. 17-20.

There is something very simple, but very precious in this. A right-minded man would always value his family more than his property, the objects of his heart more than the interests of his estate. It was so with Adam and Eden. Adam got possessions in abundance. He was a man of great substance, of wealth and of honour. He gave names to all cattle, thus treating them all as his own. But all that was not so important to him as Eve. Eve opened his mouth, as all his possession had failed to do. And this was a part of Adam's moral perfection in that day.

So the Lord tells His disciples to have the same mind in themselves, to rejoice more in the thought of their home in heaven, than of their kingdom and power.

May the hope of getting the heart's satisfaction there make heaven very chiefly dear to us!

WORLDLINESS.

Worldliness is the great *dispensational* offence because the Lord in this age is a rejected Lord and worldliness and religious profession find it uncommon easy to keep company.

The characteristic of the church is this, that she has been joined to the Lord in the day of His rejection.

This has its type or expression in Asenath and Zipporah. These Gentile women of old were united, the one to Joseph, the other to Moses, in the day of their rejection. It is not that they did much or suffered much. The details of their history we do not know but they owned their lords in the days of their sorrow.

BEREAVEMENT.

I would send you a few lines by way of remembrance, and to express my hope, that the Lord is graciously turning your deep sorrow and bereavement to sweet and good account for your soul . . . It ought not to cost us much to know that it is far better to see our children safe with Christ, than growing up to hold conflict with all that which is coming on the earth not only in the shape of terrors, but of snares and delusions as well as difficulties.

But your loss had some peculiar trial with it. What a comfort could the loving hand and heart of mother and father have ministered then! But He who orders the events, orders the circumstances, and you must be silent.

With all unfeignedness knowing my poor ways and services, I am often, in a spirit of bondage, disposed to compare myself with others, and then to be cast down. But this is all wrong. We ought to say let Him be glorified by whom He may be glorified. When Peter saw John next his Lord, and even leaning on His bosom, you may be sure Peter did not grudge the place to John. So let it be with our spirits. Let us rejoice that others, in one sense, are more to Him than we are.

THE INCREASE OF GOD.

One prays, beloved, to be more and more independent of the creature, and above the scene here. It is a great expression "increase with the increase of God," but we are prone to increase with the increase of man, to feed on what the creature provides for us . . . It will be heaven, to be in a constant rapture at the grace of God and the beauty of Jesus.

SATAN.

It is a thought warranted by Scripture, I judge, that the devil dreads his approach, as you say, to the lake of fire. See Matthew viii. 29.

But while that is a truth, it is also, I judge, a truth that he delights in evil and mischief, and the greater the exhibition of these things the greater his enjoyment. This is his nature, he is under this necessity, though it may hasten his own doom, for he is ever defeating himself. But this being so. I should be slow to say that "he hinders the revelation of the man of sin as long as he can." And besides the man of sin

comes after the full working of Satan, as though Satan was taking special delight in that creature, his manifestation and coming, instead of being disappointed at his appearing.

Again, I judge the letting thing operates in the place where the manifestation is to be made. Your thought makes his presence in heaven the letting thing, and it is only when cast down to the earth that the man of sin is revealed on earth.

You are very right in presenting the enemy in his stages from ¹ heavenly places to the earth, from the earth to the ² bottomless pit, and from the pit to the lake of fire; and right, I judge in making Revelation xiii. the "short time" of Satan's concentrated power on earth.

And I need not add, beloved, that you are right in saying our suggestions on these subjects are to be made "with unshod feet," but if in that way, we may make them one to the other.

BREAKING AND BUILDING.

The Lord is breaking up in these days, and man is building up. But *His* ruined waste places shall sing like a garden by and bye.

JOHN XX.

The characteristics of John xx. have just struck me. In the first verse it is Mary alone that is shewn to us as going to the sepulchre. This is characteristic, for the whole Gospel so much presents individual saints to

our notice, and the action of God upon them personally. And then in Mary also you see the working of affection, according to John: the individual brought alone to Christ, and finding in Christ an object to satisfy. Then the new life is imparted carrying with it the remission of sins; because imparted by Him who is raised out of the death that has put it all away for ever. This is also characteristic of John. These are post-resurrection scenes different from what the other Evangelists give, which however in their turn are equally characteristic.

HEBREWS VI.-X.

I have been long assured that the Apostle, in Hebrews vi. and x. does not contemplate any amount of moral evil, but such offences as impinge the glory and sufficiency of the work of the Son of God, such as "do despite to the Spirit of grace" or "that tread under foot the Son of God," or "count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing." Such offences as take the place of presumptuous sins under the law. See Numbers xv.

Presumptuous sins were not pieces of moral iniquity, but direct insults to the majesty of the Law-giver, such as picking sticks on the sabbath-day. And now, when grace, and not law, is dispensed, when the effectual work of the Son of God is declared, presumptuous sin is putting dishonour on that by going back to carnal, legal, self-righteous confidence.

The present system of ordinances is very like the offence contemplated in these solemn passages. It is committed against the *dispensational* provisions of grace.

SANCTIFICATION.

Dublin is on the way to the 'Great Exhibition' as London was two years ago. But how unchanged one's judgment is about it all—yea with increased decision, because heavenly principles are only the more discerned, and the effrontery of the world and its devices only every day the more published.

The sanctification of the church is of a very peculiar order. I read the Lord saying, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." This is full of meaning. He was separating Himself altogether from the world. He was leaving the earth for heaven. In that sense He was sanctifying Himself. He had always been "holy," even in the mother's womb "the holy thing"—as holy then as He now is holy in the highest heaven. But when He said "I sanctify Myself," He meant that He was about to take a new relationship to us, about to sit in heaven and draw His saints there to Himself.

And this constitutes the high and peculiar order of the church's sanctification.

I ask then, can the church help the world in its purposes and expectations? Can the church join in schemes that set the advancement, and the beauty, and the cultivation of the world as their end and hope? How is that possible? How could that be consistent with her peculiar sanctification? The saint is to labour in the earth for his daily bread. He is to learn honest trades for necessary uses. He is to befriend others in their need—do good as he is able to all, and to be ready to every good work. But how can he purpose to

cultivate and advance the world? or join in the expectations of those who make the world's desirableness and beauty *their object*?

Christians may be holy in their behaviour and in their personal habits, and in the moral order and keeping of their thoughts and words, and without watchfulness in such matters we cannot be right—but Christians are not sanctified with that peculiar sanctification that is properly theirs and for which Jesus laid Himself out when He said "for their sakes I sanctify Myself," if they are worldly or seek the cultivation or advancement of this present scene of human action.

The law demanded holiness in desires and thoughts. To be sure it did. The rules of society demand rectitude in a thousand given cases. Conscience imperiously exacts moral conduct of us. But Christ not only does all this, but looks for a sanctification in His saints of a high and peculiar order—separation from the world because HE is in heaven.

CONFEDERATION.

Did you ever notice how confederacy marks the action of man or the world in the Book of the Revelation?

The Woman sits on many waters, multitudes, tongues, nations and peoples, and they all receive the cup of fornication at her hand. Kings of the earth, merchants of the earth, the nations of the earth, and then every ship-master, all are allied to her, and the blood of "the saints," the separated ones flows.

The Beast exhibits the same. In his own person

he has, as it were, gathered the characteristics of the four great empires, who has the ten horns and the seven heads (xiii. 1, 2). The Prophet is his associate and minister and "the whole world" wonders after him, receiving his mark in their foreheads, so that all who will not be of that confederacy must suffer for it.

Thus, whether it be during the supremacy of the Woman, or during the supremacy of the Beast, *confederacy* marks the day.

Is not this the principle of the day in which we live? There is a tendency in all the nations to associate. There is the thought, what may not be done beyond all precedent, if man will but help his fellow to have it so.

"Say not ye a confederacy to whom this people shall say a confederacy" (Isa. viii.).

How blessed when *Millennial* peace shall succeed this apostate alliance? When every tongue shall confess Jesus Lord, instead of the whole world wondering after the Beast.

MAN-WORSHIP.

I am not going to the International Exhibition, you may be sure. The last was the Great Exhibition, this is the International Exhibition. Things are advancing to their ripened apostate form. The word "international" implies confederacy; the word "exhibition" implies display of man, and confederacies and human pretensions are to mark the last days of Babylon, or of man's world.

I met a word in reading this morning, that arrested me. It is Isaiah iii. "provoke the eyes of his glory."

They are peculiar and solemn, and significant too. This provocation comes from the haughty, insolent ways and speeches of Jerusalem. See verse 8. A kindred word is found in 1 Corinthians x. 22: "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?" This comes from the saints, the worshippers of God, being found in idol-temples.

I have a thought that they who go to this International Exhibition are, in a way, provoking the Lord to jealousy, and provoking the eyes of His glory. They are somewhat in a temple of idol-worship, by their lofty admiration of man and his skill and his successes giving the creature the due of the Creator.

Is this admiration expressing the heart of man "to wonder after the Beast?" I judge that it is, and that makes it solemn.

We may use the world but not over-use it. Thankful for the mercies, the provisions, the reliefs, the accommodations, which human skill and industry supply, but be watchful that we step not into the temple of man-worship by wonder and admiration. We shall have Christ's world to admire for ever, after the pattern of the Queen of Sheba in Jerusalem.

THE 'ACCOMPANIMENTS OF THE CROSS.

I have often said, might not the Lord have been spared the accompaniments of the Cross, the buffetting and spitting, the scorn and the rabble, the vinegar and the thorny crown—would not the Cross itself have been enough. But we see, that in all these accompaniments, these aggravating additions, He is able to sympathise with His saints in some of those things which constitute their sharpest sorrows at times.

THE HARMONIES OF CREATION.

I have just been thinking what a purpose there is in the Blessed God to unite all the parts of His great work together, and how His purpose has been manifested, though variously, from the beginning hitherto.

And this tells us what He Himself is—how He delights in the harmonies of all things under His care—how their joy and interest in one another is His own complacency in them.

It was thus in Eden. There were harmonies between all the parts of the great system, and the Lord God Himself walked in the garden. Heaven and earth are linked together—they were one though different, and all the creatures here owned the one common lordship of man.

In patriarchal days we find this purpose expressing itself amid all the confusion and enmity which sin had introduced. Abraham and Abimelech meeting at the well of the oath shewed, in mystery, Israel and the nations in the distant days of the power of Christ, or in “the world to come.” And a more extended exhibition of these purposed harmonies is given in the land of Egypt in the day of the power of Joseph.

The meeting of Jethro and Moses at the mount of God in Exodus xviii., the meeting of Solomon and the queen of the south, tell the same mystery in different features of it. Prophets announce it afterwards. The King of Israel is to be the God of the whole earth. The house of prayer in Jerusalem is to be the house of prayer for all nations, as the divided sticks of Ephraim and Judah are to become one again; and even

a covenant is to be between man and the beast of the field again, and the parts of the now severed creation are to be so healed that a little child is to play with a cockatrice.

Time would fail to go over the witnesses of this. But the New Testament discovers to us one of these harmonies, and it is by far the most wondrous and excellent of all. It is called as you know "the mystery." It is "the Christ" of 1 Corinthians xii. It is the one body of which Christ is the head—destined for excellent glory, and for dominion too—destined to shine in the heavenly places, even above angels; and to have authority on the earth in company with the Lord of the earth Himself,—but more than that, destined to express His divine delight and desire in the harmonies of the scene before God in the most marvellous and blessed form which they could possibly assume. I mean, oneness between the Sanctifier Himself and the sanctified.

This harmony, this oneness, we get in such Scriptures as Galatians iii., 1 Corinthians xii., xiv., Romans xii., Ephesians i., iii. But it is in everything now dispensed to the understanding of the saints, for their joy and comfort, and for their divine, spiritual separation from the world.

But I must add this. *The Lord will never admit of unity or harmony at the expense of truth or godliness,* or of His own glory. The great witness of that is Babel. There the whole family were of one speech and of one language, but because they said "Go to, let us build a city, and a tower that shall reach unto heaven," the Lord of heaven came down to scatter them. On the other hand, the harmonies which He purposes will be the *display of His glory,* and the sustainment of truth

and godliness, and the greatest, and chiefest, and deepest of them all, (the oneness of Christ and His members) is the most glorious expression of His glory. In the sight of this we can sing with renewed vigour of soul.

“Lord Jesus are we one with Thee,
O height, O depth of love!

The tongue of the Egyptian sea shall be dried up in *Millennial days* (Isa. xi.). The sea itself shall be no more in *new heaven and new earth days*, to effectuate and display this blessed desire of God in the harmonies of creation (Rev. xxi.).

CHRIST IN ISAIAH.

What a series of anticipations of Messiah we find in the Prophet Isaiah, each of them presenting Him to us in some special light and character, and each of them verified as belonging to Jesus as Messiah, by citation in some part of the New Testament.

VII. We get Messiah in this chapter, as “Immanuel,” and this is cited and applied to Jesus in Matthew i.

IX. We get Him here as the light from Zebulon, and this is cited in Matthew iv.

XL. We find Him here as ushered forth by His messenger, the Voice, and this is cited in Luke iii.

XLII. Here we see Him in certain fine characteristics of His ministry. It is quoted in Matthew xii.

XLIX. This is a very full anticipation of Him, and a verse of this chapter is cited by Paul in Acts xiii.

LIII. In this well known chapter, as is well known we have the Lord in His sufferings, and quoted in Acts viii.

LXI. Here we have the Lord in His ministry again, but a different view of that ministry from what we have in chapter xlii. It is quoted in Luke iv.

Each of these prophecies respecting Him, though it may give us a special view of Him, as in His Person, or in the beginning of His ministry itself, or in His sufferings and death, yet will be found, if read throughout not to lose sight of Him till it shew Him to us in His glory. All is to end in that, and the Spirit would in this way impress that truth upon our souls. All is to end in the strength and exaltation of Jesus. And we should accustom our hearts to this thought. The path may be chequered. It may be rough. Many contradictions may beset it, and many snares may lie upon it, but it is to end in glory, and hope should therefore be the crowning affection of the soul. Of course there are other allusions to Christ, interspersed in this great evangelic prophet, as Isaiah has been called, but these are prominent passages, and stand out in relief before the eye, as the reader travels through that wondrous book from beginning to end.

CHRIST IN HUMILIATION.

The great act or duty of faith is to meet the Lord Jesus in *the due place and character*. If we know our need as sinners this will be so. When He was demanded to shew a sign, it was answered, that no sign should be given but that of Jonah. This told them, that they must receive Him in character, or meet Him in the right place if they received Him or met Him at all. Those who asked for a sign from heaven

(a sign of power such as would astonish the world and force its acceptance of Him in dignity and strength) exposed ignorance of their own need as sinners. If we be guilty, we need a sacrifice. If we be in ruin we need a repairer. If we have to be raised up, we need one who can and will stoop to our condition to lift us up. It is only the Son of God in weakness, in humiliation in death and buried, that can be all this to us, or do all this for us. So that if, again I say, we know our own condition and the need that attaches to it, we shall go to the cross of Christ, and the humiliation of Christ, the death and burial of Christ, to the manger in Bethlehem, or the Carpenter's shop in Nazareth, to look for our object.

This signalizes the faith of the Shepherds who were not offended by the weakness and poverty that they saw at Bethlehem; and the faith of old Simeon who took the poor babe of Nazarene parents who were bringing their two turtle doves as an offering, into his arms as the Salvation of God; and the faith of the wise men from the East, who opened all their treasures, brought with them in sacrifice when they reached the house in Bethlehem where the babe of the manger had just been brought, having passed by the palace in Jerusalem. They did not ask for any sign but that of Jonah. How simple this is, and happy, and yet how humbling. We must go to the blessed Lord in humiliation ere we can know Him according to the demand of our own condition. And this causes faith to utter words like these, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." For faith understands our condition and Christ's provision for that condition, Christ Himself in humiliation and death.

JOHN VIII.

What a divine thought that is in John viii.—“He that committeth sin is the servant of sin.” Instead of being a man of pleasure and with independence, the Lord says, the man that gratifies his lust is a slave, a captive—he serves iniquity.

And He adds, “the servant abideth not in the house for ever.” It is true that Ishmael was not to abide in the house for ever, but this was because he was the child of the Bondwoman. Adam, I judge, in Genesis iii. is rather looked at by the Lord in these words, because he was cast out, because he sinned.

THE PARABLES OF MATTHEW XIII.

My idea on Matthew xiii. has been this. The Parable of the Tares and the Wheat introduces the two sides, the good and the bad—the divers contents of the present age or world, Christendom.

The parable of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven, take up the Tares, presenting them, the bad thing of Christendom, in its two forms of outward secular greatness and of internal spiritual corruption.

The parable of the Treasure and the Pearl, in like manner, take up the Wheat, presenting it, (the good thing of Christendom) in its two characters as being set for Christ’s glory and for Christ’s joy or delight.

The parable of the Drag-net shows the separating, judicial action that is to close the age.

I receive that of the Tares and the Wheat as generating, so to speak the rest. For it includes the

bad thing and the *good* thing, and the judgment that finally separates these two things, and thus the remaining five parables are only an enlarged view of the contents of this parent-parable.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

I have been thinking of Nebuchadnezzar lately. Look at him in Daniel i.-iv. He seems to me to illustrate that principle of the Lord, "new wine must be put into new bottles." The hand and Spirit of God had wrought wonderfully before him. The "wisdom of God" had been displayed to admiration in Daniel interpreting his dream—the power of God had been displayed to admiration in Shadrach and his companions outliving the fiery furnace—his conscience and affections were again and again moved—another dream amazes him and again Daniel makes him understand it in all its solemn awful application to himself. But with all these displays of power and wisdom, and with these workings on natural conscience and affections, Nebuchadnezzar is still the same man, the proud child of dust, who, like Adam of old, would be as God. "Is not this great Babylon which I have builded" says he after all these visitations and exercises. The hand and Spirit of God were displayed in vain. The new wine was only wasted. A new bottle must be got for it, if it is to be preserved. And so there is. This King is made "a new bottle." He passes through a solemn process of death and resurrection. All his former style is changed. He no longer does great things either for Daniel or for Daniel's God, but humbles himself before Him, makes confession to Him as the only One, and takes the place, not of a king, but of a dependent. This is the old thing indeed passed away, and all becoming new.

That little parable or figure is used by the Lord, after He had been experiencing the resistance of the scribes and Pharisees again and again. See Mark ii.

He had been gracious to the palsied man—they said He spake blasphemies. He sat at Levi's table with publicans—they upbraided Him for want of common holiness, as they judged. His disciples were not fasting as the disciples of John and the Pharisees, and again this is objected to Him. All this was a witness that the new wine had been lost on them. They had not contained it. His miracles of grace, His ways of friendship with sinners to lead them to repentance—the liberty and joy of His gospel or of the Bridegroom mystery—all had been lost upon them; and He learns from this (I speak as a man) that man was worth nothing for God—he must be born again—the old thing must pass away, and all be new.

GLORY REBUKING UNBELIEF.

How continually from the beginning have we had to learn the glories of God even in the very midst of the witnesses of them. So slow of heart are we. "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip," may be read as a very common rebuke. A calm, single-hearted faith, that counts on what the Lord is to us, and has for us is the exception.

Israel had a wondrous witness of what God was to them. Plague after plague, in which they had been preserved, had swept through Egypt, and the blood on the lintel had sheltered them on the night of doom; but still, when they come to stand between the Red Sea and the Egyptian host all was as it were forgotten, and the cloud that carried the glory had to manifest

a virtue that they knew not of. It went between the two camps, and was there again like the blood on the lintel, a shelter from Egypt, as the blood had been from the Angel of death.

David had known the Lord as for him and with him in the wilderness, when the lion and the bear had come out; and he had known His arm unshortened, when the giant of Gath came out. But now it is "I shall one day perish at the hand of Saul."

So with the disciples who journeyed with the Lord day by day, and saw His works. They were at their wit's ends at times, even in the midst of the witnesses of His grace and power. The wind on the lake, and the unfed thousands on the shore, are quite beyond them. They had to learn still what Jesus was. And to teach them on one occasion, the Lord lets the sickness of Lazarus end in death that at the grave they might learn "the glory of God," and know the exhaustless stores of strength and virtue He had for all their need.

COLOSSIANS I.

There is a great character in Colossians i. . . The Apostle contemplates in the saints two characters of knowledge—the knowledge of "the grace of God in truth," and the knowledge of "His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (verses 6 and 9). The saints at Colosse had attained the first; he desired for them that they might attain the second.

According to this he contemplates two characters of ministry in himself—the ministry of "the Gospel," and the ministry of "His body . . . the church" (verses 23, 25).

These distinctions should prepare us for much that we see in this day. Saints have commonly attained the knowledge of "the truth," or of the grace of God in truth, that is, of "the Gospel," but they have come short of the knowledge of "His will," that is "the mystery." We are therefore to accept them with all thankfulness, as the Apostle accepted the Colossians (verse 3), but we are also to desire as he did for the Colossians, that they might go on to reach the knowledge of the mystery in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

This is very simple and easy to be understood, from this first chapter of Colossians. The humbling to us, dear Brother, is, that the knowledge of "His will" which we have, in measure, attained, has done so little for our souls; and that others with less attainment this way, may have reached far beyond us in other ways.

But I will touch upon another secret in this great chapter: which also addressed itself to my mind, as I read it again this morning. Wherever the eye turns it is filled with one object, and that is the preciousness of Christ. In the region of Creation, Providence, Redemption and Glory, this is so. As the first chapter of Hebrews tells us in a more succinct form, He made the worlds, He upholds all things, He has purged our sins and sat down in the highest place in heaven, and He is appointed heir of all things. So here. When I look at creation, or all things in their original estate, I see Him as their Creator, nothing less than that; and that gives Him pre-eminence in the midst of them.

When I look at Providence, or at all things in their *upheld consistent estate*, I see Him as "before" them; and that gives Him pre-eminence there.

When I look at redemption, or at the great scene of reconciliation, I see Him as *the Head* of the body, the Firstborn from the dead; and that gives Him pre-eminence in the great region of reconciliation. *To Himself* it is, that all has returned in the way of reconciliation, and *by Himself*.

And lastly when I look at *glory* or at the time of the inheritance I see Him as *having* all things, all things created for Him as well as by Him, "the Firstborn of every creature," or the heir of the whole creation of God; and that gives Him, as surely, pre-eminence in the great scene of the glory or the Kingdom.

Thus, beloved, wherever you and I look, in whatever direction our eye is turned, backward or forward, upward or around the pre-eminence of Christ is made to shine before us. And faith approves it well, and puts the many crowns on His honoured Head.

WOMEN PRAYING AND PROPHESYING.

I have long thought that the expression "praying or prophesying" in 1 Corinthians xi. does not intimate that they are actually to be themselves teaching or praying, but that while women are in the Assembly, in the *place*, not in the *act* of praying or prophesying, they are to be covered. And my judgment is grounded on this, that the men, though they do not either pray or teach, yet being in the place of praying or teaching, are to be as much uncovered as those brethren or men who do pray and teach actually. How many men in our assemblies never actually do anything, and yet we should be as much offended by their being covered

as if we saw the teaching, active brethren covered. So that it is the place and not the act of praying and prophesying that 1st Corinthians xi. contemplates.

JOSHUA AND MOSES.

Have you observed Joshua's place in the wilderness? It has its interest for us. Joshua does not represent grace but the kingdom. You see him in Exodus xvii., fighting with Amalek just before the Camp reached the Mount of God. You see him in Exodus xxiv., going up in company with Moses to the region beyond the darkness and thunder of Sinai, for Moses there has to receive the pledges of grace, and Joshua the representative of the hope of the Kingdom accompanies him, because grace leads to glory. In Exodus xxxiii. you see him abiding in the Tabernacle, while Moses goes backward and forward between the Tabernacle and the Camp—because Moses was the mediator of grace, and thus mediated between God's presence and the thing that was defiled; but Joshua remained where the glory or the Presence was. In Numbers xiii., you find him going into the place of the Kingdom, and bringing back the pledges or earnest of it.

In Joshua i-xxiv., you find him in his proper ministry leading the Camp into the inheritance and seating them there. Thus Joshua is always connected with the Kingdom, or the ministry of glory. And Joshua ought to be realized in our souls by the indwelling Holy Spirit. We should have a mind which lives in constant hope and thought of the coming Kingdom, a mind that links us with it, that longs and sighs, in the spirit of Joshua, to go on and in; and till the appointed time, brings back the pledges, the samples,

the earnest, of that which is found in the promised land.

If we knew grace duly, we should find that it puts the soul very near (in hope) to glory, just as Joshua continually waited on Moses (See Rom. v. 1-2).

I know that grace links itself with defilement. That is one way to enjoy grace, and to glorify it, when—whatever we may have, whether our need, our defilement, or our trespass—we bring it to the grace and washing of Christ. But grace should also link itself in our souls with hope. Then we do it double honour, when grace thus deals on the one hand with our defilement, and on the other with God's glory, when we can use it for the full purifying of the one and for the full begetting of the hope of the other. If Moses wait in the Camp, let Joshua wait on Moses.

SUBMISSION TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

Jehoiachin went to Babylon, there yielding to the judgment of God, and in the end he was exalted. (2 Kings xxiv. xxv.). Zedekiah remained at home, and instead of accepting the punishment of his sin, by submission to the king of Babylon, the Lord's rod, rebelled against him, and at last perished.

This is the two baskets of figs, good and bad, of Jeremiah xxiv. The parable of the two Eagles and the Vine in Ezekiel xvii. is to be read in connection with Zedekiah's history.

But the close of that chapter is very fine, and tells us that another witness shall deliver his testimony in Millennial days; that God takes up the lowly and puts down the haughty and the mighty, His constant, yea necessary action in this fallen world.

Israel's real blessing *began* in the *lowly place*—when they stripped off their ornaments, and sought the Lord outside the camp (Ex. xxxiii.). So, Israel's blessing must *end* in the same *lowly place*. After they had failed in the kingdom or in Canaan, as they had failed in the wilderness, their blessing lay in Babylon, as before it lay outside the Camp. They must accept the punishment of their sin and go there.

And it is thus with us individually. We are in the way, or place of blessing when convicted. We must be broken in order to be blest.

Now, the Lord Himself, took this same place—not by being broken in conscience, as we are to be, for He was spotless, without either corruption within, or blemish without. But He was broken in *circumstances*. The heir of the throne was a Carpenter—the Lord of the fulness of the earth had not where to lay His head. He was a root out of a dry ground—or, as Ezekiel here speaks, “a tender twig,” a “low tree,” a “dry tree,” but planted in the last days, in millennial days, “upon a high mountain and eminent,” becoming “a goodly cedar,” under which shall dwell all fowl of every wing.” This is the *Millennial* Jesus, who once had been the *Nazarene* Jesus.

But this was not Nebuchadnezzar's history. His branch had spread in its day, as the branch of this Millennial Jesus will do. (See Daniel iv.). But Nebuchadnezzar had never been “a tender twig,” a “low tree,” a “dry tree.” Accordingly this great tree of Babylon which had never been “a tender twig” in early days, in last days exalts itself, and meets the judgment of the Lord. Its leaves are shaken off, its

fruit is scattered, its branches are cut down. It is preserved—but preserved as “a stump in the earth”—that thus being humbled and broken, God may bless and exalt it, in His own way, at the end

HIS BANISHED ONES.

It is only God Himself who could bring home a banished one, or provide salvation for a sinner. For to accomplish this there must be a ransom, a price adequate to the redemption. God alone could furnish that. All the angels in heaven would fail in the attempt. An eternal value must go for an offence against God. God alone can yield an offering which shall carry infinite value in it, like that, and such as sin demands. Power cannot supply it, love cannot supply it; it is God Himself, whose Person has infinite value, can alone supply it.

Power once attempted this, and failed awfully. David on the throne of Israel undertook by a simple word or decree of power, such as his throne carried, to bring back a banished one. But this ended in greater mischief; and the throne that had attempted this, was as it were forfeited by the act.

God has, however, done it—because He can sprinkle blood on the throne such as the throne can accept. He can, and He has, allied righteousness with peace, in this great matter, and His banished are brought home under sure and clear title to see His face, and to walk in His presence; and His own throne is not only guiltless but glorified. New honours array it. Mercy and truth with their several glories, and that too in their brightest shining, adorn it,

GOD REVEALED IN HIS ACTINGS.

Scripture acquaints us with God, not by descriptions of Him, but through His own actings. What a different thing we should have had, if He had employed Prophets to describe Him—but what a precious thing we have in seeing God Himself in action!

Philosophy seems to delight itself in describing God, thinking to magnify its subject by learning, and at times by eloquence. But this is not the way of the Book. Scripture allows God to shew Himself by His acts and does not take the method of describing Him.

And what a proof that God reveals Himself in action and in personality, and not by theologic descriptions or commentary, is the Incarnation with all that it led to in the life of Jesus: His childhood, His youth, His subjection under the law at Nazareth, His ministry in its sayings and doings, His sorrows, temptations and death, His resurrection and glory. What a witness does all this leave to the great truth, that God will be known by manifestations of Himself, and not by descriptions—that He has not committed the revelation of what He is, and who He is, to the pen of even inspired descriptions, but that He has chosen to be His own Revealer, in living personal action. His own activities bespeak Him, and not the pen of theologians

Theology's best and first thought of Him is thus rebuked at once. It says *God is in heaven*. Nay, the answer is, God is on earth, among us acting, speaking, sympathising, in our nature, in our world, in our circumstances. It is indeed true, that He is in heaven—but as an abstract theological maxim, it deprives us of

Him, instead of acquainting us with Him. He is in heaven, it is true, but He has been on earth. And if God in heaven be not known to us as the One who has been here, I am without Him.

The One who sat on the well of Sychar is the One who now sits on the right hand of the Throne of the Father. Seated once with a sinner here, now with God there--suited with each in His day: His personality as perfect here as there; here manifested in unmeasured grace, there in imperishable glory.

THE EARNEST OF THE INHERITANCE.

I have never felt fully at ease with two lines of a favourite hymn,—

“Though the shore we hope to land on,
Only by report is known,”

for in my secret thoughts while that has been singing, I have said, “We have something beside a report of that land,” I grant that if we had nothing but God’s report, that would be quite enough to commend our souls into that state which the hymn goes on to describe.

“Yet we freely all abandon,
Led by that report alone.”

I fully grant that if the Lord had been pleased to give us only His word about the goodness of the land, that would be quite enough to calm our faith. But the question is, has He confined it to a report of that land,—is it only tidings?

This I question; Eliezer, for instance, gave to Rebecca more than a report—jewels and gold, pledges

of Isaac's love and samples of Abraham's wealth. And this is the office of the Holy Ghost in the great economy of redemption. He enters the scene not so much with a report of the distant glory, as with pledges and first-fruits of it—He is the earnest of the inheritance.

So with the Spies and their clusters (Numbers xiii.). They did this additional service for the camp: the report of Canaan had reached them through Moses long before this, and the Spies also bear a report of it, they said that surely it was a good land, flowing with milk and honey; but they did *more*, something which Moses their redeemer from Egypt had never done, they presented a cluster of grapes, and said, this is the fruit of it: they offered a sample, a first-fruits; this was a new thing—this seeing of the produce of Canaan was something additional to all that had hitherto been done for them. Moses described the land, the Spies exhibit and brought into the wilderness a taste of its pleasant produce, and this Eschol, like the jewels of Eliezer, typifies the blessed service of the Spirit in the great work of our salvation, and this is God's way, as appears by these witnesses. He gives an earnest as well as a report. He did so in patriarchal days by His messenger from Abraham's house; He did so in Israel's days by the Spies which He commanded to search the promised land (Num. xiii. 3) while His people were still in the wilderness; and He does so in this age of ours among His elect by the gospel and indwelling of His Spirit, who gives the soul enjoyment of the things reported of in the word, after the manner of a sample or foretaste. It is a part of the Divine plan of the great economy, or purpose, to give earnests as well as reports. This is essential and not accidental.

THE GLORIES OF JESUS. ' He no

What an extended publication of the glory ^{will} strength of Jesus there is, in the preaching of the Apostles in the Acts, and all upon *the ground of His resurrection.*

He is "the Just One"—the righteous One—so declared by resurrection and the bestower of righteousness, accordingly, on the sinner that trusts in Him.

He is "the Prince of Life"—the quickening Spirit, so declared by resurrection, or His victory over death, and accordingly the impartor of life to the sinner that trusts in Him.

He is "the Judge"—like the budding rod of Aaron (Num. xvii.) silencing, because of His resurrection the murmers and rebellion of those who had lately crucified Him.

He is "Lord and Christ"—the anointed Head of Israel and Lord of the ends of the earth—"Lord of all" as Peter calls Him in chapter x. 36.

To Him belongs "a name" for salvation (ii. 21; iv. 12), "a day" for judgment (ii. 20), and "a promise," to be revealed by and by, for refreshing (iii. 19).

These are among His published glories. His resurrection was to be the great testimony (1. 22), and the virtues and results of that resurrection are largely unfolded in the Book.

That is a fine title, beloved, among others, "the Just One." See it in iii. 14; vii. 52; xxii. 14. Jesus had before linked Himself and righteousness (or justice) together in John xvi. 10.

of Isaac' THE COVERING OF THE TENT.

this
 ex Taking off the covering of the Tabernacle before the time, and presenting it out of wilderness circumstances, makes that glorious in the earth which should be *hidden*. This is the way the church becomes a lure to the kings of the earth, when she puts on outward glory. "Glorious *within*," "*hidden* man of the heart," "*dove's eyes within her locks*." When she leaves her position of dependence as the weaker vessel, and becomes the *unveiled harlot*, she loses her honour in the sight of the *Lord*, while she gains it in the sight of men. Thus was Sarah reprov'd when it was said "Behold he is to thee a covering of the eyes"—Gen. xx. 16: xxiv. 65.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

I do not doubt, the saints will be the subjects of that judgment seat. They will be manifested before it. Not that their *persons* will be called in question; that could not be. They are justified. They rise not to judgment, but to *life*. So that the question of their persons, that is of *themselves*, is settled.

But in happy family order, the discovery of *wrong tempers* or *hidden breaches* is a most *welcome process*. Far better to have such things *manifested* than *smothered*. The discovery or confession of them is the best *kind* of healing.

All work of this kind should be conducted and concluded by the *light of the Spirit in us*. But by *reason of flesh* this is not so. This process is hindered and left imperfect. But the light of the judgment seat

of Christ will not be so hindered. There will be no flesh to contend with it, as a rival energy. It will manifest all; and that light and that operation will be needed work to make the saints happy in their social eternity. But observe this, as another once remarked, the thought of this judgment seat gives the Apostle no uneasiness about himself, it rather makes him think of others, "knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

This is a very happy thought. He was not disturbed about himself when he thought of judgment.

CIRCUMSTANCES.

We are but bad judges of the value of circumstances. Indeed we are. We often dread what turns out the best for us, and hail and welcome that which is but cherished to pierce us like a thorn. We are poor judges of the value of circumstances, just because we walk in the light of the present moment, and not in the light of eternity, in our own light, and not in the light of the Lord.

How finely Jacob in the midst of the attractions of Egypt lived in the desire of Canaan. He ended a very weary pilgrimage in that uncircumcised land. He was there for seventeen years, and it was the contrast of all his earlier life. He had known plenty of sorrows in Canaan both before he left it and after he returned to it; and his time in Padan-aram was hard bondage as well as exile for twenty years. But Egypt seemed at last to make amends for all. His heart was satisfied in the regaining of Joseph. His

circumstances were prosperous and flattering. He saw his family flourishing around him and his long lost Joseph the second in the kingdom. At evening time there was light indeed. His eye might naturally have desired the lengthening of such a sun-set, and his heart might have been tempted to contrast all that the place of the Gentile had been to him, with all that the place of promise had been to him in other and earlier days.

But his faith triumphed. No recollections of sorrows or disappointments or disasters or disgraces in Canaan, no present possessions of honour and wealth and happiness in Egypt moved him. The promise lived and ruled in his heart; and of Canaan as promised by God he spoke, in Canaan as promised by God he hoped and that only (See Genesis xlvi.-xlix.).

In nothing does Jacob as a man of God so shine. His life was but a poor one, we might say, but his recovery of it at the close seems to me to be very fine.

True, beloved, I will own that mine, like Jacob's, has been a poor life, and you will be ready to join me in this. But the God of Jacob is our God.

ISAAC.

I have just been reading Genesis xxvii. What moral illustrations that beautiful Book of Genesis does afford us; what a variety of character is exhibited, for our warning and instruction. Isaac takes his place in the midst of these characters thus produced and presented—and for a saint we get in him but a poor example. He had godly sensibilities, as well as human,

amiable virtues but he had not godly energy. He reminds us of Jehoshaphat in other days. Jehoshaphat had godly sensibilities, but he failed in godly energy. Through vanity he failed, he joined affinity with Ahab, and had not strength to refuse to go to the battle with him. But still he had sensibilities in his soul that were spiritual and of divine workmanship, for in the midst of the prophets of Baal he was not satisfied. He had a witness within that this would not do, and he asked, "Were there not beside a prophet of the Lord?" But strange and humbling to tell it, he would still go to the battle in company with the very Ahab who had thus wounded the spiritual sensibilities that stirred in his soul, and who had thus, in infidel revolt from the God of Israel, consulted the prophets of Baal. (2 Chron. xviii.). This was terrible but this was that King Jehoshaphat.

Isaac, so, on this occasion, had his sensibilities, but not his corresponding energies. It was not through vanity, as did Jehoshaphat, that he failed—it was rather through a general relaxed moral tone of soul, that sought ease and indulgence. But while Isaac, with a godly mind, could grieve over Esau's marriage with a daughter of Heth,—one of the people of the land—yet that very Esau is Isaac's object, and keeps and holds the dearest affections of his heart, so that Isaac cannot free himself, to act for God. He is ensnared by an earlier Ahab, though the witness within tells him that it is an Ahab that is doing it. He would fain help the profane Esau to the blessing, as Jehoshaphat would help the idolatrous Ahab to the victory.

What sights are these, and what lessons and warnings!

RESURRECTION.

The times are uneasy abroad, and surely the fears are many within. But it will not do to be thus hanging about the clouds, when the clear blue sky beyond them all invites the eye higher. It ought to be a *vacant* tomb in our sight, a *rent* rock, a *ripen* grave, and an *opened* vail. But nature lingers with Mary Magdalene in search of something still on earth and in the flesh.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus has a wondrous character in it, and we but faintly apprehend this—at least as one may speak for another. It has brought in life, in victorious, infallible glory. It has made it something that is invulnerable and unassailable. Life in Adam was not of that fine character. It was a destructible thing. It was forfeitable, and, as we know, was actually lost. But the life which the risen Jesus imparts is infallible and unassailable, because it is life in victory, life gathered as a prey from the hand of the spoiler, or as spoils after battle.

Adam was made but “a living soul,” Christ is made ~~“a quickening spirit.”~~ Life in Adam was not in a condition of victory, but in a state to be tested and proved; life in the risen Christ is life in victory, the power of death being overthrown.

So the resurrection of Christ is not to be considered as merely and abstractedly resurrection. It was not that. It was not simply the resurrection of the Son of God, or of a righteous, blameless, untainted Man. In one sense it was so, but in the full sense it was this—the resurrection of Him who had been pressed down under

the weight and judgment of our sins. So that in His resurrection we read the dismissal of all that judgment which lay *against* us as sinners, and which lay *on* Him as our surety. It is this operation of God in the raising Him from the dead that we must believe (Col. ii. 12). It is this counsel and act of God that we must by faith apprehend in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Rom. iv. 24, 25). It is not simply the fact of His resurrection but the fact of the resurrection of One who is in death because of our sins. What a mighty character this gives the mystery. And what a title does it convey to the poor sinner to know his interest in that mystery. To faith such a resurrection can do nothing less than speak of peace and salvation.

GODLY SORROW.

What solemn changes in all around and within does sin work—what new relationships to places and persons it forces us to take.

This is sorrowfully experienced by David. Nathan the prophet who had been previously sent to him with words of approval and encouragement, was now sent with words of trouble, rebuke and conviction (2 Sam. vii. xii.). Again, he has to listen to the reproaches of the vile a second time; but he could not answer them as once he had done—the spirit of holiness and boldness had departed from him—he could not reply to Shimei as he had replied to Michal (2 Sam. vi. xvi.).

And another feature in the changed condition of David appears in his relationship, as I may express it, to the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, of Lo-debar. In the day of his beauty and integrity, David sends

to that house for Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, who was entertained there. With a noble heart he brings the son of his friend Jonathan home to him at Jerusalem, and makes him to eat continually at his own table. But afterward this same house of Machir at Lo-debar has to supply David with the common necessaries in the day of his exile from Jerusalem, by reason of Absalom (2 Sam. ix. xvii.).

What bitter changes for the heart all these are! The more vain and proud the nature was, the more would they be felt. They would be all but intolerable. It would be "the sorrow of the world that worketh death."

With David, however it was otherwise. It became godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of. He did not feel it as *worldly* sorrow, sinking under it as such, but he bowed to the punishment of his sin, refusing the consolation of Zadok's presence, and suffering the iniquitousness of Shimei's presence. His sorrow became *godly*, and salvation was the end of it.

Had he taken up all this changed condition of things in reference to man, or to the things around him. it would have been worldly sorrow. But he was willing to be humbled before men, knowing that it was the Lord, who might do with him as seemed him good.

This is the difference between "godly sorrow" and "the sorrow of the world." How beautiful, how precious with God, when in circumstances like David, the first prevails in the soul to the crushing or hiding or annihilating of the other. But O how difficult; and the prouder and vainer the nature is, the more difficult.

If, however, moral mischief and misery thus work as testing David himself, so do they work as testing others.

Shobi the Ammonite, Machir of Lo-debar, and Barzillai of Rogelim, stand this test, and have their grace or virtue illustrated. And very striking this is.

Shobi was the younger brother of Hanun the king of the Ammonites who had treated David's courtesy with such wicked and injurious slight. And I doubt not Shobi had deprecated his elder brother's way on that occasion, and been attracted by the grace and nobleness of David—so that now, though David is humbled and degraded because of his sin, Shobi has still the right mind though in new circumstances, and joins in comforting the poor exiled king of Israel (2 Sam. x. xvii.).

So Machir. He had, I doubt not, in a very right spirit received the poor lame son of that worthy son of Israel—Jonathan; and had been a comfort to him in the day of the national trouble, when the house of Jonathan was going down. And so, when David is going down, the same right mind appears in Machir the son of Ammiel, and he joins in owning and comforting the poor humbled, sorrowing, self-accusing David (2 Sam. ix. xvii.).

And as to Barzillai, he never appears until David is distressed, and he is willing to disappear as soon as that distress is over (2 Sam. xvii. xix.). He was the friend in need. But though unknown before, his mind was under divine teaching, for he knows and takes the path of the Spirit in a moment when nature even in some of its refined and moral judgments would have

gone astray. He treats David's sorrow as a sacred thing, and adds not to the grief of him whom God in holy, gracious discipline is wounding.

PERFECTION.

You must take your place right before the Lord Jesus Christ—the Saviour. The Epistle to the Hebrews, I may say, puts you there.

In early days, God Almighty set Himself before Abraham when Abraham had taken up confidence in Hagar, confidence in the flesh, confidence in something other than the all-sufficiency of God. "I am the Almighty God, walk before Me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. xvii. 1). This was a rebuke. Abraham was not then *perfect in his generation*. He had lost the power of the name or revelation of God. The state of his soul did not answer to that in God which was dispensed or made known to him. That is, Abraham was not *perfect*, failing in *confidence* when God was with him as the *Almighty*.

In the days of the ministry of the Son, (revealing Him who makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good) perfection of another order was looked for, as we read in Matthew v. 44-48. There the Father in all the full, free bountifulness of paternal goodness is set before us by the Lord, and perfection is *imitation* of Him. *Confidence* was perfection when the Almighty was revealed, or stood before the soul; *generosity* that counts only on the need and not on the worthiness of its object is perfection when the Father stands before us.

So, in the day of the same ministry, perfection, again takes another form as we may see in Matthew

xix. 21. The Lord Jesus had been on the heavenly hill, in the glory that belonged to that place, with Moses and Elias (chap. xvii.). He was, in an eminent sense, the Stranger—the self-emptied heavenly Stranger here, and standing before the rich young man, he speaks to him of a perfection suited to such an one. “If thou wilt be perfect, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me.” This is a high order of perfection indeed—*imitation of the fully-emptied heavenly Jesus*. And nothing less than this is the living practical perfection that suits the heavenly calling. “I have overcome the world,” says Jesus. Perfection is the taking of that place with Him, which this dispensation opens and shows to us. Paul had much of it realized in his soul, when he uttered Philippians iv., and the Hebrew saints knew a good deal of it, as we see them in Hebrews x. 32-34, in the day of their illumination.

But, beloved, we must not stop here. Good it is to look at all this, and discern these forms and characters (different as they are) of perfection in the people of God. But God looks to be glorified in *us*, in a still different form of perfection, and we find this precious secret in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

There, the Holy Ghost summons our *conscience* into the presence of Christ as a Saviour. His perfection to us sinners is there made known to us. The law never provided in Moses or Aaron or in Joshua, or in the victim on the Jewish altar, or in all these put together a perfect Captain of Salvation, or Author of eternal salvation, but God has given us such an one in His suffering Son; and the conscience of the sinner is called into His presence, summoned to stand before

Him, and to take of the perfection which is there revealed to it, by enjoying peace and cleansing, and consequent boldness of access into the divine presence.

Here is your perfection, beloved, obtained by the gaze of faith at the Lamb of God. It is not the perfection of confidence which knows God's all-sufficiency for the circumstances of life; nor the perfection of generosity which acts after the pattern of paternal goodness; nor the perfection of imitation of a heavenly Jesus; but it is that form of perfection that glorifies God more than all, because it glorifies Him in that grace that has dispensed a remedy to our deepest necessity, and healed a breach in the tenderest place,—the conscience of a wretched, ruined, good-for-nothing sinner.

And God would have this perfection, the principle and power of all others. If we trust in God, if we imitate the bountifulness of the Father, if we walk in the steps of a heavenly self-renouncing Master, it must be because we have been "illuminated" by the sight, or rather by the clear, full, and gladdening light of Him, who has perfected Himself for our salvation. He is *perfect* for you, though you may be weak in looking at Him.

CHANGE WITHOUT CURE.

You will find a man changes his way but never cures himself. This truth has had abundant illustration in the progress of the world's history, and may be a seasonable warning to us at this moment.

Israel in the wilderness shewed this. They made a calf first, afterwards they made a captain. The unclean

idol vanity was left for the presumptuous thought of setting up one of themselves; but this was only change and not cure.

Israel in the land did the same again. They had the gods of the nations as their gods, till Babylon became the place of their captivity and judgment. But when returned to the land, though they did not return to their idols, they became infidel and presumptuous. Read their ways in Ezra and Nehemiah, and very specially in Malachi. Again it was change and not cure.

The Lord in His teaching contemplates this. See Matthew xii. and Luke xi. It was first the unclean house and then the swept and garnished house. But this was no cure. Some say the Lord did His works by Beelzebub; and others challenge Him for a sign. They may vary in the form of their enmity, but it is enmity still. Instead of all this change and variousness working a cure, the last state is worse than the first. What transpires in the swept house is still worse than what had been witnessed and practised in the unclean house.

This, beloved, is serious truth, but it is seasonable. The nations are now hailing a change. The war is over, and peace is proclaimed. Men's hearts are beating high and promising them great things. But it is well to remember, that man may change his way, but he never cures himself. The changes only end in something worse.

In the "latter times" of Christendom, we get certain forms of evil (1 Tim. iv.), but when we reach "the last days" it is only a change of the form that we get. (2 Tim. iii.). It is evil still and no cure.

In the awful disclosures of the Apocalypse, we find this. It is change and not cure. The woman that corrupted the earth is removed, but the Beast and his army takes the lead and conducts his strength against the Lord (ch. xix.). The kings of the earth may hate the whore and put her down, but then this is only to give their power to the Beast, and put him up.

Thus changes are witnessed; one form of evil gives place (in the course of dispensations, whether in Israel) or Christendom) but then it is only giving place to another form of evil. There is no cure. Judgment must be executed; and that is not cure but the making way for something new. The judgment will displace man and corruption, and makes room for Christ and His power in righteousness.

The evil is incurable, and must be displaced by judgment. And just as man's change of his way did not work a cure, so the Lord's different dealings with him has not worked correction. His piping has not led to dancing, nor His mourning to lamentation. "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness." All tells us that nothing remains but judgment—as says the prophet, "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. xxvii. 9, 10). And again, "All nations shall come to worship before Thee, for Thy judgments are made manifest" (Rev. xv. 4).

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The Reformation was a *change*, but no *cure*. Judgment awaits Christendom.

SAMUEL I-VII.

The inspired historians become typical or parabolical by the simplest necessity. Because, God acting in them, He must act according to Himself, according to His own counsel. And thus the fragments of history which we get (introducing God as they do) necessarily become so many revelations, more or less full, more or less distinct, of God's way, of the purposes of His grace, of the operations of His Spirit, and of the doings of His hand and the mode of bringing His purposes to pass.

Man being in action also, expresses himself in various ways, as God being in action, reveals Himself.

This may prepare us to find parables in histories—in other words, parts of the divine way in the pieces of history which we get in the inspired Book. Now I have thought this in connection with 1 Samuel i.-vii., which forms the first part of 1 Samuel, and is a very complete piece in itself.

Man is here expressed, but God, in the ways and counsels of His grace, and in the operations of His Spirit, is also revealed. Man is expressed first in Peninnah. Confidence or pride in fleshly advantages (a common principle of corrupt nature) betrays itself in her. She provokes Hannah weak in the flesh—in the spirit of Hagar and Ishmael. Man is exposed, next in the camp of Israel. Confidence in fleshly or carnal ordinances, even in spite of a bad conscience and evil practices (another common principle of corrupt nature) betrays itself there. They bring the ark into the battle (ch. iv.). I say not how man betrays himself in the

sons of Eli—that is evident enough. But even in the saint, in Eli, the easiness that conformed with flesh and blood, and did not take counsel with the ark of God only (common enough with us all) betrays itself in him. In these ways man is here exposing himself. But God is revealed. He enters this scene of action, and He cannot but enter it consistently with Himself, and this of necessity reveals Him.

He takes up the weak thing. He visits Hannah. This is a great principle with Him. To be sure it is, in a world that has departed from Him in pride—for while He blesses us, He must humble us, leaving us no room or occasion to boast. His Spirit in Hannah celebrates this; as His Spirit afterwards in Samuel forms a vessel, or quickens a vessel, the very opposite of the proud and confident Peninnah. Samuel is all meekness in the presence of Eli, Peninnah had been all haughtiness in the presence of Hannah (ch. vii. iii.)—different ways in which they used their several advantages. Then His anointed One, the true Ark, has some of the dearest mysteries in His history, brought out in type here. The Ark which symbolises Him is a captive but a conquerer also in the place of its captivity (ch. v. vi). This is Christ dead and risen.

Thus in the last place the divine way of blessing is traced in chapter vii. Samuel, the vessel and witness of the Spirit, instructs the people in this way. It is the very contradiction of the human way. We saw that in chapter iv., how man will trust in an ordinance, a carnal piece of religiousness, a rudiment of the world, and that, too, in the midst of his practical uncleanness. Man will be religious and worldly, religious and polluted

at the same time. But God's way, witnessed and taught by Samuel, is the way of faith and righteousness. Samuel requires of them to be honest with the Lord by putting away the strange gods. He then will have them take the place of good-for-nothing ones, like water spilt on the ground. Then, on their cry, he pleads the blood sacrifice, and then God answering the sacrifice with deliverance, he raises the Pillar that tells how the Lord Himself had done it all for His people.

Here the witness for God instructs the camp in God's way, which leads them to blessing—for they take that way in the obedience of faith.

SMALL AND GREAT.

Think with comfort on Revelation xi. 18, and xix. 5. I have enjoyed and been strengthened by the thoughts that have arisen in my soul from such verses, having a legal tendency to measure myself with others. Be willing to be amongst the "small"—heaven has fitted itself for the accepting of "small" and "great" together. Do not be uneasy if you judge yourself little in either fruitfulness or devotedness or grace in comparison with others, be willing to enter heaven as a "small" one. The glory has made its reckoning accordingly. The "millions of the saints" are there, as well as "Apostles—Prophets—Martyrs." ALL the congregation, the small ones of Dan, as well as the princes of Judah, were alike in the shout of triumph when the glory appeared (Lev. ix.). Clement and others were not Paul in the measure of their labours,—in the love of Christ, and energy of the Spirit, but they *were*

Paul as having their names alike written in the Book of Life (Phil. iv. 3).

It is indeed a happy thought—the *system of the glory has counted upon the small as well as the great*, as John xiv. 2 intimates that ~~the~~ Father constructed His house on the very plan of receiving the saints as well as Christ. It was part of the original design. It was built as a *many-mansioned* house, because all that trust in Jesus were to be there just as surely as Jesus Himself. O the solid and deep consolation of faith in these great and precious mysteries!

SEPARATION TO THE LORD.

Let us watch and desire that saints leave the Established, or the Presbyterian Church on some ground beyond that of mere *brotherhood*, or it may be that the last state be worse than the first. We must maintain the *mysteries* and the *peculiarities* of the truth and of our calling, beloved; and the more I think of it, I believe I can the more see the Lord, that we have brought ourselves under, to be purified by the separation that has taken place. Carelessness about the Lord Himself is terrible, and it is not the less so, when it is vindicated on the plea of maintaining unity and brotherhood, and the love of saints. I judge indeed that *purity* and not *love* must heal the breach if it be ever healed. “First pure and then peaceable.”

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