

# LEAVES FROM THE BOOK

BEING

Miscellaneous Papers for the Household of Faith

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# RESURGAM

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## 1.—NIGHT

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THE sun at noon is paling into night;  
Without a cloud the circling hills grow dim;  
A city's murmur hushes into blank  
And utter silence, as if nature stood  
Suspense, to hear the uncreating word,  
And at her Maker's bidding be unmade.

One shadow only, 'mid the deepening gloom,  
Still deepening stands, as if the judgment-scroll  
Upon its blighted head were nature's doom:  
As if the awful burden which it raised  
Upon its naked arms, in mute appeal  
To heaven, had stricken to her centre earth.

*Two* crosses, with their freight of living death,—  
Of life with death which wrestles, for defeat,  
Not victory; two deaths of common shame  
And common sin, which the night blots but out  
Easily, as a thing 'mid myriad things  
Accustomed, which but wake a moment's ruth,  
And pass, and are forgotten.

But here—though numbered with transgressors—here,  
Not where the night falls, but from whence it falls,  
Still the mocks of mockers, who for sin  
Had silence, if not pity;—here, not sin  
Suffers, but righteousness; from hatred, love;  
Love most compassionate, from basest hate  
Bred by it, as corruption by the sun.  
No strange thing yet, for earth which has drunk in

From many a brother's hand a brother's blood,  
Since Abel; and the heaven looked calmly down,  
Nor paled her light for many a sight like this;  
The ashes from the martyr's furnace-fire  
Have flaunted in her face and brought no frown;  
Her rains have washed the stains from off the earth,  
And fields have fattened on her slaughter'd dead.

No cloud for those upon whose face had shone,  
Ev'n to the last, heaven's sweet approving ray;  
Who smiled it back to heaven from block and stake,  
And various battle-field of good with ill,  
And, dying, found but death transformed to life,—  
Defeat to victory.

No cloud for sufferers who had but plumb'd  
The depths of human enmity, to find,  
Beyond it all, a bottom; for their hearts  
Failing, had met a heart that could not fail,  
Nor yet forsake: they trusted upon God,  
And, howsoe'er the storm of trial raged,  
Their roof abode, they housed them in His love,  
Trusting and not forsaken; shepherd-rod  
And staff were there to comfort, the way of life  
If yet through death; and darkness glorified  
At even-tide to noon.

Here had God failed, that thus the heavens should blank?  
For *He* was surely righteous; o'er His head  
They once had opened, and the Father's voice  
Proclaimed His pleasure in His Well-beloved:  
'Gainst Him false witness witnessed but its shame;  
The judge had justified whom he condemned;  
The pitiless voices round about His cross  
Mock'd but His goodness and His trust in God.

Yet, as the darkness deepened into night,—  
A voiceless night, as nature had no cry,  
As grief had now no meaning, but with joy  
Had ceased, like shadow with the bye-gone sun,—  
His voice of truth, if still truth were, His voice,  
Not of His silenced enemies, proclaimed  
Himself by God forsaken.

We had built our hopes upon Him ; we had thought  
The wreck that yet had spared no other thing,  
Could not touch Him : all other things to Him  
Had been but total and mere opposites :  
It seemed as if all else had failed, that He  
Alone might bear the pillars of the earth,  
As if He were a rock too high for floods,  
On which whoever builded built secure.

He had brought light into the world, and life  
Into the valley of the shadow of death,  
Where hope sat dumbly gazing on despair,  
Stanching, if but she might, the wounds which truth  
Had gotten at the traitor hand of greed,  
While discord built its Babel-empire up  
And preached that evil was a phase of good  
And curse was misread blessing.

His voice had made faith possible once more,  
And right, being possible ; the spectral mists  
Rolled off the earth, rolled off the face of heaven,  
And the clouds changing, changed no whit the sun,  
Which kept its ordered path amid them all,  
Hidden or manifest ; and which was cloud  
Changeful, we knew, and which was changeless sun.

Earth stood revealed, as heaven alone reveals :  
Its penury, its squalor, and its sin ;

Its evil worse in evil, as the pure,  
Rebuking light shone, undefilable,  
Upon the surging of its yeasty sea,  
Which chafing, hoarse and white-lipped, had its bound  
From God, and broke in vain upon the shore.

No winter ray, upon the earth it fell  
And kissed the tears of night from off its face,  
And waked it with the gentle touch of Spring  
Into new life, life out of death, which waked  
Amid the murmur of a thousand tongues  
Swelling into a harmony of song  
From heaven's sweet choristers. Earth's spring had come,  
Spring with her burst of life and leaf had come,  
Her winter night had fled away forever.

And He, of all her deep-hid mysteries, He,  
God's dear Interpreter, Man amongst men,  
Of lowly lowliest, of near most near,  
Grief's intimate, as come to be acquaint,  
Love-sent, with all the sorrows He would heal,  
The crown of thorns, which but of late He wore,  
Was His in more than mockery,—thorns which, plucked  
Out of man's pathway, were indeed His crown.

He called not for Elias: He who called  
Only on God, His God; on God He called  
The hearer and the answerer of prayer;  
The hope of all the righteous evermore,  
The refuge and the shield of the oppressed.  
The Rock of all that trust Him evermore;  
Out of the dark, out of the inner dark  
Upon His soul, He in His agony:  
"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"

## 2.—MORNING

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THE bitter night is past, the morn is come;  
The morn for which earth's forty centuries  
Have waited on in hope, that, oft deferred,  
Oft nigh to death, now out of death itself  
New-born, has sprung up into life o'er which  
Death has no more dominion. Over *Him*  
It has no more: our hope, our life, our all  
He has brought with Him out of death, and death  
Henceforth has no dominion evermore.

Darkness is past, and the true light now shines;  
The shadow on the face of God is gone,—  
Gone with the awful shadow of the cross:  
The light is in His face come back from death,  
Back from the tomb so impotently closed,  
To tell us of our peace secured, and heaven,  
His and His Father's dwelling-place, our home.

And now as we look back from off the bank  
Of Jordan's waters, parted for our path,  
To where lie midway the memorial stones  
To which our Gilgal twelve upon the shore  
Answer, as resurrection to the grave,—  
The new-ris'n Sun upon the clouds which are  
Its late-left bed, sheds its transfiguring rays  
Till all the night of sorrow is transformed  
From formless chaos into order fair,  
And in each tear an orb of beauty shines.

The Son of God is glorified, and God  
Is glorified in Him. There where so late  
Our faith o'ershadowed fainted, following Him,  
And could not follow,—there alone He stood  
While on Him fell the flood of all our woes,  
And on Him pressed the burden of our sins,  
Self-made His own; and Wisdom's counsel-plans

And Justice' claims, and Love's dear purposes  
Freighted the Ark of our salvation as,  
Outriding all our woes, it bare us in,  
Into the haven of eternal rest.

That cry of anguish, hush'd in joy forever,  
Was but the travail pain of our new birth,  
When out of human weakness power was born  
In our behalf, and love came girded down  
T' endear itself by lowliest services ;  
In manhood gaining power for sacrifice,  
And loving us from enmity into love.

But yet no vain display nor meaningless  
The fury of that storm which o'er Him rolled,  
To which the Father's self must give His Son,  
And which the Son of God perforce must suffer :  
If He His harvest-sheaves would have from earth  
The precious seed with weeping must be sown ;  
For sin had severed love from righteousness,  
And stricken from its hand the power to save ;  
A righteous God awoke the heart to fear,  
And not to worship ; sin had changed the Lord  
Our dear Creator to our Judge, and gift  
We had not to appease, nor bribe to turn  
The sentence Time was gravings on our brows,  
And sending down for sad Eternity  
Sadly but unrepenting to confirm.

Death was our portion, darker than the grave,  
Till into death the Shepherd of the sheep,  
The Son of God and God-sent Son of man,  
Stepped 'mid the breathless silence of the heavens  
With love stronger than death, with zeal for God  
As altar-fire consuming even Himself ;  
And there the sword that pierced a mother's heart  
Reached unto His.

Reached, and made bare before the eye of God  
While principalities and powers adored,  
A human heart which only for Him moved,  
Spring of a life which lived but by His word,  
And where the flame of whole burnt-offering  
Brought out but incense-savor unto God.  
Nought was there there of blemish nor defect,  
But piety that challenged answer,—love  
That gave fresh argument to love. He cried,  
And He was heard; the love and glory of God  
Broke through the bands of darkness and of death  
And resurrection from the dead proclaimed  
That God had found a ransom.

And righteousness and peace have kissed each other,  
The just God is the Saviour, and upon  
The sinner's side, confessed but only that,  
In every attribute united stands. [where  
Grace reigns, and reigns through righteousness; and  
It had been death t' approach, th' atoning blood  
Makes boldness but simplicity of faith.  
A Father's house, a Father's tenderness,  
A Father's watchful eye upon our path,—  
His care, without whom not a sparrow falls,  
And not a hair uncounted from our heads:—  
These are our joys, and these our songs of praise,  
As on the lighted path that leads to God  
We walk, amid the glory of His face,  
Unclouded and unsetting, evermore  
Past shadow, evermore!

Thus the night passes and the day abides;  
Out of the womb of sorrow comes our joy:  
The painful lessons of the school of time  
Become the wisdom of eternity.

# THE LESSONS OF THE AGES

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## INTRODUCTORY

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**I**T has become a fact more familiar to many, through certain recent discussions of momentous importance, that Scripture is full of a doctrine of the "ages." The phrase is, in our common version, more often obscured than not by being translated "world," or "worlds," or hidden under the stereotyped form, "forever," or "forever and ever." This last expression is always, in the New Testament, if literally rendered, "for the ages of ages." It never implies less than full eternity, as it is the measure of God's own life: "He that liveth for the ages of ages" is His title (Rev. iv. 9). Christ, too, presents Himself as "alive for the ages of ages" (chap. i. 18); and there are ascribed "blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for the ages of ages" (chap. v. 13). These same "ages of ages" measure also the duration of the punishment—which is no less, then, than eternal—whether of the devil and his angels in the lake of fire (chap. xx. 10) or of the beast-worshippers who drink of the wine of the wrath of God (chap. xiv. 11). There is no hope of finding an escape from eternity under an admitted phraseology of this kind in Scripture.

The term "forever" is, again, sometimes "for the ages," while much more often the singular of this word is used, which some would render, in a way very equivocal to our habits of thought, "for the age," but where "age"



must refer to the "age of ages" (the expression used in Eph. iii. 21), inasmuch as it also stands for true eternity, for which it is the common word; while (save in three passages) the adjective derived from it is rendered "everlasting," or "eternal," everywhere in the New Testament; and rightly and necessarily so.

There may be thus *an* "age" (a period rounded off from the rest of time, and having distinctive characters of its own) as well as, in Scripture-language, *the* age," sum of all ages, which knows no limit and no end. In the adjective also may be found these different significations; for while in its ordinary use, as I have already said, it means *eternal*, there are just three passages, with which we have now more to do, in which it refers to an age, or ages, rather than *the* age.

The Revised Version, even in Romans xvi. 25, 2 Timothy i. 9, and Titus i. 2, keeps to the word "eternal;" but it is hard to realize what "eternal *times*" can be. The Authorized Version has "before [or "since"] the world began;" but this is again a paraphrase rather than a translation. The true force is, "in [or "before"] the *age-times*"—times marked out as "ages," distinctive, rounded off periods. In Timothy and Titus it is God's grace, or the promise of eternal life, which is said to have been given us (in the divine counsels) before these age-times were: in Romans it is that *in* certain ages God had kept secret a mystery, now in Christianity revealed.

Thus there are ages past as well as ages to come—ages which lose themselves to our sight in that eternity which stretches in measureless infinity before us. The ages that are past, moreover, are distinguished from those to come as a series which, in a certain sense at least, has come to an end, and which is characterized as a series of steps toward the fulfillment of a purpose now accomplished, and from the accomplishment of which important

results accrue to us. So, speaking of the things that are recorded as happening of old to Israel, the apostle says (1 Cor. x. 11), "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples [or, as in the margin, "types"]; and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the *ages* [not "world"] are come." Since these ages have ended, then, the types of a past dispensation have begun to speak as never before; which corresponds to what, in another place, the apostle says (Cor. iii.)—that the veil which was over the Old Testament is now "done away in Christ."

Again, in Hebrews ix. 26, we are told precisely that it was "at the end of the ages" (as we should read it) Christ "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." This sacrifice closed, then, if not in every sense, the ages; and thus the New Testament, written on this side of the dividing line, gives the true key to the Old. In Christ come, all that the past pointed to was fulfilled; the substance was reached of all its shadows; the heart of God was opened out to man, and in free and unrestrained speech declared itself.

But why not before? it is natural to ask. If, as now seen, this grace was in Him from the beginning, why was it so long before He openly manifested it? Was it necessary that through so many centuries of deferred hope, or of darkness without true hope, the coming of the Deliverer and the gospel of deliverance should be delayed? The New Testament affirms this absolutely when it speaks of a "due time" in which Christ died (Rom. v. 7). How, then, was this "due time" marked? First, "when we were *yet without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." And again, "when in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. i. 21.)

The wisdom of the world had thus to be proved at fault, and the world itself helpless and hopeless in its moral ruin, before the due time of man's deliverance could come. He must get the blessing on true ground,—as grace, not something that man's hand had wrought at. "When we were *yet* without strength"—"yet," after repeated trial. Again, "when *in the wisdom of God* the world by wisdom knew not God;" it must be granted time and opportunity to prove this, therefore. The delay in the coming of the Deliverer was the result of time required to certify the need of the deliverance: the ages previous to Christ's death were ages of a special trial of man, which the cross ended; for indeed there was his heart fully proved to be at "enmity to God," while, as to true and divine wisdom, it was what "none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor. ii. 8.)

But if, then, it was so necessary that these probationary ages should have their course,—if the coming of Christ on this very account waited four thousand years, how important must it be for us to get hold of the meaning of these age-times! As the world is but the multiple of the individual man, so it will be found that we pass in general, in order to find our blessing in Christ's death, through the stages of these different dispensations. Certainly it is when yet ungodly and without strength we find what that death has wrought. And what law is, though God never put the Gentile under it, we know as putting *ourselves* under it, as indeed the Gentile Christians have done in a body.

Scripture, too, will be cleared for us as we consider these ages past; our own portion in it will be freed from admixture, and appraised more truly; God's ways will speak more distinctly their perfect character, and many a precious lesson as to these shall we learn, or be con-

firmed in; the history of the world itself will have a new significance, if perchance it thus may fill fewer pages;—in short, every way we may find most real profit, if only the blessed Spirit of God lead us Himself down the track of a past, gone indeed, but not yet done with,—a past which is the seed of the present and the future, and of which the judgment-seat at last will give us, for eternity, the full moral. For now “we know in part, and we prophesy in part;” and yet this partial knowledge may be most helpful.

Let us glance at the course over which, if the Lord will, we hope to travel. We have—

1. The trial of innocent man in Eden; brief indeed—the history of a day rather than an age,—yet all-important in its results for every step of the journey afterward.

2. The trial of natural conscience simply, in the time before the flood.

3. The trial of human government (the political trial, as we may call it) from Noah’s time, virtually over at Babel, although, of course, as a divine institution, this remains to the present time.

4. After an important interval, which has its own significance with reference to these age-times, and in which Abraham and his seed appear upon the scene, we have next the great trial of man under the law. This has two parts of very unequal duration.

The trial of pure law lasted at the most forty days, ending, under the mount itself, with the breaking of the tables of the covenant, and judgment executed on the people for the breach of it, in the worship of the golden calf. Then followed, for nine hundred years, a system of mingled law and mercy, the tables of law being now written by the hand of the mediator; and here man was as much convicted of his impotence for self-recovery as he was of his ungodliness before. This ended when Hosea’s

"Lo-Ammi" was recorded against the people, and the kingdom of Judah came to an end by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

5. From this time onward the question was not, Could they keep the law? but, Would they submit to the sentence, and receive the Deliverer? The remnant, returned from the Babylonish captivity, with their temple empty, and under the heel of the Gentile, were witnesses of a ruin which John's baptism of repentance called to (and should have sealed) their confession of. Thus, and thus only, could they have been prepared for the Saviour, and found remission. Here, alas! Satan's wit combined with human pride to build up Pharisaism, and the cross proved not merely that man could not keep the law, but that the mind of the flesh was "enmity against God." This was the "end of the ages" of Hebrews ix. 26.

Yet, in fact, the ages go on after this,—nay, the *Jewish* "age" does. We learn this from Daniel, whose seventieth prophetic "week" is detached from the sixty-nine at the end of which Messiah the Prince comes and is cut off, by an interval of desolation for the city and the sanctuary, whose final blessing he announces. From the New Testament alone we learn what fills this interval, and that the "harvest" of judgment upon *Christian* profession coincides with the "end" of this *Jewish* "age."\*

The gap is thus a very large one, of more than eighteen hundred years, and in this Christianity comes in, not properly as an age, but as a break in the ages, in which a wholly different thing is presented from such probationary trial as the "ages" present. God's revelation of Himself is what characterizes Christianity. Man remains

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\* See Matthew xiii. 39, 49, where "world" should be "age," and where the second parable shows the end of christendom, as the last does what immediately follows it.

the same as ever, indeed, and shows himself as incompetent to hold the blessings of the gospel as he was to stand the probation of law; still these are essentially different; and Christianity is but an interruption of the course of the world-ages, the end of which (for us) is come, and which yet go on after Christianity, to their full consummation in Messiah's kingdom—the “age to come.”

Christianity past, the true saints, living or dead, being taken up to heaven, the “end of the age” is marked on the one hand by a new work of grace in a remnant of Israel and of the Gentiles, and on the other hand by the apostasy of professing christendom and the mass of the Jews, who, having rejected Christ, receive Antichrist. The full ripe result of iniquity is reached and judged by the Lord at His personal appearing.

6. Then follows the “world to come”—a day in which, Satan being bound, and evil kept down with a strong hand, man is brought face to face with eternal realities. It is a dispensation of sight rather than of faith, under which, alas! man, as ever, shows what he is, in once more (Satan being again let loose) rising up against God in open insurrection. The judgment of the dead follows; the wicked being cast into hell; the earth and heavens fleeing away before the face of Him who sits upon the great white throne.

7. All enemies are now subdued; the kingdom of the rod of iron is given up; new heavens and new earth succeed the old; God is all in all; and the ages of ages (probationary ages no more) commence their eternal course.

The Lord give us ability to gather up in some measure the lessons of these wondrous ages—lessons not for time alone, but for all eternity.

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## THE TIME OF INNOCENCE

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A TIME so different from anything we ourselves have known as is the primitive time of innocence in Eden, there is necessarily difficulty in realizing or interpreting aright. Innocence we have lost, and can never regain. Nor is there anything really like it to be found in such a state as that of childhood, which, speaking comparatively only, we call the age of innocence. Much of what we deem this, is in fact but *immaturity*; and Adam was not immature, but a man with all the faculties of manhood fresh and vigorous in him, as come, in a perfection nowhere to be seen, out of the hand of his Creator.

Indeed, theologians, realizing this, have imagined a moral or spiritual perfection in him for which Scripture gives no warrant. It is the "*new* man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." On the other hand, it *is* said that "God made man *upright*," which is in contrast with the craft implied in the "many inventions" they have since "sought out."

Let us look briefly at the whole Scripture account (confined as it is to little more than one chapter of the book of Genesis) of man's creation, and of the condition in which he was placed in Eden, the "garden of delight."

The first words are,—

"And God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.'

"So God created man"—and here the words fall into a rhythmic measure, the first poetry of Scripture, as if God were rejoicing over the creature He had made—"So

God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him: male and female created He them."

The second and briefer, yet more detailed, account is in chapter ii.

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

We must not expect to have man's inner nature, however, fully revealed in this initial revelation as to him. The language is pictorial and figurative largely, according to the usual character of the Old Testament. More is hidden than is openly declared. Plainly "of the earth, earthy," as the first man is, "the dust of the earth" is not all he is. Formed, as to his bodily frame, of this, God "breathes into his nostrils," communicating thus something from Himself, by virtue of which he becomes a living soul. Not even does this expression, "a living soul," give the full reality of what he is. The beast also is, and has, a living soul,—"everything wherein there is a living soul" is the description, in chapter i. 30, of every beast of the earth, and every fowl of the air, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." "Likeness" to God cannot be affirmed of such an one as this, for God is not "soul," but "spirit," and the "Father of *spirits*." Man is thus alone in relationship to God, as possessing not only soul, but also spirit; that "spirit of man" which "knoweth the things of a man," and is his real distinction from the beasts that, as having no link with God or God's eternity, are "beasts that perish."

"Spirit," thus, in man, is linked with "soul." An intelligent and moral nature, which is implied in this, furnishes the affections of the heart (or soul) with objects suited to its own proper character, and lifts it thus, as it were, into its own sphere of being. Man is not a more developed beast, although he has an animal nature which



resembles the beast's. He belongs to another and higher order of life; and to this the language of chapter i. will be found to correspond in a manner all the more significant that it is not interpreted to us there, but left for the general voice of Scripture to interpret.

It has been made a question of late whether the word used for "creation" necessarily means that. Yet in the first verse of the chapter, where we are told that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," the bringing out of nothing must be certainly intended. After this, (with the exceptions to be just now noticed,) the word "created" is exchanged for "made;" and the whole six days' work is characteristically a "making," as in the words of the fourth commandment; a making which is of such importance in the sight of God that it is said, in chapter ii. 3, that He "created *to make*" it. Thus it stands, rightly, in the margin of our Bibles and in the Latin Vulgate, although few ancient or modern interpreters seem to have understood it; "creation," or the bringing out of nothing, being thus distinguished from the "making" of existing materials. We find that there are but two distinct acts of creation in the six days' work; the first, where the "living creature," or "soul," is introduced; the second, where man is. Thus soul and spirit are distinguished from all modifications of previous existences. They are "creations"—the calling into being of that which before had none: creations successively of higher character until in man at last we find "the offspring of God."

But in man, spirit has its links with lower and preceding forms. He is a living soul, as the beast is; and this soul is the seat, not only of those affections in which it corresponds to what we call ordinarily the "heart," but also of the instincts, senses, and appetites. The *adjective* of soul (for which in English we have no corresponding

term) is, in the New Testament, in our Authorized Version, translated twice "sensual." The same word also, both in Hebrew and Greek, stands for "soul" and "life," thus marking the soul, in distinction from the spirit, as the source of this to the body. In man thus, as a "living soul," spirit, or mind, is made dependent upon the soul, or senses, for its proper furnishing; and thus the body also becomes, in this present condition of things, a necessity to the spirit, and, if it be not in a fit state, a drag upon it—at the best, a limit beyond which it cannot pass. Men "out of the body" are called "spirits," and not souls; and the body in resurrection is a *spiritual* body, henceforth imposing no limit.

But this link with the body is a matter of great interest in another connection. Before man was in being, a class of spiritual existences had been created—purely such; and of these, many had already fallen away from God. Hence the tender care and wisdom of God are seen in this hedging about the new spiritual creature with restrictions which manifestly tend to "hide pride from man" in this his probationary state. Probation seems to be the rule, and so (as we may infer) the necessity, for moral beings; but the goodness of God is shown in thus fencing man round, as far as possible, with witnesses to him of creature-imperfection, perpetual preachers of humility and self-distrust.

The necessities of this mysteriously compounded nature were another argument in the same direction. In Eden, man had his wants, as out of it. Hunger was his, and thirst, although no distress could result from these, but rather new sources of enjoyment—all the trees of the garden ministering to his need. Sleep he needed for the recruiting of a frame which would otherwise have been exhausted by the putting forth of its own energies—nay, the immortal life, which was his conditionally, another

tree was made to minister. He was not taught that it was his by the mere fact of what he was. He had it not as what was essential to his being, but rather the opposite—a thing foreign to him naturally, communicated by the virtues of that wondrous tree which was perpetually to sustain the wasting bodily frame.

All this was thus to him constant witness of his creature-condition; on the other hand, the constant witness of divine goodness which met all this need with superabundant resources, so that appetite should be but the occasion of enjoyment, and no want be for a moment known. This was Eden, man's garden of delight—for us, type of a greater—where all was “good,” as God Himself pronounced, and no evil at all existed, nor could exist, save as man introduced it; no hand but his own could mar this beauteous picture. To all but himself it was a citadel impregnably guarded from assault.

But this leads us on to consider what was the prohibition, and what the nature of the temptation to which man yielded.

One thing alone was prohibited to man, lord of all else,—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As to this, the commandment was precise, and the penalty assured: “In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” One prohibition thus served, or should have served, to keep in the mind of one who, as the image of God, was otherwise uncontrolled master of this fair domain, that he too had a Master. “Duty,” as it is the thought of which man alone, and not the beast, is capable, must be necessary to his proper development as man. The moral faculties must have a field provided for their exercise, for man assuredly was from the first a moral being—that is, a being *capable* of discerning good and evil. I say *capable*; for the actual discernment plainly came afterward, when, and when alone, evil was there to be discerned.

As yet, there was none, and therefore, while good was present everywhere, and its enjoyment not denied, the knowledge of even good was not as yet discriminative—was not *discernment*—when as yet that from which it had to be discerned was not within the field of vision. We are not to suppose a moral incapacity in innocent man which would have put him outside the pale of morality, and render a fall impossible, by leaving nothing from which to fall; neither must we suppose a mind into which the thought of evil had ever yet entered. When solicited by the fruit in the hand of his already fallen companion, “Adam was *not* deceived; but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression.” He, at least, with his eyes open thus far—although not yet having eaten of the tree of that fatal “knowledge”—became a transgressor. In whatever sense the eating of the forbidden fruit opened the eyes of both of them, it created no moral capacity which was not there before, implied in the very nature of a spiritual being, such as was Adam by the gift of his Creator.

Righteousness and holiness are another matter. Scripture does not affirm these of the first man. These, in the creature, represent a character which could only be the outcome of spontaneous rejection of the evil when in sight. This character was not and could not yet be found in Adam, when evil there was none in that garden of delight, planted by the hand of God Himself, for the object of His care and goodness. And herein the meaning of all that we call “probation” lies. Probation was permitted—nay, necessitated, not alone by the tree forbidden, or the tempter’s assault, but by the very constitution of a moral being—a being who apprehends, and deliberates, and wills.

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## THE TRIAL OF INNOCENCE

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**A**MONG all creation beside, there was found no helpmeet for Adam. God makes all the creatures pass before him that he may see this for himself,—a fact which we shall see has its significance for the after-history. Adam gives names to all, as their superior, and in the full intelligence of what they are; but for Adam himself there is found no helpmeet.

Yet that “it is not good for man to be alone” is the word of his Creator as to Him. Looking at the circumstances of the fall, he who has learned to suspect God everywhere may suspect Him here. He provides in the woman one whom Scripture itself pronounces inferior naturally in wisdom to the man, but on the other hand supplementing him otherwise. The rib out of which she is made is taken from the breast; and if man be the head of humanity, woman is its heart. Even spite of the fall, this still is clear and unmistakable; and man’s heart is correspondingly drawn out and developed by her. The awful perversion of this now shows but the fact the more; and the perversion of the best thing commonly produces the worst. For Adam, where all was yet right, here was not only a spiritual being with whom was possible that interchange of thought and feeling which our whole being craves, but also an object for the heart. Pledge of his Creator’s love was this fair gift, in whom love sensibly ministered to him and drew out his own, redeeming him from self-occupation as from isolation: surely it was not,—“*is* not good for the man to be alone,” and the help provided was a “help *meet* for him.”

If unbelief still object that by the woman sin came in, and that inferiority of wisdom exposed her to the enemy: she was "beguiled," and ate; Adam too ate, though he was *not* beguiled. The woman's strength did not, and does not, lie in wisdom, but in *heart*: and the instincts of the true heart are as divine a safeguard as the highest wisdom. It was here—as it is easy to see by the record itself—the woman failed, not where she was weakest, but where she was strongest. And with her, as still and ever, the failing heart deceived the head. There is an immense assumption, growing more and more every day, of the power of the mind to keep and even to set right the man morally. It is a mistake most easy of exposure; for are the keenest intellects necessarily the most upright and trustworthy of men? or is there any ascertained proportion between the development of mind and heart? The skepticism that scoffs at divine things revealed to babes is but the pride of intellect, not knowledge. It is itself the fruit and evidence of the fall.

Enough of this for the present, then. Along with all other provision for his blessing we must rank this—too little thought of—that Adam was to be taught *mastery* also, even in a scene where moral evil was not. He was to "replenish the earth and *subdue* it;" to "dress and keep" even the "garden of delight." The dominion over the lower creatures he was also evidently to maintain, making them to recognize habitually the place of lordship over them which was his. All this implies much in the way of moral education for one in whose perfect manhood the moral and mental faculties acted in harmony yet, with no breach or dislocation.

Surely we can see in all this a kindly and fruitful training of Adam himself, as in a scene where evil threatened, though it had not come. The full and harmonious play of every spiritual and bodily faculty was provided for,

that the man himself, to use language antiquated now, might "play the man;" language truer in its application to him than to any of his natural issue since the fall.

But to that fall itself we must now go on. Its brief but imperishable record is full of the deepest instruction for us, for every day of our life here;—nay, who shall forbid to say, for our life hereafter also? The lessons of time, we may be assured, will be the possession of eternity; of all that we gather here, no fragment will be lost forever. In this history we shall find, too, I doubt not, what we have been considering as to Adam abundantly confirmed.

First, then, as to the instrument in the temptation, Scripture leaves us in no possible doubt that the one who used in this case the actual serpent was the one whom we too familiarly recognize as the leader in a previous irremediable fall—the fall of the angels. Thus he is called "a liar from the beginning," and "a murderer;" "that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan."

The use of the serpent here is noteworthy in another way from that in which it is generally taken. No doubt in the fact that it was "more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made" lay the secret of his selection of it. But why appear under such a form at all? For myself, I cannot but connect it with the fact that Adam had before named every creature, and found no helpmeet for him among them all. If evil, then, would approach, it was not permitted to do so save only under the form of one of these essentially inferior creatures, refused already as having help for man. It was a divine limit to the temptation itself. Man listening to the voice of a creature over whom he was to have dominion, and in whom there was recognized to be no help for him, was in fact man resigning his place of supremacy to the beast

itself. In all this, not merely the coming of the enemy, but the mercy of God also, may be surely seen.

Again, as to the form of the temptation itself. It was a question simply—apparently an innocent one—which, entertained in the woman's mind, wrought all the ruin. Here again, surely the mercy of God was limiting the needful trial. Evil was here also not permitted to show itself openly. The tempter is allowed to use neither force nor allurement, nor to put positive evil before the woman at all until she has first encouraged it. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

Here was affected surprise—a suggestion of strangeness, no doubt, but no positive charge of wrong. Such an insinuation, if it were even that, a heart true to God need scarcely find much difficulty in repelling. This was in *paradise*, where all the wealth of blessing which the munificent hand of God had spread around her filled every sense with testimony of His love. Was reason demanded? or did intellect need to find the way through any difficult problem here? Assuredly not. A heart filled with divine goodness would be armor of proof in such a conflict as this. The effort of the enemy was just to make a question for the reason what ought to have been one of those clear perceptions not to be reasoned about, because the basis of all true reason. As a question for the mind the woman entertained it, and thus admitted a suspicion of the divine goodness which has been the key-note of man's condition ever since.

She thus, in fact, entered upon that forbidden path of discriminating between good and evil, which has resulted in a conscience of evil within, in the very heart of the fallen creature. Around was naught but goodness—goodness which they were not forbidden but welcomed to enjoy. Everything here had but to be accepted; no question raised, no suspicion to be entertained. To raise



the question was to fall. And this was the meaning of the forbidden tree, as it was the point to which Satan's question led. In the midst of a scene where was naught but goodness, there could be no question entertained where there was no suspicion. By entertaining the question, the woman showed that she had allowed the suspicion. Thus she fell.

How differently now we are situated is most plain. In a mingled scene where indeed divine goodness is not lacking, but where also the fruit of the fall, and Satan's work, is everywhere, suspicion becomes continually a duty, and conscience a divine preservative. The knowledge of good and evil is no longer forbidden, but we have our "senses exercised to discern" these. Innocence is gone; but, thank God, who is supreme to make all things serve His holy purposes, righteousness and holiness are things possible, and, in the new creature, things attained.

If we look at the woman's answer to the serpent, we shall easily find these workings of her soul. "And the woman said unto the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is *in the midst* of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, *neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*'"

Here is the wavering unsteadiness of a soul that has lost its balance, and flounders more in its endeavors to regain it. What tree had God put into "the midst" of the garden? According to the inspired account, it was the tree of *life*. Prohibition—was that at the very heart of paradise? Did everything there radiate, so to speak, from the threatening of death? Alas! slight as the matter may seem, it tells where the woman's soul is. The first words we hear from her are words very intelligible to us, far gone as we are from innocency. For how easily with us does one prohibited thing blot out of our view a

thousand blessings! Alas! we understand her but too well.

And her next words are even plainer. When had God said, "Neither shall ye touch it"? The prohibition has got possession of her mind, and to justify herself as to her conception of it, she adds words of her own to God's words. A mere "touch," she represents to the devil, might be fatal to them. They might perchance be the innocent victims of misfortune, as it would seem, according to her. Who can doubt how dark a shadow is now veiling God from her soul? All the more that her next words make doubtful the penalty, and as if it were the mere result of natural laws, as men now speak, rather than direct divine infliction,—"*lest* ye die."

God's love is here suspected; God's truth is tampered with; God's authority is out of sight: so far on the swift road to ruin the woman has descended. The devil can be bolder now. Not "ye shall not surely die" is what he says, but "certainly ye shall not die;" and closes with one of those sayings of his in which a half truth becomes a total lie,—"*for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, [or perhaps, "as God,"] knowing good and evil.*"

And there is no more tarrying as to the woman: her ear and her heart are gained completely. She sees with the devil's eyes, and is in full accord and fellowship with him, and the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, come in at once. "*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.*"

Thus was the fall consummated. Conscience at once awoke when the sin of the heart had been perfected in act. "*And the eyes of them both were opened, and they*

knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons." But we are now in another scene from that with which we started, and a new age now begins, even before Genesis iii. is closed. We shall therefore look at this in its place separately when we consider, if the Lord will, the dealings of God with man under the next economy.

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## THE TRIAL OF CONSCIENCE IN THE AGE BEFORE THE FLOOD

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WITH Adam fallen—even from the first moment of his fall—we enter upon a new period. Sin and death, now come into the world, necessitate new dealings of God with man, if, indeed, judgment do not bring all to a sudden close. And this was not in His mind, who from the first had foreseen and provided for the rebellion of the creature. Judgment does indeed follow, such as God had previously announced; but that was no final one, but (as we shall easily see) one anticipative of the mercy to be shown, and which could be made to take itself the character of mercy. It is in confounding the provisional “death,” threatened to and inflicted on Adam and his posterity, as the result of the primal sin, with the “second” and final “death” of the lake of fire, that much error and heresy of the present day finds apparent countenance, Scripture being strained to establish what is a mere foregone conclusion in the minds of its interpreters, and what none can in fact deduce from its straightforward simplicity of statement.

“In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” is defined so clearly, in the Lord’s words to fallen Adam, as to put its meaning, one would think, beyond serious question. “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou *return unto the ground*; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and *unto dust shalt thou return.*”

To read into this eternal judgment is to misread it thoroughly. The death announced, and which we know to be everywhere in the world, through the first man's sin, is in reality a thing which, in its very nature, necessitates the *suspension* of eternal judgment until it is taken out of the way. Not till the dead are raised will the white throne be set, and the dead—the wicked dead—be judged, every man according to his works." And thus the resurrection of the unsaved dead is as much a "resurrection of *judgment*" (that is, what it implies and necessitates,) as the resurrection of the saved is similarly a "resurrection of *life*." The final judgment is thus in no wise the result of Adam's sin; it is that in which emphatically each suffers for his own. The second death and the first are in no wise to be confounded—they are incompatible and contrary things.\*

Nor can spiritual death, or "death in trespasses and sins," be possibly what God speaks of in His threatening to Adam. This is indeed the spiritual state which is the result of the fall; but the moral state of a criminal is a very different thing from the judgment upon the criminal. Man's depravity is what he is condemned *for*, not what he is sentenced *to*; and these things cannot be synonymous. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" is thus the only possible, as it is the divinely given, interpretation of the announcement, "In the day† thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

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\* "Dying, thou shalt die" (Gen. ii. 17, *margin*) is often appealed to as if inferring a second death. Any one who will look at the marginal reading of only the verse before will find that it is but a Hebrew idiom of emphasis. "Thou shalt freely eat" is literally, "Eating, thou shalt eat."

† Some contend that this makes impossible the thought of returning to the dust, because Adam did not actually die on the day that he ate of the tree; and some have more strangely answered that

Yet it is quite true, and to be pressed, that this death, coming not only upon the first sinners, but upon all their posterity,—and surely by no mere arbitrary decree on God's part,—marks the changed relation to Him of the now fallen creature. Everywhere does Scripture recognize this, and in God's ordinances for his chosen people of old it comes fully out. Death is associated ever with uncleanness and defilement. If a man die in a tent, all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, are unclean seven days. Every one touching a dead body, a bone, or a grave, is similarly defiled. Nor must we look at this as merely symbolic teaching. The psalm of the wilderness is plain enough in its doctrine here: "For all our days are passed away in Thy wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath." (Ps. xc. 9-11.)

Yes, if God had thus to turn to destruction the being over whom, as first created, He had rejoiced with unfeigned delight, surely the state of the creature it was that was thus marked out, not a causeless change in God. Death was the stamp upon the creature fallen away from God, and every sign of its approach a standing admonition to him as a being thus under sentence—not final indeed, or there would be no use in the admonition, but still a sentence of condemnation, which cut him off from all pretension to righteousness, or natural claim to favor,

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Adam *did* die on that "day," for a day with the Lord is a thousand years! The truth is, that not only did Adam indeed begin to die from that day, as cut off from the tree of life, but also that "in the day" does not require so rigid a construction, as see Eze-kiel xxxiii. 12, etc.

and left him but the subject of mercy, and of mercy alone.

True, he may (alas! he does) resist and strive against the sentence graven upon his brow. He may condemn God, that he may himself be righteous. This changes nothing—no, not a hair of his head from white to black. He may complain of himself as the victim of circumstances, impossible to be “clean” as “born of a woman.” He may plead that he did not give himself the evil nature that he carries with him, but conscience will not be satisfied with this. It will not excuse actual transgressions by any plea as to a fallen nature. We feel and know, every one of us, that we ought nevertheless to be masters of ourselves and of our nature, and that our responsibility has been in no wise destroyed or lessened by the fall. So in the day of judgment also God will render to every man, not according to his *nature*, but his *deeds*, and upon this ground is the whole world brought in “guilty before God.”

Death thus, while introduced by one man’s sin, “passes upon all men, for that *all* have sinned.” Were there one man, in the full sense, righteous before God, he might successfully plead exemption from the common doom; but “there is none righteous—no, not one;” and death remains universally a sentence gone forth against man as man, the constant witness against self-righteousness on his part, the constant witness of his need of mercy—absolute, sovereign mercy.

The sorrow of all this is thus God’s appeal to man; the trouble to which he is born, as sparks fly upward, becomes the discipline of holy but merciful government. It is of this that God speaks to the man and the woman when He first appears to them in the garden; to the woman, of the sorrow of conception, and subjection to the rule of her husband; to the man, of the cursed

ground, and of its thorns and thistles, with the toil of labor, till he return to the dust. With them, let us notice, He makes no new terms—no other covenant is proposed to them. As helpless and hopeless otherwise, they are made simply to listen to what God announces He will do—to the message of a deliverance He will raise up to them in the woman's Seed. It is to faith in One to come they are invited, in the midst of the ruin they have brought upon themselves. No new trial is proposed. They are left under the salutary government of God, to realize what and where they are before Him, and to embrace the mercy wrapped up for them in the bud of that first promise.

For promise indeed it is, while it comes in the shape of threatening to the serpent; a promise whose broken echoes the traditions of the nations have prolonged, even to our own day. Scripture, which cannot be broken, has alone given us the very words, in their original simplicity and grandeur—the “let there be light” of a new creative period, exceeding the former as antitype its typic “shadow.” The words are for us to-day, to vindicate their imperishable nature, fresh for our souls as the day when they were uttered: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.”

It is the character of the new period we are occupied with, and for this have only to do with certain features of this promise. It is plain enough that Another is here given as the Conqueror of the serpent, the enemy of man, but whose “seed” nevertheless (as the near future would painfully reveal) would be found among men. This Conqueror is also the woman's seed, and not the man's. It is no restoration of Adam's forfeited headship, but a new and mysterious beginning, wherein divine power takes up the frailty and mutability of the creature, which has its fullest expression in the woman, to demonstrate



divine grace, while not without cost is the victory over the enemy achieved: in bruising the serpent's head, the Conqueror has His own heel bruised.

Thus does the divine purpose begin to be disclosed, asking no aid from, and making no condition with, the fallen creature. From the first, it is seen that all help is laid upon Another—One in whom, though born of a woman, power from God is found; who suffers, and in suffering overcomes; and manifestly in behalf of those of whom He is the Kinsman.

Although, then, the Lord's address to the woman afterwards speaks of nothing but pain and humiliation, and to the man himself of toil and suffering and death, yet we read immediately upon this that "Adam called his wife's name 'Eve' [or 'Life'], because she was the mother of all living." Life he apprehends, according to the divine announcement, to be in the woman connected by grace with her victorious Seed; weakness and evil in her thus met and triumphed over, while the headship of the first man is set aside. Adam bows, then, to this sentence, while in faith he receives the mercy; and it is upon this that we find God significantly replacing the inadequate apron of fig-leaves, the first human manufacture, with the coats of skins, the fruit of death itself, now made to minister to their need, and by divine gift, not by human acquisition. We may thus very clearly see how God accepts the faith of Adam, and in this clothing, how the shame of our moral nakedness is put away forever, clothed, in divine mercy, with Christ Himself, as the fruit of His death for us.

How much of this Adam and his wife might apprehend is another question, and it is one impossible perhaps for us to answer. Instead of unsafe speculation, therefore, it will be better to pass on to that in which, according to Scripture itself, the faith of one of their children is ex-

pressed,—for “by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and by it he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.” The use of sacrifice thus demands our attention, no single examples merely of which we have in the case of a few early patriarchs, but a thing which we find, in whatever perverted forms, pervading all religious creeds from the beginning. That—unnatural as it is—it could have rooted itself thus deeply in the minds of men, shows its manifest divine institution, as well as the depth and universality of a common conviction to which it appealed.

Nature could never have dictated it. Cain’s way was nature’s dictation, not Abel’s. How could it be supposed that, admitting man’s sinfulness and its desert, the death of an innocent victim could atone for the guilty, or that the blood of bulls and goats could put away sin? Looked at as the product of reason merely, such reasoning were utter folly. Connected with the bruised heel of the Seed of the woman, and perhaps with the skins which clothed the first transgressors, a voluntary Sufferer might be seen, whose suffering and death should indeed have efficacy on man’s behalf. And thus we gain the assurance of a real view which faith had, and which was offered to faith, of vicarious atonement, as linking itself with the suffering Conqueror of the first prophecy, even as we are assured of Abel that his “gifts” had in some way a value in them which God could accept on his behalf, pronouncing him righteous on their account. With Cain also it would seem as if we must read God’s expostulation, “And if thou doest not well, a sin-offering coucheth at the door;” thus prescribing a way in which faith, on the part of a poor sinner, might approach Him with confidence. The way of sacrifice was thus openly proclaimed as the way of acceptance; repentance and faith as what, on man’s part, this implied, if really apprehended; no legal condi-

tions, no covenant of works, were in any wise imposed; God starts with that which He has now, and once for all, returned to: His first thought is His last—His own thought, in fact, all through, though man's necessity might require, as we shall see, apparent departure from it. Man's necessity is indeed his perversity, and nothing else, which, refusing in self-confidence God's simple way of grace, compelled Him to allow them the experiment of their own way. But for sixteen centuries at least, God abides by what He has said at the beginning. Having made known to man His way of acceptance and approach to Him, He waits to see how man's conscience will respond to the sentence upon him—his heart to the grace which has provided for his need. Alas! His next word has to be a threat of near and approaching judgment. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years."

We see that, after the fall, God purposed no new trial to man whatever. He revealed the coming of that Seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head. He instituted sacrifice, and thus not obscurely intimated the way of blessing and acceptance for man. He declared actually his acceptance of believing Abel, and to Cain the ground of his rejection and the remedy that still remained. But He gave no law; He urged man to no fatal use of his own efforts to work out righteousness. Conscience was to be the teacher of that need which they had as those outside of Eden, whose closed gate was a perpetual witness, as were also the sorrow and death which sin had introduced into the world; while repentance—the truthful acknowledgment of their condition—would be as ever the way out of it, by faith in that which on God's part met it all.

The only test for man was this necessary one, whether

conscience would have force to bring him thus to himself and to God. Alas! as to this, we know the result. The figure prominent in the antediluvian world is one in whose person the world, at every period, finds its awful representative. "The way of Cain," as Jude may assure us, has survived the flood, and been followed by the mass through the many generations thence to the present time. It is, of course, the exact opposite of God's way; as its first originator stands before us as the first of that seed of the serpent ever in enmity to the woman's Seed. He is thus the incarnation of satanic opposition to the counsel of God. Abel approaches God by sacrifice, the appointed foreshadowing of Him in whom the conflict between good and evil would find its decisive issue; Cain, rejecting sacrifice, brings as an offering the fruit of his own labor. Here begins, with him, the self-assertion which required so many ages of trial to beat down,—a "ministration of death" and "condemnation." It is man himself who raises the question of his ability to meet God and merit acceptance at His hands; and the question being raised must be fully and with long patience entertained, and conclusively settled.

Toward Cain himself, who at once shows how murder can lurk under the specious form of righteousness, this patience is exercised. He abuses it to build a city in defiance of his doom of vagabondage—a city which his sons adorn with arts and appliances, which, like man's first invention, are made to cover from themselves the shame of their nakedness. Adam wove his girdle out of fig-leaves; Cain's sons weave all nature into a web for the awful purpose of self-deception, forcing it into unwilling revolt against God, and idolatrous usurping of its Maker's place. As with their first father, so with these imitators of his apostasy and not his faith, conscience but drives them to hide from the insupportable presence of God,

under the cover of His own handiwork. They are pioneers of progress, which, with all its mighty results in the ages since, has never sufficed to lift off the curse from the earth, or take the sting from death, or satisfy the craving heart of man, or deliver from the corruption that is in the world through lust. It has built up luxury, has added burdens to the already burdened, has kindled wars, which come of the "lusts which war in the members." The last of Cain's family is but Tubal-Cain—"Cain's issue." Its Lamech, "the strong man," with his two wives (first of polygamists) and his argument for impunity because of the long-suffering patience of which Cain had been the subject—shows us clearly and conclusively the moral result.

But Cain and his seed do not fill the whole scene here. The forefront they do; and history at the beginning, like all history since, has little to tell of outside their doings. Yet there is a remnant, beginning with one who, by divine appointment, takes the place of the martyred Abel. His son's name, Enos (in a day when names still had meaning), tells us of the acceptance of the humbling reality of man's condition—Enos, "frail man." And "then," we read, "men began to call on the name of Jehovah." God gets his place when man takes his. And so it ever is.

Here, then, a new beginning, as it were, is found; and the divine record, leaving out Cain and his apostate race, gives us now a fresh genealogy, in which we are once more told how "in the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him; male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called their name 'Adam,' in the day when they were created. And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth." Of the men of this generation it is but noted that they lived and died, although now first we find—what is want-

ing as to Cain's race—every year of their unobtrusive lives noted before God. Divine interest is shown in what for man has none, and contributes nothing to the world's history.

When, indeed, we come to Enoch, seventh from Adam, God can keep silence no longer, "And Enoch walked with God . . . three hundred years . . . and Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." Precious and emphatic commendation of Enoch! Solemn and decisive judgment as to the ruin of all on earth! for the one who walks with God He takes from the earth. How plain an intimation that this pious seed is not as yet to fill the earth! Nay, surely a very clear one that that seed itself begins to fail. This Enoch-walk is as rare as it is precious. Indeed, we know that but two generations later Noah stands the solitary representative of it upon earth. Even in Noah's father, Lamech, though he speaks piously of God, we can detect deterioration. Is he not, even in his name, sadly linked with Cain's race?—another Lamech, a "strong man;" not an Enos, taking his place in self-humiliation before God. It is striking, also, that like his Cainite namesake, he too has his memorable saying. And though at first sight they may seem quite diverse, and in some sense really are, there is yet, spite of all, a striking similarity. For if the Cainite Lamech prophesies impunity to himself for his wrong-doing, from the false argument as to God's long-suffering, the Sethite no less, upon the very eve of judgment, speaks of comfort to a generation soon to be swept away by the flood. "And he called his [son's] name 'Noah,' saying, 'This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.'"

There was truth in this. It was of Noah's day that we read, "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the

Lord said in His heart, 'I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake.'” Lamech's prophecy was true, then, as to the “comfort” God had in store for man; false only as to the application to a generation the survivors of whom were cut off by the judgment that preceded the blessing.

If we go on to the next chapter, the marks of fatal declension are yet more manifest. However we may interpret the “sons of God” of the first paragraph there, it is abundantly evident that Seth's line, as a whole, are no longer exempt from the universal corruption. God declares His Spirit shall not always strive with man, and fixes the limit of present patience to a hundred and twenty years.

Yet it is just here that the world's mighty ones are found, and giants appear upon the earth—men whose fame survives their awful judgment. God on His part saw “that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil, and that continually. And it repented Jehovah that He had made man upon the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.”

When at last all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth, and Noah alone is found walking with God, the flood closed the time of His long-suffering; and the earth, emerging from its baptism, bears upon its surface but eight living persons, as the nucleus of the new world.

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## THE TRIAL OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT

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JUDGMENT was executed and over, and in Noah and his family the human race began anew the history of the world. There are many features of difference from the former beginnings, whether inside paradise or without. It was now first that on the fallen earth the trial of man formally began—a trial which, as we have seen, man had forced God (if we may so speak) to make. Already He had indeed pronounced, in answer to the challenge of Cain's altar, that "every imagination of the thought of man's heart was only evil, and that continually," and after such a sentence could never for His own sake—as if *He* were in any doubt—institute a fresh trial of such a creature. So, too, when He brings out Noah upon the restored earth, He is at pains to show that He is not possessed with any fresh hopes concerning man. "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake," He says, "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Thus He could not for His own sake institute trial. But man has need to know himself, and as he will not recognize himself in the subject of God's verdict, he must be permitted to make practical proof. Hence, once more his responsibility is solemnly proclaimed, and with the solemn lessons of the past fresh in his memory, and once more with the fresh tokens of divine mercy on every hand, he is bidden gird up his loins and begin again his course, to triumph now, if it may be, in the scene of his former disastrous failure.



Before we examine this in its details, as they are given in the divine Word, let us try to realize the meaning of one solemn change which the renewed earth presents from that old one which the flood had swept away. *Paradise is no more to be found there.* Euphrates, Hiddekel, Gihon, Pison, may be there; but the garden from which they once issued is gone forever. Where it was, and *whether* it was, men may now dispute about as they list. The flaming sword has no need to keep any more the way of the tree of life. The cherubim are also gone. The earth is discrowned and empty.

And must we not connect this displayed glory in Eden, however intimately connected with man's fall and punishment, yet also with the mercy that manifested itself toward him, as we have already seen with other tokens of his condition, in which judgment united itself with and ministered to mercy? Labor and sorrow, and death itself, thus ministered, and do minister; and this flaming sword with its cherubim, like Ezekiel's cloud and fire, speak of that presence of God which is not mere judgment only. So even for Cain there was a "face of the Lord" which he evidently identified with Eden, near to, if still outside of, paradise. "Behold, Thou hast driven me out from the face of the earth," he says, "and from Thy face shall I be hid;" and again we read that "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden." It is the easier to realize, because after this, as we know, it pleased God to localize His presence thus in Israel, and there also with fire and cherubic emblems. It seems not doubtful that this was but in some respects a reproduction of what had been before at the gate of paradise, where sacrifice (which had so essential a part in the Mosaic economy) confessedly began.

Paradise passes away, however, with the flood, and the presence of God, as displayed there, is gone also. It is

simple in principle that while the fall itself had not done so, man's maintenance of his righteousness compels Him to more reserve. For man's sin He had resources, which in the presence of self-righteousness could not be brought out. This must be met in a way far different from the other; for "the proud He beholdeth afar off." Thus, as Cain before, so man now, (and by his road also), "goes out from the presence of the Lord."

Yet He, as consenting to man's trial, does not withdraw simply, and leave him to himself. On the contrary, He solemnly inaugurates the trial Himself, making men afresh to know His power and goodness, as by *their recent deliverance from the otherwise universal destruction*, so also by the new condition of blessing into which the earth enters, in covenant with Him. Still His goodness was, if it might be, to lead them to repentance. And this goodness of His it is the apostle refers to as God's perpetual witness in all times and lands.

Nevertheless, if God thus declare His purpose of loving-kindness, He is careful to ground it all upon that sacrifice rejected by Cain, but fully accepted by delivered Noah. "And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings upon the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savor, and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."

So clear is it that, if God take up man now to go on with him again, it is only upon such a ground as sets him altogether aside that He can do so. Just as afterward, in the giving of the law, it is only on the ground of re-

demption—to a redeemed people—He can give this. If He allow man thus the new trial that he claims, He keeps His own ground still, even while allowing it; and proclaims still, in man's reluctant ears, sacrifice—atonement—as the only way of acceptance, and the impossibility of his standing on his own self-chosen ground.

And now, blessing them as He does so, God delivers into the hand of Noah and of his sons, with something of the old sovereignty, the lower creatures. Significantly, also, death is to be for them the food of life; while the reservation of the blood, the vehicle of life, maintains the divine claim to what God alone can give. Above all, man's life is sacred; the deed of Cain is to go no more unpunished, and man is directly affirmed to be his "brother's keeper:" he is to exact blood for blood, and that as the instrument and vicegerent of God on earth. "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man: at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, *by man* shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man."

Here, then, human government begins, not as an expedient suggested by man, as so many think it, but as a divine institution. From the commencement of it it could be said, "The powers that be are ordained of God." Not any particular powers, as yet indeed, such as we may find afterward, but "the powers that exist," whatever their form.

There is no need to prove, what every one that has a right thought will at once admit, the blessing that there is for man in civil government. Few would doubt that, if it were removed, corruption and violence would overflow all bounds, as it did before the flood, or as in the French revolution of the eighteenth century. Better the

worst form of government the world has seen than absolute anarchy. Darkening of sun and moon, the falling of the stars, and convulsions of the earth are its symbols in Scripture; and these are signs of the near end of the dispensation.

As a moral discipline, subjection to government is of the utmost value. It is seen in the family as what has its root in the divine ordinance by which the whole human race is compacted together. The immaturity of infant years has necessarily to submit itself to the superior power and wisdom by which alone it is able to attain maturity. And this immaturity, so long lasting in the case of man as compared with the lower animals, implies a long discipline of subjection. By the ordinance of civil government the period of this is lengthened to the whole term of man's life. And this subjection is one not merely to the will of others, but in which also *self*-mastery is learned and attained. It is true that man's self-will—the very essence of sin—breaks all bonds that are possible to be devised; and the inadequacy of such means is one of the very lessons—nay, a main one, which these dispensations teach us. Yet were not the means themselves such as *should* be efficacious, their failure would not have the same significance. And amid all the failure this is still apparent.

The failure is on two sides,—that of the governed and that of the governors alike, for both are men. On the part of those in authority is found weakness, the want of *self*-government, as in Noah, which exposes it to the contempt of those who need most the display of power; or, as in Nimrod, the abuse of this, tyranny and oppression. Babel ends this scene in a general revolt against the source of all power—against God—the issue of which is to bring down judgment and stamp the whole scene, even outwardly, with the brand of “confusion.”

The failure begins with Noah, and this is the occasion

of Ham's sin and the curse upon his posterity. The break-up of government is primarily the fault of those to whom God has committed the authority, with the responsibility, of government. God would be with His own institution necessarily to maintain it, if only those to whom it was intrusted did not betray their trust. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" But then subjection to Him is the secret of subordination on the part of the governed. When man gave up his supremacy over the beast, then the beast rose up against him. He had sunk down to their level, practically, by giving up God—for the beast knows not God. "Being in honor and abiding not, he is like the beasts that perish." Thus, long after this, Nebuchadnezzar is driven to the beasts, until he should know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men. His own account is very striking: "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar *lifted up mine eyes unto heaven*, and mine understanding returned unto me; and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored Him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. . . . At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me."

Noah's departure from God was not what Nebuchadnezzar's has been; but it was as real, if not so manifest. We have in him the beginning,—the root, and not the full ripe fruit. A root is not *manifest*; but it is what the other springs from. Noah's failure is easily read as the unguarded enjoyment of blessings away from the restraining presence of Him whose gifts they are. But this is the very secret of a departure the limit of which is then only

with God and not with man. The soul has lost its anchorage, and cannot choose but drift. Noah is drunk, loses his garment, and is naked. In many points it is the Eden-scene repeated. This nakedness is matter of contempt to those who are themselves wholly away from God, and who use it to their own worse shame and ruin. From this family of Ham comes, later, Nimrod, "the rebel;" and the beginning of his kingdom is Babel.

The order is instructive and important. God's thought for man is weakness, dependence, subjection, but so, blessing. To realize this, they are to be scattered abroad upon the earth. But of all things, the pride of man refuses the acknowledgment of weakness, as his will resents subjection. Power and a name he covets. "Union is strength" is his watchword. "And they said, 'Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.'"

Now God's thought for man is a city too. Faith looks for a "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Cain's city was not original with him, nor is God's thought caught from man's. It is itself the original; only that it must wait for another scene for its accomplishment. For He cannot build in a storm-vexed and shifting scene, such as the present; and the anticipation of God's time is unbelief, not faith. Man's union is thus confederacy, a compact of selfish wills, of which the cross is the outcome.—"Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

Meanwhile, God is digging deep, in the sense of emptiness and nothingness and guilt, to have Christ as the foundation of a city whose walls shall be salvation, and whose gates praise; where union shall be communion with the Father and the Son, and thus accord with all things that serve God. Jerusalem shall be therefore "the

foundation of peace." The outcome of man's confederacy—judgment only stamping it with its true character—is Babel, "confusion." And this is the beginning of his empire who is the type of the great final "rebel," who, crushing all lesser wills into his own, shall be at the same time the "lawless one" and the iron despot.

Thus "man's day" will come to an end, and the kingdom of Christ be seen to be the only refuge; all other kingdoms but its shadow, this the substance. The perfect Man must come—Himself the perfectly obedient One,—in whom shall be no failure; no degradation of power, and no lack of it: whose of right the throne is. Till then the trial of government, however this may be needful (and therefore "the powers that be are ordained of God," and "he is the minister of God to thee for good"), becomes only one of the things that manifest more and more man's hopeless ruin. He who could not maintain himself in blessing cannot recover himself; nor is there redemption for him in his brother's hand.

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## THE PREFACE TO THE TRIAL BY LAW:

### ABRAHAM AND THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

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**A**N important period comes now to be considered; not itself forming part of these probationary ages, but having nevertheless the deepest significance in relation to these. The trial by law, it is evident, was the fullest and most detailed trial that man received; as it was the trial of the only religious system that ever was the fruit of man's mind simply. We have seen it in principle already in Cain—a mere natural man, of course; but with the believer also there are thoughts of the natural mind which are no better. God, in the giving of law, does not yet reveal His own way of blessing, but adopts, for the sake of experiment, man's way; only supplying the needful conditions that the experiment may be fully made, and the issue such as may not at all be doubtful.

But in a case of this kind, special care would be needed also to guard against the mistake, so sure otherwise to happen, of confounding this adoption of man's way, for a certain purpose, with the acceptance of it by God as the true one, and His own thought. This in fact has happened, because unbelief in man can set aside the plainest testimonies that can be given; while the systems which set these aside necessarily, in proportion as they do so, deny the simple facts connected with the giving of the law, and which are indeed part of a testimony which He has thus graven upon the history itself.

Thus those who affirm the law to be in any sense God's original thought have endeavored to prove, as it was needful to prove, its universality and its existence from



the beginning in a fallen world. Its universality,—for that which was God's way of blessing for man, could not be (according to His own design) shut up from the mass; its existence from the beginning, partly for the same reason, and partly because God's thought would surely be the one first announced by Him.

To establish its universality, they have had to distinguish between a written and an unwritten law; or, as they assume to call it from Scripture, a law written on the heart. What they mean is in fact conscience, an implicit law which every one has, while the ten commandments are only its explicit form, and as such given to Israel alone. In the same way they prove equally, as they think, its existence from the beginning.

Scripture refuses this, however, utterly. The "law written upon the heart" is only used of Israel's condition when finally converted to God. It is one of the blessings of the new covenant—"I *will* put My laws in their minds, and write them in their heart;" words which prove conclusively that such a condition is not every man's natural one. While in the passage in Romans often quoted, where at first sight a similar term seems to be applied to the Gentiles, it is in reality a very different one: "Which show," says the apostle, "the *work* of the law written upon their hearts"—not the law written, but its *work* written, as the original text declares without any question. The work of the law is conviction: conscience does this work in the one who has not the law, though far less completely: "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" and this knowledge conscience in measure gives to every one, and in that respect they, "having no law" (so the Revised Version correctly gives it), "are a law unto themselves." *Had* they a law, they would *not* be a law to themselves.

There is no escape from the plain statement of Scripture that the law written on the heart is conversion, and

not the natural state; and that if it were, God could not promise to write it for those who already had it written in them. Positive, too, is the statement that the Gentiles had "no law." But beside all this, the introduction of law at the beginning in a fallen world is the subversion of the whole argument of the apostle (Gal. iii. 17), that "the covenant, which was confirmed before of God in Christ [or rather "to Christ"], the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul, that it should make the promise of no effect." For "though it be a man's covenant, if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereunto."

He here shows one of the meanings of this Abrahamic period preceding the dispensation of law. No less than four centuries does God require to put between the promise of grace to Abraham and his seed and the legal covenant between Himself and Israel, to prevent the one being confounded with or added to the other. And the importance of this will be seen, when we compare the real universality of the first with the restricted bearing of the second. "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed," God says to Abraham, speaking to him as the pattern man of faith, the "father of all them that believe." For "they which are of faith," says the apostle, "the same are the children of Abraham." And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would "justify the heathen (the nations) through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, 'In thee shall all nations be blessed.' So then," he adds, "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful (or rather, "believing") Abraham."

Thus God had proclaimed, centuries before the law, that the Gentiles should be blessed upon the principle of faith. Even as, long after the law was given, He had declared by Habakkuk that "the just shall live by faith." "And," adds the apostle again, "the law is not of faith;

but 'the man that *doeth* them shall live in them'—an entirely different and conflicting principle.

Even thus far it is plain that, as God's universal way of blessing, the gospel had possession of the field before the law came in at all. But God would make it more evident; and He confirms this covenant of promise (really) to Christ, when He afterward adds, "In *thy seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." This is of course the completion (and therefore confirmation) of the former promise; and its full significance is seen in connection with that offering up of Isaac, and receiving him back (in figure) from the dead, which so plainly find their antitype in Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection. The true Isaac is that One Seed, as the apostle points out, "to whom the promise was made." If "in thee" showed that the blessing was to be by faith, "in thy seed" reveals the object of faith, the Person and work through whom alone the blessing of all nations could in fact come.

Law is excluded from this covenant of promise. It has absolutely no place there. And what proves this, according to the apostle, is just the fact of its having been made and confirmed of God four hundred and thirty years before the Sinaitic. Even a man's covenant made and confirmed cannot be reopened to insert new conditions. How simply impossible, then, to add the law as a condition to the covenant of grace!

Theological systems would come in here to assure us, however, that the law was written upon man's heart from the beginning, and thus upset altogether the apostle's reasoning. Instead of grace having priority of law, as he affirms, according to these, it is the law that has the priority. Either he or they, then, must be in error.

In the epistle to the Romans also he speaks of a time before law. "For until the law," he says,—or rather, "until law"—"sin was in the world" Law did not in-

troduce it therefore, he means to say; but again they would correct him: according to them, there was no time "until"—that is, *before*—law. And some would doubtless quote the next words of the apostle in proof: "But sin is not imputed where there is no law." The mistake is in supposing "imputing" here to be the same thing as elsewhere in the epistle; it is in reality a different word: "sin is not *put in account*" (as the different items of a bill,) is the true thought. "Sin is not put in account where there is no law; nevertheless death reigned"—proving that sin *was* "imputed," *from Adam to Moses*, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." For Adam had "transgressed;" he had overstepped a positive law under which he was. "From Adam to Moses" is just the time of the most part of the Genesis history; it is the time *until law*, when sin was already in the world, but when it had not as yet this aggravation. The supposition—for it *has* been supposed—that *infants* are in question "from Adam to Moses," is scarcely deserving a refutation.

It is not true, then, that the law given at Sinai was only the explicit announcement of what had been implicitly in existence from the beginning; but on the contrary, law, as a principle of God's dealings in a fallen world, came in then. It is what He was forced into (to speak after the manner of men), rather than desired. Abel, in the world before the flood, declared what was His way from the beginning; and this Noah's altar proclaimed again as His, when those waters had scarcely dried from off the face of the new world.

In this prefatory period of which we are now speaking, the types of the law and its significance the apostle has taught us to find in Abraham's history. How suited their place there should be surely evident. Hagar is thus the "covenant from the Mount Sina, which gendereth to

bondage," and every detail of her history is, I am assured, luminous in this way. That she is but handmaid to Sarah, the covenant of grace, every one owns, of course. Sarah's name is "Princess," for "grace reigns." Hagar is an Egyptian, child of fallen nature; and *her* name is "Fugitive," for, alas! the natural effort now is to get away from God. She is fleeing toward Egypt when the angel finds her at Lahai-roi; and when dismissed with her child in obedience to the divine command, again we find her gravitating toward Egypt. How plainly is it taught, thus, that the law is characterized by "the elements of the world," with which the apostle connects it in Galatians! *As a principle*, it is man's way, not God's; as specific commandment, holy, just, and good; and in His intent in giving it, surely worthy every way of Him. These things alter in no wise the fact that it is man's way—his experiment with himself—taken up by God, and worked out, in His own perfect manner, to a true result.

Thus it should be very plain why Hagar is first *found* by God in relation to Abram, manifestly his own shift, through little faith, to obtain the promised and desired fruit. *Finding* her thus, He appears to her at the well Lahai-roi, and sends her back to submit herself (mark) into her mistress's hands, and to allow the trial already begun to be fully wrought. But while He allows it, He does not leave the issue for a moment doubtful. The fruit of law is the natural fruit. Ishmael shall be born, but be only the "wild-ass man"—untamed, untamable flesh.

Abraham thus exhibits in his own history the lesson which afterward, for so many centuries, his posterity were set to learn. In his own person, he is the witness of sovereign, electing grace; called out of the darkness of heathenism, as Joshua reminds the men of his generation—"Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in

old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods." Here, "the God of glory appeared unto" him, and called him from country, kindred, and father's house, to be the special witness of His name and way.

Before Hagar appears in the history, God gives testimony to Abram, as a man righteous through faith; and it is instructive to see how the apostle, when he brings Abram before us as the pattern man of faith, passes over all the time of his connection with her as so much loss. "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, 'So shall thy seed be.' And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*"

In the last words, the apostle seems to ignore the facts of history; for Abram's body was not yet dead when God said to him, "So shall thy seed be," and when his faith was first counted for righteousness. It was after this—probably some time after—that Ishmael was born; and *he* was thirteen years old at the time of which the epistle to the Romans speaks. All these fifteen years or more the apostle treats as so much lost time, to bring together the period in which he is first spoken of as having the righteousness of faith, and that when he received the covenant of circumcision as the "seal" of that righteousness. Circumcision means, as the same apostle elsewhere tells us, the "putting off of the body of the flesh;" and they are the "true circumcision" who "have no confidence in the flesh." God Himself thus brings these two periods

together; and circumcision is seen to be indeed, as the Lord says, "not of Moses." In its spiritual meaning, it is the fundamental opposite of law.

How fully in all this the character and purpose of this intermediate time comes out! Even the natural seed—Israel after the flesh—will find their blessing in the end from God according to the grace of the Abrahamic covenant, and not according to the Sinaitic,—the only one according to which they have yet received the land. The Abrahamic covenant will thus be in very deed to them a "*new* covenant." Thus grace still as a nation holds them fast, as it ever has, for future blessing,—a blessing which, when it comes, will alone be the proper fulfillment of the "covenant of promise."

Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph give us, as types, yet further lessons. Isaac shows us the Seed through whom alone the blessing can come; Jacob, the immediate father of the twelve tribes, in both his character and history, foreshadows theirs; and Joseph, rejected by his brethren, and yet at last received perforce as their saviour and lord, shows in so plain a way their history in respect of One infinitely greater that it needs no insisting on. For our present purpose, enough has been already said to prove how, in this period prefatory to the law, the law itself is guarded from misconception, and grace is declared God's way, and only way, of blessing for man. Even for Israel, God's covenant is the covenant of circumcision. Carnality and unbelief, stopping at the outside, may misread all this from first to last. If those misread it, for whom has come the full and final revelation, "the veil is upon their hearts."

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## THE AGE OF LAW

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**I**N taking up the lessons of the dispensation of law, we must carefully distinguish two different and, in many respects, contrasted elements. As a trial of man, which, in the highest degree, it was, we have already seen it to be the working out (in a divine way, and therefore to a true result) of an experiment which was man's thought, not God's. God could not need to make an experiment. Man needed it, because he would not accept God's judgment, already pronounced before (as a fallen being) he had been tried at all, in the proper sense of trial; "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil, and that continually." God's way of acceptance for him had been, therefore, from the beginning, by sacrifice, in which the death of a substitute covered the sinner before Him, closing his whole responsibility naturally in the place in which he stood as a creature.

The "way of Cain" was man's resistance to the verdict upon himself, and so to the way of grace proclaimed. God then undertook to prove him, taking him on his own ground, and bidding him justify his own thoughts of himself by actual experiment.

But this is only the law on one side of it. It was what made it *law*, and gave its character to the whole dispensation. Yet underneath, and in spite of all this, God necessarily kept to and maintained His own way, and to the ear of faith told out, more and more, that way of His, although in "dark sayings," from which only Christianity



has really lifted off the veil. Thus, and thus alone, a sacrificial worship was incorporated with the law, and circumcision, "a seal of the righteousness of faith," remained as the entrance into the new economy.

First, then, let us look at the law as law, and afterward as a typical system.

As law, or the trial of man, we find him put in the most favorable circumstances possible for its reception. The ten commandments appeal, at the very outset, to the fact of the people having been brought out of the land of Egypt; it was He who had brought them out who bade them "have no other gods" before Him. He had made Himself known in such a way as to manifest Himself God over all gods, His power being put forth in their behalf, so as to bind them by the tie of gratitude to Himself. How could they dispute His authority, or doubt His love? His holiness, too, was declared in a variety of precepts, which, if burdensome as ceremonial, appealed even the more powerfully on that account to the very sense of the most careless-hearted. There were severest penalties for disobedience, but also rewards for obedience, of all that man's heart sinlessly could enjoy. The providence of God was made apparent in continual miracles, by which their need in the wilderness was daily met. Who could doubt, and who refuse, the blessing of obedience to a law so given and so sanctified?

A wall of separation was built up between them and the nations round; and inside this inclosure the divinely guarded people were to walk together, all evil and rebellion excluded, the course of the world here set right, all ties of relationship combining their influence for good; duty not costing aught, but finding on every side its sweet, abundant recompense. Who, one would think, could stumble? and who could stray?

Surely the circumstances here were as favorable as

possible to man's self-justification under this trial, if justify himself he could. If he failed now, how could he hope ever to succeed?

That he did fail, we all know—openly and utterly he failed, not merely by unbidden lusts, which his will refused and denied, but in conscious, deliberate disobedience, equal to his father Adam's, and that before the tables of the law had come down to him out of the mount into which Moses had gone up to receive them.

The first trial of law was over. Judgment took its course, although mercy, sovereign in its exercise, interposed to limit it. Again God took the people up, upon the intercession of Moses—type of a greater and an effectual Mediator. Man was ungodly, but was hope irrecoverably gone? Could not mercy avail for man in a mingled system from which man's works should at least not wholly be excluded?

Now this, in fact, is the great question under law: rigidly enforced, it is easily allowed that man must fail, and be condemned. He does not love his neighbor as himself, still less love God with all his soul and strength. Is there nothing short of this that God can admit, then? He can show mercy; can He not abate something of this rigor, and give man opportunity to repent, and recover himself?

And this is the thought that underlies much that is mistaken for the gospel now. A new baptism may give it a Christian name, and yet leave it unregenerate legalism after all. For this—only correcting some mistakes—is what the second giving of the law takes up. It is an old experiment, long since worked out, an anachronism in Christian times. "The law is not of faith;" these are two opposite principles, which do not modify, but destroy, one another.

A second time the tables of the law are given to Israel;

and now, along with this, God speaks of and declares the mercy which He surely has: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." It is the conjunction of these two things that creates the difficulty. We recognize the truth of both, but how shall they unite in the blessing of man? This doubt perplexes fatally all legal systems. How far will mercy extend? and where will righteousness draw the line beyond which it cannot pass? How shall we reconcile the day of grace and the day of judgment? The true answer is, that under law no reconciliation is at all possible. The experiment has been made, and the result proclaimed. It is of the law thus given the second time, and not the first, that the apostle asserts that it is the "ministration of death" and "of condemnation."

One serious mistake that has to be rectified here is, that the law can be tolerant to a certain (undefined) measure of transgression. It is not so. It is not on legal ground that God "forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin." The *law* says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." If on other ground (in this case, as ever, that of sacrifice,) mercy can be extended, and even forgiveness,—if man be permitted to cancel the old leaf and turn over a new, yet the new must be kept unblotted, as the old was not. "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness," he must do "that which is *lawful* and right," to "save his soul alive." And thus the commandments, written the second time upon the tables of stone, though now by the mediator's hand, were identical with the first. Here, the law cannot give way by a jot or a tittle, and therefore man's case is hopeless. The law is the ministration of condemnation only.

That was the foreseen issue, and the divine purpose in it, and God, to make that issue plain, (that man might not, unless he would, be a moment deceived as to it) lets Moses know, as the people's representative, that His face cannot be seen. He does indeed see the glory *after it has passed*—His back parts, not His face. God is unknown: there is no way to clear the guilty, and therefore none by which man may stand before Him.

Thus the law, in any form of it, is the "ministration of condemnation" only. That it was the "ministration of death" also, implies its power, not to produce holiness, but, as the apostle calls it, "the strength of sin." His experience of it—"I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Forbidding lust, it aroused and manifested it. "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of lust"—thus "deceived me, and by it slew me."

Of this state of hopeless condemnation and evil, that *physical* death which God had annexed to disobedience at the first was the outward expression and seal. In it, man, made like the beasts that perish, passed out of the sphere of his natural responsibility and the scene for which he had been created, and passed out by the judgment of God, which cast, therefore, its awful shadow over all beyond death. The token of God's rejection of man as fallen is passed upon all men everywhere, with but one exception in the ages before Moses. Enoch had walked with God, and was not, for God took him. That made it only the plainer, if possible, what was its significance. It was actual sentence upon man for sin, and all men were under it as sentenced,—not under probation.

If God, therefore, took up man to put him under probation, as in the law He manifestly did, He must needs *conditionally* remove the sentence under which he lay. "The man who doeth these things shall live in them"

meant, not that he should die, and go to heaven, as people almost universally interpret it, but the contrary—that he should recover the place from which Adam had fallen, and stay on earth. *Faith* in Abraham, indeed, looked forward to a better country—that is, a heavenly. But the law is not of faith, nor was Abraham under it. *Faith*, owning man's hopelessness of ruin, was given in measure to prove the mystery of what, to all else, were God's dark sayings. To man as man, resisting God's sentence upon himself, the law spoke, not of death, and a world beyond, (which he might, as he listed, people with his own imaginings,) but of the lifting off of the sentence under which he lay—of the way by which he could plead his title to exemption from it.

Thus the issue of the trial could not be in the least doubtful. Every grey hair convicted him as, under law, ruined and hopeless. Every furrow on his brow was the confirmation of the old Adamic sentence upon himself personally; and the law, in this sense also, was the ministration of death, God using it to give distinct expression to what the fact itself should have graven upon men's consciences. It is this (so misunderstood as it is now) that gives the key to those expressions in the Psalms and elsewhere which materialism would pervert to its own purposes: "For in death there is no remembrance of Thee; in hades [it is not "the grave"] who shall give Thee thanks?"

God would have it so plain, that he might run that readeth it, that upon the ground of law, spite of God's mercy (which He surely has), man's case is hopeless. "By deeds of law shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Yet, God having declared His forgiveness of iniquity, transgression, and sin, the second trial by law could go on, as it did go on, for some eight hundred years, till the

Babylonish captivity. Then the legal covenant really ended. The people were Lo-ammi, a sentence never yet recalled.

As law simply, then, the Mosaic system was the complete and formal trial of man as man; all possible assistance being given him, and every motive, whether of self-interest or of gratitude to God, being brought to bear on him; the necessity of faith almost, as it might seem, set aside by repeated manifestations of Jehovah's presence and power, such as must force conviction upon all.

The issue of the trial, as foreseen and designed of God, was to bring out the perfect hopelessness of man's condition, as ungodly, and without strength, unable to stand before Him for a moment. But then, the truth of his helplessness exposed, the mercy of God could not permit his being left there without the assurance of effectual help provided for him. In this way, another element than that of law entered into the law, and the tabernacle and temple services, taking up the principles of circumcision and of sacrifice (of older date than law) incorporated them in a ritual of most striking character, which spread before the eye opened to take it in lessons of spiritual wisdom, which in our day we turn back to read with deeper interest and delight the more we know of them.

The language of type and parable God had used from the beginning. As yet, He could not speak plainly of what filled His heart ever, as these bear abundant witness. Unbelief in man had dammed back the living stream of divine goodness, which was gathering behind the barrier all the while for its overflow. In the meanwhile, the Psalms—the very heart of the Old Testament—declare what faith could already realize of the blessedness of “the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.” Faith tasted and declared, as the apostle could take up such words afterward, to show, not the blessed-

ness of keeping law, but of divine forgiveness. "It shall be forgiven him" was indeed said, with perfect plainness, in connection with that shedding of blood for man, which testified at once to his utter failure, and of resource in God for his extremest need. It was not, and could not be, perfect peace or justification that could yet be preached or known, but a "forbearance," of which none could predict the limits. Still, faith had here its argument, and, in fact, found ever its fullest confidence sustained.

Very striking it is, when once this dealing of God with faith is seen, how the very burdensomeness of the rigid ceremonial changes its character, and becomes only the urgency of an appeal to the conscience, which, if entertained, would open the way to the knowledge of the blessedness of which the psalmist speaks. These continual sacrifices, if they did indeed, as the apostle urges, by their frequent repetition, proclaim their own insufficiency, nevertheless, by the very fact, became continual preachers, in the most personal way, to the men of Israel, of their ruin, and of its sole remedy. How the constant shedding of blood would keep them in mind of that divine commentary, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul," (Lev. xvii. 11.)

How striking, too, that circumcision, which was clearly before the law, was expressly the only way by which even the Israelite-born could claim Jehovah as his covenant-God, or keep the memorial feast of national redemption! For, as the apostle says, it was "the seal of the righteousness of *faith*," not law-keeping, as the covenant of which it was the token was "of promise"—the promise of an "almighty God," when in Abraham, almost a hundred years old, all natural hope was dead forever. To walk before that omnipotent God in confessed impotence, trust-

ing and proving His power, was that to which he was called. As yet, there was no law to saddle that with conditions; and in memory of this, in token of its abiding significance, the Gentile "stranger" could still be circumcised, with all his males, and keep the passover as an Israelite-born.

How tender, too, the goodness which had provided that whoever of Abraham's seed should turn to the history of his forefather after the flesh, should find written there, and of this very depositary of all the promises, such plain, unambiguous words of divine testimony as these: "He believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness." Of no other was this in the same way written. What hand inscribed it *there*, just where it should speak most plainly, and to those most in need? Just where, on the incoming of Christianity, it should be ready with its unmistakable testimony to the central principle of Christianity itself. Such is the prophetic character of the inspired Word. The same presaging Spirit who dictated to *Peter*—in men's thoughts, the first authority in the church—those two doctrines which are the death-blow of ritualism, new birth through the word of the gospel, and the common priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. i 23-25; ii. 5-9), recorded by Moses this testimony as to Abraham. Blessed be God for His infinitely precious Word!

It was in connection with law that all the books of the Old Testament were given, and Israel, as is plain, were they to whom all was committed. It seems, therefore, here the place to speak briefly of their general character as affected by this. There are certain things, at least, that one may indicate as of special importance, in view of many things around us at the present time.

In the first place, it was not yet the time for that "plainness of speech" which, as the apostle says, belongs to Christianity. This we have already seen, but it is not



superfluous to insist on it still further. The veil between man and God necessitated a veiled speech also—not, indeed, altogether impenetrable to faith, but requiring, in the words of Solomon, “to understand proverb and strange speech,\* the words of the wise and their *dark sayings*.” Even as to man himself, while his trial was yet going on, there could not be the full discovery of his condition. We have not yet the New-Testament doctrine of “the flesh,” nor of new birth, although there was that which should have prepared an Israelitish teacher for the understanding of it when announced. Election was only yet national, not individual, and therefore to privilege only, not eternal life. Adoption, too, was national: the true children of God could not yet claim or know their place as such. No cry of “Abba, Father,” was or could be raised. The heirs differed not as yet from servants, being under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father. (Gal. iv.) As to all these things, there were preparatory utterances, and all the more as the ruin of man came out, therefore, in those prophetic books which fittingly closed the canon of the Old Testament.

Even the types had in them the character which the apostle ascribes to the law: “having a shadow of good things to come, but *not* the very image of the things.” The unrent veil, the repetition of the sacrifices, the successional priesthood, as he points out, had all this character. They were the necessary witnesses that the “law made nothing perfect,”—that under it “the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest.” Of these was the intermediate priesthood of Aaron’s sons, which was the provision for a people unable themselves to draw near to God; which, with all else, the Judaizing ritualism of the

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\* Not, as in the Authorized Version, “interpretation,” but “what needs interpretation.”

day copies, and maintains as Christian. The apostle's answer to it is, "By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after that He had said before, . . . 'Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.' Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and having a High-Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." (Heb. x. 14-22.) Sin put away, and distance from God removed, ritualism, in all its forms, becomes an impossibility.

In the second place, as the law dealt with man here and now, and did not relegate the issue of its own trial to another time and place, where its verdict could not be known by men in this life; the earth is that upon which man's attention is fixed, and that whether for judgment or reward. There are *hints* here also of the fuller truths which the New Testament unfolds; but manifestly there is no promise of heaven to the keeper of the law, nor even threat of hell—that is, of the lake of fire—to the transgressors of it. Judgment there is, and eternal judgment, but *death* is rather the stroke of it—the horror of this shadowing the eternity beyond. Job speaks of resurrection, and the prophets also, though in them it is only applied figuratively to national restoration; yet this shows they held it as admitted truth. Outside of the Old Testament we learn, from the epistle to the Hebrews, that the patriarchs expected "a better country—that is, a heavenly;" but we should not know it from Genesis. Faith penetrated, in some measure, it is clear, the "dark sayings," and found all not dark. A recognized body of truth was received by the Pharisees, which embraced, not

only resurrection for the just, but of the unjust also, and spoke, not merely of hades, but of gehenna also—the true “hell.” This only makes the more remarkable the constant style even of the prophets. The confounding of judgments upon the living, by which the earth will be rid of its destroyers and prepared for blessing, with the judgment of the dead at the “great white throne,” is one of the errors under which annihilationism shelters itself most securely.

On the other hand, this earthly blessing, still further confused by Israel being (as commonly) interpreted to mean the Church, has been by current “adventism” made to take the place of the true Christian expectation of an inheritance in heaven. And this, too, has linked itself with annihilationism in its extremest and most materialistic forms. We must keep the stand-points of the Old and New Testaments—of Israel and the Church, earthly and heavenly—clear in our minds, and there is no difficulty. “My kinsmen according to the *flesh*,” says the apostle; “to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the *promises*.” (Rom. ix. 3, 4.) All of these for them *earthly* blessings. Christians are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in *heavenly* places in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. i. 3.)

If this should seem at all to take the Old Testament away from us who belong to another dispensation, we must remember two things: first, that if it has not so directly to do with us, it has, most assuredly, with Christ no less on that account. His glories run through the whole; history, psalm, and prophecy are full of Him. But what reveals Him is ever of truest blessing for the soul. Oh to be simpler in taking in all this, in which the Father gives us communion with His own thoughts of His Son!

And then, when we look at the typical teaching, now fully for the first time disclosed, when even the things that happened to the favored nation, and are recorded in their history, "happened to them for types," we find what is in the fullest way ours—"written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come." (1 Cor. x. 11.) How wonderful this! and how sad to think, on the one hand of the disuse, on the other of the reckless abuse, of that precious teaching!

We have now to look at the history of the age of law.

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## THE HISTORY OF THE AGE OF LAW

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**W**E have seen already that at the very commencement of its history the people failed under the law; and this is the one unvarying lesson of all these ages. Under law it was only more plainly marked, as was indeed to be expected of that which was emphatically the "ministration of condemnation." Still the extent of the failure seems after all amazing. I do not even refer to the worship of the golden calf, although it might seem nothing could more show the desperate wickedness of man's heart than this. The very mount which had flamed and quaked in witness to the divine presence bore witness also to this rapid descent into the abominations of the heathen round about, who "changed the image of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." Judgment being executed, God took up the people the second time; not, as we know, under the same strictly legal system, which it had been proved they could not endure, but under a mingled system of law and mercy.

It was in this way that the tabernacle with its sacrifices and priesthood was added to the law, although God, in the display of perfect omniscience which could not be taken unawares, had instructed Moses as to it before the sin of the people (Ex. xxv.—xxxi.) And here faith found its provision, and a convicted conscience its pledged forgiveness. These at least, it would be thought, would be prized and welcomed in view of the constant failure which the vigilance of the law detected and condemned. How surpassingly strange, then, that these should have fallen into such utter disuse as God by the mouth of Amos declares they did (v. 25—27). "Have ye offered Me sacrifici-

ces and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of Moloch and Chiun, your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves." Thus even Moloch's dreadful altar was preferred to God's and the gracious provisions of *His* tabernacle dropped into a forgetfulness hard to realize. The failure of the dispensation was already fixed: "Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord."

Incredible almost would this neglect indeed seem, did not the Word of God itself announce it. And there are testimonies in the history itself which show in a still more striking way the extent of it. Especially is the statement of the book of Joshua (v. 2-7) remarkable as showing the complete breach of the covenant with Jehovah on the part of the people. Nothing was more fundamental to this than the ordinance of circumcision. The uncircumcised man-child was to be cut off from his people (Gen. xvii. 14); and none such could eat of the passover at all (Ex. xii. 48.) Either these laws must have been disregarded or the passover must have been almost entirely omitted toward the close of the wilderness journey, when no one under forty could have been circumcised at all. For the express statement is, "All the people that came out of Egypt that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt. Now all the people that came out were circumcised; but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they come out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised." How the patience of the Lord with the people is manifest! but how evident that priesthood and Levitical service must almost have come to an end? If these, as all other of the things that happened to Israel, happened unto them for types (1 Cor. x. 11), what admonition would this convey to us!

Moses, even, dies in the land of Moab for his sin; and of all that came as men out of the land of Egypt, Joshua and Caleb alone remained. An entire new generation enter into the land of Canaan, and here a new order of things begins.

For, let us notice, with all the patient goodness manifested toward the people, and which God had declared when He took them up at Sinai the second time, He does not simply continue the trial of them in one form throughout. On the contrary, He varies it in many ways. This, on the one hand, makes it a more perfect trial, as is plain; on the other, it repeats again and again the admonition of a watchful holiness which never lapsed into indifference, while mercy warned of the time of long-suffering, however slowly, still surely running out. As we, upon whom the ends of the ages have come, look back upon them, it is blessed to see how, in the various forms of this trial, God presents to us in changing aspects typically His one unchanging theme,—Christ as the justification of His long-suffering patience as of His fullest grace. This, faith might even in those days in measure see, though not in the detailed glories in which we see it. For the voice of prophecy, even in the law itself, spoke of a Prophet to be raised up, a High-Priest of good things to come,—yea, a priestly King greater than Abraham, in whom Levi had once paid tithes. And we can rejoice in thinking how God thus could linger over the picture of Him to whom when at last come He would give out-spoken witness: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight.”

In the land, then, as I have said, a new order of things begins. Moses had been in the wilderness the representative of the Lord, the channel of the divine communications. In the land, Joshua stands before Eleazar the priest, and the priest it is who communicates to him the

word of the Lord. He who is confessedly the leader of the people, and standing in Moses' place, is nevertheless not in the same place of nearness with God. Departure has brought in distance, while intercession based on sacrifice is that on which all depends. The link between God and the people is now the priesthood.

Before they pass over Jordan, all their wilderness history is rehearsed to them, that it may be practical wisdom for their new position, and then they are to take possession of the land which God had promised to Abraham; although not yet do they possess it according to the terms of the covenant with their fathers. They are on the footing of law, and must make good their title to the land by actual victory over the inhabitants of it. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses." (Josh. i. 3.) Thus the extent of the land, as the Lord describes it to them, they never actually acquire. Only in David and Solomon's time does their *dominion* extend to the Euphrates, the Abrahamic boundary, while they never properly *possess* thus far; Philistines, Phœnicians, Hittites, confine them in fact within much narrower limits. Two and a half tribes they leave on the other side of Jordan, defeated by their own success; just as in Christian times the church has gained by its victories a possession the wrong side of death.

In the land, the Lord delivers their enemies into their hands. But failure is everywhere apparent. The sin of Achan, the defeat at Ai, the snare of Gibeon, follow one another in quick succession. They do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, but make gain of their sin by holding them as tributaries, then go after their gods, as the Lord had warned them, and are soon captives in the hands of those they had conquered.

If Gilgal characterizes the book of Joshua, and there



the reproach of Egypt—of their slavery there—is rolled away, Bochim (weeping) characterizes the book of Judges, where they return to a more shameful one. The history shows now their broken unity, the inroad of foreign enemies, the uprising of domestic ones. Again and again they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivers them out of their distress. A judge is raised up, and is the instrument of their deliverance; and as long as he judges, maintaining the authority and holiness of God among the people, the deliverance lasts. But their weakness (which is only their willfulness,) is fully apparent: the judge dies, and once more they wander; there is a new captivity, followed at length (because the mercy of God does not forsake them,) by a new deliverance.

These revivals become, however, more and more feeble and less decisive. At last, the priesthood itself fails utterly, and that when the judge and high-priest are one. Eli's sons make themselves vile, and he restrains them not. The Lord swears that this iniquity shall not be purged with sacrifice and offering forever. And though He raise up for Himself a faithful priest, as He declares, and will build him a sure house, yet the order is again changed: Joshua stood before Eleazar, but now the priest is to walk before God's anointed (1 Sam. ii. 35; iii. 14).

In the meanwhile, ruin is complete. The Philistines come up against Israel, and smite them; they superstitiously send for the ark of God to deliver them—the ark of the covenant so often broken! They are again smitten, Hophni and Phinehas slain, the ark is taken; Eli falls backward at the news and breaks His neck, and Phinehas' wife, expiring, gives to her son a name expressive of the people's terrible condition. "And she named the child 'Ichabod,' saying, 'The glory is departed from

Israel.'” The priesthood, as the link between God and Israel, had come to its final end.

Twenty years pass, and all the house of Israel are found lamenting after the Lord. The ark had not indeed remained long in the Philistines' hand, but had wrought its own deliverance apart from the people. It had returned, but not to Shiloh, its former abode, nor to the tabernacle, no more to receive it. Beth-shemesh—a city of priests—to which it had first come, smitten for its irreverence, had had to yield it up to Kirjath-jearim, where it remained in retirement, kept by Eleazar “in the fields of the wood” (Ps. cxxxii. 6) until David brought it out (2 Sam. vi. 2). All this time was marked thus as a time of disorder and disturbed relation between God and Israel.

This gap of time between Eli and David is bridged by the prophet Samuel, the real link between God and the people even during the reign of Saul. The prominence of the prophets was always a sign of disorder and decline among the people. It was an extraordinary agency, with no provision for succession or permanence at all; in this case, from the first, a note of preparation for the king (1 Sam. ii. 10), whom at last it anoints and makes way for.

Before the priesthood is set aside, Samuel is established as the prophet of the Lord; but through the unbelief of the people, twenty years pass, after the return of the ark, before the value of God's gift is realized. Then Israel gather for confession and prayer to God at Mizpeh, and Samuel judges them there. This brings up the Philistines; but the battle is now the Lord's, and Israel has but to pursue a smitten foe. The Philistine yoke is broken, and Samuel becomes the judge of Israel. We see the prophet here, as never before under the law, building his altars and offering to the Lord, the priesthood quite unrecognized.

But Samuel grows old, and his sons, whom he has

associated with himself in the judgeship, walk not in his ways. The enemies of Israel begin again to gather strength. The unbelief of the people becomes manifest. They desire a king, explicitly to be like the nations, from whom God had separated them. Now, He intended they should have a king. Moses had spoken of it, anticipating indeed their desire as expressed here (Deut. xvii. 14-20). Hannah had spoken of God's king to whom He would give strength. And to Eli, God had told, by His prophet, of His anointed one, before whom the faithful priest should walk (1 Sam. ii. 35). Self-will might here find its excuse, but nothing more. In fact, as they are forewarned by God through Samuel, the rule of a king among them, while it would bring them into a bondage hitherto unknown, would be the sign of God being further removed from them—another step downward in the long descent they had been making. It does not affect this that under David and Solomon they were in fact freed from their enemies, and attained a worldly eminence such as they had not enjoyed till then. The characters of the kingdom as Samuel depicts them were none the less fully illustrated in these reigns; and the more the grandeur of the monarchy, the more even might the yoke press, the more the distance between king and subject. But above all, God Himself, rejected as their King, dealt now with the people, not on the old familiar terms, but at a distance, through the king himself. Let David be rejected, and the show-bread, even if just sanctified, is but common bread (1 Sam. xxi. 5).\*

That the king was here also the shadow of the King of God's kingdom in a coming day is true, but neither does it alter the significance of the fact literally. Faith here

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\* The passage is otherwise rendered in the Revised Version, and by other translators. The common version is, however, justifiable, and I believe to be preferred, as see the Lord's use of this incident in connection with the Sabbath and His own rejection (Matt. xii.)

as elsewhere may find tokens of the coming day, and see also the justification of God's long-suffering then. None the less the links between God and His people were more and more being strained. And if this last endured longest of all, it was surely because it *was* the last: there was no other, and God's patience lingered.

Saul, the first king, though chosen by God, is given them as one after their own heart, as his name providentially signifies,—“the Asked.” After being fully tested, he is set aside for the man after God's heart, David. And Saul, though the anointed of the Lord, is never recognized as the true link between the people and God. He is throughout dependent upon Samuel, who, as he anoints him to his office, announces also his rejection, and before his own death anoints his successor.

David is thus the first king fully owned,—with Solomon, the double type of Christ, the Sufferer-Conqueror and the Prince of Peace. He brings the ark to Jerusalem, appoints the courses of the priests and the service of the Lord's house, for which he provides abundantly the material, and receives the pattern. His kingdom is greatly extended and his enemies are subdued, and Solomon builds and consecrates the house, with “neither adversary nor evil occurrent.”

But “man being in honor abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish.” And all this glory is like the flower of grass; it has scarcely blossomed before it begins to fade. The first love passes, and there is no indistinct threatening that the candlestick is under sentence to be removed. Solomon loves many strange women, and his heart is drawn after their idols. Adversaries are stirred up against him. He passes away, and a sudden rent tears ten out of the twelve tribes out of the hand of his son; and in the fifth year only of his reign, Shishak sweeps down upon and spoils Jerusalem and the house of

the Lord. Henceforth, in Israel, with the worship of the golden calves, it is one monotonous story of evil ever growing worse; in Judah, the descent stopped, indeed, again and again, by the intervention of divine grace acting in an Asa, a Jehoshaphat, a Hezekiah, a Josiah, but still with no recovery really. Blow after blow falls upon them; prophet after prophet warns and threatens in vain: at last, disintegration fully begins. The ten tribes are carried captive into Assyria; Judah, spared for a hundred and thirty years longer, is at last carried into Babylon.

The glory has before this departed from the temple, which the king of Babylon plunders and destroys. The people are now (though not forever) disowned of God. The legal *covenant*, in fact, is over, although the dispensation of law cannot be said to have ceased. "The law and the prophets were until John." But the history of the people as such is closed, although a feeble remnant return from Babylon. But they return only to await in Messiah their Deliverer, amid the tokens of the ruin in which they have involved themselves. The glory does not return. The ark of the covenant, Jehovah's throne in the midst, is gone from their new temple. The Urim and Thummim, by which the Lord had communicated regularly with them in the past, is also gone. Prophets His mercy raises up to them for a brief time, and every one of them is a witness that the moral and spiritual condition is unchanged. This voice soon passes. The history of the favored people ends in blank and total, most significant silence. The throne of the earth is in the hands of the Gentiles. Israel's dominion is passed away; and those "times of the Gentiles" have begun in which we still are, and which continue until the kingdom of the Son of Man is introduced by His coming in the clouds of heaven.

But the significance of this change we must consider more at length.

## THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

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**T**HE "times of the Gentiles" is the Lord's own expression for the whole period of their divinely appointed supremacy over Israel (Luke xxi. 24). It is the period, therefore, of Israel's rejection nationally, and begins with Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the temple and city when Judah was carried away captive into Babylon, and ends with their deliverance from the assembled nations by the coming of the Lord from heaven (Zech. xiv. 3, 4, 9).

It is the time of the four Gentile empires seen in the visions of Daniel and the Gentile king, with a noteworthy exception which we find in the book of Revelation, that there is a time in which the last empire "is not" (xvii. 8), before its final appearance and complete overthrow. In this gap we stand, for none of the great world-empires exist, and all the political effort of the present is to prevent any possibility of the revival of such a thing. Napoleon's history is a warning of how easily God can break through these human counsels, and bring about what He has ordained.

For the history of the times of the Gentiles we are dependent largely upon prophecy, even though much of this be now historical fact. But the history of the Old Testament almost ceases with the subversion of the kingdom of Judah, and no mere human hand can supply the deficiency. It is God's view of things we are seeking, and "the Lord seeth not as man seeth." Thus man's history would be likely by itself to lead us only astray from the divine view, which alone has any real significance. We

should hold fast, then, to prophetic scripture as to our sure guide through the mazes of human history.

But prophecy, while it throws light upon the darkness of the present, hastens ever onward to the accomplishment of God's counsels in the time before us, and indeed mainly in revealing this declares the present to us. The end is the time of manifestation, for the tree is known by its fruit. We misjudge constantly by anticipating this, mistaking the true harvest-time which it is the glory of Him who knows the end from the beginning to make certainly known.

This will prepare us for a character of prophecy to miss which will leave us in continual perplexity. All prophecy connects with the end, and by this means with every other prophecy. None is its own interpreter, as that passage in the second of Peter, so commonly perverted, really means.\* And why? "For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It is all one plan, one counsel. To separate one part from the rest would be to make a rent in a seamless robe. Every seeming by-path connects at any rate with some road that ends not, save in the city of the Great King. And as we approach this, the highway widens, the view lengthens, road after road comes in and pours its contribution into the swelling stream that hastens onward whither all ends—at the feet of the King Eternal.

It is to prophecy that we mainly turn, then, and for our present purpose especially to Daniel and its complement, the book of Revelation. And the fact that the history is at the present time prophetic has a significance which we must now consider.

With Israel in the Old Testament man's history mor-

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\* "No prophecy of Scripture is of *separate*"—literally, "its own"—"interpretation."

ally ends. The law has given its judgment as to him. "There is none righteous,—no, not one" is the verdict it renders. If true of the favored nation, true then of all, for "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."

There is indeed another trial to be made here, but for which we must pass on to the pages of the New Testament. Will he not, now convicted and exposed, be ready for grace when it is offered him? Will not the prisoners of hope turn to the stronghold,—to the Mighty One on whom God has laid help? The answer to this is but the cross; and in this the full and final judgment of the world is found. In the meanwhile, the law has already, and to leave him thus shut up to grace, given its verdict. Man's history closes with Israel's ruin. The *record* closes. God may predict the future of him with whom He has now parted company; *but He has parted company.*

It was the throne of the Lord upon which Solomon had sat (1 Chron. xxix. 23), and the ark of the "God of all the earth" had long before passed through the dried-up Jordan to the place of His rest. But now the glory of God had passed from the mercy-seat, and Ezekiel had seen its lingering sorrowful departure from the city (Ezek. xi. 23); and now God's title is, in the books which speak of this time, the "God of heaven" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 23; Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel). The *God of heaven* gives Nebuchadnezzar the kingdoms of the earth, and the Gentile kingdom widens out soon into an empire such as never had been seen in Israel. Nebuchadnezzar is thus a king of kings,—a petty image again of Him who will be *the* "King of kings and Lord of lords;" somewhat also in the absolute authority possessed by him. But there the resemblance ends. How different the character of the one who possesses this power, and how rapid the degeneration of it!



To him whom God had raised up He appears, that he may know the hand that has raised him up; making him debtor too for the interpretation of his dream to one of the scanty remnant of the people he had overthrown, that he may learn the vanity of his false gods in the presence of Him to whom they are opposed. This dream makes him aware of the fact that He who had placed can displace, and of the continual degradation of power in the kingdoms which succeed his own until at last they all together come to an end, smitten by a kingdom which becomes really world-wide, and which stands forever. About this final kingdom little is said; only that it is of no human shaping, but set up in a peculiar way by the God of heaven Himself, that it destroys all others, and abides. It is the vanity and corruptibility of all mere earthly power that is insisted on: a homily against pride and independence of heart read to one who is in the greatest need of it.

In this view of the kingdoms, the debasing of material shows the decay of power in the successive forms. The Babylonian was the head of gold, owing no allegiance save to God Himself. In the Persian—the silver,—the law when made, although the king might make it, could not be altered even by himself. The kingdom of Alexander—the “brazen-tunicked Greeks”—had risen on the ruins of a pure democracy, of which it retained many elements; while Rome, which succeeded this, though strong as iron, was in principle entirely such, the power of the emperors being gained by their assuming to themselves a number of democratic offices. Finally, in the latter days of the divided empire, the inroads of barbarian nations mixed the iron with clay. There was no real cohesion, and the heterogeneous elements falling apart, the kingdoms of Europe arose out of this division. But this was not the smiting of the image with the stone.

This belongs to a still future time, as we shall see, if the Lord will, as we proceed.

The next four chapters of Daniel show, step by step, the character which these world-powers assume, and are the preface to the seventh chapter, in which they are viewed prophetically in their history as before God, the history in which these features are manifested. The third chapter shows the assumption of control over the conscience, which has characterized man's rule wherever he has had the necessary power. Nebuchadnezzar's image is marked as that which *he has set up*. To refuse to worship in the prescribed way is rebellion, therefore, against himself. How invariably, we may say, has the civil power assumed to be the religious also, wherever it could. Liberty of conscience—precious as the boon is,—is in our days the sign of the decay of absolute authority, and it will not last, but give way finally to the worst form of spiritual despotism which the world has ever seen. But this, as in the case before us, surely leads into opposition to God in the persecution of His people. Others may escape by submission, but not they; although the Son of God is with them in the furnace.

The fourth chapter is the descent of the kingdoms from what has at least the form of a man, as in the second chapter, to the beast-form in which they are seen in the seventh. It is the pride of power which forgets God, which levels man with the beast that has none. Nebuchadnezzar claims the great city over which he rules as built by his own power and for his own glory. In the same hour he is driven to the beasts, until he has learnt that the "Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." Then he is restored, but the lesson remains, not, alas! to avert the doom of the Gentile empires, but as a note of warning for him who has the secret of the Lord.

The fifth chapter shows us the moral declension still progressing unchecked. Belshazzar openly lifts himself up against the Lord of heaven, exalting above Him the senseless idols of silver and gold; and fingers of door come forth and write his sentence before his eyes.

Thus the Babylonian empire runs its course, and is followed by the Persian; but the Persian we see also, in the next chapter, brought in to complete the terrible picture of decline, ending in complete apostasy. The king exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, making a decree that for thirty days no petition is to be asked of any god or man except himself. That Darius himself is not the real author of this decree, and is personally very different from what it would imply, does not alter the significance of this terrible act,—the presage of that last antichristian blasphemy for which the Gentile powers come to an end, while Israel, like Daniel, is delivered from the paw of the lion.

The seventh chapter now gives these empires, seen in the prophetic vision, as four wild beasts. But attention is concentrated upon the last, and that, too, as seen at the time of the end. It has already its ten horns, corresponding to the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image, and then there arises another little horn, on account of whose blasphemous words, the beast is destroyed, and his body given to the burning flame. But the kingdom now becomes His in whom meet the characters at once of the Son of Man and of the Ancient of days; and "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, that shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Thus when Israel's course is ended for the present in utter ruin, God takes up the Gentiles, (not as yet to reveal Himself in Christ to them—that is another and totally different thing, as will, I trust, in its due place appear,—but) to give them their trial also. This will seem strange

and contradictory at first sight, for has it not been just said that with Israel in the Old Testament man's history morally ends? That is surely true also. In all this history of the Gentiles, there is no fresh stirring of that question. No law, no moral code, is given to them. No revelations at all are made, save only Nebuchadnezzar's vision; although Cyrus speaks of a charge which God had given to him to build Him a house in Jerusalem. This he might readily have found in Isaiah's prophecy (chap. xlv. 28), and probably was shown it there. At any rate, the founders of the first two empires were made perfectly aware from whom it was they had received their greatness. Here all personal communication ends. God does not bring them nigh, as He had brought Israel. He has significantly left the earth, putting it afresh, in the most decisive way since Noah's time, into man's hand, but with scarcely a word as to its government. There was His written Word, indeed, if they had heart for it; for ignorant He took care, as we see in Cyrus, that they should not be. And there He leaves it.

What, then, can be the new test when God takes up the Gentiles? He has not left us without plain intimation as to this, and it must be our endeavor now to trace it out.

Two reasons the Word of God gives for the delay of Christ's coming. For why should God delay in what was nearest to His heart? The need of the discovery of man's need fully is the reason assigned. "When we were yet without strength, *in due time* Christ died for the ungodly." So there was a "due time;" and to what this has reference is plain from the apostle's statement. It refers to the trial of man morally in Israel under God's righteous law. This had been proved to have no help for man. Where it had found him, there it had left him—ungodly, and without strength. He was shut up to Christ, then; there was no hope but in Christ.

In 1 Corinthians, the apostle gives us another side of this delay. The *Jew* had had the law,—true; but what about the Gentile? Had God altogether left him out? The book of Daniel, if nothing else, would prove the contrary. Even God's silence, moreover, must have its significance. There must be a meaning even in "the times of ignorance" which "God winked at." And so the apostle declares. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of the preaching"—not the manner, but the matter—"to save them that believe. For the Jews, require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom." But "hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Yes, wisdom as well as righteousness, for Gentile and for Jew alike, are found in Christ: "who is made unto us wisdom from God, righteousness as well as sanctification and redemption:" "that *no* flesh should glory in His presence," but that "he that glorieth should glory in the Lord."

Here, then, is the secret of the matter. The question of man's wisdom was for him an excessively grave one. Where had he got it? Alas! a "tree to be desired to make one wise" was the bait which Satan held up before the woman, and by which our first parents were seduced and fell. "Ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil," says the tempter. "The man is become as one of Us," says the Lord God, "to know good and evil." What, then, is the value of the wisdom he has attained? Taught of necessity, into which he has now got, he has "sought out many inventions." The apron of fig-leaves was only the first of a long line which is not ended with the steam-engine and the telegraph; and all, if it be considered, are but inventions to cover his nakedness, or like John Bunyan's "wholesome instructions," of which cart-load after cart-load the slough of Despond swallowed up, and was nowise bettered after all.

What blanks man's wisdom? We shall find it in the Old-Testament "preacher", clothed in sackcloth though a king. For God has given us, as I have elsewhere said, side by side, in two Old-Testament books, the two questions we are looking at. A divinely pronounced *best* man, Job, is the preacher of repentance: a divinely pronounced *wisest* man, Solomon, is the preacher of vanity. Yes, the vanity of wisdom, if it be only human, more than all. For the beast has no regrets and no sad anticipations; finds his place in a world of change, enjoying the present, and never thinking of the future. But man, if he does not *know*, anticipates and dreads; cannot bear his everyday burden and lie down in quiet. Death levels all; and what beyond death? Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward? Yet the heart says, "God judgeth the righteous and the wicked." Here we stop, the one thing certain our ignorance, with eternity in the heart and no sure outlook beyond time,—except God give it. Human wisdom fails: we must await, says one of the wisest of the Greeks, God's revelation.

But "vain man will be wise, though he be born a wild ass's colt." Even yet he prefers a guess to the truth,—the first being his own, the latter God's.

It is strange and significant, in that blessed Word where all is significant, that in these two books of Job and Ecclesiastes, the Jew takes up the Gentile question, the Gentile Job takes up the Jew's. Thus the same truths are applied to all the world.

Notice, too, that Solomon is not only the wisest of men, but the richest and most powerful. Man's wisdom needs plenty of material to work with. God gives him all he can desire. When He takes up the Gentile, He gives him just the same things. The Gentile becomes the possessor of the world, and the controller of it. But he only forfeits his power and loses it, runs through the

portion of goods that falleth to him, and leaves his crown to his successor. The Babylonian leaves and the Persian enters; the Persian thrusts at the Greek, and falls by a back-thrust; the Greek power breaks into fragments, and is devoured piecemeal by the Roman. When Christ comes, after the predicted sixty-two weeks of silent waiting (Dan. ix. 26), the Roman is already issuing his mandate that all the world shall be registered, although he does not know that God is making him move all the machinery of his empire to bring a Jewish woman to Bethlehem, that her child may be born there, and then for years will stop the census, which is not taken up again till Cyrenius is governor of Syria. So must the world wait after all upon Christ.

And He comes, He lives among men, He dies, He ascends to heaven, and the Holy Ghost is sent down at Pentecost. The Church is formed, and the world is dropped. Since that time, the world has had no history. Even prophecy in the meantime is silent. The empires are for God already gone, although their history yet for a space will be taken up again after the Church is gone from earth, and when the harvest of the world is come.

#### THE NEW BEGINNING.

The voice of Old-Testament prophecy does not cease without predicting the time of the coming of the Deliverer, in whom now plainly is man's only hope. The seventy weeks of Daniel, to which we shall have to return hereafter to consider them more fully, foretell this as to take place sixty-nine weeks (of years—483 years) after Nehemiah's commission to restore and to build Jerusalem. This plainly reaches to the time of Christ's public ministry, after which the prophecy declares He would be "cut off." Before this, the Gentile empires have already reached their fourth or final form; the Jew-

ish Maccabean revival has shown itself to be but the flash of an expiring flame; politically, the people lie helplessly under the foot of the oppressor, while the law is over-weighted by human observances, in the vain attempt to patch with new cloth their rags of legal righteousness.

It is at this time, when utter failure and hopeless ruin are every-where manifested, that we reach a new beginning,—the beginning of what is not susceptible of failure or decay at all. A new, a second Man,—since Adam, there had been no second,—appears upon the scene, to be the “last Adam” of a new creation, “the Beginning of” what God can identify as His thought from the first —“the creation of God.”

Man, true and perfect Man, is here, holy and righteous, not merely innocent; perfect in obedience in the scene of the first man’s failure—not in a garden, but in a wilderness, which sin has made the world. To man at first, the trial had been made as light as possible: to the Second Man, everything that could make the trial full and searching to the utmost was ordained. With miraculous power freely used in behalf of others, He never uses it to minister to His own need, or to take Himself out of the condition of absolute dependence upon God, which is the necessity of the creature. “Tempted in all things like as we are, sin apart” (Heb. iv. 15, *Gr.*), He not merely walks by faith, as the people of God in all ages have done, but is “the Leader and Perfecter of faith.” (chap. xii. 2, *Gr.*) One who fills the whole possibility of such a life in His own person. Moreover, as He lives not in a scene like the first paradise, where all ministers to Him, so He does not walk as One who is served, but as One who serves. The law of His life is that of sacrifice. He closes it with laying down of Himself what none could take from Him. His one principle throughout is, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.”



Such, then, as He is, He is no product of His times—no outgrowth of preceding generations. Light does not develop out of darkness, nor life out of death. And in Him the Eternal Life is manifest; not that He *has* it merely, struggling, as in His people, with many discordances; He *is* it,—the Eternal Life itself.

But this brings us where to know is to worship. It is God who is come down to us. He who visited man's abode in goodness at the beginning, to prepare it for him, has now visited it after another fashion; and "we beheld His glory," says the apostle, "the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Here, indeed, is a new beginning, and who shall tell the blessedness of it? God, always Light, is now in the light. Exactly when it is fully proved that man can never find his way into the presence of God, His glory is unveiled, and in grace, not in judgment. Judaism is plainly over. God's grace can never be manifested side by side with law. The hopelessness of all attempt to develop anything out of man for God has been made apparent. And the light now come into the world, although not come to condemn the world, but for its salvation, yet only confirms the solemn fact. God's own Son, come in grace, awakes man's heart only to enmity and rejection of Him. It is not mere ignorance: "They have both *seen* and hated both Me and My Father."

He comes with His hands filled with the blessing which He has to communicate. With Him, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Let them own but to what palpably their sins had brought them, and He was there on God's part with remission of their sins. The power ready to banish from among them the effects of sin already showed itself. Sickness removed, Satan's power destroyed, death itself made to give way at His word, what more evident than that in Him God was reconciling the world unto

Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them? Paradise was once more opening the way to the tree of life, where no flaming sword forbad men's access. Would not the blessing under their eyes prevent their refusing Him who thus by every tie of interest would bind them to Himself? So one might surely reason. Alas! such is man's enmity to God that not even blessing will win him to receive Him in whom alone it can be found. "For my love, they are my adversaries: . . . they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love." Of this the cross is the fullest proof. They can taunt Him there with that good itself—"He saved others, Himself He cannot save."

Jew and Gentile have their part in this. It is the commencement of that grand conspiracy which the second psalm predicts, and it ends not until the Lord asks and obtains the world for His inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. And how then must He make good His claim? "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." This is of course when He comes again; and the opposition, although at times more covert, only ceases then. "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool." Still we know He sits there; and when He actually comes forth (as Rev. xix. depicts it), it will be when the enmity of the world has blazed out again most fiercely, and there is no concealment of it any longer.

The cross, then, is the expression, on the one side, of the world's hatred: "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." Thus it is the judgment of the world—a judgment pronounced, but waiting execution. On the other hand, it is the expression of God's over-abounding grace—a grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Whatever man's enmity, then, this grace must find utterance—must be published

and have its proclamation in the world. The sweet savor of Christ's work must come abroad. The fruits of it must be gathered and garnered. This pause of blessing is Christianity.

Christ, then, as come to Israel, their Messiah, is (in the language of Daniel's prophecy) "cut off, and has nothing." Israel is not gathered. Three years He comes looking for fruit upon that fig-tree, whose leaves give a deceptive promise of fruit that is not found. But man's condition is apparent, and "without shedding of blood is no remission." "The Son of Man must be lifted up." His followers in Israel must see their Jewish hopes expire in His death, and be "begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," now "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved *in heaven*."

Judaism must give place to the "precious faith" of Christianity. The risen Lord ascends to heaven, receives from the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost (Acts ii. 33), Pentecost beholds His coming, and the kingdom of God begins upon earth.

Yet Israel is not at once set aside; on the contrary, "to the Jew first" the message of grace is proclaimed. Nor only individually, but nationally also. The three years of Christ's ministry have found no fruit upon the barren fig-tree; still, the words are uttered, "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that, thou shalt cut it down." So, at the cross, the Lord intercedes, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and Peter proclaims to them the acceptance of that prayer: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. . . . Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of

the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you; whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (Acts iii. 17-21, *Gr.*)

National repentance would even then avail to bring Christ back from heaven, and to bring in the glories of His reign on earth, as the Old-Testament prophets had pictured it. Alas! there was no repentance. Numbers indeed believed, but the nation remained what it remains to this day—rejecters of the Prince of Life. They who had said that if they had lived in their father's days, they would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets, proved themselves, as the Lord had predicted, the children of those who killed the prophets, by persecuting, even to death, the new prophets God had raised up. Stephen, arraigned before their tribunal, sums up their guilt, proving from their history how they had always resisted the Holy Ghost, rejecting the divinely raised up deliverers sent to them; and they consummate their sin by stoning him, and sending him, as it were, a messenger after Christ, to say, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

Thus the time given for repentance ends. Persecution scatters the saints from Jerusalem, and they go everywhere preaching the Word. Philip goes down to Samaria, and evangelizes it. Then the Ethiopian eunuch carries away his new-found blessing. Then Saul, the incarnation of Jewish enmity, is converted to be the apostle to the Gentiles; the first of them, however, are received by the apostle of the circumcision—Peter himself. Antioch soon after becomes the new centre of Gentile evangelization, and from thence Paul and Barnabas go forth to their mission among the heathen round.

Jerusalem yet remains, however, and converts even

multiply there greatly; but the nation is unceasingly hostile. Nor only so: the zeal for the law, which disfigures Jewish Christianity, and which warps even Peter himself and Barnabas (Gal. ii.), after it has been decided that it must not be imposed as a yoke on Gentile converts (Acts xv.), persuades even the great apostle of the Gentiles to conduct which brings the fury of a Jewish mob upon him, and shuts him up in a Roman prison. From Italy he writes to warn the Christians to leave the camp of Judaism altogether. Finally, according to the Lord's prophecy, Jerusalem is destroyed, and the temple-worship of necessity wholly ceases.

Alas! that still remains which becomes a subtle infection for the new and spreading faith. This we shall see, if the Lord will, as we proceed; but first, we must look at this new faith itself, and ask ourselves, (alas! in the nineteenth century of its existence, not a needless question,) What is Christianity?

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## CHRISTIANITY

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WHAT, then, is Christianity? How many answers would be given in the present day to such a question! But the variety of discordant answers assures us of this, which of itself is a lesson needing, however painful, to be laid to heart, that as a dispensation—not it has failed, but—men have failed under it, as they always have. The history of the Church which its historians give us is something widely different from a development of what is Christianity, if we take Scripture for it. The grain of mustard-seed has grown into a tree,—true; but in this it has lost its primitive character. The malign “birds of the air” dwell in its branches, and the power that shelters them is the type of power which we see in Babylon (Dan. iv.). It is indeed Babylon the Great, alas! (Rev. xvii.) The irony of truth to-day affirms that there is a Christian *world*, and that the true Church is *invisible*.

But let us go back to Scripture for the answer to our question, What is Christianity? And this is but asking, What is the New-Testament faith? Let us first define it in its contrast with that Judaism which passed away from before it, and then add to this some other things which will be needed to give an outline of it at all complete.

In the first place, then, Judaism was part of a systematic trial of man: as Moses says, at the time of the giving of the law, “God is come to prove you.” Christianity affirms this trial over, the sentence of the law given—“none righteous, no, not one;” the cross, the judgment

of the world more fully still, "the carnal mind" as enmity against God." It thus begins in the soul as a true repentance, an acceptance of God's righteous judgment against man, the end of all hope of betterment for him, save in a new life and nature from God:—he must be born again.

Man is thus judged as to the old creation, his history is ended: God in His grace remains; and this is expressed in the Second Man, head of a new creation, in whom alone all resources are. He, too, must go down to death to lay hold upon us there, for "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." Dying, He justifies God in His sentence upon man, and becomes the way of righteous blessing for him. Rising from the dead, He is the sheaf of first-fruits in whom the after-harvest finds acceptance.

The characteristic of Judaism was an unrent veil: man at a distance from God, who dwelt in the thick darkness unapproachable, unknown. Christianity declares the veil rent in love and righteousness,—rent by the cross of Christ, and a way of access thus to God, revealed in Him.

Judaism, with its many constantly repeated offerings, could not make the conscience perfect. The law was efficacious to condemn, but not to justify; and its forgiveness, needing again and again to be renewed, spoke only of the "*forbearance* of God," gave no place of assured rest and acceptance with Him. In Christ, by one offering are perfected forever those who are sanctified; the worshiper once purged has no more conscience of sins; and the righteousness of God justifies the ungodly, who believe in Jesus.

Judaism left, therefore, the children of God confounded with the world—necessarily, as giving no full assurance to any. "I am a Father to *Israel*, and Ephraim is My

first-born," God was saying. No cry of "Abba, Father," therefore, was known—no spirit of adoption. Christianity separates its justified ones from the world, to which they no more belong, and separates them to God, to whom they belong.

Judaism, for worldly men, had a "worldly sanctuary" and "carnal ordinances"—things suited to act upon men in nature. The worship of Christianity is heavenly, spiritual, in the intelligence of faith, and needing it; the worship of those brought nigh. It is thus associated, necessarily,—as Abraham's altar with his tent,—with a stranger's and a pilgrim's place on earth, having here no continuing city, but seeking one to come.

Finally, Judaism had its separate order of priests, who alone had to do with sacred things. Priest and people were distinct; and while none could draw really nigh, the former had an outward, official nearness which the latter had not. In Christianity, people and priests are one; there is real, not merely relative nearness; and as a consequence, an overflowing of joyful testimony to those outside, for whom also, without restriction, the way is opened by grace into the presence of God.

In all this, Christianity is in contrast with Judaism, and, as a divine revelation, its necessary complement. The questions raised by the former dispensation are answered in the new one. The shadows of the one find their substance in the other. But there is an overabundance beyond this even, in the grace that has visited us. The Church is, as indwelt by the Spirit, the house of God—His habitation on earth; it is the body of Christ, His bride, the Eve of the last Adam.

In Judaism there was God's house, but of necessity the house and the people were quite distinct; in Christianity they are identified; and this is the first way in which the Church is announced, viz., as a building:



"Upon this rock I will build My Church." Peter develops it as a building of living stones—a spiritual house (1 Pet. ii. 5), and Paul as the temple of God in which the Spirit of God dwells (1 Cor. iii. 16).

That the Church is the body of Christ is Paul's doctrine only, and of this there was not even a type or figure in the Old Testament. Both these things depend upon the coming and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the fruit of Christ's work accomplished and ascension to the Father: as the Spirit of God dwells in the temple of God, so by the baptism of the Holy Ghost the body of Christ is formed (1 Cor. xii. 13).

*In the thought of God* these two things are coextensive; and as the body of the individual believer is the temple of the Spirit (1 Cor. vi. 19), so the bodies of believers are the members of Christ (v. 15). Every part of house and body is thus instinct with the glorious presence which claims and seals the whole for God. Holiness is the character of God's house as such; subjection to the Head, and mutual care among the members, the responsibility of the body; the unity of the Spirit the practical unity of the whole.

To be the bride of Christ is the *destiny* of the Church. Now espoused to Him (2 Cor. xi. 2), she is by and by to be presented by Him to Himself (Eph. v. 27); and of this the Old Testament has many types. Eve is the first and the fullest; but Rebekah, Asenath, and others fill in the blessed picture. As body and bride of Christ, the mind and heart are both provided for. For her union with her Lord the true Church waits and longs.

This, then, in the briefest way, is Christianity, the expression of the "manifold wisdom" (Eph. iii. 10) as of the "exceeding riches of the grace of God" (ii. 7). How it has fared in a world which rejected Christ is a question which must now be answered, though to answer it should

wake up in our hearts all their capacity for sorrow. Rejection and persecution by the world are indeed her natural heritage, and this fellowship with her Lord could hardly be unfriendly to her. Fiery trial has manifested, again and again, the true Church, brightening her features with her own unearthly beauty. But these have been but occasional glimpses of a record of which men's hands have written but a few pages, and which waits the day of manifestation to be made known. In general, the history of the Church has been but the history of what has usurped her name and travestied her character. Scripture itself gives us but the history of this professing Church; noting for us its departure from the truth, as He whose eyes are as a flame of fire reads it, and comforting us with its foreseen end. This, then, must be our course as well, following Scripture as our only guide and safeguard against ourselves; for the witcheries of Babylon are many, and by her sorceries have all nations been deceived.

The statements of the Word are explicit as to the failure and corruption of the Church, from which it gives no hope of recovery either, but only the promise of the Lord's return. If we go back to apostolic days, we may find in Corinth the leaven of immorality and the denial of the resurrection; in Galatia, law superseding grace; in Rome, all seeking their own, not the things of Jesus Christ (Phil. ii. 21); Ephesus by and by having lost its first love; and in the days of John's first epistle, already many antichrists (1 Jno. ii. 18). In these, too, the apostle recognizes the sign of the "last time," as Paul characterizes the "last days" by the denial of the power of godliness (2 Tim. iii. 5), and Peter by "scoffers, walking after their own lusts" (2 Pet. iii. 3). Jude tells us that already there had crept in among Christians the men of whom Enoch prophesied that the Lord was coming to execute judgment on them. While Paul again assures us that

the mystery of iniquity was already working which would work on to open apostasy and the man of sin, who was only to be consumed by the breath of the Lord's mouth, and destroyed by the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. ii., comp. Isa. xi.)

This is explicit assurance as to the close of the dispensation. Evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse (2 Tim. iii. 13), the course of christendom startlingly repeats the history of Israel in its religious features. But we have more connected and detailed account of this decline in its successive stages, and this from the lips of the Lord Himself. The parables of Matthew xiii. give us four of these; the addresses to the seven churches a large supplement to them. I do not propose to enter upon or justify the interpretation of these at this time—it has been often enough done,—but rather out of these to construct an outline which will be, if truly given, the *divine* history of the professing church.

The Word sown in men's hearts is that which establishes the kingdom upon earth: it is received by faith, not yet set up in power. From the first, therefore, there is varied success: the seed tests the quality of the soil; and here the hard-trodden ground refuses entrance, here the rock below forbids any proper root, here the thorns spring up with it and choke it. We see at once there is no universal reception of Christ, but three parts of the seed out of four become unfruitful. A more ominous thing still is here—that where there is real fruit, few bring forth in any due measure: if “some a hundredfold,” more often “some sixtyfold, some thirty.”

It is this failure in true disciples which is the secret of all that follows. Men sleep, and “*while* men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat.” Here is the introduction of what is not the Word of God at all, but the word of Satan, and the fruit of this is not hypo-

crites and backsliders merely, but heretics and false teachers. Here the devil has already a secure place in the professing church; and this evil cannot be remedied until the harvest, as the Lord declares.

In the addresses to the churches we see the root of failure in a general departure from first love, with men claiming to be apostles falsely, and Nicolaitanism (or clerisy) in fact, if not in doctrine. But both these are yet resisted. In the next step, we find, amid persecution from the world, the rise of a Jewish party, which the Lord stamps as Satan's synagogue. We see at once how every distinctive principle of the Church is in peril here. Law supplants grace, salvation is clouded, the children of God lose their known place as such, separation from the world grows shadowy and indistinct. Worship becomes necessarily formal, ritualistic, official. The heavenly people become citizens of the earth: the church the synagogue.

All this is at first the badge of a party, but it is a party which attracts to itself every element of declension, and grows rapidly and necessarily as the decline goes on. The state of the third church addressed, as of that pictured in the third parable, shows now its complete victory. The persecution, which alone for awhile has hindered this, is over; the church is firmly settled in the world. It *dwells* where Satan's throne is; the little seed has become a tree, and the birds of the air—the type of the powers of evil— *dwell* in the branches of it. Nicolaitanism (the “subjection of the laity”) is now complete—an open doctrine, and not merely a practice; and there are followers of him who loved the wages of unrighteousness, and sought to mix the separated people with the nations around in unlawful intercourse and idol-worship.

Another step, and we find, in Thyatira and the fourth parable, the “woman.” It is the professing church itself,

now taking the place of rule and authoritative teaching only to repeat the lessons of the Balaam-teachers, and to mix the leaven of evil with the pure meal of the bread of life. This is now Jezebel, the bloody persecutor of the prophets of the Lord, and for whom the Lord reserves a corresponding retribution. And now the remnant of true saints becomes more distinctly marked out and separated from her, and encouraged by the Lord's reprobation of her and the promise of His own return.

Another stage: we find the Lord has uttered His own voice in answer to the assumption of the false church, and there is a people who have received and heard. But, alas! they are already called to *remember* what they have received and heard, and to hold fast and repent. Yet it is not corruption of doctrine which characterizes them, but simply a lifeless profession. They have a name to live, but are dead,—the world but a Christian world,—with here too a remnant, not merely of living, but of *pure* living saints whom the Lord owns and commends. But the rest are but the world, and will be treated as the world: He will come as a thief upon them, and they will not know the hour. This answers, without reasonable doubt, to the state churches of the Reformation.

And now follows a solemn time, a time of peculiar blessing, a time of peculiar solemnity. There is evident revival, as we say, the word of Christ being hearkened to, the name of Christ waking fresh response in the hearts of His own, His people thus being necessarily drawn together—"Philadelphia" is "brotherly love." The word of His patience being kept shows, too, the hope of the Lord's coming in some freshness, held. All this is full of encouragement. There is, indeed, no blame at all expressed on the Lord's part, although they have but a little strength. No blame, indeed, but a *warning*, and the Lord's warnings are never without meaning—

"Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

Here, then, is the danger; here is the peculiar responsibility: here is the room for overcoming in Philadelphia also, for overcomers there are here. And now the application is plain. What have all the movements been, that have been taking place since almost the Reformation itself, in which wave after wave of blessing and revival have swept over Protestant lands, wakening renewed attention to the Word, renewed love to Christ, renewed desire for His coming, and gathering, whether professedly or not, by necessity of these, the people of God together, in separation more or less distinct from the world, which knows nothing of them? And what have been the results, again and again, of all these movements? Alas! in how brief a time has the freshness, the zeal, the simplicity, died out, and only another sect perhaps been added to the number of those before, in its main features little different from others.

All these impulses of revival, in their passing away, emphasize the impossibility of restoration and the near coming of the Lord Himself: "I come *quickly*" is now His word. Doubtless Philadelphia, in some measure at least, will go on till He comes, as Sardis, as Thyatira, as even Pergamos, go on. Plain proof of it is the assurance: "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." But the direct result of the collapse of Philadelphia movements is but Laodicea; in which the heat of Philadelphia has become mere lukewarmness, self-satisfaction, and complacency, with Christ outside: and His word is, "*I will spue thee out of My mouth.*" Upon this I do not linger: it is the rejection by the Faithful Witness of what is now but a false witness for Him on earth. It

is the long-threatened removal of the Church's candlestick. The predicted apostasy is now at hand, and the man of sin ready to be revealed. Let the Lord's voice be now heard summoning His true saints to Himself, and darkness thicker than ever before, settles down upon the scene. "Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the nations," is now fulfilled.

### THE "END OF THE AGE."

It has been already stated, at the commencement of these papers, that the expression in Matthew xiii. 39, 40, 49, and xxiv. 3, is not properly "the end of the world," as in our common version, but rather "the end [or consummation] of the age;" and this may be now found in the margin of the new revision.\* It is a change of immense importance, as it is one of absolute necessity.\* As it was itself, no doubt, the product of the belief that Christ's coming is at the end of the world, so this mistranslation has done perhaps more than anything else to sustain this.

What is this end of the age? It is the harvest-time when the wheat-field of Christendom will be reaped, the wheat gathered into the barn, and the tares gathered and burned in the fire. It was entirely natural, therefore, for those who supposed that after Christianity there could be nothing more, to suppose that the end of the age and the end of the world were one. It is strange, but true, that the expression itself shows exactly the opposite; for the truth is, that the end of the age does not refer to any Christian age at all. For us, the cross was the "con-

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\*It is well known that the true word for "world" in the physical sense is *κοσμος*, found in xiii. 38—"The field is the *world*;" while the word here is *αιων*, expressing time, not physical structure.

summation of the ages" (Heb. ix. 26, *Gk.*); and upon us, therefore, the "ends of the ages are come" (1 Cor. x. 11, *Gk.*). Nay, the apostle uses an expression which shows at once the impossibility of a Christian age when he calls *Satan* the "god of this age" (2 Cor. iv. 4, *Gk.*). The time of the display of God's heavenly purpose is not reckoned among the ages of the world. In the Old-Testament prophecy, its history has no place; it is an uncounted interval—a mere gap of time. Of this we shall have proof as we proceed.

But what, then, is this "end of the age?" If we turn to Matthew xxiv, we find the Lord's answer to the disciples' question as to it: "What is the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?" Of Christianity, it should be evident, they could know nothing; the end of the age would be for them Jewish,—the age of law, which was to give place to the age of Messiah's reign. Doubtless the end of the age connected itself for them with the destruction of the then-existing temple, of which the Lord had spoken to them. But even so, He says nothing to them of Christianity, but pictures a scene in Judea in which disciples would be found to listen to His word, still connected with a temple in Jerusalem; the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, their warning to escape from the following tribulation.

"Yes," people say, "but this is passed!" Then, has Christ come in the clouds of heaven with all His holy angels with Him, according to this prophecy? Yet this ends the short, sharp, yea unequaled tribulation of which He speaks. It is plain that this "end of the age" is future to us still, as indeed it must be if it is also (as the 13th chapter shows,) the time of the *harvest of Christendom*.

Now put these things side by side, and how complete and unexpected the harmony! *Jewish* disciples once more owned, and Jerusalem again occupying the Lord's



mind, in a day when the wheat of Christendom has been gathered into the barn, and only tares, which He does *not* own, remain for the burning! Yes, "darkness shall cover the earth, and *gross* darkness"—not the light of Christianity—"the peoples; but the Lord shall arise upon *thee*, and His glory shall be seen upon thee" (Isa. lx. 2).

Then "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place," becomes very plain and full in its significance. We shall find the first mention of it in Daniel ix. 27, in connection with the last week of those seventy *at the end of which Israel's blessing was to come*. This last week is cut off from the previous sixty-nine in a way which the knowledge of Christianity as coming in to fill up an uncounted gap of time in prophecy, alone can make intelligible. Sixty-nine weeks (of years—483 years—) pass before Messiah the Prince is there. After it, He is cut off and has nothing (v. 26, margin), and (more than forty years after the sixty-ninth week is ended,) "the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and to the end of the war desolations are determined."

Thus, if taken without a break, the seventieth week is already gone far past; yet the prophecy closes most unexpectedly with just this seventieth week: "And he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and on account of the wing of abominations shall be a desolator"—I translate literally,— "even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

Many questions might be asked here, but the abomination, on account of which there comes a desolator, is plainly "the abomination of desolation" of which the

Lord speaks, while its being "in the holy place" shows clearly how the sacrifice and oblation are caused to cease.\* Then the short time of tribulation reads in the prophecy as half a week ( $3\frac{1}{2}$  years), to the end of which the judgment continues, which suddenly comes to an end with the appearing of the Lord.

The "end of the age" is plainly nothing else than this last week of Daniel's seventy, covering the time from the removal of the heavenly saints to heaven till the time the Lord appears with them in glory. That, "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we appear with Him in glory," Colossians (iii. 4) teaches. How we come to appear with Him then, we are taught in 1 Thess. iv, which includes the dead in Christ as well as those alive and remaining till He comes. That Christians go forth to meet the Bridegroom on His way to earth is told us in the parable of the virgins in Matt. xxv. But we need the putting together of such scriptures, as we have had before us, to see that any such interval occurs between our being caught up to meet Him and our appearing with Him as that which now is plain. When seen, it harmonizes all the scriptures, and throws a flood of light upon the whole.

Thus, if we go on in Revelation past those warning words to Laodicea in which we have already seen the judgment of the professing church, we reach at once, in chap. iv. and v, a heavenly scene. The apostle by a trumpet-voice is called up there: and there he sees, upon thrones around the throne of God, a company of elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and crowned with golden crowns. From these, prostrate before the Lamb, we soon hear the song of redemption, the angels worshipping in an outer circle.

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\*The connection is made quite plain by chap. xi. 31—"They shall pollute the sanctuary, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and place the abomination that maketh desolate."

The throne itself is a throne of judgment: thunders and lightnings proceed from it; but around it is the bow of promise, the token of God's covenant with the earth, for the earth is coming into remembrance before Him. The Lamb who takes the book and looses its seven seals is also now heralded as the "Lion of the tribe of Judah"—King of the Jews. With the blessing of the earth, Israel's blessing is necessarily connected.

After this, we look down upon earth, to find, before the seventh seal is broken, a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed of all the tribes of Israel, and then a multitude of Gentiles who have come out of the *great tribulation*. The years of this great tribulation we find numbered variously afterward: "time, times, and a half," "forty and two months," "a thousand, two hundred and three-score days"—all give its measure as that of the *last half week of Daniel*.

These harmonies in the book of God are a sure witness for the truth of this interpretation; and by it we see that the end of the age is the harvest of the world in every phase. Israel, the Gentiles, the professing church, alike come up for judgment in it. And it is this which gives it much of the importance which attaches to it in Scripture. People are slow to believe that two chapters of Revelation can suffice for eighteen centuries or more of Christianity, and fourteen more be required for seven years of a short closing period. But it is in this short period that we find the ripe result of all that preceded. And here are for us lessons, which it is true we have little fathomed or even cared to fathom, but which none the less bear witness to the goodness and wisdom of God in furnishing us with the true end of all which is about us. Would that fellowship with Him were more prized by us! Not only would our feet be kept out of a thousand snares, but what would it be to realize as to everything, the mind

of the Holy One! May we seek and find it more from day to day!

But beside the end of man's ways, we find also the ways of God, at a time when He is not merely showing long-suffering patience, but actively moving to accomplish His blessed purposes. Here the converging lines of prophecy unite after a manner which tells of God's interest, at least, in what for man may have little. We must in this way study prophecy to find its proper end. Prediction has a moral purpose for us. It is not given merely that we may be able to say, with a wisdom beyond the wise man's, what shall be after us upon the earth, but that in this we may find, as in all other scriptures, sanctification by the truth.

We can here but look in the briefest way at some of the features of this time of the end, as prophecy develops them. We have seen the crisis of trouble for the Jews, and their deliverance. The agents in the former we may now look at. And, first, who is it who confirms a covenant with many [of the Jews] at the beginning of the seventieth week? Most commentators, viewing the seventy weeks as an unbroken period, have considered it to be Messiah Himself; and this is favored by the common translation, which gives "*the* covenant," as if it were the divine one so often spoken of in the after chapters. Of course, no one but a divine Person could do this, and so it passes, among most, without question. But the real translation is "*a* covenant;" and if he who makes it, makes it void, as we have seen in what directly follows this, it is clear that Messiah cannot be the maker of it.

The natural person to think of is the one mentioned in the verse previous,—“the prince that shall come;” but he, again, has been confounded with Titus. “The *people* of the prince that shall come” does not, however, necessitate the thought that he comes with the people, nor is there

any reason apparent in the prophecy, for marking Titus with this special emphasis. The *people* who destroyed Jerusalem were, we know, the Romans; but if we did not know, it would be surely the question, interpreting scripture by scripture, Is there any prince to come sufficiently marked by Daniel elsewhere to be spoken of in this way, and who could fulfill the further statements of the following verse?

We may put it more distinctly thus: Does Daniel speak anywhere of a great Roman prince who shall arise at the time of the end, and be in connection with and hostile to the Jews at that time? This question is very readily answered: *Daniel has already spoken of this very person.*

The fourth beast of the seventh chapter is allowed by almost all commentators to be the Roman empire, and the angel who interprets the vision to Daniel speaks thus of its last king: "And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak *great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High*, and think to change times and *the law*;\* and they shall be given into his hand until *a time and times and the dividing of a time*. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end."

Here, surely, is the "prince that shall come," in opposition to God and to His people, his changing of Israel's law, the very time of his power, (the last half week of the seventy,) and destroyed by the coming of the Lord. Who can doubt the identity?

But another objection arises: This fourth beast, or Roman empire, how can it be destroyed at the coming of

the Lord, when in fact it has already ceased to be long since? Here Revelation comes in to supplement, as in so many other cases, the older prophecy. Revelation, as we know, speaks also of this fourth empire and of its last head, and similarly of his destruction when the Lord appears. But it completely clears up the difficulty that exists by showing us this empire as coming up again out of non-existence—"The beast that was, *and is not*, and *shall be present*:" this is given by all now as the proper reading of Revelation xvii. 8.

Thus, again we see the gap of time which has to be allowed for in Old-Testament prophecy; and thus the last end of the Gentile empires is revealed. But this by no means fills the whole field of prophetic vision for the last days. The abomination of desolation is still only in part disclosed, and it requires only once more to compare prophecy with prophecy, to find another power side by side with this last blasphemous head of Gentile empire, his main ally and instrument in the east, and indeed *the* Antichrist of whom the apostle says, "Ye know that he shall come."

His marks are these:—

(1) "Who is *the* liar, but he who denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is *the* antichrist who denieth the Father and the Son" (1 Jno. ii. 22). Antichrist thus denies absolutely the Christian revelation; he does not deny the Jewish hope, but claims to fulfill it; does not say there is *no* Christ, but that *Jesus* is not the Christ. He thus heads up Jewish unbelief in both respects.

(2) 2 Thess. ii. so naturally connects with this, that most will readily allow the connection. Here we find an apostate from Christianity, "the man of sin," "the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he as God *sitteth in the temple of God*, showing himself that he

is God." Here we might think of the Church as the temple of God, but for two things: (1) that he is an apostate—does not profess Christianity at all, as we have seen the antichrist does not; (2) the connection with an abomination of desolation standing in the holy place is so simple, so evidently satisfying the conditions, that it is hard to suppose any other than the Jewish temple meant.

Then notice his end: "Whom the Lord shall consume with the breath\* of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming." Here, "that wicked one" is literally "that lawless one," and is a point of connection with another prophecy.

(3) In Daniel xi. 36 a king is found in the land of Israel whose character is portrayed in words precisely similar: "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished, for that that is determined shall be done." Yet "a god whom his fathers knew not shall be honor." Compare this with—

(4) Rev. xiii. 11-17, where we find a second beast rising up after the first or Roman beast, with two horns *like a lamb*, but speaking as a dragon; full of such power as the passage in Thessalonians speaks of—doing great wonders, and causing men to worship the first beast, as Christ to worship the Father. These two we find meeting a common doom, when the Lord is revealed from heaven in the nineteenth chapter.

These scriptures clearly show us how the abomination of desolation is planted in the holy place.

The desolation is caused, as we have seen, by a deso-

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\* Not "spirit." The reference is to Isaiah xi, where "the wicked" is also "the wicked one."

lator from without, and his course we find in Dan. xi. 40-45, where the king of the north sweeps down upon the king in the land of Israel, and overflows and passes over, reaching down to Egypt and Ethiopia. This king of the north is all the way through the chapter a Grecian king; and the account of him who has this place in these latter days is given in chap. viii. He too comes to his end in the land of Israel, the rod being broken when it has served its purpose, and at the same time, plainly, with the beast and false prophet. (See chap. xii. 1.)

Lastly, Ezekiel xxxviii, xxxix, give us still another power, whose rise and growth and attitude in the present day are (along with the revival of Greece and Italy,) among the most striking signs of the times. It is Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal,—as the words should read. Russia is here really *named*; and she too, doubtless all through at the back of Greece, comes up as an enemy of Israel and of God, in days which cannot be far distant.

Thus the whole prophetic earth is in convulsion in the time of the end, and amid this, Israel find their discipline, in which a preserved remnant are taught to look for and to find Messiah in the Christ they had rejected. The two tribes only—or those we now call Jews—returning partly (as they are beginning to do) and in unbelief into their land, return to find themselves under the tyranny of Antichrist, whom the mass receive, and between the opposing ranks of Gentile powers. But amid them God raises up and maintains a prophetic testimony, and from them the gospel of the kingdom goes out also to the nations around. Babylon the great, the harlot church, falls under the wrath of the western powers; but the new testimony has its effect in the salvation of many, who are the sheep placed on the right hand of the Judge when the Son of Man takes His throne on earth. Even of those



gathered against Jerusalem,—and in the very crisis of her trouble the Lord appears (Zech. xiv.)—many are spared, and sent as messengers of mercy to the nations round. Then, from all parts of the earth Israel are brought back, and, judgment having wrought for purification, the earth's blessing is at last brought in.

But who can give an idea of the lessons of holy wisdom to be gathered in this solemn field of prophetic history? The conviction of how little distant in the future these things are should give to them an intensity of interest, painful indeed, but salutary. For in all of us lie hidden the seeds of what we here find springing up and in maturity. And true, emphatically, is the rule of divine government: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

#### THE KINGDOM OF THE SON OF MAN.

The "world to come," the apostle tells the Hebrew Christians, is to be subjected, not to angels, but to *man*. "For unto angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, 'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honor; Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.'"

We have only to read attentively the tenth chapter of Daniel to know what is meant by being subjected to angels, and to find that this is what is true of the *present* world. We there read of angelic "princes" of Persia and Grecia, and the former, at least, in conflict with the angel who speaks to the prophet, while he is helped by another angel, "Michael, your prince,"—that is, prince of the Jews. Angelic "principalities and powers" are thus made known to us as in relation to the earth, and

Satan is seen in all his power, as "prince of this world;" while in the same sphere the holy angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation."

But the world to come is not subjected to angels, but to man; and here, not to the first man, who has lost it, but to the Second Man, and He is the subject of the eighth psalm—"made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death," as the apostle explains, and "crowned with glory and honor." But as yet we "see not all things put under Him," he adds: this is not fulfilled in His exaltation to the right hand of God now, but will be when that glorious time shall come of which prophecy has been ever full—the "times of refreshing from the *presence* of the Lord." These He must come again to introduce.

Accordingly we find, at the time when the Gentile empires come to an end, in Daniel's vision of the seventh chapter, "Behold, One like the Son of Man, *came in the clouds of heaven*, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people and nations and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Between this kingdom of the Son of Man and the kingdom which He now has, the Lord Himself distinguishes in His address to the church in Laodicea: "To him that overcometh will I give to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." It is "One like unto the Son of Man" who thus speaks, and as this alone can His people be, through His marvelous grace, associated with Him. No saint could sit with Him upon the *Father's* throne, and now it is the "kingdom of *God's* dear Son" (Col. i. 13). In

this, we are only subjects; but "if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him;" and then it will no longer be long-suffering patience, but the exercise of power which will beat down all opposition. So in the address to Thyatira the Lord says, "And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of My Father."

In this character we see Him come forth, in the nineteenth chapter of the same book, upon a white horse, the symbol of conquest and victory, the armies of heaven following Him also upon white horses, to the judgment of the earth: "and out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations, and *He shall rule them with* a rod of iron, and He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

Now, therefore, no adverse power can be tolerated. Not only do the beast and false prophet meet their end at His appearing, but Satan is bound and cast into the bottomless pit, to be shut up there until the thousand years of the last dispensation shall be fulfilled. Then he is cast finally into the lake of fire. The close of the twenty-fourth chapter of Isaiah had long before announced this, though in more general terms: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and be shut up in the prison, and *after many days* they shall be visited." This clearly shows the judgment to be premillennial. "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients [or "elders"] gloriously."

With this breaking of Satan's chain comes the removal of the curse upon the earth. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." Creation, fallen with her head, waits till the open declaration of God's grace toward man shall be seen in the redemption of the body. Then it also "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and translated into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." (Rom. viii. 19-21.) Well may the earth rejoice, the floods clap their hands, and the hills be joyful together before the Lord. The Redeemer is the Creator, and the "rule" of the rod of iron is a *shepherd*-rule, as the word means. The judgment itself is the effect of love as well as righteousness, to "destroy those who destroy the earth." (Rev. xi. 18.)

This is not the eternal state, however; it is not that in which divine love can rest. The Lord's own words to His disciples speak of it (Matt. xix. 28) as "the regeneration," not the state of glory or of full blessing, though a great and important step toward it.\* The word evidently implies the rule of righteousness, not by any means yet the complete absence of sin; and this all the pictures given us of that time confirm. Indeed, the very meaning of that apparently so strange letting loose of Satan at the end of the thousand years is to detect the hidden evil. The display of power when Christ comes, easily compels a certain obedience. "As soon as they hear of Me, they shall obey Me," says the prophet, personating Messiah; "the strangers shall lie unto Me." (Ps. xviii. 44, *marg.*) And then—"The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid

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\* There is a plain correspondence here between the steps of blessing for the individual saint and for the earth. In both, there is at first "the bondage of corruption;" then a state in which the dominion of sin is broken; then the material change, whether of the body or the earth itself; and then rest and glory.

out of their close places." Again, in the sixty-sixth psalm it is said, "Through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies submit themselves unto Thee." Here the same word, "lie," is used; they are "enemies" still. Now when a thousand years of blessing have not sufficed to change this stubborn enmity, Satan is allowed to claim his own, and the multitudes who follow him show speedily the true condition of things: "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea."

Indeed the character of the millennium has been wrongly estimated by many, through confounding Christianity with that which replaces it upon the earth. But in fact, we must go for our pictures of it, not to the New Testament, but to the Old. The New Testament simply supplements the prophecies of the Old with the few verses in Rev. xx.-xxii, and these add little but the reign of the heavenly saints and the account of the apostacy at the close. The Old-Testament prophets give us pictures which, because they accord little with our thoughts of what should be, have been "spiritualized," as the phrase is, until they have lost all distinct meaning; while others have used them to lower the final portion of Christians to Jewish—or rather Israelitish—promises, as the apostle of the Gentiles declares them to be (Rom. ix. 4).

No doubt the Gentiles too are blessed, but by no means, as now, on the same footing with converted Israel. Everywhere in the Old-Testament prophets the old distinction is maintained. Nay, it is plainly said, that while on account of their rejection of Christ "therefore He will give them up, until she which travaileth hath brought forth"—until the nation be born as in a day, "*then* the remnant of His (Messiah's) brethren shall return unto the children of Israel;"—they shall be Israelites once more (Mic. v. 3).

And in the millennial earth Israel will have chief place.

around us; but we are forever with the Lord, enjoying the fruit of His blessed work for us. The fruit of our work follows, and is connected in Scripture, not with our being caught up, but with the Lord's appearing—the day of *manifestation*.

As taken up, whether raised or changed, we are already in the likeness of Christ's glorious body. Redemption is complete in body, soul, and spirit; no spot of sin, no wrinkle of infirmity, remains for any. We have taken an everlasting farewell of both. Who can imagine the blessedness! escaped forever from all subjection to vanity, from the whole body of sin and all connected with it; nothing left but the memory of it to awaken the endless praise, fuller than angels'.

Then the Lord's presence, seeing Him as He is! All inability removed, with all the unlikeness to Him. Knowledge and enjoyment perfected in open vision. Divine love in all-revealing light.

With this, the Father's house, for so the Lord Himself connects these: "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." To know Christ here is to know the Father; to come to Him, to come to the Father: to be with Him face to face cannot be separated from the Father's presence, nor this from the joy of the Father's house. With Him, in the children's place, owned as His in heaven now,—children brought home.

The book of Revelation, which gives the throne of God rather than the Father's house, adds to these things two others as found in the twenty-four elders round about the throne: they are "kings and priests"—a royal priesthood,—sharers with Him who is to come forth as King and Priest.

These things belong to all the heavenly company of redeemed ones. But Scripture distinguishes two classes of these—"the assembly of the first-born ones, whose names are written in heaven" and "the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. xii. 23). That the latter class are Old-Testament saints is plain, from their being spoken of as all departed ones, while the Church waits on earth till called up by her Lord's voice. On the other hand, "the firstborn ones" are not such in time, but in privilege. And such is the Church, Christ's body. It may be, as others have thought, that the number of the crowned elders (24) indicates the union of these two companies (2 x 12) in the royal priesthood of Revelation iv.

Just when Babylon the false church is judged, and when the Lord is nearly ready to come forth, we hear that the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready; and then, too, it is granted her to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the *righteousnesses* of the saints. It is not now the "*best robe*" as in the parable, which is the value of Christ Himself before God; this is expressed by another word; but, according to the character of Revelation, it is the practical obedience of the saints which is now granted to them to be arrayed in. And this tells, surely, of the judgment-seat of Christ passed, and the reward of works measured out. Only grace, after all, can do this; and *such* garments need to be washed in the blood of Christ to be made white.\* This shows the immense difference between these and Christ as our righteousness, which it would be blasphemy to speak of as needing washing.

The marriage of the Lamb is now come, therefore; and

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\* It is well known that chap. xxii. 14 should read, "Blessed are they who have *washed their robes*, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." See also chap. vii. 14, and comp. chap. vi. 11 and xii. 11.

soon after, the Lord appears with His saints, who, changing their attitude with His, come out as His "armies" to the judgment of the earth. The same "fine linen, clean and white," covers them still. Judgment is executed, as we have seen. The saints reign with Christ, the martyrs under the beast being added to them, and so the first resurrection is complete.\*

In the final judgment, the Lord alone is on the throne; while after it, the new Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb, descends from heaven, to be the "tabernacle of God with men." The picture of the bride which closes the prophecy of the book is doubtless millennial, though the city itself be eternal.

The earth comes out of her baptism of fire (2 Pet. iii. 7-13) a "new earth;" for surely it is not regenerated as in the millennium, to be afterward set aside. The notice that "there was no more sea" agrees with this. The very type of instability and barrenness is removed. God is with men; although among these Israel retains a distinct place (Isa. lxvi. 22). The kingdom of the Son of Man is over; its object is achieved. Having brought all things back to God, and all enemies subdued forever, Christ delivers up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all. This is God's rest, the seal of eternity put upon all—a rest never to be disturbed again.

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\* Note that xx. 4, 5, first sentence, gives the vision; the rest is interpretation; and this latter is not symbolic, or it would not be interpretation. It shows indeed how clear the vision itself is, that it *does* represent a real resurrection, and that the "thousand years" is literally this.

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## OUR HOPE, AND ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES

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

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

(1.) That death is the Lord's coming I need say little about. It is but the assertion of those who think themselves wise enough to substitute their own terms for those of Scripture, not one passage of which can be produced, even seemingly, to justify it. "If I will that he tarry till I come,"—the Lord's words as to the apostle John,—would be reduced to simple folly by reading them, "If I will that he tarry till he *die*"; and the report that went abroad among them that heard it, "that that disciple

should *not* die," unwarranted as it might be, still shows that with them Christ's coming was the very opposite of dying. So the common quotation, "Watch, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," is part of a long prophecy, which, if any one believed to be a prediction of believers dying, it would be really vain to reason with such.

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

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

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

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

(4.) There remains the literal unforced rendering of the words, the only thing that is really worthy of Him who does not use ambiguous speech with those to whom as to His children He utters what is in His heart. Other

interpretations are but the fantasies of wise and learned men, which the simple have learned from them, no doubt, but which they could never have originated.

(5.) This coming is pre-millennial, and *in order to* the blessing of the earth, although judgment upon those who are destroying it must clear the way for blessing. This is proved abundantly by many passages, too many even to enumerate: it is part of the web and woof of Scripture. I can specify but a few.

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

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

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

Rev. xix. gives us first of all the marriage of the Lamb in heaven, and upon His wife the fine linen, which is interpreted to be "the righteousness of saints." Then He comes *from* heaven with His armies, upon which the same fine linen covering the Bride is seen. Then there is the judgment of His human, and angelic (xx. 1-3) ene-

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

mies; and then the saints reign with Christ a thousand years before the resurrection of the rest of the dead, and *their* judgment (xx.). But this connects with a line of truth which must be separately noticed.

(6.) The resurrection of the saints is always connected with the coming of the Lord, and separated not only in character but in time from that of the wicked. The text just quoted, people object to as figurative. There is a vision, no doubt, (what the apostle "saw,") but there is also the *interpretation* of the vision: "this is the first resurrection" is the interpretation of the vision, *and not figure at all*, as also what follows in the 6th verse.\*

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

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

\* The objection that it is a resurrection of "souls" is forgetfulness merely of a very common Scripture phraseology, in which "the soul" stands for the person himself. (See Gen. xii. 13, etc., and the whole question treated in "Facts and Theories as to a Future State," Part I., Chap. VII.)

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

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

This hurried and imperfect statement should suffice to show that the coming of the Lord is not an unpractical doctrine at least, but connects itself with a number of important truths. To call any Scriptural truth unpractical is to dishonor the love that has made it known to us, and to ignore the fact that truth links itself with truth, as error with error. And how little unpractical can that truth be which is to characterize our attitude as Christians: "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, ye may open to him immediately" (Luke xii. 35, 36)! How the Lord Himself appreciates such a spirit of watchfulness, the words that follow in this chapter sufficiently declare.

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

In the first place, then, as to the gospel itself, the reception of the true doctrine of the Lord's coming clears it from all suspicion of legality with which the common

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

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

clared a child of God by being a child of the resurrection, and *already glorified*!

But again, as to our character here, what more suited to keep our hearts out of the world than the assurance that He may come at any moment actually to take us out of it and introduce us into all the joys and glories of the Father's house? People ask, I know, does not the knowledge of an ever-impending death act in the same way and with equal power? I ask them in turn, can they really believe it does? and do facts show that it does? The very enthusiasm that they often deprecate as connected with the expectation of the Lord's coming, do they often have to complain of such enthusiasm as connected with death? Even to him who is able to say, with the apostle, that "death is gain," and "to depart and be with Christ is far better," (and doubtless every Christian may and should be able to say that,) death is not, and cannot be, what the coming of the Lord is. Death is the dropping of the body, not its redemption. It is personal gain, which may be almost balanced to one's mind (as in the apostle's case) by others' loss. The coming of the Lord is pure gain, pure joy, and no loss whatever. It is the confirmation forever of every spiritual tie. It is the blessing of all believers from the beginning of time. It is the time for which the Lord Himself is waiting, as the gathering of His own purchased people,—the fruit of the travail of His soul. It is the time too when He shall take His great power, and bring to an end the misrule and disorder under which the earth so long has groaned—the time for which creation looks as for its enfranchisement.

The assertion that death is as powerful a lever as the Lord's coming for the soul, comes only, in fine, from those who have never known what the latter is; and I think I may safely add, who *think it scarcely worth the trouble to inquire*. The Lord Himself has settled, for him who will

listen to His word, what couples itself with the thought that He delays: "If that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth His coming, and shall *begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken.*" And has not this effect followed in the Church's history? Who that knows anything about it will say that it has not?

A third practical consequence connects itself with this. If the world, according to the common thought, is to be gradually leavened with the gospel, of necessity its character will be changed in that proportion. The numerous scriptures, too, which speak of the "course of this world" being "according to the prince of the power of the air,"—of "*all* that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,"—of the world treating the disciples as it treated the Master, and kindred things to these, cease to apply in the present day, as they did of old. Conformity to the world becomes proportionately more in place, and in a *Christian* world perchance even a duty. And when, to supplement and confirm all this, the promises of earthly blessing to an *earthly* people, Israel, are taken as applying *literally* to a people who belong to heaven,—the climax of carnal ease and self-indulgence is simply and surely reached.

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

Be assured, beloved reader, the truth of the Lord's coming is one of the greatest practical importance to



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

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## THE NEARNESS OF OUR HOPE

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

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

It is naturally enough asked, if the dates are in Scripture, must they not be intended to serve some purpose? and, like all the rest of it, are they not "profitable for doctrine?" Nor can we answer this, as long as it is not seen that "times and seasons" are connected with *Jewish* hopes, to which the whole *Christian* dispensation is in reality an *interruption*. The want of "rightly dividing the word of truth" is the great cause of perplexity as to its interpretation. The division of the Word into two Testaments ought to help us, and the apostle of the Gentiles distinctly teaches us that the "promises" of the Old

Testament (taken in the letter) are Jewish (Rom. ix. 3, 4); while the Gospel of Matthew, on the other hand, assures us that the "*mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven,"—the kingdom in the form it takes during the present dispensation—are "things which" up to that time "had been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (xiii. 35).

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

But this uncounted interval of time deranges all attempts at calculation of the periods. Take, for instance, the great prophecy of the "seventy weeks," one of the highest importance to understand as connected with the whole plan of the book of Revelation. The commencing and terminal points are marked as clearly as can be. The commencement is clearly passed, for it dates from "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem," Nehemiah's commission, about the middle of the fifth century B. C. The termination is when *Israel's* transgression is finished, and their Sanctuary restored, a period as plainly not yet reached. And yet the whole period of 70 weeks is only 490 years, while more than 2,000 have actually intervened. The reason

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\* Heb. x. 1: "A shadow, and not the very image."

for this is indicated, however, in the prophecy itself, which gives us 483 years or more to Messiah's *cutting off*, and then an uncounted time of desolation for the city and sanctuary, at the close of which occurs the seventieth week.

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

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

It is important to note this at the outset, when we propose considering the probable nearness of the Lord's approach. We are not going to set time, or take up chronology at all, in this connection. Still less are we going to supplement the teachings of the word of God with the calculation of the Pyramid measurements. God has given us Scripture as able thoroughly to furnish us to all good works, and it is Scripture alone that we admit as having title to be heard at all.

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

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

There are signs, in fact, whichever way we look, in the social, political, ecclesiastical, and spiritual spheres alike.

We do not propose to classify them, however, in that way, nor pretend indeed even to enumerate them all—they are so many. We propose only to take up some of the most striking.

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

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

2. The resurrection of Greece is another remarkable occurrence. She is expressly named by Zechariah as among Israel's adversaries at the time the Lord finally takes up their cause (Zech. ix. 13). Moreover, in Daniel (chap. viii.), "in the *last end* of the indignation" of God

against Israel, we find a king of Greece who destroys "the mighty and the holy people" (Israel), and who at last, standing up against the Prince of princes, is broken without hand. He appears to be the final "king of the North" in the eleventh chapter, who manifestly, throughout the chapter up to this point, is a Grecian king.

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

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

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

4. Again, everybody has heard much about "the Eastern question." But everybody familiar with God's prophetic Word knows that the East (particularly Palestine) is to be the place of settlement, Divine settlement, of national controversies. The powers of the North and South and West are thus depicted in a final struggle before the interference of Him under whose peaceful and powerful

sway "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

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

5. The return of the Jews to their land is actually accomplishing. In Jerusalem itself there are said to be now 23,000 Jews,\* and they are buying up all the available ground within it. Agricultural labor is being resumed, and the latter rains, long absent, are reported to be returning. A Jew is currently reputed to have a mortgage upon the land. Lastly, the British occupation of Cyprus is giving a new sense of security in the East, which must needs have the effect of encouraging their most sanguine expectations.

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

6. Another prominent sign of the times is the spirit of lawlessness and independence prevailing everywhere. The spirit of Communism, in its various forms, is a matter causing the most serious alarm, not merely to despotic governments, but to those of the most popular character also: in the United States, for instance, as well as in

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\* Now 27,000, and everywhere the movement for repossession of the land is gaining strength.



Russia. Nor is this a mere passing ebullition. The rulers of conservative Europe have had uneasy and uncertain possession of their seats for a long time past. The voice of the people is making itself heard more and more, and in no respectful tones. They are newly interpreting the very ancient maxim, "Might is right," by the assumption that might should be with the many, and not with the few. In result it is individual self-will casting off restraint, and with man's law, God's also.

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

7. That Christendom as a whole ends in open infidel apostasy is what the word of God distinctly teaches. Antichristian as Rome surely is, there remains yet to be developed a final form exceeding all in blasphemy and iniquity. The beast will at last throw off the woman who at first rides upon it, and with the ten horns will "hate the whore, and make her desolate and naked, and eat her flesh and burn her with fire" (Rev. xvii. 16); but it will be only to be found in open antagonism to the Lamb (ver. 14). Popery will thus not be the last nor the worst form of evil. *The* Antichrist will deny both the "Father and the Son" (1 John ii. 22). No longer content to be at all the "woman," and to own subjection to Christ at all, he will be "*the man*," although it be "the man of sin," and sit in the temple of God, and show himself as being God (2 Thess. ii.). Thus the present "mystery of iniquity" will issue in a "falling away," or apostasy, and that in a strong delusion in which *all* will be taken, who, while

they had the truth, believed not the truth, that they might be saved (vers. 11, 12).

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

8. Apart from this, the signs of the last days are, in the professing church, painfully evident. Such texts as "In the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof," need only be quoted. Those who are acquainted with the wonderful prophecy of Rev. ii. and iii.,† in which the whole course of the professing church is mirrored for us from the apostles'

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\* This was written in 1878, and since then the "higher criticism" movement has made startling progress, in a way which must be familiar to all who read this.

day till the Lord takes His people, will know how near the close we seem to be. I cannot do more than refer to this just now. In Philadelphia the last announcement of His coming is given, and the word is now, "Behold, I come *quickly*." Is not this the cry now to us on every side? Shall we not hear it?

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

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

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

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## THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN SALVATION

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THE sovereignty of God is what alone gives rest to the Christian heart in view of a world full of evil, which is gone astray from Him. To know that after all, spite of the rebellion of the creature, things are as absolutely in His hand as ever they were,—that still with the apostle we can adore “one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all,”—this brings, and alone brings, full relief. Still He rules over all, and where evil cannot be turned to good, limits and forbids it: He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath (what would go beyond this) He restrains.

The shepherd-rod, the type of power exercised in love, out of the hand to which it belongs, and become a serpent, is the vivid picture of what we see on every side. The prince of this world is not Christ, but Satan; but it was the sign of a deliverer for Israel that Moses had but to stretch forth his hand and take back to him what was already his, for it to become a rod in his hand once more. For us, how sweet is this assurance! The rod had not *slipped* out of Moses' hand, but was *cast* out; and even when cast out, it was fully under his control: so is it with the government of this world; for Him who rules it, even disobedience works obediently; Satan, meaning nothing less, accomplishes His purposes as do the holy angels which wait around His throne. Through all, spite of all, He yet “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.” “He doeth according to His will in the army of

heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

We rest, for we know Who reigns. It is not mere sovereignty, the almighty despotism of mere will, to which we bow because we must, but the sovereignty of wisdom, holiness, and goodness,—of One in whom love is revealed in light. How strange and saddening that in any phase of it the sovereignty of God should be an unwelcome theme to a Christian heart! Surely, one would say, there must be something very wrong with the state of such an one, or with the manner of its presentation to him, or with both, for this to be the case. Yet is it not so, that the sovereignty of God in *salvation*,—and where else is the thought so simple and so necessary?—is by the large mass of Christians perhaps a thing most vehemently denied; and even where entertained, is entertained with coldness and suspicion. The truths of election and predestination, while the favorite cavil in the mouths of unbelievers, are undoubtedly, by many who receive them, received with inward shrinking,—as at most necessary, rather than really approved. And both causes named no doubt contribute to this result.

Yet if God be (what He must be to *be* God,) perfect goodness, and wisdom without fault, what could one possibly desire, but that everything should be absolutely in His hand, plastic to and moulded by His blessed will, working, according to plan and forethought, His eternal purpose? It is not possible to conceive objection on the part of any, worthy of the least respect. But this is all that predestination can at all imply. It is the simple and necessary result of a really divine government,—of the supremacy of One who lacks neither wisdom nor power, nor benevolent interest in the work of His own hands.

I know, of course, the objection that will be raised. "Open your eyes," it will be said, "and look around!

Is the world as you see it just what you would expect as the fruit of a wise and perfect and omnipotent will? What of the suffering that abounds on every side? and what of the sin? Can you say of that it is the will of God, and attribute to Him still nothing but perfection?"

It is of course true that we find around us a very different state of things from what we could have at all imagined from the necessary perfection of an almighty Creator and Governor. Nor dare we ascribe moral evil to the direct will of Him from whom it is a revolt. Nevertheless the doctrine of predestination remains our only comfort and support in this perplexity: to give it up would be to abandon ourselves to the despair of good as the final goal to which all tends. If the rebellion of His creatures has thus far thwarted the will of God, and filled the world with an unanticipated or unavoidable confusion, who can say how this may perplex the final result? On the other hand, complete foresight of all being His, with full power to avert whatever will not fall into harmony with His purposes, predestination of all things may be safely maintained. God is neither made the Author of sin, nor compelled helplessly to admit defeat at the hands of men. And this is what Scripture asserts as the truth of His government: "He worketh *all* things after the counsel of His own will."—"Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee; the *remainder* of wrath"—foreseen in its issue as not glorifying Him,—“Thou shalt restrain.” (Ps. lxxvi. 10.)

It may be said by some, "This is not predestination: this is only government." But what is worthy of God to do, it is worthy of God,—and only worthy of Him,—to determine before, or from eternity, to do. This fore-determination, or predestination, alters in no wise the character of what He does in its appointed time. It frees it only from the character of after-thought, which would

imply weakness and change in Him. And thus we can say, "Known unto God are all His works from eternity [*ἀπ' αἰῶνός*]." (Acts xv. 18.)

Thus, take the worst act the world has ever seen—the crucifixion of Christ; it can be said, "Of a truth, against Thy holy Servant Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done." (Acts iv. 27, 28.) If in this act then, in all acts whatever we are privileged to read the hand and foreordination of God; and thus alone everywhere the darkness is no more unrelieved.

The will of man is recognized in all this, and not set aside. Certainly we are nowhere led, from Scripture, to think of him as a mere intellectual machine, moved necessarily by influences external to himself, but as a being free and responsible, though now, alas! fallen, and become the willing slave of sin. As to this, we shall see more directly. It is certain that in no wise are we to think of God as determining to evil the wills of His creatures, or as involving them, whether by (what is to them) the accident of their birth or in any other way, in irretrievable ruin. This Scripture unites with our own consciences to assure us of. There may be difficulties, and there are; but however even insoluble may be the mystery, God has given us that within us which witnesses unflinching for Him, that man's evil and man's ruin are of himself alone.

How, spite of contrary and conflicting wills, God is yet as absolutely "over all, and through all, and in \* all," "working *all* after the counsel of His own will,"—this is beyond our skill to fathom. But so it is: and blessed it

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\* The editors omit "you" in Ephesians iv. 6.

is to recognize that, as the apostle witnesses, it is as "God and Father of all" He is so. This is in fact the very web and woof of Scripture. This is what so irresistibly appeals to us in those tears wept over impenitent Jerusalem by Him who could pronounce its sure and approaching doom,—a doom to be executed by the hands of men ignorant and careless of Him whose sentence they fulfilled.

This predestination extends to everything. Foresight and omnipotent will are everywhere. Thank God they are! In the moral as in the physical universe, nowhere can one escape from His presence, save, alas! by such an insensibility as the mass of men have sunk into. For the Christian, it is joy unspeakable to recognize this pervading presence, which recognized brings light into darkness, order into disorder, peace into whatever circumstances of distress. In the strain of triumph with which the apostle closes his development of the Christian state in Romans viii., the basis of all is this precious doctrine. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to those that are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, them also He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

But this leads us to another doctrine, closely connected with this of predestination, and suffering the same reproach, even from those who owe their all to it. I mean, of course, the doctrine of election. Election is so plainly taught in the word that it is surely only the opposition of the heart to it that can account for its not being universally received



among Christians. Nor is this an election nationally or individually to privileges or "means of grace" such as plainly Israel, and for long the nations of Europe, have enjoyed, but to salvation; and to salvation, not on account of foreseen holiness or faith, but *through*, or by means of, these. "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation, *through* sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto He called you by our gospel." (2 Thess. ii. 13.) Nothing can well be plainer than this; nothing more positive than the assertion by the same apostle which was just now quoted of that "chain of salvation," link riveted to link, whereby predestination issues in calling, and calling in justification, and justification in glory. A hundred texts would fail to convince where two such as these would. But in truth, the difficulty is not textual; it lies elsewhere.

Election involves many another truth most humbling to man's pride of heart, and this is in a large number of cases the real hindrance. On the other hand, it is quite true that in the conflict of minds upon a subject which has been in controversy for centuries, the balance of truth has been very much lost (although I could not say, equally,) by those who contended on either side; extremes on either part have tended to throw men off into the opposite extreme. Thus Calvinism and Arminianism, or what are commonly so called, have nearly divided Christians between them, each refusing to recognize, for the most part, any truth in the other. Yet each has in fact its stronghold of texts and arguments, and its unanswerable appeals to conscience, never fairly met by the other. The mistake has been in the supposition that what was really strong on both sides was in necessary opposition. The fact is, that, as another has said, in general,

the strength of each lies in what it affirms; its weakness, in what it denies. The truths of Calvinism cluster about the pole of divine grace; those of Arminianism, about that of man's responsibility. The world revolves upon its axis between the two.

But, upon the ground of responsibility merely, men are lost. Hence the texts upon which Arminianism relies have to do with the world at large, with the provision made in grace for these, and the divine appeals to and dealings with them. An important class of texts, however, even with regard to these, they overlook or explain away, while they infer wrongly from their general texts as to the actual salvation of those saved. Calvinism, on the other hand, when it treats of actual salvation, is almost wholly right. Scripture and conscience agree here in their witness to its truth, and the opposition made is compelled to be mainly upon another ground, namely, the supposed bearing of this upon the case of the lost. Here the Arminian is upon his own ground, and if the Calvinist follow him here, he loses the strength he but now had, and Scripture and conscience turn against him.

Let us take up first the texts upon which the Arminian relies, and see how far they lead us, before we speak of those which may seem more to suit our present subject.

In the first place, then, God's love to the *world* is manifested in the cross. "God so loved the *world* that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." It is not allowable to narrow this down to a love simply to the elect, as has been only too often done. It is true that the elect are all originally of the world, and that thus He loves them when dead in trespasses and sins, and for His great love quickens them (Eph. ii. 4). But we cannot limit His love here to this: it is out of keeping with the "whosoever" which follows. Moreover the "world"

cannot fairly be interpreted as less than the whole of it, if we believe in the transparent honesty and accuracy of Scripture. God's love to the world, then, is so deep and wonderful that it can only be measured by the gift of His Son. We dare not refuse to credit fully what is so solemnly assured.

But this being so, it settles decisively the meaning of Christ's death being for all. "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all;" "a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world:" these and many similar passages assure without any doubt of full and sufficient provision for all made in the atonement.

Upon this ground, and to give express utterance to what is in the heart of God, the gospel is bidden to be proclaimed to "every creature." Men are assured that God "willeth not the death of a sinner," but that on the contrary He "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." These testimonies are simple, and they deny that there can be any contrary decree of God hindering the salvation of any. The Redeemer's words as He wept over Jerusalem assure us that it is man's contrary will that resists God's will—"How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"

But this will of man itself, what shall we make of it? Is there not after all in it, define it as we may, some mysterious power which, spite of the fall, spite of the corruption of nature, should yet respond to these invitations, these pleadings of divine grace? It is clear that final condemnation is not for any sin of another, nor yet for any depravity of nature derived from him, but for men's own sins. They are treated not simply as a race,

but individualized. And thus the apostle teaches that the whole world is brought in guilty before God. Conscience bears witness in the same way of these individual sins, and refuses to put them down simply to the account of nature. Eternal judgment according to the "deeds done" by each man "in the body," a judgment which of course will recognize all diversity of circumstance, knowledge or ignorance of the Master's will, will proclaim a personal difference to which "few" or "many stripes" will answer. All this is the antipodes of a mere necessary development of a common nature, alike therefore under like conditions. Freedom, in some real sense, is recognized by us all, *whatever our creed, as necessary to responsibility*, although it is true that we may freely deprive ourselves of freedom, and be accountable for this. There is a confessed mystery here, which no one can pretend to solve; but Scripture and conscience unite to assure us that man's guilt is truly his own, and that all those tender pleadings, admonitions, reasonings of God with man have in them a real suitability to men in general, and are no vain show.

Man's *will* is no mere inheritance from his fathers as his "nature" is; it is something which is in Scripture and in conscience held as his own personal, righteous accountability. It constitutes him, we may say, a person, a man; and to men God ever addresses Himself; as fallen creatures, born in sin and shapen in iniquity, "by nature children of wrath," yet always and none the less proper subjects of appeal; if destroyed finally, then *self*-destroyed.

So the Spirit of God is represented as striving with them,—with those who nevertheless to the last "resist the Holy Ghost." It is of no special consequence whether we can show or not the manner of this striving; it is enough that the word of God speaks of it as that,—that

it *is* that. All this shows something very different from a simple condemnation merely, and giving up by God of all but the elect; and whatever it prove as to man at large, something more is meant than simply to demonstrate his ruin and helplessness, by that too which increases his condemnation. On the contrary, when the law has proved man's unrighteousness, and the cross that the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, still in this very cross is it manifested that "God so loved the world that He gave His Son," and the gospel goes out addressed to every creature.

Thus far we must needs go, then, with the Arminians, and the truth of predestination does not conflict with this in any way. We have here simply to inquire what is, and we can affirm that Omniscient Goodness willed it so to be,—from eternity so willed it; did not of course desire or work the evil, but ordained to suffer it, and in this sense that it should be. The mystery of evil being thus suffered we accept,—do not explain, or suppose it possible to be explained. As a fact, we know it is, and know too that God is, and that He is against the evil. Scripture is of course in no wise responsible for it, while it gives us, not an explanation, but such a revelation of God Himself, and in view of it, that we can have perfect faith in Him, and leave it unexplained. The cross has glorified Him in every attribute more wonderfully as to sin than this could raise suspicion; while it demonstrates that not mere power could deal with evil, the victory must be that of goodness, and in suffering.

Christ dying for the world, the testimony of God's love to men at large, is no vain thing because in fact all are not saved by it. It demonstrates to us that infinite goodness from which men have to break away: that, of which He has sworn, "*As I live*, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; *but* that the wicked

turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why *will* ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.)

Men die because of their own will, not of God's will; yet they die. And men crudely ask of God's omnipotence why He cannot convert them all. But omnipotence itself must needs be limited by His other attributes. What Infinite Wisdom *can* do I must be myself infinitely wise to know.

Let it suffice us that "God *so* loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," and that full provision has thus been made for that return of all to God to which they are besought. The result, it is for man himself to decide.

But now as to this result, what? Is it uncertain? Are we to conclude that because, if a man die, he wills himself to die, that therefore if he live, it is by his own will also? We may not argue so; for here too God has spoken, and the conscience of His saints responds ever really to what He says.

"He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not; He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Was this rejection universal? No; some received Him. What, then, of these? "But to as many as received Him, to them gave He right (see *margin*) to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, *nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man*, but of God." (Jno. i. 10-13.)

Nothing can possibly be more decisive. And this plainly covers the whole ground. It is not, of course, that the will of man is not implied in the reception of Christ, for reception is surely not in this case unwilling, but rather that, as the apostle tells the Philippians, "it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do"—"both

the willing and the working"—"of His good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 13.)

Every description of this new birth ascribes it in the fullest to divine and sovereign power. The very idea of "birth" implies it, for who is aught but passive in his own birth? It is also quickening from the dead, and "as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will." (Jno. v. 21.) It is a new creation; "for we are His workmanship, *created* in Christ Jesus unto good works." (Eph. ii. 10.) And this defines the character of what is therefore truly effectual calling: "Whom He predestinated, them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified."

This sovereign, gratuitous work in man, done in accordance with that eternal counsel which all things work out, defines clearly for us what is election. It means the gracious interference of divine love in behalf of those who, no different from others, dead in the same sins, instead of being given up to perish, are given to Christ to be the fruit of His blessed work, "that He might be the first-born among many brethren." It is love, and only love, righteously and in perfect goodness manifested in salvation only, and of those worthy of damnation. To charge upon it the damnation of the lost is blasphemy, however unconscious, of that in which the whole heart of God is pouring itself out. If others remain obdurate in pride and careless unbelief, and going on to destruction, while we, justified by faith, and having peace with God, rejoice in hope of the glory of God, is it because we are better than they? What Christian heart can believe this? No; it is because "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." No man has found his true level who has not come down there, and only there do we find the full and impregnable

assurance of perfect and enduring peace. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of *God's elect*?" A love that found us with nothing, to indue us with all, is a love that has in it no element of change.

"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,"—what possible cause of harm is there that is neither a thing *present nor to come*?—"nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

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## DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS IN ITS ACTINGS TOWARDS MEN

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THE righteousness of God is the constant plea of the Old Testament; and naturally so. Especially the Psalms are full of it—a righteousness displayed in governmental dealings with men, His creatures. In the conflict everywhere and at all times going on between good and evil, “the righteous Lord” who “loveth righteousness,” and whose “countenance beholds the upright,” must needs manifest Himself in behalf of what He loves. Divine righteousness is here plainly, and ever, a part of the Divine character, an attribute of God Himself; not a gift bestowed upon man in any wise, although connected with the salvation of His people, for whom, after a long and needed discipline of suffering, He will at last appear.

But that does not solve all questions as to it; and it could only appear to do so to one whose knowledge of himself and of God was exceedingly superficial. If sin be a real thing, and of infinite concern with God, the pardon of it *righteously* (and no other pardon could God give) must be no light matter. And if the righteous had still to ask, in a way that implied the hopelessness of the question, “But how shall man be just with God?” then God’s righteousness could not be exhibited even in behalf of the comparatively righteous without incurring suspicion of partiality or defect.

It remained to be the glory of the gospel to clear away this suspicion, and to display “the righteousness of God,”

not now merely in the salvation of the righteous, but of sinners; yea, of the chief of sinners. "I am not ashamed," says the apostle, "of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." What constitutes it thus God's power to save, irrespective of the character of those that believe? This: "for therein"—in the *gospel*, in the glad good news to be proclaimed to every one—"the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IS REVEALED, from faith (or, on the principle of faith\*) to faith" (Rom. i. 16, 17).

Is this "righteousness of God," which the gospel reveals and puts upon the side of the believer, other than that which the law left unrevealed, in view of that very matter, the salvation of men? Is it anything else than that attribute of His, (part of His glory which He cannot divorce from Himself, or act in contradiction to,) reconciled with, or rather manifested in, the very love which is in His nature? Let us see if it be this or any other thought which the New Testament would convey to us by this expression.

There is first a class of texts which evidently do not speak of any revelation of it by the gospel, and which we need to keep distinct in our minds from those which have to do with this. They are five in number, and of no special difficulty to understand; but should not be confounded with the Gospel revelation.

The first text occurs in the Lord's sermon on the mount: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33).

Here the Lord's words mean plainly, in the connection in which they stand, "Care *you* for what belongs to God,

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\* *Ek pisteos*, the same expression as afterwards; "the just shall live by faith," "justified by faith," etc.

and suits Him, and *He* will care for *you*:" and "His righteousness" means all that suits His character, as revealed. Important as the lesson is, it is evidently not what we need to dwell upon in connection with the present inquiry.

The next is in Rom. iii. 5: "But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?" Here again the sense is evident, and we need not pause to consider it minutely.

Once more, in Romans x. 3, we have: "But they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

Here many, from the connection with what precedes and follows, suppose the Gospel revelation of righteousness to be referred to; but it is not so, and the connection is different from what they suppose. No doubt this ignorance of God's righteousness is in intimate connection with the rejection of Christ; but that does not show that Christ is identified in this passage with the Divine righteousness to which they have not submitted. The law itself should have so taught them what God's character was in this respect as to have made them conscious of how far short their own righteousness must come of His requirement. They had taken that law to work out righteousness by it, instead of as the "ministration of condemnation," as indeed it was: a "law of righteousness," which for that very reason could not accommodate itself to the unrighteousness of man. Had they humbled themselves under the solemn sentence of the law, Christ would not have been a stumbling stone: repentance would have led them beyond the law, for salvation through faith in another.

The fourth passage is similar to the first. It is in

James i. 20: "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

The fifth and last requires a little more notice. It is in 2 Peter i. 1: "To those that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ." This is the marginal reading, and the true one. It is strange that any should confound "faith through righteousness" with "righteousness through faith"; but so it is. Evangelical orthodoxy has discovered to the satisfaction of many that the two are one; but it only shows how prepossession with other thoughts will obscure very plain Scripture. The apostle is speaking really of the precious faith of Christianity replacing the Judaism which had now come to an end, through His righteousness who had come in to make good His prophetic Word, and sustain the hearts of the true Israel with His abundant loving mercy. It is plainly Divine righteousness still exhibited, not conferred, and exhibited in not allowing those really His in Judaism to lose by its being set aside.

And now the way is open to consider the righteousness of God as the Gospel reveals it. The texts are few in number, and for their importance need to be all and well considered. The due order will be that in which their mutual connection is best illustrated and maintained.

(1.) The passages in the third of Romans naturally present themselves here first.

The Epistle to the Romans is that in which pre-eminently the subject of righteousness is treated of, as a glance at the concordance will at once suffice to show. The apostle in the first place is occupied in proving that, whether Jew or Gentile, man has none. The sins of the Gentiles (the heathen) are manifest: their heathenism itself the fruit, not of seeking light when denied it, but of refusing it when God had given it them. "When they

*knew* God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened: professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things." And from this their notorious immorality proceeded: "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness," etc.

But if this was the case with the heathen, what about the people to whom God had restored the light when they (as the rest) had lost it? Was Israel better? So far from that, the "name of God," committed to their trust to sanctify, had been "blasphemed among the Gentiles through" them. The very law in which they trusted was their righteous accuser, and had pronounced already as to them, "There is none righteous, no, not one." And "We know," says the apostle, "that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

There was no difference then between Jew and Gentile: righteousness, measured by the Divine standard, was to be found nowhere among men. There the law left man, helpless and hopeless; with the knowledge of sin, but without escape from it: by the deeds of the law no flesh being justified in the sight of God.

And now the way is opened for the Gospel. The shutting of man's mouth opens God's. The exhaustion of man's resources throws the full burden of his salvation upon the arm of God. Human righteousness there is none: the Gospel cannot open again that question; it is ended forever. "But now the righteousness of *God* without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.

But the righteousness of God! the dreadful sound! What hope can be for guilty man in that? What Gospel in the display of Divine righteousness? It is what aggravates all his fears, when perhaps the thought of God's mercy has given hope. Yet unrighteous mercy clearly there cannot be. Mercy, above all with God, can only be exercised within the limits which His righteousness imposes. There cannot then be hope for man in a righteous God, except it come in a way of righteousness. It is the glory of the Gospel, not merely to *reconcile* righteousness with salvation, but more, to *manifest* it in that very way: to take this object of man's natural dread, and show it him as his friend and advocate, not accuser. In the Gospel it is God who justifies man,—“justifies the ungodly,”—and He does this, not simply *although* righteous, but *as* righteous. His righteousness is the safe shelter of the sinner. Not merely His mercy is “upon” all them that believe, but His righteousness is: the exact force of which statement we must presently inquire.

But where is there Divine righteousness in this way exhibited? It is in Him “whom God hath set forth to be a propitiatory through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness with regard to the passing over of sins before committed, through the forbearance of God; to declare His righteousness in the present season, in order to His being just, and justifying him who is of the faith of Jesus” (iii. 25, 26).

I have altered some words, to try and bring out the sense more clearly. The word “propitiatory” is the one used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament for “mercy-seat”; and that is doubtless its force here. “The sins that are past” of our authorized translation, are not, as it might be thought from the way it is there put, the sins of a man's past life, up to the moment of his justification, but the sins committed in the ages before Christ,

while God forbore, but the ground of His forbearance was not yet made manifest. Now, "in the present season" of Gospel grace, God does not forbear merely, or "pass over": He positively *justifies*, or pronounces righteous. The cross, the blood of atonement, now declares His righteousness both as to the past and in the present. The precious blood has made God's throne a "throne of grace"—a "mercy-seat." Grace reigns *through* righteousness. Righteousness and peace toward man are one—"they have kissed each other."

And where indeed, as in the blood of atonement, has God's righteousness been displayed? Where has it been seen, as here, that God's judgment of sin is no arbitrary thing, but the fixed necessity of His holy nature? The penalty had to be met, when God Himself had to meet it, and at His own personal cost (and who can estimate at what cost?) to "provide Himself a lamb for the burnt-offering."

Yet this declaration of Divine righteousness, was it *against* sinners, or rather was it not specially for them,—for sinners as such,—for sinners only? Who else could claim the blood of atonement as shed for them, but such as needed it?—such as deserved the awful place to which the Son of God stooped to set them free? Hence we can fully understand how, "if we confess our sins, He is *faithful and just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." To confess our sins is just to put in our claim as sinners to that to which sinners alone have title, and to which they have (if they will claim it) undoubted title. God is "faithful" to make over to them the provision made for them, as soon as they put in their claim.

God's righteousness is pledged thus in behalf of all who by faith take shelter under it. Declared as regards sin by the cross, it is by this put upon the side of sinners,

instead of against them. Hence it is "the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all." It is, as declared in the blood of Christ, a city of refuge with a door ever open—shut upon none that come. And therefore it is "upon, (or, better, "*over*," which is the exact force:—it is over) all them that believe" (chap. iii. 22). It is not a dress clothing, but a roof sheltering from every storm, or a shield protecting from every shaft of the enemy.

No wonder then that the apostle should say of a gospel which reveals this, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ;" or that it should be "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (i. 16). He who can appeal to the very righteousness of God against every challenge of the accuser, may indeed boast of a "salvation" complete, free, and eternal, which the Gospel, and the Gospel only, can bestow on man.

(2.) There is a passage next which we must look at, although it be only to show that it does *not* bear, as it might seem to do, upon the present question. It is that in which the apostle speaks of "*having* the righteousness which is of God:" "and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, *the righteousness which is of God* through faith" (Phil. iii. 9).

Here, it is naturally asked, have we not the doctrine announced of our actual possession of the righteousness of God, and must we not understand the expression somewhat differently from that in the former cases? Does not this show that Divine righteousness is in some way the righteousness which is ours by faith?

A glance at the original will, however, clear up the difficulty. The "*of* God" is really "*from* God," as it is in 1 Corinthians i. 30: "who *of* God is made unto us righteousness." In each case it means simply that from God our righteousness comes, but does not further reveal its



nature. The expression is really a different one, and must not be confounded with that in the former passages.

(3.) But we have now, however, to trace further the development of the Scripture doctrine. We have seen the righteousness of God declared in the death of the Lord Jesus, and therefore available as the safe shelter of him who takes refuge under it. We have now to see it declared further (but as the necessary result of this) in the Lord's resurrection, where God first was able fully to show Himself on the side of the One who had now glorified Him as to sin, and suffered to redeem those whose condition it was. He "was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom. vi. 4). His resurrection was now an absolute necessity to the display of that glory. Could He leave it as an unsettled question between Him and the world that crucified Him, on which side He was? Could He leave His cry for deliverance out of death unheeded? or suffer His holy One to see corruption? Manifestly He could not do it. God must act in righteousness and in power, and that both towards Christ Himself and the people whose cause He had taken up.

As between Himself and the world, the Lord's appeal had been: "O *righteous* Father, the world has not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me" (John xvii. 25). There he had linked His believing people with Himself in that appeal to righteousness in His own behalf. And prophetically already had He seen and announced the answer. The Comforter, the Holy Ghost, shortly to come as the witness of His ascension and of His glory, would therefore, by His very presence in it, "reprove (or convict) the world of sin, and of *righteousness*, and of judgment." "Of sin," says the Lord, "because they believe not on Me; of *righteousness*, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more" (John xvi. 8-10). The Father would take back

out of the world that beloved Son whom He had trusted in the world, and whom the world had so unanimously, so scornfully, so murderously rejected. They should lose the inestimable blessing which they had no heart to value. It was a righteous thing that they should lose it; how necessary a part of Divine righteousness to take Him who had vindicated it with a zeal which consumed Himself as the sacrifice to its majesty, out of the sepulchre in which man had with impotent hatred sealed Him up, no longer to leave Him in the world the man of sorrow He had been, but to exalt Him in the manhood once for all assumed as His, to the right hand of power!

(4.) And this will lead us to the last text, where the result of His work is seen, and where those who are its fruit are linked together with Him, as needed for the display of Divine righteousness: the full answer to His appeal to the "righteous Father." "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21).

In our behalf He was made to be what He was not: for had it not been for others He was suffering, this would have been no display of Divine righteousness at all. It would have been the very reverse of righteousness. But therefore, in order to its display, those for whom He suffered must be identified with Him in the results of His suffering. He must not be alone in that place which as man, for man, He acquired,—which for Himself He had no need to acquire. The manifestation of Divine righteousness in the cross required, that, as the fruit of it, His people should have the place which He had toiled to bring them into. They as in Him, blessed and exalted, are made *God's* righteousness; not merely righteous, but *His* righteousness,—its embodiment, as it were, and its display.

How complete, then, the triumph over sin, when Divine

righteousness, not allows merely, but requires the presence of those once, and but now, sinners, in the glory into which He has entered! How marvelous to be linked thus with the display of Divine attributes forever! The glory put upon us is thus in every ray of it the glorifying of Himself before His creatures, so that in us His character may be made known, in us the depth of His heart exhibited, to an adoring universe;—to creatures blessed unutterably by this knowledge. Not righteousness only shall be thus displayed, but treasures of “manifold wisdom” also, as well as (surely most of all shall *we* acknowledge it) “the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.”

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## THE TWO NATURES, AND WHAT THEY IMPLY

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(Jno. iii. 6 ; Gal. v. 17.)

**W**HEN we speak of there being two natures in the believer, as these passages, with others, plainly teach, it is needful, in the first place, to explain the words that we are using. The more so, as the word "nature" is not of frequent use in Scripture, and such expressions as "the old nature" and "the new nature"—in frequent use among ourselves—do not occur. I am not on this account condemning the expressions. They may be useful enough, and accurate enough, without being taken literally from Scripture; and he who would exclaim against them on this account would show only narrowness and unintelligence really.

But what such persons have a right to insist upon, and what we should all be as jealous for as they, is that these expressions should really represent to us *things* that are in Scripture,—not fancies of our own, but truths of the Word of God. Our business, therefore, must be to explain the terms we use, and justify them by the appeal to Scripture, by showing that the things themselves are there for which we use these expressions as convenient terms.

There is no word for "nature" in the Old Testament at all. In the New, the word translated so is, in every case but one, the word *phusis*, "growth." In the exceptional case, it is *genesis*, a word familiar to us as the title of the first book of Scripture, so called from its describing

the origin or "birth" of the world. The two words in this application come nearly to the same meaning; they express the result of what we have by our origin—the qualities that are developed in us by growth.

Now, for us as Christians, there are *two* births, and two growths, and thus we can rightly speak of two natures,—two sets of moral qualities that belong to us: the one as born of Adam, the other as born of God. Each is dependent upon the life received, and from which it springs. We are one thing as children of men merely; we are another as children of God. Let us look at these separately now; and first, at that which is first in order of time.

*Men* we are, of course, all through. Here, again, we must learn to distinguish between what we are as men by God's creation and what we are as men fallen from the uprightness in which God created us at the beginning. We must distinguish between our nature as men and our nature as fallen men. Men we are, and are ever to be; whatever change we pass through in new birth as to spirit and soul, whatever change awaits the body at the time when the Lord shall call us to be with Himself, we shall never lose our essential identity with what God created us to be at the first. We are the same *persons* all through,—the same *individuals*. No question of life or nature, such as we are about to consider, affects the reality of our possession of what we commonly call *human* nature all the way through. The youth differs much from the infant; the man from the youth; yet the same human being, the same person, passes through these different stages. The caterpillar is the same being that is at first in the egg and that finally is the butterfly; so changed as to conditions that if we had not traced its continuity through these different forms, we should regard it as three or four different creatures; and yet we have the most absolute per-

suasion of its identity throughout. We might distinguish between the "nature" of the egg, the caterpillar, the chrysalis, and the butterfly, and yet again affirm its *insect*-nature to be unchanged throughout, and its individuality to be maintained too all through. It would be even its "nature" as an insect to go through these several changes. So we must distinguish between such terms as "our human nature," "our fallen nature," "our new nature." The fall did not unmake us as men; our new birth does not unmake us on the other side. What is essential to manhood we never lose, and our individuality too is never changed.

These distinctions are not useless, but on the contrary, most important. Did we keep them in mind, there could be no misunderstanding (such as there often is) as to the Lord assuming our nature, for instance. The words of the hymn, "He wears *our nature* on the throne," are objected to by some, because they do not make such simple distinctions; and on the other hand, some would press that taking of our nature into consequences as to our blessed Lord, such as every true soul would indignantly repudiate. He *did* take our human nature: He was in all respects true *man*; the consequences and conditions of the fall are as little essential to manhood as the fracture of an image is essential to the image.

Let us consider, then, briefly and simply, what is essential to man as man, in order to separate from it as far as possible what is due to the fall; *human* nature from *fallen* nature, or what Scripture calls "the flesh." We shall find mysteries, no doubt. Mysteries surround us, into which all our researches will enable us to penetrate but a very little way. Our knowledge is very partial; our ignorance is great. And nowhere among created things do we find more mystery than when we attempt to penetrate the secrets of our own being. But in keeping closely to the

Word, we shall find a sure and unfailing guide here as elsewhere, and a means of testing whatever may be gathered from other sources.

Man is constituted of spirit, soul, and body. He has lost none of these by the fall; he has only these when born again and a child of God. Mind, judgment, and therefore conscience, are properties of his spirit. The affections and emotions are faculties of his soul, which is also that wherein is found the link between the spirit and the body, and by which the former, while highest of all in its nature, and (rightly) controlling all, apprehends the things of sense.

Man is thus by constitution a conscious, intelligent, and moral being, but dependent, in his present state, upon his senses for the furniture even of his mind—a “living soul,” as Scripture terms him, and not a pure “spirit,” as the angels are. Yet, with other spirits, he is in relation to God as his God, and his Father too; only that in this last respect he has sold, like Esau, his birth-right for a mess of pottage.

The fall has affected man in all his constituent parts. It has subjected the spirit to the soul, and the soul to the body. The scene in Eden, which Scripture represents to us at once so simply and so graphically, is recalled to our minds as we ponder the inspired descriptions of what man now is. The link of affection, reverence, and dependence which held him to God being broken, he is like a building in which the roof has fallen in upon the base. Named from his lowest part, into which spirit and soul have sunk, he is “*flesh*.” Thus “*flesh*” is the scriptural designation of his old or fallen nature.

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food,”—there the body, and in its lowest cravings, is first; —“and that it was pleasant to the *eyes*,”—meeting the emotional desires of the *soul*;—“and a tree to be desired

to make one wise,"—there the spirit is,—last, but aspiring to independence of God. "Ye shall be as gods" had been the temptation. Yielding to it, the mental and moral structure had collapsed. A thing of sense rather than God man had chosen for his dependence: the things of sense became his necessity and his masters; his wisdom, henceforth not from above, was "earthly, sensual," and so, "devilish."

And this word "sensual," which, while it may well have that meaning here, is in fact the adjective of the word "soul," is the same word as that translated "natural" where we read, "The *natural* man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14).

The spirit here has given up the reins to the soul; the soul is swayed by the allurements of sense; the body itself, unbalanced and perverted in its natural instincts and appetites, becomes in turn the tempter of the soul. The man is "sensual:" his nature is "flesh."

We must not expect to find this use of the word "flesh," however, in the Old Testament, for a reason which will easily suggest itself to one who knows the peculiar character of the Old Testament. The law being the trial of man in nature, as long as the trial was going on, the character of man could not be fully brought out. Nor is it even in those first three gospels in which Christ's presentation to man is God's last experiment with him. "Having yet, therefore, one son, his well-beloved," as the Lord Himself puts it in the parable, "he sent him last unto them, saying, 'They will reverence my son'" (Mark xii. 1). But in John's gospel, it is seen that this trial too has failed: "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not; He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." That



is the very opening chapter; and thereupon He immediately goes on to speak of "the flesh," and of new birth: "But to as many as received Him, to them gave He [not "power," but] authority to become the sons of God, even to those who believed in His name." And who were these? "Which were *born*, not of blood, nor of the *will of the FLESH*, nor of the will of man, but *of God*."

One passage there is in the Old Testament in which man is characterized as "flesh," in a manner which seems to approach the style of the New. And this passage is found in almost the beginning of Genesis. Before the flood, the Lord says, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." Yet even here the declaration seems more to point to the frailty of a creature with whom it would be unseemly for God to be always striving. And the limitation of his days seems to coincide with this interpretation. It is like the appeal to Job,—“What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? and that Thou shouldst set Thine heart upon him? and that Thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment?” Or, like that hundred and forty-fourth psalm, so striking a contrast with the eighth,—“Lord, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that Thou makest account of him? Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away! Bow Thy heavens, O Lord, and come down . . . Cast forth lightning, and scatter them!”

All through the Old Testament, "flesh" is thus the symbol of weakness and nothingness: a use of it which is carried on also in the New. Witness a passage which is often cited in another way, and very falsely applied: it is the tender apology of the Lord for His disciples' sleeping in the garden: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Here, the "weak" flesh is clearly not at

all the old nature. It is bodily infirmity, which prevents it yielding to the will of the spirit.

In the gospel of John, we find, for the first time, the "flesh" used in the other signification of an evil nature,—our sad inheritance by the fall. We hear of a "will of the flesh" from which new birth does *not* proceed. And in the third chapter of the gospel, the Lord enforces upon Nicodemus the absolute necessity of a new birth, from the irreclaimable character of this,—“That which is born of the flesh,”—of man characterized as this,—“is *flesh*; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit: marvel not that I said unto you, ‘Ye *must* be born again.’”

Thus, out of man's fallen nature proceeds nothing that can be acceptable to God. Like a field unsown, the heart of man will never produce aught, so to speak, but thorns and thistles—fruit of the curse. Life of the right sort must be dropped into it in the living germ of the Word of God, as our Lord teaches in the parable, and from that alone is there fruit for Him.\*

New life is thus introduced into the field; and while this does take up and assimilate material from the soil, and thus there now goes on an active transformation of this kind, yet how false an account would it be to give of this to make this transformation the whole thing, and ignore the new life which was effecting it! Yet in the spiritual change of new birth, people are, doing exactly this. They look at the moral transformation going on, and ignore what Scripture speaks of in the most decisive way—the introduction of a positive new life from God, from which the moral change proceeds.

It is no wonder if, in trying to define this, we soon lose

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\* It is one of those lessons from the book of creation, of which there are so many, that wheat is only found in connection with the presence of man—never wild.

ourselves, and are made aware of mysteries which crowd upon us at every step. Even natural life is a mystery, which the mind of man, vainly seeking to penetrate, is trying in an exactly similar manner to deny. We are told that we may as well talk of a principle of "aquosity" in water as of a vital principle in a living thing. Yet as a cause of certain effects otherwise unaccountable, it is as vain to deny it as it may be impossible to define. So spiritually we may learn lessons from experience which at least rebuke the folly of not listening to the Word. And Scripture points these out also, giving us, as needed explanation of what every child of God finds in experience, a doctrine which alone makes all intelligible, and enables us to learn and use the experience itself aright.

As for natural birth there must be, not merely certain processes, but the communication of a life-principle which produces, controls, and harmonizes these processes, so is there precisely for new birth. The voice that soon will quicken out of death natural—which all that are in the graves shall hear and shall come forth—now quickens similarly the spiritually dead,—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live: for as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself” (Jno. v. 25, 26). Here there is a life communicated by One who has it in Himself to communicate,—a new life for those “dead;” in whom, if there be not this first, no moral change is possible at all.

This new birth the Spirit and the Word combine to effect. A man is born of water and of the Spirit, the water here, as the symbol of purification, taking the place that the seed of the Word does in the parable elsewhere. As the apostle Peter tells us, we are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of

God . . . and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pet. i. 23, 25). And so the apostle of the Gentiles explains Christ's purification of His Church to be "with the washing of water *by the Word*" (Eph. v. 26).

To take up again the former figure of the seed, used by both the Lord and the apostle, the seed is the incorruptible Word which gives form and character to the life-manifestation; but the life itself must be in the germ, or it cannot be manifested. So the word of the Lord embodies and manifests the new life we receive, but the energy of the life communicated by the Spirit works by the Word, and there is "growth"—the development of a new nature, which is characterized by its blessed and holy attributes.

Thus Scripture speaks of "the *ingrafted Word*" (Jas. i. 21); and the apostle John, similarly connecting the new nature with the Word, says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for *His seed* remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 Jno. iii. 9). This is Peter's "incorruptible seed" of "the Word of God," but the life communicated by the Spirit, as already said, causes it to germinate; and, being "*everlasting life*," His seed remains.

The "nature" of the seed determines the form of life. The new nature, God's gift, is not a mixed or partially good thing. It is in itself perfect (though capable of and needing development), without mixture of evil from the very first. In the man in whom it is implanted, evil indeed exists, as thorns and thistles in the field in which wheat is sown: these things being not the imperfection of the wheat in any wise, though hindrances to the crop they are. The character of the seed we have just seen, where the apostle says that the child of God "doth not commit (or rather "practise") sin; *for His seed remain-*

eth in him." The new life, if obscured by the evil, is untouched by it, and in essential,—nay, victorious opposition to sin. It will vindicate its character in one born of God, and manifest him as born of God; and where we do not see this result, we cannot recognize as a Christian the person in whom it fails, although granting the possibility of seed being in the ground that has not yet come to the surface. But "faith"—the first principle of the new nature—"worketh by love;" and "faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone:" "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Gal. v. 6; James ii. 17; Rom. viii. 14).

It is needful to insist on this at all times—never more needful than at the present time. It is no exaltation of faith to maintain it as justifying and saving, and yet possibly without power to produce fruit in the world, or to glorify God in a holy life. The apostle's faith was the power of a life devoted as his was—"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

Such, then, in its character, and such in its energy, is the new nature. It will be understood that the gospel has to be received, and deliverance realized, before this can be properly known; nor do I dwell upon these now.

But such is the new nature; and being such, it is the means of effecting that wonderful change in a man which we speak of as "conversion." As the seed converts the lifeless elements of the soul into the beauty of the living plant, so the powers and faculties of soul and spirit are brought back from death to life. The spirit, redeemed from self-idolatry, and having learned the lesson of dependence upon God which faith implies, is reinstated in its old supremacy; the affections of the soul are taught to trail no longer upon earth, and set upon God as their only worthy object. The body, yet unredeemed, and

"dead, because of sin,"—awaiting its redemption at the time of the resurrection (Rom. viii. 10, 11, 23),—can only as yet be "kept under, and brought into subjection" to the man new-created in Christ Jesus. (Rom. viii. 13; 1 Cor. ix. 27.)

But now we must again draw some very important distinctions. We speak of the old nature, or "flesh," and of the new. We speak also of the "old *man*" and of the "new." Is there any difference between these? and if so, what is the use of the distinction?

A *nature* and a *person* are in many ways widely different. Unconverted and converted, the person is of course the same. It is the one who was dead in sin who is quickened and raised up; it is the same person who was condemned and a child of wrath who is justified, sanctified, and redeemed to God. It is the person too—the "*man*"—to whom accountability attaches, and not to the nature. *Acts* belong to the individual, and not to his nature; and in the case of man, the only rational and responsible creature of whom we have something that can be called knowledge, we know that he is responsible to walk contrary to [not indeed his nature as God first constituted him, but yet] his nature as he actually now possesses it, fallen from its primitive state.

Only, in fact, by a license of speech do we speak of nature acting. To say of a person, "nature acts in him," whether said approvingly or disapprovingly, still implies that the man himself has lost command of himself, or does not exercise it. Many a Christian thus talks of the flesh in himself or others, as if its being flesh that was exhibited explained matters sufficiently. Yet, if he thinks about it, he will realize that he uses this language to *escape* responsibility, so little idea has he of responsibility attaching to a nature. Yet if this excused him, it would excuse every sinner that ever lived; and how could God

judge the world? In point of fact, men do use everywhere the truth of their sinful nature in order to escape condemnation; whereas if they would listen to conscience, they would assuredly find that not a single sin have they ever committed which they could truthfully say their nature forced them to. It *inclined*, no doubt, but they should, and might, have controlled the inclination. The essence of their guilt is, that they do not.

In the day of judgment, therefore, the award will be given, not according to the nature, (in which they are alike,) but to their works, in which they are not alike. God "will render to every man according to his *deeds*" (Rom. ii. 6). And this, and this alone, will be the exact measure of guilt and responsibility.

It may be objected to all this, "How, then, can the man in the seventh of Romans, who is converted, and has a will for good, find, on the other hand, the flesh in such opposition, that what he desires, he is quite unable to perform? How can there be still no ability, when the will is right?"

But the answer is plain, that the good he desires would not be good really, if done in other than the sense of dependence upon God, which is the only right condition of the creature. The power of sin from which he has to be delivered lies in the self-complacent self-seeking which assumes the shape of holiness to a converted man. For a holiness that makes *him* something, he has to accept a Christ who shall draw him *out of* himself. The "good" (in one sense that,) which he is seeking, is really a phantom shape which God has to destroy, to give him instead the true and only good. Thus only crippled Jacob can become Israel.

"Power belongeth only unto God." True—ever true: but were we right with Him, could it be lacking to us? Assuredly it could not. Still, then, it remains true that

no one is shut up powerlessly in bondage to evil. The key of his prison-house is in his own hand.

It is the *man*, then, who sins, and is the sinner; it is the *man* who has to be forgiven and justified; it is the *man* who is responsible to walk, not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. It is the same person—the same individual all through.

Yet, in another way, we may surely say as to the Christian, that the man that *was* and the man that *is* are total opposites. I *was* a sinner in my sins, freely following the evil that I loved: I *am* a child of God, with a new nature, new affections, and a new object. Between these two persons there is a wide interval indeed. The first is what Scripture calls “the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Eph. iv. 22); the second is styled “the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (v. 24), and “renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him who created him, where . . . Christ is all and in all” (Col. iii. 10, 11). The first it speaks of as being “crucified with Christ,” as it does of our “having put off the old man with his deeds” (Rom. vi. 6; Col. iii. 9.\*) The second, similarly, it speaks of our “having put on.” What we were we are not, and never can be again. But while this is happily true of us, it is also true that the “flesh”—the old nature—we have in us still, and shall have, till the body of humiliation is either dropped, or changed into the glorified likeness of the Lord’s own body.

The old man is gone forever, but the flesh abides: in those who are possessors of the Spirit, still “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the

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\*Eph. iv. 22 is not different from this, although the common version might make a difficulty. But the “putting off” here, and the “putting on,” ver. 24, are really in the past.



flesh ;" and the exhortation is, not to destroy the flesh, as if that were possible, but "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. v. 16, 17). A poor conclusion this, to many in our day! but to those who know themselves, how great a relief to find thus an explanation of what experience testifies to! It may be, and is, a mystery how we can have at the same time in us two natures, total opposites of each other,—how Christ can dwell in us, and yet sin dwell too; but Scripture affirms it, and experience also. If it is God's mind to allow us to know thus for a while what evil is, not by yielding to it surely, but as realizing its opposition, can He not make this experience even both to serve us and glorify Him?

The flesh remains, and remains unchanged: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" must always be said by one who identifies himself with the flesh. "The mind of the flesh is death; . . . because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. vii. 18; viii. 6, 7). Thus the Word speaks of the incurable evil of the old nature, which, attaching itself, as we have seen it does, to the things of time and sense amid which we are, God's remedy for it is Christ as an object for our hearts in heaven, and His cross as that by which we are crucified to a world which the flesh lusts after, and which in its moral elements consists of "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." We are not in the flesh; we are in Christ before God; our life is hid with Christ in God. The knowledge of our portion in Him, as given us by the Spirit, divorces our hearts, and turns our eyes away from that which ministers to the evil in us. "*As* strangers and pilgrims," journeying on to a point which faith, not sight, beholds, we learn to "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul"

(1 Pet. ii. 11), and, as a consequence, to "mortify the deeds of the body" (Rom. viii. 13). Our true power is in absent-mindedness,—a heart set upon that which stirs no lust, for it is our own forever, and we are invited to enjoy it.

This *satisfies*, and this alone. By "the exceeding great and precious promises" we "become partakers of (or rather, "in communion with,") the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. i. 4). The new life within us is strengthened and developed, and this alone can divine things work upon. Christ seen and enjoyed by faith, we grow up unto Him in all things, from the babe to the young man and to the father, when we have but to sit down, as it were, and endlessly enjoy our infinite blessing.

Before closing this brief sketch of an important subject, let us look closer at this question of growth, as the apostle puts it before us here. Growth (mental, not physical,)—the growth of a babe into a man, is a matter of education; not merely what professes to be such, but the influence upon it of surrounding circumstances which call forth the hidden energies of the mind and heart, and of examples which stimulate and encourage to imitation. God has thus, on the one hand, for us His discipline of trial; on the other, His perfect example of what He would have us grow up to. In general, men reach about the level of what is thus before them. God puts before us Christ, that we may grow up into Christ. Our occupation will tell upon us. What we give ourselves to will make its necessary mark upon us. The exhortation to us is, "Set your mind on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

The admonition, therefore, of the apostle to the babes and young men—to the fathers he has none—is to let nothing take away their eyes from Christ. The babes he

warns as to Antichrist, not that he may perfect them in prophetic knowledge, but because in their little acquaintance as yet with the truth of what Christ is, they might be led away into some deceit of the enemy. Satan's first snare for souls is some distorting error, which shall in fact deform to us the face in which alone all the glory of God shines, or substitute for His face some witchery for the natural eye, in which the heart may be unawares entangled, supposing it to be the true and divine object before it. This is Antichrist,—not yet the full denial of the Father and the Son, of course,—and antichrists there are many.

Oh that Christians did more realize the immense value of truth!—the terrible and disastrous effect of error! What presents to me, when seen aright, the blessed face of God Himself, may through Satan's artifice darken, obscure, distort this, or present to me a treacherous and destructive lure instead.

The apostle therefore warns the babes as to false Christs doctrinally. The young men are not in the same danger as to this. They are strong, and the word of God abides in them, and they have overcome the wicked one. Their danger now lies from the allurements of a world into which their very energy is carrying them. The word to these is, "Love not the *world*, neither the things that are in the world." For the eye affects the heart; and it is one thing to have seen by the Word that the world is under judgment, and another thing to have gone through it in detail, looking it in the face, and counting it all loss for Christ.

This the fathers have, however, done: therefore he says to them (and it is all he needs to say), "Ye have known Him that is from the beginning." It is all we gain by looking through the world; yet it is a great gain to be able to say of it all through, "How unlike Christ it

is!" And what when we have reached this? Has the "father" nothing more to learn? Oh, yes, he is but at the beginning. He has but now his lesson-book before him, for undistracted learning. But he needs not caution in the same way not to mix anything with Christ, and not to take anything else for Christ. How much toil to reach, how slow we are in reaching, so simple a conclusion! But then the joy of eternity begins. Oh, to have Him ever before us, unfolding His glories, as He does to one whose eyes and whose heart are all for Him! The knowledge of the new man is, "Christ is all!" To the martyr, in the fire which consumed him, this knowledge broke out in the words which told of a joy beyond the torment—"NONE BUT CHRIST!"

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## DELIVERANCE: WHAT IS IT?

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### I.—THE NEED OF DELIVERANCE

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

Before peace is known, a true walk with God is impracticable, however sincerely it may be desired and sought for. The moral character of practical Christianity is found in this: "That they which live should hence-

forth no more live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 15). But is it possible for one to whom his ultimate salvation is yet unassured to be thus regardless of what must be to him of the greatest moment to have secured? Can he live thus devoted to another who has such abundant reason for anxiety about himself? and if there is "no fear in love," as the apostle assures us, and love is the principle of all right obedience, and that by which faith works, how is it possible to be divested of fear—"fear" which "hath torment"—if there be a real possibility of at last being cast away as utterly reprobate?

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

But we are to trace out the subtler workings of this principle in those who have already "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." In such, there surely should be found fruit unto holiness. The instincts of every quickened soul are after it. Why is it, then, that such as profess (and we may say, truly profess) to be at peace with God are found so often, in practice, little beyond those who profess nothing of the kind?—nay, not unfrequently, as it would seem, doing their best to confirm the disparaging thoughts of those who identify the precious gospel of God's grace with what they entitle "antinomianism"? Why is it, further, that those who

really, with the knowledge of peace, desire earnestly to know what it is to walk with God, manifest and confess such constant and utter want of power for it? and why do so many who have begun well and happily, fall back often under the power of things they had forsaken, and go on in a course of conduct at variance with their Christian profession, even if they do not give it up?

We do not at all suppose that one answer will be sufficient to account for all such cases; but we do believe that one of the most frequent causes is to be found in this, that such souls, though they may have known peace, have not known deliverance—a deliverance such as the eighth of Romans, in the commencement of it, sets forth; a thing which must be apprehended, not merely doctrinally, but experimentally, before the Christian life in its true character can be known and manifested.

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

Thus it should be seen that the whole question here is of *serving* and of *fruit*.—"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth *fruit* unto God" (vii. 4); and again, "But now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held, that we should *serve* in newness of spirit, not in the oldness of the letter" (ver. 6, marg.). So the state is of one "carnal, sold under [in slavery to] sin," doing, under this

tyranny of sin "that dwelleth in him," in compulsion to a "law of sin and death," the thing he hates; and the deliverance enjoyed finally corresponds to this: it is that "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death."

It is therefore no question of justification or of peace; that has all been gone through in previous chapters. That, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, is a conclusion fully arrived at in chapter v. 1, and the inability of the law to *justify* had been fully insisted on previously to that. Throughout our present section there is no repetition of this; it is a different and a further question. While justification is "not of works, lest any man should boast," and "to him that worketh not, . . . his faith is counted for righteousness," here, on the other hand, it is "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

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

This in itself is important to realize, and at first a thing very difficult to realize. In the vivid apprehension of sins forgiven, of the terror of the wrath of God gone forever, of the wondrous love which has visited us and turned the shadow of death into morning, it is easy to conclude that the warfare with sin is well-nigh over, when, in truth, it has not fairly yet begun. Who could sin for whom the cross of Christ has blotted out the past, the grace of God furnishes the present, and whose future prospect is the glory of God? But experience soon sor-



rowfully disappoints this expectation, and we learn to cry out despairingly for a new deliverance—"Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

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

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

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

But all through he maintains that his will is on the side of God and good; he delights in the law of God after the inward man; with his mind he himself serves it; but he

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

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

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

## 2.—THE MEANING OF THE NEED.

A "*law* of sin in the members" is not what is proper to the Christian, as we have seen. If on the one hand the apostle's language is, that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," on the other hand he says, "These things write I unto you that ye sin not; and *if* any one sin"—he supposes this possible, but not normal. Again—"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit [or better, practice] sin; for His seed remaineth in him, and he *cannot* sin [or, be sinning], because he is born of God" (1 John iii. 9). The force of these words is, not that a believer cannot commit *a* sin, (a thing contradicted by Scripture and experience alike,) but he cannot *practice* it, or be sinning, as he once was; and over and over again this is asserted: "Whosoever

abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him. Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that practiceth sin is of the devil" (ver. 6-8).

This language has been strained so as to make it contradictory of the supposition that the experience of the seventh of Romans is that of a child of God at all, and to lead people into the manifest error that a mere child of nature may "with the mind serve the law of God," as "delighting in it." But this is in the teeth of the apostle's own assurance that "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can be*; so, then, they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God" (Rom. viii. 7, 8). Here, the mind *is* subject to the law of God, as the mind of the flesh; or of one in the flesh, cannot be. Thus the man passing through this experience, with a right will, and perfect powerlessness to accomplish it, is clearly converted and a child of God. And that deliverance described in the beginning of the eighth chapter, by which freedom from the law of sin is attained, and the righteousness of the law (of God) is fulfilled in him who walketh not after the flesh but after the Spirit, is looked at as already the happy portion of those whom the apostle John in his epistle is addressing as believers.

And their portion it is—a thing which thus lies at the beginning of a true Christian course; for how can one unable to do the things he would—carnal, and the slave of sin—be qualified to walk with God or to glorify Him? And yet, alas! with many a true child, for a long course of years the truth is not known which sets free for this. For the truth it is that sets free (John viii. 32), and the truth alone; but that also, truth apprehended by a soul conscious of its need—conscious of bondage, and longing

for deliverance. It is only when the cry is wrung from the soul, "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" that the answer is supplied, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is an experience of evil from which we are delivered; and for that we must, in one way or another, *pass through the experience*.

But this is not yet the explanation of the need; for why should not the knowledge of peace with God and the practical deliverance from the power of sin go together? In the epistle to the Romans it is evident they are treated as separate questions, of which the one receives its answer after the other. The ordinary experience of believers confirms this, if it does not add, often, "*long after*." I am persuaded that, in fact, the want of deliverance is the great want of by far the larger part of those even at peace with God. Their lives, if they would own it to themselves, are made up of empty purposes and broken resolutions, if they have not got into the more perilous condition, rather, of half-contentment with the evil, from which there seems no escape. Why, then, the need of such an experience at all as this in such as I am speaking of?

Now, in the practical attainment of peace with God, we may find (if we have attained it) what may help us greatly in the inquiry. Here, too, what a length, oftentimes, of so-called "conflict" before that which is already made for us and so fully proclaimed to us and to which we are made so heartily welcome is attained! What means this struggle? Its character is evident enough—at least to those who have passed through it. It is the struggle to maintain, or to produce,—by God's help, too, no doubt,—some righteousness of our own, for peace or for justification. Instead of bowing before God's righteousness, according to which "our righteousnesses"—"*all* our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," we seek to rescue something from this absolute condemnation, and be re-

ceived at least as not wholly and in the full sense "lost." We try (and are often *taught*) to find firm footing for faith in the assurance of our *saintship*, and not of our *sinnership*; as if as *sinners* we were not entitled to the fullest possible confidence in Him whose special title is, The Saviour of sinners.

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

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

How we are enabled for this we shall have to consider more at large directly. The fact itself is what I would press here. Justification is no more on the principle of faith than sanctification is: holiness is no more acquired by self-cultivation than righteousness is. It is faith that

purifies the heart; it is faith that worketh by love; it is faith that does all this, because it is *Christ* does it, and faith it is that lays hold of Christ for whatever purpose. Self is never its object, but Christ only. The soul taken up with the beauty of Christ is the soul that at one and the same time is learning effectually to be holy and what is its own nothingness and unlikeness to Him.

The need of the experience of self in the seventh of Romans is the need of learning practically to abide in Christ at all times, to accept Him for practical life as well as for position. And here we may have to find, what is a thing strange enough in the discovery, that a pious and right-willing self may stand in the way of this, and need to be set aside, that Christ may have the place that He must needs have with all His own. "I live, yet *not I*, but Christ liveth in me," says the apostle (Gal. ii. 20). That is another thing from saying "Christ is my life," to say "*Christ lives* in me." It is a practical substitution (for faith) of Christ for the saint on earth, as real as His substitution for the sinner on the cross. In death, He was the sinner's substitute; in life, He is the saint's. This may be still an enigma to the reader. I trust it will be cleared up as we proceed.

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

Surely God does enjoin it: surely we are to produce it.

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

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

### 3.—DELIVERANCE NEEDFUL FROM THE LAW.

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

Strange as this may sound,—strange as, the apostle admits, this doctrine must sound, where the law so spoken of is the law *of God*, "holy and just and good,"—it is yet in full consistency with the language of Scripture elsewhere.—"The strength of sin is the law." "Wherefore, then, serveth the law? It was added *for the sake of transgressions*" (Gal. iii. 19, Gk.),—*i. e.*, not to avoid, but to



*have* them. In the chapter before us, the apostle shows us this worked out in experience.—“For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came,”—what then?—“sin revived, and I died; and the commandment which was unto life”—“ordained” is not in the original, and is too strong; “was proposed,” one may rather say,—“I found to be unto death.” Let us now inquire into this so dark a problem for many even to the present day.

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

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

For this end, of course, nothing must be wanting *in the law itself* to make it a fair and a full trial. In effect, nothing *was* wanting. While God’s necessary claim for righteousness was exhibited by the law itself, this was accompanied with every incitement to obedience that could be given, and every possible discouragement to disobedience. Delivered from cruel bondage, in a way which manifested the power and goodness of their Deliverer, the awful judgments accompanying it, though upon their enemies, were warnings, on the other side, not to trifle with His goodness. The visible ensigns of Deity

were before their eyes, the audible utterances of Jehovah in their ears. Did they obey, earth should be practically paradise renewed; while disobedience would mar all their happiness for time as well as for eternity. Heart and conscience, eye and ear,—the whole of man, and in all his circumstances and relationships, was addressed in the fullest way. Nor was the encouraging voice of mercy wanting: still, in the ears of even the wicked man it proclaimed that did he turn from his wickedness, and do that which was lawful and right, he should “save his soul alive.”

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

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

How it aroused it the apostle likewise shows.—“I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, ‘Thou shalt not covet [or lust];’ but sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence [or lust].” There the very point is touched that reveals man’s departure from God. To “lust” is to manifest a heart not in subjection to God. The “corruption which is in the world” is

"*through lust*" (2 Pet. i. 4). Had we not dropped away from the sense of God's wisdom and His love—did we believe in absolute *goodness* on a despotic throne, the Lord of heaven and earth our Father,—whatever the circumstances, how could one's heart crave more? how should it do other than rest absolutely?

The law, then, must, of necessity, forbid "*lust*," as the very characteristic feature of man's condition, as the expression of unbelief and enmity which is the "*mind of the flesh*." It must *forbid*,—but what then? Lust is *there*, and no prohibition will get it out—no law will better it. The flesh remains even in the child of God, and, as ever, opposed to God. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. v. 17).

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

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

not deliverance. It only makes me cry the more, "Oh, wretched man!"

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

Self-occupation is never holiness. God never means me to be able, with the Pharisee, to thank Him for the goodness that I find in myself. Self-conscious humility is spoiled by the consciousness. If I will be at it, He leaves me to find in this irreparable flesh, which cannot be mended, what I may break my heart over, but never alter. It is a quicksand which spoils all my building—a morass impracticable to cultivation; and God uses this, in His sovereignty over evil, to wean me from self-confidence and self-complacency, and cast me over helplessly upon Himself. But then, surely it will begin to be apparent that for real fruit Godward I must "be delivered from the law." This is the plain teaching of the epistle to the Romans; and the experience detailed by the apostle, and familiar to so many souls as there described, is abundant confirmation of it.

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

## 4.—THE MEANS OF DELIVERANCE.

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

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

The second is, that we must omit altogether the last clause of the first verse of that chapter. All critics are now agreed, whatever their individual creed may be, that "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" is an unwarrantable interpolation from the fourth verse, where the words are in perfect place and keeping. As they stand (and still more certainly in the Greek), they make "no condemnation" conditional upon a certain walk. But this would effectually set aside the apostle's argument, as we may surely even already see. It would be poor consolation to one groaning over his powerlessness to do the thing he would, to be told that his freedom from condemnation nevertheless depended upon his doing this! and it would be the emphatic denial of the doctrine already so emphatically laid down for us in the previous chapters—that we are "justified by faith, without the

deeds of the law." But the consideration of the passage at length will clear up any remaining difficulty.

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

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

But this point being reached, deliverance is at hand:—“I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The first word of the delivered man is praise, and brings in a name which we have never heard throughout the experi-

ence preceding. The eye turned in upon self has been turned away from Christ. The destruction of all hope of self-satisfaction has left it free to return to its allegiance. Deliverance has come through Him who is now more than ever "Lord." But how has it come? and in what form? Has there been a sudden infusion of power from on high, nerving the paralyzed soul to accomplish the thing impossible hitherto? No; that is contradicted by the words which follow. It is not that: it is a word which has come home to the soul—a new revelation which reveals the folly and hopelessness of the past struggle, while it brings it to an end forever. "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin: now, then, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the Spirit's law, of life in Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death."

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

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

First, the words with which the seventh chapter closes,—"So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin,"—are not a description of the state which follows deliverance, but of the state to which deliverance applies and in which it finds the speaker.

This is shown by both clauses of the sentence; equally by the fact that he is yet serving the law of *God*, and by the fact that he is yet serving the law of *sin*.

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

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

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

"*In Christ Jesus*"—what is that? It is evidently a definition of all Christians; and it defines them as a people identified with One who as a man has entered into the presence of God for men, their Representative. The full acknowledgment of that wonderful fact, too little apprehended by those who have title to all the blessedness it



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

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

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

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

And "now, then, there is no condemnation to those

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

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

or any thing of that kind. It is not yet the question of how to walk, but of what I *am*; but a question which, when settled in God's way, stops necessarily the effort to BE what no effort of mine can make me, and what, thank God, His infinite grace has already made me.

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

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

that, drinking it in, reflects it back to Him, a wealth of satisfaction and joy in Him.

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

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

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

"I live"—because, of course, the person—the individual remains still the same. It is no Platonic mysticism, no pantheistic absorption into the ocean of being. The joy that fills my heart, the brightness poured over my life, are *mine*—fully and entirely mine. Nay, I live henceforth a life true and eternal, worthy to be called such. I have for the first time, as the apostle terms it, "what is *really* life."\*

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

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

What a deliverance is this! I am drawn out of the whole scene to which I belonged, and in which my interests, my rights, my cares, my sorrows and temptations inhered; and being drawn out and to Himself, the hold of all this loosened and cast off forever, I am sent into it for one blessed purpose, as His, TO REPRESENT HIM IN

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

IT.—“As Thou hast sent Me into the world, so have I sent them into the world.” (John xvii. 18.) And so, as the works He did were “in the Father’s name” (John x. 25.), the works we do are to be in *His* name: “whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Col iii. 17.)

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

### 5.—POWER.

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

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

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

with man. And therefore, also, is He Man with God and God with man.

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

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

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

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

Occupied with this glorious object, we are transformed by it; we receive the light and give it out. Hence, an-

other characteristic of a life of power is that it is a life of *dependence*,—only as we *receive*, and what we receive, we give out. And this surely, also, “abiding in Christ” implies. “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye,” says the Lord, “except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing.” (John xv. 5.) The connection between branch and stock must be maintained, or the sap cannot circulate; so only as we abide in Him does He, as fertilizing sap, abide in us; or, as the Lord again put it at the feast of tabernacles, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John vii. 37, 38).

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

For this, then, there must be dependence—a dependence of which we are made, and intended to be, continually conscious; for thus, as Christ is alone continually power to us, the constant ministration of it is the constant



witness of an omnipotent love, which carries us and all our burdens. And thus we have not to measure our strength for the evil day, for our strength it is not. He has guaranteed that "as thy days, so shall thy strength be." (Deut. xxxiii. 25.) This is the promise to Asher—the happy one, and happy indeed is he who realizes it. Thus, as the apostle says, what indeed we want to know in ourselves is weakness, for "when I am weak, then am I strong." "*His* strength is perfected in weakness." And then it is not merely that I receive sufficiency, but it is "*His grace*" that is "sufficient for me." As with Israel in the wilderness, every day is a new realization of a love which is as fresh and true one day as another, and as full of power in the greatest as in the smallest emergencies.

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

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

It is true that the Spirit of God may have, alas! to take also of things that have been in my walk and ways

to show me where I have *not* walked as what I am—*not* walked as Christ walked. But even so, not to occupy me with myself, but to show me the fruit of having forgotten to “reckon myself dead unto sin, and alive unto God in Jesus Christ.” Having learned and owned what has come of my eye being off Christ, my *resource* is His grace, who brings the basin and the towel to cleanse me from the defilement I have contracted. “If *I* wash thee not,” He says, “thou hast no part with me.” For that, even, I must be His debtor, and for that again, in company with Him.

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

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

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

## PETER'S "CONVERSION"

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### I.—THE ROOT OF FAILURE

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

"And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both unto prison, and to death.

"And He said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me" (Luke xxii. 31-34).

"And the Lord turned, and looked on Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly" (Luke xxii. 61-62).

"But go your way, tell His disciples *and Peter* that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you (Mark xvi. 7).

"The Lord is risen, indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon. (Luke xxiv. 34).

"Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. . . . As soon, then, as they were come to land, they saw a *fire of coals* there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. . . . Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. . . . So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" (John xxi. 7-15).

I HAVE put together these passages from the Gospels, that we may have before us, at one view, all the steps in that "conversion," or restoration of Peter's soul, of which they speak to us. Conversion, in Scripture, is not by any means always the first grand turning of the

soul to God, but is the term used for any turning from sin also, into which even as converted (in the ordinary sense now) the soul may have got. Peter long before this had been converted (that is, in the sense of being born again,) as is plain by the Lord's words in Matt. xvi. He had had Christ revealed to him by the Father, and had believed that revelation—was a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. The conversion the Lord speaks of is his restoration of soul after the denial of his Lord and Master.

The outward sin, which too commonly we judge to be all, is ever and only the out-cropping of a state of soul which was there before, and is the root of it. No force whatever of temptation would suffice to upset or draw away a soul which was finding its strength in God Himself. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able," is ever true here. So that a man is actually "tempted"—that is, temptation succeeds with him—when he "is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." That which exposes him to the evil is in himself, and not in his surroundings. A soul that in the thorough consciousness of impotence rests in God for help is impregnable to assault. "When I am weak, then am I strong." Self-confidence, therefore, in some form, is the secret of all failure—the root of all actual commission of sin.

That this was so in Peter is evident. It ought to be evident also that his is a pattern case. His restoration is the divine application in the last supplementary chapter of John's Gospel, of the feet-washing of the 13th, where Peter, too, is the resister, and is told that by-and-by he shall understand the meaning of what he understood not then. In pain and shame, indeed, he learns it, as more or less we all do, but a lesson well worth learning at whatever cost, and, indeed, absolutely necessary to be learnt;

a lesson it will be well for us if we learn, and at less cost, through his example as the Word gives it us, than by our own.

A root is a little thing apparently, and below the surface. Who would judge to be so grave a thing the expression of honest affection to his Master which spoke out of him in the words, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee to prison and to death." How easily such like things in us pass undetected in ourselves and others! At least, if detected, how little serious we deem them! Who would have thought that the fruit of this would be, "I know not the man." Yet it was, plainly. Not, of course, the fruit of the affection, which was really there—he was no hypocrite,—but of the wretched self-confidence, only able to carry him into the danger, but not through it; sure to break down, and needing to be broken down, at whatever cost; necessitating the perfect love of God itself to give him over into Satan's hands to break it down.

Look at Job. There is not one like him upon the earth, a perfect and upright man. That is God's testimony. Why put such an one through those sorrows which are the very type of suffering to this day? Alas! Job nourished and cherished this perfectness of his, as hundreds now their *Christian* perfection, as they style it. Therefore, "Behold, he is in thine hand." *Satan had asked the same thing concerning Simon Peter*; a lesson for perfectionists to the end of time, but a lesson for many more besides. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired"—it is "demanded," rather—"to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." Mark that "demand." It is *as* wheat he demands them, for he is the sifter of God's wheat. This applies to all the disciples; but there is one in special need among them, and him the Lord singles out from among the rest: "I have prayed for *thee* that thy faith

fail not." How tender that anticipation of the trial before Simon Peter, yet no prayer that he may escape it; it was necessary that he should be exposed to it, and that, too, with the certainty of breaking down. How solemn that warning! And how different yet the Lord's judgment of the matter to ours. In ours, that terrible denial in the high priest's palace would be the thing most thought of. In His it was the laying bare only of the state which necessitated it.

While warning it is, there is yet comfort in the warning. If I have fallen into the ditch, it is that I might be turned back out of the path which led to it. It was needful I should fall, and love allowed it for my recovery. But that recovery is not effected simply by my getting out of the ditch, therefore I must be got back to where my path diverged from the true one; yes, and have got the signpost up upon the by-path, too. It is for want of this that we fall again so often in the same way. To judge the open sin is easy, and no assurance at all that I shall avoid it for the future, no token in itself of recovered spirituality. "If we judge *ourselves* we should not be judged." To judge our *sins* and to judge *ourselves* are two different things. For the last we must have distinguished and judged the state of which the sins are only the issue—the root on which, if it be not removed, fresh fruit will surely grow.

This is restoration in full result. We must notice, however, that there is another kind of restoration needed first and in order to this. Many overlook it or displace it, and to their own serious hindrance. To this the Lord's prayer for Simon Peter plainly looks on, and His own announcement of it to him, along with the announcement of the sin itself, would do its part in due time towards it. The tendency of sin—*all* sin—is to weaken faith, and put distance between the soul and God. And then this again

is what makes (so long as it lasts) recovery impossible. Not merely if you are not washed, but "if I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me." And we—we must have put our feet with all their defilement into His gracious hands, that they may be cleansed. For that we must be with Him. Distance will not do. With Peter we may think it only becoming to hold off and say—and say it with reverent consideration of His greatness and His holiness—"Thou shalt never wash my feet." We may try to cleanse them by confession and self-judgment, and so make ourselves fit to be with Him again. We shall accomplish nothing by all this. *He* alone washes. We must needs submit to the supremacy of love and grace in Him, and be with Him not as cleansed but as defiled, and let Him cleanse.

We will return to this, and look at it more in detail presently. What we begin with is, that in all cases actual sin is the out cropping of a state of soul which went before it, and necessitated that we should be given up to it. And moreover, this state is very generally, and at the best, some form of self-occupation and satisfaction. We never fall because of weakness merely. We fall because we do not realize our weakness. We have our hand out of our Father's hand. What could harm us if it were not so?

But there are many forms of this, and some so unsuspected, it will be well to pause and look at them a moment. Peter's might be plain; but his undoubtedly true affection to his Master, and upright honesty of purpose, disguised it for him. Such do you find with many a young soul fresh with a fervor most real but yet untried. What is the meaning of the miserable breaks-down and failure so soon experienced often after conversion? Not surely that God would have us fail! Not that there is a necessity of failure to which we are delivered! No, but that

even at the expense of failure we must be allowed to see what we are who would so fain serve God, and be something now, if we never were *till* now. Did He leave us to that, what should we not lose? How would our very piety soon shut out God from us, the Strong One's strength that beareth us and all our burdens; the love of Him who carrieth in His bosom! To know His worth, we learn our worthlessness, and that the lesson is cheaply learned will be proclaimed in eternal Hallelujahs.

There are others apparently not at all on this ground, and indeed at its very antipodes. They have learnt so fully (they would say) what failure is, that they can think of little else but this. Speak to them when you may, they have nothing but lamentation over their short-coming to respond with. Sunk under the load of a body of sin and death, they imagine that to be self-judgment which is mere self-occupation, and which gives no whit of power for the holiness they long after.

This is not self-complacency, it is true; but it *is* a *desire* after it. If not able to utter the Pharisee's "God, I thank Thee," they are at least miserable because they cannot do it. They have not reached that point of self-judgment at which we turn away in hopelessness from what we have no further expectation from. On the contrary, it is because they have this expectation that they find such grievous and continual disappointment. This, therefore, almost equally with the former condition, exposes the soul unarmed to temptation. If "the joy of the Lord is your strength," it is but little joy they have.

In both cases evil is the fruit, because did God suffer good, it would be but worse evil. We should dress up self with that of which we had robbed Christ, and all seeming good would be perverted and transformed to its mere opposite. "No flesh shall glory in His presence." Therefore the solemn and reiterated warnings of Scrip-



ture, not to bring us to content with fruitlessness, but to show us the way rather of bearing fruit. God takes up Job, a perfect man as none else on earth, and how painfully He has to teach him his vileness. The Lord takes up Peter with his honest love to His Master, and has to let him learn in the high priest's palace that he could deny that beloved Master with oaths and curses. He has to be in Satan's sieve that he may be "converted," *not* from the denial of his Lord,—that was but the bitter and painful means by which he was to find out where he was before;—but out of the self-complacency and self-sufficiency which was, in His sight who seeth not as man seeth, the deeper evil. Satan's desire in sifting was not this, of course, but this was God's use of it, and its end.

How slow are we to recognize this! Yet it is most important to do so, for if we look at the fruits in the life as isolated from the condition they manifest, we may judge and judge the former, and, leaving out the latter, leave still the root out of which again and again the evil springs. So in the case of another, equally with our own, we may address ourselves to the mere things into which one may have got, forgetting the deeper question of what got one into it. And here we shall find that Peter's fall is no exceptional one. Self-trust is ever our ruin. Never trusting ourselves we shall never be disappointed. The answer to all that we are is the cross whereon, for what we were, Christ died. We have died,—we are dead,—with Him, that He might be indeed the object of our life. "To me to live is Christ." If it be *that*, God, with all that He is, is with me. Power cannot be lacking to accomplish what is His own purpose. Alas, that it should be so easy to mistake my desire to be something for Christ, for this, the only rightful object of the soul!

## 2.—THE ADVOCATE AND HIS INTERCESSION.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not," says the apostle (1 John ii. 1). It is important to ask of what he had been writing with this end in view. We may answer that essentially, communion with the Father and the Son had been his topic, and the fullness of joy in it—for "the joy of the Lord is your strength"—would be their safeguard. The two passages are evidently in close relationship to one another: "these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full," and "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."

Thus occupation with Him in whom Divine love has visited us, is our preservative from the snares of the enemy, from the solicitations of the world around us, and from the lusts of the flesh to which these alone appeal, and which give them all their success. Lust is spiritually the beggar's badge, the sign of emptiness and dissatisfaction. The soul filled is the soul guarded. The earnest and reiterated exhortation of the epistle of experience, is the needed one for holiness and fruitfulness alike: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice!"

"God is light" and "God is love." These are but two aspects of what is essential unity, and in reality inseparable from one another. In Christ, God manifest, they are "grace and truth." In contrast with law, when God was hidden in the holiest, "grace and truth *came* by Jesus Christ." Here the real unity of these two things is apparent: for "grace" there cannot be where sin is untruly dealt with; while "truth" that came by the Son of God incarnate could as little be divorced from the love that brought Him down.

Yet there is an order in which these two are presented to us, and this order is not unimportant to us. How differently it would appear if we read "truth and grace,"

instead of "grace and truth!" for grace it is which (in the presentation of these to our hearts) comes necessarily first, and thus is "truth in the inward parts" established; while yet, so little can truth be *divorced* from grace that, until truth *be* established there, the proper *enjoyment* of grace there cannot be.

The order is plain in the first chapter of the epistle. If "the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you," is "that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all," who is He that has brought us the message, but He whose very presence among men is in itself a gospel? At His birth the angels had proclaimed not only "Glory to God in the highest," but also "on earth peace, good pleasure in men." In Him the Word of life (the apostle has before been telling us) was "heard," "seen," "looked upon," and "handled" by our hands. Thus Divine love had brought in Divine light; and now if we "walk in the light as God is in the light," what has rent the veil behind which in the thick darkness He had dwelt, and enabled our human eyes to take in the revelation? Surely, once more, Divine love, which in providing the precious blood to put upon the mercy-seat, has opened a way of access into the holiest of all.

A *righteous* way; and thus "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life;" but surely love, not righteousness, has found the way, and righteousness exalts the love which has done so: grace reigns, though righteousness is the basis of its throne.

Love has let out the light; love invites and enables us to "walk in the light." That is not setting it aside, but the contrary. "Light" implies "manifestation": "that which doth make manifest is light." In the presence of God, Himself in the light, we and all things else are manifested. Repentance and remission of sins are preached to us in the saving name of Jesus (Luke xxiv,

47), and as we believe the grace which has visited us, we bow to its holy terms and drink it in. As confessed sinners we find God "faithful and just to forgive us our sin," and so to "cleanse us" inwardly "from all unrighteousness." The order of presentation of the truth is ever the same.

So far—and that is as far as the first chapter of John's first epistle carries us—we have to do with the first entrance of the soul into the presence of God. The latter verses (which are often taken as applying solely to the failures of Christians) are strikingly, and according to the apostle's manner elsewhere in the epistle, the testing of a profession which was already in his day beginning to be wider than the reality. In verses 6 and 7 he is defining how far amid such profession the efficacy of the blood extends. Love has let out the light. The light of the holiest carries with it the cleansing virtue of the blood with which the rending of the veil has furnished the mercy-seat. It is therefore "if we walk in the light," manifested to ourselves, "as He is in the light," manifested to us, . . . "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." It is *where* we walk, not *how*, that is in question; and plainly to make it here a question of a believer's conduct morally, would be to say that the blood of Christ cleansed just in proportion as there was nothing to cleanse from.

The three verses following are really the definition further of what it is to walk in darkness or in light, and are thus the necessary appendix to the former ones. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," are in darkness, "and the truth," the product of the light, "is not in us." "If," on the other hand, "we confess our sins, showing the action of the light upon us, (we have sins and nothing else to confess) "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." This is the connection of repent-

ance and remission of sins indicated in the passage in Luke before quoted. It is so clearly parallel to the preceding verses, and so simply refers to the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, that to make it the introduction of a new subject,—and *that* the subject that we are introduced to, *as if for the first time*, in but the second verse of the following chapter,—seems really impossible to concede; yet that we find here principles in God's way of dealing which may be carried further, and applied in this and in other ways, is true, for light and love are ever one in God, and what He is He will be; He cannot deny Himself.

But these things the apostle puts before us, as he plainly says, *that we may not sin*. "If," notwithstanding, "any one should sin," that case is considered next. But observe how differently the matter is put. This kind of sin is put hypothetically only, not as if it were sure to be, but *if* it be, then "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins." It must be confessed, but the eye of the person who has sinned is thus not in the first place turned upon himself, but upon Another, his Advocate. It is of course implied that he knows he has sinned, but that is not at all the same as restoration. In this, grace must act, Christ must restore; and it is of the greatest importance that our eyes should be thus directed to whence alone all help comes.

"An Advocate" (Paraclete): One who takes our cause in hand to see it through for us; "with the Father," not God as God, but in settled nearness of relationship to us as His own. Were it as His creatures simply we had to do with God about sin, it would imply that we had no true position in righteousness at all before Him, and then intercession could not avail for us. Intercession with God as God is that of Priesthood, not of the Advocate;

and there "such an High-priest becomes us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and *separate from sinners.*" As long as the blood of Christ is on the mercy-seat, he who has come to God by Him is perfected by it, and the intercession of the Priest with God is on account of *weakness*, not of sin (Heb. vii., x.).

The intercession of the Advocate, on the other hand, is for sin, but with the *Father* for the *children*. It is needed, not to take away guilt, nor surely to turn the Father's heart towards us, but as regards the government of the Father's house. "Christ, as Son," is "over His house" (Heb. iii. 6), and all in it are under His hand. As charged with them it is necessarily His place to act in their behalf with the Father; and, as noted in the passage before us, being "Jesus Christ the righteous," Him the Father ever hears. If among mere men even, "the prayer of the righteous man availeth much," and this be a well-understood principle of holy government, how absolutely must avail, and how easily intelligible, the intercession of the One alone absolutely righteous! while in addition to this He is also "the propitiation for our sins." Such is our Advocate. Well may our eyes be directed towards Him, then, in the very first place, when the restoration of the soul is before us. We shall also comprehend that, as Son over the Father's house, He is more than simple Intercessor.

In Peter's case, which in this as in other places seems quite a typical one, we are permitted to see the Advocate in His place and hear the purport of His intercession. We find that before even the sin had taken place He had been with the Father about it. We find, too, that Satan also had been before God about Simon Peter among others. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired (*demand*ed, it should be rather) to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee

that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

The prayer of the Advocate had not been the effect of Peter's repentance plainly, but of His knowledge of the need and danger of His unsuspecting disciple. Satan had demanded them all for his sieve, as the permitted sifter of all that purports to be God's wheat; and, as in Job's case, he had obtained his request. The Lord had not for a moment asked that the sifting should not be, but the special need of Peter He had provided for by the special request for *him*—He does not say for *them*—that his faith might not fail. His failure otherwise He foretold. It is very noteworthy and solemn that He could not apparently ask that he should not fail. Simon must be permitted to break down, as Jacob his father before had to be broken down, that just as Israel sprang out of crippled Jacob, so Peter, the man of stone, might come out of sifted Simon. Jacob had to give up his cunning, Job his goodness, Simon his strength, for a like end in all. Our human virtues lie but too near our vices: our wisdom is our folly, our folly wisdom; our strength is our weakness, our weakness strength. This is the first lesson of our primer, and hard to learn: but when we have learnt it, our progress is wonderful. Jacob crippled is at once a prince with God, and Simon, just now shrinking before a maid, strengthens his brethren.

For us it is serious that if we are "wheat," or assume it, Satan has undoubtedly demanded us for trial, and that the Lord our Advocate does not refuse his claim to that. But He has prayed for us also, who can doubt? We may well trust ourselves, not in carelessness, but not in carefulness, to His hand and care.

We have already in some measure considered the purport of the Lord's intercession, that Peter's faith may not fail. That sin has a natural tendency to weaken the

practical confidence of the soul in God, I suppose by experience we are well aware. Upon this Satan works to produce a practical separation from Him, which he well knows to be fraught with disastrous consequences. At a distance from God self-judgment is impossible, and power of recovery wholly lost; further departure follows, and here may be the secret of a long period of declension, a night and winter of the soul, dark, cold, and unfruitful. The sins which may follow upon this are but its necessary result and sign. To deal with these as if they were the whole matter, or half the matter, is a most serious mistake; nay, they may be of such a character as to be little noted by the unexercised conscience of the man "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." He owns, perhaps, he is not spiritual, thinks of it rather as his misfortune than his fault; is a fatalist, when he thinks he is only owning creature nothingness; is "blind and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

From this state we must carefully discriminate that which is indeed very different in itself, though under certain conditions it may verge into it. I mean the state of one who may have known peace, but not deliverance; who is trying to make something of himself—that self which the cross of Christ has set aside for him—and finds as the necessary effect neither power in himself nor help from God. This is not an unexercised state evidently, though through bad nurturing it may lapse into it, and "the good that I would I do not" may become at last but acquiescence in the evil from which there seems no escape.

Who can but groan when he considers how large a part of Christians really come under one of these two conditions? From hence schism, heresies, a worldliness great enough for the reproach of the world itself, and innumerable other evils! Oh, for the power of the Word, quick,



and sharper than any two-edged sword, to pierce even to the dividing asunder of joints and marrow, of soul and spirit, and to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart! God grant us, reader, honesty with Himself and in His presence, with whom we have one and all to do.

Peter's case was one of self-confidence, that is, of self-ignorance, the haughty spirit, sure precedent of a fall. The fall he needed, nothing but the humbling of it would do for him. The danger was lest he should, as one hopeless and reckless, drift away from Christ still further, and fall effectually under Satan's power. Confidence in Him whose grace he had begun to know alone could hold him fast, so that the break up of self should only the more make that grace to be exalted, and become the strength henceforth which in himself he lacked. Having learnt that, he could "strengthen his brethren."

### 3.—FOOT-WASHING.

We must now turn to that 13th chapter of the gospel of John which furnishes the text, so to speak, of which Peter's "conversion" is the significant illustration. It is evident that here, as in connected chapters of this gospel, the Lord is anticipating the results of His death, and looking on to His service in resurrection. He is teaching in acts and words whose true significance is not upon the surface, but must be sought for deeper. "What I do thou knowest not now," He says to Peter himself, "but thou shalt know afterwards." The prefatory words of the chapter carry us on to the time when He "should depart out of this world unto the Father," and expressly connect the lowly and tender ministry recorded here with the place taken with God as possessing all things. If love uses its wealth in behalf of His disciples, it is their need before a holy God which dictates this form of service. A "part *with*" Christ, of which He speaks to

Peter, necessitates cleansing according to and in the power of that Word which is so often symbolized by water: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me."

Part *in* Christ is not at all the question, though here also the Word it is which acts and must act; but this is that primary washing which the Lord distinguishes from the washing of the feet. For when Peter, passing from one extreme into the opposite, from refusing the Lord's condescending grace, would have his hands and head washed as well as his feet, the Lord replies: "he that is washed (or "bathed," *léloumenos*) needeth not, save to wash (*nipsasthai*) his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all."

The first washing is of the whole man, and sets its indelible seal upon the soul, not needing and not allowing repetition. "Whosoever is born of God doth not practice sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot be sinning, because he is born of God." Such is the real force of the apostle's words (1 John iii. 9), which shew us on the one hand the indelible character of the washing, and how at the same time there may be needed such a cleansing from defilement contracted by the way as is expressed in the Lord's action in this chapter.

The washing is "water-washing by the Word;" not as the blood cleanses, therefore, from the guilt, but from the defilement, of sin. The foundation of all is the precious blood of Christ. "Without shedding of blood" there could be no more the one than the other. Being delivered from wrath, our moral purification is necessitated and assured.

The "washing" here is of the feet, the purifying from defilement contracted in the walk: it is the application of the Word to set right what has been wrong, and deliver from the effect of it morally. But there is much more than this to be considered. There is the One who

washes, as well as the washing, and the style and manner of its being done also.

It is Peter who, beside the Lord Himself, is prominent in all this scene; that Peter whom we have already seen specially mentioned in the prayer of the Advocate. All have need of the cleansing, and all, no doubt, are remembered in His prayer; but Simon Peter it is who in both cases illustrates the Saviour's care of His own. We have remarked too that the tenor of the prayer is that Peter's faith may not fail, and Peter it is who is found in this chapter demurring to the Lord's taking that lowly place in which here we find him. All this is in harmony with the self-confidence which we have seen to be the root of failure, and which lurked under the form of love to his Master in the words: "Though all shall be offended, yet will not I." But the same self-confidence in no dissimilar shape showed itself in his words at this time: "Thou shalt never wash my feet;" in answer to which the Lord presses upon him his necessity and helplessness: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me."

Self-confidence and faith are contradictory things; and as the former would lead into the open failure, so it would tend to separate the soul, in the time of its need, from Christ,—to make faith fail in view of the break-down. And still (and that is why Peter is kept so steadily before us in all this) the same cause everywhere brings about the same results. Under the plea of the holiness of God Satan will seek to cast the failing one away from Him in whose hand alone is power to help; and sin too clouding the soul, it will be led into some legal means of self-help in order to set itself right with God, rather than betake itself to Christ in simplicity for cleansing.

It is here that the mis-use of such a passage as 1 John i. 10 works so injuriously. Applying this to cases of this kind as the Divinely prescribed remedy for such, the soul

falls back upon a process of what it deems self-judgment, hoping by this to restore itself to the communion it has lost. To be forgiven and cleansed, the sins have to be confessed: a very simple condition, it may seem, indeed; but he who has learned himself aright will easily recognize that the simplest conditions to one away from God are absolutely impossible. Two ways the endeavor to perform this condition works, according to the actual state of the soul in question, as it is either light and careless at bottom, or really distressed and legal; but either way restoration to communion is not in fact attained.

A careless soul will naturally make most disastrous use of such a passage. The confession of sins may become with such really very much what it would be with a Romanist, a means of readily wiping off (only here without even a penance) what has never caused it much trouble, and what will cause little in again contracting. The sins that such an one feels are gross enough at least for an unspiritual person to recognize without much difficulty. He has only to confess these, and forgiveness and cleansing are assured. I believe many and many an one is thus deceiving himself with the belief that he is thus again all right with God, nay, must be, because he has fulfilled the condition, and that it is a matter of duty, against the plainest evidences, to believe this, because has not the apostle said, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"? Carelessness may in this way be taken for the spirit of one who has apprehended the gospel, and is free from the gloomy shadows of an oppressive legality.

On the other hand the person who is not thus indifferent will indeed become a prey to legality, to find, as always, that the law is the strength, not of holiness, but of sin. If confession of sin is to be made before there can

be forgiveness or cleansing, he will not find it so easy to know if he has performed the condition. Occupied with himself, with his confession and self-judgment, he has no security but that a treacherous heart will deceive him here, as it has so often deceived him elsewhere; and what right has he to happiness or forgiveness, until he has performed the requirement?

But, with Peter, he has missed seeing that the cleansing water is in Christ's hand alone; and the needed word for him is, "If *I* wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." Still the Lord waits upon His own, girded, and with the basin and towel, ready Himself to do the work so needful to be done, so impossible for self-accomplishment. "If *I* wash thee not." So that He expects, not clean feet, but feet *to be* cleansed; and the cleansing is what He has undertaken to perform, with whom we may safely (not carelessly) rest it.

The needed thing on our part is then to be with Him, our feet in His blessed hands in the confidence of faith. There He assumes the responsibility. But what is implied in our being thus with Him? This, in the first place, and above all, that distance between us and Him is of *our* putting, not of His putting; and of our *keeping* also, not of His. There is no possible place in which we can be, where we may not turn to Him, and find Him with us. The contrary thought is really unbelief. It reveals that tendency against the fatal effects of which the Lord had prayed for Simon Peter, that his faith might not fail. How often do His people dishonoringly speak of God hiding His face from them, when, if there be hiding, it must be they who are doing it, not He. God who looks ever upon His Beloved with unchanging complacency, sees us ever in Him, and cannot turn away. The clouds that obscure the sun are not from the sun but from the earth; and so with what failure and unbelief produce

as to our state. The Father shuts no door behind His prodigals, but runs forth to meet them. The Shepherd of the sheep is always He who seeks them out. Nor could His withdrawal be needful for them in order to self-judgment: it would be withdrawing the light that we might better discern. For in His light alone we see light.

But of course turning to Him must be a real thing. It is not the mere seeking of joy from Him, or seeking communion with Him in indifference to evil. Indifferent He cannot be, and thus His words fully apply: "If I *wash* thee not, thou hast no part with Me." True turning to Him must be for cleansing, and cleansing according to His mind. There can be no bargaining with Him, no reserve. The honest desire must be to be with Him at all costs; the prayer of the heart, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me." Here, alas, is apt to be the real difficulty. Days, months, years of unhappiness and evil are passed while we are fruitlessly endeavoring to induce Him to make terms with what indeed we may not choose to consider sins, but what we feel nevertheless a scrupulous strictness would oblige us to give up.

Thus "little communion" means almost always, "little integrity of heart with Him." Joy we want, no doubt, and rest of heart, and many another thing; and we are very sincere in the desire for self-gratification: but, alas, we would have these upon terms incompatible with His bestowment of them. We offer the blind and the lame and the sick in sacrifice, and wonder why we have not the tokens of His acceptance. In this application how many of us have yet to learn that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

Here then is the decisive point. The Lord is abun-

dantly desirous to have us with Himself, and is ready with His basin and towel to cleanse us after His thought of it, that we may have part with Him. Are we as willing to submit ourselves into His blessed hands, that love may have its perfect way with us? Or is He too severe a taskmaster, and can a "part with Him" be purchased at too great a cost?

If not, we shall find love's girded Servant ready to take our feet into His hands,—soiled, not clean,—and for that we must be with Him to begin with, in the faith that admits no distance, the faith that (whatever we are) should never fail. If now our hearts would value, above all that the world can give, a part with Him; if we will let Him shew us what evil, what defilement is, as measured by His word, and not our thoughts nor the thoughts of those around us; then we are welcome to Him without any preparatory work to make us so. Coming to Him without reserve, we shall find Him meeting us without reserve also, and in His presence learn self-judgment, as we can nowhere else.

We shall now be prepared to see in Simon Peter the Scriptural illustration of this perfect way of a perfect Love.

#### 4.—RESTORATION OF HEART.

"I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Such words from the lips of the great Advocate, the more they are pondered, the more will they assure us how important that must be which forms in fact the whole purport of His prayer. Repentance, restoration, and all that is implied in these, are evidently connected with this maintenance of Peter's faith. And it is not so difficult to understand how. A ship at anchor will ride out the storm, and, however tossed, recover herself, if only the anchor holds. If it does not hold, she drives before the storm. And as

it is just such a time that tries the anchor, as well as the ground it holds in, so it is with us in seasons of failure such as this with Simon Peter; only of the goodness of the ground there is no question here, and all the strain is upon the anchor.

How naturally apt faith is to fail, may be better understood if we consider how little, with the mass even of true Christians, it is at all in lively exercise. How many sharp decisive statements of the Word are pared down to almost meaningless nothings because there is not faith to entertain them! How many blessed promises which should cast all care out of our hearts, leave them yet weary and burdened, for the self-same reason! It will be a not unprofitable work, perhaps, to search ourselves out honestly by such questions, and take stock of our faith, even when perhaps not where Peter's self-confidence placed him, and where our deficiency would be so apparent.

Now, if we consider also, we may be easily aware that faith and self-confidence—trust in another and in self—are ever opposed. Any deficiency in the one implies a corresponding increase in the other. What but a real confidence in our own superior knowledge could make us refuse, as we so often do, the guidance or the comfort of the inspired Word? Peter could contradict his Lord up and down, and so can we, without realizing, no doubt, what is implied in this. Our self-ignorance is lamentable. Little do they, often, who can talk well about the deceitfulness of the human heart, imagine what is in their own. And thus we must needs so constantly expose ourselves, in lesser ways, but as really as Simon Peter.

Thus it is no wonder that the Lord's prayer for Peter should be that his faith might not fail.

Moreover, in this failure of faith, it is first of all implied, that where man failed at the beginning he fails again. It



is divine love that is in question first, and which brings divine truth into question; and thus man, slipping away from confidence in God's love and care, becomes a weary worker on his own account. Lust, which is nothing else than this self-seeking away from God—lust thus entered, and all "the corruption which is in the world" is "through lust."

Hence the preservative and remedy for a soul that is slipping away from God must be in the careful strengthening of its confidence in God's love. This will not exclude, surely, the maintenance of divine holiness, for grace is ever linked with truth, and introduces it to the soul; but it will give character to it. It will be the basin and towel in the hands of One meek and lowly in heart, who will stoop at our very feet to wash them. Wonderful and blessed picture, which is given us too, not for our comfort and admiration only, but for our imitation also, in our dealings with one another: "Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

But how little yet do we understand that mere righteous dealing—absolutely righteous as it may be—will not work the restoration of souls; that judgment, however temperate and however true, will not touch and soften and subdue such hearts to instruction, as by the very facts of the case are shown not to be in their true place with God. Man is not all conscience; and conscience reached, with the heart away, will do what it did with the first sinner among men, drive him out among the trees of the garden to escape from the unwelcome voice.

The whip and the scourge may be righteous, but there is no winning the heart of man with these. Nor is it righteousness that reigns among the saints of God, but grace that reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life. Alas, how many sins that might have been washed away have been retained! how many brethren alienated for all time that might have been won back to God and to us, because we have hammered at the conscience merely with the heart ungained—with the heart, I may say, almost unsought! We have not overcome evil, because we have not overcome it with good. We have taken readily the judge's chair, and have got back judgment; but the Master's lowly work we have little done.

But let us return to Simon Peter, and see how, (where it is the perfect work of the Master Himself, instead of the work of His failing disciples,) Divine love steadfastly manifests and asserts itself towards him. How much pains taken that his faith might not fail! What careful, tender dealing until Peter learns, what he had not really learnt before, to put his feet into the hands of One who in love had set Himself to serve him in such a fashion.

The Lord's forewarning words must first be considered. They were not merely a warning; indeed, as that, they were not accepted, nor availed to keep Peter's feet out of the snare that was laid for them. Surely they availed much more, when recalled to Peter's mind by their fulfillment, to bring home the sense of His love who had not only warned of the failure, but prayed for the failing one, and predicted the restoration along with the failure itself.

When we look at the prediction too, as the apostle John records it, at the end of that thirteenth chapter to which we have made such constant reference, we find (if disregarding the artificial division of the chapters we read on without a break), that it is immediately followed by

familiar words of comfort, but which in this connection may appear new to us:—"Jesus answered him, wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." And then come the words: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, *believe also in me.*" How Peter's soul, as the circumstances of that solemn night were recalled to him, must have drunk in the words! Who can doubt the design all through? He who had prayed for him that his faith might not fail, had enjoined him to believe, in the very presence of his sin.

In the high priest's palace we know too that, at the very time of his denial, "*the Lord turned and looked on Peter.*" We may not imagine what that look conveyed, but we are told that it brought to remembrance the Lord's word: "And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly."

All this was not enough for the object of the Lord's care. The next thing we read is, after His resurrection, when the angels say to the women at the grave: "But go your way; tell His disciples *and Peter*, that He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you." Thus an angelic message assures Peter of his place still among those other disciples, with whom it might be thought he could no more be numbered. No notice is taken of any breach; no repairing of any therefore attempted. It is the Master of former days, and the old words to be fulfilled, and the disciple as of old. There is no breach: *He* will not allow one.

And this too is only a message to prepare Peter's heart for the Master Himself. He will not see him with the rest merely. Might he not shrink back if first met with the rest? No: his heart must be yet more effectually

prepared by a private meeting before the public one. What a lesson for the heart of any poor wanderer, who is mis-reading the Lord's by his own! Peter is the object of special care and love at this time. A John even may wait, but Peter cannot wait: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon." "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve."

Again we have no account of what took place there. It is just the fact itself that is left to impress us. And it is evident that the aim is still restoration of heart. The searching comes by-and-by. But oh, how much pains taken, and how much needed, to assure the soul of a poor wanderer like this!

When the Lord meets the twelve, Peter is in his place with the rest, and no special notice is taken of him. He hears, as others, that "Peace be unto you," and looks once more at the wounds in His hands and side. And so after this, how many times we know not.

The last scene takes us to the sea of Tiberias, and Peter is seen in his old foremost place among the disciples. They follow him fishing, and all night catch nothing. But with the morning Jesus stands upon the shore, but they know not that it is Jesus. He says to them, speaking in the intimacy of affection: "Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, no. And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes."

How it must have recalled the time past, when a similar draught of fishes was made the means of awakening Simon Peter's conscience, and of making him cry at Jesus' knees, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Yet it is not Peter but John, very noticeably, who says, "It is the Lord." But then Peter's warmth is again manifested: "Now when Simon Peter heard that it was

the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked), and did cast himself into the sea."

He is in full restoration of heart back with the Lord, and ripe for closer dealing. But notice again, how gently he is prepared for it. "As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a *fire of coals* there, and fish laid thereon, and bread." A striking thing upon the shore there, that fire of coals! The only other place we find it in the gospels, is in that other well-remembered scene in the high priest's palace. How that fire must have spoken to Simon Peter! But the Lord says nothing. Their food is prepared there, and He says simply, "Come and dine"; and Peter dines with his Lord in the presence, so to speak, of his sin. Face to face with it, he is with his Lord as he had ever been. No more than that? Aye, nearer than ever surely! with a deeper, tenderer gladness; knowing better, fully known, distance impossible again! Surely that fire of coals robbed Peter's heart of no element of gladness there as he sat and dined!

And after they had dined, and not till then, the Lord, still on the old terms with His disciple, but those terms now fully understood,—the Lord had a question for Peter's conscience, which it was time to ask.

Then, and not till then!

#### 5.—FULL RESTORATION.

We have now seen Peter fully restored in heart to God. The full searching out of his conscience is yet to come; but the time for it is reached when that strange dinner by the fire of coals is ended. "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me *more than these?*" We cannot but recall, and see that the Lord is recalling, Peter's fervent yet boastful words; "Though all shall be offended, yet will not I." His answer to this, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love

Thee," declines the comparison which he is thus reminded of. But the Lord does not allow it to rest there. Again he asks, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" and when Peter again affirms his love, He once more repeats the question. Not once too often surely, as we know, and as the result proves; for then only do we read, "Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." This threefold repetition connects Peter's first boastful affirmation with the threefold denial in the high-priest's palace. Root and fruit are connected together, and Peter's answer testifies of the omniscience that has scarched him out, "Lord, Thou knowest all things;" if that only deepens the conviction that where he had signally failed to manifest his love in outward act, yet He who knew all could read it in his heart.

The Lord's questions vary, however, somewhat in their form, as often noticed. In the first two He uses a different word for "love" from that which He uses the third time, but which is that which Peter uses all through. This latter is the term for affection, ardent and heartfelt, but it may be unintelligent and unappreciative also; the former is a love guided and sanctioned by a deliberate judgment also. Both terms are used in a bad sense as well as a good, and the more discriminating and deliberate love is, the worse it is if set upon evil. Yet this intelligent love which can give a reason to itself is otherwise the higher quality. It is the love of the Spirit, as Scripture would put it, as Peter's word expresses the love of the soul; and although the Father in both ways is said to love the Son, yet when it is said, "God is love," the word used is necessarily the former.

The Lord then uses this higher term first, and descends to the lower, thus searching out Peter more and more,

In the first place, too, he adds, "more than these" (the other disciples); then asks, "lovest thou Me" at all? And when Peter urges still his, "Thou knowest I have affection for Thee," He takes him up lastly even there, and asks, "Hast thou affection for Me?" Then the disciple's heart gushes out. Even this poor "affection," alas, might be questioned now;—yes, but thank God, *not* by Him, who knowing all things, could discern what others could not. He dare not say, "I love Thee more than these," dare not claim for himself the possession of love in its higher quality at all; but be it what it may, he *has* "affection."

Thus his self-judgment is complete. Searched out by the Divine eye, he is found and owns himself, not better but worse than others; so self-ignorant that he cannot claim *quality* for his love at all, nothing more than something that he feels and is conscious of, and which (he has so failed in showing it) omniscience alone might see.

And now the needed point is reached. The strong man "converted" to weakness, is fit to "strengthen his brethren:" as Peter step by step descends the ladder of humiliation, step by step the Lord follows him with assurances of the work for which he is destined. "Feed my lambs." "Tend my sheep." "Feed my sheep." He, the faithful Shepherd, who could give his life for the sheep, could give those sheep, so dear to Him, into the hands of this humbled, ruined man. How sweet and assuring this grace to Peter, and to us. When brought to nothing, He can use us in our nothingness, and when He can use us He will.

But the Lord does not even stop here. He takes Peter back once more to his first zealous protestation, "I will go with thee to prison and to death," and He says, Peter, you shall have this honor also: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young thou girdest thyself,

and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this He said unto him, Follow me."

Thus in that path in which human energy had broken down, and the strength of flesh availed nothing, Peter was henceforth to walk indeed as having proved this. The Lord takes up that prompting of affection for his Master, separates it from the mixture of self-sufficiency that had spoiled it, and now gratifies the affection itself. Peter had lost the opportunity of manifesting his love just now; but he shall have it nevertheless, and it shall be patent to every eye at last as surely as omniscience could read it in him now. Blessed Lord! He knows how to take forth the precious from the vile, and will lose not even the fragments that remain of what is true and of Himself, out of the shipwreck which may seem to have shattered hopelessly all we had. May these last words linger in our ears to whom as much as to this beloved disciple He says, "Follow Me." Yea, Lord, we follow: who would not follow? "Draw us; we will run after Thee," sustained by that grace, as sufficient for us as for Simon Peter. The path will soon end in glory,—with *Himself*.

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## BROKEN GLIMPSES

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"And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight." (Luke xxiv. 31.)

**H**OW aptly does this describe what must have been the spiritual experience of most of us or all, at some time. The momentary glimpse caught, so sweet, so brief as to be almost a sorrow in memory, won as it would seem by effort, but which no effort could retain. What is the meaning of this and what is its remedy? Is it normal for us, the necessity of a life of faith, or the failure of faith, and to be judged as such?

In the case of the two at Emmaus; what held their eyes? Was it divine power for their discipline, or human weakness, or what else?

It is plain they had failed in faith. The Lord's words were a rebuke; His difficulty in yielding to their desire a greater rebuke. These are things which those who know their Lord should have no difficulty in interpreting. The latter we may find again, or what resembles it in a case which should be familiar to us in the earliest book of the Old Testament. Lot in the gate of Sodom found his angelic visitors slow to yield to an invitation which, at Abraham's hands, a greater than they had accepted without the smallest hesitation. Here the Lord Himself had stayed behind with Abraham. Sodom could not receive Him save in judgment. Lot's dwelling there kept God out of his dwelling. Was it arbitrary dealing that we read in his case no such words as meet us in the case of the "friend of God"—no appearance of Jehovah to Him, no "I am the God of Lot"? As little was it arbitrary dealing when the messengers of judgment had to say, "Nay, but we will abide in the street all night."

And when his importunity had prevailed, and he had

put such fare as he had before his guests, and they had sat down,—was he accountable or not for the clamor of the men of Sodom at his doors which interrupted them? Did he not abhor the wickedness? Did he not grieve for the interruption? Both, most undoubtedly. Yet Abraham had no men of Sodom to interrupt. Was that to his credit?—certainly, as it was his gain. Clearly it was the result of being where the men of Sodom had no place. Lot had chosen Sodom, and he must have the conditions attaching to his choice.

What does this tell in our ears? does it tell nothing? The thoughts that throng in upon us as unbidden, if not as unclean, guests, when we would so gladly have them away—at the Lord's Table, at the prayer-meeting—hindering communion: have we any similar responsibility as to these? The effort necessary to obtain what we cannot hold, while other things throng in uncalled, when we do not want them: why are these things so? There is no accident, be assured. There is nothing arbitrary. How often would the Lord be absent from us when He might be present? No: we have lost authority to keep out, what (so licensed) must keep Him out. We have given the key of the house to those who now hold it in defiance of us; we have resigned our authority, and lost it. They control us, when we should be controlling them. We have shut Him out, who could control them, by the necessity of His holiness.

With Lot there was not even a glimpse of the Lord possible, but it was the fruit of a place where association not only defiled, but where the choice of such association was in itself defilement. How many thus, by these associations, shut out the sunshine from their hearts effectually! Is it not only a lesser degree of a similar cause, when but a ray now and then struggles with the clouds that again banish it?

## “MILK OF THE WORD”

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“**A**S new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” (1 Pet. ii. 2.)

Is not this a passage often misconceived of? Does it mean that we are to be always as babes in Christ returning to the first elements for nourishment? I apprehend this is how many take it. But it is not its force, as a little consideration may suffice to show.

There is of course a stage in our life as Christians in which we are necessarily and rightly “babes.” The apostle John addresses himself to these (1 John ii.). But the Corinthians were rebuked for the continuance of such a state, and to them carnality was the true synonym for its protraction: “I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ” (1 Cor. iii. 1). And both here and in the epistle to the Hebrews the apostle blames them for the necessity they had for “milk.”

Here in Peter the thought is different. The Word itself is milk, the whole of it, and we are to be not simply as babes, but as *new-born* babes in our desire for it. To a new-born babe what is milk? Its very life, we may say. And such is God’s word to us, and such is to be its place in our affections. The Word, the whole of it, is that which God has provided for us, and it would be but dishonoring it and Him who gave it, to extract certain elements from it, and dismiss the rest as not available for food. It is *all* food, if appropriated as such. The highest and most advanced truths, so-called, do but expand,

illustrate, and confirm, the Gospel itself, than which no truth is more wonderful, deeper or "higher." We do not leave the Gospel behind as we go on with Scripture, nor even have to turn back to it to find the refreshment it supplies for our souls; but it is the Gospel itself that travels on with us, more and more learnt, more and more developing itself to us continually.

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# KOHATH, GERSHON, AND MERARI

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## I.—KOHATH

**T**HE book of Numbers is the history of the wilderness, the type of our journey through the world to the rest that remaineth for the people of God. It is preceded necessarily by Leviticus, in which first we learn what suits God in the sanctuary before we come out to practise it in the world. Leviticus is therefore the priest's book, as Numbers is that of the Levites: both are types of Christians, who as priests have access to God where now His glory is for us displayed, and as Levites have to carry through the world the precious testimonies of that glory to us displayed.

And Christ it is in whom Divine glory shines for us. It is the glory of the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, but a glory which now shines out for us from the face of a Man passed into the heavens. In Him we are brought near to God. In Him we know God. He has descended into the darkness which hid from us the face of God; He has dispelled it forever. He has revealed the holiness and the tenderness of Divine love. We know God, and are known of Him. We are His, and He is ours.

This knowledge it is that we carry with us through the world; and it is our competency for testimony in the world. It is in no wise a testimony to ourselves, but to Him. We are "the epistle of Christ read and known of all men." And this is not responsibility only, but com-

petency ; for the epistle is not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ; not on tables of stone, but on fleshy tables of the heart. The gladdening light which has shone in, shines out again. And, no matter what it shines upon, it is easy enough to tell where the light is shining. The moon, our type, is but herself a ruin, but bathed in the sun's brilliance, she can reflect it to us.

It is a good and happy thing to know that this is Levite service. As Levites, they had (in one way) as much to do with the holy things of the tabernacle as had the priests themselves. Their service was in these. And ours no less is to carry with us through the world One of whom it is always safe and happy to speak, and occupation with whom is itself a real and precious testimony. What more real than when men see that He has attraction for us? what more precious than to feel, as our eyes fasten upon Him, that here is sunshine for a whole world, and healing, if they will have it, for every sin-sick, sorrow-sick heart, the wide world over?

"Ye are the epistle of Christ," says the apostle ; not "epistles." It is not after all that you or I could be individually an epistle of Christ. No single heart of man is a table broad enough to write such an epistle upon. It takes the whole Church to make what could be called the "epistle of Christ ;" and then, as little as the world could contain all the sun-rays, or the moon reflect the full brightness of the sun, so little could even this fitly represent Him. Ah, we belittle Him, with all we can do. Yet a warm and bright spot can be made nevertheless with but a few of His beams.

The apostle, in Heb. xi. reminds us of a "great cloud of witnesses" who had exhibited in their day the necessity and power of faith. But when he comes to the Lord, he does not mix Him up with these, but speaks of Him

alone as the "Beginner and Finisher of faith."\* They had shown it out piece-meal: one the energy, and another the patience, another the strength, another the humility, another the clear-sightedness of faith, and so on. But in His life there had been exhibited the full dimensions and the full content of faith, and there alone.

The work of the sons of Levi shows us this. Kohath, Gershon and Merari have each their division of labor in the things of the Lord, a division which I desire a little to interpret and to emphasize now. Only by the united work of all could that which needed, be accomplished. Still we must guard a little against a thought that might arise, as if it was meant that, for us individually as Christians, there was only a responsibility to present Christ in a certain character; as if we were to discern for ourselves whether we belonged to Kohath, or to Gershon, or Merari, and, if Kohathites, were not to intrude on Gershon's office, or if Gershonites, then not on Kohath's or Merari's. It is not so at all. We are indeed privileged and responsible to perform the whole Levite service, however much in fact our service may be of one kind rather than another. Just as, however much our lives may show perhaps the patience of faith rather than its energy, or the reverse of this, we are none the less responsible to manifest energy as well as endurance, or endurance as well as energy.

Now let us try to gather the meaning of this various service. If we look back to the consecration of the priests in Lev. viii. we shall find the blood of the ram of consecration, by which they were set apart to God, anointing the ear, the thumb and the great toe. This signified the devotion to Him of the whole man. The

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\* Not "of *our* faith": *our* is merely inserted by the translators, as the italic letters show.

ear was anointed to listen to His word; the hand to do His work; the foot to walk in His ways of pleasantness and peace. Hearing—the receptive life; walking—the subjective; doing—the practical, outward life. Hearing—the Godward side; walking—the selfward; doing—the manward. The whole life was purchased and redeemed to God.

Now Levite service was, and is (as we have seen), based upon the priestly. The Levites were given to the priests, to wait on them, as ministry or testimony in the world must wait upon communion. Thus it will not be strange to see these three parts of priestly consecration connecting themselves with the three families of Levi and their service in this chapter. Kohath, in fact, we shall find connected with the consecrated ear; Gershon with the anointed foot; Merari with the blood-sprinkled hand. To speak generally, the Kohathites represent the objective side of Christianity; the Gershonites, the subjective; the Merarites the practical manward side. If I fail to make myself at once clear, my meaning will come out, I trust, as we go on, and some important truth along with it.

Let us first, then, consider Kohath. The things entrusted to his care are the ark, the table of shew-bread, the lampstand (or candlestick), the golden and brazen altars, with the respective coverings of these.

The ark was God's throne in Israel, by the blood put upon the mercy-seat, at least typically, a "throne of grace." In the double material of which it was constructed (the shittim-wood and gold) it symbolized the Lord, through whom alone God dwells amongst His people. This was further shown by its being wrapped in the covering veil, the humanity or "flesh" of Christ. This was further covered with the badger-(or seal-)skin covering, which seems fitly to typify the impenetrable holiness which re-



sists all outside influences; while over all the cloth of blue displayed the heavenly color.

This is, then, Christ in glory (the gold outside the shittim-wood), maintaining the government of God in grace towards His people, and withal in unswerving holiness. By carrying this first, the sons of Kohath proclaim their Master: the Saviour-God, come down so low, gone up after His work accomplished, having not only put away our sins, but the enmity of our hearts also, and brought us back to holy and loving obedience.

Next comes the table of shew-bread, of the same materials as the ark, and covered with a cloth of blue, upon which the continual bread is placed, twelve loaves representing the twelve tribes of Israel, significantly covered with a *crimson* cloth, and that again with a seal-skin covering. Here is Christ again, maintaining His people before God, the fruit, in resurrection, of His death, the display of the value of the blood of the cross, where as "a worm and no man" He proclaimed the holiness of God in the very place of sin.\* That holiness thus confessed then (in the seal-skin,) is seen enwrapping and applying itself to all.

Thus, in the ark and in the table of shew-bread, Christ is seen for God and for His people. The third object that comes before us is still Christ, and still as in the

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\* The loaves are primarily for God, though the priest afterwards partakes of them. They are, as it were, the fruit of that "corn of wheat," which would have abode alone if it had not fallen into the ground and died, but, dying, has brought forth much fruit.

The "scarlet" or "crimson" is literally the name of an insect (a kind of cochineal,) from which a dye was and is still produced. It is the same word as that in the text quoted above from Ps. xxii. where the suffering of the cross is seen.

I must be pardoned for passing briefly over what is of such infinite beauty and such importance also. My reader will do well to ponder it.

sanctuary of the heavens, the Light-bearer for his own; He who has the fulness of the Spirit, from whose face shines the light of the unclouded glory in which alone we see light.

The two altars follow, and still both are Christ. The first is the golden altar, from which the fragrant incense rises up to God:—a *double* type of Him who is altar and incense both. By Him, as worshippers, we draw near to God. In the fragrance of what He is, our prayers and praises find acceptance.

The *brazen* altar is the only object here for which we travel outside the heavenly sanctuary. Every Christian heart will understand why it is linked with what is heavenly. The brass, which here replaces the gold of the holy places, is the type of enduring strength, easily apprehended as the result of His being what He was, Son of God as well as Son of man, as the brass in the altar overlaid the shittim wood. Although not suffering now, it is the holy Sufferer.

The ashes are taken from the altar, and a purple cloth now covers it: the royal color, for the Lamb slain reigns as such; and once more over all is the unfailing seal-skin covering.

Thus, in Kohath's charge we have Christ in glory before us continually:

Giving God His throne of grace, as in the ark.

Giving man his place before God, as in the table of shew-bread.

The Lamp of the Sanctuary, in whose light alone we see light.

The One by whom our prayers and praises rise up to God.

Yet still, though reigning, the Holy Sufferer of the Cross.

Thus Kohath (so to speak) has his gaze upon the heav-

ens, and Him who is seated there. His is objective truth essentially. He is receptive; and thus I have likened him to the priest's anointed ear. I do not mean that he is not practical, for this is all of the very first necessity for practice:—

God, known in grace, is now really *his* God:—he is reconciled—subject.

In Christ is His place, and he is a new creature.

The true light shines which manifests the character of all things.

He is a worshipper and the Father hears him.

And the Crowned One is the Crucified: the way to the glory is the cross.

What would we do without all this for practice? Yet, I may say again, they are essentially objective truths: they point the eye elsewhere than upon self; and nothing can be more practical than this very thing. Our first Pentateuch of lessons here, is Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ; and Christ, too, risen and glorified, although still in His heart of hearts just what He was on earth.

Here, then, let us find our Levite lessons first. The first form in this school is the highest. We enter the heavens to be qualified for earth; we do not begin on earth, to reach the heavens. Our simplest earthly duties require us to be conversant with the “things above.”

## II.—GERSHON.

The family of Gershon have a charge essentially different from that of Kohath. Theirs is “the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, his covering, and the covering of the badgers’ skin that is above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the hangings for the court, and the hanging for the door of the gate of the court, which is by the tabernacle and by the altar round about,

and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and all that is made for them."

These curtains are, as to material, of goats' hair, or of fine twined linen; the coverings, of rams' skins and of badgers' skins. The "fine linen," we are clear, from Rev. xix. 8, is "righteousness"—practical righteousness (*dikaïomata*). The curtains which compose the tabernacle itself, represent this in Christ, in whose flesh the Divine Word "tabernacled," as the expression is in John i 14. The hangings for the court represent the righteousness of saints, exhibited outside the sanctuary in the world; the hangings for the "door" and "gate" again represent Christ, as the only way of access. The skins, whether of goats or rams or seals (badgers), give also traits of personal character. That is, it is *walk* (the manifestation of personal character) that we find expressed in all with which Gershon has to do: the anointed *foot* is what characterizes his occupation here.

Let us look at these things however more particularly.

The curtains which formed the tabernacle itself are described fully in the book of Exodus. They were of "fine twined linen and blue and purple and scarlet, with cherubim of cunning work." The first was pure white, with which the blue, purple and scarlet were interwoven in patterns of cherubim. We may remember the Lord's own garment, seamless, woven from the top throughout: and also Joseph's "coat of many colors." The white is of course absolute purity, the complete reflection of the perfect ray of light. Blue is the heavenly color; purple, the royal; scarlet (or crimson) the sacrificial.\* These

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\* I in no wise refuse another meaning in Numbers xix. and some other places, and see a profound significance in the fact of "earthly glory" being thus represented by that which represents also the suffering of the cross; but the former meaning seems to me only applicable in a bad sense; to the Lord here it could not apply.

characters in the Lord combined to form the cherubic patterns which show Him as the One maintaining the majesty of the throne of God; for the cherubim belong ever to the throne. The Lord then is here before us in the diverse glories that His life down here exhibited. King of God's kingdom; heavenly, come down to earth; highest, and lowliest; absolute purity, self-sacrificing for the guilty. Never shall we get beyond this wonderful display of grace and goodness in which Deity has made itself familiar to us: that path in which extremest suffering only pressed the grapes into that precious "wine, that cheereth God and man." Such then is Gershon's occupation: and because that wonderful life is taken up from earth, and exists but as a remembrance, therefore is He indeed "Gershon"—his life an "exile," though but temporary, from his true home, where Christ is.

But the curtains of the tabernacle, though its beauty, do not give us all. Above these, as a tent upon the tabernacle, were the curtains of goat's hair, in which it puts on (so to speak) its prophetic garb—"the rough garment," assumed so often "to deceive" (Zech. xiii. 4), but here the garment of the absolute truth itself. This is the John Baptist covering of separation from the world, which the Lord did not wear externally, or as outward separation, refusing meats and drinks and social intercourse with those after whom as a physician, or a shepherd, He had come to save them. Still if He could touch the moral leper and be undefiled, that only showed how much deeper in, as nature and life, the separation lay. It was an essential *unlikeness* that made Him able to approach so near, as oil and water can be mixed and never mingle: contagion requires that the being to whom the disease is carried, should have affinity with the one from whom it is brought.

Yet was He true man, truest that ever was, the pattern

and perfection and archetype of man; the "corn of wheat" which, till it fell into the ground and died, abode alone, and yet was to be that from which all human harvest was to grow for God. Strange to those to whom He was nearest, essentially unknown where most accessible, His words to Philip apply to more than to him: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?"

And it was the goats' hair; for the goats' hair speaks of sin, and of its due from God, and of the needed offering for it; and the whole condition of the world, and all God's dealings with it connect themselves with this. He hated sin with a hatred none but God could have, yet longed over men with a longing none but a Divine heart could know without breaking. And these two things, this hatred and this longing, the prophet's garb implies; for the prophet is God's mouthpiece to men before judgment, and in view of judgment, yet God speaking, that He may not judge. And such, though more than such, He was.

Over these curtains was another covering of rams' skins, dyed red, the beautiful symbol of devotedness even to death. For the ram is not simply the sheep, the meek surrenderer of life, but, as the *male* sheep, imports the bringing into this surrender a firmer and stronger will, an energy of character which makes it purpose, *determinate* surrender. Hence the ram was "the ram of consecration," and the typical trespass, or restitution, offering. The reddened ram skin shows the purpose actually carried out, and to its extreme result.

Over all this was, again, the seal-skin covering.

For my purpose here I need not enter into further details. All this is Christ, however it may be in measure reproduced in His people. This part of the tabernacle was indeed Christ exclusively; for if "we" too "are

God's house," it is in the boards and bars we find our representatives, that over which these coverings fell, and wrapped them in their beauty. Yet outside the sanctuary, as I have said, we do find, in what was Gershon's case, that which typifies the "righteousness of the saints," their practical character as manifested in the world, where indeed manifested. The hangings of the court exhibit this.

They were of fine twined linen five cubits high, two hundred and eighty cubits in their compass round the court; hanging by silver hooks from pillars of brass, resting upon brazen sockets in the sand of the wilderness. The fine twined linen we have already looked at. The numbers also speak, if we have skill to read them. *Five* is the stamp of what is human—the divine measure for us is still the "measure of a man," yet beyond what we esteem man's measure, as we shall find if we reckon it here.\* The compass round, 280 cubits, seems to yield the numbers  $7 \times 4 \times 10$ . Ten, the number which tells of responsibility, as the ten commandments are the measure of man's duty under the law. Four, the testing as to this, which the world-journey implies; these two together give us *forty*, the well-known stamp of perfect probation. Finally, seven is the sign of perfection, but not merely of human, but of Divine work. Thus we have not only the fulfillment of responsibility, as measured by God and tested in the world, but also in all this "God working in" us what we "work out." The brazen pillars again are Divine strength upholding human testimony, while the *silver* hooks show how all hangs upon the redemption-work of Christ. This perfects the picture.

We are now in a position, then, to see how peculiar is Gershon's charge. He is occupied, whether in Christ or

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\* Taking the cubit at Parkhurst's estimate or thereabouts  $17\frac{1}{2}$  inches, it would be over 7 feet high.

in His people, with what we may properly call subjective. It is not Christ in His offices or in His work that he has to do with, but Christ in His personal character, as manifested by His blessed walk. And thus naturally we find associated with this the same thing as to the believer: not his position, nor his worship, nor what he is in the holiest, but what he is to be as a man upon earth.

And this comes in its rightful and proper order, as dependent upon Kohath and his objective side of things. The "foot" must wait upon the "ear." The only way to practice is by faith; and a faith which puts Christ in the place which He has taken for us, and puts us in corresponding relation to Him as in that place. The objective must be before the subjective, as the Levite himself waits upon the priest, and as the book of Leviticus precedes the book of Numbers.

But then it has its place, and a most important place it is. *Could* we be really in the glory of the holy place, and not come out, as Moses from the Mount, with something of that glory reflected in our faces? We are not simply citizens of the heavenlies; we are also, and on that account, strangers in the world. The practical way in which we show ourselves the latter is the real measure of how far we have entered into the other. Gershon surely follows Kohath: not precedes indeed, but inseparably follows. We must learn Ephesian truth really, properly to understand Hebrews; but Hebrews is then as necessary as Ephesians.

In our place in the heavenlies we have no failures and no weakness. "In Christ" we have, blessed be God, unchanging perfection and abiding rest. In the wilderness there is frailty; and too often failure. Yet God has united the two together for us now, as in the holy places of the tabernacle, the feet still pressed the desert sands. And we must remember that if the wilderness had its



pains and difficulties, it had its own peculiar privileges also. The manna fell nowhere but in the wilderness. It was there the power of the living God was made known for and to His people. It was there that living guidance was needed and obtained. It was there that in God's holy discipline the lurking evil in His people got its rebuke. Precious and wonderful lessons, which we may find hereafter it was worth while even to have stayed a while on earth to learn. His power and His grace are not alone found in the sanctuary, but suit themselves to the desert also. The very things of the sanctuary can put on their traveling dress and accompany us by the way. We do not lose them. The world is the sphere rather in which we need to carry them with us, and tell out their preciousness.

### 3.—MERARI.

Merari's charge is given us as "the boards of the tabernacle and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof and the sockets thereof, and the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins and their cords, with all their instruments and with all their service."

We have seen that the curtains of the tabernacle speak of Christ Himself as the One in whom the Word, made flesh, "tabernacled" amongst us: just as with a kindred meaning He spake to the Jews of "the temple of His body." In Him, in fact, as thank God we know full well, dwelt bodily all the fulness of the Godhead. But there is another aspect of the tabernacle also, for we too are God's "house," that house which Christ as Son is over (Heb. iii. 6). And this is shown out in the *boards* of the tabernacle over which these curtains fell, covering them with their manifold beauty.

The boards were forty-eight in number, upright, and fitted together with "tenons,"—in the Hebrew, "hands;"

each board resting upon two silver sockets, made from the atonement money, and each overlaid with gold, with golden rings for the bars which united all together. Thus the Church consists of those individually resting on the testimony of redemption, and fitted together by God as His own habitation, in which His glory shines out of the face of men as the typical gold \* from the shittim-wood.

The bars of shittim-wood, covered with the same gold, and fitted into golden rings upon the boards, speak of special gifts for maintaining all in place, which need however a corresponding receptivity on the part of the saints individually, in order to make them available: the "bar" was of no use without the "ring."

The pillars were first the pillars of the veil, four in number, of shittim-wood and gold as before, each standing on *one* silver socket, the veil hanging from these by golden hooks. Secondly, the door of the tent had *five*, of the same material, but upon *brazen* sockets, the hanging being here also suspended from hooks of gold. The gate of the court was again a similar hanging, suspended by silver hooks from four pillars of shittim-wood, with silvered capitals, and standing, like the last, upon brazen sockets.

In veil and door and gate we shall have no difficulty in seeing Christ; and Christ as a way of access; though the veil must be rent before we can in fact draw near to God. The hanging of the gate we easily read as pendent from the silver hooks of atonement, and these borne up upon the four pillars which speak of tried and perfect humanity, the silvered capitals proclaiming still pre-eminent grace. That of the door of the tabernacle hangs

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\*The "cherubim of *glory*, shadowing the mercy seat," (Heb. ix. 5), I do not doubt to be the Scriptural key to the meaning of the "gold."

from golden hooks, for Christ "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father" receives as "Son over His house" those already partakers of salvation by His blood. Here therefore the pillars of shittim-wood are overlaid with gold; but they stand, as do those of the gate, upon the brazen sockets which speak of unchanging perpetuity of strength. The veil (rent, as we know) gave the way of access to God Himself, and it too hung from golden hooks supported on four pillars of shittim-wood overlaid with gold; but which stand again upon *silver* sockets. Is it not "the gospel of the glory of Christ" that is here expressed to us? of Him in whom, as "the image of God," we find God expressed?

The pillars of the court rest upon brazen sockets, and are surmounted with silver capitals, while the fine linen curtains are suspended from them by silver hooks. Thus grace enables us to hold up before the world the character of Christ, and divine strength is what we rest upon in doing so; the pins and cords still further coming in to brace all up against the contrary influences which are too much for our unassisted strength.

Merari's service thus has to do with the house of God, the church of the living God, with the holding up of Christ as the way of access in to God, and with the supporting, strengthening, and steadying of that which is His witness in the world. He represents the workman, as Gershon does the "stranger"-pilgrim, and Kohath the one occupied with Christ. His name—Merari, "bitterness,"—speaks of the painful character of such service at which self-love will break down, or run off from it into some eccentric path, less burdensome to flesh and blood. Indeed in our day the family of Merari has dwindled down into a very small number; and their work has been very ill done. Who cares for these boards and bars, and pillars and pins and cords? Who thinks of God's plan

and pattern, and all the minutiae of Divine appointment? Who desires work of this menial kind, costing so much and bringing in so little? The pattern is old, and will not adapt itself to the fashion of changed times. It gives no room for human invention to display itself in. It requires only plodding accuracy and diligent obedience. And yet is it not true, that in the Divine interpretation of these types, Merari's service is the full ripe fruit of what we have seen depicted in Kohath and in Gershon?

"If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." And this love, if true, manifests itself in service; if *Divine* love, in service according to the Divine pattern. To put a "pin" in its true place may involve a surrender of one's own will to God, a voluntary taking up of what is little, not counting it little,—an attentive hearkening to God's words, which to Him is sweeter than much that is thought more costly sacrifice. Service about God's house must own Him Master, and that He may have things to His taste, not we to ours.

Does it disparage Kohath or Gershon to put Merari's lowly and painful service as the fruit of theirs? Not so! For without Kohath you can have no Gershon and without both these no true Merari. "Faith, if *it* have not works, is dead, being alone." Does this disparage, or exalt, faith? It is *faith* must have the works. These are not independent of this, any more than fruit is of the root it grows on, and which nourishes and gives it character. So faith comes first, because Christ, whom faith alone embraces, and from whom it draws all sustenance, is absolutely needful. And then faith's fruits are produced by love, which is the stem upon this root. "Faith *worketh by love.*" Thus Gershon is the link between Kohath and Merari.

How important this connection! How needful to maintain this order! First Christ:—"high truth!" as

high as Christ in glory. Never lower it, never omit it, never talk against it as unpractical. If Merari fails, never turn Kohath from his work on that account. Only your truth must be high enough to reach Christ Himself, a living, personal Christ, who is at God's right hand alone. If it be not this it will fall with its own weight, and be wrecked utterly.

But then Gershon, the "stranger," will display the beauty of his fine linen, his curtains and his veils. The response of love in man to the Divine love will be also maintained. The moon, because *in* the sun-light reflects the sun to us. Our responsibility is measured by our place, and the grace, which has given it us, is alone power for the fulfillment of our responsibility.

Then comes Merari, the Timothy-service in the house of God. Ear, foot, and hand, all testify to the power of the blood of Christ, and are set apart to God as purchased by it. The living water, being drunk in, flows out, and in channels already prepared of God, that it may bring fertility and beauty to many a plant of the Lord's planting, and carry His seed moreover to enrich many a barren spot, and make the desert blossom as the rose.

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## GOD'S THOUGHT ABOUT RESTITUTION

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“Until the times of the restitution of all things”

**I** BELIEVE that a serious hindrance in the minds of many to the reception of much important truth, lies in misconception of the Scripture doctrine of “restitution.” Thus the expression which I have put at the head of this paper, and which is, as we know, a simple quotation from Acts iii. 21, conveys to many at the present day the idea of a restoration to a kind of Adamic state. This is argued to have been evidently God’s original thought, which He would not let the entrance of sin set aside. Or else, it is contended, Satan would really have got a victory in compelling Him to change His plan about Eden. This thought has been carried so far in the minds of many, that the “new earth” has been supposed to be indeed a “Paradise regained,” in which generations of men would, in the ordinary way of nature, but without death, replace each other to all eternity.

I mention this, not to reply to it, save as the general line of truth of which I desire to speak, furnishes reply; but to show how rooted it is in the minds of many that Adam in Paradise was really God’s first thought, instead of being merely a first step towards the accomplishment of what was really His first thought. Thus “restitution” becomes necessarily a getting back to a supposed Adamic state. And in this way both the state of Adam in Paradise is unscripturally exalted, and the work of Christ and its consequences really, though unintentionally, degraded.

Now, if the reader will turn with me for a moment to one of the Old Testament types, he will see at once that God's idea of restitution is not merely what we should call so. I refer to the trespass-offering, (Lev. v. 15, vi. 7). The grand significance of this, which is of course, as all others, a type of Christ's work, has, I am persuaded, been too much passed over, even where understood. The grand thought in it is not merely of sacrifice for sin, nor should it be confounded with the sin-offering. It is that of compensation for wrong-doing, and that expressly in the double character of wrong done to God (chap. v. 14-16), and of wrong done to man (chap. vi. 1-7). "*He shall make amends for the harm that he has done,*" is that which really distinguishes this offering from every other. It is not here simply "the sin committed must be atoned for"—its guilt must be met—but "*the injury done must be compensated.*" This is indeed, if you take it in another way, what is absolutely necessary to true atonement in the sight of God. He must have restitution—reparation. And notice how far His thought of restitution goes: not only must there be the "estimation" of the injury, and the value brought in "shekels of the sanctuary"—pure money and full weight—but also "*he shall add the fifth part thereto.*" Thus the one wronged should be gainer by the wrong done him. Mere making up would not do for God. And it is blessed to see that. For thus I judge the poverty of the thought that God would not suffer Satan to prevail to set aside His plan. True as that is, of course, Scripture teaches us to go beyond it, and to say, "He would not suffer sin at all if He could not have got glory by it." He would not suffer Satan to come in and mar His "old creation," merely that He might show His skill in restoring it, but that He might, IN THE RUINS OF IT, get the material of a "new." In the language of the Old Testament, "He maketh the wrath of man"—

not to be of no effect, but—"to *praise* Him; the remainder of wrath shall He"—not make of no effect, but—"restrain." Even so would He have restrained Satan's working, could He not have brought out of it a harvest of blessing and of glory; and instead of being content with the patching up of what Satan has marred, the word of Him who sitteth upon the throne is, "Behold, I make all things *new*." (Rev. xxi. 5.)

Now, Christ is He who restoreth: "I restored that which I took not away" (Ps. lxix. 4), is what is prophetically said of Him. He is the offerer of this trespass-offering. He is the One who has overpaid God (if I may say so) for all the wrong that sin has done Him. He is the One also who has to man (to as many as receive Him) more than restored all that sin had taken away.

But let us inquire a little how He has done it, and what the restitution is. And here we shall find the consequences of the work of Christ to be really *contrasted* with what would have been the consequences of Adam's continuance and of the old creation with him.

In men's minds the fruits of Christ's work have been mixed up with what would have been the fruit of Adam's continuance, and serious mischief ensues. The original creation is taken as the perfection of what was in the mind of Him who created it. Thus (without a word of Scripture for it) Adam is considered to have been a creature made for heaven, to whom it was secured by covenant that he should gain it by well-doing; and the Ten Commandments are carried back two thousand five hundred years before they were given to be the measure of what he was required to fulfill. Thus, too, when he failed, Christ is supposed to have taken up the broken contract, and to have gained for us, by His fulfillment of it, what Adam lost.

It may startle some to be told that this is all theory, not only apart from Scripture, but in opposition to it.



Yet so it is. And its plain tendency is to rob Christ of His glory, by reducing His work to almost the level of what simply a perfect man could be expected to perform. For, manifestly, if the law be the measure of what Adam ought to have done, and what Christ did do, no more was asked of one than of the other. And yet this is what is being more and more insisted on in (so-styled) "Evangelical" writings.

To answer this, let the pregnant figure of the trespass-offering speak. Plainly, had man in that case fulfilled the law as regards God and his fellow, there need have been, and would have been, no offering at all. If Christ had merely taken up Adam's broken contract to fulfill it, death would have had no place in that work, because death was the penalty of the breach of it. If He could have fulfilled the work for Adam, and given to God the obedience in which Adam failed, and in Adam's behalf, the punishment of the breach of it could not have been required from Him. What was wrong would have been set right without shedding of blood. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. ii. 21).

But furthermore, in this matter of the trespass-offering, after the injury inflicted had been duly estimated and made up, still restitution, in God's thought of it, was not complete, until there had been added to it a fifth part more. Thus the person who offered the trespass-offering did more than could have been required had the trespass not been committed, and the injured person was now a gainer to that extent. But here, as ever, the antitype goes far beyond the type. God and man are both gainers by Christ's work; but not only so—the work of Christ, and any work that could be required of Adam, differ essentially from each other, as, for example, the righteousness of God manifested, differs from human obedience performed.

People's attention is so fixed upon what *they get* by the work of Christ, that its real value, which can only be at all properly seen from the Divine side of it, escapes them, along with much of the truth of what they do get. Let us try and look a little at the Divine side of Christ's work, and see how a moment's glance there upsets poor human thoughts.

What *did God* gain, to speak humanly, by Christ's work?

What *would* He have gained by Adam's?

Is it not plain that the first need, in order to answer these questions in any measure, depends on our estimate of the worker in each case?

Just as the altar sanctifies the gift, so does the glory of the Person of the Son of God set His work apart from all mere human work, and give it another value.

What was the "first man, Adam?"

Not, if I am to take Scripture, a being framed for heaven, but, in express contrast with heaven (1 Cor. xv. 47), "of earth, earthy." If I open Genesis, I find no promise of heaven held out to him, no idea of being raised above the estate in which he was created. I find no works enjoined for which he was to be rewarded; one prohibition only of a thing, which would have had no moral character attaching to it, if it had not been forbidden.

Created "very good," he was to keep his first estate, not seek a new one. Nor, until sin had made our estate evil, and only with fallen man, do we find one thought of a creature quitting its estate, except as sin. Thus "the angels which kept not their first estate," of whom Jude speaks. Not made to toil at working out a righteousness, but to enjoy the bounteous goodness which had provided richly for him, one test of obedience alone was given. If he ate of the tree he died.

What did God gain by such obedience?

Save as one of the countless creatures He had made whose happiness bore witness of creating goodness and wisdom—nothing. Had he obeyed, what marvel? Had he obtained witness that he was righteous, it would have been creature righteousness, not Divine. With Eliphaz we might have asked, "Is it gain to God, that thou makest thy ways perfect?"

And had he been obedient, as angels were, would the fitting reward for it have been a place in the glory, and at the right hand of God? Would he have inherited all things? Would he have been where Christ as man is, and have shared what the saint shares now as joint-heir with Him?

Simple questions, yet needful. For if the work done were to be the same, and Christ fulfills the broken contract and obtains the forfeited reward, some such conclusions follow as these questions suggest.

But Adam fell. That wrong was done to God of which the trespass-offering speaks. Sin had spoilt the old creation, and (again to speak humanly, as we must) raised the question of God's character. What would He do? Cut off the offenders in righteousness? Spare them in love how could He, and be holy? Slowly and patiently was the question answered. Christ was that answer. Not simply the taker up of man's cause; not the worker out of human righteousness; but the brightness of the Father's glory—the wisdom and the power of God—the fulfiller of Divine *righteousness*, and the revealer of Divine *love*.

Hence, the glory of the gospel of Christ is, not that it saves man merely, but that it reveals God. No longer shut up in the thick darkness, (as in Israel it was declared at the very time of their magnificent temple being dedicated,)—"He is in the light" (1 Jno. i. 7). The glory of

God is in the face of Jesus Christ. There we see it. If the entrance of sin into the world had in any-wise raised a question about God, not only are such questions forever at rest, but the way in which it has been dealt with in the Cross of the Son of God becomes the very way in which His attributes shine out. Christ is not merely "the Lord *our* righteousness," He is "the righteousness of God." Could Adam have been that, or wrought it? We are in another sphere altogether, plainly. And there, amid the sin which might have seemed to compromise His glory, there is wrought a work in which He is glorified as never beside. Inseparably connected with man's worst wickedness is the display of God's righteousness, and not in wrath, but through which He justifies the ungodly.

I ask again, if God had merely meant to restore (in our mode of speaking), would not the question rise, then, why suffer the fall? But if the fall were to be the background upon which He could display Himself in such a character as should reveal Him in His glory to the adoring gaze of His creatures for eternity, what then? Ah, might not the angels well repeat that "glory to God in the highest," when they could link it through the Christ born in Bethlehem, with "on earth peace, good pleasure in men!" Did not the arms of love which were stretched out around men, encompass angels also? As it is written, "that in the ages to come, He might shew forth the exceeding riches of His grace" (how?) "in His kindness *towards us* through Christ Jesus."

Thus Christ's work is different in its character and results, God-ward, from anything that could be of Adam, asked or had. It was one such as the "Only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father" alone could accomplish. Peerless in His person and work, the place which He has taken as the result of it with God is one

suited not to the first man, "of the earth, earthy," but to "the second man, the Lord from heaven." Taking His seat at the right hand of God, He is become Head of a "*new* creation," not Restorer of the "*old*." He is not the first Adam set up again, but a second Adam, and He is "the *beginning* of the creation of God." All things are restored, but not to the primitive condition before the fall. They are "*made new*." The old condition of things is done away.

Let us see how this affects us as Christians: how to us also the fifth part is added; how Christ has restored to us, not the primitive condition of unfallen Adam, but all things in a higher way.

1. As to *position*, we are "in Christ" a "*new* creation, old things passed away, and *all* things become new." As to what we were as men in the flesh, "dead with Christ," "our old man crucified with Him," so that we are "not in the flesh," not "living (alive) in the world," not "of" it—carnal, if we "walk as *men*." To give us boldness in the day of judgment, we are told that "as Christ is, so are we," even "in this world." Hence, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," for we are "accepted in the Beloved," and already "seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Thus the position of men in the world is completely passed away, and we are in a new place before God, as and what Christ is; "made the righteousness of God in Him."

2. As to *nature*, we are "born again," "born of God," "partakers of the Divine nature," "have eternal life abiding in us," that eternal life that was in the Son of God through the *back* eternity, therefore truly "eternal," not mere existence or Adamic life. And though we carry the old nature, the flesh, still about with us, it is only as an enemy, and to be destroyed.

3. As to *inheritance*, "we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," begotten to "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us," where Christ is, in the "mansions of a Father's house," that we may be "ever with the Lord."

But I must close. Even for the earth comes surely, as promised, the restitution of all things, but, beyond the fires in which the elements shall be dissolved, such a scene as never Adam knew. My purpose, however, is but to give the thought, not work out the details. In eternity alone shall we "fully know" what our "fifth part" beyond Adam blessing is. Meanwhile we know enough to bow our hearts in adoration, and to make us echo the song:

"Unto Him that loveth us, and has washed us from our sins in His own Blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father:

"To Him be glory and honor forever. Amen."

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## THE FIRST RESURRECTION AND THE BODY THAT SHALL BE

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ACCORDING to Scripture the first resurrection, or that of the saints, precedes the resurrection of the wicked by more than a thousand years, and is always carefully distinguished from it. It is the *first* resurrection, as distinguished from that of the "rest of the dead," who live not again till the thousand years are finished, and whom we then find assembled before the great white throne. (Rev. xx.) It is therefore the resurrection *from*, not merely *death*, as all resurrection is, but from or out from *the dead*—a selective, peculiar one. It is a resurrection in which he who has part is "blessed and holy" by the very fact; nay, a child of God and equal unto the angels: language that could not be applied to a general resurrection, which would include the wicked also. (Rev. xx.; Luke xx.) It is a resurrection which takes place "*because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you*"—as the margin of Rom. viii. 11 correctly gives; and is therefore the "resurrection of life" in contrast with the "resurrection of damnation," or rather, "judgment" (Jno. v.). It is a resurrection which takes place at the Lord's coming ("they that are Christ's at His coming") in contrast with that of the wicked, when the earth and heavens flee away. Scripture thus carefully distinguishes as to time, circumstance, and character between the two.

On the other side, what are the arguments by which the popular creed as to a general resurrection is main-

tained? I shall not be wrong, I believe, in saying that the strength of the argument lies in the interpretation of three passages, of which one (the gathering of sheep and goats in Matt. xxv.) has nothing to do with resurrection at all, but is the judgment of the *living*, when the Lord appears; the second (John v. 28, 29) is made to apply only by the false interpretation of "the hour," which does not mean any narrowly limited time, but in verse 25 takes in the whole present time of gospel grace; while the third (Dan. xii. 2), literally taken, will not apply to a general resurrection\* at all, and is really a figure, kindred to several elsewhere, of the national revival of God's people, Israel.

The consistent teaching of Scripture is then, that when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, the dead in Christ shall rise first," even before the change of the living saints. But that then "we which are alive and remain shall be"—first, "changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump," and then—"caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord."

Who would not willingly turn aside from the routine of earthly life, and from its daily struggle, to contemplate this which in one moment of ecstasy shall end it all? We are disappointed only, it may be, that Scripture which deals so little in sensation, so much more with the convictions, describes in terms so brief and simple this glorious scene. Imagination may not supplement this brevity

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\* *Many* of them that sleep in the dust of the earth "cannot possibly be made to mean "all." To the first resurrection it can apply as little, since in it none will "awake to shame and everlasting contempt."



with human thoughts; but meditation may be rightly used to draw from the inspired words, if it were possible, their full depth of meaning. If we did but more fasten our gaze thus upon these wondrous realities as embodied in the very words which with all their brevity, being the Divine words, must best convey them to us, it may be that we should find what we little thought at first, that what was needed to give them to us in power and vividness was, not a fuller description, but a heart sufficiently in earnest to lay hold of what is given.

It is our purpose now, avoiding all rashness of speculation, yet to linger a little upon the blessedness of what is here presented to us. Oh for power to scan its every feature, until nothing of what surrounds us here was so familiar to our hearts! What a lever to lift up heavenward these affections that gravitate so earthward, to realize that at any moment, as we are occupied with daily tasks, in the house or on the highway, we may find with more than ecstasy the life eternal with its pulseless tide pervading a body moulded in an instant to its will, henceforth "the image of the heavenly"! In an instant the life behind, no more to be counted life, dropped into a past from which a great gulf, never to be repassed, separates! Christ's, and in His image! Our Beloved ours indeed; we His!

But we must tarry at Resurrection here. What we shall realize then in a moment—and oh, how much more than this!—we must be content, in our slow way of acquiring knowledge now, to get before us bit by bit, searching and weighing and meditating, and all the while—and let us never forget it!—absolutely dependent upon the teaching of Him who alone conveys to us what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man," yet "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." "God hath revealed them unto

us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

In two ways is death triumphed over when the Lord comes. By the change of the living, it is shown to have no title to assert against the redeemed of the Lord; by resurrection of the dead, that it has no power to retain those over whom its title has seemed to be made good. It is the open manifestation of the truth in the Lord's words to the sorrowing Martha: "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall *never* die."

Thus He who has "the keys of death and of hades" displays openly His power over both. Death is cancelled, Hades gives up possession. Redemption is completed, as far as the heavenly people are concerned; taking effect now upon the body as before it did upon the soul.

The *style* in which it is effected has often been remarked. "The Lord Himself shall descend." Why that? Could He not commit it to others? Could He not speak the word from the throne above, and never leave it? Surely, in one sense: but how it should stir our poor, slow hearts to see, when the time of His patience is over, how *His* heart comes out in the action here. He must come Himself out of the gate of heaven, as we rush out, forgetting all slow formality, to greet the approach of a dear and intimate and long-absent friend. His voice must greet them first of all; His must be the shout that breaks the slumber of the grave, and brings out its tenants. All is accomplished as in a moment; delay is at an end: and this is the fitting introduction to the end which alone satisfies Him whose time has come to see the fruit of His soul's travail—"so shall we be ever with the Lord."

But let us look at these rising dead; and let us not think it *necessarily* a fool's question, and to be repressed,

that which rises involuntarily to our lips, "With what body do they come?" The apostle blames it only as the question of a sceptic, such as we know some of these Corinthians were. But he uses the opportunity to give such an answer as will meet other thoughts than these; and to his answer it cannot be folly to give attention. There are different bodies, he says, and different glories. The grain of wheat you sow dies to give birth to the harvest, and that which you sow you reap, and yet what you sow is not the body that shall be. There is continuity, and in that sense identity; yet there is dissimilarity also between the seed-germ and the plant its product. So with the body: "it is sown, it is raised;" there is continuity and identity as in the figure used; but it is sown in one form, it is raised in another. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

The body is the same, though wherein consists the identity it may be quite impossible to define; nor need we define it. Sceptics have urged a renewal of the whole every seven years or less of life, but we have nevertheless a conviction of its being to all intents and purposes the same. The seed-germ and the plant its product are different as to the amount of substance; yet they too are practically identical: and this is the illustration which the apostle employs, as we have seen. Needless as it may seem in the eyes of some, God cares for the very dust of His saints, and their resurrection is the "redemption of the body"—a body already claimed by the Holy Ghost as His temple, and to which He will make good His claim: "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, *because of* His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Yet while identity is preserved, and that which thou sowest is quickened out of death—the analogy used here by the apostle—in another way, as He also applies this, “thou sowest *not* that body that shall be.” Incorruption, glory, power, replace the opposites of these; and “a spiritual body,” suited to those who are partakers with the “heavenly” Second Man, is the glorious outcome of Divine power working upon the “natural body” in which the saint falls asleep.

This last we must give attention to, for it seems exceedingly little understood, and its misapprehension gives rise sometimes to thoughts misleading further. No doubt we can know but scantily what is implied in “a spiritual body;” yet we may speak positively as to certain things which are *not* implied in it; and more, we can tell with some exactness what the expression, as an expression, means. But for this it is necessary to have in our minds what Scripture teaches us as to man’s present condition, for the phrase is designed to point a contrast between the present and the future one.

“A spiritual body” is contrasted with the “natural body,” out of which nevertheless (as the plant out of the seed) it is developed. And this last expression, more exactly given, is rather “a *soul* body.” We have no adjective of “soul” in English, and we can only use the word soul itself as an adjective therefore; meaning by the phrase a “body related to the soul,” as “a spiritual body” really means a “body related to the spirit.”

The meaning will be at first only a new perplexity to those who are unacquainted with the distinctive force of soul and spirit, as used in Scripture. But it will be found not a mere curious question, as certainly it is one that admits of clear and decisive answer from the Word. I can only briefly state what Scripture teaches as to this here indeed, but the Word itself, only authoritative, is in

all our hands, and what is stated as fact may thus easily be compared with it.

"Spirit and soul and body," if we take Scripture, make up the man—not any class of men as such, but men in general. I say this, because some have the thought of "spirit" being the new nature, and of course only proper to the children of God. The mistake is founded on a misconception of John iii. 6. But while "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" in its own nature, it is never called *the* spirit of man. "What man knoweth the things of a man," asks the apostle, "save the spirit of man which is in him?" (1 Cor. ii. 11.) Thus the apprehension of all that is distinctively human belongs to the spirit; and of course all men have it. The beast has not,\* and God is thus called exclusively the "God of the spirits of all flesh," and the "Father of spirits." The spirit it is that thus brings man into relationship with and responsibility to God, such as no beast has, nor can have. "Mind" proper is an essential characteristic of it. It is the highest part of his composite being: for "God is a Spirit," and the angels too are "spirits."

The beast on the other hand is, and has, a soul. In the margin of Gen. i. 30 you may read as to the lower creatures, "everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is a living soul." The animal life is one of sense, emotion, instinct, often very wonderful, and in its results sometimes apparently superior to reason itself. But even this shows the difference. If there is no defect, there is no improvement. A bird builds its nest from the first just as it builds its last. The economy of a bee-hive or an ant-hill, with all its marvels of architecture and

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\* The passages urged against this, with an examination of them, and of this subject generally, will be found in the first part of "Facts and Theories as to a Future State."

political combination, never alters in the least. They fill the place God has given them without exhibiting any traces of a fall, of an imperfect condition such as man's work so constantly exhibits: incapable of a place with God such as could admit of a fall at all. Yet these are souls—"living souls"—not immortal, of course, nor *human* souls, but not merely perfect organisms either; not merely material machines, or automata. Materialism is as far as possible from getting any countenance from Scripture.

And man's soul, as the link between his spirit and his body, is that which though, as immaterial, connected with the spirit (and like it, immortal, surely), is on the other hand that which animates the body, so much so that the same word is used in Scripture for soul and life. It is looked at as the seat of the senses, as well as the emotions: it loves, it hates, it joys, it sorrows, and it *hungers* and *thirsts* also. A brief examination of Scripture will suffice to show how little our current ideas are in accordance as to this with the exact and persistent language of the Word. "Meat to relieve the soul," "to satisfy the soul, when he is hungry," "cold water to the thirsty soul," "the full soul loatheth the honeycomb": these and such like expressions meet us everywhere.

And yet, as connected with the spirit, the soul in man has to do with God, and with the highest emotions of love and adoration. It is the soul that "follows hard after God," with desire and longing. The common kinship and distinction between heart and mind, in our ordinary speech, is in fact very much that which in Scripture we find mentioned between soul and spirit. But on the other hand the bodily sensations and appetites which we carefully distinguish from the soul, Scripture ascribes to it in the distinctest way.

And this is the reason why the adjective of soul, want-

ing in English, is translated twice in our version (Jas. iii. 15, Jude 19) "sensual,"—a force which our use of the word now never would have given it; and the "natural" man, too, is in the same way, the man captivated by his senses,—*soul*, not spirit, led.

We may further see too, and thus approach our text more nearly, why a child of Adam, as that, should be called "a living *soul*." It is man's peculiarity, of all spiritual beings that we know, to be a *microcosm*—a being in fact in which all the known elements of the universe find place. The mineral, vegetable, animal kingdoms, all find somewhat that they can claim in him; but what is specially remarkable is that which gives materialism all its apparent force, the *subjection*, in some sense, of that which is spiritual to that which is material.

For what seems purely mental, when we examine it closely, we find ourselves, in a way at first startling to us, indebted to the senses, and through these to the material universe. Powers and faculties there are in the mind, no doubt, which no laws of matter can at all explain. Matter is but the material it uses, as it were: but still so necessary that no observation can be carried on (to our knowledge) without it. Our ideas, our language, our whole mental furniture almost, is borrowed from the world in which we are placed, and to which in this sense we are limited.

This then is why Scripture speaks of us as "living souls." Our spirits, though higher than the soul, are bound to it, in a manner which characterizes us and distinguishes essentially from purely spiritual beings. Our souls too are bound to the bodies which they permeate and vitalize; and how these drag upon and limit them, and through them the spirit itself, we are too constantly and painfully reminded to need much dwelling upon it

The "natural" body is thus a "soul" body—a body fitted to the soul; and this is what suits one who is characteristically "a living soul." The body, for the higher capabilities of the spirit, is (apart altogether from the fall) inefficient and unequal. The old creation was but after all a step to another which was in God's mind from the beginning; and in this the "spiritual body"—the perfect vehicle and servant of the spirit—will take the place of the natural body, the body suited to the man who was (even as the beasts thus far) a living soul.

The meaning of the expression, "a spiritual body," being ascertained, we are freed from many wrong conjectures as to it. We find that it is not in contrast with a *material* body, but that material it still is assuredly, as the outcome, though by Divine power, of what is "sown" in the dust. But it is a body fitted now, as never before, to be the servant of the spirit, not confining it to slow acquisitions of knowledge by sense-perception of material things, nor saddling it with the infirmities of a frame constantly exhausting itself and in need of recreation and repair, but able to accompany it in the ceaseless activities of a scene where no night is, or is needed.

It is with reference to this state, we see at once, that the apostle says of "knowledge," that "it shall vanish away," or rather "be made void" (1 Cor. xiii. 8). The next verse gives us the reason, "for we know in part, . . . but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away," or made void. It is of the slow, toilsome and imperfect processes of acquiring knowledge (of "knowing") that he is speaking, and which will necessarily be made void, when the spirit is no longer confined to the attainment of the spiritual by means of groping (for the most part) amid material things. The things known will still remain known; but the *knowing* of things, in the partial way now necessi-



tated, will be done away, in the perfect apprehension of spiritual knowledge.

It is with express reference to the spiritual body that the apostle further tells us that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. xv. 50).

These words have again been misunderstood by many who have, upon their warrant, denied the resurrection of the *flesh*. Yet Job's confident expectation of resurrection was expressed in these terms: "in my *flesh* shall I see God." The Psalmist also, prophetically speaking of One greater, says: "My *flesh* also shall rest in hope." And He of whom this was spoken, when risen from the dead, affirms that still He had flesh and bones: "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have."

Surely this language is decisive. Nor does it in the least conflict with the apostle's words in Corinthians just quoted. For he does not speak of flesh simply, but of flesh *and blood*, a not infrequent term for man as at present constituted. The Lord, as risen, does not speak any more of "blood;" and a very little consideration will enable us to realize the force and appropriateness of this distinction. *Blood* is the vehicle of that waste and repair which our present constitution necessitates. The worn-out particles of the body are taken up by it, to be removed from it by the proper organs; while the fresh supply of material is poured into it, to be carried with the circulation to every needy part. In a body no longer dependent upon supply, because no longer subject to waste, blood would naturally have no longer place: and thus the Scripture language finds its explanation.

The "spiritual body" is thus not merely in contrast with that on which is imprinted the stamp of mortality and corruption. It is a body in contrast also with Adam's, when he came fresh with vigor and beauty from

under the creating hand of God. Even then, Adam was "of earth, earthy"; in resurrection we put on "the image of the heavenly," and are conformed to our head, the "second man," who is "of heaven."\* Our resurrection-body is therefore also "our house which is of heaven"—heavenly in mold or pattern. It is no restoration of the old creation passed away: it is a new creation, of which the body is now the subject, as the soul and spirit were before.

Yet it is still material. In it matter is redeemed from the reproach under which it has so long lain—is taken up and glorified. By it we are still in connection with a material universe, which Scripture gives no hint of ever passing away. Our link with this is not broken when we are introduced into the heavenly sphere. It is purified, re-adjusted, refined, but never broken. What fields of service in which love—weeping no more—shall bear her precious seed, and fill her hands with golden sheaves of harvest, does this imply! Surely, as the "prepared" body, which the Lord retains forever, is as the "digged ears" of the "Hebrew servant," the pledge of service too highly prized to be ever given up; so the body for us prepared, and like His own, must have a similar meaning as to us. Thus, as man's body as first created was a prophecy of the place he was to fill in the earth to which

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\* *Ex ouranou* in opposition to *ek ges*, "of earth;" just the same expression as is used in the second epistle (ch. v. 2) of this resurrection body, "our house which is of [not 'from'] heaven." The expression is not an easy one to render exactly into English, but the contrast with "of earth" helps to its apprehension. It does not mean either that the Lord's body or ours comes from heaven: that would be *ap'ouranou*, and false doctrine plainly. We may say, perhaps, "of a heavenly type," or "mold."

The editors generally omit "the Lord" in 1 Cor. xv. 47, and, I cannot doubt, correctly.

he belonged; his resurrection-body is a prophecy of the new place and wider relationships he is henceforth to fill with regard to the new creation of which the last Adam is Head. This place we shall have to look at, as Scripture develops it (the Lord willing), at another time.

But thus, while the materialist or the hyper-spiritualist may scoff at the idea, "the spirits of just men,"—happy as they may be, and are, "with Christ," while "absent from the body,"—are really "perfected" only by resurrection. This body is no more the "tent" or "tabernacle" of the man: it is the "*house*," the "building of God," prepared for eternity. It is the "clothing" of the spirit, else "naked"—stripped of its possessions in that material universe, which as God's creation, we may not and cannot condemn, and which will yet be to its furthest limits vocal with God's praise. In this temple we are to be His kings and priests forever: the material henceforth no longer a drag upon the spiritual, but its complement and helpmeet.

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## NEW CREATION

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- “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth.” (Isa. lxv. 17.)
- “If any man be in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Cor. v. 17.)
- “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” (Gal. vi. 15.)
- “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” (Eph. ii. 10.)
- “For to make in Himself of twain one new man.” (Eph. ii. 15.)
- “The new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph. iv. 24.)
- “The new man, which is renewed after the image of Him that created him.” (Col. iii. 10.)
- “The First-Born of every creature.” (Col. i. 15.)
- “That we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.” (Jas. i. 18.)
- “The Beginning of the creation of God.” (Rev. iii. 14.)

I PROPOSE a brief inquiry as to new creation: in what it consists, how we are brought into it, and its relation to its Head Christ Jesus. In the texts above we have all the passages which directly and in terms speak of it, and from which the doctrine of Scripture must be mainly learnt; to which a very few more which speak of Christ's Headship or compare Him with the first Adam must be added, in order to have before us its full teaching.

One of these other passages, indeed, we may take as the key-note of our inquiry. The purpose of God, we read, is “in the dispensation of the fullness of times to head up”—as it is literally—“all things in the Christ,

things in heaven, and things on earth" (Eph. i. 10). Later on in the same chapter the apostle adds that God has raised Christ from the dead and "has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body" (vv. 22, 23). And in the fifth chapter the Church is compared to Eve, Adam's own flesh, whom God presented to him, as Christ will present the Church unto Himself. So also in 1 Cor. xv. 45 Christ is declared to be "last Adam," and in Rom. v. Adam to be "the figure of Him that was to come." These passages surely bring us to the heart of the doctrine.

So guided, we may see in the old creation a type of the new, with necessary contrasts dependent on the difference between their respective heads. The first Adam, man merely, yet as that a being in which already there is a union of strangely opposite elements, the breath of God on the one hand, with the body of dust; offspring and likeness of God, yet a "living soul" like the beast;—this first man, how plainly does he figure an infinitely more wondrous "Second Man." The woman formed out of the man, cast into that mysterious "deep sleep" which so vividly pictures the Lord's fruitful death, is thus bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of her head and lord, *before* she is "one flesh" with him by union. So in the Church we must distinguish carefully between these two things, manifestly different as they are,—new creation and union. Over the whole scene the man is set, the woman sharing his sovereignty.

Now, if we turn from the old to the new creation, we need not wonder to find a wider range in the dominion of the last Adam. God's purpose here is to head up all things in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth, as we have seen. The earth is expressly named in Isaiah as coming into this: Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remem-

bered, nor come into mind." And Israel is as expressly promised continuance upon it: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall abide before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain." To this the apostle Peter clearly refers: "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness."

Over this whole scene the Lord is, as Second Man, head and ruler. He is "the first-born of every creature," "the beginning of the creation of God:" terms which speak, not of priority *in time*, but in excellence and power. The "first-born" is of well-known use in this way. Thus God says to Pharaoh, "Israel is My son, even My first-born;" and again, in Jer. xxxi. 9, "I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born;" and so once more in the psalms (lxxxix. 27), "Also I will make him My first-born, higher than the kings of the earth." The word in Rev. iii. 14, again, although the regular word for "beginning," has very commonly the sense of "principality," and is so translated (Rom. viii. 38; Eph. i. 21; iii. 10; vi. 12; Col. i 16; ii. 10, 15; Tit. iii. 1).

"The church of the first-born ones" is, in Heb. xii. 23, distinguished from "the spirits of just men made perfect," the company of Old-Testament saints being clearly designated in this latter way. The saints of the present are of course not prior *in time* to those of the old dispensation, while in rank they are, according to the sovereign good pleasure of God toward them. But if ranking as the first-born, there are thus seen to be others of the same family, in the common relationship of children with them, of the same spiritual descent, as children of God; and with all these the Lord connects Himself as "First-born among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29). These "brethren" are all believers: "For verily He taketh not hold of angels,

but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold" (Heb. ii. 16, *marg.*). And "both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (v. 11).

Here the relationship seems different from that between Adam and his race; yet "last Adam" we are fully assured the Lord is, and the Antitype of the first. Are we to consider that the connection of the first Adam and his race is different from that between the last Adam and His race? That there is such a difference as results from that between the first and Second Man themselves, is surely true. "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the Second Man is from heaven:" "the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit."

Thus there is a difference. Yet in the very statement it is most strongly asserted that as the first Adam was in his creature-place, as living soul, a fountain of life to the race of which he was the head, so still more absolutely is the last Adam "a quickening [or life-giving] Spirit." It is not simply *the Lord* here, let us remember, but the "*last Adam.*" Surely the force is plain. He is a quickening Spirit: it is divine life, but it is divine life in Christ, —in the last Adam. We are children of God; but none the less are we His "seed," seen as the result of His soul being made an offering for sin (Isa. liii. 10).

It may help us, too, to remember that Adam's race are also called the "offspring of God" (Acts xvii. 29), and that here Adam was but also a *first-born among brethren*; and in this way, the natural type illustrates perfectly the antitype, and there ceases to be really any difficulty.

How we come into the new creation is therefore plain. In the first moment of divine life given to us are we made a new creation. Here Adam himself, rather than any descended from him, is the fitting illustration, because we

are not *naturally* separately "created." Spiritually we are: God's workmanship each one, needing nothing less than the forth-putting of almighty power. So the new birth is spoken of as quickening from the dead, or as creation—things which are never effected by any natural process: "we are *His* workmanship, *created* in Christ Jesus unto good works."

Thus, "if any man be in Christ, [it is] new creation," as the Greek may be most literally rendered. This is the plain, unequivocal statement of how we get to be in Christ. Adam at the moment he received life was surely perfectly *created*. He was not first quickened and afterward created! neither is this true spiritually of any saint, in any dispensation whatever. Thus the place in new creation, or under the headship of Christ, is given by that which is common to the whole "seed," or race, and not by that which is the distinguishing feature of one particular dispensation. If it were by the gift of the Spirit we were brought into the new creation, the saints of the Old-Testament and of millennial times would be effectually excluded. Everything combines to assure us of what is the truth here, and to it there is no appearance even of contradiction from Scripture anywhere.

But then what follows in the passage just quoted assures us further that to every one in new creation, or in Christ—under this headship—the work of Christ attaches as righteousness: "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." This could not be true as applied merely to personal condition. Granted the life received is divine life—the nature, as it must be, perfect; yet my condition is not, cannot be, perfect as long as "sin dwelleth in me," as in every child of man it dwells. "Old things are" *not* "passed away," so that "*all* things are become new," if condition only is in question. Bring in the value of the cross, and then indeed all is clear. The



new nature and the new standing, never separated in Scripture, however much they may be in our thoughts, perfectly meet the requirement of the text, and leave no difficulty.

Indeed, if any one will consider the apostle's words in 2 Corinthians xii., and how carefully he distinguishes the "man in Christ," in whom he will glory, from the "self" in which he will not glory, he will surely see that it is not a state of that self that he has before him in which he glories. It is Christ Himself in whom he sees himself. Grace has identified him with that glorious object, putting away all that he was by the work of the cross. Thus he can gaze, and rejoice, and worship.

Thus, "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" becomes a "rule" to "walk" by. (Gal. vi. 15, 16.) "As" we "have received Christ Jesus the Lord," we are to "*walk* in Him" (Col. ii. 6). Position it is that gives the measure of responsibility, and new creation furnishes us with position as well as condition; therefore a rule for walk. We are not only the subjects of a blessed work of God individually, but belong to another sphere in which "all things are of God" (2 Cor. v. 18). We are to walk as belonging to this, our eyes upon things unseen and eternal, strangers and pilgrims here. We are to "walk in Him," identified with Him by God, and so to identify ourselves. This is what "avails" before God,—"*neither circumcision nor uncircumcision,*"—neither a Jewish nor a Gentile state,—and these two conditions make up the world: "*but new creation.*"

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## A FEAST FOR THE LORD

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(Luke v. 29 ; John xii. 2, 3.)

**I** FIND but two cases in which a feast was said to have been made expressly for the Lord ; and these two seem to be in designed and beautiful contrast with one another. In the first case we find Him in company with sinners ; in the last with saints. In the first case He is come down upon the ground natural to us, where alone He could meet us all ; in the second, He has taken us through all that appals nature, and set us down in triumph the other side of it. But in each case His people are feasting *Him*.

If the hymn we sometimes sing has meaning for us, and "His joys" indeed "our deepest joys afford," this feature in these two cases will attract us surely. It is something to find, in a world so unlike Him, a table now and then really spread for Him. It is blessed to know that we have, if we will, materials wherewith to furnish such a table. Let us briefly look at these two, this way :

Levi's feast we naturally begin with, as simple as it is beautiful in its meaning. A publican had just learned in his own soul a fact of mightiest import beginning to be disclosed, that God was seeking sinners,—*not* the spiritually whole, but "maimed and sick and halt and blind,"—and seeking them *to save them*. It was not the blessing merely he had got, but a disclosure of the heart of God in its innermost depths. The music and the song of the Father's house he had learnt as the echoes of the Father's love making all glad with its own gladness, and here, down here in the world and at his door, was One in whom

this love was told out as nowhere else, and, as nowhere else, embodied.

It was little to let into heart and house that which was its joy and sunshine; but Levi knew that where it was let in it must and would be true still to its own character. He who could not enjoy the glories of heaven alone, could not be content in Levi's house alone. That house, by the fact of Christ being in it, must become a little picture of the Father's house to which He belonged, and receive its prodigals too with open arms and joyous welcome.

So Levi made Him a feast; and He, as understood and welcomed, took and maintained there His place of Welcomer; was fed in feeding; rested, in giving rest; and the Spirit His witness testifies His satisfaction in the fare He got. For of all who received Him, not all understood Him so; of all who welcomed, not all feasted Him.

And is this our joy in the Gospel still, that the Lord should have His feast with us, which cannot be that unless the door is open and the invitation out, and publicans and sinners are made free to enter? Or is any desolate heart now needing to be made aware of such a Christ so seeking sinners, that where'er He feasts He must have open doors for them? Down in a world of sinners still, still such is He, (though absent), in His Gospel and His Spirit evermore the same!

Here He must begin with us upon our ground, but not to leave us here. The feast at Bethany tells another story. No publicans sat at the table there, and yet do not imagine them excluded, save only as Levi in fact, no doubt, sat there, publican no longer. But a company of people were gathered there, full of wonderful experiences and partakers in a mighty triumph. They had found death no difficulty to Him, with whom Levi's guests had found sin no difficulty. He had made Himself a *real* crown (not such as human malice was soon to invent for

Him) out of the thorns He had taken out of their path of sorrow. And now having seen His victory over the "last enemy," and sharers of the triumph He had achieved in their behalf, they make Him a feast—a supper—once more; and He can feast.

It is all a picture, a type for us: a type of triumph still more assured, still more complete, still more wonderful; announced already in words which, however at the time misunderstood, would interpret themselves yet to the hearts of His own, and so interpret *Him*. "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; *and he that liveth and believeth in Me SHALL NEVER DIE.*"

Lazarus, dead and risen, was our type and yet was not; for our death has been Christ's alone, and His life is ours forever. And in the knowledge of it, its warm flush in our veins, communion, service, worship, have indeed a distinct character, He Himself a central, vital connection with them, and Himself has (who can doubt?) *His feast*.

If He could feast thus with His delivered ones, with the shadowed cross even then full in view,—if Mary's ointment then (her constant memorial), could anoint Him for His burial,—*already* for His burial,—shall we not feast Him yet, and serve, and worship, when we are with Him in the eternity to us so near?

And now? how many of us are qualified and prepared to make,—yea, more, are actually making Him this supper now?

Not to discourage do I say this; for as soon as the heart turns truly to Him, wherever we are—aye, in Laodicea,—He will come in and sup *with us*, as well as we with Him. And when we let Him do for us what He would do, be to us what He would be, then we shall give Him a supper; and the joy of it will be the foretaste of eternity.

## “DESPISE NOT PROPHESYINGS”

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(1 Cor. xiv.)

THE fourteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians is remarkable as being the only scripture in which the order of the church when “come together into one place,” is declared. This should give it surely some importance in the eyes of those who believe that He who “loved the Church, and gave Himself for it” has not ceased to love and care; and moreover that the Head of it has not given up His headship.

For those who think the mere matter of the conduct of the meetings of the saints a thing of no or of small importance, it is well to note how solemnly the chapter closes with the assurance that the things the apostle wrote, were “commandments of the Lord.”

Have they ceased then to apply, or been recalled—these commandments? Or was all this care taken for the Church at the beginning, and is it now no more?

“Surely not the care,” people reply; “but the gifts regulated in the chapter have ceased, and therefore the regulation of them also.”

But then it is not true that the chapter as a whole occupies itself with merely the regulation of gift. It rather gives, as I said, the regulation of the assembly as “come together.” “Let your women keep silence in the assemblies” did not stir the question of whether they had gift or not. Some in fact did prophesy, the chief thing regulated in this chapter; but the thing here is, they might

not do it in the "assemblies;" outside that, what they or others might do is not in question at all.

Then again, "Every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine (a teaching)." The latter surely has not ceased; no, nor the former, for there is no ground for supposing it was any inspired or even freshly prompted utterance. What was to guide in the bringing forth of all this in the assembly, was the principle, "let all things be done unto edifying."

Thus the whole chapter treats of the assembly, and the case is supposed of an unbeliever coming in, while such and such things were going on in the assembly, and what the effect would be upon him who came in. Now suppose certain gifts had ceased—as plainly "tongues" and "interpretations" have—this would not destroy the general principles which were to govern in this "coming together." Points of detail might cease to apply, while yet the principles remained untouched. Even in those days the gift of tongues might be wanting in some assemblies; but that would not affect the general application of the chapter to them. If they had but a "psalm" or a "teaching" it would apply. Indeed these were, and are, a sort of type or sample of what occupied the assembly when come together—the psalm addressing itself to God in praise or prayer with the melody of hearts conscious of His "favor better than life," while the teaching addressed itself as from God to men. The one was worship; the other ministry. Certainly, if these two abide, we are not altogether destitute of what may furnish forth our assembly; and had we nought else, the principles of the chapter would apply to us.

It is indeed plain, that the apostle has especially upon his mind two things as connected with the assembly, but which affected his mind very differently. These were prophecy and the gift of tongues. He saw them priding

themselves upon the latter, and falling into utter folly in their pride, so that they were actually exposing themselves to shame even before unbelievers through it; speaking with tongues that no one understood, and where no one could enter into or be edified by it. Comparatively speaking, prophesying was made of little account in the presence of this more showy gift. That which was "a sign to those that believed not" was usurping the place of that which spake unto believers "to edification and exhortation and comfort." If in the assembly, then, the rule was that all things should be done to edifying, the prophesying which was expressly intended for that, was really the greater and the better thing.

Thus he bids them "*covet* to prophesy," but on the other hand "*forbid* not to speak with tongues." They hold in the apostle's estimation a widely different place. I am in a measure prepared to hear of the disappearance of that which men were so much abusing. On the other hand, the more I think of the place which prophesying holds with him, as that which was for "edification and exhortation and comfort," so that he exhorts them to covet it as what edified the assembly, the less I can suppose it possible to pass away until the Church is perfected and removed to heaven.

On the other hand I can understand it still being a thing slighted and overlooked by men to any conceivable extent. I find, both here in 1 Cor. xiv. and again in 1 Thess. v. 20, (which latter passage couples together the two warnings, "Quench not the Spirit,—Despise not prophesyings"), the assurance that they were already doing so. There was that in the nature of this precious gift which exposed it peculiarly to the slighting and dis-esteem of man. What had then begun may well have advanced in our day to the denying of the gift altogether.

If we enquire, then, as to the nature of this "prophesy-

ing"—a "prophet" was, according to the strict meaning of the word, "one who spoke for another;" and the name was given among the heathen to those who spoke for a god and made known his will to men. It was by no means necessarily in the utterance of prediction properly so called; for this another word was used which the Scriptures do not employ. Even a "poet" was a prophet, as one who spoke for the Muses, thus speaking, as was supposed, under a sort of inspiration, not merely from his own mind. So even Paul speaks of a "prophet" of the Cretans.

The New Testament knows nothing of a mere seer of the future. The prophet was one who spoke *for God*. Thus "a man of God" is so often the beautiful and significant designation of a prophet. In days of darkness and apostasy they stood forth on His part whom men had forgotten, and brought His word and will to them. Their predictions were but a part of these utterances, which dealt with the moral condition of those addressed, calling them to repentance; encouraging, warning, comforting, exhorting, instructing in righteousness. Of such the most distinctive feature was that they were "God's men." Very significantly the apostle Paul speaks as if "all Scripture" were written for such. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the *man of God* may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.) Here was the necessary condition of prophesying, that truth and devotedness to the living God which enabled them as living near Him to know His mind. This underlay that saying of Amos, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing but He revealeth it to His servants the prophets." Like that again in Revelation, "to shew unto *His servants* things which must shortly come to pass."



It might be thus made known in different ways—by positive fresh revelation, which for us, since the completion of the word of God, has ceased to be; or by the Spirit in living freshness, using that Word according to what Paul says to Timothy. The man of God it is who in either case has the mind of God as to the scene through which he passes. To such an one “the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.”

Now, if this be the basis of prophesying, it is no wonder that the apostle so highly values it. If prophesying be just speaking for God, God’s own utterance in the midst of His people, it is easily to be seen how people should be exhorted to “covet” it, and that earnestly. “Love,” seeking not her own, would yet seek that which was so profitable “to edification and exhortation and comfort.” Distinct enough from “teaching,” it did not necessarily infer any gift for the latter, nor indeed any for public speaking at all. “Five words,” and those not the speaker’s own, might suffice: the word of God simply read might carry its own simple and intelligible meaning to the hearts of all present. Not eloquence in anywise, nor the power of presenting the truth in orderly arrangement, was needed. The Divine utterance might come in broken words and sentences, and be still the fulfillment of the injunction, “If any man speak, let him speak as oracles of God,” so that even the simplest there, or the unbeliever coming in there, should come under the power of that word, be convinced of all, be judged of all, and the secrets of his heart being made manifest, should fall on his face, and worship God, and report that God was of a truth there. The apostle coveted this for them, and would have them covet it also for themselves; this direct dealing of God with heart and conscience from which man might indeed shrink, but which was fraught with blessing for him none the less.

I need scarcely say, that the meeting of the church in this fourteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians was even on this account an "open" meeting, in this sense and for this purpose, that God might speak in His own sovereign way by whom He would. It was thus, in the fullest way open; so much so that man might and did abuse it there at Corinth. "Every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation." He states the fact, does not pronounce as to whether right or wrong, but only adds, "let all things be done unto edifying." That it might be so, those that had gift of tongues might speak, two or three, not more, and only when there was an interpreter. The prophets similarly two or three. Only the women were absolutely to keep silence in the assembly. There was no other line of prohibition whatever, as to who should be the speakers.

This open door, so widely open, was a special need. It might be abused. It was. That did not alter at all the actual necessity. It would not better it to shut God out, even by pre-arrangement that those who were most gifted should be the speakers. Who had title to arrange this? None among men; not one. Scripture recognizes no power of this sort in the Church, short of the Church's Head. As to the use, it may shut out, no doubt, some species of disorder, but only at the expense of the very worst disorder.

Gift is not spirituality. The church at Corinth came behind in no gift; yet the apostle could not speak unto them as unto spiritual but as unto carnal, even as to babes in Christ. It is no disparagement of gift to say that thus, without the accompaniment of spirituality, the possessor of the most precious gift might be quite incompetent to edify. And, alas, men change and men decline. The highly gifted sometimes even by this means lead those who follow them the most astray. Hence when the

church is gathered together, God will have no voice raised to exclude His. In perfect wisdom He may put aside the most gifted at His will, to bring His word in by some poor, plain man, who has been upon his face before Him, and has learnt His mind where man learns best, in the lowest school. He, whom perhaps they would all have excluded from teaching them, who is indeed, as to measure of gift, below any there, may be the very one brought forward to teach them all.

And so the apostle puts this power of prophesying before them, and exhorts to covet it. Such a gift as love alone, that had Christ as motive, and men's blessing as the desire of the heart, could covet. It would lead in no easy path. The very word, "despise not prophesyings," may shew to what it leads. And what has been the history of prophets ever? "God's men" must, of all men, be men of faith, content to wait on God, and walk with God, and perhaps walk solitary else. "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" Do you think that in assemblies of Christians that could not be? Well for us, if it were. But sure am I of this, that no man in his senses would take up the vocation that I speak of, to win praise from even saints.

But where are the "men of God?" Amiable, kindly men, I can find many. Just, honest and upright, not a few. Saved men who know it, and thank God for it, are much fewer, but still many. But where are the men, to whom "to live is Christ?" Where are His bondsmen, absolutely His? Is it not what we all are, as bought with His precious blood? Is it what we are in practical reality?

There are few things more to be coveted for the assemblies of the saints, than this "prophesying." Men may teach truth, and teach it well; but that is quite another thing. The prominent place given to prophesying in this

chapter which regulates the assembly's coming together, ought to assure us of its special importance in this place.\* That importance is that the voice of the living God should be heard by His people, distinctly addressing itself to their need, their whole condition at the moment. How different a thing from people speaking to fill up the time; or the cleverest speaker, to supply the absence of a teacher; or once again, the teacher himself because he *is* a teacher, or has something in his mind which has interested or impressed himself! "The word of the Lord by the prophets" was none of these: it was a direct address from the heart of God to the hearts and consciences of His people. And still, "if any man speak," he is to speak "as oracles of God," as God's mere mouth-piece.

But it is one thing to affirm that that *ought* to be, another thing to say, it is. It is one thing to say, "I should do this," and another thing to say, "I have done it." Lowliness here will surely be the truest wisdom. We need claim nothing: "He that judgeth is the Lord."

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\* A teacher's meeting is quite distinct from the assembly coming together. He is responsible to teach surely; and the saints no less to hear; but it is another matter.

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## A FRAGMENT AS TO DISCIPLINE

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**I**N the matter of evil and of our dealing with it there are two things to be considered: the sin itself on the one hand of course, but on the other hand the state of the person who has committed it. It is so commonly the case that the evil itself becomes practically the whole matter, or at least it seems supposed that if the one is dealt with and set right, the other may well be left to take care of itself. Than this scarcely anything can be a greater hindrance (to speak of nothing else) to the real putting away of the evil which we seek to remedy.

So faithful is God that He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape that we may be able to bear it. A sin then, when we fall into it, is a sign of the state of soul, very likely unsuspected, but none the less a real sign of a condition,—the fruit in fact of our not being with God. In dealing with this, if the sin itself be practically the only thing before one—an act and not a state—we shall become incapable of effective dealing with it; except that effective dealing be considered the putting away of evil and the evil doer together.

But the Lord hates putting away. It is the last and the sad resource when all else fails, and when the person who has sinned has simply to be left to God as confessedly beyond our reach altogether. Now there are, of course, sins of such a character as makes it manifest from the first that nothing else can be done. I am not now speaking of these. In other and ordinary cases we shall only do mischief by identifying in this way the offence and the offender,—by forgetting that there is a soul to be restored as well as a sin to be put away.

In this case, grace and truth have both to act; *but grace foremost*. Grace alone restores, alone gives dominion over sin. The water and the towel have to be in the hands of one who can stoop low enough to use them aright. Meekness and lowliness alone can meet the case in hand. But more: if our action here is to be an imitation of Christ's own, we must first of all realize what Christ's is; and I fear a mistake here in many minds. A thing, true in itself, is often put into a false place,—that “if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,” and therefore it has been conceived as if our part must first be the judgment of the evil before we could count upon Him to be with us for blessing.

But away from Him self-judgment in its true meaning becomes impossible, and we find practically that this is no *remedy* for us. We are as unable to meet conditions imposed on us here as anywhere else. How indeed can we set ourselves right for Him to wash us? what would be the meaning of His washing, if our feet could not be put into His hands defiled, not clean?

A first welcome to Christ then, is to be maintained in order to cleansing by Him, a restoration to His presence in order to cleansing. And for that the open arms of love ever waiting,—the Lord Himself only rebuking our absence from Him whatever our condition.

Now if this be Christ's way, our own must follow it. The first thing is not to get a matter right, but to get a soul right so that he may be able to see and to judge with God. For this he must be with Him. Force upon him your judgment of his sin before this, you are not at his feet, you cannot wash. Your well-meaning work may drive him but further away from you and from God. He *is* away, and must be brought near. Then wash, and He will not resist you.

## THE GOSPELS AND THE OFFERINGS

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**T**HE key to the characteristic features of the Gospels is the position of the Lord Jesus.

There are four principal positions answering to the four Gospels, one to each.

Thus in Matthew, as "Son of David, Son of Abraham," He is seen in relation to the dispensations. We have His position with regard to David's throne and Abraham's true seed,—the heirs of promise.

In Mark, on the other hand, we find Him "in the form of a servant," come not to be ministered unto but to minister; and to do that, humbling Himself to the full depth of man's need, giving His life a ransom for many.

Then in Luke, "in fashion as a man," we find Him among men, meeting them in grace upon an equal footing with themselves, as Himself the Son of man.

While in John, as pre-eminently Son of God, we behold His glory, "a glory as of the only begotten of the Father"—in the Father's bosom and declaring Him—the life-giving Word of God, bringing those He quickens, in the full privilege of sons, into divine fellowship with the Father and with the Son.

All this we are more or less familiar with. It is less distinctly seen,—not less distinct,—that the aspect or the work of Christ varies as much, and in perfect accordance with each view of His Person. Such a thought is clearly enough suggested by the Levitical sacrifices. Out of the five offerings of Lev. i. 6, while one (the meat-offering) undoubtedly presents to us the character of the

life of the Lord, the four others, clearly recognized in their distinctive application by the out-poured blood, present us with the varied perfectness of His atoning work. Here, therefore, we have at once a fourfold view. And it is sweet and wonderful to find, as soon as we begin to look at details, that these pages of the Old and New Testaments correspond exactly to each other as type and anti-type,—the offerings of Leviticus being but the picture of that which in the gospel narratives is a living reality.

The four offerings I allude to are the burnt-offering and the peace-offering, both offerings of sweet savor, and the sin- and trespass-offerings which were not. The former representing *God's* delight in the perfection of the sacrifice and in the result of it, where man partakes of the joy; while the latter bringing before us more distinctly the thought of the *sin*, in which God can have no delight, which required atonement, and the judgment of it which is His strange, though needed work.

Or, more particularly,

In the burnt-offering we see the perfectness of the sacrifice of Christ, His voluntary surrender of Himself to do the will of God, and God's perfect delight in, and acceptance of the sacrifice.

In the peace-offering, while God still has His joy in it, man is permitted to be a sharer of that joy, feeding in peace with God upon the offering.

In the sin-offering, however, the thought is totally different. In the victim burnt without the camp we behold the due of sin, putting afar from God and under judgment, while yet it is the blood of the sin-offering which sanctifies the holy places, and is put upon the mercy seat; so it is Christ made sin for us that is the foundation of everything, by which we are not simply forgiven, but even "made the righteousness of God in



Him;" and by which, as our representative, He has "entered in once into the holy place having obtained eternal redemption."

Lastly, in the trespass-offering, not only is atonement made for particular sins, but recompense also for wrongdoing. "He shall make amends for the wrong that he hath done" is one of the most distinctive features. In it we see, therefore, Christ as making up, and more than making up,—“he shall add the fifth part to it,”—for all the injury that sin has caused to God and man.

How beautifully all this is told out in the Gospels we shall see upon a very brief examination: the mind of the One Spirit brightly showing itself in the divine unity of Holy Scripture, from the first of inspired writers to the last.

The order in which we find the Gospels in our Bibles is most probably that in which they were written. Matthew is the evident link with the Old Testament, which it cites continually, and with which its subject and character correspond; while John is as evidently that which opens out the deepest and fullest glories of the Lord's person, as well as the highest character of His work. Mark, again, comes nearest to Matthew, plainly; while Luke, with all his differences, opens the way to John.

If our view of the application of the Scripture language of numerals be at all correct, we should expect Matthew to speak of divine *sovereignty*; Mark, of divine interference in grace for us; Luke, of our being brought to God. We shall not find these expectations disappoint us.

Matthew begins with the Lord's legal genealogy, which proves Him to be Son of David, heir to the throne in Israel. But He is also announced as Son of Abraham, through whom the blessing of all nations is to come, and here the introduction of four women's names, significantly all Gentiles, prove His title spiritually. But the throne

of Israel is Jehovah's throne; the coming kingdom, heaven's kingdom: the blessing for Jew or Gentile requires salvation to be wrought for both; and so immediately we are assured that He who is come is Immanuel—"God with us," and *Jesus*, because He should save His people from their sins.

In this threefold character, then, Matthew presents Him, the last not developed as in John, but underlying the others. His first title is what is first insisted on. He is come to His own. When they do not receive Him, the kingdom passes in the meantime to the Gentiles, His Son-of-Abraham title is made good; always, however, with a prophecy of blessing and fulfillment of promise to Israel in the time to come. The first two chapters in this way give us the character of the book. Israel's King is hailed by Gentiles while rejected by His own. Jerusalem is alarmed, the Magi worship, the Lord takes in Egypt the place of rejection, yet there begins again *for God* the nation's history, the secret of that remarkable quotation of Hosea, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son." It is on this representation by Another all their blessing depends.

The King and kingdom are thus the characteristic thoughts in Matthew, its link, plainly, with the Old Testament. Two and thirty times its distinctive phrase is found—"the kingdom of heaven." God is on the throne; and though made known as Father, nearness of intimacy there is not with Him. The work of salvation is intimated, but as to be accomplished. There is no present joy of it as yet. Discipleship, and its responsibility in walk and life, are emphasized; but the outflow of the heart of God does not awaken man's heart in response, as yet it will. Over all these is a certain restraint and reserve. Forgiveness of sins is governmental, and may be revoked (xviii. 34). The shadow of law has not yet given place.

Only when we reach the cross we find the intimation of a blessing which the other gospels go on to develop. The aspect of the cross in Matthew we shall consider later.

Mark's gospel, which seems in some respects almost an abridgment of Matthew, is nevertheless, in the view of His person, in entire contrast. He is at the very outset declared to be the "Son of God," but this to give its character to the lowly service in which throughout He is found. The "kingdom of God" we have still, but now never "of Christ" or "of the Son of Man." Save as accusation on the cross, He is never even "King of the Jews." His title of "Lord" is very seldom taken. But He is the Son of God in service, with divine power and riches in His hand, serving in love, which requires nothing but power to entitle it to serve. There need be, and is, therefore, no genealogy. The earnestness of His service is marked by the frequency of the word "immediately." Half of all the occurrences throughout the New Testament of the Greek word which this translates are found in this gospel. The singleness of His service is seen in His knowing nothing of His Master's business save that which is given Him to communicate (xiii. 32). The tenderness of it is found in all the smaller features of His ministry: how "He was moved with compassion;" how He was "grieved with the hardness of their hearts;" how He touched one, lifted up another; how "He marveled because of their unbelief." Here too, as in Luke, the ascension is given as the fitting close to His path of humiliation,—"the right hand of God;" even then His service being unceasing as His love, so that we read, "And they went forth and preached everywhere, the *Lord working with them*, and confirming the word with signs following."

But in Mark, as in Matthew, there is not yet the nearness to God we shall find in the next gospel. The Father is mentioned as such but five times, and "your Father,"

only in one place (xi. 25, 26). Not the children's but the servant's place is here, although it is recognized that the servants are children. Governmental responsibilities and rewards are before us as in Matthew, but there, of disciples, each for himself subject; here, of laborers for the accomplishment of divine purposes: ministers, after the pattern of Him who, as "Son of Man, came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

The shadow that lies upon both these gospels is revealed, as soon as we look at the cross, where in each the Lord's cry is found, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The fourfold view of the cross which the Gospels present, it is now long since that I have endeavored to show to be that of the early chapters of Leviticus. There as we have seen, (omitting the meat-offering, which is not sacrificial,) we have just four sacrificial offerings. Two of these, the burnt and peace-offerings, are "for sweet savor:" the peace-offering, that which speaks of peace and communion with God; the burnt-offering, of the perfection of the work itself *to God*. Luke and John, I have no doubt at all, give us respectively the peace and the burnt-offerings: of this, by and by. But in the two others,—the sin and trespass-offerings,—the judgment of sin is the side dwelt upon, the necessary result of divine holiness, but not that which is sweet savor to Him. In the trespass-offering, sin as *injury* rather,—whether as regards God or man; in the sin-offering, sin as *sin*. The one has to be *repaired*; the other, *expiated*.

Which, then, does Matthew present? and which, Mark? I have been accustomed to take Matthew as the sin-, Mark as the trespass-offering; I am now convinced that this is wrong, however, and that it should be reversed. Matthew, I am now clear, represents the trespass- and Mark the sin-offering.

The difficulty lies mainly in this, that in the type the sin-offering alone is that which shows us the full judgment of sin in the outside place in which the victim is burnt upon the ground. But *both* gospels show our blessed Lord in this outside place: the cry of forsaken sorrow is as much in one as in the other. There is perhaps no such thing in Scripture as a mere repetition of the same thought; and this, while a perfection of the Word itself, is a difficulty in the interpretation of it. What has pressed upon me of late is this, that the trespass-offering (as I have elsewhere said,) is a question of divine *government*; the sin-offering, of the divine *nature*. Now Matthew we know to be the gospel which speaks of government. We see too in this why the trespass-offering can put on the aspect of the sin-offering; because the claim of divine government requires the display of the holiness of the divine nature.

In Matthew we find the double answer of God to the work of Christ. Having gone for us into the outside darkness, it is dispelled; the veil of the temple is rent in twain from the top to the bottom. The glory of God can shine out: the way in to God is opened for man.

But the Lord gives up His spirit also: the double portion of man is death and judgment. Judgment He takes first, and, having exhausted this, dies: the answer to this is seen in the resurrection of many of those who slept, who after His own resurrection go into the holy city and appear unto many. Now death is the stamp of divine *government* upon the fallen creature, as the cup of wrath is the necessary outflow of His holiness against sin. Matthew and Mark both give the rending of the veil, but Matthew alone the resurrection of the saints. This shows again that Matthew gives the governmental view of the cross, the trespass-offering.

There is another indication in the fact that in Mark the

grace which is the result of the cross is not only fuller—"the gospel to every creature," preached with the signs of the enemy's work overcome, and the effects of man's judgment at Babel overruled,—but also it is grace *unmixed*. Compared in this way Psalm xxii. with Psalm lxix. So in Mark there is no prophetic Aceldama, no "His blood be upon us and on our children," no judgment even of the traitor. "Who is to be judged," as another has well asked, "for God's laying our sin on His beloved Son?" In the governmental gospel these things have their right and necessary place, and their omission would be as much a defect in Matthew as it is a perfection in Mark.

Again, even the threefold witness to the Lord, in the traitor who betrayed Him, the judge who gave Him up, and of Heaven in the dream of Pilate's wife, seems to me now more in accord with the governmental trespass than with the sin-offering. Mark entirely omits them, and, by what it omits as well as what it brings forward, thus concentrates our attention on the one point of that forsaking of God which is the essential feature of the sin-offering.

In Luke we find the manhood of the Lord emphasized, as His deity is in John. Thus His genealogy is traced from Adam, not merely from Abraham. Not only His birth is dwelt on, but His childhood also; and how He grows in wisdom and in stature. His prayers are noticed where in the other gospels they are omitted, as at His baptism and at His transfiguration. So, His being "full of the Holy Ghost." Seldom is He the Son of David here; and Mary has the prominence in the early history which in Matthew belongs to Joseph.

Taking thus a place among men as Man, it is no wonder that angels tell, not simply of God's "good will toward," but rather of His "good pleasure *in* men," for so it should be read. And accordingly the peace-offering

aspect of the work of Christ is what Luke's gospel gives.

We might apply to it, in comparison with the two former Gospels, those words of the Canticles, "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear in the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come." Even so does Luke open with a burst of melody. Like Israel's chorus on the banks of the Red Sea, when the returning flood had swept away the last trace of those that had so lately threatened them, every heart is full of joy, and every mouth opened to sing of a great deliverance. Not only so, but heaven itself opens, to tell of, and to share its joy, and the burden of its song is like carols of that never-ending morning which it anticipates:—

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy,  
which shall be to all people.

"For unto you is born this day, in the city of David,  
a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude  
of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace, good pleasure in men."

This at once stamps the gospel before us with a peculiar character. In neither Matthew nor Mark do we read such language as this. In them we look at the awful due of sin, seeing it, it is true, where we see it in Divine grace put away forever, and learn His love who gave Himself for us there. But in Luke we see heaven opened, and walk in the light of it. God and man are at one again. There is an open house, and a glad reception, for the chief of sinners. What brings glory to God in the highest, gives peace to man.

And this is just the meaning of the peace-offering, where man feeds with God upon the same sacrifice, and is at rest in His presence. This is the one theme of this

precious gospel, not the working out, but the bestowing of salvation. And this it is sets loose man's tongue in praise: Mary, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Simeon, are all full of what we hear of in the angel's message,—a Saviour and salvation.

Let us enter a little into the proof of this.

Not to speak more about what is so plain in the first chapters, if we look on to the opening of the Lord's ministry, in Nazareth, in the fourth, how strikingly is the character of the gospel presented in those words—only to be found in Luke—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." This is the place the Lord takes throughout the book. He is ever doing this. Everywhere we see "God in Christ, reconciling men unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." And we see, too, men brought to God, and blessing Him, with adoring thankfulness, for "trespasses not imputed."

So the woman, at the close of the seventh chapter, who, taught of grace, is not afraid to seek Him out even in a Pharisee's house, loving much because much is forgiven her, though having the instinct of it, if I may so say, rather than the assurance; getting that now from the lips of Him who never disappoints the largest expectations faith can form of Him—"Thy sins be forgiven." "And He saith unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Again, in the parable of the tenth chapter, how sweet to recognize, in the person of the "good Samaritan," Him, who (not caring how men impute it to Him as a disgrace) ministers "righteousness of God without law;" applying



in the power of the Divine Spirit, the knowledge of His own precious blood-shedding to the healing of those wounds from which the life-blood flows.

Or again in the fifteenth chapter, how "all the mind of heaven is one," in the bringing back of the lost sheep, the recovery of the lost piece of money, and the welcome back of a returned prodigal: all this to justify those "publicans and sinners" who drew near to hear Him, and to assure them of the joy that is in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

And we might add more, as in the Pharisee and publican of the eighteenth chapter, and the history of Zaccheus in the nineteenth; but it will suffice to quote one other instance. The cross, as we might expect, preeminently has this peace-offering character. There is no "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Instead of that the Lord says twice, "Father." Though the shadow may be upon the cross, He is in the light with God. And instead of self-occupation, such as was necessarily the case in draining the cup of wrath and judgment, He is able to intercede for others. "Father, forgive them," is His prayer for His murderers. And yet more wonderful even, a little after, heaven is opened to a poor sinner at His side, and a dying thief, who perhaps but a while ago had joined in deriding Him, is caught up to Paradise.

How significant is all this! What depth of meaning does it give to the angels' chorus in the opening chapters! while being, as it surely is, "Glory to God in the highest," how sweetly does it speak, "On earth peace, good pleasure in men."

A few statements, which it will be easy to verify with the aid of a concordance, may perhaps not be useless for the confirmation of this.

The word "peace" occurs but four times in Matthew. "If the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it;

but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you again." And in the same chapter, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." Once the word "peacemakers" occurs: "Blessed are the peacemakers."

In Mark the same word, "peace," is found but once. In chapter v. the Lord says to the woman diseased with an issue of blood, "Go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

The character of these passages will be seen at once. Now compare them with the following in the present gospel:

"To guide our feet into the way of peace."

"And on earth peace, good pleasure in men."

"Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

"Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

"Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."

"And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto you."

This needs no comment.

The verb "to save" is found in Matthew and Mark, but neither "Saviour" nor "salvation." For the Lord is in those gospels more looked at as One who is working out salvation, than as having wrought it out or bestowing it. In Luke, however, we have—

"My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

"Unto you is born this day a Saviour."

"He hath raised up a horn of salvation for us."

"To give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins."

"For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

"And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

"This day is salvation come to this house."

In all these instances salvation is looked at as a thing wrought out, making glad man's heart; God, a Saviour, bestowing it.

So the word "grace" is found several times here, but not at all in the two former gospels.

"All bare Him witness, and wondered at the words of grace that proceeded out of His mouth."

"Remission" (*aphesis*) is found once in Matthew, as what would be the result of the sacrifice of Christ; in Mark once, as connected with John's baptism, what it led to in God's grace; and once in the negative, "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never remission."

"Remit" (*aphiemi*) is used but once in Matthew of present forgiveness, as ix. 2, to the paralytic—"Son, thy sins be forgiven thee;" and here it seems to be brought in mainly to display the character and dignity of Him who was among His people. In Mark it is precisely the same thing. But in Luke both these words are of comparatively common occurrence, in the sense of present remission.

"To give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins."

"To preach deliverance (the same word) to the captives."

"To set at liberty (the same word) them that are bruised."

Both these things the Lord was *there to do*: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations."

To the paralytic, as in the former gospels—"Thy sins be forgiven thee."

To the woman that was a sinner, the same thing.

On the cross: "Father, forgive them."

And to this I add, what comes out very strikingly in

the institution of the Lord's supper, and may have been noticed in examples already given, that in Luke the subjects of blessing are distinctly named, as it were, and the blessing given *to them*; in Matthew and Mark, more attached to a certain character.

Thus in Matthew we read: "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many." But in Luke—"This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for *you*."

How the joy of salvation is here brought home to the hearts of those He is addressing.

Again, compare the Sermon on the Mount with what answers to it in the present gospel.

"He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'" But in Luke—"And He lifted up His eyes upon His disciples, and said, Blessed be *ye* poor; for yours is the kingdom of God."

And just answering to these loving assurances on the part of a Saviour God to the objects of His love and care, so do we find, as I have before noticed, the heart of the redeemed sinner going forth in love and adoration towards Him who has so blessed him.

In Matthew and Mark you find love to God or man only as a command, or as in the statement, "The love of many shall wax cold." In Mark, further, you do find, what is so blessedly in keeping with the whole gospel, the love of Jesus towards an object (though the fairest thing in mere nature) utterly unlovely: "Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him."

But in Luke we have the Lord's own testimony as to what had been awakened by grace in the heart of a poor sinner—it cannot be wondered at if I quote the whole passage:—

"And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon,

Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

And as we find here the heart attracted to and delighting in the One who has redeemed it from death, so do we find the mouth opened in blessing and adoration. Let us look again at some passages which illustrate this.

The word "praise" (*ainos*) is found in Matthew once, in the quotation from the eighth Psalm: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise." The verb "to praise" (*aineo*) is not found at all. In Mark we have neither. In Luke we have—"A multitude of the heavenly host praising God."

"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God."

"And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God."

"And the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice."

"And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."

The word "glorify" is used four times by Matthew; twice only as a thing actually done: "they glorified God." Mark uses the word once. In Luke we have it nine times,—all of men actually glorifying God.

So the word "bless" is used in Matthew, once as a command: "bless those that curse you;" twice, "blessed

is He that cometh in the name of the Lord ;” twice where the Lord breaks bread and blesses,—once where the sheep are placed on the right hand of the King: “come ye blessed of my Father.”

In Mark it is used five times, in a precisely similar way.

In Luke it is used thirteen times. And, omitting occurrences similar to those just given, we find—

“And he spake and praised (blessed) God.”

“Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God.”

“And He lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them He was parted from them, and was carried up into heaven”—the last look we have upon the Saviour here, and revealing His attitude until He comes again.

Finally, as Elizabeth, Mary, and the rest, began the Gospel with songs of gladness, so do the disciples close it. “And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.”

In connection with Luke, I have only one point more to notice, and that has been glanced at. The fifteenth chapter opens the heart of God to us in a way which the former Gospels have nothing of. Yet, if we see here the prodigal brought home, and the grace of God revealed in doing it, and the son’s place into which grace receives him, we do not go on to see what follows this. We do not actually enter the house, nor become familiar with the after-life, in the Father’s presence. This is reserved for yet another revelation. Where Luke ends, John begins.

No one of the Gospels has its characteristic features more marked and decided than that of John. This will readily be admitted. Coming, in providentially perfect order, after the rest, it is based (so to speak) upon them. We have no repetition in it of what they have said, but taking what they have proved for granted, our apostle

proceeds to the development of other and higher truths, for which they had prepared the way.

The former Gospels have all shewn us, in connection with other things, man fully tried and tested by the presence of One who stood among them in the fulness of love and grace and of unspotted holiness. Christ in fulfilment of long desired promises, had come unto His own cherished and peculiar people. Jesus was in the world as the friend and servant of man's need, the perfect witness of Him whose compassions go forth into a scene of guilt and ruin and seek out the outcast and the sinner, with assurances of mercy and good-will. But what was the result? Alas, in whatever way the Lord is presented to us in these inspired narratives, they bear a common testimony to His rejection. However in other respects they differ, they all agree in bearing witness to the cross. "He was in the world and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own and His own received Him not." With the statement of this broad fact our Gospel begins.

We have therefore, no fresh trial of man here;—he had been abundantly proved already. Here, in the light come into the world, he is manifested indeed for what he is. The whole truth about him comes out. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," is the judgment of God upon all that naturally comes of him. If any receive Christ, it only shows that Divine power has been at work there. They have been "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Now we have nothing of regeneration in the other Gospels. Here we begin with it. On the other hand, here we find no repetition of the warnings already given; none of the gracious invitations so uniformly rejected. Even the Baptist utters not here his usual message. We have no "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;"

—no “bring forth fruits worthy of repentance”—no coming “in the way of righteousness” or requirement at all. All that is over. Righteousness dealing with men simply on the ground of natural responsibility could only be in judgment. Yet it is not judgment we get here, though evil indeed be judged, and man be set aside. No; it is rather God’s own pure and precious grace:—God as the Quickener of the dead, that they may walk in the “light of life” with Him, maintained there by the precious blood upon the mercy-seat.

John has this ever before him: the rent veil opening a way into the holiest,—the light streaming out from thence,—Jesus, the light, not of Israel merely, but of the world,—and the blood covering the sin the light reveals. This is what indeed the first chapter gives: the “glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;” the glory revealing (bringing out the truth); grace securing, so that, whatever is brought out, we can abide in His presence,—and then furthermore, the manifestation to us, as there, of the Father; as it is said, “the Only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”

Thus in the Gospel of John, that which breaks out in other Gospels in gleams transitory, however glorious, here shines through the whole. As we might fitly call Luke’s, the Gospel of peace, so we might as fitly call this, “the Gospel of the Glory.” Yet, for that very reason, those occasional gleams are not in John. We have no Transfiguration-scene. The glory is not afar off on mountain-tops. It dwells with us. We are familiar with it. In Christ we have ever the Word made flesh—the Only-begotten in the Father’s bosom,—the “Son of man, who is in heaven;”—yea, more; he that has seen Him, has seen the Father.

Even upon the cross, where least we expect to find it.



the Divine glory does shine forth. There is no horror of a great darkness, hanging for three hours about it here. There is no cry of desertion. There is no agony. If Jesus says, "I thirst," it is "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." And in perfect keeping with this, He is all through the doer of the Father's will, and the object of the Father's delight; just as in the burnt-offering, everything is for the eye and heart of God, and all goes up to Him a savor of a sweet smell. So here Jesus offers Himself in the calm and perfect consciousness of acceptance; "when He had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished, and He bowed His head, and rendered up His spirit."

How sweet this witness not merely to "the strength of our salvation," but to the perfectness of our acceptance in the Beloved. And how suited also to that particular aspect of truth which we have here, viz.: communion in the light with God in the power of a new life given of Him. It is in One in whom the fire could only bring out the sweet savor of perfect devotedness, that we stand before God;—One in whom the Father can only find unchanging delight. This preciousness it is that attaching to us gives character to our communion and sustains it abidingly. Accepted in the Beloved we dwell in the Father's presence, and our fellowship is with the Father and the Son.

There is another witness to the perfectness of this work that is exceedingly precious. Out of the side of a dead Saviour the soldier's spear brings blood and water. It is God's answer of love to man's senseless enmity,—Divine provision for his need. It is the proof that all is indeed finished. The spirit, water, and blood bear witness to the same unspeakably blessed truth: *God has given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.*

Yet one more character of the burnt-offering, found also in our present Gospel, remains to be noticed:—the

perfect voluntariness of Christ's sacrifice.\* We find this everywhere. So in the tenth chapter: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No one taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again."

So again in the garden we see the perfect expression of the same free will, where He gives Himself up to those who had just fallen to the ground before Him. "The cup which my Father hath given Me," is His answer to the hasty zeal of a disciple, "shall I not drink it?"

I do not know that I have much more to suggest here. It will be plain, I think, that we are touching harmonies of sweet and holy significance. May they be full of power for our souls.

I scarcely need to repeat what is so manifest, that here in John only, we get the full revelation of the Father. The other Gospels are too much occupied with man and his trial, for this. But in John, at length, the full end of this is come. Jew and Gentile, seen in the light of God's own presence, are without distinction there. Both are alike dead in sins. Both need alike renewal. Therefore, for John, Judaism and Gentilism are one. Light is come into *the world*. The Sabbaths of the old creation, the law and all carnal ordinances are gone with Judaism. Man is out of the scene, and God can tell out therefore the secrets of His own heart.

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\* The voluntary character of the burnt-offering is not to be argued from Leviticus i. 3. The words there should be rather, "He shall offer it for his acceptance." But in point of fact all the sweet savor offerings partook of this character. From the nature of the case, where sin is seen as requiring sacrifice, you cannot speak of freewill in offering it. I need not say, Christ was willing surely, He is burnt-offering and sin-offering both—"who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God."

Then it is "grace upon grace" only. Life for the dead, light for those in darkness, purification that we may walk in the light with God, are all found in Him. We are without a veil \* in His presence, and it is perfect blessing.

Thus God manifests Himself commending His love to us—for God is love. And as it is the Son, the only-begotten Son who has declared Him, *we* are put also in the place of sons, that we may understand and enjoy this manifestation.

This is the Gospel of John, very meet to be his whom Jesus loved, and who speaks ever as it were from the breast of Him who is in the bosom of the Father: words of grace and love such as must needs bow our heads down to the dust, while we drink them in.

One more remark may suitably close this brief recital of differences which are manifest perfections of these inspired books. In Mark and Luke, the two gospels which give most distinctly the Lord's humiliation, His death is spoken of in terms like that of any other man: *exepneuse*, "He expired." In Matthew, where He is King, and heaven's own King, it is *apēke to pneuma*, "He dismissed His spirit." Here, even in death, He is Lord of Himself, and none can take His life from Him. In John, again, He is the Son, and in relation to the Father; and here the suited phrase is *paredōke to pneuma*, "He delivered up His spirit"—handed it over to Another, as the word means.

I do not know of any version of the English Bible which gives these differences wholly right. But they are there, and each in perfect accord, as is plain, with the view given of our glorious Saviour in the different books. Deeper than our utmost realization of it is the perfection of God's blessed word.

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\* There is no rending of the veil at the cross in John, because it is looked at as already rent all through the Gospel.

# THE "ONLY BEGOTTEN"

## AND THE "FIRST-BORN"

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**W**HOSOEVER denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father," says the apostle: solemn words of warning, which we shall do well to take with us in our consideration of the relationship of the Son to the Father. We have also to remember the Lord's own words, that "no one, save the Father, knoweth the Son." This is not intended to prevent our search into what Scripture gives us as to the person of the Lord, but only to give us reverence—a reverence which implies, surely, attentive heed to what has been written in it.

Two of the most popular commentaries of the day—that of Adam Clarke and that of Albert Barnes—deny the eternal Sonship of the Lord. From this the doctrine has spread among others, and confusion and indistinctness are in the minds of many at the present time—indeed, creeping over the minds of those once apparently clear. Let us, therefore, take up this truth afresh, fundamental as it is, to inquire what the Word of God, ever and alone authoritative, declares. And may we, as we look, be given at least to behold more brightly, the "glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

It is not of the deity of the Lord that I am now supposing question. Those of whom I am speaking are, thank God! as clear as we can be, that Christ is in the fullest sense God,—to be honored even as the Father is honored. Nay, it is on this very account that they demur

to the "only begotten Son" being His title in Godhead. I do not intend to take up their views or arguments, however, but simply to look at the Scripture-doctrine by itself.

Now it is His Sonship that the apostle insists upon as distinguishing the Lord even as man from the angels (Heb. i. 5): "For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee?" It is clearly as man born into the world that He is addressed; for "this day" is time, and not eternity; and so the apostle's quotation of it in the synagogue of Antioch (Acts xiii. 33) implies. It is the more remarkable because angels too are called "sons of God," as in Job i. 6; xxxviii. 7. Here, the sonship common to all spiritual beings created by the "Father of spirits" (Heb. xii. 9) is distinguished from the real relationship of a "begotten Son." This is carefully to be marked, insisted on as it is in the announcement of the angel to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Here is in creature-condition One who is more than creature. Men may be "offspring of God," and angels "sons," and yet neither of them touch this place or inherit this name.

So, as the apostle argues, to none of the angels is it said, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to Me a son." This is once more spoken of Him in manhood. "*I will be* to Him a Father" would be of course quite impossible to be said of Him in any other character. But here also a real and full relationship is indicated beyond that of a mere creature. "Begetting" is the distinct basis of this relationship, and declares the reality of it. Such was the Lord even, as man.

This Sonship as man has been confounded by perhaps

the mass of Christians with His deity. *Founded* upon His divine relationship it is, and yet carefully distinguished from this, as we have seen. His title in this respect is, in Scripture, the "First-born," as in *divine* relationship He is the "*Only Begotten*." The one title as clearly maintains what is exclusively His as the other asserts His sharing it in grace with others. The words used, we should notice too, are different. "Begotten" speaks of the Father; "born," of the mother: \*—the first, alone of divine paternity; the second naturally reminds us of another element than the divine.

In wondrous grace there are others also, not among angels, but among men, and fallen men, who have been chosen to be born of God. Who, as born of the Spirit, are partakers of that which is spirit,—of a divine nature. It is with these, the fruit of His work, the Lord is associated as First-born: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29). And their link with Him as "brethren" is distinctly declared to be on account of their being "of one [origin]" with the Lord Himself: "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are *all of One*: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, 'I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee'" (Heb. ii. 11, 12).

We must here remember that the title of "First-born"

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\* *Μονογενής*, "only begotten," a compound of *γεννάω*, "to beget;" *πρωτότοκος*, "first born," from *τίκτω*, "to conceive." It cannot be asserted that this is the exclusive force of either word. *Γεννάω* is applied also to the mother, and *τίκτω*, more rarely to the father; yet the force of the words in general is undoubted, and throws light upon the constant use in Scripture. We have never *πρωτόγενής*, never *μονότοκος*.

does not necessarily speak of priority in time, but of place and dignity. The actual first-born might lose his place, and another obtain it, as we see in Jacob and Esau, Reuben and Joseph; and so God says of David, "I will *make* him My first-born, higher than the kings of the earth" (Ps. lxxxix. 27). So with the "assembly of the first-born ones, whose names are written in heaven" (Heb. xii. 23), which is without doubt the Christian assembly, in plain distinction from the "spirits of just men made perfect," who are the saints of the Old Testament. Yet it is the latter who are the first-born in *time*, while the former have the precedence in place and privilege. And it is thus I understand the language in Colossians i. 15, where, speaking of the Lord, the apostle calls Him the "image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature." Here, it is in manhood that He declares the Father; and He who has thus become man, yet is Creator of all, as the apostle goes on to say, if He take His place, in marvelous condescension and love, in His own creation, must needs do so at the head of it. It is His pre-eminence, not priority in time, as many have thought, that is asserted. That "He is before all things," the seventeenth verse plainly declares.

The same passage in Colossians distinguishes also two things that are in danger now of being, by some, confounded: "And He is the Head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the first-born *from the dead*; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." This is stated as another thing from being "first-born of every creature," although for us the two things have now become practically one. But He was the "Second Man" before He was the risen Man, as we also are born again before the quickening of our bodies.

Between us and Him there is this plain and immense difference, that we, as first-born ones even, are the fruit of

His work; whereas His being first-born is grounded in His deity. So the apostle says explicitly. "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; *for* by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." It is to this, then, His title as First-born is due; and this points clearly to incarnation, not to resurrection. Scripture is clear, therefore, as to the application to this for us so precious title of our Lord, while all through shines the glory of a more wondrous relationship to the Father, distinct and wholly divine, "the glory," as the apostle John says, "of the *only*-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father."

This title is *only* used by the apostle John, and by him five times, while that of "First-Begotten" is, in his gospel and epistles, never used,\*—a fact at once of the greatest significance, for John's peculiar theme is the deity of the Lord. But we are not left to this, for the passages themselves exclude all possible doubt. A truth of this kind could not be allowed to remain in the least obscure; and to those content to take Scripture as it stands, without rationalizing, there is no possibility of mistake.

The first passage is alone decisive: "And the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us, (and we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten with the Father,) full of grace and truth." I give what is more literal than our common version, and preserves the all-important connection with the tabernacle of old. In that, the glory of God had dwelt; in the darkness, not in

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\* Once in the book of Revelation, a book of very different character, we have "the first-born of the dead."



the light; shut up, and inaccessible to man. Here now was a tabernacle—the flesh of Christ, in which dwelt the fullest glory of Godhead, and most accessible,—divine glory now to be approached and looked upon, because revealed in grace and truth. And what was the glory thus revealed? It was the glory as of an only begotten with the Father: that was its character; the glory of the Only Begotten is the very glory of God. Nothing could surely be plainer than this declaration.

It is reiterated in the apostle's emphatic manner in the seventeenth and eighteenth verses: "For the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Here, we have the same contrast with the law, when God dwelt unseen in the darkness; the same *grace and truth as the character in which Christ had now come*. And who is it that declares, or tells out, the Father only now revealed? It is the only begotten Son, the One being in the Father's bosom. Not "who is" now; that is not the force of the expression, but the "One being"—or who is always—there. Here, to deny His being Son forever would be as much to deny the Father being the Father forever. It would be the denial of divine relationship,—the making the "Father" not the real and essential name of God, but only a character assumed by Him in time. It would lower immeasurably the whole character of the revelation. But it is the *only begotten* Son who is thus in the bosom of the Father; it is He, and no other: not always incarnate, but always the Only Begotten,—the divine, eternal Son.

Once more, in the third chapter, we have the truth of this divine relationship doubly pressed, according to the apostle's manner. The familiar words of the seventeenth verse imbed this in the very heart of the gospel: "For

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is the signal proof of this love of God that it was His only begotten Son He gave; and then all blessing depends upon the reception of this gift: "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned; he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Solemn words these for those who deny or pare down the truth of eternal Sonship! The "name" implies the doctrine—the truth of this.

It is the eternal Son that John speaks of in all his writings. This is the glory which he has told us faith sees irradiating the tabernacle of His manhood. The title of "Only Begotten" is only once used again by Him, and that not in his gospel, but in his first epistle; but there, the connection is as solemn as in this passage already before us: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." Here, how plain is it that He was the only begotten Son before he came into the world; and divine love was manifested in God thus sending the object of His love.

I have done little but cite the Scripture-texts, which are so clear and plain that comment of any length could only obscure them. Our *faith* in this will show itself only rightly in the joy of our worship here in the presence chamber of the God to whom we have been brought.

NOTE.—It has been recently maintained, from the Septuagint use of the word "only-begotten" for the Hebrew "only one" (*jachid*), that "only" is all that is intended by it. But this is irreverent rashness in handling the

divine word. The Septuagint does not govern the speech of the New Testament, and is often as inaccurate as the latter is always perfect. The difficulty with regard to "begotten" with reference to the Lord as a divine Being would have certainly precluded its use, if it had not had an importance which should be evident. It speaks of the Lord as Son in *nature*, real Son in a sense no creature could be; and practically to strike this out, as is proposed,—whatever the intention,—is to expunge a testimony to the unity of the Godhead, and to the true relationship of the Father and the Son.

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## HIS YOKE AND OUR REST

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(Matt. xi. 29, 30.)

**T**HE Lord in this chapter already stands before us as the rejected One. The kingdom has been announced as at hand; the King is there: works of power attest His authority, and works of love display His heart. Disease, elements, devils, and that which lies at the root of man's condition everywhere,—sin, all have in turn yielded to Him, and owned Him Master. Proof upon proof has been given of who He is, who has taken in grace the lowly title of Son of Man. All is (so far as the nation is concerned) in vain. John has come mourning to them, and they have not lamented; in the Lord's sweet pipings they have not rejoiced. Neither righteousness nor grace will suit those whose hearts away from God will have none of Him, and with whom light is discerned only to be refused, and quenched, if possible. Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, witnesses of His mighty deeds, only awaited a judgment worse than Tyre or Sodom, as guiltier than they. Driven back in His love, the Lord's heart yet finds rest in the ways of a holy God, His Father, Lord of heaven and earth, who has "hid these things from wise and prudent"—not from any particular people, but from this class of people—"and revealed them unto babes." "Even so, Father," says He, "for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

And "good" our hearts too recognize it. Would it be good that God should reveal Himself to what after all are

but the attributes of a select few, rather than to the helpless and the ignorant, the poor and foolish? "To the poor," says the Lord, as the crowning witness of His mission, "to the poor the gospel is preached." Man values himself upon what distinguishes him from his fellows, but God's common blessings are also the greatest. His sun and rain and air no man gets by philosophy or skill. He who would get his religion so would have it to exclude the mass of common men.

For "wisdom" man bartered Paradise and the favor of God. Is it not "good," is it not necessary, that he should renounce this fatal acquisition to get back to God? Would it be "good" that that which is the fruit of sin should be the means of attaining the blessings lost by sin? It is not right that as to this, his way to true wisdom should be by the confession of folly and of impotence; and that the gate of the new Paradise should stand open upon the common level of humanity, rather than upon the mountain-tops inaccessible but to the few?

Yet "vain man will be wise, though he be born a wild ass's colt"; and alas, the ignorant will rather look up to his leaders, than rejoice in the God of sunshine and free air, whose best gift is brought down to ignorance itself. Thus "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life." God's breadth, to man, is practical "narrowness." Open to all, man's lofty eyes overlook it. Its simplicity is its reproach; its lowliness, to pride exclusion: "few there be that find it."

And yet what *seems* good in the Father's sight is still what is only really good, however much man may take his own stubborn and self-willed course. God cannot give up His way, and He, who with open arms receives in the Father's name, and without question, all who come, still declares, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me,"

Thus here:—

He who rests, amid all contradiction of men, in perfect satisfaction with the Father's will,—He can show to others the way of rest. And He who treads the path of obedience to the "Lord of heaven and earth" has all put into His own hand, as Lord of all. "*All things are delivered unto Me of My Father*;" and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The way of rest He knows: He can guide others into it. Meek and lowly of heart, they must learn of Him to find rest. He who had come down to learn obedience (as a thing before unknown) in a strange path of suffering and sorrow, could yet speak of ways of pleasantness and of peace, such as all God's ways are. Think of Him, the Son of God, the Man of love and sorrow, upon whom the mourner-dove rested as His emblem, come down to this from the throne before which angels veiled their faces, to commend *to us* the restfulness of self-surrender to the Father's will, the pleasantness of "ways" which as a Man in our world He had learnt! How simple, how easy, how blessed, will it be to learn of such a teacher!

How do we "labor?" why are we "heavy-laden"? Is it not because "we have turned every one to *his own way*?" It is a way sufficiently characterized as a way of trouble and unrest by the simple designation of it as our "own." The path marked out for us of God is that which Divine love, wisdom, power, have employed themselves about; our own way, the way of folly and self-will, what can it be but trouble and evil? Can we set up our

wisdom or our will against God's, and prosper? How wonderful this call from One who seeing our infatuated rejection of God's blessed will, has come, drawn down from heaven by His love, to take it up and vindicate it against our suspicions, and in the face of the universe, proclaim its blessedness! "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O my God." And then when having proved it: "My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work."

"Come unto Me," then He says; "*I* will give you rest." How much, here unexplained as yet, was needed in order that that might be fulfilled! No mere example was enough; no mere Teacher could He be. The Shepherd of the sheep, leading the feet of His own into green pastures, by quiet yet living waters, had, in order to be this, to be "brought again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Rest for our souls is, first of all, I need not say, to be known as the fruit of His work of atonement for us. We, looking up into the heavens through which He has gone, and seeing the Lover of our souls, whose love could give Him no sabbath till His work was done, now sitting down at the right hand of God,—we can rest only because *He* does: because the work is finished, accepted, and abiding in value before Him in whose presence He appears for us.

But this is here left for the future to develop, and there is something else needed also in order for the rest to be complete. To give rest in this way He gives a "yoke." To find rest we must accept His yoke. "Take *My yoke* upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

The yoke is what He gives, but never wore. It is a mistake to suppose that He in any sense wore a yoke,—a mistake to suppose that in it we are yoked with Him. A yoke is *always a restraint*: useful and good it may be,

and is here surely; but still a restraint. He *never* needed, nor could have it. It is the distinctive contrast between Him and us, that His type is that "red heifer upon which *never came yoke.*" In untrammelled freedom, because with a will always with God's, He was the perfect workman, devoted even to death, as this figure signifies. *God* never had to impose a yoke upon the neck of His perfect Servant. And beautiful it is to see in the figure of that which cleanses away our defilement in the wilderness, the blessed picture of a wholly devoted, and therefore uncurbed, will.

*We* need a yoke,—an easy one, but still a yoke. Look at the picture in Lamentations (iii. 27-29). "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope." The very goodness of the yoke here shows that the Lord never could have borne it; but for us it is indeed good, because of that in us ever needing to be restrained, ever ready to break out if it be not restrained.

Then again, it is not a yoke in which we are yoked with Him, but a yoke we get from Him. He is here One to whom "all things are delivered by the Father." As He served the Father, we are to serve *Him*. How ready we are to forget, when we speak and think of following Christ, the difference between us and Him which yet exists, and must exist. "Following" must be distinguished from mere unintelligent imitation which ignores the difference. He was the Son of the Father, sent into the world by the Father to represent the Father. We cannot and do not represent the Father, but Christ. He Himself points out the difference: "As my *Father* hath sent *Me* into the world, even so have *I* sent *you* into the world." "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved



you: continue ye in My love. If ye keep *My* commandments, ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept *My Father's* commandments, and abide in His love."

In the passage before us this is marked, for the Lord has just said, "All things are delivered to Me of My Father," and then follows it with "Come unto Me" and "Take My yoke." Nor is there a hint of yoking *together* in the passage. A single yoke is just as much a "yoke."

But the force of the passage is that the yoke of Christ's commandments, easy and blessed as it is, needs to be in fact practically submitted to, in order to find rest to our souls. Alas, there is danger, because we are so little like the Lord, of our mistaking the doing of our own wills for the "perfect freedom" which is only in true "service." The liberty of grace, the deliverance from legality, which we are entitled to enjoy, are liberty to follow our Shepherd only; and this is living guidance, which requires our watchful eyes to be upon Himself. Let us not mistake, if our wills are crossed by His, as if it were legality to be too intently listening to His voice, or keeping too strictly to His "narrow" way. It is true we are "sanctified to the obedience of Christ," and His obedience was not that of a stopped will. It is true that our obedience should be therefore that of a changed will and not a stopped one. But let us take along with this, as remembering that we have in us what our Lord never had, the truth which it needs to meet this, that therefore is the necessity of submitting to a yoke which for our blessing checks and restrains what would otherwise ensure the toil of labor with a heavy burden.

It reminds us how the book of Exodus, the redemption-book, is not complete with the ending of Egyptian bondage and the song of salvation on the shore of the sea, but ends only with the law of Jehovah their deliverer established over them. It reminds us too of how when Bala-

am's unwilling lips have pronounced that "neither hath He beheld 'labor'"—"perverseness" is what this results from, but 'labor,' such as the Lord speaks of in Matthew, is the word employed—"neither hath He beheld labor in Israel," he explains how this is in fact accomplished, when he goes on to say that, not only "the Lord his God is with him," but also "the *shout of a king* is among them." That ringing shout of loyalty which welcomes the King, is indeed the jubilee-cry which proclaims liberty to the toil-worn. No rest but in "the shout of a King!" Would that our hearts knew it better, and echoed it with the joyous anthems which are its fit accompaniment! A King! our King! all the more that He loves rather to take a nearer and more familiar title. Who would not take gladly His enfranchising yoke, who has borne for us the burdens under which our souls would have been whelmed forever, and given us His path delivered from the shadows under which He knew it, and bright with light of the glory into which He is gone!

His yoke! how little really we apprehend its liberating character! how little frankly it is accepted now! Self-will is rampant among those who have most claim to have been set free from Egyptian bondage, but whose uncircumcision proclaims the "reproach of Egypt" not yet "rolled away." Our morals are more utilitarian than divine, and the "broken spirit" which God pronounces His "sacrifices," have we not almost classed it among the things of law which it is the mark of evangelical liberty to discard? "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," are words how needful for us to recall! how full of sweet rebuke from Him whose meat and drink were to do the Father's will, and to finish His work! Blessed Lord! may He not have to say of us as of old of His own: "*I have meat to eat that ye know not of.*"

## CHRIST'S WORK AS PRIEST ON EARTH

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THE question of the Lord's having been a priest on earth is one to which, now that the attention of many is being drawn to it, should be given due and patient consideration. Mistake on this point may easily lead to further error, as should be plain to us, and there needs no apology for another review of the subject here, in which especially it is my desire to look at some things which as yet have had but brief and unsatisfactory notice in these pages, if any. I shall, however, briefly state the whole argument.

1. The *main* ground for the belief that the Lord was not a priest on earth is certainly Heb. viii. 4, which however, says nothing of the kind. Speaking of Christ as "a minister of the sanctuary, and of the *true* tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man," it says, "If He were on earth, He should not be a priest." And why? "Seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law;"—that is, the *place is occupied already!* Well, but what place? Plainly that of offering gifts *according to the law*. But would any of the Lord's work on earth have interfered with that? The question is idle, of course. *So, then, is the argument which needs to raise the question:* for it is this, and only this, from which the apostle argues, that there are priests already installed in the legal sanctuary, and doing the legal work. Could the work of the cross come in here? Nay, if you will observe, with the perfect accuracy of Scripture, while in the third verse the

apostle says that "every high-priest is ordained to offer gifts *and sacrifices*," when he goes on to the argument of the fourth verse, he drops the "sacrifices," because in the Lord's present priestly work there is *no* sacrifice, and only says, "Seeing that there are priests that offer *gifts* according to the law." Backward he does not look: he does not say, "When He was on earth He was not a priest"—and to change the statement into this is surely unallowable. Put in its connection, the whole argument is, "If He, the Minister of the sanctuary, were on earth, He would not even be a priest, seeing that there are priests of another order fulfilling that office as to the sanctuary on earth." This is surely clear, and we may pass on.

2. A second objection to the doctrine of the Lord's having been priest on earth is derived from the fifth chapter, where it is stated that being "made perfect" . . . He was "called of God a high-priest after the order of Melchizedek:" thus it is urged, if He were made perfect through the things which He suffered, as all will allow, then it must be *after* His sacrificial work that He became high-priest.

Two things need, however, to be considered: first, that the word for "called," in this case, is not that for calling to an office,—the actual word for which occurs before, where His calling seems clearly grounded, not upon His work, but upon His *person*: "And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron; so also Christ glorified not Himself to be made high-priest; but He that said unto Him, 'Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten Thee;' as He saith also in another place, 'Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.'" Then there can be no just doubt that the call to office is implied in the acknowledgment of Sonship: otherwise these words would be irrelevant, and the last quotation would be the true and suffi-

cient one. Secondly: on the other hand, it is really His being the Son of God in humanity that constitutes His fitness for the priesthood,—that is, for the mediatorial office. Aaron's anointing without blood shows that His work was not needed for this; and the *acknowledgment* of Sonship would thus be tantamount to the call, and the two quotations exactly harmonize.

It is after this that His sufferings are introduced; and then, "being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation . . . *saluted* of God a high-priest after the order of Melchizedek." The work is done, and God greets the Victor by the title under which He has done the work. How suitable this when we know that everything, with the great High-Priest Himself, had been under the cloud from which He has just emerged! That here there should be the reaffirming of a title which was before His own, need cause no difficulty.

But it is affirmed that "perfected" means "consecrated," as it is translated in chap. vii. 28, "consecrated for evermore." If, then, He was only consecrated as priest through the sufferings He endured, it is plain that He could not have been priest before His sufferings.

Yes, it is plain, if the basis of the reasoning be true: but is it true? As to the word, "perfected" is truly the sense, as every one the least competent will admit; the margin and the Revised Version have it even in chap. vii. 28. As to the application, of course the force may vary according to this, and abstractly the perfecting of a priest *may* be his consecration to office—*may* be, not must; and the application and the force are alike open to question here.

The application:—for the passage itself does not say "being made perfect as priest," nor is this connected in this way by the structure of the chapter; and the strictly parallel passage (as it would appear), chap. ii. 10, substi-

tutes (if we may speak so) for priest, "the Captain of salvation": "it became Him . . . to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Is not this very like: "And being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation"?

But if the connection be admitted, (and I for one cannot be unwilling to admit that the Priest is *as* priest the Author of salvation,) the conclusion does not follow that is supposed. It must then be asked, In what sense are we to take "perfected"? If as consecrated through sufferings, was not that at least *on earth*? and if He were consecrated through sufferings on earth, is not that inconsistent with the thought of a consecration by His being saluted as High-Priest after death, or perhaps resurrection? Take it as "perfected,"—the Scripture word,—and you may say as Priest, and I for one have no question and no difficulty. I believe there was such a "perfecting" of our blessed High-Priest, and that not seeing this occasions much of the perplexity that many are in to-day. For since the apostle is addressing Christians, (who have their place, as Christians, as the result of His accomplished work,) it is necessarily a risen and ascended High-Priest with whom we have to do, and whom we need; and thus his words are very simply applicable to Him as He now is: "Such a High-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and *made higher* than the heavens" (chap. vii. 26). Yet even such statements show he does not mean to deny that Christ was High-Priest *before* He was "made higher than the heavens," or "passed into the heavens" (chap. iv. 14), but in fact *affirm that He was*: otherwise his language would be that He was passed into the heavens, and then became Priest; but this he never says.

3. But does not the apostle say that (in contrast with the Levitical priesthood, in which those who were priests

"were not suffered to continue by reason of death") "this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood"? (chap. vii. 23, 24) and does not this imply that only after He had passed through death He could become Priest? No: this is but an inference, and a false one,—derived, no doubt, from too close a reference to mere earthly priests. Death *would* remove one of these from his place of office: could it remove similarly a heavenly priest? It would rather *introduce him to it*. And the "endless life" after the power of which Christ was made Priest could only be that "eternal life," though in man, over which death could have no power. But this will be supplemented by after-considerations.

4. We must now look at some other statements of the epistle to the Hebrews, which seem to affirm in the strongest way the fact of the Lord's priesthood upon earth. In chap. viii. 3 we have already found the apostle saying, "For every high-priest is ordained to offer gifts and *sacrifices*; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer." Again: "For such a high-priest became us . . . who needeth not daily, as those high-priests, to *offer up sacrifices*, for *this He did* once, when He offered up Himself" (chap. vii. 27). "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation (*R. V.*) for the sins of the people" (chap. ii. 17). "But Christ being come, a High-Priest of good things to come, . . . neither by the blood of bulls and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (chap. ix. 11, 12).

Now what is the consistent testimony of these passages? Is it possible to say, in view of them, that it was not high-priestly work to offer sacrifice? Surely not: they were *ordained to do it*. Was not this typical of what

Christ did as priest?—or was it something in which the types failed to represent the truth,—as shadows, but not the very image? Nay, He was “a merciful and faithful High-Priest *to make propitiation*”—for that purpose,—and as the high-priests offered daily, so “He offered up Himself.” After this, as High-Priest still, by His own blood He entered the heavens.

Surely the texts are plain, and must be forced, to make them speak otherwise than upon the face of them they seem to do. Where did the High-Priest offer Himself up? In heaven, or on earth? How did the High-Priest enter heaven by His own blood, if He were *not* High-Priest *till* He entered heaven? Will the perfection of Scripture allow me to say that the High-Priest did these things, but not *as* High-Priest? and even where it is asserted that He was High-Priest *to make propitiation*, still that He did not make it “as” High-Priest?

No; as believing in the perfection of the Word of God, we dare not say these things. If we were at liberty to interpolate Scripture after this fashion, it would soon cease to have authority over us, because it would cease to have meaning for us. Any body, in this case, could see how simply such passages could be altered for the better; and if it be the exigency of what has seemed to us the meaning of some particular verse or verses which requires this, have we not the very best reason to see if indeed we have interpreted such passages aright? The apparent contradiction is the result only of partial views of truth: with the whole, the perplexity clears. Scripture has not to be perfected by our thoughts, but cleared from the mists which our thoughts introduce into it.

5. But, it is said, the priests did not kill the sacrifices, except where for themselves, and that this shows that Christ's work on the cross was not a priestly work. But in this way evidence might be brought against evidence: for



the burning on the altar or on the ground, the sprinkling and pouring out of the blood, were so strictly priestly functions that no private person dare ever assume them. Yet these are but different sides of one blessed work. It is not even strictly true that the priest never killed the victim except where for himself; for he *did* kill the burnt-offering of birds (Lev. i. 15), and on the day of atonement,—the very day which is specially referred to in the epistle to the Hebrews,—he killed also the sin-offering for the people. But in any case the burning upon the altar or upon the ground was the most strictly sacrificial part, and this belonged to the priest expressly. On the other hand, it is not difficult to see that in the death of Christ we have the victim side, as we have the atoning side in the offering up, and that the death at the offerer's hands may represent the victim, as the priest's work the atoning side. This, I have no doubt, is the truth, the offerer for his part marking out thus the penalty of sin which he had brought upon an innocent sufferer, while the priest offers it to God as *sacrifice*, and so atoning. The slaying of the bird offered for the healed leper is not by the offerer, and that of the red heifer (between which and that of the leper there are strong points of resemblance) concurs with it, I believe, as showing Christ's death at the hands of the world; and this is in connection with the truth in both cases of the crucifixion to the world implied in the cedar-wood, scarlet, and hyssop being in the one case cast into the fire, in the other stained with the blood of the victim. Both are lessons as to *purification*.

The offering, in any case, was exclusively priestly, and this was surely the representation of the death of Christ in its divine meaning.

6. One thing more in this connection. In Numb. xvii. the true priest for God is known by the blossoming and

fruit-bearing of Aaron's rod—a type unmistakably of resurrection. But this only *marks out* the priest, does not make him one, as in fact Aaron already was in office. Resurrection has the most important bearing upon priesthood, *all the more on this account*: for thus it is the acceptance of the work of Him who offered up Himself, and is by this shown to be the Author of salvation to those who obey Him.

7. If, then, the acknowledgment by God of His Son were the call to the priesthood, and if the anointing of the Spirit, and apart from the blood of sacrifice, marked out the great High-Priest,—if it was the High-Priest who offered up Himself, how clearly all this was fulfilled when at the baptism of John the Lord came forward to His public work among men! Then the Father's voice came forth in testimony, "This is My beloved Son," and the Spirit like a dove descended upon Him. From that baptism to death which was the shadow of it, the Lord went on to another baptism, and a Jordan that filled all its banks for Him. Yet so was His priesthood perfected, and He entered heaven by His own blood.

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## "BREADTH AND LENGTH AND DEPTH AND HEIGHT."

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(Ephesians iii. 18.)

THIS expression does not refer to the dimensions of the love of Christ, which the apostle immediately after represents as "passing knowledge," whereas he prays that they may be "able to comprehend what is the breadth and length and depth and height." Yet these things surely have a connection with one another. God's counsels and His ways are what give us the thoughts and actings of Divine love, and we are continually having the lesson of it enforced upon us, while yet the fullness of it none can fathom. And it is our joy that we cannot fathom it. For while unfathomable holiness might seem to put us at a distance, and infinite wisdom and power alone shut us up in folly or in nothingness, *love* that passes knowledge only holds us by that fact with a closer embrace. Blessed to learn it as it is, it is wonderful blessing indeed to learn it as *passing* knowledge.

What then are these dimensions of God's ways, which are to give us points from which we may look off into infinity, to find everywhere beyond us still this love everywhere displayed? Let us try very briefly to think of these just now.

First, the BREADTH.

An infidel measures the earth, contrasts its puny measurement with the grandeur of the heavens, and argues that God could never have given His Son to save the puny inhabitants of an orb like this. Scripture only argues therefrom the wondrous love of Him who could do this. The Psalmist too beholds the heavens, the work

of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which He has ordained, and he too asks, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" But for him Christ is not a stumbling-block, but the sufficient answer. "Thou hast made *Him* a little lower than the angels; Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honor; Thou hast set Him over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet." "In that He put all in subjection under Him," argues the apostle, "He left *nothing* that is not put under Him." Thus he sees man in Jesus elevated to the throne of the universe—of those very heavens which had made him ask the question,—and he has nothing but adoration for Him who has done this.

But in truth we cannot follow this out as we should do until we see why God has taken up feeble man to put him in such a place of power and dignity. The Psalmist sees this connected not only with the excellency of His name declared in all the earth, but also with His glory being set *above* the heavens. God in setting man so high is indeed setting His own glory there, whence it may shine upon the whole universe. In that condescending grace of His at which man scoffs, He is actually putting a candle upon a candlestick, that all His creatures may be gladdened with the light. Because Christ taketh not hold of angels but of the seed of Abraham,—because His blood was shed for men alone,—we must not imagine that there is no significance for angels in the wondrous union of manhood with Deity in Him. There is a deep significance—the very deepest. The love that reaches down to the lowest link of creation, and fastens it irrevocably to the eternal throne, has thereby linked indissolubly all creaturehood to God. He, gone up on high, is Himself "the beginning of the creation of God"—all that is to abide in relation to God as His. Thus all has taken

a new start with Him, and in Him the angels themselves have a new and abiding link with God. If man is brought near, *they* surely are not more distant thus, but nearer; indeed, how much nearer for that wondrous Presence in a creature form, of the God of all creatures—the Creator-God!

But this is not all. Not merely are they in a new place with God, but they have a revelation of God also in Christ, which the apostle Peter tells us they "desire ('crave,' we may better say) to look into." Nor is this meant at all as ineffectual craving: we are told expressly that "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that *in the ages to come* He might *show* the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." And again "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. ii. 5, 7; iii. 10.)

How plain the ulterior purpose! How blessed to know that the joy that fills the Father's house when prodigals are brought home,—the joy of the Father's household is not only in *their* finding afresh their place with Him, but joy also in Himself, the Father, who could thus receive! in God, whose plan and purpose salvation is!

We are "made," too, "the righteousness of God in Christ." Thus wisdom, righteousness, grace, shine forth as what in God was never so revealed before. And all this becomes, as it were, the pulse of a new life in "every family in heaven and earth," which "is named of, (or from,) the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. iii. 14, 15, *Gk.*). This is the "breadth" then of God's purpose and plan, as Scripture reveals it. Let us now look at—

Secondly, its LENGTH.

This requires little development. The purpose is an "eternal purpose," *from* eternity, embracing an eternity to come. God does not shape His thoughts according as circumstances arise, but the circumstances are controlled by His thoughts and plans. How blessed to know that He is absolutely Master of all things; that even "He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He restrains." It is the only thing that can give the smallest comfort in the midst of such a scene of confusion as that around us is. Thus He goes on with His own thoughts. In another sense than Job meant, "He is of one mind, and who can change Him?" Redemption was not with Him an impulse, (impulse comes from without,) but the fruit of a purpose which was His before the world was. Eternity will be the seal of His approbation of what is the fulfilled purpose of His own mind.

I need not dwell upon this; it is all plain and obvious, but not on that account the less noteworthy or blessed.

Thirdly, the DEPTH.

And here how can we do better than follow the apostle's track in Phil. ii.? Here from a height which we cannot measure, a series of wonderful steps lead down to a depth again immeasurable. But one blessed Person has travelled the whole way. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation"—or, literally, "emptied Himself"—"and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Each step here, how much is involved in it! First, in the form of God, and equal, without robbery, to God, He emptied Himself—abandoned the form, (He could not give up the reality), and took another form, the form of a

servant! Who can measure this descent? Still He might have served as an angel. He would not: He had no mind to tarry there. He was made in the likeness of men. Still there He might have paused. The descent was already immeasurable; was it not enough? As man, death at least had yet no title over Him; but "being found in fashion as a man," still "He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death." You and I do not *humble ourselves* to become obedient unto death: He did; but more; and how much more!—"even the death of the cross." For that was how different from other or ordinary death! Here again we cannot follow or fathom. We can only discern amid the darkness One in whom even there darkness had no part; glorifying God in the place of unequalled trial; bearing up singly and alone, in depths that had no bottom, the honor of God, the cause of ruined man, the full weight of those eternal purposes which are to fill heaven and earth with unceasing joy.

This is a "depth" we cannot plumb. It is easy to speak of the death of the cross. We may say, the cross measures this death. After all, what do we mean? Our lives alone can tell how far we know it. Paul's life such as we know it was the expression of his knowledge: "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me!"

But the passage in Philippians does not end here. From the depth it takes us up into—

Fourthly, the HEIGHT: and "He who descended is the same also who ascended up, far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." For "God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

This introduces us to all our blessings. It is as Man He suffered and died; it is as Man He is ascended; as Man He has entered upon the possession of what for men He has earned. Thus our place before God is measured by the place which He has as Man, and as the fruit of His accomplished work. We stand already in the value of what He is, and of what He has done, for God.

Here the whole heart of God comes out. Restrained, pent in, until the accomplishment of that which set divine righteousness upon the side of the sinner, and justified God in justifying the ungodly, He was then free to declare fully what had been from the beginning in His heart. Eternal love found at this lowest depth its spring and outflow, and from thence could bear up the happy objects of it up to Him from whose heart it came. Think, oh think, of the rapturous joy of being thus upborne! divine love satisfying itself in not only delivering us from the burdens under which we lay, but enriching us with the fulness that is in Christ for us! Shall we not give its way to love like this? Is it not faith's part to enter into its meaning, and receive with simplicity and adoring thankfulness the assurance of what, passing all human thought, approves itself only thus to be indeed divine?

The link in all this—"breadth, length, depth, height,"—is apparent with what precedes and follows:—

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God."



# THE MAN OF GOD

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## LECTURE I

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I KINGS XVI. 29—XVII. 1

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

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

There you find that Scripture only has its proper effect on the man of God; and though, of course, no child of God is shut out, and it is written for all in this sense, that all may be and should be such, yet of necessity the profit of it is limited to those who have, in a measure at least, the character of the man of God,—God's man; of those who *stand out for Him—those who are manifestly and practically His.*

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

In the chapters before this, how little one seems to find one's way amid the discordant shapes of evil that fill the page, where the son is but spiritually the "brother of his father," as Ahab's name imports, and that which is born of the flesh is only flesh again. It is so beautiful that you get God at once brought into the scene when Elijah steps into it. Then, while there is still darkness all

around, it is not unrelieved darkness any more. If you consider, you will see how largely God's people have lived in such times as these; how from the very beginning of all dispensations that which was intrusted to man's care he failed in, and the ruin of what was set up became a settled thing. If you take Israel, God says of their course in the wilderness, "Ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them; and I will carry you away beyond Babylon." (Acts vii. 43.) The failure in the wilderness is there connected with the Babylonish captivity, though a great number of years intervened. The whole thing failed there, and Babylon was the necessary result of the failure in the wilderness.

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

If you compare the second epistle of Peter, the first

chapter, with the first chapter of the first epistle, you will find such a difference. There is a call in the second for greater energy; because God does not leave us to the influences of every kind about us. *He* does not fail, if man does. Yet it is so astonishing that we should be ready almost to credit Him with failure, because we fail. And at a time of general failure, as if delivered up to it, we claim it as even a sort of humility, not only not to pretend to be Pauls, but even to take his path at all.

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

The times in Israel were not times in which we should look for such a light as Elijah the Tishbite; it *was*, exactly, God's time. God delights in showing, in the very midst of it all, that He is quite as sufficient for the darkest times as for the brightest. Elijah's name shows where his strength was. "My mighty One is Jehovah" is its full significance. "Eli" means "my God," but yet also "my strength," or "my mighty One." It is the word used by the Lord upon the cross,—*"Eli, Eli,"*—"My God, My God;" but the very force of it there is, that He is appealing to One who has got abundant power (if it were

only a question of power,) to bring Him out of all the difficulty in a moment; instead of which, the mighty One, His strength, forsakes Him. So here, it is "Jehovah is My mighty One," and it is the power of *God* we see in Elijah,—a power as available for you and me as for him.

"Tishbite" is said by some to mean "the converter,"—the one in whom there was power to turn men from the way in which they were unto Himself, and who sought to bring a nation back to God. In his own lifetime there might seem to be little apparent success in that; even so there is the lesson for us. For while God never allows His Word to fall fruitless to the ground, and we may surely trust Him for that, on this very account we may leave success to Him,—not indifferent, but still not daunted, if it do not much appear; and anxious, first of all, that the seed and sowing should be to His mind, rather than to see results which perhaps the day of manifestation will alone disclose.

That is what God would have before us: success is in His own hands, and God is content sometimes to work in a way to us inscrutable. Look at the Lord's life: how many apparently were converted?—a few disciples gather in an upper room after His resurrection. There was quite a number at Pentecost, and a mightier work; but as you go on, you find no such large success, even in apostolic hands, as you would expect perhaps from the gospel. Very various indeed it is: in many places to which the apostle Paul went, instead of having, what people expect now from a few weeks' revival-meetings, converts by the score, very often but a few, so far as we can see. And only in a few places at first was there large response. In an exceptional one, you find the Lord saying, "I have much people in this city;" but in no wise was that the rule. And the Lord, in His own parable of the mustard-seed, indicates that the growth of the little gospel-seed

into the "tree" was as little likely a result as it argued little for Christianity. Alas! the great spread of this took place in proportion to its adulteration; and as it became popular, so it became corrupt.

Why do I speak of this? Because if we make success our object, it will become a snare to us. We shall get our eyes upon the results, and by this, test our work untruly. For if that were the test, what about His who said, "I have labored in vain: I have spent My strength for naught!" "Yet surely," was His confidence, "My judgment is with the Lord, and My work with My God." God, on the other hand, would have us look, in the most careful way possible, at walk and work and life, and as to what comes of it,—the issue of it all,—leave that to be made manifest in the day fast approaching, which shall make every thing manifest. Are you content to leave it to that? Care for souls and love to them is of course another thing. God forbid that I should say one word which should make that a matter of little moment! but beware of what on every side people are doing; and beware of thinking that quantity, with God, will atone for quality.

Now with Elijah, while God honored the man in the most remarkable way, as you know,—put Himself along with him, authenticated his word, and gave the fire from heaven which consumed the sacrifice,—yet there seemed no adequate result. Did the nation turn to God? "Hear me," Elijah prays,—"Hear me, O Lord! hear me! that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their hearts back again." (1 Kings xviii. 37.) In the very next chapter, he is fleeing from the face of Jezebel, because she had said, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." (Chap. xix. 2.) There you find, perhaps, how the ill-success of his mission affected one like Elijah. When he looked at that,

he was asking, "Would God I might die!" and sank down in discouragement. There he was, just the man that was not going to die,—just the man who, as you know, was taken straight into heaven without seeing death at all, vanquished by the apparent want of success, after all this wonderful display of power. Is this not to us a most wholesome warning not to look at the success so much as at the being with God which will insure success? If we are to wait for the success—for the end—in order to see what the thing is we do, is it not manifest that we must do it in the dark in the meantime, as to whether it be of God or not? Yet only as knowing this can we do it in communion with Him. What comes of it is God's account, not ours. We need not be afraid that His purpose will not be fulfilled, or that which is of Him not prosper.

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

I know, when you look at Elijah's life, you may say, "Certainly God did manifest Himself to Elijah in a marvelous, miraculous way, which we do not see at all now.

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

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

It is only that which will make our lives at all what they ought to be; it is only that which will redeem them, so to



speaking, from the littleness and meanness and unimportance otherwise attaching to them. The meanest life in His presence ceases to be drudgery, and becomes ennobled; the noblest without it, what is it but utter vanity?

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

But again, to Elijah, the living God was not merely his God: He was the God of Israel. That is a beautiful thing, quite characteristic of the man of God. Israel were God's people. He was not standing before Israel, remember; he stood before the *Lord God* of Israel, not before Israel. But Israel was something to him, because his God was Israel's God; and because the Lord God was the Lord God of Israel, therefore Israel was in his thought connected with the Lord God for whom he spoke.

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

and leaving out all that gives Christianity or Christians the least importance.

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

Thus, while God, who forgets not the smallest in His care for the greatest, nor one of His people in His concern for the rest, is to be for us personally and intimately ours, at the same time, He is to be the Lord God of Israel to us, and we are to stand before Him as such. Now, this standing before Him, what does it mean? It is not an expression of confidence—there is abundant confidence you see at once—or of rest, or of peace. Too often we make that the whole thing. He stands before the Lord God of Israel. This is the attitude of service. He is waiting, ready at His bidding. Not merely walking before Him; not running about, surely, with the restless hurry of many, too busy with His service to listen to His word. "Standing" is waiting to have His will expressed. We *stand* before the Lord God when we are waiting for Him to direct us, and do not move without His guidance. There may be much more standing than moving even, no doubt. If you take Elijah's life, how much more of standing, or waiting, or being alone with God, than there was of acting for Him; but the acting for Him, in consequence, came just at the right time. So should we be

ready to serve, not merely occupied with the service, much less hurrying about, as if to be doing was the whole matter, but to be in *His* path, to be doing *His* will, conscious that all else is worse than idleness.

Now notice how God identifies Himself with the men who stand before Him in this way. "As the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word." What a bold thing to say! Of course, Elijah did not mean to assert that because of his word the Lord would do these things. It was not that the Lord was going to accomplish Elijah's will, but that Elijah was accomplishing the Lord's. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." "Surely the Lord God will do *nothing*, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets. . . . The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos iii. 7, 8.) The prophet and the man of God are nearly identical. Would He keep back any thing from those who stood before Him, seeking to be servants of His will and toward the people of His choice? What a wonderful place that is to be in! For God to identify Himself so with one, not to be ashamed of him, as it is said in the eleventh of Hebrews of those old worthies; not ashamed to identify Himself with, and uphold before the face of the world, the word of a poor, untitled man, but to whom *His* word and will were all. Thus was it with Elijah, and so he became linked with the fulfillment of the purposes of One to whom the universe is but the scene of the display of a glory which transcends it still.

Now, that is the character of the man of God. Do we know what it is to have the living God before our eyes in this kind of way? Do we know what it is to be able to see, not only His actings in our lives, but what He is doing in the world, and toward His people, because we are with Him and therefore have His mind? Do we know what it

is, as sons of God, to be His servants, working with the zeal and intelligence of those who both know the Father's will and know the Father?

Of course, we must be sons before we are servants; but, being sons, do not let us imagine that this is every thing! People put service in the wrong place often. They are serving before they are sons, or before they are conscious of being sons; and slipping, therefore, into that hired service for which God has no place. On the other hand, it is surely the right thing when sonship ripens into service, and the full reality of sonship can hardly be enjoyed when this is not so.

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

But notice, it is His yoke and His burden. It is not a yoke of our own making or imposing. It is not setting ourselves to so much work for Him. It is another thing to take Christ's yoke and His burden, and learn of Him, the Doer of the Father's will, and whose meat and drink it was to do it. In Him, the true Son was the perfect servant. Have we apprehended that because we are sons, from the very nature of the child's relation to the father, we are necessarily and always servants? The child is never released from it, as a mere ordinary servant

may be. His very relationship makes him a servant to his father. A servant of love, no doubt, and thus completely one.

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

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

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## LECTURE II.

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### HIS DISCIPLINE.—I KINGS XVII. 2-9.

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

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

That discipline of the Lord never ceases; but still there are special seasons of it, and a special season we have

here in Elijah's life. He has scarcely stood forth publicly before the world before the Lord takes him away again, apart by himself. No doubt it was not a new thing for Elijah to be alone with God; but there are yet some new features in his present isolation. He is bidden to turn eastward and hide himself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. You know what "Jordan" means,—the great typical river of death. And "Cherith" means "cutting off." The Lord brings him to that significant place, and there makes him drink of the brook, sustained by the ravens, which feed him there.

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

come from God and went to God, and He was with God all the way through. That was sufficient to make Him pre-eminently a Man of sorrows, just because He was not a man like us. How little of the misery around have our hearts room for! How even familiarity with it deadens our sense of it! And how our own personal sorrows absorb and abstract us from those around! Think of One all eye, all ear, all heart, for all of this. The Lord knew it divinely, and felt every thing.

*Personally*, however, He gave Himself up to that which sin has made our condition. His probation was not in Eden, but a wilderness; nor did He use His miraculous power to relieve His hunger there. He had come into the world only to do God's will in it, and His hunger was no motive to act, when that will was not expressed. In His answer to Satan, He just takes the ground of man, but perfect man:—"Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

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

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

Thus God makes things most contrary to work together

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

By and by, it will certainly be no sorrow to have known, in whatever measure, the circumstances of his path down here, in which God was glorified as nowhere else. How could we be so prepared to see, as now we may see, but soon shall fully, what His perfection was, or what the grace that brought Him into the world for us ? And then to have shared, in whatever smaller measure, with Him the trial, and with Him the victory ! Manna is no *mere* wilderness food, though it is that. In our Canaan home at last, and forever, it is written that he that overcometh shall eat of the hidden manna.

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

That is what we find in the first place as to the prophet in this chapter. In the second place, God takes him away



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

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

That is what Elijah has to learn in the case of the widow of Sarepta. He has to learn to go out with God outside the limits to which natural ties, and even religious

associations, would confine him, and recognize in a woman of Sidon the work of God's sovereign grace,—there in its fullest and most wonderful display. I do not believe we have bottomed the need of man (or, therefore, our own,) until we have learnt the absolute *sovereignty* of divine grace,—shown, however, let us remember, in a scene where man's rejection of it compels Him to be sovereign, if He show grace at all. Man's will, alas! is in opposition to that will of God to which, if all yielded, all could and would be saved. But if some,—if *we* have yielded, is it because of betterness in us?—were our hearts naturally more docile or obedient? Scripture shall answer for us: "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." Therefore, beloved brethren, was it needful that we should be born again, "*not* of the will of the flesh, *nor* of the will of man, but of God" alone. The very figure speaks of this; for in our natural birth, was there aught of our own will?—were we consulted? Or in creation, has the thing called into being its choice? And we are not only born of God, but His creation, "His workmanship, *created* in Christ Jesus unto good works."

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

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

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

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

And that is the way the Lord would have us spiritually. He never gives a stock of any thing—of grace or of gift—so that we can say, “I have got enough to last me so long, at least.” That would be taking us out of the place of faith, and depriving us of the blessing God has for us. He covets to show us what He is,—His power, His love, His unforgetfulness of us. As it is said of the people whom in His love and His pity He redeemed, “He bare them and carried them all the days of old.” It is a great thing to get this in a real and practical way for ourselves with God. If He keeps us low down here,—and you know it is His way, in more senses than one, to call and choose the poor,—it is not because His hand is niggard, (God forbid !) but that we may not miss realizing this great blessing of His care. Often all we think of is, having our need met ; but how little a thing is that with God ! It would cost Him nothing, we may say, to meet

the need of a lifetime in a moment ; and a lesser love than His would supply it at once, and get rid of a constant burden. But that is not His way. To supply the need is a small thing ; but to supply it in such a way as to make us feel in each seasonable supply the Father's eye never withdrawn from us, the Father's heart ever employed about us,—that is what He means. "Give us day by day our daily bread" is the prayer the Lord taught His disciples ; and thus we ask Him continually to be waiting on us. Is it not much more than to ask, Give us now, that we may not have to come again ?

What a place the wilderness was to Israel, where the constant manna was a daily miracle, and the cloud of Jehovah's presence led them in the way ! It was the place, alas ! of constant murmurings ; but in God's design, and to faith wherever in exercise, how wonderful a manifestation of the living God ! Yet that wilderness journey is but for us a type,—only a shadow, therefore short of the reality of what faith in us should realize to be ours. What a spectacle to the heavenly beings, to whom is "known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God" ! *what daily miracles of grace for eyes that are open to it !*

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

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

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*LECTURE III*

## HIS DISCIPLINE.—I KINGS XVII. 17-24

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

You have here, in the very last verse, something which especially makes known the man of God. The woman says to Elijah, “Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.” What is it that makes the man of God specially known to her, and gives specially to his testimony the character of truth? It is this: not merely that he knows the living God, but that he knows and has had to do with the God of resurrection. Death visits the house of the widow of Zarephath. God has taken away her son. Not

the widow alone, but Elijah himself is brought face to face with this fact of death; a death which the woman's conscience realizes, as ours do if in activity at all, to be the fruit of sin.

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

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

Resurrection, God's power over death,—power available and displayed in our behalf, is thus God's testimony to Himself among men. But I may say, in these times it is particularly the testimony He is giving. You know, if you take the Lord Jesus through His life even down here, as you have Him in the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, “He was marked out the Son of God.” How? He was, on the one hand, Son of David after the

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

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

In the past, there had been death ; in the past, people

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



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

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

And is there not such a thing as getting hold of this in reality? It is a different thing to say, “I know it is there in Scripture,” from saying, “I know it for a truth in my very soul.” Such recognition will make us of necessity

something of—in one sense much more than—what Elijah was. It will carry us into a new sphere of relationship, of thought, of interests; and where all is deathless and eternal. We shall appreciate the Lord's words to the lingering disciple, to "let the dead bury their dead." That will be no unintelligible mysticism, as to many a believer we fear still it is.

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

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

When the Lord proposes to go to Judea again the disciples say, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?" Thomas says, "Let us go also, that we may die with Him." Death is upon all their souls,—nothing but death. When He comes, He finds them overwhelmed at the thought that

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

Some may call it high truth; and some, again, to whom it is outwardly familiar, may think it truth that needs very little insisting upon. I wish it did. What is the fact, when practice comes to test the actuality and power of the belief we have? What, for men who really knew the

power of resurrection, would be the serious business of their lives? Would it be their aim to make money, beloved brethren? Trying to get things comfortable around them? To keep up their station in the world, and live as well as their neighbors? Of course we have got to get through it, and have to do with it in the way of business. He who was "the carpenter" has sanctified honest labor, and there is nothing at all derogatory or unspiritual in it. But I need scarcely remind you what He was down here, all the way constantly and absolutely a heavenly man. Let me ask you, beloved friends, do you think that Christ could have set his heart on making money? Do you think He could have come into the world in order to seek a comfortable place in it, or anything of that sort? You know it was the very opposite of that. And what are we? We are distinctly His representatives in the world, as He was Himself His Father's representative. "As My Father hath sent Me into the world," He says to us, "so have I sent you into the world." What is the consequence? Why, we must not talk about this being "high truth," and we must not think that after all the humble part is not to pretend to so much. We are Christ's representatives down here in the world. True or false, no doubt: that is what it comes to; *true or false* witnesses for Christ down here. The responsibility of the place is ours, and if we are Christians, we must frankly accept it.

It will not do to value ourselves upon our morality, honesty, benevolence, and that sort of thing. The world knows perfectly well there is no testimony merely in that, because it will find you honest men, benevolent men, and moral men, without the least pretense to religion. The world is keen-eyed, and knows that that is no sufficient testimony. "If that is all you have to show," they will tell you, "we can do without your Christianity. We

have just such people who have none." But if we appear as people of another sphere, people who have their backs upon the world, as having beyond it a sufficient and satisfying portion, such as in it they have not,—that is another matter. "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."

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

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

That was the very thing which made *life* work in those around about. This death which was working in him (v. 12) was the power of his testimony to them. Death, so to speak, had a fair opportunity to show its power over him; but it only showed that it had none at

all; all it could do was to make life shine out brighter. "Death worketh in us, but life in you."

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

That is where his eyes were; that is what his heart was occupied with; and you find at the opening of the next chapter how fully for him Christ had met death and judgment. To die was to "depart and be with Christ." The thought of the judgment-seat moved him for others: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

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

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

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

Paul's body, but the very fact manifests that there was that in Paul over which it had not power. His true life is beyond it, untouched by it. The life of Jesus—the risen heavenly life of Jesus—shines manifestly out in him.

“Death worketh in us, but life in you.”

The life of Jesus belongs not to the world. It is eternal life, with the Father before the world was, and manifested to us in Him in whom the world found nothing kindred to itself, therefore no beauty. His home was elsewhere. His delights with the sons of men did not alter that. In us, too, it will manifest itself as that which has its source and attachment elsewhere, and there where alone no want, no unrest, no instability, is found. We manifest it when Christ is our realized sufficiency and strength, and our circumstances alter nothing, as with regard to this they can alter nothing. When we pass through the world debtors to it for nothing it can give. This is not misanthropy, not asceticism, not giving up this world in order to get another,—that is only living to ourselves in another form, and from that we are delivered. It is the very opposite,—giving up the world because we *have* what is beyond. God is our portion, and to the fullness which is ours in Christ the world can add absolutely nothing; nor, blessed be His name! can it take any thing away.

This is real testimony to Christ. It is when we can say, “He is enough for us; and know how to be abased, and how to abound, for He strengthens us. Why, oftentimes God has to put us on a sick-bed, in order to show us practically what He can do. Blessed it is, surely, to see how He works thus,—to see how He proves His sufficiency to those whom He lays low. But the blessing of a sick-bed is often just that God takes away all other things to show us that in reality we have lost nothing, whereas before we did not quite believe this. And what Christ shows us

there, He is ready to show us without the need of a sick-bed at all. I do not say that all there need it in this way. I am not reflecting upon these at all: God has His own mysterious working, and there are many and diverse purposes worthy of Himself He can accomplish thus. Still this is often what we learn and have to learn there, to be weaned from nature's breasts, and find what is our sufficiency elsewhere.

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

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

As soon as His work was accomplished, then God stepped forth and showed Himself at once on the same side as the One who took that place for us,—by raising up His Son from the dead. It was the acceptance of Christ's work. He showed Himself there upon our side. Therefore the apostle says, at the end of the fourth of Romans, “If we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offenses,

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



and was raised again for our justification," (*vv.* 24, 25.) That is, believe on the God who is for us righteously by the death of Christ. Who is for us, and showed Himself for us the very moment He could ; and He could be for us now, with all His attributes displayed and glorified. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father ; righteousness required it, while love shone out in it.

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

With our eyes and hearts up there, where Christ in the glory is the revelation of a divine object for a heart brought back to God, they will necessarily be off the whole scene from which temptation comes to us. He is for us there in the glory. We are before God in Him, those upon whom God's eye rests with fullness of satisfaction, His own beloved. And so, practically, outside all that now tempts and defiles and weighs down here ; that is what God has provided for us, and our first duty as Christians—taking the epistle to the Philippians—is to "rejoice in the Lord." To be happy where happiness is full and uninterrupted. The only possible power we can find for going through the world aright is the power of the enjoyment of Christ. If Christ is known in this way,—if Christ satisfies, in

that is strength to do all things—to be abased and to abound—as the apostle ; to go down into the scene of death, and, while it works upon us, to give forth the testimony which God seeks from us. The Lord give us grace to realize what I have so feebly shown you here. Thus only can we be practically men of God.

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



# AN ADDRESS

TO

MY BRETHREN AND FELLOW-MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH  
WHICH IS CHRIST'S BODY, KNOWN BY WHATEVER  
NAME.

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**B**RETHREN,—The test of even an apostle's message was the truth that he brought. Even the signs of an apostle wrought before men's eyes "in signs and wonders and mighty deeds" were never sufficient of themselves to accredit to his hearers the word he carried. The truth was its own commendation, and needed no other. Our Lord's own appeal was, "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?" And our Lord's own assertion is, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers."

This is my comfort in addressing you, who personally have no claim or title to be heard. If the voice be Christ's, you will recognize it. If your will is to "do God's will," you will "know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Neither claiming nor desiring any thing upon my own account, if I bring you God's Word, your responsibility is to Him as to how you hear it.

Nearly eighteen hundred years ago, an apostle wrote that it was "the last time," and gave this sign of it, that there were "many antichrists." (1 Jno. ii. 18.) "Many antichrists" were then, for the apostle, a sign of the last time; and more, that "last time" *had already come*.

In men's thoughts, those are the fresh first days of the Church's history. The vigor of youth was still upon her. In the memory of him who wrote the words before us, Pentecost yet lived; and on every side around him, as he

wrote, the word of God was growing and multiplying. More than two centuries of struggles and of triumphs were yet to precede its conquest of the whole Roman world. Yet here, before the very earliest "antiquity," to which men so fondly now look back,—before the canon of Scripture yet was closed, or the last apostle had passed away, the words of that surviving apostle himself, (inspired words—Scripture which "cannot be broken,") assure us that even then the end, morally, had already come for the professing Church; not triumph (alas!), nor a millennium—"the *last* time," and "many antichrists."

Already had the apostle Peter uttered a warning as to the same thing. That there should be false teachers among Christians, privily bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and that many should follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth should be evil spoken of. (2 Pet. ii.)

To which Jude could add, when *he* wrote, that these men were already there; so that it was needful for him to write, exhorting earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. "For," he says, "there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation,—ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." There was no remedy for all this: the Lord was coming to execute judgment upon them. "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied *of these*, saying, 'Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all.'"

Quick work of ruin, brethren, in what had been once so fair. Apostles even yet in the Church, and the canon of Scripture not completed. Yet there, *in* that Church, were the objects of judgment, and the Lord coming to execute it!

But we may go back further still, and put the testimony

of another inspired writer side by side with Peter, Jude, and John. In Paul's address to the Ephesian elders, mingled with the sorrow of his own departure from them, was the sadder foreboding of evil which should quickly follow to the Church of God. "For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." And this so soon began,—so rapidly developed, that in his second epistle to Timothy, he writes as of a notorious fact, "This thou knowest, that *all they which be in Asia* are turned away from me."

Asia, the scene of so many labors! Was Europe better? From Rome he writes to the Philippians, and he says, "*All seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ.*" "Many walk, of whom I have told you before, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."

Thus east and west were together departing from the Lord. And how does the apostle,—no man of gloomy views or narrow mind he at least,—how does he look at the future of that Church declined and yet declining from its primitive faith and love? "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." "Preach the Word; . . . for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables." "This know also, that in the *last* days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

This is the apostolic picture—with no room for a millennium in it, no prospect of general revival or recovery,

but the reverse. "The mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way; and *then* shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit (or breath) of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming." Thus there is not a break in the darkness up to the coming of the Lord. The *last* days are the perilous ones. The *last* time is known by the "many anti-christs." And that time, however God's long-suffering has protracted it unto the present, had morally already come when John the apostle wrote.

Brethren, if this be so, where are we? As surely as the Word of God is true and reliable, the general Church is far gone on the path of decline toward the full apostasy that yet shall be. (2 Thess. ii.) A form of godliness there may be, and yet "perilous times." Dangerous work to be floating with the tide, accepting things because our fathers did; dreaming, after eighteen centuries of sad and miserable failure, that even now we are to undo these centuries of wrong-doing, and do, after all, what yet was never done! Was there not energy and faith and love of old? Were not apostles equal to you in every natural and supernatural qualification for the work they gave their lives to? Does it no wise daunt you that the apostle Paul should have to say of places where all the signs of an apostle no whit behind the chiefest had been done among them, "All that are in Asia have departed from me"? or will you convince him of his error in predicting only an increase in evil, and the last days worst?

But you say you have God's promise and assurance that you shall convert the world. For He has said that "righteousness shall even fill the earth as the waters cover the sea." True, He *has* said this; but He has *not* said you are the ones to do it, but the reverse. "*Israel* shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the earth with fruit." Is

that the Christian Church? Indeed there is nothing plainer in the Word than that it is not. If you will listen to one who says he speaks to the Gentiles as the apostle of the Gentiles, he tells you plainly that just as the casting away of the Jews was the reconciling of the world, so the receiving of *them* back shall be life from the dead. (Rom. xi. 15.) Moreover, he bids you, as Gentiles, "be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee." "Behold, therefore," says he, "the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell (the Jews), severity; but toward thee (the Gentile Church) goodness, *if thou continue* in His goodness; otherwise THOU ALSO SHALT BE CUT OFF."

Brethren, *have* we continued in God's goodness? Why, then, talk of *revival* if there has been no decline? But there has been, as even the Scriptures themselves show; which show, too, there will be no general recovery. What is the alternative, then? *Cutting off*. Yet God's purposes shall be accomplished. "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so ALL Israel"—the nation, not merely individuals—"shall be saved: as it is written, 'There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.'"

Mark the definiteness of all this. Israel nationally blinded till God has His complete number of Gentiles gathered in, then *all* Israel saved; and how? By the gospel? No, but by the Deliverer coming out of Zion. And it is distinctly added, "As concerning the *gospel*, they are enemies for your sakes," treated as such; their own distinctive promises held in abeyance, that God may gather the Gentiles into the Church; "but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake; for

the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Words how often quoted, but how seldom applied as the Spirit of God applies them here—to the calling and promises of the nation of Israel.

Thus, if the receiving of Israel be life from the dead for the nations of the world, the "gospel" is not the means of their reception; but as long as it goes on, they are enemies for your sake. When the fullness of the Gentiles is brought into the Church, the dispensation will change, the Lord come, and Israel, received as a nation, be life to the nations of the world. Till the Lord come, then, there is no millennium, no conversion of the world by the Church. On the contrary, the expectation of it is the denial of the shame and failure of eighteen centuries, the proud self-assertion of Laodicea, "rich, and increased with goods, and needing nothing," not knowing that she is "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked," and that the Lord is saying, "I will spue thee out of My mouth."

Beloved brethren, for this fatal and disappointing dream of the world's conversion by your means, you have given up the practical hope of the Lord's coming. Persuading yourselves things are going in the main right, you are accepting, with little scrutiny, the ways and means and associations by which you imagine the end you have in view is promoted. Yet the Lord is just ready to judge the whole scene and your own individual part in it;—yes, judgment is to close the scene which just now may seem so full of promise. *Judgment at the coming of the Lord.* For that coming we are taught to watch, because we know not when the time is. This is the answer at once to the mistakes of those who set times, near or remote, for His coming; and, on the other hand, to those who would put it off to the end of the millennium. You know not *when* the time is; therefore the Lord says, "Watch." You



cannot *watch* for what you know will not come for a hundred years; how much less, a thousand.

Nor can you say that the coming the Lord bids us watch for is not a real and personal one, except by such a mode of interpretation as would throw all Scripture into confusion, and all ordinary language too. For the Lord tells us it is a coming in the clouds of heaven with the angels, which all the tribes of the earth shall mourn to see, because it shall be in judgment like the flood; a day when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory and all the nations be gathered before Him; and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. (Matt. xxiv., xxv.) Yourself apply these last words to the time of His real advent, and it is quite evident it is the same coming throughout both these chapters. Thus for this coming it is you have to watch, because you know not when the time is.

Yet, brethren, how many of you give ear to the exhortation? You have suffered Satan to rob you both of the comfort and the admonition of your Lord and Saviour's words. And hence a multitude of errors, and of what He will judge as evil and dishonoring ways.

1. You lower the authority of Scripture by attributing to it human exaggeration, and therefore falsehood. How could a man not led of your interpreters suppose that that coming spoken of in the terms of the twenty-fourth of Matthew was either death or high-flown language for the simple destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans long ago? If it be so, why should there be any real coming of the Lord at all? Why should not all the passages about it mean something else than they so plainly say? No wonder it should be thought that prophecy can only be clearly interpreted by its fulfillment, if these are really its interpretations! But our inheritance, brethren, our "exceeding great and precious promises,"—what about them?

Are *they* not unfulfilled prophecy? What if in result all these should dwindle down proportionately, just as the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven has dwindled down into the sacking of a Jewish city?

Alas! infidelity thanks you for the lesson which it has not been slow to learn; but the simple and ignorant man, whom you have delivered blindfold into the hands of your interpreters, will scarcely thank you for the proof that the grand and blessed Word of his God is but, as to much of it, a more than half deception,—and *how* much, he cannot know.

From hence a wide uncertainty results. The wise and learned differ, it is found; how, then, shall the *unlearned* be sure? And “charity” is invoked to cover all mistakes, by asserting—save as to some fundamental points, (that is, some points believed to be essential to men’s salvation,)—the humility of universal doubt. Indeed, the Lord has said that “whosoever will do God’s will shall know of the doctrine;”—but then you must not say that you *do* “know.” You have your opinion; I have mine. Between the two, the authority of the Word is gone. The Bible *is* God’s word, no doubt; but it is scarcely “what *saith* the Scripture” any longer. It is “What say your doctors?” And, in despite of His own word, His sheep cannot know Christ’s voice from the voice of strangers!

2. But another thing. The Scripture saith, “The whole world lieth in wickedness.” That applies, you think, only fully to the past; Christianity is rapidly changing that. As we progress toward the millennium, the world must certainly be growing better. “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,” says the apostle. But that too has ceased to be. Doubtless it was of such a change already begun at Corinth that he wrote, “Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us; we are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise

in Christ ; we are weak, but ye are strong ; ye are honorable, but we are despised." It is very true we get on far better with the world in these days. And times so changed make it difficult to understand how we "are *not* of the world." All its harmless pleasures we partake of ; all its honors we aspire to and obtain ; we find it our positive duty to "get on" in it, and do good to ourselves, that men may speak well of us ; we do not believe that Satan is the "prince of this world," for *we* are its soldiers, its magistrates, its politicians.

Brethren, where *are* we ? *Is* this progress ? or is it deterioration ? Is the "offense of the cross ceased" ? or have we ceased to bear it ? And are these words "hard sayings," which we cannot bear even from the lips of our Lord and Master ? "But woe unto you that are rich ! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that laugh now ! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you ! for so did their fathers of the *false* prophets."

3. But the Church, too : the Church it is that all the nations are to flow to yet. Kings are to be its nursing fathers, and queens its nursing mothers. It is the heir of all Jewish promises, the divinely appointed successor to Israel's place and portion. Nay, it is but one and the same Church all through, that Jewish and this Gentile. Its law is ours ; its union of church and state, its earthly head, its priestly order, its ceremonial services, and its worldly sanctuary ; its earthly blessings and dignities, contended for and maintained by carnal weapons,—all, all are ours. Points of detail may be changed without disturbing the essential unity. The Church, Jewish or Christian, is all one. So you maintain ; with what result it is not difficult to see.

For, brethren, the Jewish nation, or church—for the nation *was* the church—was no pilgrim or stranger upon

earth assuredly. "Days long in the land;" "blessings in casket and in store;" "to be the head only, and not the tail" among the nations, and their enemies smitten before their faces; these were the things plainly, though conditionally, promised them. If you are successors to all these, *who* are the successors to the apostles and the primitive witnesses for Christ?—"fools," and "weak," and "despised;" "hungry," and "thirsty," and "naked," and "buffeted," and "having no certain dwelling-place;" blessing when reviled; persecuted and suffering it?

The law is your rule of life, and holy and just and good it is, though as many as are *of* its works—upon that principle—are under the curse, as the apostle says. But whose is the "rule" of being a "new creature in Christ Jesus," crucified to the world by His cross, and glorying in it? (Gal. vi. 14-16.) You find no pilgrim or strangership in your rule, and that may suit you; but you find no glories of the new creation in it either; nor does it speak to you as a heavenly people, sanctified and sent into the world as the Father sent His Son. All this is nowhere,—the Christian's place no higher than the Jew's,—the standard of walk no different; for, of course, if the law is your rule and was the Jew's, there cannot and ought not to be any difference between your walk and his: your place in Christ and its responsibility is gone, for of this the Jew knew nothing.

But "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Brethren, what does this mean—"a new creature"—a new *sort* of creature, as the word implies? Do you go back to Adam, the pure and innocent man in the garden in which God set him to dress and keep? Nay, *that* would be no creature new in kind. Adam even, pure and good before his fall, was yet "of the earth, earthy." Is Christ but the first man set up afresh? Nay, verily; He

"is the *second* man, the Lord from heaven." Let men cavil as they please, He is a *heavenly* man, a *second*—another sort, a "*last* Adam"—head of a new race—beginning of a new creation; and you and I who believe are "in Him," seen and accepted before God "in the Beloved." "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the Heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." The image of it we have not yet: true. That will be ours in the day of His coming. The *thing* we *are*.

"Heavenly" and "in Christ"! oh, brethren, think you we realize our place and portion—"old things passed away, and all things become new"? Do you and I know what it is to look up into those heavens, where the Son of God sits in glory all His own, and see and recognize in Him what we are before God—"as He is," even "in this world"? Can we say quite confidently, each for himself, "Yes, we are identified with Him who represents us there before the eye of God—as He is, in whom no spot was ever found nor can be, but perfectness after God's own heart wholly?" *That* it is to be in Christ—a new creature. Our rule is, to "walk *in* Him," as being what we really are,—heavenly, citizens of heaven, pilgrims and strangers upon earth.

All the rest, the cross has ended for us. We have died with Christ out of our old Adam condition; our old man is crucified with Christ. The flesh is in us still indeed, but in us as a foreign thing; and we are not *in it* before God, nor identified with it in any wise, but with Him in whom it was never found. We are in Him,—as He is.

Brethren, *can* we own this and seek to get on in a world that crucified the Lord; whose prince and god is Satan, and friendship with which is enmity against God? Can we claim rights where we are dead? Can we take up carnal weapons where He has bidden not to resist evil?

Can we take the law with others where God has shown us grace ourselves? Can we be magistrates and politicians where Satan is really prince? Can we find ease and enjoyment where every step of *His* way led Him on to a death by wicked hands, even the death of the cross?

"Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. . . . He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. . . . And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

"Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not hold, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, . . . for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come forth and serve them."

4. The effects of not watching have been in every way disastrous. You are waiting for death and judgment rather than for Him who has conquered death and borne judgment for you. These are indeed the common portion of men as such. "It is appointed unto *men* once to die, and after that the judgment." And you have forgotten so the distinctness of your own portion, that you account it enthusiasm for a man to say with the apostle,

"We shall *not* all die," and almost heresy to affirm, as the Lord does, that "whosoever heareth His words, and believeth in Him that sent Him, shall not come into judgment."\* Yet both are simple Scripture statements, which the holding fast the Lord's coming gives to the soul in full and unclouded reality. For those who are watching for Him, what more simple than the apostle's language—"We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord"? Is death to these a necessity—a thing "appointed"? And as for judgment (though we shall all give account of ourselves to God), when "the Lord cometh to execute judgment upon all," even Enoch tells us, He "cometh *with* ten thousand of His saints" (Jude 14); or, as Paul says (Col. iii. 4), "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

"For this we say unto you by the Word of God, that we which are ALIVE AND REMAIN unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them that are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. iv. 15-17.) That is our portion who are His, living or dead, when He comes: "Every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward *they that are Christ's* at His coming." Mark that! Not *every body* at His coming, but "they that

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\*In the common version of Jno. v. 24, "condemnation," but the word is almost everywhere else translated "judgment," and is the ordinary word for it. The Bible Union version and Alford's Revision both give "judgment."

At ver. 29, the word rendered "damnation" is the same, and should be similarly corrected; also in 1 Cor. xi. 29,—"*He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself*"—here, not eternal judgment, but chastening.

are *Christ's* at His coming." That is the divine "order." "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and *we* (the living) shall be changed." Thus shall we go up to meet the Lord. It is the fulfillment of His own promise,—“In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again*, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Blessed, blessed words! Are they a call to judgment, think you, reader? Do you expect a sentry and a challenge at the door of the Father's house, or to be put on trial, and judged according to your works, to see if you have title to enter there?

Does He *not*, then, “know them that are His”? May there be in the company of those “raised in glory” or “changed,” and having “put on the image of the heavenly,” one who perchance may yet have no title to be there? And the “dead in Christ,” who have been many of them more than a millennium “absent from the body, and present with the Lord”—will you put them on trial too, to see if they were indeed rightly there?

No; it is all forgetfulness of the place we have with Him,—of His love, and of the value of His work. We have forgotten that if it be true, as it is, that “God shall judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained.” It is written no less that we “are *not* of the world, even as *He* is not of the world,” and that “*as* it is appointed unto *men* once to die, but after this the judgment, *so* Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and”—blessed alternative of man's natural portion —“to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.”

This is our hope, beloved brethren, to be with Himself



before He comes to execute judgment; and when He does appear for that, we know that we also shall appear with Him.

The common doctrine is a cloud upon this precious hope, and no indirect question of the certainty of salvation itself. If the day of judgment is to decide who are the saved ones, it is no wonder if many think they cannot be sure even as to themselves before. And if we are to be judged then according to our works,\* who but must shrink from the thought of it? The result is, on the one side, legality seeking to rest on its own performances in view of the day of judgment; and on the other, the lack of comfort and assurance because on this very ground. How different the believer's position as stated in Rom. v., where "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God"! How different a thing it is, to be seeking to make one's self fit to pass the judgment, and recognizing the grace which has already given me a place in Christ in the day of grace and of salvation! "Herein is love made perfect with us (see the margin), that we should have *boldness in the day of judgment*; because as HE is,"—as Christ in glory is,—“so are we in this world.” (1 Jno. iv. 17.) The day of judgment will not upset the confidence of the day of grace, for we shall be with Him, and like Him—the Judge, before that day comes. We are now as He is. When He shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory.

Bear with me a little, beloved brethren, yet; and suffer a further question. We have spoken of that Church so

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\* Those who will be so judged are the wicked dead, who are not raised with the saints at the Lord's coming;—"the rest of the dead," who 'lived not again till the thousand years were finished.' They are judged, therefore, at the end of the millennium, when the heavens and earth flee away from before the face of Him who sits upon the great white throne. (See Rev. xx. 4-13.)

dear to Christ, for which He gave Himself. If I turn to the picture of it which I have, in its first bright days, it is impossible not to ask of that Church which is the body of Christ, united together and to Him by that Spirit by which we are all baptized into that one body (1 Cor. xii.), Where is that Church now? "It still remains," you say, "scattered throughout the various bodies of Christendom." Well, that is true, no doubt; but then, what scattered it? and more, what *keeps* it scattered? Was it an evil for it to be scattered? and is it not as great an evil for it to continue scattered?

You may say, "We neither scattered nor can bring it together again." That is true too: neither you nor I can undo what has been done. But we can surely own the evil, and *ourselves* cease from it; and that we are called and bound to do.

And then what about these various bodies of Christendom, among which (you say) the *true* Church is scattered? Plainly, they are not the true Church themselves,—for that very reason, that the *true* Church is scattered amongst them. If, then, they are not the true Church, what are they? Do they even *represent* the true Church, as far as an outward, visible body may?

They do not, for they are *not* one body, even professedly, but *many*; and by the very fact of what they are, to be a member of any one of them is to be *not* a member of the rest. Thus these bodies do not even represent the Church of God. They are societies of people who are associated together upon the ground, not of membership in the body of Christ, but of holding certain views which *distinguish them from other Christians*. And *that* (suffer me to say it, brethren; the appeal is to Scripture in the matter,)—*that* is true sectarianism, "schism" in the Bible sense, "schism in the *body*" (of Christ).

Mark it, then, brethren: it is no schism to be outside

*these* bodies. It is a duty; for by the very fact of being united to *them*, I separate myself so far from all those who, though true and devoted Christians, cannot give in their adhesion to the creed or to the regulations of the sect.

The moment I get the true thought of the Church of God, I see it to be a body into which Christ the Head admits, and He alone, for He alone baptizes with the Holy Ghost, and by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body. Scripture owns no other membership than this—the being members of Christ,—of His body. If you and I are such, we belong already to the Church, and have to “receive *one another*, as Christ received us, to the glory of God.” He who imposes conditions is guilty of dividing the body of Christ, not he who cannot in conscience come under the conditions. That discipline is to be maintained is of course true, but that is not in question here. Aside from this, the gathering together of Christians as such, apart from all denominational distinctions, is the only “assembling of ourselves together” that the Scripture knows. Do you say, “Well, but that assembly of Christians as such must be subject to the order which Christ has instituted for His Church”? I answer, Surely so; but that is too small a loop-hole to admit all or any of the ecclesiastical systems of the day. Tested by the Word of God, these all founder upon this, that they put into men’s hands the power which alone belongs to Christ,—give Him nominal headship, but not actual, and subject the conscience thus to men and not to God.

All human regulations, however wise and expedient in their design, yet *as* regulations, necessarily do this. Who has power to regulate in the Church of Christ but Christ? Not the whole Church together, much less any class or section in it. Are not the Scriptures able to furnish thoroughly to *every* good work? What want we more?

Are all your creeds, confessions, canons, and what not, clearer and more forcible than the Word itself? Are your liturgies the supply of a deficiency which the Head of the Church has not provided for? Alas! is it not all sheer dishonor done to Him, and in reality a subtle form of unbelief in His only authoritative Word?

But, again, I read that Christ has given gifts to His Church: some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. The apostles and prophets remain as the foundation (Eph. ii. 20); the others carry on the building to this day. Evangelists labor in the world outside, pastors and teachers in the Church inside. The possession of the gift entailed the responsibility of using it (1 Pet. iv. 10), for He who gave it could not have made a mistake in giving it. Now, once more, suffer me to ask,—and if it be folly, bear with me in my folly,—whence did men get the control they exercise over the gifts of Christ? Who gave them power to ordain or appoint or choose or send out or locate and settle the servants of another Master? Is it no interference, think you, with Himself, that *He* has given the gift to use, but *you* are to give the authority to use it?

I ask for scripture to show that men were ever ordained to teach or preach at all. It is too scanty a foundation for it to adduce that Paul and Barnabas were separated to a special work among the heathen, by the imposition of the hands of prophets and teachers. (Acts xiii.) In the first place, Paul certainly was not ordained then; for to some of the very people to whom he was then sent, he declares that he was “an apostle, not of men, nor by man.” (Gal. i. 1.) Secondly, the work to which they were set apart was simply a definite mission among the Gentiles, which chap. xiv. 26 tells us was “fulfilled;” but Paul’s apostleship did not end with that. Thirdly, they were *prophets* as well as teachers who acted in the matter.

And, lastly, "the Holy Ghost said, 'Separate Me Barnabas and Saul,'" not See if Barnabas and Saul are proper persons to be separated. In other words, He pointed out to them directly those whom He would have sent, not gave them authority to choose and send.

Then Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every city. And afterward, Timothy and Titus, as apostolic delegates, did the same. But though an elder should be "apt to teach," his vocation as an elder was not to teach, but to "oversee." It is well known that the word "bishop," the elder's official title, means "overseer," and is so translated, Acts xx. 28. They were elderly, grave men, fathers of families, who could show, by the careful training of their own families, that they knew how to take care of the Church of God. They tended, were shepherds to (as the word translated "feed" means—Acts xx. 28; 1 Pet. v. 2,) the Church of God. If they had gift, they labored in the Word and doctrine (1 Tim. v. 17), but they might rule well without that. Not that they were separate classes of elders, for which there is no scripture at all; but if they had gift, they used it; yet it was not confined to them.

These elders *never* ordained. Apostles did, and could depute others. In Timothy's case, who was no elder, when a spiritual gift was given to him by prophecy, it was accompanied with the imposition of the elders' hands. That is the whole scripture on the subject. As for the successors of the apostles, or of Timothy or Titus, they exist in the fables of tradition, nowhere else. Scripture speaks only of a wide-spread ruin of the Church, beginning in the apostles' days; and these commend us to the Word of God in their own absence, not to successors. (Acts xx. 32; 2 Pet. i. 15.)

Why do I speak of this? I would gladly be spared having to do so, and have been thus brief, as desiring to call attention to the subject, rather than pretending to

make all plain. But the evils resulting from the common view and practice are great and many, and would justify a much longer notice. When I turn from the blessed Word of God and its teachings—from its free and simple ministry in love to all and any where, of whatsoever any one might have for the common good of all,—when, I say, I turn from this to the narrow systems of men, where hired preachers have each their little circle in which their voice is alone entitled to be heard,—when I see the sheep of Christ oftentimes clinging to those who cannot feed them, (even if they teach no positive heresy, and are themselves Christian men,) just because they have the commission of men, and refuse other teachers who have not, or are not *their* ministers, as they would say, what can I think, beloved brethren? And this is one grand evil of the system, that by maintaining the need of an external commission from those who are supposed to have authority to give it, the *commission* is, as the result, made the test of the truth. The truth ceases to have entire authority. Christ is made to commission men who do not preach it,—nay, often men who are not His at all. And yet they say there would be confusion from allowing Christians to act simply upon their own conscience to God, and that men would not know whom to listen to or believe in that case. Is not that as much as saying that Christ's sheep do *not* hear His voice, and that they *will* hear the voice of strangers?

Brethren, there is still, thank God, a living, acting Head to the Church, His body: One who cares for His own as tenderly as ever,—yea, as when He laid down His life for His sheep; One who, Himself at God's right hand, has sent down, in His own absence, "*another* Comforter," to abide with us forever. The Holy Spirit is really present with us in that place of infallible Guide and Director in the Church of God, which is falsely and blasphemously claimed by the Roman pope. Alas! are Protestants

conscious of His presence, and of what the fact of His presence involves? For if He be here, must He not be sovereign? Once He did act, and was acknowledged,—set apart men to their several spheres of service, as well as gave capacity to serve,—sent men hither and thither at His will; and the whole Church, in its coming together, could be trusted to His guidance, without prayer-book, priest, or president,—each man left to his own conscience before God;—*all* “a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” The rule was, as to worship, “in spirit and in truth;” the rule as to ministry, “all things to edification.” In the public assembly, the women were to be silent (1 Cor. xiv.). The one exception shows how large the liberty for all else.

But I close, though having scantily uttered what was on my mind. But, oh, for a heart rightly to feel all the deep dishonor we have done to Him in the ruin we have brought in everywhere. Repair it, we never can; but we can judge ourselves about it, “cease to do evil, learn to do well.” Our resource and hope is, the Lord Himself is coming, to end it all, and in the bliss of His own presence, for the feeblest and most failing of His own. May we be waiting for Him.

*F. W. G.*

