

"Let him that is taught in the Word communicate . . . in all good things" (Gal. vi. 6).

# SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

FROM THE

# SCRIPTURES OF TRUTH

NOTES FROM  
A YOUNG MAN'S BIBLE

BY  
EDWARD HERBERT BATES



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## P R E F A C E.

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**T**HE following Notes or Comments were found in the interleaved Bible of EDWARD HERBERT BATES after his sudden home-call on February 3rd, 1892, at the age of twenty-seven. They are issued in the hope that they may stimulate others in the habitual study of that wonderful Word of God which was his daily life-joy, and which, by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, led to the formation of a character of singular attractiveness, a marked feature of which was personal love to the Lord Jesus Christ. His service for Christ was evidenced as much in his ordinary occupations as in more direct efforts for the salvation of others, his favourite motto being, "Whose I am and Whom I serve." He was born in Australia, but having lost both parents at a very early age, he came to a relative in England for education, where he remained till, as he himself said,

"THE MASTER WANTED HIM."

**T**HESE Notes were inserted in *The Witness* as Gems of Truth in the midst of larger Biblical articles, and only on many Christians writing of their helpful character, and enquiring where the full "Notes" could be obtained, was the thought of publishing them entertained.

We feel sure that any spiritually-minded Christian reading through these "Thoughts" will be grateful for their issue in permanent form.

# INDEX.

The left-hand page-heading indicates the portion at which the reading matter *begins*, and the right-hand the portion at which matter *ends*, thus indicating at a glance the Scriptures commented upon on each opening of the book.

## OLD TESTAMENT.

	PAGE.		PAGE.
Genesis, - - -	9	Psalms, - - -	44
Exodus, - - -	24	Proverbs, - - -	55
Leviticus, - - -	25	Ecclesiastes, - - -	57
Numbers, - - -	26	Song of Solomon, - - -	58
Deuteronomy, - - -	30	Isaiah, - - -	58
Joshua, - - -	33	Jeremiah, - - -	65
Ruth, - - -	34	Ezekiel, - - -	66
1 Samuel, - - -	34	Daniel, - - -	70
1 Kings, - - -	36	Hosea, - - -	74
2 Kings, - - -	38	Nahum, - - -	76
1 Chronicles, - - -	41	Zechariah, - - -	76
2 Chronicles, - - -	42	Malachi, - - -	77
Job, - - -	43		

## NEW TESTAMENT.

Matthew, - - -	80	2 Thessalonians, - - -	157
Mark, - - -	90	1 Timothy, - - -	158
Luke, - - -	95	2 Timothy, - - -	160
John - - -	104	Philemon, - - -	163
Acts, - - -	121	Hebrews, - - -	163
Romans, - - -	129	James, - - -	177
1 Corinthians, - - -	135	1 Peter, - - -	178
2 Corinthians, - - -	140	2 Peter, - - -	181
Galatians, - - -	144	1 John, - - -	183
Ephesians, - - -	147	Jude, - - -	185
Colossians, - - -	154	Revelation, - - -	186
1 Thessalonians, - - -	155		

# INDEX

OF

## SPECIAL SUBJECTS.

	PAGE
The Space Between—In Beginning, . . . . .	9
The Tempter and the Tree of Life, . . . . .	11
Man's Tower and God's Tower Contrasted, . . . . .	13
Sonship and Heirship—Isaac, . . . . .	15
The Son Offered, . . . . .	20
Midnight—Lessons in Egypt, . . . . .	24
The Brazen Serpent (three points), . . . . .	28
Hannah and Her Burden, . . . . .	34
Suffocated Christians, . . . . .	40
Studies in the Twenty-third Psalm, . . . . .	46
He that Hasteth to be Rich, . . . . .	56
God's Spiritual Plans—Man's Tangled Webs, . . . . .	61
Lessons from the Leaves, . . . . .	63
Divine Love and its Five Lessons, . . . . .	74
The Unchangeableness of God, . . . . .	77
Jonah—Fact or Fiction? . . . . .	83
The Kingdom of God and of Heaven, . . . . .	84
Gethsemane and Calvary, . . . . .	86
Hail! The Morning Cometh, . . . . .	88
Special Characteristics of Luke, . . . . .	95
The Pharisee and the Publican, . . . . .	100
Peter at Pentecost, . . . . .	122
The Doctrine of God's Election, . . . . .	132
Behind the Scenes, . . . . .	139
The Grace Postscript, . . . . .	143
The Life—The Work—Liberty, . . . . .	144
Top-line Christians, . . . . .	149
Filled with the Spirit, . . . . .	150
The Hope of the Church, . . . . .	155
The Gospel of Rest—God's Rest Day, . . . . .	168
Who is Worthy? . . . . .	188

# NOTES FROM A YOUNG MAN'S BIBLE.

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## GENESIS.

**GENESIS I.** The space between the 1st and 2nd verses may have been millions of years. Contrast the whole of Exodus and Leviticus occupied with 13 months only. Creations 7 days or stages—illustrative of our new life. 1st Chaos. 2nd Brooding of Spirit. 3rd Light. 4th Life. 5th Growth. 6th Fruit. 7th Rest.

I. 1. "In beginning"—The absence of the article carries us back to the boundless ages of Eternity.

I. 27. "Male and female created He them." The Church viewed from all Eternity in Christ (Eph. 1.) the fulness of Him who filleth all-in-all. The blessedness and security of the individual soul is the lowest view of redemption; that Christ's glory is involved in and connected with the Church's existence is a truth of far more dignity, depth and power. There would be a blank in the second creation without the Church,

as there would be in the first without Eve. Thus the Church is needful to Christ, and I, as a member am needful. Ephes iv. 16.

Is the 1st chapter of Genesis Science? No—but it is truth. SCIENCE is only the reasoned arrangement of ascertained facts, and the very existence of Science in its present condition is a testimony to the imperfection of human knowledge. Knowledge of God, Science is utterly unable to give us. "The world by wisdom knew not God." Man's knowledge of God independently of the revelation God has been pleased to give us, is a singularly worthless thing. It has become more false as time rolls on. The more ancient of the old Indian Vedæ are the best, etc. Science is man's account of what he thinks to be true. Revelation is God's announcement of what He knows to be true—and it is "by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear."

II. 9. The TREE spoke of death in the midst of life. Contrast John vi. 51.

III. As a test of obedience the tree of knowledge of good and evil was planted in the garden, within sight and reach, but fenced off by a prohibitory command. Had the command been grievous, had it involved suffering or even great difficulty, it might have been said: The balance is loaded at the danger-end, and the test is not fair. But the command was light and easy to obey—and disobedience consequently the more inexcusable.

III. 4. "SURELY DIE." Does God begin the training of His noblest creature by issuing a threat? Nay—here is no threat—but merciful forewarning adapted to a will-endowed and responsible moral agent. Without an announcement of the penalty, man lost might have said, "Why was there no danger signal held up, no red light exhibited?"

III. 6. The tempter never *bids* Eve pluck and eat—Ah! the tempter knows better. There is no urgency—no pressure. Where is God all the while this tragedy is being enacted? Why does He not come forward and prevent? How should a Father suffer some crafty, wicked and malignant foe thus to assail His unsuspecting child? Should it be pleaded, He had in view to provide a remedy and thereby reveal the depth of His compassion. Might it not be answered, "But would not prevention have been better?" We are out of our depth. Before such questions we can only be silent, holding fast the assurance in Christ Jesus of His goodness, love and righteousness, and awaiting His own disclosure of the mystery, as soon as we are able to bear it, if that may ever be. In the meantime, this is His word to us, "O Man thou hast destroyed thyself, but in ME is thine help." Let us accept it reverently.

III. 24. "The TREE OF LIFE, in the midst of the garden" (ch. ii. 9). All radiated from it. Man cut off from it (ch. iii. 23, 24). Man invited to lay hold upon it (Prov. iii.) Held out as a reward to the overcomer (Rev. ii. 7). The right to it (Rev. xxii. 14).

Symbolical of the eternal condition of the trees of the Lord, eternally rooted in Christ the Water of Life—they will eternally yield endless variety of fruit, and be eternally occupied in imparting health and good to those upon earth. "The leaves of the Tree for the healing of the nations."

IV. 9. "AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?" We have to a large extent by prayer and exhortation and washing one another's feet, the keeping of our brethren.

IV. 17. Cain began building cities, establishing manufactures and arts, and undertook to make himself comfortable in the scene of the curse, and to get from beneath its sharp edge. This spirit ends in Babylon the Great.

V. 24. "ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD." None but the living walk. Two must be agreed who walk together. So many satisfied just to scramble into Heaven. We are so apt to lay the blame of listlessness and coldness upon the circumstances of our lives. Our Christianity has such a tendency to become a thing of "On Parade;" but it is when off parade, when the belt is unbuckled, and the helmet taken off, when we are not trying to be something, but return to the ordinary, uneventful, every-day life, that we are ourselves. In the midst of adverse circumstances, Enoch walked with God.

VI. 4. THE FLOOD. It was a season of outward prosperity. Grand times they were, no doubt, looked at from man's point. Those antediluvians, who in the beginning of the world, made iron pliant, were workers in brass, and

builders of cities, and framers of instruments of music, were not rude men, ignorant savages, but men of culture and taste. The narrative of ch. vi. probably goes back many years before ch. v. 32 (see verse 10).

VII. God told Noah to go in. God told him to come out. God shut the door—our security depends not on ourselves. The window was left to be shut or opened. So, our personal enjoyment of communion.

VIII. 4. Christ's burial on the 14th, the passover on the 15th, the resurrection on the 17th.

IX. 10. Here, counting man, are mentioned the four great earth tribes represented by the cherubim. Neither the fish nor the creeping things are mentioned—these were not brought to man to be named, sin entered through the serpent, a creeping thing, and in the new earth there shall be no more sea—these two earth tribes will have disappeared.

XI. and XII. Contrast. MAN'S TOWER. The vast tower probably gave to the Babylonian's their vast conceptions. They were giant architects that laid out a city with a wall 60 miles in circumference, and huge artificial gardens raised upon a wall hundreds of feet high. Let us give full credit to the great carnal men—the energetic race that dared to do great things in these early days. Mark the egotism, vanity, conceit, absence of any mention of *God*. "Let *us* make brick. Let *us* build *us* a city, and a tower which points to Heaven. Let *us* make *us* a name, lest *we* be scattered abroad."

**GOD'S TOWER.** "I will shew thee"—"I will make of thee"—"I will bless thee" and "I will bless them that bless thee"—"and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." That tower has been going on ever since not a tower of dead dust, and dead men's works, but—a *living* Foundation-stone, and raised on rich and eternal pillars of promise. Every builder ascends to the Heavenly Jerusalem; no *dead* men go there; every stone is a *living* stone, and every labourer increases in power as he labours. Invisible, but lasting.

XII. 1. One man hears the voice of God and follows. Straightway the current of history changes. For hundreds of years a roll of names like head-stones in a cemetery, yet the moment this man gets hold of God's hand, his life becomes a lesson to the ages. Shall the pen of inspiration only say of you "And...lived...years, and...died?" It may be there are some whose lives have disappointed them. In Spring, a young fruit-tree, full of blossom—in Autumn, barren and lone amid abundant fruitage. The reason may lie in some call away back in life unobeyed. This is the worm at the root of the gourd—the little rot within the timber—the false step which deflected the life-course from the King's highway into a blind alley.

XII. 2. Nothing but our own receptiveness, our faithfulness to what we have received, in short, our will, determines the extent, the magnitude of the blessing. On God's side it is absolutely unlimited.

XIII. ABRAHAM'S CHOICE. The man

who is sure of God can afford to hold very lightly the things of this world. Having God, he has all—and though having the right of choice, to hand it back to God, saying, “Not mine, not mine the choice,” is best. God’s promises are ever on the ascending scale. In Mesopotamia, “I will shew thee the land.” At Bethel, “This is the land.” Here xiii. 15, “I will give.”

XIV. Melchisedec reveals God to Abraham in a new aspect, as Possessor of Heaven and Earth—just the aspect He will need for the coming temptation by the King of Sodom, viz., the offer of earthly goods.

XV. SONSHIP AND HEIRSHIP. The promise of Isaac was the promise of *Resurrection*, since Abraham’s body and Sarah’s womb were as good as dead. The most suitable theatre for the living God is that from which nature, with all its boasted powers and empty pretensions has been totally expelled by the sentence of *death*. “Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead” Rom. iv. 24. Christ in the grave exhibits the end of everything human—the end of sin—the full limit of Satan’s power. The grave of Jesus forms the grand terminus of all. But the Resurrection takes us beyond this terminus, and constitutes the imperishable basis on which God’s glory and Man’s blessing repose for ever. There can be nothing higher than the bosom of God. There can be nothing lower than the cross and the grave. I find Christ in both. God in Christ has stooped to the very lowest point of

Man's moral condition; that, by stooping, He might raise Man to the very highest point of blessedness, in fellowship with Himself. *Hence our Sonship with all its concomitant dignities and privileges is entirely independent of us*, as were Abraham and Sarah of the seed as numerous as the stars that garnish the Heavens. We do not reach the high dignity of sons, we do not reach the family through suffering. But we reach the heirdom, the kingdom, through suffering (Rom. v. 3; II Cor. iv. 17; Phil. i. 29; Rom. viii. 17, 18). There is no penal element in this suffering, no suffering from the hand of infinite justice because of sin; all that was fully met on the cross. There are two ways in which to view a suffering Christ: first, as bruised of Jehovah; secondly, as rejected of men. In the former He stood alone; in the latter we have the honour of being associated with Him. He uttered the cry alone. He sings the new song in company (Ps. xl. 2, 3). The question is, shall we refuse to suffer from the hand of Man with Him, who suffered from the hand of God *for us*.

XV. 7. THE COVENANT. Surely this were Heaven, to be watching with God, when the heart of Man could afford to wait a millennium, unstaggered by delay, untinged by doubt.

XV. 8. In the grey dawn, as the stars which symbolized His posterity, were beginning to fade in the sky—this was His question—how human this is! Do not wonder at Him, but rather adore the love which bears with these human frailties, and stoops to give them stepping-

stones by which to cross the sands to the firm rock of an assured faith.

XV. 10. Hour after hour passed by, but God did not give a sign, or utter a single word. This is in a line with the discipline through which we all have to pass Hours of waiting for God! Days of watching! Nights of sleepless vigil! Looking out for the outposts of the relief that tarries! Wondering why the Master comes not! These long-waiting hours are building up the fabric of the spirit-life, with gold and silver and precious stones. "If the vision tarry, wait for it" (Hab. ii. 3).

XV. 12. "Who is among you that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God" (Is. l. 10).

XVII. 1. Thirteen long years, and no new appearance—no fresh announcement. Never since He had left Charran, had there been so long a pause. Divine appearances, celestial voices are very delightful; but they are meant as a bright surprise. Incessant straining after them produces an unwholesome feverishness. These long silences are to the heart what the long silence of winter is to the world of nature. Teaching us the necessity of basing the inner life on *faith*, and not on feelings or experiences.

XVIII. The old man in his 100th year, resting in his tent-door in the heat of the day, sees the **THREE TRAVELLERS**; and though he might have excused himself on account of the heat, his age or his dignity—for he was "a prince" among the people—yet, forgetful of all,

he *runs* to meet them, lest they should pass on, and he should lose this opportunity of shewing *kindness*.

What gives its beauty to the story before us, what makes it worthy of record and of study is the God-likeness of the action. We recognize in it Jehovah, who, in the repose of His Heavenly Throne, saw us wandering and lost, and, in spite of all that would have deterred any but Himself, hastened to seek and to save, to beseech us to come and take His mercy and kindness, to wash us, and feed us, and comfort our hearts, and give us rest. When the heart responds, "Do as Thou hast said;" does God draw back from His Word, or scantily fulfil it? No—though the life of sorrow, and the death of the cross stood in the way, He kept the promise He had made in Eden, doing far beyond all He had said. And when the sinner takes God at His word, and accepts His salvation, he little dreams what it is all to be. The half has not been told of what is comprised in the "unspeakable Gift." Abraham reflected God's character and ways.

XVIII. 21. SODOM. "I will go down now, and see," etc. Beneath these simple words, we catch a glimpse of one of the sacred principles of Divine action. He must see for Himself if there may not be some mitigating or extenuating circumstances. It was only after He had come for many years seeking fruit in vain, that He said, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" "Not without cause" (Ezek. xiv. 23).

XIX. ANGEL WORK in a bad town. (1)  
They went to the place where Lot was. (2)

They were content to work for very few. We are in danger of overlooking hand-picked fruit. So far as we can gather, all our Lord's choicest followers were the result of His personal ministry. He would spend much time and thought to win one solitary woman, her character none too good. Jno. iv. (3) They told Lot plainly of his danger. (4) They hastened him. The two angels had but four hands, but each hand was full; and each clasped the hand of a procrastinating sinner.

XXII. GOD'S TESTING. (1) WHY? God tempts or *tries* that you may cling to His Word, come what may; that you may believe in the Promiser whatever form circumstances may take; that your faith may grow and abound. He did it also that Abraham might see Christ's day afar off and be glad, that he might get the clue as to the *modus operandi* of redemption. Had Abraham not been thus tempted, he could not have gained the like fulness of understanding, nor have been brought into the same closeness of relation to the sympathies and heart of his God. (2) How? By so ordering it as to cause the course of His Providence to run counter for a season to His Promises. This feature is very prominent in God's dealings with Abraham. The land was promised, yet he never possessed a foot. Isaac was the casket of all the promises, yet he had to be given up. (3) WHOM? Not the carnal, the graceless, the babes in Christ—but those who can bear to be tempted. Those He desires most signally to honour, and most abundantly to use.

XXII. 9. THE SON OFFERED. "Laid

him on the altar." Our dear ones depart in spite of all we do to keep them—but in Abraham's case, there was this added anguish, that he was to inflict the blow. The last thought that Isaac would have of him, would be holding the uplifted knife; and even though the lad might be restored to him, yet would it not be a revelation to the young heart to discover that it was possible for his father to do him an act of violence like that?

Inspiration draws a veil over that last tender scene—the father's announcement of his mission—the broken sobs, the kisses; the instant submission of the son who was old enough, and strong enough to rebel if he had had the mind. Do you and I love God like this. Would you go with Him, though it cost you the loss of all? You think you would. Aye, it is a great thing to say. The air upon this height is too rare to breathe with comfort.

XXII. 14. "In the mount of the Lord, *deliverance* shall be seen." Deliverance does not come, till we have come to the mount of sacrifice. God does not provide deliverance until we have reached the point of our extreme need. But God *will* interpose, even though He ask you to do the one thing that might seem to make deliverance impossible.

Yet the reality surpasses the shadow. Isaac suffers with a clear apprehension of his father's presence. Christ bereft of the consciousness of His Father's love, bewails His forsakenness. All was done that love could do to alleviate Isaac's anguish, but Christ suffered the rudeness of

coarse soldiery, and the upbraidings of Pharisee and Scribe. Isaac was spared death, but Christ drank its bitter cup to the dregs.

**XXIII. DEATH OF SARAH.** She had been his partner for 70 or 80 years. She was the only link to the home of his childhood. She alone could sympathize with him when he talked of Terah and Nahor, and of Haran and Ur of the Chaldees. She alone was left of all, who thirty years before, had shared the hardships of his pilgrimage. As he knelt by her side what a tide of memories must have rushed over him of their common plans and hopes and fears and joys! This is the first time we read of Abraham weeping. We do not read that he wept when he crossed the Euphrates, and left for ever, home and kindred. He does not seem to have bedewed his pathway to Mount Moriah with the tears of his heart.

**XXIII. 4. ABRAHAM'S CONFESSION.** "A stranger and sojourner." We profess to look for a city, but we take good care to make for ourselves an assured position among the citizens of this world. Abraham would never accept the land as a gift from any but God.

**XXIV. 12.** "I pray Thee send me good speed this day." Every Christian ought to have a window open towards God at sunrising. God never built a Christian character for to-day's duties and to-morrow's anxieties. Do not trouble yourself about dying. Bend your thoughts upon living; then dying will be simply the winding-up and the going home. Rebekah's death never mentioned. "Because I live, ye shall live also."

XXV. 7. Abraham's nature may be compared to those ranges of mighty hills whose summits rear themselves above the regions of storms, and hold converse with the skies, whilst their lower slopes are clothed with woods and meadows, where homesteads nestle, and bright children string their necklaces of flowers with merry laughter.

XXV. 8. "He was gathered to his people." This cannot refer to his body, for that did not sleep beside his ancestors. It must refer to his spirit. People to whom by its tastes and sympathies it was akin. What a lovely synonym for death! To die is to regain our people—to pass into a world where the great clan is gathering, welcoming with shouts each new-comer through the shadows. Little doubt had this noble man of the recognition of saintly spirits in the other world.

Out of materials which were by no means extraordinary, God built up a character with which He could hold fellowship as friend with friend; and a life which has exerted a profound influence on all after-time. It would seem as if He can raise any crop He chooses, when the soil of the heart and life are entirely surrendered to Him.

L. 24. JOSEPH. Sixty years had brought great changes. No splendid obsequies were voted for Joseph at public expense. When Jacob died, all was bright. When Joseph, all was getting dark. We cannot tell the precise form of these symptoms. Perhaps he had been banished from the councils of Pharaoh; perhaps

he was already pining in neglect; perhaps the murmurs of dislike against his people were already rising, as the roar of the breakers against a harbour bar. He addresses his brethren—it is as if he said, “I have done my best for you, but I am dying, nevertheless God will fill my place.” “God will surely visit you.” It is somewhat remarkable that in his whole noble life, and the most fascinating, with one supreme exception, in the sacred record, these are the only words that are referred to in the subsequent pages of the Scriptures (see Heb. xi. 22). Israel, settled in Goshem, and increasing in numbers, seemed to make this more unlikely, day by day, to natural vision. Though dwelling among granite temples, solid pyramids, firm-based sphinxes, and filling his place at Pharaoh’s court; his dying words open a window into his soul, and betrayed how little he had felt that he belonged to the order of things in the midst of which he had been content to live.

What a contrast between the opening and closing words of Genesis! “In the beginning God”—“A coffin in Egypt.” Is this all? Is all God’s work to end in one poor mummy-case? Turn the leaf—EXODUS—JOSHUA—KINGS—CHRIST. We do our little work and cease, as the coral insects which perish by myriads on the rising reef—but God’s work goes on—His Temple rises age after age.

## E X O D U S .

EXODUS XII. MIDNIGHT. (1) TWO CLASSES of people. Repeated sin of Egyptians—despising God's long-suffering not with impunity. (2) POSITION OF EGYPTIANS. Sentence already passed. Every tick of the clock, every grain of hour-glass bringing them nearer time of execution. Ere to-morrow's sun rose. Perhaps sleeping—perhaps had seen Israelite slaying lamb, while passing by in the evening. What of those of ch. ix. 20? Social position no safeguard (ch. xi. 5). (3) SHED blood—not enough—SPRINKLED. (4) Safety not dependent on garb of pilgrim—nor on sincerity and earnestness—unleavened bread—but on SPRINKLED BLOOD. Assurance of salvation (I Jno. v. 13; Exod. xii. 22)—by *faith* not *sight*—that their faith might rest on *God's Word*—not on their sight. (5) NOR FEELING. Whatever feeling, blood outside the same. Do you think that an Israelite could *know* that his household was safe? Do you think the Israelite who had sprinkled the blood, and believed that he and all his were safe, was presumptuous?

XXI. AN HEBREW SERVANT. There is no life so free as that which has escaped all other masters in becoming the bond-slave of Jesus. There is no nature so exuberant with joy and peace unspeakable as that which has felt the stab of the awl, has been tinged with self-sacrifice for His dear sake, and has passed in through the open doorway to go out nevermore. There is no rest so unutterable as that which

knows no further care, since all care has been once and for ever laid on Him who can alone bear the pressure of sorrow and sin, responsibility and need. Then the spirit of Heaven where the Will of God is done, would engird our barren weary lives, as the Gulfstream engirds some wintry shore, dispelling the frost and mantling the soil with flowers of fairest texture and fruits of Paradise.

## LEVITICUS .

LEVITICUS I. THE BURNT-OFFERING.  
(See John x. 17, 18). The burnt-offering (complete surrender), sets forth the Lord Jesus doing the will of the Father. It was an ineffable delight to Him to accomplish the Will of God on this earth. No one had ever done this before. Some had, through grace, done that "which was right in the sight of the Lord" but no one had ever perfectly, invariably from first to last, without hesitation and without divergence, done the Will of God. He was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philip ii. 8). "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem"—and as He walked from the Garden of Gethsemane to the Cross of Calvary, the intense devotion of His heart told itself forth in the accents, "The cup which my Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" The cross as foreshadowed by the burnt-offering, had an element in it which only the Divine mind could apprehend. It had depths so pro-

found that neither mortal nor angel could fathom them. There was a voice in it which was intended exclusively for, and went directly to the ear of the Father. There were communications between the cross of Calvary and the Throne of God, which lay far beyond the highest range of created intelligence. The burnt-offering does not foreshadow Christ on the cross as *bearing sin*, but Christ on the cross as *accomplishing the Will of God*. That He contemplated the cross in these two aspects is evident from His own words. When He looked at the cross as the place of sin-bearing, He exclaimed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." His pure and holy mind shrank from contact with sin, "the mire of the depth;" and His loving heart shrank from the thought of losing for a moment the light of His countenance.

## N U M B E R S .

NUMBERS IX. 15-23. THE PILLAR AND CLOUD. It may seem to some tried and timid hearts, as if every one mentioned in the Word of God was helped, and they are left without help. They seem to have stood before perplexing problems, face to face with life's mysteries, eagerly longing to know what to do, but no angel has come to tell them, and no iron gate has opened to them in the prison-house of circumstances. Some lay the blame on their own stupidity—they are blunt and dull. How does a Father treat His child? He will come down

to your ignorance—only—(1) Our motive must be pure (Luke xi. 34). We are liable to the workings of *self* in our holiest and loveliest hours. (2) Our will must be surrendered (John v. 30). "If any man *will* do His will, he shall know, etc." (3) We must seek information from the Bible. God may bid us to act against our reason, but this is exceptional. For the most part He will speak in the results of deliberate consideration, weighing and balancing the pros and cons. He would dictate a miraculous course by miraculous methods. But when the ordinary light of reason is adequate to the task, He will leave us to act as occasion may serve (read about Peter in prison). (4) We need to be much in prayer for guidance (Ps. xxvii. 11; Jas. i. 5); soliciting that His will may be impressed on the surface of our will, as the Heavenly bodies photograph themselves on prepared paper. (5) We must wait the gradual unfolding of God's plan in providence. God may delay. There was delay concerning Sennacherib's host, Jesus walking on the sea, raising Lazarus, sending angel to Peter. He stays long enough to test patience of faith, but not a moment behind the extreme hour of need. Lights begin to multiply as we reach the town. Steps are ordered—not the next mile, but only next yard—not the whole pattern, but the next stitch in canvas. Beyond this we are in the dark.

XV. 38. This ordinance concerning "THE RIBBAND OF BLUE" closes an important chapter. The man found gathering sticks (vv. 32-36) was guilty of presumptuous sin. The

gathering of sticks was not to meet necessity. To the Israelite the double supply of manna was given on the morning of the day before the sabbath. And as the uncooked manna would not keep, it was necessary that early in *that* day, it should be prepared for food. He had no need of sticks to cook his sabbath dinner. And the country was so hot that no man would kindle a fire from choice or preference. His object was simply to shew openly and publicly that he despised God, and refused to obey His holy ordinance—rightly therefore was that man put to death. But occasion seems to have been taken in connection with this judgment to introduce the wearing of “the ribband of blue.” Blue is the colour of Heaven. The beautiful waters of the deep sea reflect it, as do the depths of the cloudless sky. When the clouds come between, then and then only is the deep blue lost. It is the Will of God that there should never be a cloud between His people and Himself. “Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.”

XXI. 8, 9. THE BRAZEN SERPENT. (I) THE MORTAL PERIL. Because they had despised God's Way, and God's Bread (ver. 4, 5). One of the standing follies of men—they prefer a will and way of their own. They called the manna by an opprobrious epithet, which in the Hebrew has a sound of ridicule about it. Man prefers the flesh meat of carnal reason, the leek and garlic of superstitious tradition, and the cucumbers of speculation to God's Word. (a) They had been *actually* bitten by the serpents. Christ

sent to save the *lost*. Salvation for the *guilty*. (b) The bite *painful*. Every vein became a boiling river, swollen with anguish. For such the Son of Man was lifted up. (c) The bite was *mortal*. No question about that. "Much people died" (ver. 6). They saw their own friends die and helped to bury them. They knew why they died. Left without an excuse for imagining they could be bitten and *not* die.

(2) THE REMEDY PROVIDED of Divine origin. When God ordains a cure, He is by that very fact bound to put potency into it—we need not know *how* it will work. (a) It was a serpent *impaled* on a pole. As you would take a sharp pole, and drive it through a serpent's head to kill it, so this brazen serpent was exhibited as killed, and hung up as dead. It was the image of a dead form of a fiery serpent, it had no venom of itself. (Romans viii. 3). Sin, death and hell slain. (b) But *one* remedy—lifted high in the midst of the camp that all might see. (c) Bright and lustrous—*newly-made* brass. It might have been of any other metal, or of wood, if God had so ordained. There is enough brightness in Christ to catch a sinner's eye. (d) An *enduring* remedy. Had it been of other materials, it might have been broken, or have decayed. A serpent of brass would last as long as the fiery serpents pestered the desert camp.

(3) APPLICATION OF THE REMEDY. It might have been carried to the sick man's tent—it might have been applied by rubbing—he might have had to say a certain form of prayer—or have a priest present to perform a ceremony.

(a) The ordained way of healing only *a look*—the cure was simple, for the danger was frequent. (b) *Very personal*. A man must look for himself—if he refused, no one could help him. There was only one hope for his life, he must look to that serpent. It has come to this—you must look, and look for yourself—looking, abandoning self-help—not sitting looking at the wound. The remedy, a display of Divine love. (c) The cure effected *at once*—not to wait 5 seconds. No doctor can cure a fever like that. Note. The healthiest way to live where serpents swarm—never take your eyes off brazen serpent.

## DEUTERONOMY.

DEUTERONOMY I. With the exception of the Psalms, the Lord Jesus Christ quotes more often from this book than any other. The law may lead us to the margin of rest, but unless there be a Joshua—Jesus to lead us in, we can never enter the goodly land of present rest. The moment we enter into rest, we are expected to keep the law more thoroughly, more utterly, more promptly, more obediently than we ever thought of doing when we looked on the law as a means of salvation. Love is always more inexorable than law. Thus the ground of consecration is the infinite love of God. (chs. iv. 37; vii. 6, 7; x. 15; xxxiii. 3).

II. 28. This is the way God would have His children pass through this world—never getting

under obligation to the world—acquiring nothing. They are to inherit it (ver. 31; Heb. xi. 8), but at present it is only the land of promise (Heb. xi. 9, 10, 13, 16; II Cor. viii. 9; Phil. ii. 5-8). Our blessed Lord and Master acquired nothing. All that He left was His seamless coat for which they gambled. (Matt. xx. 26-28; Luke xviii. 22; I Tim. vi. 6-11; II Tim. ii. 3, 4).

XXVI. 1. A BASKET OF FRUIT. A *definite experience* to be “come unto”—more than that “possessed”—more still “dwelt in”—resident owners. The best proof of being in the land, was to bring the fruit of the land; the best proof of being at the sea-side is a bucket-full of sea-weed and shells; the best proof that I am a Christian is the first fruits of the spirit (Rom. viii. 23). “Thanksgiving is good—thanksgiving is better.” The world will judge us by our basket of fruit. As the Indians said of the Spaniards who stole them for slaves, “What a God must theirs be who has such hell-hounds for His servants and children.” If we have the fruits, we are to use them as appointed.

XXVI. 2, 3. (1) A *place*—Tabernacle—Temple—now Christ true Temple. (2) A *priest*. Christ again. (3) A *profession*. This is where so many stick fast; they dare not say, “I am come.” As if there was so little superiority of Canaan over Egypt, that one could not know the difference. Fancy an Israelite saying, “You see, Sir, we must not be presumptuous. I trust we have crossed the Jordan, but I am not sure we are in Canaan. I sometimes think we are still in the wilderness” (Heb. xii. 22; iv. 3;

Rom. x. 10). Let us confess, "The Lord brought us forth out of Egypt."

XXXI. 6. A SURE PROMISE. "He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Observe the frequent repetition of these words. Just before Moses departs. Then Joshua (i. 5). Just as Joshua begins his independent course. David dying passes them on to his son Solomon (I. Chron. xxviii. 20); and Paul winds it up as a possession for ever to every generation of mankind (Heb. xiii. 5, 6). Moses the type of our Lord, utters this text as he is about to quit the earth. Our Lord says almost as He was ascending to Heaven, "Lo I am with you alway" (Matt xxviii. 20).

XXXIII. 25. SHOES FOR ROUGH ROADS. The Divine blessing for every experience is folded up in the experience itself, and will not be received in advance. The iron to make the shoes was in the rugged hills themselves, and could not be gotten until the hills were reached. God does not put strength into our arms to-day for the battles of to-morrow. Some people are for ever unwisely testing themselves by such questions as, "Have I grace enough to bow in submission to God if He were to take away," etc., etc. Such questions are unwise because there is no promise of grace to meet trial, when there is no trial to be met.

## J O S H U A .

**JOSHUA I.** The book of Joshua is the book of the risen and conquering Jesus. We enter the land by a single definite act of faith, wholesale surrender and consecration. But we also enter step by step—to-day, Jericho—to-morrow, Ai. It is the occupation of the given land of rest.

**III. 14. JORDAN**—separating from the promised land. Sin and death separating from Heaven. A way made through Jordan by the ark. A way made through death by Jesus Christ. Only one way. Room in the way, and on the other side for all. The blind, the lame, the leper, the little child, as well as the strong, healthy warrior. The way closed at last (Jos. iv. 18). Death has not lost its pains to those who do not pass over with the ark. Only to those in Christ is the sting of death removed.

**III. 15.** "Jordan overfloweth all his banks, all the time of harvest"—signifying that the death of the Lord Jesus was more than an ordinary death. "The pains of Hell gat hold upon Me."

**XV. 17. ACHSAH.** South land—sunny—sun no good without water. Upper springs—communion. Nether springs—service. Or supply of spiritual need and temporal need. "Man doth not live by bread alone."

## J U D G E S .

**JUDGES VI. 37-40. DEW FROM HEAVEN—**

silent, saturating, permeating, typical of Holy Spirit. Dry fleece typical of an unsaved soul in the midst of blessing. Wet fleece typical of a healthy soul in the midst of barrenness.

VII. 3. Those who were fearful and afraid had to return. What is the remedy for this? Nicodemus came to Jesus by night—but when he saw the Lord on the tree, he came afterwards with Joseph to claim the body of Jesus—so that the remedy for cowardice is Calvary.

## R U T H .

RUTH I. 14. Ruth only made a choice. She had nothing to bring with her. She left all that was naturally dear to her in the land of her nativity, because of her stronger love to Naomi; but then in chapter ii. 1, there is the wealth of her Heavenly Kinsman. We have power with God in prayer, as He has power with us in His Word.

II. 17. Her gleaning needed threshing and winnowing, as we are obliged to deal with expositions which we hear. But when HE fills us, He gives us pure corn (ch. iii. 15).

## S A M U E L .

I. SAMUEL I. 2. HANNAH—sowing and reaping. In chapter i. 10 she sowed in tears (see Psalm cxxvi.) She acted in accordance with the injunction of the Spirit in James v. 7. The burden of the Spirit must *flow* out, or break

out—it must be poured out to God, or it will burst out in fretful complaints. The wisdom of the child of God is to take the appointed path. If anything more than another incites to this, it is the blessed experience of the “Man of Sorrows” Himself, “when hanging on the accursed tree,” His mental and physical agony aggravated by the taunts of those who passed beneath. What does Psalm xxii. teach us was the refuge and resort of the Lord Jesus under these distressing circumstances? He adopted the Divinely-appointed relief for the oppressed.

I. 6. “To make her fret.” This is Satan’s great object with us. We must keep the dispensation in view, then if we turn to Psalm cxxvii. 3 we shall see the sting of her sorrow.

I. 12. (1) The eye of God’s High Priest was upon her. An eye marks our request—an eye that never sleeps. (2) Eli marked the *mouth*. Man can do nothing further, and he made a mistake. Our High Priest marks our *heart*. (3) She went her way—a most blessed illustration of simple faith under a much darker dispensation than ours.

I. 18. “Go in peace.” Very simple but it was from the lips of God’s High Priest. This was genuine gold from Heaven’s own mint.

I. 28. (4) Full maturity of fruit. “I have lent him to the Lord.” She asked but that she might return it to the Giver.

II. 1. “My heart rejoiceth in the Lord”—not in Samuel—not in the little cup of joy, but in the Fountain. It is so important that we rejoice not in *good*, but in *God*. Contrast Psalm xl. 1

and Micah i. 12. We have every day opportunities of choosing between the two.

V. 1-5. **THE ARK** of the Covenant. When God's people put symbols in the place of Himself and rest in rites and ceremonies, as if they were of saving value, disaster and defeat are sure to follow—but now the honour of Jehovah was at stake. The Philistines in this act have had multitudes of successors. Men are still prone to try and have God and Dagon in the temple of their hearts at the same time. They are not willing to cast out their idols, but they wish to have God too. Wealth, fashion, literary culture, pride, vanity, lust—how many things are there to share the heart with God.

XVII. **DAVID** and **GOLIATH** are perpetual. Proud, self-reliant, self-sufficient strength; the big, hard muscles, the tremendous bulk, the gigantic armour of the Philistine on one side; and on the other, the slight Judean youth, with nothing but a sling and stone, with the memories of struggles in which he has had no strength but the strength of God, and has conquered; with no boast, with nothing but a prayer on his lips.

## I. KINGS.

I. KINGS I. **CROWNING THE KING.** (1) King—implying firm government, necessary for all young men; either our own selfish will and passions govern us, or Christ (Gal. v. 1). (2) Christ will only be crowned with the full consent of our hearts, won by the sacrifice of Himself.

What King has such a right to homage? What throne is built on such a firm, unshakeable basis? His, not an autocratic, but a democratic government—must have our whole-hearted co-operation in the carrying out of every law. His yoke easy. Burden light (Deut. xxviii. 47, 48). (3) The power of choice ours—either “We will not have this man to reign over us,” or “God save the King!” (4) ADONIJAH’S glory. His chariots and fifty men to run before him (ver. 5). “A very goodly man” “Satan transformed into an angel of light” (ver. 6). “Slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle in abundance” (ver. 19). *Short-lived!* Let us not be caught by its false, fleeting, transient glare. “As they made an *end* of sating.” (5) The joy consequent upon the crowning (vv. 39-46) foretold a time of national glory, and unparalleled prosperity. Henceforth the meanest Israelite would be respected and honoured by the other nations—for was not Solomon his King, the barn floors full, the wine-vats overflowing? (6) That which was a sound of joy to others, a sound that struck terror into the hearts of Adonijah and his friends. (7) “Jesus shall reign where’er the sun.” “To Him every knee shall bow.” But yet there dawns a far more glorious day. (8) Extension of kingdom (Phil. iii. 21).

III. 7. “I am but A LITTLE CHILD.” Remember—a little child does not walk, but is carried; does not know, but is taught; does not think, but is thought for; does not stand, but is holden up. So be it with you. Consent in all things to be undertaken for.

XXII. 32. Christians who ally themselves with the ungodly, come in for a line of fire not intended for them.

## I I . K I N G S .

II. KINGS II. 13, 14. MANTLED CHRISTIANS. His own garments he rends in twain, and grasps Elijah's mantle—striking symbol of forsaking his own spirit and strength, and claiming the promised blessing. He had taken the mantle not only to wear it, and that others might look on and admire it; it was not some precious relic to be displayed and talked about—the mantle was for use; it brought out the power of Elijah's God—it overcame the difficulties that confronted him. *Our* promised mantle, "Greater things than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father" (Jno. xiv. 12). Following Christ from place to place through Gethsemane and Calvary—only then can we expect to receive the mantle of power. The mantle is for use, not ornament. Two special commands left; "GO YE;" "TARRY YE." We need the tarrying to give power to our going. We need the going to give purpose to our tarrying (see Matt. iii. 11).

II. 20. "NEW CRUSE"—type of sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus. His Name, the Wisdom of God. He is given "for a covenant of the people." These are the things represented by salt—therefore the salt of the covenant must never be absent from any sacrifice offered to God. He is "Priest" and "King" "for a covenant of salt" is the term which God uses

of the priesthood conferred upon Aaron, and of the kingship of the house of David.

III. 14. ELISHA. "Before whom I *stand*." Beautiful position! Do we thus *habitually* stand before God? Elisha called for a minstrel. It was a strange thing to have music at such a time; but it lifted up his soul to God, and he spake of grace. Grace and song always go together. Christ, the chief Musician, is tuning a song in God's presence—thus the thunders of wrath are restrained, the valley is full of water, and all may come and drink freely. The Moabites saw the water and called it blood. Why? Because they looked at it from a distance, and did not drink. If they had stooped down and drunk, they would have found it *life*, not *death*.

IV. 38. GILGAL—place where Israel first ate the old corn of the land—but a change had come over it. Once it had been full of God's resources—now it had become a place of death. It often happens that the very circumstance from which the Christian should obtain nourishment, becomes an occasion of famine to his soul, from want of confidence in God.

"Set on the *great* pot," not a small one. "He giveth to all liberally." Instead of acting simply, according to the prophet's command, one more active than the rest, went into the field to gather herbs—result—he gathers poison. Instead of trusting God simply, we seek to satisfy ourselves with something down here. Satan does not present death in its hideousness and terrors, but he masks his snares. You think it is something worth having, but it is the vine of Sodom!

IV. 41. The one remedy—MEAL. Christ bruised for our iniquities. Not admiration of Jesus in His holy conduct and walk, nor admiration of His beautiful precepts—but His precious blood—shedding, an atonement for our sin. They could eat with confidence and be nourished. The Apostle, in mentioning the “all things” that are ours, speaks of *death*. In this sense, death is the greatest boon that God could give to the believer; it is no longer the wages of sin to the believer, but the *gate of life*.

IV. 42. The dearth still continued, when a man came with a little offering of FIRST FRUITS. What joy it must have given them, for they would gaze on those loaves, and assure themselves that the harvest was coming in. So, Christ is risen from the dead; “first fruits;” the first risen man that has entered glory, or touched the Throne of the living God.

IV. 43. Now, “Give the people that they may eat,” enough and to spare, whether we think it or not. These loaves really belonged to God, for the first fruits were always His. Elisha had the right to take them because of the starving ones before him. He knew what grace meant, and what God’s heart of love is. It is our starving, helpless condition gives us our right to Jesus.

XIII. 17. SUFFOCATED CHRISTIANS. “Open the window eastward.” Fresh air wanted. How important to learn the secret of spiritual ventilation (Jno. xv. 4; Gal. v. 16; 1 Jno. i. 7; Jude 21; Heb. x. 32). Don’t live with your windows shut (Jno. iii. 8). Is the sound of the

Spirit always heard among the twigs and leaves of your daily life? Is there the sweet music of the Spirit's influence, the love of God, playing upon the smallest details of your life? There is no mistaking the sound thereof. The soft wind makes the sweet spices to flow out, and the blowing of God's Spirit upon you will bring out of your life the sweet fragrance of holy living, and loving, unselfish service (Cant. iv. 16). Besides, there is no greater purifier and cleanser than the wind. It blows away the germs of disease, and removes from our midst the foul gases of corruption. If you want to be bright and beautiful and attractive to the world; if you want to be strong and vigorous and used by God, see that you keep your "windows open," and your shutters back (see II Cor. ix. 8).

## I. C H R O N I C L E S .

I. CHRONICLES IV. 23. "There they dwelt WITH THE KING for his work."

In the humble dwelling,

In the crowded street,

There abiding, Lord, with Thee for work.

Still the heart is swelling

Upward to the street

Of Gold—Rest of labourers

Home from work.

XXIX. 18, 19. In these two verses the shadow of the future departure from God, seems to cross the noble spirit of David, and wring out this fervent, earnest cry for his son and people—when his hand will have released its grasp of the

helm, and his voice be no longer able to keep the tone true, and the strain pure.

## I I. C H R O N I C L E S .

II. CHRONICLES IV. 17. "In the plain of Jordan did the King cast them, in the CLAY GROUND." Here—not our plastic character in the Hand of God, but our moulding power over others. What has only a transient effect on our lives may have a permanent effect on the lives of others. Lot went down with Abraham into Egypt. And afterwards he saw the land of Sodom "like the land of Egypt, as thou comest towards Zoar." What shall our harvest be in the lives of others?

## N E H E M I A H .

NEHEMIAH VIII. 15. A HOLIDAY AFTER HARVEST. These words were concerning the Feast of Tabernacles which had been appointed in Lev. xxiii. It was to be kept by a people who had heard the law and wept; it followed the day of Atonement and a completed Harvest. We are sojourners—we need booths—we must have something between us and Heaven. Who can bear the full blaze of God's sun? We are not asked to build house-work. We are not permitted to make tents of canvas, the result of human skill. Our covering must be of God's appointing, and of God's producing. There is a mount where Jesus planted all the trees we need, by His precious death and resurrection. There we may find without money all we need. "Go forth unto the mount and fetch."

## J O B .

JOB XX. 12-14. Many eat that on earth which they digest in hell; sin's MURDERING MORSELS will deceive them that devour them. Adam's apple, Esau's mess, the Israelites' quails, Jonathan's honey, and Adonijah's dainties were all bitter-sweets. After the meal is ended comes the reckoning. Men must not think to dance and dine with the Devil, and then to sup with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven—to feed upon the poison of asps, and yet that the viper's tongue should not slay them.

XXXIII. 24. "I have found A RANSOM." Over the cross of Calvary where Jesus the Son of God hung bleeding for sinners guilty and condemned, God proclaims this.

XXXIV. 27. "I HAVE SINNED." What can righteous love do with us? It finds us in all the guilt of our sin. It may yearn to deliver and to restore, but there is one thing it can never do—never, never, never—it *cannot pass by sin*. It can never make light of that—and who of us could trust God's love if it did? We feel that there would be a suspicion, a fear, almost a scorn of it. We should feel that right through the throne of the universe there was a crack, and that some day all things would crash over into black and utter ruin.

No—that is not the manner of His love. He brings it out, all out into the light, and in the

face of Heaven and Earth and Hell, God passes sentence upon sin. Then HE stoops to bear its sentence, to meet its dreadful penalty. Hereby perceive we the love of God, that He laid down His (own) life for us. And now there meets us love that is righteous, and therefore free and full. Love that has nothing to be afraid of, nothing to conceal. Between us and our Father there rose that terrible fact "I have sinned." It shut us in like a prison-wall—it held us as with fetters of brass. But lo! "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24). Now fling back the bolts! off with the fetters! "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God" (1 John iii. 1).

## P S A L M S .

PSALMS I. The HAPPY MAN. No mention is made in this description of wealth, position, or fame. This might be the likeness of a very quiet, obscure Christian. There is something so restful and refreshing in the picture, raised so far above the world with its flattery and its frown, that one is inclined to examine it more closely. There is so little real happiness in the world that one is curious to know what can make one "very happy" (blessed).

I. 1. Enoch *walking* with God. Elijah *standing* before the Lord. David *sitting* before the Lord.

I 2. Deep and quiet thought which revolves day by day, feeds the strength of faith. To meditate is the secret of constant growth and fruitfulness. Nothing before and nothing behind faith. "The steps of faith fall on the seeming void, and find the rock beneath."

I. 3. STABILITY. (1) "He shall be like a tree," not a mere annual plant, of steady, progressive growth and increasing fruitfulness. (2) "A tree *planted*"—always to be found in its place—not blown about, the sport of circumstances; flowers may bloom and pass away but the tree abides. Independent supplies. (3) "Planted *by the rivers of water.*" The ordinary supplies of rain and dew may fail; the deep and hidden supplies cannot. "He . . . shall not be careful in the year of drought" (Jer. xvii. 8), and "in the days of famine he shall be satisfied" (Ps. xxxvii. 19). He depends on the Spirit of God. No intermittent spring. (4) Seasonable fruitfulness. Note John vi. and xv., feeding on Christ and abiding. He who delights and meditates, brings forth "fruit *in season.*" (5) Continuous vigour. "His leaf *shall not wither.*" In our own climate many trees are able to maintain their life through the winter, but are unable to retain their leaves. The hardy evergreen, however, not only lives but manifests its life, and all the more conspicuously because of the naked branches around. The life within is too strong to fear the shortened day, the cold blast, or the falling snow. (6) Uniform prosperity. "*Whatsoever.*" Fruit—best seen from above. God's eye. Leaf—that which is apparent to all.

**XV. I. DWELL—ABIDE.** This is my home. I come down, as it were, through the pearly gates each morning for ten or twelve hours' work among my fellow-men, and I return through these gates in the evening.

**XXIII. SEVEN DIFFERENT POSITIONS** in Psalm xxiii.

1. Underneath me—"green pastures"	ver. 2
2. Beside me—"still waters"	..... " 2
3. With me—"The Lord"	..... " 4
4. Before me—"prepared table"	..... " 5
5. Around me—"enemies"	..... " 5
6. Behind me—"Goodness and mercy"	... " 6
7. Above me—"House of the Lord"	..... " 6

**SEVEN STEPS** in Psalm xxiii.

1. A sheep fed	.....ver. 2
2. A child guided	..... " 2
3. A backslider restored	..... " 3
4. A friend comforted	..... " 4
5. A warrior feasted	..... " 5
6. A priest anointed	..... " 5
7. A pilgrim house	..... " 6

A sheep has no responsibility. Whoever heard of a sheep being blamed for anything? *All* a sheep can do, is to go astray. God would rather call us servants or soldiers, for that is more honourable, but if we are not, He will still think of us as His precious lambs.

Note the continuous tense in Ps. xxiii. maketh—leadeth. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in" *going on* "believing."

Food before rest (Ezek. xxxiv. 15).

The 23rd Psalm is consolation at a death-bed,

and yet gives expression to our most joyous and festive feelings.

XXXII. 8. "I will INSTRUCT—I will GUIDE. Would it not be great cruelty, if a father did not tell a child, who is eager and willing to do it, what His will really is? How am I to have this promise fulfilled? Pray and prove. (1) PRAY (James i. 5). True spiritual prayer is the best way in all circumstances for learning the will of God. The great want of our day is the still, tranquil *life* of prayer. The prayers stand too much for themselves, and the rest of life for itself, and this is the chief cause for the darkness in our paths. There is a perfect avalanche of promises, under which every doubt will be buried. (2) PROVE (Rom. xii. 2; Ephes. v. 10). Proving is investigating the reasons which are to be balanced for and against a case. Not as men of the world, who look only at the immediate result and temporal advantage, but in the light of Eternity. Proving is making the most diligent use of sound reasoning, made sound by the Spirit of God. Proving is observing the signs and indications that lie in the circumstances of the case. Proving is searching the Scriptures for the word or example of some man of God, placed in a similar situation. Proving is observing carefully the way by which the Saviour has already led you—enquiring "How does this present dealing correspond with the former dealings of God with me?" Proving is meditating on the counsel and opinions of faithful and experienced Christians. But, you say, this is burdensome, difficult, tiresome. We are

neither called to indolence in the outward nor inward life. He who will not exert every power of body and soul in the service of God, knows nothing yet of true faith. Where the fault usually lies—self-will, a double eye.

XXXVII. 7. "REST IN THE LORD." In His creation God rested. Not one tint, flower, or note wanting. Finished work of creation. Finished work of redemption. Life one long sob for the rest of a lost Paradise—like the mottled shell on the mantle-shelf, sobbing for its deep ocean rest. In His grave redemption. On His throne victory. HE sits, rest "seated together," beneath that throne see the principalities and powers and dominion and might. Sit serenely looking down upon it all. Sit still, and let Christ make your enemies your footstool. (1) Rest in His *will*. "If ye be willing, ye shall eat the fat of the land." (2) Rest in His *care*. The vane "God is love" from whatever quarter the wind blows. (3) Rest in *Himself*. "Oh spirit, make my Lord to me a living bright reality!" He has enough to supply every hunger of the heart. Just as the sun has light enough for one daisy, and the river water enough for one forget-me-not.

XLIII. 4. "GOD, MY EXCEEDING JOY." This is the gathering of the grapes of Eshcol in the face of the giants—in the realization of a mightier presence than theirs—sure not only of victory but of spoil.

XLVII. 4. "He shall CHOOSE OUR INHERITANCE for us." This is not our home—our inheritance is not here. Forgetting these

things we lower our dignity, and spoil our consecration—and this for things that perish with the using, or may suddenly fly away, leaving us destitute.

XLVII. 7. LOYALIST CHRISTIANS. It was easy enough to shout "God bless the Queen" when all the nations of the earth had sent their princes and nobles to do honour to our beloved Victoria. But loyalty was a very serious thing when Charles I. was driven from his throne. The nobles who believed in him had to prove their loyalty very practically. They risked their lives and their families, gave their money, sold their lands, and even melted down their gold and silver plate. Shall we do less for our Prince of Peace.

LVII. 7. Is it to be an aspiration only, and never a reality, that we are really to rest in Him? Must our life be a perpetual wandering from Him and returning to Him? May we never say this with David, "MY HEART IS FIXED, O God, my heart is fixed?" Our entire sanctification is God's will (I. Thess. iv. 3 and v. 23). That we should give ourselves, body as well as soul, to His service, is His will (Rom. xii. 1, 2). That we should be delivered from this present evil world is His will (Gal. i. 4). That we should live down opposition and ignorance is His will (I. Pet. ii. 12). That we should live a life of unceasing prayer and praise is His will (I. Thess. v. 17, 18; Phil. iv. 6). Surely these great general principles are enough to shew us what the tenor and direction of a life that pleases God ought to be.

LXXII. 8. "HE SHALL HAVE DOMINION." Say it grandly, triumphantly—for this is the solution of "sin shall not have dominion over you" (Ps. cxix. 133). "From sea to sea, etc." Over all the unexplored, unknown parts of your being—over all its unseen, unconscious capacities, and hidden liabilities to sin. He saves to the uttermost, indeed to the very utmost bound of our being, and out to the very farthest shore of our life.

LXXII. 9. "The Wilderness-dwellers"—these are the untamed thoughts, the high, far-ranging imaginations. Like the Bedouin wanderers who dwell in no city, and range hither and thither, unsettled and uncertain.

LXXII. 11. "All Kings"—all the noble, ruling faculties of our being. "Upon the top of the mountains." Just where it is naturally barren. The desert, the place for angels' food. And to prove that He was the same Lord, He twice over made the desert the place for giving miracle—bread. His one single resurrection—miracle was to provide plenty for His disciples (Jno. xxi.) Corn which grows on the limit of the corn-producing zone, is the best of all. Alone with Him. Him that hath no helper (John v. 7).

LXXII. 15. "HE SHALL LIVE." "Because I live ye shall live also." "In His days" only "shall there be abundance of peace" (verse 7). "Bow before Him" (verse 9). We could never reach this. The hostile forces never "bowed before" me. By tremendous effort sometimes they were conquered, or seemed to be—but the effort left me so exhausted or so elated that they

soon returned with reinforcements, and there was crushing, despairing defeat—but “before Him” they shall bow.

LXXII. 15. “GOLD.” “To Him shall be given the gold.” Gold is whatever we value most, whatever will stand the fire (Mar. xii. 41; Jno. xiii. 29). He uses it to pave Heaven with. All Heaven shines with the gold given back.

LXXVII. “I call to REMEMBRANCE my song in the night.” How wonderful is the influence of memory. Like the wind, it is hurtful or healing, according to the soil it passes over; now laden with the foetid air of undrained marshes, and of the plague-smitten city, or charged with ozone from the ocean, or the honeysuckle, and clover of the sweet fields. We do not often consider in youth that memory itself will one day be an enemy or an avenger. David said, “My sin is ever before me” and yet, he had remembrances of delight in God. “Remember O Lord, Thy loving kindnesses and Thy tender mercies, for they have been ever of old.”

So Asaph here. Past experience becomes vocal to his soul, and makes a sweet memory out of the music of long ago. The beauty of the experience is this, that it came just when he needed it, as sweet music from afar. The whole Psalm is a mirror with Asaph's heart bending over it. He lay sleepless. No other city was open to him, save the city of many gateways in his own heart, and he wanders at will through their varied paths. Who can wonder that bad men dread the stillness of the night?

SILENCE! what a dreadful thing it is!

Travellers tell us that the frowning precipices of Sinai are not in themselves so awe-inspiring as the *stillness* of the desert! What biographies we should have if we could read men's true thinking, and how little there would be of that unreal goodness which spoils most biographies.

Asaph communes not lazily or dreamily, but diligently. Is God a changeable God? There are changes in men and women, who from friends turn to enemies, and whose words change from summer-warmth to winters icy breath, but there are no changes in God. "I am the Lord, I change not." Some call to memory their misereres, and some their jubilates, but among them all the hearts-ease for the Christian is the unchangeable character of God.

XC. 12. "So teach us to number our days." The throng of unreturning travellers to Eternity, is swelled by every class of society. God repeats to man more frequently than His servant did to Philip of Macedon, "REMEMBER THOU ART MORTAL." "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!" cried Edmund Burke on the morning of the Bristol Election, his competitor having fallen dead the night before.

"We die but as the spring-bud dies,  
In summer's golden joy to rise;  
These be our days of April bloom,  
Our July is beyond the tomb."

Time itself we are ever leaving behind us. A solemn thought for us mortals, in view of the disciplinary nature of this life, and its bearing on the *unchanging* future.

**XCI. SECURITY.** When Alexander I., Czar of all the Russians, was about to set out for Moscow in his defensive campaign against Napoleon, Count Tolstoi put a paper into his hand, and on reading it the next night, he was surprised to find that it contained Psalm xci., beautifully written out. Some weeks after in his study at Moscow, his eye lighted on the same Psalm in an old Saxon Bible. A little later, in an interview with Prince Galitzin, he heard the opening words of the Psalm for the third time; and later still, the Court preacher, on a day of humiliation and prayer that had been appointed, preached from the same words. These recurring coincidences so deeply impressed the mind of the Czar, that he did not rest till he had found in Christ his hiding-place.

**CII. 7.** "I watch, and am become AS A SPARROW alone upon the house-top." Do we not seem to see the desolate, ruffled heap of feathers, as it sits apart from its chirping mates, its head a little on one side, and all the miseries in its filmed eye?

**CIII. 1.** Many have tears in their eyes, and complaints in their mouth, but few have harps in their hand, blessing and glorifying God.

**CIII. 7.** "He made known His ways unto Moses." Where? In the wilderness. By desert-training, each child of God becomes distinguished for certain characteristics, and not, as is so often seen, the mere reflex of his fellow.

**CIV. 23.** "Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour, until the evening."

Home from work when day is done,  
 Pass we on with rapid feet—  
 Home from work with set of sun,  
 Till we gain the golden street.  
 Home from work, together blest  
 In our Father's House, at rest.

CVII. 43. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." (1) *Lovingkindness*; not a rough, grumpy kindness. (2) *Observe*. Keep your eyes open—your ears open—your heart open. "Lift up now thine eyes," said God to Abraham. "Come and see," said Jesus to His disciples. "Behold the Lamb," said John. "Consider the lilies," said the Lord Jesus.

CXIX. 164. David PRAYED three times daily, but he knew something of the victorious power of PRAISE.

CXXXIX. 3. "Thou *winnowest* my path" (*margin*). The object—*increase*. He wants His grain to multiply it (Hos. ii. 23). (1) *Winnowed will*; unreserved. (2) *Winnowed work*; may be less in amount, but it will be all pure. He knows what will last and reproduce most. (3) *Winnowed words* (Isaiah xxx. 23, 24). (4) *Winnowed way*. This covers all the outer part of our life, the framework of the inner.

CXXXIX. 23. "SEARCH ME." Be more careful about what you are before God, than what you are before men.

CXLVI. 5. Happiness. Help. Hope.

CL. The book of Psalms unfolds a wonderful variety of experiences, conflicts, sufferings, con-

trition, etc., but it ends in unbroken praise. There is not a cloud to obscure the glory that settles down on the soul of the inspired writer as he strikes his harp and sings "PRAISE YE THE LORD." (1) In the sanctuary (Holy of Holies); place of atonement. (2) In the firmament, the power and Majesty of the Creator. He who made the worlds, bare our sins. (3) For His mighty acts; all His deliverances. (4) For His excellent greatness. His own essential glory—the highest form of praise. "Praise ye the Lord."

## P R O V E R B S .

PROVERBS III. 6. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." This text gives us THE SECRET of simplicity, steadfastness, contentment, and unaffected dignity, in life, by encouraging us to recognize, consult, acknowledge and follow God in all our ways. The emphasis is in the word "DIRECT." Some pray, but find small success or relief. Has God forgotten His promise? No, but you overlook the requirement on which His promise is conditioned—you are only acknowledging God when you find yourself in a strait. The habit of taking everything to God must have a powerful moral effect on the man who has formed that habit. It keeps a true edge upon his conscience, compels him to examine his own motives and propensities. The promise is, God will keep you *straight*—not make you prosperous—nor an *even* course—STRAIGHT.

## V. 22. ROPES THAT BIND.

Gold cord .....	Haste to be rich.
Silver cord .....	Undesirable acquaintances.
Silk thread .....	Social custom.
Whip cord .....	Gambling, racing.
Cart rope .....	Abuses of Lord's Day.
Wire rope .....	Strong drink.
Tarred rope .....	Infidelity.
Cotton thread .....	Almost persuaded.

XIV. 10. "THE HEART knoweth his own bitterness." To a fine and keenly, sensitive nature there is a consolation in solitude (with Jesus), that any companionship, even of the dearest and most intimate, cannot bestow. The suggestion of parity of suffering is felt to be an intrusion. "Not e'en the tenderest heart and next our own, knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh." The closest human companionship must fail to satisfy the complex human nature, so finite in its gifts, so infinite in its needs; so finite in its relation to its fellows, so infinite in its relations to the Eternal and Infinite Father in whose Image it was made. Communion with the ever-living, unchangeable Saviour can alone satisfy the heart's deepest longings.

XXVIII. 22. "He that HASTETH TO BE RICH, etc." The anxious planning and plotting for the acquisition of wealth or distinction is opposed to the spirit of Christianity, which is evinced in a calm repose of life, resulting from a rest in the Lord. The Christian is required to do the will of the Master now, and leave the question of the result to Him; to carve out no imaginary career for himself, but tranquilly to

leave to-morrow in the Hand of Him who guides to-day. The Christian's estimate of the relative values of the circumstances of life, differs entirely from the estimate of others. Wisdom consists in the possession of an accurate power of mental perspective, which, like a skilful artist, puts the objects of real importance in the foreground, and with increasing diminution towards the background, pushes into insignificance or oblivion the objects of little value. The mental perspective of the Christian is governed by his faith in, and love for the eternal truth as revealed in Jesus Christ. Christ is in the foreground of all his mental pictures of life. The light from Him determines the prominence or indistinctness of His objects; and many things which a selfish world applauds, are altogether lost in the Christian's picture of His life, and many things of no account in the eyes of the worldly-wise, are to Him of the utmost importance and value. It is not those who achieve "success in life," but those who apparently fail, who seem the men chiefly to be honoured.

## ECCLESIASTES.

ECCLESIASTES XI. 6. "In the morning SOW thy seed." (1) "In the morning," without delay; (2) "thy seed"—just whatever God gives us where we are—not vainly wishing for some other sphere of work. Archbishop Leighton used to say he loved a life divided between ascending to Heaven to procure blessings, and descending to diffuse them on earth.

## SOLOMON'S SONG.

SOLOMON'S SONG II. 14.

The stormiest wind HE rules,  
 The wildest wave HE binds,  
 Thou hast the "secret of THE STAIRS"  
 For to His heart it winds.

II. 15. "THE LITTLE FOXES." The Turks once conquered a German town, and while they were marching up one of the narrow streets, some young women threw from a window a dozen or more beehives among them. The bees did with their little stings what the German soldiers could not do—threw them into such confusion that they were easily put to flight. The Turks knew how to fight men, but not bees. But faith in God will help us to meet and overcome the insectile annoyances of life as well as its giants.

V. 3. "I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" The least bit of satisfaction with my cleansed self is just a moving out of the current of *His* cleansing blood.

## ISAIAH.

ISAIAH I. 18. "Let us reason together." The higher one always gives the topic of conversation. What does God speak first about? That which is uppermost in His mind—SIN. Is that the first thing we think of? No—the last. "SCARLET," royal colour, high-handed, presumptuous sin. "Red like CRIMSON," translated "worms" or "worm-scarlet," low, revolting forms of sin. "WOOL" at once reminds us of the

Paschal Lamb. How pure that wool must have been!

The Pharisees reasoned *against* Christ (Luke xx). The Jews reasoned *apart* from God (Acts xxviii. 29).

VI. 6. "A LIVE COAL." The very fire which in Hell shall never be quenched, when it has fed upon the sacrifice, purifies.

IX. 6. The PRINCE OF PEACE. Peace of conscience, peace with God (Isa. xxvii. 5). He is the Bridge over the broad, black river, down which the desolating torrent of despair deeply, darkly sweeps. That chasm divided man and God—that torrent swept between man, hope and Heaven, and would have swept to this day, had not Christ, a true and greater Curtius, plunged into the gulf and filled it up.

Peace of mind—peace *from* God; peace of heart—peace *in* God. The perfect composure with which He passed from duty to duty, from solitude to society, from disturbing visitors to crowds, seeming to feel interruptions a help rather than a hindrance, and sorrows the occasion for the disclosure of deeper joy, revealed Him as "the Prince of Peace."

XXX. 7. "Their strength is to sit still." All is not done by movement. The compensating power of work is REST—and the little coral-builders of nerves and forces that live within this wave-beaten body of ours, are active with their trowels and mortar while we are *pausing* from life's strain and tug. Thus it is true in more ways than one that sometimes our "strength is to sit still."

XL. 31. Not *may* perhaps mount up but "*shall*;" it is the inevitable result (Ps. lv. 6-8). We might name our wings Surrender and Trust—each useless without the other. We MOUNT ON WINGS as eagles into a higher plane of life, the life "hid with Christ in God." A life utterly independent of circumstances, and one that no cage can imprison, and no shackles bind (Eph. ii. 6). Our way of escape is not north, south, east or west, but *upward*. All creatures that have wings can escape from every snare set for them, if they will only fly high enough—even from "among the pots" (Ps. lxxviii. 13).

"MOUNTAIN." "Things above" (Col. iii. 1-3). The caterpillar, as it creeps along the ground, must have a widely-different view of the world around it, from that which the same caterpillar will have when its wings are developed, and it soars in the air above the very places where once it crawled (1 Jno. v. 4); above the fog (Rom. viii. 37). The higher law of flight overcoming the lower law of gravitation (Rom. viii. 2). We must use our wings, or they will avail us nothing (Ps. cxliii. 9; Heb. vi. 18).

A passive surrender or trust will not do. We must do it definitely and practically about each detail of life as it comes to us. God makes our nests uncomfortable for us to teach us to fly (Deut. xxxii. 11, 12). Unused wings gradually lose their flying power (Rom. v. 3-5). Where to fly (Ps. xxvii. 1-6; Ps. xxxi. 20). Indulged sin is a hopeless weight that absolutely holds us back from flying. The only creature that sings is the creature that flies.

**XLIX. 23.** "They shall not be ashamed that **WAIT** for Me." Waiting or patience is composed of three things. (1) The inward impression. (2) The teaching of the Word. (3) The combination of circumstances. We must not act solely by first or last. As the focusing proceeds, the picture with all its little details is made plain. **WAIT.**

**LIII. 3.** "He is **DESPISED** and rejected of men." When Handel was composing his Messiah, a friend coming in found him pacing up and down the room weeping. "What's the matter?" he said "What's the matter?" and Handel pointed to the open volume. "He was despised and rejected." Is He despised in you? in me?

**LIII. 5, 6.** Do you believe that you have sinned against God? Do you believe your iniquities were laid on *Him*—Jesus? Do you believe He suffered all the punishment due to your sin? If so, God says you are **SAVED**. He says you shall not come into condemnation—but have passed from death unto life (John v. 24). And this is true irrespective of feelings, happiness, whether you will be able to act as a Christian or not. Remember your *safety* does not depend on your subsequent walk, and life. It does not depend on your holding Christ, but on Christ holding *you*.

**LV. 2.** God's **SPIRITUAL PLANS**. Man's **TANGLED WEBS**. God's plans work into one another. God's trees are suitable for God's soil, and even the falling leaves, like apparent failures, make a new and valuable soil; such failures and

providences are advantages, not failures ; but we can plan only for one purpose, and our plans rarely have the merit of adaptation ; if they fit one or two purposes, they probably run counter to other points, and when they break down, they are only ruins. We learn lessons from our failures ; but our failures never teach nature, and never adapt themselves to our surroundings ; they expose only our ignorance and our confused ideas.

The Holy Spirit will not allow *men* to make soul-winners. True, Apostolic successors are those who are "born from above." Thou hearest the *sound* thereof, yea, and thou knowest the spiritual *power* when it comes ; it shakes congregations, villages, yea and cities ; it separates the chaff from the wheat ; but "thou can't not tell whence He cometh."

LV. 13. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree." This is the practical outcome of accepting God's salvation. When the nature is regenerated, when the NEW LIFE is communicated, when the Holy Spirit begins to till and cultivate the ground that has hitherto been lying waste—then "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree." Not suddenly, but gradually—instead of the wheat being choked by the thorns, the thorns will be choked by the wheat. Instead of sin growing and spreading, getting hopelessly worse ; we can look with hope for its *ultimate* eradication.

This is typified by the FIR, a tree of slow but sturdy growth ; gradually, resistlessly, steadily increasing, and causing a corresponding diminu-

tion of the thorn. Thus the Holy Spirit restrains, brings into subjection and binds the power of sin. New life, Divine life is the remedy for sin.

The MYRTLE signifies the grace and fragrance and beauty of the new life, as the fir tree signifies its substantiality and stateliness. Thus shall Christ be formed in us, till we are changed "in the twinkling of an eye." "*Then shall the desert blossom as the rose.*"

LVIII. 11. "And the Lord shall GUIDE thee CONTINUALLY." It is impossible to think He could guide us at all, if He did not guide us continually, for the greatest events of life, like the huge rocking-stones, in the West of England, revolve on the smallest points. A pebble may alter the flow of a stream. The growth of a grain of mustard seed may determine the rainfall of a continent.

LXIV. 6. "We all do FADE AS A LEAF." This lesson is whispered by every stream that wanders through the valley, choked with the relics of former beauty and luxuriance. The earth coyly hides her face with them from the too ardent glances of the sun. Summer would not be summer without them. Life under the green leaves is a keeping of the feast of tabernacles. (1) Leaves have a wonderful human interest about them, and are linked with many tender associations of joy and sorrow. We need their mystery and secrecy amid life's naked and garish troubles. When their freshness and fairness fail to charm away the evil spirit, like soothing medicine, they at least remind us of

those blessed trees that grow on either side of the River of Life, under whose shade God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. (2) Leaves fade *silently*. The bud expands into the full-blown rose; but the unfolding is done in secret. No awful handwriting appears on the wall, telling us in the midst of our rejoicings, as it told Belshazzar, "Mene, mene, tekel upharsin." No solemn message comes to us, as it once came to Hezekiah, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." We know not which of our friends and acquaintances will pass away soonest. (3) Leaves fade *differently*. Decay brings out their individual character. Some are covered with dark, unsightly blotches, while others display glowing hues of crimson and scarlet and gold, lighting up the forest like a pillar of fire. So death reveals to some the errors and follies of life in all their hard reality, without one softening shadow. With others it is merely the last filmy cloud that veils the sunrise—only the passing shadow between faith and sight. (4) The leaves of some trees when they fall, *leave no trace whatever behind*. The scar left by their removal heals immediately—and on the smooth, naked bough in winter there is no mark to indicate that it was once covered with foliage. There are other trees, however, on which, when the leaf drops off, it *leaves a seal-like impression* which no succeeding growth can obliterate, and which cleaves to it still in the grandeur of old age. Some do nothing to keep their memory fresh and green in the hearts of their friends—others leave an impression which time will only deepen—a scar which

no future summer can heal, no subsequent growth of beauty obliterate. (5) Leaves fall *preparedly*. The leaf bears the young bud that is to usurp its place, in its bosom, and nourishes it with its own expiring life. How little provision for the future there is with man. How uncertain is our reaching that lovely verge of life, where the flowery meadows and golden corn-fields slope gradually down to the bare and stony beach that fringes the eternal sea. The coast of death is to most an abrupt precipice. We are cut off in the midst of our days.

## J E R E M I A H .

JEREMIAH XVII. 7. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord." The SECRET OF TRUE BLESSEDNESS. Man is fitted for trust. In a hundred ways man is more dependent than any other animal that lives. In the case of every other creature, nature makes haste to sever the tie between parent and offspring, but in the case of man, it is prolonged till reason can perceive it, and the memory of it is made imperishable. Does not this weakness and need of the little child expose it to misery, injustice, sorrow? Does it not impose a heavy burden upon the busy and the toiling? Where then are the compensation and the gain? It is this—that out of this dependence grows the Divine relationship of father, mother and child. Blessed is the man *because he can trust*.

The dependence of man is cruel if he is to be forsaken. "Come unto Me" (Matt. xi. 28). Does trust need power? here is the Almighty. Does trust demand the unchanging, the everlasting? "I change not." Does trust need wisdom? here is Divine. But all these do not win my trust. My heart needs more. *Trust needs love.* And yet one thing more is needful. Trust is born of fear—and fear of sin. How can I, who have sinned, draw near? Till that question is answered, God is but a terror to me. What can He do? hush it up? make light of it? Then I could not trust that love. My own sense of righteousness would suspect and condemn a love that made light of sin. Love may pity, love may weep, but true love cannot hush up and hide my sin. "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world!" Now His love can overflow without let or hindrance. Now I can come without fear, though I have sinned, and call Him Father, and find in that Father's heart every fear hushed, and every want for ever satisfied. "And whose *hope* the Lord is." Is your expectation Jesus?

XVII. 9. "The HEART is DECEITFUL above all things, and desperately wicked—who can know it?" Thousands of atheists in *heart*, not one in *conscience*.

## E Z E K I E L .

EZEKIEL I. 24. FOLDED WINGS. "There was a voice." And this is exactly what our

whole heart desires. "That thou shouldest hear" (Acts ix.); chosen to hear. Does God so value a listening servant? (1) "When they stood, they let down their wings." "Stand thou still awhile, and I will shew thee the Word of God" (I. Sam. ix. 27). (2) All need to stand—even successful ones. "These had straight feet" (v. 7); they were undeviating (v. 9); they were obedient (v. 12); they returned (v. 14). Not going aside when the message was given, to be for one moment independent. Successful service demands new surrender. "As a flash of lightning" (v. 14). Message too glad, too good to be delayed over. "Like burning coals of fire" (v. 13); shining, illuminating flight. Most wonderful of all, "the noise of their wings, as the voice of the Almighty." These were the workers who "stood and let down their wings."

STAND, oh busy, eager worker; silence the rustle of your wings. Have I returned? Yes, very often when bruised with failure in service—then I was glad to creep back to Him with the feeling of disgrace and failure, to be comforted and cheered. But when I gave the message beautifully, did I not keep the crown His grace had given me for myself?

RAPIDITY. Has my service been swiftness without brusqueness? Has the noise of my wings recalled *Him*? or has it only made others think, how busy! how earnest!?

(1) THE WINGS OF OUR WORK. The work begins to cling to us—it is becoming more to us than He is—it presses upon our time alone with Him. "Let down your wings." He is not a

Taskmaster—it is “*Son, go work to-day*”—not *slave*. It has been all along God’s plan that the land should not be worked to its fullest extent (Lev. xxv.), in order that its fruit might be kept up to the highest quality. The weaker one, whose health is God’s fence, marking what he cannot do, has in himself, as it were, a constant reminder to stand still and listen. But the strong one, more from conviction than compulsion, if weaker workers see you able to go on without break or pause, will they not think they must work to their utmost tether, until wings get too tired to be folded even, and head too weary to listen for the Voice which is infinitely precious?

(2) THE WINGS OF OUR WILL—often, though work may cease, the will is so active, that a noisy, vehement breath seems all around us still. “My will, I cannot yield thee—no, not to any human being.” Trample on your will yourself, and some day it will rise in awful ravings against such treatment. Give it up to any human or spiritual authority, and some day God will demand it of you; but yield it to its own Lord, so that instead of trampling down all tenderness in others, it will become a throne whence He can lead others by you.

What is THE “VOICE?” Perhaps “the voice of the Lord that breaketh the cedars”—perhaps “Holy, holy, holy,” breaking down all thought of our own worthiness—perhaps “the still, small voice” bringing courage to the most fear-stricken—perhaps strange directions—“Go shut thyself within thy house” (ch. iii. 24). You would

have thought he was being equipped and inspired for heroic service, and this was all—silence and isolation. He knows that when the spirit is all on the alert to do His bidding, and go anywhere for Him, that it is the greatest surrender we can possibly make, to be willing to go out of sight, and out of hearing. Though dumb, your witness is not wasted.

Then there is His voice in creation, circumstances, and His personal Voice into our very spirits, for the Father of spirits is not silent to His children. Think of Christ's own thirty years of folded wings. "He went down and was subject," this was all "His Father's business."

VIII. 34. The GLORY LEAVES the earth with all the hesitation and lingering that disappointed affection so well understands. We may trace its steps (Ezek. viii. 3, 4; ix. 3; x. 4, 18, 19; xi. 22, 23). It will return as the lightning (Matt. xxiv. 27).

XXXVI. 31. "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways," etc. *Then*, after salvation, sanctification and the enjoyment of Christ as corn and wine in the soul. *Then* comes the self-loathing. The more we utilize the light we have, the more light is given; the humblest Christian is the ripest (see Luke. ix. 48); "he that is least among you all, the same shall be great."

XXXVI. 36. God has given His character into our keeping and His Name. We may REPRESENT HIM truly or falsely. We may bring glory and honour, or disgrace and despising to His Name. He has placed us here with "Christ in us" as His representatives. He seeks

to reveal Himself to the heathen, (the unsaved world) by us. He does not accomplish this entirely in one individual, but seeks to do so in "the body" of Christ—only that which is represented by one member should never belie that which is represented by another—but each should be perfectly compatible and harmonious with the other.

## DANIEL.

DANIEL II. 34. "STONE CUT OUT without hands." The second advent of Christ could not have been distinctly predicted in Old Testament as *second*; that would have involved a premature revelation of Messiah's rejection by Israel, of His death and re-ascension into Heaven, and of the present dispensation of grace to the Gentiles. Prophecies so clear as either to secure or prevent their own fulfilment, were never delivered by Divine inspiration. A coming of Christ—as King and Judge—of a character essentially different from His *past* coming, and extensively and clearly predicted in Old Testament, is therefore future. The destruction of the image is attributed to the *fall* of the stone, not to its gradual expansion. The development of the stone into a mountain does not *begin* till the image *has been broken* to pieces. "That blessed Hope" is essential to the production of the Christian character in its perfection.

III. 18. THE GOLDEN IMAGE. "We will *not* serve thy gods." This is the shortest cut

out of difficulties of this kind. Instantaneous and entire obedience to the Word of God in spite of all consequences. God has promised that we "shall not be tempted above what we are able to bear." The happiest and most useful Christian life is that which makes a decided stand. Had those three dallied with the enemy he would never have been satisfied. Give Satan an inch, and he will take an ell. None are so miserable as the backslider; he is always getting consciously more and more into the slough of his own sin. It is the first step that costs; a decided stand once made is half the battle towards keeping it. An unequivocating, uncompromising bold "NO" is the best, easiest and shortest way. To *resist* the Devil is safer and happier than to *reason* with him. Looking unto Jesus, who, having been tempted in all points like as we are, is able to succour them that are tempted, relying only on His strength, we, too, may gain the victory.

Fire will burn, or lions bite, but not when God forbids. Every law of nature has its way only so far as He chooses. And the Bible everywhere witnesses that He has, in all ages, more or less, held these laws in control, and that He will always do so, as He pleases.

VII. The FOUR BEASTS. The Daniel of the second chapter was a young man just entering on a career of extraordinary dignity and power, such as few have ever known. The Daniel of the seventh chapter was an aged saint, who, having passed through the ordeal scatheless, still possessed a heart as true to God and to His people, as when some threescore years before he

had entered the gates of the broad-walled city, a captive and a stranger. The date of the earlier vision was about the time of Jehoiakim's revolt, when their ungovernable pride of race and creed still led the Jews to dream of independence. At the time of the later vision, more than 40 years had passed since Jerusalem had been laid in ruins, and the last king of the house of David had entered the brazen gates of Babylon in chains.

VIII. The SECOND VISION. This vision deals only with the two kingdoms represented by the arms and body of the image of the 2nd chapter, and again by the bear and the leopard of the 7th.

The Medo-Persian empire and the relative superiority of the younger nation, are represented by a ram with two horns, one of which was higher than the other, though the last to grow. The vision of Alexander's reign, followed by the four-fold division of the kingdom, suggests *a rapid sequence of events*; the same remark applies to the vision of the 2nd chapter; the rise of the Roman empire; its future division and final doom being presented at a single view.

VIII. 27. These visions were full of MYSTERY to Daniel and filled the old prophet's mind with troubled thoughts. A long vista of events seemed thus to intervene before the realization of the promised blessings to his nation, and yet those very revelations made those blessings still more sure. Ere long he witnessed the crash of Babylonian power, and saw a stranger enthroned within the broad-walled

city. But the change brought no hope to Judah. Daniel was restored, indeed, to the place which he had held so long under Nebuchadnezzar, but he was none the less an exile; his people were in captivity, their city lay in ruins, and their land was a wilderness. And the mystery was only deepened when he turned to Jeremiah's prophecy which fixed at 70 years the destined era of the desolations of Jerusalem. (Dan. ix. 2). He gave himself to prayer, and in answer had delivered to him the great prediction of the seventy weeks.

IX. 24. "SEVENTY WEEKS are determined upon thy people and thy holy city, to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." All these words point to practical benefits to be conferred in a practical way on the people at Christ's second advent. Whatever meaning is put upon "anointing the Most Holy," it is clear that calvary was not the accomplishment of it. Isaiah i. 26 is a commentary on "bringing in righteousness." To take it as synonymous with declaring God's righteousness (Rom. iii. 25) is doctrinally a blunder and an anachronism. The Hebrew *caphar* (to make atonement or reconciliation) means literally "to cover over" sin (see its use in Gen. vi. 14), to do away with a charge against a person by means of blood-shedding or otherwise as by intercession (Ex. xxxii. 30), so as to secure his reception into Divine favour. It is never used of

expiation or bloodshedding considered objectively, but of the results accruing from it to the sinner. "Transgression" will be "restrained" (see use of the word in Gen. viii. 2; Exod. xxxvi. 6) *i.e.*, they will cease to transgress; sins will be sealed up—the ordinary word for securing a letter (I. Kings xxi. 8), or a purse or bag of treasure (Joh. xiv. 17).

X. 18. "Again"—PERFECTED STRENGTH. Would you have held on for three whole weeks without any sign from your Lord? persevering through dead, desperate silence—apparently causeless silence. At last when the answer came, it turned his comeliness into corruption, and took away all his strength. Was it worth waiting for? Was the long fight of faith only to end thus, making him stand trembling and dumb? God has infinite patience with His weakest child; He will wait beside you with His revelation until He has put strength in you to receive it (see Jno. xx. 21).

## H O S E A .

HOSEA XI. 1-4. DIVINE LOVE. (1) *Incar-nate*. Not as the love of a mighty, mysterious Being, at some infinite distance—far too high for our conception. Manifested in Christ. Knows what tears are—what it is to sigh—what sorrow is—what grief is—what it is to be weary—hungry—no place to lay His head—often misunderstood. The Hand that sways the universe is a hand like yours. (2) *Inviting*. Not one that

stands by us cold and indifferent "called" (v. i.), Come, Come, Come, the chime of Heaven's bells, from Genesis to Revelation. Come weary, "I will rest you;" grief-stricken; "I am the Resurrection and the Life." (3) *Drawing*, not driving (v. 4), though He has to drive sometimes, as the sailor flees before the coming storm to the harbour. (4) *Educating* (v. 3), "taught," "I would be a Christian to-morrow, if I could stick at it." "Taking them by their arms." We know how the baby clings to its mother's dress, as if instinctively; but underneath the clinging, and underneath the child is the mother's arm; and underneath your prayer and clinging and faith are the Everlasting Arms of Omnipotence. (5) *Liberating*. "Take off the yoke" (v. 4). "Breaks the power of cancelled sin, and sets the prisoner free." Boys (met by an old Divine, one morning), ragged, homeless, friendless, penniless—and yet looking bright and happy. "Ah," pointing to the great prison-gates over the way, "if you had been where we've just come from, you'd be *happy to be out*." So some—not happy in circumstances or because all is well, but because they look at those great gates of brass and iron, and the prison-house of sin, whence He, the great Emancipator said to the prisoners "Go forth"—and to them that sat in darkness, "Shew yourselves." He casts off the fetters—and they whom the Son makes free, are free indeed.

## N A H U M .

NAHUM I. 3. "The clouds are the dust of His feet." Between THE WORD of God rightly understood, and THE WORKS of God as unfolded to us by reverent and accurate investigation, there never has been, and never can be any contradiction; or, as was well said by Sir John Herschell. "All human discoveries seem to be made only for the purpose of confirming more strongly the truths that have come from on high, and are contained in the sacred writings."

A forcible illustration of this is furnished by one of the latest discoveries of modern science—that clouds could not exist where there was no dust, for every cloud has a nucleus of dust. This should make us beware of accepting too readily the idea that many of the inspired statements are poetry rather than fact.

## Z E C H A R I A H .

ZECHARIAH XII. 10. All prophecy is history with God, and why not practically so with us?

Three distinct kinds of language in Scripture.  
 (1) *Literal*. "They shall look *on* ME whom they have pierced." We can look *to* a person in a letter, or through a friend, but we can only look *on* a person by seeing that person actually. (2)

*Figurative.* "All the trees of the field shall clap their hand." "I am the Way." "I am the Door." "I am the Good Shepherd." (3)  
*Symbolic.* Daniel, Ezekiel, Apocalypse.

XIV. 4. CHRIST WILL COME again *literally, bodily, visibly* (Acts i. 9-11; Mark xiii. 26; Luke xxi. 27; I. Thes iv. 16; Rev. i. 7). In John xiv. 3, Jesus says, "I go," "I come again." Surely these two expressions are to be taken in one and the same sense. We *know* He went *literally*—we believe He will come again *literally*—When? Before or after the millennium? Before. Three reasons. (1) Antichrist, whoever he may be, must be destroyed before the millennium, but he is to be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming; therefore the second advent is before the millennium. (2) War is neither to be learned nor practised during the millennium; but war is raging at Jerusalem when Christ returns; therefore Christ's coming is pre-millennical. (3) The Jews are to be a restored and converted nation during the millennium, but they are to be converted as a nation on the return of our Lord; therefore the second advent of Christ is before the millennium.

## M A L A C H I .

MALACHI III. 6. "I am the Lord, I CHANGE NOT." Time changes us—moods change us—circumstances change us—sin and provocation

change us, but not Him. What He *was*, He *is*. He still sails with us in the boat, walks in the afternoon with us to Emmaus—stands in our midst at night-fall, opening to us the Scriptures. He wakes our children in the morning with His "Talitha cumi"—calls the boys to His knees, watches them at their play, and rebukes those who would forbid their hozannas. He feeds us with bread and with fish—lights fires on the sands to warm us—shews us the right side of the ship for our nets, and interests Himself with the results of our toils. No lake without that figure treading its waters—no storm without that voice mightier than its roar—no meal without that face uplifted in blessing, or that hand in breaking. No grave without that tender heart touched with sorrow—no burden without those willing shoulders to share the yoke. Each miracle and parable and trail, a specimen of eternal facts, taking place by myriads at each moment of the day and night.

What makes eye and heart turn to the mountains in a glorious land-scape, with a satisfied sense of repose quite different to any feeling called forth by sea or sky or river? Is it not their grand and hoary changelessness? The feeling expressed by the prodigal, "It is all just the same as ever." "Mother you are just the same." So the heart falls back, driven hither and thither by changing circumstances, or the failure of human friendships, or the agony of doubt, or the still sharper agony of a rebellious, struggling will on "JESUS CHRIST THE SAME—TODAY." What a wonderful testimony to His

absolute perfection is this instinctive joy in His changelessness. Christ the *same*. "This same Jesus." Jesus who came to save His people from their *sins*. To-day when some old besetting sin has overcome us, and we are utterly ashamed and disheartened. "The same *to-day*." Let us keep this blessed thought ever in our minds, as we read of His tender and gracious ways, either during His life on earth, or with His people throughout the ages.

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## NEW TESTAMENT.

THE Gospel narrative is like a high table-land, but we cannot be spared the ascent from Genesis to Malachi.

The solvents which act so readily when employed on the fables of the twilight past, are utterly impotent when applied to the life and character of Jesus Christ our Lord. His matchless character has been frescoed on the corridors of history in undying colours by the evangelists. MATTHEW, official in the Roman kingdom, wrote of the King; MARK, Paul's servant, useful for the ministry, writes of the Servant; LUKE, Paul's companion, probably a Grecian, writes of the Man: JOHN, who leaned on His bosom, writes of the Son. *Deeper and deeper* (Ezek. xlvii. 4, 5).

## M A T T H E W .

MATTHEW III. 2. "REPENT YE." No mere temporary and superficial change will satisfy the Word. Repentance is not shame because sin is discovered, or rage because it has falsified its promise. It requires a reversal of the whole existing attitude of men's hearts and minds towards God. These words take *God* and *sin* for granted.

IV. 4. "IT IS WRITTEN." Here are no Pharisees to refute, no Jewish people to convince. He refers not to conscience. He does not appeal to His own feelings. He does not bring forward thoughts and opinions, but the *written Word*; as if He meant to say, the written Word is the ultimate authority, not merely on earth, but in the invisible realms, in the world of Spirits.

IV. 22. To follow in the path *marked out* cheerfully, sincerely, boldly, humbly, and diligently, with no fear of man, and seeking no glory from man, is the way to the Green Pasture, is the way to have an easy yoke and light burden, a joy unspeakable, a peace past understanding, to be more than conquerors, to have a successful life, and to enjoy the secret of His presence.

V. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT. Every sentence ought to teach us that from beginning to end it is a call to repentance rather

than a counsel of perfection. It was a preparation for a Saviour—not a substitute for one—a disclosure of sin to persuade men of their need of a Redeemer.

VI. 28. CONSIDER THE LILIES. "Consider," not simply "look," but carefully observe, notice, and think over, how flowers grow first in God's great mind—are exactly what He wishes them to be. When we gaze at a delicately-tinted, exquisitely-shaped flower, we are getting a glimpse of the loveliness that is in God.

XI, 25, 26. GOD'S WILL. *At that time*, when John the Baptist was wavering, he who had boldly preached repentance, who had said with such conviction, "Behold the Lamb of God," he who was a witness of the Light, was doubting and sending to see whether Jesus were really the Christ:—*At that time*, when His own called Him gluttonous:—*at that time*, when the preaching in Chorazin and Bethsaida was apparently a failure:—*at that time*, when Capernaum, the scene of so many of His mighty acts, was shutting Him out—when all was failure—Jesus answered and said, "I thank Thee, O Father . . . Even so, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Jesus delighted in the will of the Father. It was boundless, joyful confidence in the will of the Father which enabled Him to endure all He as Man had to endure on earth. Even at the last, this pierces through the surrounding agony: Nevertheless, *not My will, but Thine* be done." And here, after thanking the Father, He says,

XI. 29. "Take MY YOKE upon you." This was His yoke, a joyful embracing of the Father's will. This is the yoke He bids us, He invites us to take. God will always reveal His will clearly and unmistakably to those who are prepared, when the revelation of His will does come, to obey it entirely and immediately. *Not to obey is to disobey.* We must make up our mind to obey entirely and immediately.

XII. A RADICAL CHANGE. The acts and words of Christ recorded in the twelfth chapter, were an open and deliberate condemnation and defiance of the Pharisees, and their answer was to meet in solemn council and decree His death (v. 1-14). From that hour His ministry entered on a new phase. Hitherto His miracles had not been reserved for those whose faith responded to His words; the only qualification was that the recipient should belong to the favoured race (x. 5-8). The miracles continued, for He could not meet with suffering and refuse to relieve it; but those whom He thus blessed were charged that they should not make Him known (v. 16). The gospel of the kingdom ceased; His teaching became veiled in parables (xiii. 3, 13), and the disciples were forbidden any longer to testify to His Messiahship (xvi. 20). From the expression "began" in Mark iv., compared with the question of the disciples in verse 10, and with verse 34, it appears that THIS WAS THE FIRST BEGINNING OF OUR LORD'S TEACHING BY PARABLES, expressly and so delivered, and properly so called. Instead of the *proclamation* of the king-

dom, He taught them "the *mysteries* of the kingdom" (xiii. 11). His mission changed its character, and instead of a King come to reign, He described Himself as a Sower sowing seed.

XII. 41. JONAH. Men talk of Christ's words respecting the prophet Jonah as though He only used the story for an illustration, bearing no testimony to it as a *fact*. Do they forget verse 41? How can the story of Jonah be a fiction if these words are true? If Christ spoke as an ordinary man, how did He know what would happen on the day of judgment? If He was more than man, how could He be mistaken on the question whether the story of Jonah was true? If He was God, how could He speak of it as true, knowing it to be false? Verse 40, *if it stood by itself*, might refer conceivably to a Jonah in history, or a Jonah in fiction, but with verse 41 *it is impossible*. There can be no profitable knowledge of the Bible unless we receive it as true. If the Bible is partly true and partly false, who is to draw the distinction? What was true with scholars thirty years ago, they give up and alter now. What is true now, by the same rule, may be false thirty years hence. Dr. Duncan said he was "conscious of an air that comes from the Word of God." It was *air to breathe*; not fog to mystify, learning to puzzle, criticism to perplex. Skim over the pages of Scripture and you inhale an evanescent scent of hidden sweetness. It is the busy, lingering bee that forces its way down into the deep chalice of the flower-blooms that carries the golden honey home, and gathers

against the dark days that must come a rich store of comfort, strength, and sustenance.

XIII. 24. (1) What is the difference between **THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**? The same difference that there is between the empire of Victoria and the British empire. The same difference that there is between the two forms used by Daniel: "The Most High ruleth," and "the heavens do rule." But there is this further difference: the kingdom is the same, but the term "kingdom of heaven" suggests the truth that it is more than an earthly kingdom; that its motives, principles, glories, and rewards are heavenly; and that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so is the kingdom of the heavens higher in essence and character than the kingdoms of the world. (2). Why does Matthew always say "the kingdom of the heavens," and not "the kingdom of God," while the other New Testament writers use the latter formula? Matthew wrote specially for the Jews. They were familiar with the idea of "the kingdom of God"—they were the Lord's inheritance, and looked for the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, but they had no knowledge of its heavenly character. All they thought of was deliverance from the Roman yoke, headship of nations, &c. "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." Compare Acts vii. 5, Heb. xi. 8-10, 2 Tim. iv. 18. In writing for the Gentiles the other evangelists consistently use the more general term, "the kingdom of God," as the Gentiles had been outside the theocracy.

XIV. 30. PETER SINKING. Generally speaking, men have too little faith and too little courage to leave the shore, which is something tangible and solid, and has the support of sense, and to go out upon the sea, which has the support of faith only. They advance, perhaps, some little distance, but when the wind blows and the sea is tossed to and fro, then they are dejected; they cast anchor, and often wholly desist from the prosecution of the voyage.

XVII. I. AFTER SIX DAYS—silent days—He had no one to talk to, no human sympathy—nothing but blank astonishment and unconcern from earth. From this hour *alone—alone—alone* (see Mark ix. 32-34).

XVII, 7. MOSES and ELIAS His familiar friends! Will He think still of our friendship? "Jesus came and touched them." Exquisite tenderness at such a moment, answering all the unspoken fear, "I am yours, still, identified with you for ever." "This same Jesus" (see Rev. i. 17).

XIX. 22. "HE WENT AWAY SORROWFUL." This was because the Master made a direct demand upon his capital, and he felt he could not yield *that*, even for the sake of that eternal life he was craving after (see ch. vi.).

XX. 1-16. In the distribution of rewards by our Lord at His coming, there will be a manifestation of these great and glorious principles—

**JUSTICE, SOVEREIGNTY, GRACE.** The householder (verse 1) guarantees a full and just remuneration for service. No sacrifice, however trifling, will be overlooked. Each will receive the due recompense of the reward. The Lord of the vineyard (verse 8) claims the sovereign right to do what He wills in His own affairs. The goodman of the house (verse 11) retains to himself the privilege to exercise grace, whatever may be thought of his generosity. Sovereignty will not be exercised at the expense of justice and grace, whilst the magnificence of the grace, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, will be for the honour of justice and the glory of the sovereignty displayed. Our language will be, "Not unto us."

**XXV. 21. FAITHFULNESS.** If we truly serve our Master, we shall be rewarded according to our fidelity, not according to our activity or success. It is not the weight of the load you draw, nor the distance you pull it, but keeping the traces tight all the time. "I cannot light a world, and make seasons, and lift tons of water into the skies," said the dim lantern to the sun one morning, "but last night I kept burning, and helped a dozen express trains full of sleeping people to run swiftly and safely on their way."

**XXVI. 36.** How much were the sufferings of **GETHSEMANE** enhanced by the failure of the sympathy of His disciples. To deny that Christ values our sympathy is to deny the existence in Him of one very essential attribute of humanity,

and to sever the strongest tie that binds together Himself and His people. Union, true and spiritual union, such as exists between Christ and His people, supposes community of feeling, and a mutual feeling; not that He only sympathises with them, but that they also sympathise with Him; not that they prize His sympathy merely, but that He also prizes theirs. Christ has by the assumption of the nature of man, and by the work done in that nature, so identified Himself with humanity that He is literally no longer independent of it. If we are hurt, He is hurt; if we are happy, He is happy; if we rejoice in His love, He rejoices in ours. If His sympathy is precious to us, our sympathy is likewise, even now that He is in Heaven's highest glory, precious to Him.

XXVII. 35. **THEY CRUCIFIED HIM.** Who can tell the hundredth part of all that is summed up in these three words? The sin that needed it, the love that ordained it, the malice that wrought it, the patience that endured it—all are past our utmost thought. We can but bow down and silently adore Him who, though God, yet, "being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross" (Phil. ii. 8).

XXVII. 46. **FORSAKEN.** He bore in silence the spitting, the mockery, the scorn, the robing, the crown of thorns, the scourging, and afterwards the reviling of the passers-by, of the chief priests and elders, and of the robbers; but

at last from the patient, loving, loyal, true heart is wrung this exceeding bitter cry, with all the force of the "THOU" and the "ME"—left alone in the height of the storm—when the pressure was most severe, when the agony was most intense, without the support which hitherto through life had been ever ready to His hand. He bowed His head (John xix. 30) for very shame of the sins He was bearing, the head that had not bowed before, even under the crown of thorns, and gave up the ghost. God forsook the only One who never forsook God. Have a care of all forms of Christianity which do not put God's pardoning mercy in the foreground. They are maimed, and in them mist and cloud have covered with a roof of doleful grey the low-lying earth, and separated it from the highest heavens. The true glory of the revelation of God gathers round that central Cross, and there, in that Man dying upon it in the dark, the sacrifice for a world's sin, is the loftiest, most heavenly revelation of the all-revealing God. The distinctive glory of Christianity is this—it tells us how God sweeps away sin.

XXVII. 51. The RENT VEIL. If unrent, as it had hung for ages, we must see Jesus incarnate to be the impassable barrier between God and man.

XXVIII. 9. "HAIL!" The original of our English word was born among the dwellers in the highland of Central Asia—shepherd tribes. The shepherd's camp is like a ship at sea. Far as the eye can reach, their own is the only

friendly shelter; beyond there is only mile after mile of uncultivated land. Watch must be kept against the onslaught of enemies—ravages of wild beasts and robbers, sometimes the midnight storm, the hurricane, the lightning and thunder, the black clouds full of fury. Under such conditions the terrors of the night are very real. How welcome the dawn! They called it by the word which signified “delight,” “joy,” “salvation,” for to them it was fulness of comfort. “The morning cometh.” “Take courage.” “Look toward the sun-rising; see far away a pale, tender gleam of light silently breaking the darkness, as, like a polished shaft, it flies upward into heaven; and now it spreads itself over the clouds like a mantle, growing brighter and brighter, and the nearer clouds catch the light in pale rose-colour and iris, and send it down to bathe the hills in gold and pearl.”

“HAIL!” What a change! Three days ago the ruler of day was darkened. Midnight blotted out mid-day. Death laid hold of life and bound Him for a moment, and now—“Hail!” The Day-spring from on High has come!

XXVIII. 18. ALL POWER. When Almighty power comes in, finite difficulties are no more.

XXVIII. 20. IMMANUEL.

“No promise what the days will bring—  
Some must be dark with storm and haze;  
To each the measured load will cling,  
But ‘I am with you *all the days.*’

“ With us at morning to inspire  
 Fresh work with ever-freshened zest,  
 At noontide that we may not tire,  
 At evening to restore and rest.”

## M A R K .

MARK. The word “ Lord,” markedly omitted in this gospel until after His resurrection. The word “ forthwith ” (“ immediately,” “ straight-way ”), characteristic of the servant, occurs forty times out of eighty in the New Testament.

III. 5. This gospel lifts the veil and shows something of the wear of spirit which His service cost this Divine and blessed Servant.

III. 17. The SONS OF THUNDER—John: He speaks to us in a voice (having no sign of the perturbation of earthly passion in it), that seems to come with a sovereign tone from the upper sky, startling souls that are held in a “ dead sleep,” and oftentimes melting down as into glad echoes. Take the opening paragraph of his gospel. Three men so different as Chrysostom, Augustine, and Bengel remark: “ Hear how he thunders.”

IV. 35. “ Let us pass over unto THE OTHER SIDE.” (1). An invitation which includes all. (2). The terms of it meet all possible

objections. "Let us." (3). "Go"—start—progress. (4) "Over to the other side"—lasting salvation. Three reasons: (1) Because it is getting late; (2) Because Jesus is going, and if we want to be with Him we must go; (3) Because if we will not go, we must be left behind—a very definite transaction.

IV. 38. "In the hinder part of the ship, ASLEEP on a pillow." A tired Man, not over careful as to His couch. But, why asleep? To teach you and me to go to sleep sometimes. When you get very nervous and anxious and fidgety, go to sleep. When you become troubled and a little peevish, go to sleep. You smile at that, but I am giving you good medical advice, I might almost say good spiritual advice. The worst thing for you is to be trying to be somebody else. Be what you feel, is evidently the intention of God in the making of such an one as you are.

IX. 32, 33. They understood not; were thinking of other things. Why do I say He was alone? He asked them what they disputed among themselves by the way. He would not have done so if He had been *with* them. Alone—thinking of the deep sorrow and humiliation that lay before Him, and, borne upon the breeze, the sound of angry wrangling and strife.

X. 32. "AGAIN." He is resolved that we shall know. How much it must have cost Him to repeat over and over what He was going to

face to those who did not realise what it meant. Alone—going before them—the tired, weary step—alone—alone—and the wrangling for place went on. How could Peter have said that 28th verse?

XI. 24. PRAYER is not for the purpose of making God cognisant of our wants, for He knows what things we have need of before we ask. It is specially designed by God to *exercise our faith*, and consequently *increase it*; to give us a *restful mind*; to bring us into *communion* with God, and to call forth our *gratitude*.

XII. 26, 27. Christ proves the resurrection by the spiritual exposition of a single expression which God had used, and which is recorded by the Holy Spirit in the book of Exodus, and on this occasion He shows the source of error. If we know not the power of God *and* the Scripture, we err. An outward knowledge of the letter of Scripture without an inward experience of the power of God is without avail.

XIII. 3. As He sat UPON THE MOUNT of Olives, over against the temple. His last open appearance in Jerusalem had taken place, and on the afternoon of that day He goes out as usual to Bethany, and on the way thither, as one taking a last, sad adieu, He sits down on the slope of Olivet. That little group is one of the most remarkable that ever appealed to human imagination; the very quietness of the withdrawal—like the going down of the last light

on a finally impenitent soul—infinately solemn and pathetic. The holy city lies completely under their eyes, crowded with more than a million worshippers, and hemmed in both east and south by deep, rocky glens, which already lie in evening shadow. The temple seems within a stone's-cast; the smoke of the evening sacrifice still floats above its courts in the clear air. Looking upon the mighty pile bathed in the gorgeous lights of sunset, "like a mount of alabaster, topped with golden spires," He pictures far on in the perspective as One to whom "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

XIV. 14. Where is THE GUEST-CHAMBER? The guest-chamber yielded becomes, (1) the place of remembered redemption; (2) teaches fellowship of His sufferings; (3) the place of blessing in breaking bread; (4) *He sings*. It is not an ordinary song, no mere outflow of joy. The guest-chamber song is something very sacred, very moving. It is a song in the face of the cross, a song under the very shadow of Calvary, "a song in the night," and knowing that Calvary was only a few hours away. This is no mere hallelujah of exuberant joyfulness, but the deep, deep music of a heart in full harmony with His will. It is only *with* Him that it becomes possible. If we try it alone, it will be false and unreal. It does not ignore pain, but takes the pain and *sings*. He went forth to die for others. Shall we go forth to work and to suffer for Him?

This was His last feast, His last rest, His last song.

XV. 17. "They platted a CROWN OF THORNS, and put it about His head." That God is anxiously desirous and willing to save is testified here. Jesus, with bleeding brow from the crown crushed on, says: "Your sin *caused* the thorns; *I bear* them." On that brow once thorn-crowned, let us entwine our laurels. Upon that ear once familiarised with threats and scorn, let us pour the fulness of our adoring devotion. So shall we gain and give new thoughts of the supreme dignity of the Lord Jesus. Those sublime syllables, "Light be," were spoken by the voice that trembled in dying anguish on the cross. Rolling rivers, swelling seas, waving woods, bursting flowers, carolling birds, innumerable beasts, stars sparkling like diamonds on the pavilion of night; all newly made, all throbbing with God-given life, all very good, but mainly and gloriously all the work of those Hands which were nailed in weakness to the cross, which itself, as well as the iron that pierced Him, was the result of His creative will.

XVI. 16. "He that BELIEVETH, and he that BELIEVETH NOT." What a tale is in the words! How do they express the experience of One who knows all the results of even the best service; now His disciples are to take His place, and He will serve in them.

## L U K E .

**LUKE. SOME SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS GOSPEL.** (1) **PRAISE.**—Here alone are found the songs of Zacharias, Mary, Simeon, and the song of the angels at Christ's birth. (2) **PRAYER.**—The six occasions on which Christ prayed, and two parables on prayer. (3) **CALLING OF GENTILES.**—Elijah and Elisha being sent to Gentiles. The mission of the seventy. Parable of Good Samaritan. Conversion of dying Roman thief. Words "grace," "Saviour," "salvation," and "glad tidings" occur more frequently than in other gospels. (4) **WOMANHOOD.**—Widow of Nain; ministering women, ch. viii. 1-3; Anna, ch. ii. 36; Martha and Mary, ch. x. 38-42; daughter, ch. viii. 48; daughter of Abraham, ch. xiii. 16; daughters of Jerusalem, ch. xxiii. 28. (5) **GOSPEL OF THE OUTCAST.**—Ch. ix. 52-56 and xvii. 11-19: Samaritan, publican, harlot, the prodigal, &c.

The Gospel of Luke is from beginning to end a message of mercy to the sinful and the depraved. Here we see Mercy bending over a wounded enemy; receiving the homage of a woman of the streets; sitting at the table of a black-balled publican; pressing forward to kiss a prodigal; telling in parables how the joy of finding such is like that of those who find a lost sheep, or lost silver, and flinging Heaven's gate wide open to receive a thief who had been driven from the world. Such is the character of these

gracious and graphic incidents, a sacred song of the mercy of God.

I. 3. Human affection is displayed in the evangelist addressing his friend—speaking of his own knowledge brings something human into his task—so verse 5 begins like a simple tale touching the sons of men, and as it proceeds the narrative introduces us to human sympathies and relationships—unlike the other gospels.

VI. 38. "GIVE, and it shall be given unto you." All lakes that have no outlet sooner or later become *salt* lakes—dead seas. The law of perpetual freshness is in being a channel of blessing to others.

VIII. 45. "WHO TOUCHED ME?" The written Word is the vesture. Humbling to think how often we have read, and missed the near, intimate contact with Himself which He yearned for us to have.

VIII. 48. "DAUGHTER!" Eternity cannot undo the relationship formed by the Master's word.

VIII. 49. Don't we often find UNBELIEF flinging its cold shadow over us? The Lord never trifles with us. If He keeps us waiting, it is but to give a larger and fuller gift than we had dared to hope for.

IX. 32. HEAVY WITH SLEEP. The sleep

must not be regarded merely as a sign of their human weakness, but as preparation for the glorious vision. It is a thing well known, that waking in the watches of the night out of a deep sleep, the false excitement of the day being gone, some eternal truth will often present itself to the mind with awful, self-revealing clearness and overwhelming power. It was a shorter road into the unveiled kingdom of heaven. When their eyes were closing they had been beside the Man of sorrows as He knelt in prayer. Now, what a change!

X. 17-24. THE SEVENTY. Christ was always the embodiment of His precepts. He sympathises with them. He allows Himself at once to fall into the current of their joy. He purifies and directs the course of it; but the great outstanding fact is, He sympathises with them. If the Lord has given your brother some special cause for joy, fall into it and swell it. If you can, purify it—it will be better for both; but fall into it.

X. 18. This remark of the seventy disciples to Jesus leads forth His holy soul in prophetic vision, gives Him occasion to glance at “the great perfected purpose of God.” “It shall bruise thy head” (Rev. xii. 7-9 ;xx. 10). He rejoiced with them, but He draws His joy from a higher source. Their joy was in *partial* triumph over the enemy; His in the *full*. Their joy was like His in texture, but He swelled it. Like a mighty current running to a little stream, His

great joy coming into their tiny stream of joy swelled it into a mighty river.

XII. 7. Even the very **HAIRS** of your head are all **NUMBERED**. Never let us lose our identity in the crowd. God knows my heart. Men may take my number to report me; the Lord has taken my number to support me. I am only one; but I *am* one, and an important one with an important duty.

XII. 24. Jesus called attention to two birds in particular—the **RAVEN** and **SPARROW**. Both these birds belong to an order that have not the strength of birds of prey; and, on the other hand, have not the fixed food of other birds.

XIII. 24. **AGONIZE TO ENTER IN**. God is not indifferent to those who *strive* to enter in. He numbers all their tears; He registers all their resolves. How can it be otherwise? If the state of mind be that of true striving after God, He Himself has inspired it. He sometimes permits those whom He determines eventually to bless to strive long, and perhaps to wander in erroneous ways; but they will ultimately understand, much better than they otherwise would have done, the direction and the issue of the new path. Perhaps the remains of self-will or self-confidence exist within them, which can be removed only by the experience of sorrows which are attendant upon the errors it invariably commits, and accordingly God leaves them to test

the value of human wisdom. They try it, they fall into mistakes; they are overwhelmed by confusion, and then, and not till then, they see the necessity of reposing all their confidence in Him who alone can guide them in safety.

XIV. 22. YET THERE IS ROOM. What a sad sight. Seats prepared for expected guests—but empty; a part in that chorus for *you* not taken up.

XIV. 23. "GO OUT." The Lord Jesus was out, out, ever out; out all day, and often out all night; out in the mountains, out on the lake, out in the city, out in the lane. It is so now in one sense. Jesus is in the world as one who serves; He is on the battlefield leading forth His hosts; He is among the sick healing all manner of diseases. He is in the harvest-field reaping the golden grain, and on the hills looking after the sheep.

XIV. 33. DISCIPLESHIP (Phil. ii. 13). Inseparable moral essentials: Self-denial (Luke xiv. 26-33; humility (Matt. x. 24 and xi. 29); permanence (John viii. 31); fruit-bearing (John xv. 8); love one another (John xiii. 34, 35). In loving one another we are apt to consider only two of the parties concerned—the brother or sister, and one's self—forgetting the most important of all: Christ Jesus, the connecting link. The Christ in me cannot help loving the Christ in you—no thanks to us.

XV. I. "*Then*," after the most scathing, winnowing, heart-searching words, "THEN DREW NEAR." And so, after severe self-examination in the light of God's Word—when we find we have failed so miserably, when we find we have fallen so short—are we to give it up? *No*. *Then* let us draw near. Peter says, "To whom shall we go?" (John vi. 68). We have failed, but, O, we cannot go elsewhere. To whom? We cannot do without Jesus. A touching illustration is found in Mary—she cannot do without Him—"They have taken away my Lord;" and there she waits at the spot where she last saw Him. The disciples had gone to their own houses, she had no home without Him, and to her were spoken the grandest words, perhaps, that are to be found in the Bible: "I ascend to *my* Father and *your* Father."

XVIII. 9-14. This is an exposure of self-righteousness. Did Jesus see or hear on some occasion these two men in the temple? THE PHARISEE so near, and yet so far off; the publican so far off, and yet reconciled and brought nigh. A Pharisaic person is to us one whose characteristic is mere evil pretence but in the days when Christ spoke it had a high and holy meaning to begin with, however perverted it became. It indicated a man who separated himself so thoroughly from evil that he would gather his robes about him lest he should be polluted by the touch of a wicked person. The Pharisees were the good, the righteous, the

worthiest persons in the whole community, *e.g.* Saul of Tarsus and Gamaliel. Of course there were hypocrites, but in learning the lesson let us take the highest and best, not the worst type. He asks nothing, because he needs nothing. We may accept it as a truthful prayer. He has no intention of deceiving himself or others—he is self-satisfied. All down the ages men have ever been inclined to set great store by the rigid performance of certain rites, duties, &c., and to attach to them a wholly delusive value, and one dangerous to their truest interests. God commanded a fast once a year; the Pharisees instituted it twice a week. God commanded the Jews to give tithes of the produce of flock and field, &c., but this man gives tithes of all he possesses. And on these two things his eye rests with the greatest complacency, and he mentions them as the foundation on which he stands. The Pharisee felt that because of these things God had reason to regard him with approval, and he prided himself on the fact.

THE PUBLICAN. He strikes, as it were, at the root of his sin, the cause of his sorrow—"God be propitiated to me, the sinner." How different! The first without heart, cold and lifeless; the second the cry of a man who knows his need, and tells it out. It bursts forth, burning hot, rushing from his life as a cry kindled by intense conviction of sin and the need of forgiveness.

XXII. 41. "About a stone's cast" (Josh. iii.

3, 4). This was the material distance ; but how great the spiritual distance !

There was no real reluctance in the Saviour's heart to redeem men. He only wished the coming woes to be averted, if it were possible, consistently with God's will. In OUR GETHSEMANE (our hour of direst sorrow and temptation) our best resort is to prayer. Do not mind saying the same words again and again ; it will soothe you. Your pitying Father does not forget that you are dust. Pour out all your heart before Him. As you do so you will get calmer and quieter ; you will come probably to feel that the path must be trodden, the cup drained, and a change will pass over the spirit of your prayer, and you will murmur, as a child sobs itself to rest upon its mother's bosom, " O, my Father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, Thy will be done."

XXIII. 14, 15. A negative relationship to Christ has always ended in His crucifixion. Pilate said, " I find NO FAULT in Him." Herod also, but they gave Him up to the murderers. There is no security in negativeness. If you merely " find no fault " in Him, you will assuredly give up Christ under external pressure. Christ asks us for no good conduct certificate. He asks for the loyalty of the *whole heart's* trust.

XXIII. 46. His LAST UTTERANCE on the cross ; the last words from his lips which the world heard were words from the Scriptures,

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Christ's favourite Book! Christ's only Book!  
the Book He always read, always quoted.

Nobody ever mistakes anything for Scripture which is *not*, if he is familiar with the Word of God. No one will ever mistake an utterance of Scripture for a piece of secular writing, that is to say, if he is really qualified to judge, and is a reader of God's Word. We have four Gospels; let those who believe them to be of any origin lower than Divine, try to write a fifth. Persons of large imagination, and quite capable of writing every kind of fiction, and imitating the style of all the poets, whether modern or ancient, let them try to give us some new incidents which can be interwoven into the life of Christ—some new miracle. Let them try their hands at a new psalm!

XXIV. 50. "He lifted up His hands and blessed them." The **LAST IMPRESSION** left upon the eyes of the disciples was the Lord's hands uplifted in blessing. "His pierced hands," "in like manner" (Acts i. 11).

XXIV. 52. "**WITH GREAT JOY.**" Having Scriptural views of Christ and His work, the disciples were filled with joy, which was their strength for private devotion and public service.

## J O H N .

**JOHN. THE EAGLE. THE SON OF GOD.** John's Gospel is a deep, tranquil lake, in which are reflected the pleasant shores around, and the pure, clear sky, with sun, moon, and stars, above. Very remarkable is it how little children and ripe Christians, the simplest-minded and the deepest-minded, all like it with so profound a liking.

I. 1. John has opened his words, as it were, with a burst of thunder. This is the thunder brought down to us by a "son of thunder." As in the beginning of Genesis, "GOD" is taken for granted. There is no attempt to prove that He is, by argument. There is no discussion or parley with the atheist. There is no side-glance taken of any denial that has ever been made of the Divine existence—it is as if there had never been, and never could be any controversy on such a subject.

I. 1. "THE WORD:" as a thing is secret and unknown until it is put into words, so the true character of God is unknown until revealed in Jesus Christ.

I. 4. "In Him was LIFE." All the life of creation, so vast in its sum, so wonderful and glorious, from the life that lasts only a summer evening to that of the archangel who bows before the Eternal Throne and adores—all that life was

in Him. Life should be our light, not light our life.

I. 14. The INCARNATION. Hitherto the verb "was" has been used of Him, now "*became.*" It is certain that in becoming "flesh" the Eternal Word did not cease to be what He was before. It is also certain that the Word "*became*" what He was not before. John's use of the word "flesh" differs from Paul's. He employs it to denote human nature in its entirety, with all its sensibilities, capacities, and powers—not the body alone, but all that constitutes us human beings. Thus the Word became a true member of the human family. He had a body—material, visible, tangible (1 John i. 1), but He did not take a body only, and become the Word embodied. He could say, "Now is my *soul* troubled." Again the evangelist could write of Him, "He groaned in the *spirit*, and was troubled." The special thought is the reality and wholeness of that manhood. Hence He grew in wisdom and knowledge. He was tempted, He sorrowed, He wept, He wondered, as truly as we do, "in all things made like unto His brethren." The "Word made flesh" is a revelation—the highest revelation that at present we are capable of receiving of the Divine Godhead in its perfect essence, and manhood in all its elements, joined in indivisible and everlasting union.

I. 14. "We beheld HIS GLORY." Only the first three evangelists record the transfiguration scene, but John almost begins his narrative in the bright glow of it.

I. 17. **JESUS CHRIST**, now mentioned by the evangelist for the first time, is the Name that embraces all the revelations of the past, and all the grace and truth of the future. "No man hath seen God." There had been revelations through nature, providence, history, man's heart and conscience, but putting all such revelations together, it held true, "No man hath seen God at any time." The revealing is accomplished through the Only-Begotten (1 Peter i. 21) *by Him*.

**NAMES** in Chapter I. The Word, the Light, the true Light, the Only-Begotten of the Father, Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son, the Christ, the Lamb of God, Son of God, Jesus, Messiah, Rabbi, King of Israel, Son of Man.

II. 3. **WATER** and **WINE**, history of a soul's conversion; water, weakness: wine, joy.

III. 7. "Ye must be born again." The doctrine of **THE NEW BIRTH** has always in its neighbourhood the doctrine of the *fall*, and of the atonement, and of the eternal issues beyond life, of the choice made while it lasted; and if history teaches anything it teaches that the proclamation of these doctrines that cut athwart human anticipations and conceptions, has moved men with unexampled force.

III. 16. "God **SO** loved the world." The measure or quality of His love—"so." Like the whole Bible written by an expert calligrapher in

Queen Elizabeth's time, who placed it in the compass of large walnut-shell (1 John iii. 1).

IV. 4. "He must NEEDS GO." Not for geographical reasons, but because in communion His Father had whispered to Him that there in that city was a heart, longing, crying, beneath the dust and ruins of sin. He is not here now, but there are 10,000 of His, and He leaves us an example.

IV. 46. The NOBLEMAN'S SON. Trust in the dark. The first miracle of Cana was one of joy, this one was of life—not only—but to teach desperate trust in the bare word from His lips, without any visible sign. You never can forget the first time. A perfect glow of joy! Six waterpots full! It seemed a life-long supply, and the marriage joy filled your heart so full that it irradiated your life, and the bounteous supply of "good wine" from His presence brought a glory into your soul like heaven's song, and joy came down to earth. But *now*, it was *trust*. How often the Lord says "To-morrow" when He gives a promise (Josh. iii. 5; 2 Chron. xx. 16, 17; Exod. xvii. 9; Josh. xi. 6). "To-morrow" implies a night before the deliverance, a time in the dark when there is absolutely nothing to see. "The pillar of cloud went from before their face and stood behind them." Absolutely nothing between them and the sea; no cloud to guide. But this was advance; this was preparing for deliverance. Are you left without any cloud to guide you? *Trust*—only go on at His bidding

through the dark, and you will find a miracle waiting for you.

V. 6. THE POOL. WILT thou be made whole? Put your will on God's side in everything, and leave to Him the responsibility of fulfilling in you and through you (2 Thess. i. 11, 12). There are times when, if we are simply dependent on our feelings, we shall be ready to despair. Say, "I WILL to be only, always, all for Thee. I long for nothing so much as that Thou shouldst hasten Thy work of conquest within my soul, till every thought and feeling are brought captive to Thine obedience." In sorrow and trial all that can abide the fire must be made to pass through the fire. We suffer as the loved one leaves our embrace. We suffer as we have to leave cherished surroundings, and venture, as the eagle's nestlings, on the untried air. We suffer as we have to be the means of inflicting pain on those who love us. We suffer as some creeping paralysis slowly cuts us off from the avenues of sense and life. But we learn obedience by the things that we suffer. When thoughts of rebellion and mistrust surge upwards in your soul, do not lose heart. Trust God to deal with them; you cannot master them, but God can. Only be sure that your *will* is as true to Him as the needle is to the pole. If we dare to believe in Him, our emotions and feelings will be won over. In proportion as the will of man is brought into unison and harmony with the will of God there will be growing peace and growing power.

V. 39. SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES. The context here shows plainly that reading, and even studying, the Word is not enough. We must read with a mind made up to believe and obey, at all costs, whether the word teaches, exhorts, or rebukes. We must search *in order to know Him* and become like Him in every respect. We must search, with no preconceived ideas. We must apply the Scriptures to *ourselves*. It is well to *search* the Scriptures, but if the Word is to have any power over us, we must *be searched* by it.

VI. The two aspects of the Church. 1st, Feeding the multitude *with Him*. 2nd, Toiling in rowing, *waiting for Him*.

VI. 47. CERTAINTY. One man takes hold of Christ, as it were, with a drowning man's grip; another but touches the hem of His garment. But the sinner who does the former is not a bit safer than he who does the latter. The feeblest faith in Christ eternally saves, while the strongest faith in aught beside is but the offspring of a deceived heart—but the leafy twigs of your enemy's arranging over the pitfall of eternal perdition. Said an anxious soul once to a servant of Christ, "Oh, sir, I cannot believe." "Indeed," said the preacher; "who is it that you cannot believe?" It is not a question of the amount of your faith, but of the trustworthiness of the person in whom you repose your confidence.

VII. 12. SOME—OTHERS. The sun calls forth miasma and malaria from the swamps it

shines upon ; but the fault is not in the sun, but in the land. The very same rays call forth fertility and abundance from the cornfield.

VII. 37, 38. RIVERS OF LIVING WATER. Not one river, but many—an Amazon, a Mississippi, a Nile, a St. Lawrence, an Ohio of blessing ! Rivers flowing forth from you over desolate, desert places. Claim it—claim it—be content to be channels. God has oceans of blessing to pour in these last days on the arid places of the world. Offer yourselves as channels, that rivers may flow from you. That filling has to be repeated many a time, for the drainage and leakage of earth tell upon one.

VIII. 1. A NIGHT OF COMMUNION. “Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.” There He lay all night, under the blue Syrian sky, no roof covering Him save the starry canopy of heaven, in communion with His Father in the glorious home above. Early in the morning, as the sun was shining forth in its brightness, Jesus entered the Temple, and the verse in which He makes the lofty claim, “I am the Light of the world,” was very strikingly illustrated in the incident which immediately preceded the utterance. Christ is the Light which discovers the deceiver and hypocrite. He is also the Light which pours comfort and gladness into the heart of the poor sinner ; the Light of the world exposing all its ghastliness and woe, and bringing at the same time healing on its wings for all the heavy-laden and sin-stricken ones. Only

the Perfect One who came to bear our sin and to cleanse it could pronounce judgment, and He did not do it. Now and here He has come not to judge men, but to save them; therefore, while He does condemn sin, He does not condemn the sinner.

VIII. 24. "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall DIE IN YOUR SINS." Wrapped up in them as in a deadly-poison robe, self-woven, and from which there is no escape for ever.

VIII. 29. "NOT ALONE." That is the most finished character that leans on the love of kindred while it may, and when it may not, can stand erect in the love of God; that shelters itself amid the domesticities of life while duty wills, and when it forbids, can go forth under the expanse of immortality and face any storm that breaks, and traverse any wilderness that lies beneath that canopy.

VIII. 32. "The truth shall make you FREE." The fullest and most entire emancipation from every form of slavery. The most perfectly free man is he who continues in the Word of God.

IX. 5. "I am THE LIGHT of the world." The world sweeps on, and when the great ages of eternity have come there will sink beneath the horizon of the past many a tall column that stands high and flashes light from its summit to-day. But no distance onwards nor any fresh illumination will ever pale the light that shines

from the earthly manifestation and bitter passion of the Christ, the Revealer of God.

XI. 5, &c. Christ Jesus knew that household AT BETHANY. He knew the place that Lazarus occupied in each of those sisters' hearts; and yet this seems such a strange way, such an unaccountable way of showing His love. He does not go immediately, nor does He give any special grace to uphold in the coming trial. No doubt Martha and Mary would have liked to bear their trial in a noble and glorifying manner, but this was not vouchsafed them. This is one of the ways the Lord brings us low, that He may be more to us than He has ever been before. And when Mary seems afterwards to upbraid Him for His delay, that does not dry up His tears. He understands the broken heart before Him, and sympathises even with the sorrow caused by a misapprehension of His own action.

XI. 26. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." The believer will never see or taste death. Death is as far off as the Cross. He cannot comprehend it; he finds it a parted river.

XI. 32. "Lord, if Thou hadst been here!" Do we ever go and talk with Jesus, and tell Him all the details of our trouble, just as we would to an earthly friend whose sympathy we were sure of? There is just a tinge of upbraiding in these words of Mary, yet she does not keep them back. As much as to say, "Lord, it was unkind

of Thee not to come sooner; it was unkind of Thee to stay so long on the way." In the agony of her love, in the blank, despairing feeling of her bereavement she cries out, "O, Lord, if only Thou hadst been here!" And in prayer sometimes do not we feel a want of faith and a sort of feeling that God has been hard upon us. Let us not keep it back; let us tell Him all. These very feelings are part of our trouble.

XII. 2. "They made Him A SUPPER"—six days before the Passover, a type of the future Supper. Martha, the Church serving; Mary, the Church worshipping; Lazarus, the Church in resurrection. Mary, giving of the most costly, "wiped His feet with her hair," this putting all her *glory*, as it were, beneath His feet, for "if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her."

XII. 9. "Then came the Jews [after the Church is gone] that they might see Lazarus also." The risen Church will be an object of wonder and marvel, and bring great glory to God.

XII. 35. "Walk while ye have the light." "Wherever I have seen His steps, there I have coveted to put my feet." Note David Livingstone's long struggle to *form in himself* the life of Christ before he could be accepted by God. Do the snowdrops bring the spring? or does the spring bring the snowdrops? As ye have received, so by faith walk ye in Him. Do you feel the beating of your heart painful to you? the

breathing of your lungs a laborious effort? the circulation of your blood a wearisome task? The little plant takes up from the world around it all that it needs to build up its life. As you take your sheet of music, take the precepts of God's Word, and make the music of heaven out of them.

XIII. 23. "WHOM JESUS LOVED." John uses the name himself. With finest lowliness of mind he utters no disclaimer of merit. Like a child unconscious of the grace of its own movements, all he thought of was the blissfulness of being loved with a love so pure and wonderful. The love of Jesus was not a kind of vague benevolence, smiling alike on all; it had discrimination, and His heart went out specially to John. The others were no losers by this. By ardently loving one friend, I have the more love for others. His childlike simplicity, and the grand sea-like largeness of his nature, drew out the Lord's love. These were of divine creation in him, but as a painter enjoys what he expresses on canvas and the musician his composition, apart from any thought that it is their own creation, so the Lord loved John.

XIV. 1. HEART TROUBLE. All the trouble in this passage is about Christ. *They could not understand Him.* Pomp of empires and courts, displays of royal and martial glory, divine honours and endless reign over subdued nations, and an ever-widening kingdom were (as they supposed) to be His. They hoped that all this was at hand. But He whom they had taken

as their Messiah talked of going away and dying. The shadow of future trouble—an absent Christ; their position was perilous; all that was most powerful of men and influence was set against them in immovable hatred. This had not seemed much while Christ was at hand to lean upon, but it appeared overwhelming regarded in the light of His absence. Looking upon these men, He knows if the warnings so disturb them, how much the events will be felt, and He directs them to the one Anchor—"Believe in Me. Believe that I am right. You think that I am wrong in not taking to Myself temporal splendour. You believe that I am wrong because I appear to let My enemies triumph. Because you do not understand, you doubt if I am right. Do not fear; I am right. Believe that I am love; absence will not alter love."

XIV. 6. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." It is in the Cross of Christ, in THE MISSION OF THE SON OF GOD, that the Divine Fatherhood displays itself in full revelation. If you shut your eyes or withhold your heart from that which is the supreme discovery to us of the Fatherhood, then all your conceptions of the Divine Fatherhood will not merely be inadequate and imperfect, but they will be mutilated, as it were, in the very centre. On the other hand, when the mediation of Jesus, His Cross and passion, are disconnected from the Divine Fatherhood, the source of the Redeemer's mission becomes altogether obscured. The mediation of Christ is a means to an end, and

if that end be hidden from sight, the great transaction refuses to interpret itself to our hearts. Christ died not to *save us from God*, but to "*bring us to God*." What may be involved in truly remedying sin, and putting the sinner right with eternal righteousness, the angels of God cannot tell; how much less can we? Our forgiveness of our children affords us no sufficient sense of the height and depth, and length and breadth of God's forgiveness, and by no means enables us to say how God can and ought to pardon sin. In the revelation which God has given us, it is ever and always asserted that the sacrifice of Christ solves the mystery. Whatever Christ did for the benefit of sinners He did by the will of God; whatever He was for us, He was from God. "I have come from heaven to do the will of Him that sent Me." But who and what was this Saviour? "*I and My Father are one*." Here we touch the mystery of the matter.

XIV. 15. "IF YE LOVE ME." The laws of states have no preface like this; they are grounded simply upon what appears righteous, and are enforced. Jesus speaks not merely as Lawgiver, nor is it merely as a Friend; a friend does not command. Here is One who has authority over us, but He does not take His stand merely on that. As the Saviour-King He commands and appeals to our love.

XV. THE VINE. The vine-clad hillside with the smouldering fires that have consumed

the fruitless branches yield the suggestion for immortal discourse.

XV. 2. "He pruneth [cleanseth] it." This treatment requires a very different instrument from that one with which the Gospel begins (Matt. iii. 10). An axe is for tree-felling; a pruning-knife for branch-dressing.

XV. 14. "Ye are my FRIENDS if ye *do* whatsoever I command you." The measure of knowledge of God's will is the measure of doing. You will incur less responsibility by taking God's Word to mean what it says, than by putting your own construction upon it. The line of plan is the line of power. The line of obedience is the line of blessing. A disobedient child will only get blessed in chastisement—left-hand blessing. "That man is blessed in his *deed*" (James i. 25).

XVI. 8. The special work of the Holy Spirit is to convince the world of sin through anointed Christians. On the day of Pentecost He did not convince direct from heaven.

XVII. 1. GLORY; His one absorbing passion to glorify the Father. If ever a cross awaits us, let us welcome it in the spirit of the Master (John xii. 26). The Holy Spirit glorified Him (John xvi. 13, 14). The Holy Spirit is so divinely loyal to Christ that you never know the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit. He never speaks of

Himself. The only way you know the Holy Spirit is when some sweet inflow of Christ comes over the soul. You know the Holy Spirit not by raptures or feelings, but by the presence of Christ within. You never see the wind, but you know it when it brings on its breath the sweet fragrance from a bank of violets; so you never see or feel the Holy Spirit but by a sweet waft of Jesus. Jesus glorified in His Church (John xvii. 10). Like a prism, we can add nothing to the sunbeam, but we may split it up and show the beauty that is in it. As the setting sun sometimes strikes a window, flooding it with light, so that you cannot see the curtains, the blind, or the casement, then you turn to the west and see the setting sun; so when we get to that we shall be right. On His brow the Father hath put a triple crown of glory—the glory of His perfect Manhood—the glory of His perfect work as a Servant—the glory of His Deity. Rev. i. 5: “Unto Him that loveth us.” The work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Him. Shall not that be the one passion of our life? It is our work.

XVII. 3. “That they might know Thee.” Seventy-one times in Ezekiel we have the expression, “That ye may know that *I am the Lord.*” KNOWING GOD means confidence in Him. Psalm ix. 10, means communion with Him. Exod. xxxiii. 13-17: knowing God means confession of Him. Christ to Nicodemus, “We speak that we do know,” means consecration to Him. The reason why Israel sinned, they did

not *know* Him. Isaiah i. 3: Knowing Christ, is to know the Father.

XVIII. 37. Contrast this with the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is no broken, despairing man whom you observe. "I AM A KING," He says, never lowering His glance in the presence of Pilate. And never did the shout of a conqueror, when he had scaled the ramparts and stood upon the heights, and was shot down in the moment of victory, mean so much as that shout whose reverberations must have reached heaven, when He cried a few hours later, "It is finished!" Do you see any trace here of a broken will? His strength was in the fact that His natural, human will was in perfect consonance with the will of the Father. Here is a picture of true resignation, a voluntary surrender to the will of God.

XIX. 28. "I THIRST." This was the human aspect—the thirst for man's sympathy, man's heart, man's confidence, man's love. They gave Him the vinegar, the gall, the bitter hyssop of the mockery and emptiness of their forms and ceremonies. In the divine aspect it was the thirst for the Father's presence, which He had never till now been without, expressed in Psalm xxii. ; xlii. 1.

XIX. 30. He had taken upon Himself all human sin which has ever rent the air, or befouled the earth, or put the stars of night to the blush; and bearing the shame, the horror, the

penalty during those dread hours which wrung from Him the cry of desolate forsakenness, *He put it away, and wiped it out for ever.*

XX. 1. "Cometh MARY MAGDALENE early." How the sight of her, whose heart was aching at the absence of the Master, must have gladdened the Saviour's heart! He came not back from those three short days—so short yet so long, fraught with so much—without a welcome. She was there to meet Him where she had last seen Him. They were satisfied with the *evidences* of the resurrection. *She* wanted the Risen One. There was the sepulchre-stone rolled away, linen clothes lying, and napkin, everything in order, and "they went unto their own home." It is very easy to have a home here when concerned only about the abstract evidences of truth.

XX. 14. "She turned herself back." How often is it so. We are seeking our Lord with weeping eyes and longing hearts, and He is there just behind us; so near, yet unknown.

XX. 19. DOUBLE PEACE—"again." No bolts or bars can keep out the resurrection Jesus. Peace—it was His message from the conquered Cross. Not only all enmity of sin put away, but all enmity of will. "He shewed them," &c. That was the path to His repeated peace. It is new visions of His dying love pleading with you to die with Him which prepares for the beautiful new instalment of peace. New peace leads to new service, for a quieted heart leads to quickened steps.

XXI. 1. Fuller revelation of Himself. He comes to the old ground to work a new wonder, and He repeats the old miracle in the old place. Is not this what you love about Him? that He does not get tired of old places, or old faces, but He clings to the spots where He has worked before, and repeats His power there *again*. Can you not find out some "Galilee," some despised place in yourself, and invite Him there?

XXI. 16. Has He ever asked for your love? Are you still impatient because the life of the Christian is full of "AGAINS;" and you feel it would be so much more satisfactory and comfortable if it were all perfected at once? HE knew what it was to have an "again" in temptation (Matt. iv. 7). HE knew what it was to have an "again" in placing His will on His Father's side (Matt. xxvi. 42-44).

## A C T S .

ACTS. One of the special features of the Acts is a detailed account of the work of the Holy Spirit—

(1) *For* the believer. (2) *In* the believer. (3) *Through* the believer.

I. 8. "Ye shall receive power." "POWER," literally "dynamite"—power to shatter the

strongholds of the devil. What did these men want in order to evangelise the world? Money? Of course they wanted money: but Christ did not say a word about money. God would provide the money. Remember how Christ sent Peter to catch a fish, and to find money in its mouth. "There are as good fish in that sea as ever came out of it." Never let rich men imagine that God cannot do without them, and never let us resort to immoral methods, like raffling, for the sake of getting money. "God will supply all your need." Perhaps they needed intellectual power. When sanctified it is of great service, but Christ says nothing about it. He was equally silent with respect to social position. What they really wanted was a power that would keep men's hands clean seven days in the week, a power that would deliver them from the love of money, and from the influence of a golden bribe. Every Christian, as one has said, is a Bible or a libel.

"Ye shall RECEIVE power." It is all a matter of receptiveness. The same shower which fertilised the nobleman's broad acres filled the poor widow's broken jar to the brim. The gardener can graft a lovely rose into the prickly briar that grows in a ditch. Christ is able to give power. There is a wealth of faith, a wealth of love, a wealth of wisdom, and a wealth of prayer all ours by this power. (Micah iii. 8).

II. 14. PENTECOST. Had we been asked which of the twelve was best qualified to preach Christ Jesus, and to convict men of their sin

towards Him, we should have agreed with one consent that, whoever spoke on that subject, *Peter* could not. He, at least, must be silent, seeing it is but seven weeks ago since he, for the time being, took rank with the Saviour's foes, openly and foully denying any friendship with Christ. Yet, look! *Peter* of all others is the man who speaks in that supreme hour. What a marvel is that sermon, coming from such a man! It is all about the dignity of Jesus; that He is the Messiah, David's Son and Lord; that God had raised Him to the right hand of power and majesty; and that these mighty wonders are the gifts of that same glorified Messiah. Surely the more he spoke of the glory of Jesus, the more he brought into relief his own great sin in denying Him. But he is bolder still; he charges them to the face with the denial and murder of God's Holy One (ver. 22-36). These were, indeed, bold words for any man to speak, but the great marvel is that *Peter* should have spoken them with such freedom, and such searching spiritual power that thousands were pricked in their hearts, and said, "What shall we do?" (See chapter v.)

II. 36. "CRUCIFIED." *Peter* could never bring his lips to form that word before. Cicero says its import was so awful that it was never mentioned among the Romans.

III. 21. "The times of RESTITUTION of all things." The coming of Him who alone can set right the narrowest of human hearts—who

alone can set right the wide world which is full from end to end of human hearts.

IV. 20. **WE CANNOT BUT SPEAK.** It is of no use speaking to people unless we are led by the Spirit, and if we are filled with the Spirit we shall be able to do it in a natural, easy, unforced way, and shall feel impelled to do it.

IV. 32-35. **A MODERN READING.** "And the multitude of them that professed were of hard heart and stony soul, and every one said that all the things that he possessed were his own, and they had all things in the fashion. And with great power gave they witness to the attractions of the world, and the love of gold. And great selfishness was upon them all, and there were many among them that lacked love. For as many as were possessors of land bought more, and (sometimes) gave a small part thereof for the public good, so their names were heralded in the newspapers, and distribution of praise was made to every man according as he desired!!"

V. 40. **BEATEN THEM.** Why, Peter, I heard you had no silver or gold; but did you ever see men so happy? Rejoicing—rejoicing that they were counted worthy—to sit on His right hand? No—"to **SUFFER SHAME** for His Name."

VI. 3. **FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST** is to be full of love—as was said of an evangelist, "The warmth of heart which sends all his

thoughts glowing into the hearts of others, kindling them into sympathetic fervour." Some evangelists are as clear as crystal in their explanation of the plan of salvation, and *as cold*. We may be as majestic in the "get-up" of our addresses as an iceberg, and as freezing. We may be as symmetrical as a building in our utterances, and as lifeless. What we want are *go*, *glow*, *grip*, *godliness*, and *grace*. The *go* of the Holy Spirit, the *glow* of Christ's love, the *grip* of Christ's truth, *godliness* of life, and the sustaining *grace* of God.

VIII. 5. "PREACHED CHRIST unto them"—the only recorded method. (See verse 25, and chap. xi. 14 and 20.) There are three special gifts that the Lord has given His Church for its edification, viz., evangelist, pastor, and teacher—Merarites, Gershonites, Kohathites. The Merarites had charge of the silver sockets, the boards, bars, pins, cords, and sockets of brass. The Gershonites had charge of the coverings and the beautiful curtains called "the tabernacle." The Kohathites had charge of the ark, table, candlestick, altars, and all the vessels of the sanctuary. The evangelist's work is to tell of Christ, the only foundation, in His twofold aspect—Godward and manward—each board in twofold sockets of silver. Then all believers are one in Christ, just as the boards were united; they are held together by the power of the Holy Ghost—the unseen bar (Ex. xxxvi. 33); and by the power of the Living Christ to keep—just as the bars and rings kept the boards steady on the

foundation. The work of the Gershonites: *Outside* things—pastors' work, comforting the distressed, caring for souls, correcting the unruly. The work of the Kohathites: *Inside*, hidden things—the work of a teacher to explain, elucidate, and give the sense.

IX. 10. Ananias was not at Damascus by chance. God had placed him there ready for a definite work. So, wherever we are, we may depend God has placed us there to be a help to someone. SAUL'S CONVERSION is a marvellous instance of the powerlessness of the enemy to prevent the spread of the gospel—how Satan strove through Saul to quench the flickering spark of life in Christ in the early history of the Church, and yet Saul, his very instrument, is converted.

IX. 31. THE CHURCH'S REST. Your safety hangs upon Christ's work *for* you; your assurance, upon God's word *to* you; your enjoyment, upon not grieving the Holy Spirit *in* you. Relationship depends upon birth, communion upon behaviour. The love of relationship is one thing, the joy of communion quite another. Nothing is so *strong* as the link of relationship, nothing so *tender* as the link of communion (1 John i. 9). All the combined power and counsel of earth and hell cannot sever the former, while an impure motive or an idle word will snap the latter. A pebble dropped into a well will break the beautiful reflection of the moon to shivers, but it does not alter the moon.

X. 19. PETER'S VISION. Peter was standing between vision and duty. We are often inclined to stop with our visions, and hesitate to come down to common things. Here, however, the vision was given by the Holy Spirit, and yet Peter had to leave it and go down stairs and meet the three men; and because he was obedient the Holy Spirit gave him the honour of being used to the salvation of Cornelius and his house.

XVI. 30. WHAT MUST I DO to be saved? This question comes home in a way over which lapse of time has no power. The soul gets intuitions then which it can never lose, into self, into sin, into holiness, and, blessed be God, into the need, the reality, the eternal rightness of the Blood of the Lamb, of the righteousness of the Mediator (1 John ii. 1, 2). Long years roll away, but these things are above time.

XVI. 31. "BELIEVE." Not, go home and pray earnestly. Not, do your best. Not, be in earnest; only *believe*. And yet, notwithstanding all God has done to win man's confidence, which is all He requires, how very, very hard it is to get man to render to God (either from misunderstanding or most often from unconcern) that which he gives to his fellow-man every day. "Believe on the *Lord* Jesus Christ." No Gospel is complete that does not present Jesus Christ as *Lord*. Were he given His right place as such at the beginning of every

Christian's life, much needless suffering and stumbling would be avoided.

XVII. 31. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, our substitute and sin-bearer, from the grave, is **THE GREATEST MIRACLE** recorded in the New Testament; and of all the facts on the record of this world's history none is more thoroughly substantiated by credible testimony.

XX. 35. "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how **HE SAID**"—not only with His lip but by His life. It is quite possible to give or grant a favour without the smallest feeling that by so doing you make the recipient your debtor, or that you throw him or her into a position of inferiority for the time being. This is the Christian grace to give, so that the recipient may not feel under an obligation to you.

XXVII. 20. "And when **NEITHER SUN NOR STARS** for many days shone upon us" (R.V.). Above us, in the dark, cloudless sky, the stars are shining with wonderful brilliance and beauty—dear, peaceful, shining friends. A glance upward at their familiar, unchanged faces lifts the heart, and brings a sense of rest, in the constant, unfailing presence of Him of whose power and care they tell in voices of light.

XXVIII. 15. "Whom, when Paul saw, he thanked God, and **TOOK COURAGE.**" In-

fluence of courageous Christians. Steer clear of iceberg Christians. Symbol of Christianity not *ice* but *fire*.

XXVIII. 31. The last description we have of the methods of this PRINCE OF EVANGELISTS is of a piece with all that has gone before. There is no trying to please men—but warning and pleading and entreating as one who feels the waters of eternity creeping in upon him.

## R O M A N S .

ROMANS I. 1. THE GOSPEL OF GOD. These words are the keynote of the epistle, which is the setting forth of the Gospel from the Divine standpoint. "Of God." The masterpiece of any human artificer is that by which his name is known, and that which such a man delights to call his. So God glories in His good tidings—it is His masterpiece.

III. 9. SIN. All sin carries in the heart of it a "No" to God, and ultimately means "Let Him not be!" Man's inherited nature—sinful, incapable of good or of self-improvement—shuts him out from God's presence as unfit. God has made a way to fit him for His own presence—*i.e.*, His justice in punishing sin, and His infinite love absolutely satisfied by the sacrifice of Him-

self on Calvary's cross. Nowhere does the Word of God say man's nature makes him incapable of exercising faith in God. Faith, though produced by the Word of God brought home to man's heart by the Holy Spirit, is yet entirely within man's own deliberate control. The Holy Spirit strives with *all*, hence man's power of choice.

V. 5. "The LOVE OF GOD." Oh, for a deeper sense of this love—for more consciousness of it. It is the realisation of this love that begets love *to* God—which is the great power to do His commandments, and to avoid displeasing Him.

V. 17. JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU. The righteousness God requires, God provides. By faith we *are* made one with Christ. His whole life was a perfect response to the mind of God and the law of God. The righteousness is not that of unfallen Adam or of an archangel, but of Immanuel—the righteousness of God. To the very last verge of Eternity the most advanced believer must stand on this level as to acceptance with God.

VI. If we have taken the Cross of Christ as our warrant, the blood as our plea, the promise of God as our security, then God is PLEDGED TO US. When Christ went down into the death, we were buried, and there was an end of *me* as a natural man. Christ rose out of death, but sin did not rise with Him. God never quickened that which His Son had put away.

When Christ rose He was the representative of accepted men. They have their union with Him in *resurrection* power; and God never looks at His ransomed ones out of Christ. We know by *experience* that in Adam all *die*, but we do not know by experience that the *death Christ suffered* passed on all men standing in Him. Yet God's Word states it, and that is our standing ground—"By faith and not by sight." Every believer, one as much as another, is *complete* before God. He sees *no* spot nor stain. If He did He *must* condemn. I died out of God's sight as a *sinner* when Christ was crucified on Calvary. God looks at me there, and lays no more sin to my charge than He did to Christ when He raised Him from the dead. "I live, yet not I."

VI. 14. The Gospel is like a form, a mould "into which ye were delivered" (marginal reading), so that your hearts ran into THE MOULD. The Sadducees and Pharisees had their forms, but evangelical preachers should bring with them the form of sound words. They have in the *Name of Christ* a mould or form in which to cast the minds of men.

VIII. 13, 14. There are in a Christian TWO DISTINCT NATURES, as there are in any grafted tree—the old stock and new graft. The nature of both remains distinct and is unalterable. If shoots grow from the stock, their nature is entirely that of the stock; if they grow from the graft it is entirely that of the graft—the natures

never amalgamate. The new nature ought to utilise all the energies of the old.

IX. It is deeply interesting to mark how sedulously the Spirit of God in Romans ix., and indeed throughout all Scripture, guards against the horrid inference which the human mind draws from the doctrine of GOD'S ELECTION. When He speaks of "vessels of wrath" He simply says "fitted to destruction." He does not say that God fitted them. Whereas, on the other hand, when He refers to "vessels of mercy" He says, "Whom He had afore prepared unto glory." This is most marked. So in Matt. xxv. 34-41, another striking and beautiful instance. When the King addresses those on His right hand, He says: "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom *prepared for you* from the foundation of the world." But when He addresses those on His left, He says: "Depart from Me, ye cursed." He does not say, "cursed of My Father;" and further He says, "into everlasting fire prepared"—not for you—but "for the devil and his angels." Every one who finds himself in heaven will have God to thank for it; and every one who finds himself in hell will have to blame *himself*.

X. 4. We must distinguish between the MORAL and CEREMONIAL law; the latter was transient, and was fulfilled in Jesus Christ; the former, of course, is of permanent and eternal force, written on the conscience of man and the government of the world.

XII. 2. "Be NOT CONFORMED to this world." Lot tried it, saved nobody, ruined himself and family, and got out of judgment fire scarcely saved. Aaron tried it at Sinai; the golden calf was the result. Solomon tried it in Jerusalem, and temples to Chemosh and Moloch, and altars to Ashtaroth and Milcolm confronted Jehovah's temple. This very principle brought in all the idolatries of Jeroboam and Ahab, and it was this that, in the days of our Lord's earthly sojourn, left the Jewish congregation to be a skeleton leaf without life, without sap. Let us translate the living truths of the Gospel into, and illustrate them by, the language of life. In the New Testament especially the unworldly character of the Church of Christ is written in large letters, as upon public tablets, that all may read at a glance. Our Lord taught it in discourse and parable, and breathed it in His intercessory prayer. Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude echo it, and the echo grows louder rather than fainter with each new reverberation. The array of Scripture texts on the one hand, and of historic facts on the other, is like the marshalling of two vast hosts, guarding God's people against the world's influence and power.

XIII. 4. "A MINISTER OF GOD." The very same title as that he uses of those who are engaged in more directly spiritual ministry, showing that God has not relinquished the moral government of the world, that all authority is derived from Him, and that civil government is just as much His work as spiritual.

XIII. 11, 12. "AWAKE." We do not make up our minds to sleep, there is no deliberate purpose, only an easy position, everything around us cosy and comfortable, *and we do not know we have been asleep till we wake up.*

XIII. 13. One of THE DEVIL'S NARCOTICS to make Christians drowsy: "Are there not two sides to every question?" Of course there are, and of most questions one side is right and the other wrong. "He that hath the Son hath life"—that is one side of a very great question; and "he that hath *not* the Son, hath *not* life"—that is the other equally true side. If half the professing Christians are no better than the unbelievers, then all the more reason for you to be awake and warm. How can we awake? Sometimes God arouses us roughly, like the clanging morning school-bell. Some Ziklag may be burnt to arouse us from our lethargy; but how much pleasanter when we are awakened by the light of early morning breaking in at our windows.

XV. 13. He who has faith has the joys of faith, and what is more, he cannot help having them; and not only this, he may justly regard them as an evidence or a sign of a healthy spiritual state. To draw our activity and our hope from sensible joys is to live by sight rather than by faith. Joy is not life, but merely an incident of life. It is better to joy in the *God* of consolation than in consolation, and in the *God* of peace than in peace. "THE GOD OF

HOPE." He who would be Godlike must be hopeful. As the predicted servant of Jehovah, it was said of Christ, "He shall not be discouraged." When to-day's environment was darkest He made "hereafter" the key-note of His speech. To-day, as Mediatorial King, He is ever *expecting* till His foes be made the footstool of His feet. In His life there was ever a joy set before Him. The love which God sheds abroad in the heart is a love that hopeth all things. Despair is the proof of His absence. Despondency and His active presence are incompatible. No Christian man can rightly be a pessimist. No sane man can believe that the issue of the conflict between sin and love is doubtful.

## I. C O R I N T H I A N S .

I CORINTHIANS I. 18. "THE WORD OF THE CROSS"—What does it say? Come away from the miasma swamp where you live. Come away from the lowlands. Come away from Doubting Castle. Come out from being mastered every now and then by the grim Giant Despair. Come away from weakness and helplessness. There is a Hallelujah Sanitarium up here. It is good for the health of your body, as well as the strengthening of your mind and the blessing of your soul. I say, Come along, my brother, my sister, come and go in with all

your heart for these higher regions. (See Matt. xxvii.) What response do you think you ought to make to the Cross. Calvary is a sort of Halfway House. HE came down from Heaven to this Cross. What for? That you might go there to meet Him.

I. 30. "SANCTIFICATION." (1) The procuring cause—the precious Blood of Christ. (Heb. xiii. 12; x. 4; x. 10; 1 Cor. i. 30, 31). (2) The instrumental cause—the channel—Faith. (Acts xv. 9; xxvi. 17, 18). (3) The efficient cause—the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. vi. 11). (4) The medium—the Word of God. (Ephes. v. 26). Practical sanctification is the extension of the dominion of the new creation of God in us by the power of the indwelling Spirit.

III. 3. UNITY NOT UNIFORMITY. The unity of the Church of Christ is not an external organisation, but a special unity of faith, and love, and holiness, of joint participation in the common life imparted by the Holy Spirit to all those in whose hearts He dwells. In seeking to acknowledge the unity, and thus increase the power of the Church of God, our aim should be, not so much to efface denominational distinctions, as to obliterate the *sectarian spirit*. The grand desideratum is, not the formation of a creed which all can adopt, or of a Church polity to which all will submit, but to bring true Christians of every name to recognise each other as such, to love one another as disciples of the same

Lord, to regard all as forming together one body in Christ.

III. 15. Oh, the terrible stripping of those who have laboured and lived in **BORROWED PLUMES**, forward spirits who are asking for the wealth and power to which they have no claim—who usurp a power they cannot use, and stand in the way of others—all the drapery of names and earthly adornments stripped—all pretentional claims unveiled.

VI. 20. **BOUGHT WITH A PRICE.** The young Russian spy, during Napoleon's invasion of Russia, who, being arrested, was branded in the hand with the letter N., asking what it meant, was told it signified that it belonged to Napoleon; whereupon, detaching a little axe from his belt, he ruthlessly hewed off the hand, saying: "Take to Napoleon what belongs to him; *I belong every inch of me to the Czar.*" (1) **HEAD!** Think for Him whose brow was thorn-girt. (2) **HANDS!** Toil for Him whose hands were nailed to the cross. (3) **FEET!** Speed to do His behests whose feet were pierced. **BODY** of mine! Be His temple whose body was wrung with pains unspeakable.

X. 10. "**NEITHER MURMUR ye.**" Life is a field of nettles to some men. Their fretful, worrying tempers are always pricking out through the tender skin of their uneasiness. Why, if they were set down in Paradise, carrying their bad mind with them, they would fret at the

good angels, and the climate, and the colours, even of the roses.

XII. 21, 22. THE FAMILY feeling. We must have the interests of the family at heart—thinking as God thinks, seeking what God seeks, feeling as God feels about each. If we do not love, we have not learned the spirit of adoption.

XIII. LOVE. It is the deliberate verdict of the Lord Jesus that it is better not to live than not to love. God says much about peace on earth and goodwill towards men. And it will be observed that all the virtues and graces in this chapter are in relation to men—in relation to life—in relation to the known to-day and the near to-morrow, and not to the unknown Eternity.

XIII. 12. "FACE TO FACE." In this world the most impressive thing, the most expressive thing, is the human face; but that face is veiled with the griefs of a thousand years; yet in the Resurrection morn that veil will be taken away from the face, and the noonday sun is dull and dim compared with the outflaming glories of the countenances of the saved. When those faces of the righteous turn towards the Gate, or look up toward the Throne, it will be like the dawning of a new morning on the bosom of everlasting day. There you will see the perfect eye after the waters of death have washed out the stains of tears. There you will see the perfect hand after the knots of toil have been untied

from the knuckles. There you will see the form erect and elastic after the burdens have slipped off the shoulder—the very life of God in the body: “We shall be like Him.”

XV. BEHIND THE SCENES. So long as things go smoothly, and our lives are not disturbed by any disastrous circumstances, when health is good, means sufficient for our wants, and friends with their kindly sympathy and cheerful intercourse are near, it is easy to refer our daily blessings to the Great Giver of all good; but in days of adversity we realise that life is full of evils—evils, too, which seem to fall upon us without the possibility of any good coming out of them. On the sudden changes of our lives from sunshine to cloud, from joy to grief, from hope to hopeless disappointment, we are often in danger of making shipwreck of our faith. We begin to ask in real earnest the meaning of life. The question rises then unbidden to our breaking hearts, Where is God? Is He anywhere? Our questioning often comes very near the half-reproachful words of Martha: “Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died.” There is no explanation of trouble and sorrow, of shame and of anguish, apart from Christ. We see in Christ, as His life is recorded in the narrative of the Gospels, the full development of the mystery of evil. Of this we may be sure: If the life of Christ had ended with the Crucifixion all were *darkness*, not only for Him but for us. But the Gospel tells us of the *Resurrection*. This assures us of an explanation which we can apply

to our own difficulties. Let us not with our partial knowledge attempt finally to judge the problems of life until we come to know the whole. If we can depend upon the word of Christ, the trials which God permits have all their meaning. Now we see through a glass, darkly.

## II. CORINTHIANS.

II. CORINTHIANS i. 5. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our CONSOLATION ALSO ABOUNDETH in Christ." Every trial is the enlargement of the range of promises which you can now test and try. You cannot see the stars now, but if you were to go down to the bottom of a well at high noon you could see the stars. God sometimes takes us down into the deeps of affliction that we may see His promises. Many of the promises are written in sympathetic ink—a kind of ink that seems to leave no mark on the paper till you hold it to the fire; then the black lines stand out. You must be cast upon a certain island ere you can "shake off the beasts into the fire;" or you must be banished to another Patmos ere you can be "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." Say to yourself, as the rumbling wheels of trial come up to the door, "Here comes another waggon load of gold."

I. 20. The PROMISES are good and unfailing (Josh. xxiii. 14). They are exceeding great and precious (2 Peter i. 4). For the Christian they are never separated from Christ.

IV. 18. SEEN and UNSEEN. "He that

believeth in Me hath everlasting life." *Now*, strange to say, the things we do not see with our eyes we see with our souls, so that they appear to be the only real things, and the things that we see with our eyes have now come to be regarded as shadows (2 Kings vi. 17). Are you cognizant of this new life? You cannot tell another what it is, but if you have it you do know that at this moment you have a life within you as far above your former life as that was superior to the life of a dog.

THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN: (1) "The bright light which is in the clouds" (Job 37, 21). (2) "Not yet all things put under Him" (Heb. ii. 8). (3) "Not yet what we shall be" (1 John iii. 2). (4) "Whom having not seen, ye love" (1 Peter i. 8). (5) "Warned of things not seen as yet" (Heb. xi. 7). (6) Endured as seeing Him who is invisible" (Heb. xi. 27). (7) "We hope for that we see not" (Romans viii. 24, 25).

V. 14, 15. Don't separate what GOD HAS JOINED. Christ for us, and we for Christ. To confess Christ crucified includes confessing yourself crucified with Him (Rom. vi.) The Holy Spirit is writing deeper and deeper the lessons of the power of the Blood of Christ.

VI. 17. SEPARATION necessary to communion. If only we are faithful to Him, that faithfulness will separate us from the world.

If you follow Jesus, you will walk very much alone. Men who think you go too far will not desire your company—it would compromise them with reasonable people who do not believe in the risen Lord of Glory finding His delight in communicating now with us.

VII. 1. CLEANSING. "Having these promises [of Christ's indwelling], let us cleanse [*i.e.* at once, *aor*, denoting point of time] ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting [*i.e.* gradually] holiness in the fear of God." The development of a plant requires patience and time, but we take a worm or stone from the root in a moment. If we do not fully yield ourselves, we cannot know peace. It is only in the same measure that we yield our will to God that we can know perfect freedom from restlessness and dissatisfaction. *Life and peace* (Rom. viii. 6). When we are perfectly satisfied that the will of God is good, acceptable, and perfect, then we can desire nothing better, and wish for nothing more.

VIII. 9. "HE BECAME POOR." Did He lay aside any power belonging to Him? Impossible; but He ceased for a season to be independent, and took on Him the form of a servant. "He became poor." Do His privations exhaust this? Does His homelessness exhaust it? Does His dependence on others exhaust it? No: He became poor in becoming a servant. "Through His poverty"—you and I know it not. We cannot fathom its depths—we cannot

measure its abyss—but one thought fills our soul :  
 “ For me.”

IX. 8. PAUPER CHRISTIANS. The Christian is the only person who cannot possibly live up to his income (see Phil. iv. 19). Learn how to make use of the promises (Heb. xi. 33). All God's cheques—cheques to order—must be endorsed (Luke i. 45). We admire the green pastures, but fail to lie down in them. One taste of the rich cordial of God's promises would give us a fresh life and vigour (Psa. xxvii. 13). Jesus stands over against us—between us and every Jericho. God's will is always an expression of His interest in me. Do not get stuck in the mud like barges at low tide, an useless hindrance (see Gal. v. 1).

XIII. 14. THE GRACE POSTSCRIPT. Perhaps that verse in the 8th chapter was in the apostle's mind when he took up his pen and added this postscript: “ You know,” he there says, “ the grace. . .” &c. ; and he ends his letter by saying, (1) “ THE GRACE . . . be with you.” That loveliness of character which belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, as manifested in His life and ministry on earth. The scene in John xiii. is not just given us to look at and pass on. If we just realise what the Lord God said in the Old Testament, “ Ye have made Me to serve with your sins ;” if we realise that sin brings the blessed Lord into this position with the basin and the towel, we will have very

different thoughts about sin, very different thoughts about the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2) THE LOVE OF GOD. When distressed by temptations and difficulties, never allow the battle to be joined on ground chosen by the enemy, but getting away from questions about difficult texts of Scripture, wait till you find yourself firmly standing upon this, that *God loves you*, and then turn upon your enemies and rout them. Seek to link yourself on to this truth of God's love, and then, perhaps, instead of priding yourself on being an "intelligent Christian" because of your doubts, you may find yourself down on your knees in the solitude of your room, with the tears trickling down your face at the thought that *God loves you*. (3) "THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY GHOST." Having things in common with God through the Holy Spirit, Do your thoughts meet God's about sin? about the world? about the influences that are against us? Instead of asking, "How do I feel?" ask, "What does God think?"

## GALATIANS.

GALATIANS II. 20. The LIFE of peace, the life of purity, the life of victory, the life of patience, the life of simplicity, the life of love, the life of hope—this life is God's blessed *gift* here below, and it is given through faith in the Son of God. Let nothing weary us of the deep

recognition of this truth in our own heart, and where need is, by our life to others (John vi. 29).

II. 20. The WORK. In the last clause, Paul is seen to be working in the way of memory, judgment, and recollection, gathering up the facts of the Lord's Person, of His work for His people, and his own relation in consequence to the Lord. This is indeed work. Every deliberate act of memory is at work; every habit of thought so generated, is generated by work. The believer works when he *takes pains* and *uses means* to gather and to keep together the facts concerning Christ, and his life in Christ; when he dwells on who He is, what He has done and is doing; what is the glory of His Person, what the beauty of the King; what are our resources in Him. Yes this is work indeed, not to be done automatically or in a dream. Remember the obvious truth that recollectedness is not to be attained without care, without thought, without marking off a time for it, without keeping the time we have marked off for this recognised purpose. In order that we may live day by day this life of faith in the Son of God, there should be time set apart to ascertain and get acquainted with the treasure on which we are to draw in the real stress of life. On the other hand, this work is not identical with faith. Faith is the only *contact* with our Lord. There is a divinely-sacred ease about the life of faith—the ease of certainty, of wealth, of resources, of power not our own; a power greatly larger than the

enemy's, and exercised on 'vantage ground. But while it is so, it is not an easy-going life—the loins must be girt, the lamps burning, and we ourselves as men alert waiting for their Lord.

V. 1. LIBERTY. “Why, it is just doing as you please, and having no one to be master over you.” Give a garden perfect liberty of this kind; take away all control, and let the ground do as it pleases, what is the result? Liberty for the weeds, but no freedom for the flowers. True liberty can only be enjoyed when there is perfect control. “My freedom is Thy grand control.” Look at a ship sailing across the ocean; it bounds forward like a thing of life; it moves easily and freely, a perfect picture of liberty. Take away the control, remove the helmsman, slacken the sails and the sheets, where will be the liberty then? Once the control is removed, the ship is only free to go to the bottom. Let the government of Christ be weakened, let the pierced hand of the Lord Jesus no longer hold the helm, confusion and rebellion will break out, decay and death will ensue; but “of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.” Everything must be in its right element to be free. The bird can only be free in the air, the fish in the sea. The sinner can only find liberty in the love of God through Christ Jesus. We always feel most free when we are “at home”—“at home in His love.” We must be doing what we are intended to do if we want to be free. We must keep in the line of God's will if we want to be free.

VI. 14. Death *to* sin as well as death *for* sin is written on CHRIST'S CROSS. If you want to get the true perspective of life, live near the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Beneath that Cross I learn the hatefulfulness of sin—the vastness of God's love. Beneath that Cross I form my estimate of the Christian life—of what it ought to be—and I judge and condemn the miserable fiasco it often is: the utterly inadequate response given to God. Beneath that Cross I learn to seek only the honour that cometh from God; all else seems perishable dross. Beneath that Cross all the circumstances and things of life range themselves according to their relative importance. Beneath that Cross my heart is bound for aye to Christ. I learn to hate sin—my arm is nerved to fight—my eye to watch. Beneath that Cross I get my inspiration. Beneath that Cross I learn not only salvation, but life. I learn that there can be no other way of escape from the ultimate penalty of sin, unless that Cross is the record of the most stupendous act of injustice in the history of the universe.

## EPHESIANS.

EPHESIANS I. 6. The Holy Spirit has actually coined a word to reveal our exalted condition through faith in the atoning Blood—"highly favoured." The word only occurs in the first chapter of Luke, verse 28.

I. 15. Your FAITH. The most momentous word in the human vocabulary after God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. The link between heaven and earth, unequivocal, unquestioning, and unreserved trust, the foundation and concomitant of power. Faith based on the Word of God (Rom. x. 17). The hearing of faith (Gal. iii. 2). The growth of faith (2 Thess. i. 3). Unfeigned faith (2 Tim. i. 5). The result of faith (Rom. xv. 13; 1 John v. 4, 5).

II. 8. GRACE covers the whole salvation, not only quickened together, but raised, seated (Rom. vi.). How can we continue in sin if saved by grace?

II. 12. Having NO HOPE. Many who are without God buoy themselves up with false hope. It is like an anchor cast out in the sea so deep that it can find no resting-place, or like a rope cast out without having an anchor attached to it. What are the *bounds* of *your* hope? Look ahead! look ahead! (Prov. xiv. 15, xxvii. 12).

II. 17. AFAR OFF. The earth-born crowd, if they think at all of the matter, never dream themselves so darkly, so remotely exiled as they are from the light and glory of God. It is only he who struggles nearer and much nearer who begins at length to perceive the true extent of the distance.

III. 14-19. Loved with a love unchangeable,

from everlasting to everlasting; saved from an abyss of endless woe; raised to a height of ever-increasing blessedness and glory; exempted from every evil, and blessed with every spiritual blessing. Herein are depths unfathomable, heights unutterable, breadths and lengths immeasurably vast, the full realisation of which is beyond our power.

IV. 16. **THE WHOLE BODY.** First Israel, then Israel and Gentiles—now members. We are joined together, but whether we are fitly joined together depends much on ourselves (Exod. xxvi. 5-11, xxviii. 31, 32, xxxvii. 22; 1 Cor. i. 13). What is urgently enforced in Scripture is that the union of Christians should be *visible*. For this our Saviour prayed, and He prayed for it as a requisite to the conversion of the world. It is in vain to reply that His followers are now, and ever have been, one as members of that one Body of which He is the glorified Head. This is *known* only to the Church in Heaven, and *understood* only by the Church on earth, whereas the world must *see* it.

IV. 32. "TENDER-HEARTED." Tenderness is one of the graces that are grown far on in the Beulah land, near to the Kingdom.

V. 1. **TOP-LINE CHRISTIANS.** Theories, however beautiful and true, are cold, and make but little impression. They must first be translated into the facts of human experience.

V. 18. "Be filled with the Spirit." A positive command—emptied before filled. God's filling is no mystic afflatus. (1) It is for *conflict*, for endurance (Luke iv. 1), victory by the Word. It needs the Hand of God Himself to wield this grand weapon of the Word. It is too heavy for your poor, weak hand. (2) Being filled, they began to *speak* (Acts ii.) It is not poetry, not eloquence, not argument, nor close reasoning, nor is it culture or pleading beautifully, but something better than all these, and which includes all these. (3) To *see* (Acts vii. 55). Holy visions of God. (4) *For business* (Acts vi. 3). There is no one like the Holy Ghost to do business with and succeed. Look at Müller. (5) To *sing* (Ephes. v. 19). Ah! but you say you have no voice. Here is a Voice for you—the Voice of the Spirit—and though your natural voice may be called husky to the end, and even those who love you best cannot call it sweet, it shall be music heard in Heaven, which God would hush the angels to hear. This is why there is so little good music heard in church, because it is not inspired by the Holy Ghost. If you want good music, here is the source of it. Note the infinite variety of a man who is played upon by the Holy Ghost. And, best of all "melody in your heart," to think of the Lord listening at the door of your poor heart to the melody going on within. (6) *To sweeten life into fruit*. Fruit is the overflow of the sap in the tree mingled with the overflow of the sunshine from above (Gal. v. 22, 23). Go in for the whole. Get the whole bunch down, and carry the whole on the old stick of dead self.

Being filled is no dreamy, sentimental thing; it ripens every grape in every Christian, as the sunlight mellows the fruit till it is fit for the Master's table. (7) *To discern and sympathise with the grace of God* (Acts xi. 23, 24). These are the men we want, who can give out mercy to others, because they themselves are living upon the charity of God. A man soon runs out of charity, if it is not his own yearly income but only an occasional gift. (8) *To be able to separate the true from the false* (Acts xiii. 9, 10). It is an awful, strange, mysterious power. It keeps a man very humble to be able to discover Satan thus.

## PHILIPPIANS.

PHILIPPIANS I. 1. "Bond slaves of Jesus Christ." A slave has no responsibility beyond what he is told; he has *all* found.

I. 23. "To be WITH CHRIST, which is very far better" (R.V.). This makes the Christian long to mount the narrow staircase of the grave that leads out of this uncertain twilight into the serene mansions of the life-eternal. To *preach* Christ is good, to *live* Christ is better, to *be with* Christ is best.

III. 8. "I count all things but loss." When the sun dawns upon us we blow out the candle,

put the rushlights aside, and embrace the Living Christ.

III. 10. Come along, my brother and sister, and you and I will travel down till we have fellowship with HIS SUFFERINGS, and join with Him in sacrifice for the salvation of mankind. "The Cross of Christ condemned me to become a saint," so said a poor Bechuana. There can be no Easter without a Good Friday. Gal. vi. 17.—This deep gash over the eyebrow? Ah! that was when they stoned me at Lystra. Those furrows on my back? Five times forty stripes, save one. Why do I stoop? and why are my knees so bent? The stocks at Philippi, and long night and days cramped in the shallow hold of that sailing vessel (2 Cor. iv. 10; Mark x. 39). The Cross is the bitter hatred and keen opposition of a wicked world. There are worse bruises than those of a leg or an arm. His Cross you will have daily to carry, not shirking it through base compromise, nor rushing upon it through blind fanaticism and self-conceit, but expecting it and taking it up patiently every day.

IV. 4. "REJOICE in the Lord alway." Outwardly the homeless, persecuted apostle had a hard lot, but a more joyful man did not tread the globe. Never a whimper—never a whine of complaint escaped his lips. A healthy and a holy joy is not an exalted rapture. Neither mind nor body could stand the strain of a continual ecstasy: a strung bow soon loses its tension.

IV. 6. "Let your REQUESTS be made known unto God." This is a command, though it is not generally read as such. Confidence in God is the highest attainment of Christian life. The higher the character the more sensitive the man to the touch of confidence. This helps us a little to understand our Heavenly Father's marvellous sensitiveness to the appeal of faith, and the amazing generosity of His response. *We* love to be trusted. God also loves to be trusted. By entrusting all our cares and vexations to our Heavenly Father, we may minister gladness to Him, while we draw down upon ourselves that generous response which never fails to bless the trustful. The truest economy of time and labour is to be found in prayer. The shortest way to any man's heart is round by Heaven. "Forget not to pay the rent of praise."

IV. 7. PEACE. Peace *with* God by faith (Col. i. 20). Peace *of* God by prayer (Phil. iv. 7). Peace *from* God by obedience (John viii. 29; xiv. 1 and 27). God of peace with us (Phil. iv. 9).

IV. 19. There are no adverse circumstances for the child of God. Every one of His own is surrounded by *the very best* circumstances. We are the children of a King, with a royal endowment; the promise of God to supply all our need. Struggling to have more faith is like a mirror struggling to give a reflection.

## C O L O S S I A N S .

COLOSSIANS I. 4. "ALL THE SAINTS." It is easy to love some; it is impossible to help loving others. This has no merit; but to love those who are as a thorn in one's side, this is Christianity.

I. 11. "Strengthened with ALL MIGHT." All this strength with all might, according to His glorious power, is not needed for martyrdom, for great deeds, or arduous tasks so much as for patience, longsuffering, generous thoughts, and that with joyfulness towards those Christians whom we are naturally inclined to despise—especially those who labour under the delusion that they are highly gifted when it is not so, and whom nothing seems able to convince to the contrary. There are none who require so much patience and forbearance as weak Christians.

I. 12. "Hath MADE us MEET." The Christian is perfect in his *fitness* for it (he will never be more of an heir than he is now), but *not* perfect either in his fitness for its management or enjoyment.

I. 27. "Christ in you, the HOPE OF GLORY." Cf. Phil. iii. 21. He brings the power of a new affection and a new inspiration. How warm the soul becomes when he enters it,

bringing His own fire with Him! What a joy there is in His sweet society and fellowship! Some fertilising guests, who visit our homes for a single evening, leave a benediction in our memories; but if we let our Master sit at our table and converse with us, we shall steadily become more like Him. If there is any fire in the stove, a touch will show it.

I. 29. "STRONG according to His working." This ought to be the epitome of every Christian life—living up to the measure of the power of the Spirit.

III. 1. CATERPILLAR CHRISTIANS. Newness of life (Rom. vi. 4). Like the bright, soft spring, when the hard winter-death has given way, and the buds and flowers are bursting forth all fresh and green. What should we think of a butterfly that never spread its wings in the golden sunshine, but crawled upon the earth in caterpillar fashion. "Since ye, then, are risen," no doubt is expressed in the original. God's order is different from man's—not, "Seek, that ye may become risen," but "*Ye are risen,*" therefore "seek those things which are above."

## I. THESSALONIANS.

FIRST THESSALONIANS. I. 10. "TO WAIT FOR HIS SON from heaven." This hope!

There is no poetry like the calm foreseeing of the glory that shall be. This is the hope of *the Church*, therefore all that is necessary to be known about it will be found *in the epistles written to the Church*. Looking for Christ's return was the position Paul desired a convert at once to take up (1 Thess. i. 9). A good test to find out whether our Lord in His teaching refers to His coming *for* His saints or *with* them, is to see whether the same truth is taught in the epistles. Christ's disciples knew He was to come back to reign on earth, but knew nothing about the Church (John xvi. 12, 13). A great deal of teaching in Matthew xxiv. is not suitable to present circumstances. For instance, it would be no temptation to a child of God at present to hear that Christ had come to any desert place, &c., but to a Jew living at the time of the great tribulation, and having the Gospel of the Kingdom preached to him, it would be, hence the warning. The disciples, when they asked Him at the beginning of Matthew xxiv. about His coming, evidently referred to the Millennial Kingdom (see Acts i. 6), His answer was, "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached to all the world," &c.

Surely if the Church has to pass through the tribulation it would be plainly stated in the Epistles. The Thessalonians thought they were in the day of trouble. Paul warned them by the very thought of *this blessed Hope* not to think so (2 Thess. ii. 2). Evidently the early Christians looked for His coming at any moment. As to a portion of the Church (those that are

watching) being taken and the rest left to pass through the tribulation, Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, who were living in a low, carnal state, instead of warning them of this, tells them they came behind in no gift *waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Cor. i. 7), and in 1 Cor. xv. 23 he gives the real test—*they that are are Christ's at His coming.*

IV. 3. "THE WILL OF GOD." He who is in perfect harmony with the *will* of God is as much in harmony with God Himself as it is possible for any being to be.

IV. 17. TO SERVE CHRIST—to be with Christ—the one here, the other there, fill up the cup of the believer's blessing.

V. 17. "PRAY WITHOUT CEASING." Do we find it hard to breathe? very hard to pray? If so, there must be something wrong with the lungs or the heart.

## II. THESSALONIANS.

SECOND THESSALONIANS. I. 2 (R.V.) "THE DAY OF THE LORD is now present." This is the correct rendering, for it is based on the authority of the three great ancient manuscripts, and it is the reading of every critical Greek text that has ever been published. There was every reason, therefore, why they, the Thessalonian saints should be troubled if the day of the Lord had set in, because it would have proved that "the day of Christ" had come and gone, and

they had not been gathered; thus the meaning of the passage is clear, and its lesson is most solemn: "The day of the Lord" is the day when the Lord will again take the world in hand (see Rev. i.).

III. 12. "That with quietness they WORK," &c. "Be careful to *maintain good works*" (Titus iii. 8-14), or *profess honest occupations*. "Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus ii. 10). "Living epistles known and read of all men" (2 Cor. iii. 2). "Do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. iii. 17).

## I. TIMOTHY.

I. TIMOTHY IV. 16. "Take heed unto thyself and unto THE DOCTRINE." Whenever the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ lives in a man's heart, it is bound to express itself in his life. The fixed pattern of the mould into which the melted metal is poured, determines its after-shape. What doctrine? Sound doctrine, "wholesome words"—words of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. vi. 3). The close connection between personal holiness and revealed truth is seen in the prayer of our Lord for His disciples: "Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth." True holiness is the holiness of truth—

all else is spurious. The greatest teachers have been the gentlest of men; but our gentleness may degenerate into a soft effeminacy, and so we may become unfaithful. Our very dread of being deemed contentious may tempt us to cease contending for the once-delivered faith—therefore, “Take heed unto the doctrine.” Moreover, every believer should hold the mystery of the faith, not for himself alone, but for others, he is steward thereof, and “it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. iv. 2).

VI. 7. “We can carry nothing out”—three times **EMPTY HANDS**. (1) At birth. (2) When we come to Jesus. (3) At death.

It was a striking scene—a gorgeous chamber filled with every luxury that gold could purchase, or heart desire; the tessellated marble pavement bordered with cedar was covered with woven fabrics of costly price; heavy curtains of silken texture hung on the walls; a couch with drapery of purple and fine white linen stood in the centre, and on the bed, the form of a dying man! Little would one think when looking at the thin, white hands, or flushed, worn face, that here was the conqueror of the eastern hemisphere! But a few months before **ALEXANDER THE GREAT** had exclaimed “Oh that there were more worlds to conquer!” and now—now he was the vanquished at last, conquered by King Death. Physicians stand around the couch, with every alleviation their skill can suggest, with every luxury their patient can crave. Listen, he is speaking—“When I am dead,” says the feeble

voice, "carry me forth on my bier, with my hands not wrapped in cere-cloth, but laid outside, so that all may see that they are *empty*." Yes, those hands which once wielded the proudest sceptre in the world—which once held the most victorious sword—which once were filled with silver and gold, which once had power to save, or to sign away life, were now *empty*.

## II. TIMOTHY.

II. TIMOTHY II. 3. The simile of "A SOLDIER" is not used as a beautiful idealism, but to represent the stern reality of fact. Here on earth Christianity is on the battle-field of its trials. We may "enter into rest"—but that does not imply that the enemy will not renew the contest. We conquer in our armour and here on earth at last, we must rest, so far as rest is given us, in our armour. To daring and boldness must be added kindness and courtesy, and readiness to forgive, and gentleness which is not easily provoked. You will find these things very precious wares to carry with you in the long run, in your journey through life. They will make many a stony place smooth; they will lighten many a burden, both on your own shoulders, and those of others, they will win friends for you, as they won for Jonathan the heart and the soul of David (see I. Sam.)

II. 15. "A WORKMAN." Give diligence—buckle to. Men can climb the Matterhorn, or Mont Blanc, and then congratulate themselves on having "done" them—God's Word cannot be

*done*—much patient, persevering, careful and prayerful study needed until we get embued with its spirit.

II. 15. "RIGHTLY DIVIDING the Word of Truth." We must not go to any part of the Bible and tear out a text, regardless of its setting, and drag it forth to give evidence in support of some pet doctrine. "Rightly dividing." (1) As to its peoples, Jews and Gentiles and the Church of God (1 Cor. x. 32). (2) Between law demanding a human righteousness, and Grace bestowing a Divine. (3) Between the new nature and the old. (4) Between the standing of a believer in Christ, and his actual life and walk. (5) Between the Resurrection, Judgment and Advent scenes, and (6) Between the dispensations (1 Cor. iv. 3).

III. 12. "SHALL SUFFER." We are not left in the world to do the best we can for ourselves—all giving up—all taking up our cross means suffering (Acts iv. 22). If we are not prepared to suffer, it is useless to speak of taking up our cross (Matt. xvi. 24; Heb. xiii. 13, &c.)

III. 16. OUR GUIDE. "All Scripture." As the sacerdotal order of the New Covenant has no longer a visible Urim and Thummim, as the Spirit has taken the place of the letter, and the inward of the outward in the New Testament, so also have outward tokens and communications given place to the reign of the Spirit. When a Christian trusts to any external token, he re-

lapses into the weakness and pupilage of the old economy; from the privileges of majority to a state of tutelage. After the outpouring of the Spirit we do not find the Apostles or early Christians seeking for special signs and tokens that they might ascertain God's will; although questions ten times harder and more perplexing than any we have to answer, lay before them.

IV. 5. "FULFIL THY MINISTRY." To-day ministers are classed as professional men, and the ministry considered a profession. One thing at least is certain, that the Apostles never understood anything about the "profession;" their ministry did not mean a social status. No—it meant for them ignominy, pain, poverty, imprisonment and martyrdom. Orations cannot waken corpses to life. God's power alone can affect dead sinners, but it must not be tampered with. If we are willing to become fools for Christ's sake, God will make us wise to win men.

IV. 15. "The time of MY DEPARTURE is at hand." Some of us know what it is to lie by the month on the edge of Eternity, looking in at the chinks of the door. It is no dream but a matter of fact. Some saints have an evident introduction, if not within the gate, yet so near that it stands ajar for them. They peer through the gates of pearl, and some of them even begin to see the King in His beauty.

## PHILEMON.

PHILEMON. Has this letter no message to us? Are we not all GOD'S RUNAWAYS? and can we not see here a dim reflection of that great love which led the Son of God not only to *undertake* to pay, but to *pay to the full* all that was against us? As Onesimus travelled back, often would he wonder what reception he would meet with, and the one thing that gave him confidence was the letter. Are we bringing to God His own letter to us? even Christ Himself. Then we need have no fear. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." If we turn to Col. iv. 7-9, we find the Apostle referring to Onesimus as "a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you." No doubt in that little town the history of Onesimus would be well-known, and but for this introduction from Paul, the Christians might have hesitated to receive a person of so doubtful a character as Onesimus.

## HEBREWS.

HEBREWS. The Christian faith of the new converts was in all its externals a painful and startling contrast to the Jewish system from which they had passed. The Jewish system still stood side by side with THE NEW FAITH, in all its

old magnificence, and its old stability, and its old claim upon their reverence as a Divinely-appointed and commanded system, and over against it stood the new faith, with its apparently mean ritual, with its new observances, with no traditions of antiquity, no appeal to the patriotism or the national sentiments of the people, and surrounded already by circumstances of danger that made it safe to apostatize, and unsafe to remain faithful—everything still was *for* Judaism—everything seemingly *against* Christianity. But! “He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second.”

I. 2. “HEIR OF ALL things.” We, fellow-heirs (Rom. viii. 17; 1 Cor. iii. 22).

I. 3. “UPHOLDING ALL things by the word of His power.” Why then, art thou so sad? Thy best Friend (John xv. 15), is the Lord of Providence—He who owns thee as His Brother (John xx. 17), is Prime Minister of the Universe, and holds the keys of the Divine commissariat. Go to Him with the empty sacks of thy need. He will not only fill them, but fill them freely like Joseph.

II. 5. “The WORLD TO COME.” This earth is but for learning and for training,

Earth’s highest work but such as children do,  
The workmen here their priceless skill are gaining,  
The true life-work is yonder, out of view—  
Which shows this life doth but our life begin,

Is but outside, the porch of the abode—  
And death the going home, the entering-in,  
The stepping forth on the wide world of God.

II. 10. "PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS." Some have watched the slow untwisting of some silver cord, on which the lamp of life hung. They have seen the golden bowl of joy dashed to their feet, and its contents spilt. They have stood by ebbing tides, and drooping gourds, and noon-sunsets; but all this has been necessary to make them the nurses, the physicians, the servants of men. Suffering educates sympathy; it softens the spirit, lightens the touch, hushes the tread; it accustoms the spirit to read from afar the symptoms of an unbroken grief. It gives a depth, a wealth, a delicacy to the spirit, of which it cannot otherwise possess itself.

II. 14. THE DEATH OF DEATH. It is a growing opinion among thoughtful men that the moment of death when the spirit passes from its earthly tabernacle, is probably the most painless and happy moment of its whole earthly story. There is the instinctive fear—the fear of its mystery—its leave-taking. Long habit endears the homeliest lot and the roughest comrades—how much more the true-hearted and congenial, and it is hard to part from them. If only we could all go together, there would be nothing in it. But this separate dropping-off, this departing one by one, this drift from the anchorage alone! who can deny that it is a lonesome thing. Men dread

the "*after* death." Had Christ not died, it might have been affirmed that, in one place at least, death and sin, chaos and darkness were supreme.

"IT BEHOVED HIM"—and like another Samson, carrying the gates of his prison-house, He came forth, demonstrating for ever that light is stronger than darkness, salvation than sin, life than death. But He could only have died by becoming man. By death, Christ destroyed "him than had the power of death." Calvary was the knell of his doom. It sealed his destiny. By death Christ delivers from the fear of death. A child was in the habit of playing in a large and beautiful garden, with sunny lawns; but there was one part of it, a long and winding path, down which he never ventured—he dreaded to go near it, because some silly nurse had told him that ogres and goblins dwelt within its darksome gloom. At last his eldest brother heard of his fear, and after playing with him one day, went with him to the embowered entrance of the grove, and leaving him there terror-stricken, went singing through its length, and returned and reasoned with the child, proving his fears were groundless. Then he took the lad's hand and they went through it together, and from that moment the fear that had haunted the place fled, and the memory of that brother's presence took its place. So has Jesus done for us. Fear not the mystery of death. Jesus has died and has shown us that, for the Believer, it is the gateway into another life, more fair and blessed than this—a life in

which human words are understood—and human faces smile—and human affections linger still. The forty days of His resurrection-life have solved many of the problems, and illumined most of the mystery. Fear not the loneliness of death—fear not the after-death. Our bodies lie down exhausted with the long working-day, to awake in the fresh energy of the eternal morning. But in the meanwhile the spirit is presented “faultless in His presence with exceeding joy.”

III. 8. THE WILDERNESS. Never did a nation occupy a prouder position than the Children of Israel, on the morning when they stood victorious on the shores of the Red Sea. The cavalry of Egypt had sunk as lead in the mighty waters of death. Behind—Egypt left for ever. Above, the fleecy cloud, chariot of God, symbol of His presence. Before, the land of promise. Many a man was already dreaming of vineyards and olive-yards and homes, within two or three months of easy march. But of those 600,000 men, flushed with victory and hope, two only were destined to enter the land flowing with milk and honey, and these not until forty weary years had slowly passed away. How dreary that heavy death-rate! How sad those constant sounds of oriental grief ringing through the camp! What wonder that Psalm xc., written among such scenes is so inexpressibly sad.

How many Christians are in the wilderness! Life passes away amid fret and chafing, disappointment and weariness of existence; all these, when we have not learned God's secret, will keep

us on the weary tramp over the sands as arid and exhausting as those trodden by the hosts of Israel.

III. 12. The cause—not in head, but in heart—AN EVIL HEART of *unbelief*. Hearts harden *gradually*, as the freezing of a pond in a frosty night—an almost unperceived process. Hearts harden through the deceitfulness of sin. Entreat God to run His ploughshare through any cake of hardness which may have commenced to form.

IV. The key-note of this chapter is *rest*. In verse 2, it is spoken of as a Gospel—and is there any Gospel that more needs preaching in these busy, weary days, through which our age is rushing to its close, than the GOSPEL OF REST! And yet it is not that we work so much harder than our forefathers, but that there is so much fret and chafe and worry in our lives. Competition is closer, population is more crowded, brains are keener and swifter in their motion. And the age seems so merciless and selfish. If the lonely spirit trips and falls, it is trodden down in the great onward rush, or left behind to its fate; and the dread of the swoop of the vultures, with rustling wings from unknown heights, upon us as their prey, fills us with an anguish which we know by the familiar name of care. We could better stand the strain of work, if only we had rest from worry and from anxiety, and from the fret of the troubled sea that cannot rest as it moans around us, with its yeasty waves, hungry

to devour. Is such a rest possible? this chapter says it is possible. "Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest." Rest? what rest? "His rest," says the 1st verse. "My rest," 3rd verse. "God's rest," 4th verse. And this last is a quotation from the earliest page of the Bible. If we turn to Genesis we find that whereas we are expressly told of the evening and morning of each of the other days of creation, there is no reference to the dawn or close of GOD'S REST-DAY; and we are left to infer that it is impervious to time, independent of duration, unlimited and eternal.

Better than all, we are invited to enter into it and share it, as a child living by the placid waters of a vast freshwater lake, may dip into them its cup, and drink and drink again, without making any appreciable diminution of its volume, or ripple on its expanse. *His* is not the rest of weariness. "He fainteth not, neither is weary." Not the rest of inactivity. "My Father worketh hitherto." It is the rest of Divine complacency, of infinite satisfaction, of perfect content. This, then, is the rest we are invited to share. This rest is holding out both its hands to the weary souls of men throughout the ages, offering its shelter as a harbour from the storms of life. The Sabbath did not realize that rest. Canaan did not realize it. In the Psalms written 400 years after Joshua, the Holy Spirit points onward to a rest still future (Ps. xcv. 11).

*Jesus has entered it FOR US.* He lay in the grave on the seventh day, not because He was

exhausted or inactive, but *because redemption was finished*. Let us then cease from our own *works*, no longer feeling as though we had ought to do by our tears, or prayers or works, to make ourselves acceptable to God. Let us cease from our *cares*—"for He careth for us." He has not left us, being saved to spend our days in a respectable workhouse. Household cares, family cares, business cares, cares about servants, children, money; crushing cares and cares that buzz about the soul like a swarm of gnats on a summer day. What rest can there be for a soul thus beset? When we acquire the holy habit of talking to Him about all, and handing over all to Him, at the moment that the tiniest shadow is cast upon the soul; when we accept insult and annoyance and interruption, coming to us from any quarter whatever, as being *His* permission, and therefore, as part of His dear will for us; then we have learned the secret of the Gospel of *Rest*.

IV. 15. "TOUCHED." That sympathetic heart is the metropolis to which each affluent nerve carries an immediate thrill from the meanest and remotest members of His body, bringing at once in return the very help and power that are required.

V. 7, 8. OBEDIENCE. As man, He submitted with perfect simplicity to every movement of His Father's will. But during the last few months the pathway had been getting ever more and more difficult. And now—but there was no other way. In the furnace of that trial which *so*

tested His obedience, it shone out in unequalled majesty, beauty and tenacity, and there was given to men and angels the example of an obedience which is unparalleled in the universe. As man, Jesus never knew how much obedience meant till then.

VI. 1. "LEAVING the principles." There is no thought here of deserting them. As the child leaves the multiplication-table—but which lies at the root of all future study. As the plant leaves the root—as the builder leaves the foundation, that he may carry up stone on stone, and leans on the foundation most heavily when he has left it at the farthest distance below him.

VI. 4. The apostate disciples had been "ENLIGHTENED," not *converted*. They had stood in the midst of the Gospel's meridian light, and had been enlightened. They had "TASTED"—so we may have some pleasure in thoughts of Christ—His sufferings touch—His beauty attracts—His history moves and inspires—but it is only a taste and we may yet fall away. They had been made "PARTAKERS." It does not mean regenerated, filled with the Holy Spirit. The expression is a very peculiar one, and because *the writer could not affirm these things of them*, and yet desired to shew that they had been brought under His gracious influences, &c., &c., but they were in peril of going back.

VI. 6. To "FALL AWAY" is to go back from the outward profession of Christianity—not

temporarily, but finally; not as the result of some sudden sin, but because the first outward stimulus is exhausted, and there is no true life beating at the heart.

“IMPOSSIBLE.” Notice, there is nothing said here of what God can do. The only question is as to the limits of human power, and the ordinary methods of influencing human wills.

VII. These chapters need to be read under a deep sense of sin to be properly understood and appreciated. Christ's PRIESTHOOD not inherited—continual. Our High Priest shall never ascend Mount Hor to be stripped of His robes of office and die. The secrets confided to Him need never be told again to a successor. The tender love that links Him to us shall never be snapped in death. No one else will ever be called in to take His place in the superintendence of our souls. If He lives and continues His work, it is arrogant and blasphemous folly to intrude upon His functions.

VIII. 2. The TRUE TABERNACLE. Moses, Samuel, David, etc., were trained in the system of which the Tabernacle was the focus and heart. We cannot fail to examine it with holy reverence. Sometimes in a *shadow*, we may see details of workmanship which otherwise in the substance we might have missed. The truths of the Gospel are eternal realities. The Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, the granite of eternal fact. We may need to be

taught them in yet higher methods of Divine communication. The true worshipper is one of a great festal throng which is filling the spiritual Temple. The true pattern of our life is suggested to us. Would that we could spend longer periods with God in the mount, getting His pattern, the pattern of our life-work.

VIII. 6. "BETTER COVENANT." There are no injunctions to "observe and do" as in the other, they are all "I wills"—God's own guarantees. The third "I will" ver. 12, is a provision altogether peculiar to the New Covenant.

X. 14. Let us never seek for confirmation of God's Word in ourselves before believing it. We must take it on His trustworthiness. SANCTIFICATION is the working out *in* me of what was true *of* me the very moment I believed.

XI. 1. "FAITH." Do you want a greater faith? Consider the promises which are its native food. Faith greatens men. Faith puts against the weariness of the way—the golden crown. None of these men would have lived the noble lives they did, had it not been for the recompence of the reward, and the gleams of the golden city, amid the sorrows and straits of their lives. The very same faith which brings me to the foot of the cross for the pardon of my sins, leads me to understand that this world "was not made of things which do appear." I cannot understand it, but I accept it unhesitatingly on

the word of Him who cannot lie. My confidence in the Lord Jesus as my Saviour, and my faith that God called into being this world, and all that therein is, are of the same character, for they rest on trust in God. It is important to notice this, for it is with a Creator—God that we have to do. You cannot believe in the turning of water into wine? Do you believe that God made the world out of nothing? If you do not, you do not believe in the God of the Bible. “We commit the keeping of our souls unto Him in well-doing, as unto A FAITHFUL CREATOR.”

ABEL, ENOCH, NOAH. Sixteen centuries these three names alone make illustrious. The first man of the antediluvian age died a martyr's death, the last floated above a dead and drowned world shut in by God.

ABEL. Justification by faith.

ENOCH. Sanctification by faith.

NOAH. Salvation by faith.

ABEL represents Christ's death.

ENOCH. “Christ's ascension.”

NOAH. “Christ-coming to judge.”

XI. 6. “HE IS.” You know what it is to be in the same room with a person: you believe that person can see you, that when you speak to him, he can hear you; and when you ask him anything, if you believe him to speak the truth, you attend to what *he says*, and never think about what *you feel*. We say we believe in God, but if we cannot believe that the God to whom

we pray can see and hear us, what better is He to us than the gods of the heathen? Until we believe in Him thus, we do not believe that "*He is.*" "Pleasing God." Is that possible here? What saith the Scripture? Heb. xi. 56. This chapter is the Westminster Abbey of the Bible.

XI. 27. "He endured as seeing Him WHO IS INVISIBLE." How little would things temporal move us, if we looked at unseen, even eternal things. Are we too much distressed when those in whom we have confided, seem to disappoint us? We are losing sight of the union between ourselves and Christ, which if seen and felt, would carry us on rejoicing through a host of trials.

XII. 1. "WHEREFORE." This connects the exhortation following with the long list of illustrations given in ch. xi. There we read of those who "laid aside every weight," who "ran with patience," who looked forward unto Jesus. These characteristics are to be found combined with action in almost every example there brought before us. "Things not seen as yet" were the things which influenced their lives. They were "persuaded" of the promises, and "embraced" them. *We* have the promise of the *second* coming of Christ. This is the "thing not seen as yet," which is to influence our lives.

XII. 5. CHASTISEMENT. All chastisement has a purpose. *There is nothing so* absolutely crushing in sorrow, as to feel oneself drifting at the mercy of some chance wave, sweep-

ing forward to an unknown shore. All chastisement is proportioned and suitable. That is not the loftiest type of character, which, like the Chinese pictures, has no background of shadow. Sometimes the affliction is for fuller revelation—as in the case of Martha and Mary, He let the thunder-cloud break on the home He loved—“NEVERTHELESS AFTERWARD” (verses 10, 11), hundred-fold blessing from each moment of pain. The Psalms are crystalized tears. The epistles were, in many cases, written in prison. The greatest teachers of mankind have learned their most helpful lessons in sorrow’s school. The noblest characters have been forged in a furnace.

XII. 18-22. SINAI and ZION. What a change to the Jew from the pomp of symbol, ceremonial and choral psalm, to the poor, afflicted, despised and few members of a contemptible new sect, with none of those things to which is due the reverence of age. “YE ARE COME”—he refuses to admit the thought of its being altogether a future experience, reserved for some high day when the Heavenly courts shall be thronged by the population of redeemed and glorified spirits—the true City of God, of which the foundations are righteousness, the walls peace—the gates praise—which rises beyond the mists and clouds of time, in the light that shines not from the sun or moon, but from the face of God. Into it nothing can enter that defiles, or works abomination, and deals in lies. To that City we have come—it has come down into our hearts;

day by day we walk its streets, we live in its light, we breathe its atmosphere, we enjoy its rights.

XIII. 8. "JESUS CHRIST THE SAME YESTERDAY, and TO-DAY and FOR EVER." The yesterday of Gethsemane and Calvary. The to-day of salvation and blessing, the to-morrow of eternal ages. He died for us yesterday, is with us to-day, and is coming to-morrow.

## J A M E S .

JAMES II. 23. The FRIEND OF GOD. No friendship without faith—the more confidence, the more intense the friendship.

V. 1, etc. "Ye RICH MEN." The canker at the core of the church is extravagant living—and when so many of God's people aspire to live and cut a figure in Vanity Fair, what can be expected of the rest of mankind? There are astronomical observations which, I believe, cannot be taken in this country—there is too much vibration, and the skies are too much stained with smoke. Alas! there are Heavenly signs and warnings and entreaties which the Church fails to hear! It is too busy, perhaps too greedy. There is the Gospel of contentment, the gospel which Christ preached in His first sermon, and in the whole sermon of His life. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon"—therefore let the

anxiety for mammon go, that ye may serve God. Who, of the hurried, anxious, eager ones that fill our streets and market-places, really believe this? How utterly lost and dead, trampled under foot in the hard pavements of our cities are such sweet messages as these that God hath sent to us. "Be ye free from the love of money, content with such things as ye have, for, etc. (Heb. xiii. 5, R.V.) That is the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the very teeth of the man-made Gospel of this 19th century.

## I. P E T E R .

I. PETER I. 3, 4. THE INHERITANCE. "I am thy part and thine inheritance" (Num. xviii. 20). He could well dispense with olive-yards and vineyards, the cornfields and the homesteads of Palestine. The Psalmist eagerly caught at the thought (Ps. xvi. 5, 6; xvii. 14, 15). "HEIRS OF GOD." Not the golden harps—not the sea of glass mingled with fire—not rest from pain and immunity from sorrow—not the blessed society of Heaven—from all these apart from God, we should at last turn away dissatisfied.

I. 4. The qualities of this inheritance. "INCORRUPTIBLE and UNDEFILED." No marble without its flaw. No flower without its freckle. No fruit without its blight. No face without its blemish. No day without regret.

No heart without sin—but this inheritance how pure, unfading! Up, friends, you are living on a vast estate.

I. 5. **KEPT.** That there will be strife and war and temptation without, and cowering weakness within, seems implied in the word—but “kept” through the fiercest storm of passion that ever swept down upon human heart. It is demanded by the purpose of God—we are “elect unto obedience.” It is demanded by the sacrifice of Christ—able to purchase, can He not keep what He has acquired? It is demanded by the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit.

I. 6. **“IN HEAVINESS** through manifold temptation.” Like laurel-leaves pressed to the earth by the weight of the snow storm. They say that springs of sweet, fresh water well up amid the brine of salt seas; that the fairest Alpine flowers bloom in the wildest mountain-passes; that the noblest of Psalms were the outcome of the profoundest agony of soul. In every furnace there is One like the Son of Man. The marble wastes—the image grows—each loss is gain.

I. 13. **“SET YOUR HOPE** perfectly.” Go fearlessly as far as hope can go. Let her sit at her easel, painting her fairest pictures, or sing rapturously her most ecstatic lay, she cannot be disappointed.

I. 14. **“OBEDIENT.”** Obedience is not holiness; holiness is the possession of the soul

by God—but holiness always leads to obedience. There is only one way of becoming holy as God is. We are holy up to the measure in which we are God-possessed. The holiest man is he who yields himself most completely to be influenced, swayed, possessed, inspired by that Spirit who longs to make us to the fullest extent partakers of the Divine nature.

I. 22. FERVENTLY “on the stretch.” It is much easier to be on the stretch for ourselves, than to seek the good of others with the same eager earnestness. The efficient cause of such love? It will come through obeying the truth. We should have thought by knowing each other better—by constant association in Christian work—but the true lens by which hearts are made to glow is “*The truth.*”

II. 1-3. “NEW-BORN BABES.” The metaphor is a very touching one. This world is but the nursery in which the heirs of God are spending the first lisping years of their existence, preparatory to the opening of life to full maturity yonder in the light of God. The child’s cry will compel the service of the strongest man. And has not God in putting into His creature these qualities—pourtrayed Himself?

III. 20. Five points of similarity between the present days and the days of Noah. (1) Depravity of man. (2) Coming judgment. (3) God’s long-suffering and provision. (4) Few saved. (5) Day of grace ended.

IV. 3-7. The curse of our time is that Satan has counterfeited so much of Christianity and has sought to hide a Godless civilization under the vaneer of Christian terms.

IV. 8. FERVENT CHARITY. (1) We are not required to form a false judgment of people. (2) We are not required to abjure all words of reproach, or methods of punishment. There is a soft, weak, reckless kind of feeling abroad, which is always saying pretty nothings, and scattering rose-water on open sewers—but which does not dare to be stern and severe and true to righteousness. This is not Christian love (1 Tim. iv. 2; Gal. vi. 1). There is nothing so wholesome, so salutary, so strong as Christian love.

V. 7. CASTING ALL YOUR CARE. We dare not, cannot cast the burden if it is one born of self-indulgence. We cannot cast care, if we still continue to create it. CAST. Burdens will not drop away like the avalanche at the breath of the wind—they will not lower themselves—they must be cast.

## I I . P E T E R .

II. PETER I. I. PRECIOUS FAITH. A traveller over the desert, who was nearly perishing with hunger, came upon a spot where a company had lately encamped. Searching about for some article of food, he found a small bag which he hoped might be a bag of dates—opening it, he discovered that it contained shells and

silver coins. Throwing it down in bitter disappointment he exclaimed "Alas! it is *nothing but money!*" A single date or fig would have been more to him than a chest full of gold. Faith drives the nail which fastens me to Jesus and then love clinches it; faith ties the knot and true love makes it tighter and stronger every hour!

I. 5. ADD TO YOUR FAITH. See that your faith (in these promises), is always associated with manly energy (or vigour), and then that your courage (virtue), be duly informed by evangelical principles (knowledge). Again, take heed that your knowledge (of the Gospel) be not abused to licentiousness, but rather be united with self-command and temperance. Nor must this control of the appetites spring from a haughty and fanatical temper, but must consist with humility and submission. Yet let not your humility be stoical. Then remember that your piety is not to be unsocial, but fraught with brotherly affection; and lastly, that your love towards your fellow-Christians is not to be sectarian, but expansive, and that it is to spring from the principle of universal love.

I. 11. ABUNDANT ENTRANCE. The thought that underlies these expressions in the Greek is richly significant. They denote the welcome given by choral songs and joyous greetings to the Conqueror, who, laden with spoils, returns to his native city.

## I. JOHN.

I. JOHN. Threefold purpose of St. John's epistle. (1) That your joy may be full (1 Jno. i. 4). (2) That ye sin not (1 Jno. ii. 1). (3) That ye may know that ye have eternal life (1 Jno. v. 13).

I. 7. "CLEANSETH"—marks a continuous process, and therefore a continuous need. And that process is not "keeping clean," but cleansing, a widely different matter. Whether the cleansing is propitiatory or internal, there is something to be cleansed away, or the cleansing would cease.

III. 1. "SONS OF GOD"—born children by regeneration. "The world knoweth us not." It is not every eye sees an oak in an acorn, or a saint's halo encircling a poor man's head.

III. 2. "We shall be LIKE HIM." Our resurrection bodies will take the impress of the first glorious object beheld with resurrection eyes. That object will be the Lord Jesus Christ, and His glory will leave an impression on the memory that will last while eternal ages roll. The very pool in the street will flash back the rays of Heaven if they but fall upon it.

IV. 17. "As He is, so are we." As He is—we *hope* to be—we *long* to be—we would *die* to

be, but it seems an unreality to say we *are*. Christian men and women are unfinished sketches; but God sees the perfect Christ in each of them.

V. 13. "YE MAY KNOW." Is this how you read I John. v. 13—"These happy feelings have I given you," etc.? We do not want a poor rushlight to enable us to see that the sun is shining. All we want is to stand in the sunshine, and we shall be convinced that the sun shines. Suppose that three men are going along, one after another. The first is Mr. *Fact*, he walks along with a bold, undeniable step, no one can stand against him, he is a stubborn fellow. Next to him follows Mr. *Faith*, looking at Mr. *Fact* with admiration—and next to him is Mr. *Feeling*, he always follows Mr. *Faith*. But suppose Mr. *Faith* turns round and looks at Mr. *Feeling*—where is Mr. *Fact*? *Faith* cannot see him at all.

## J U D E .

JUDE 3. "The faith which was once (for all) delivered unto the saints." No words could be stronger or more clear to describe an IMPERIAL STANDARD OF TRUTH, set up once for all and unalterable, to which men should come back in all ages afterwards, to test and adjust their own measurements of truth.

24. "Able to KEEP . . . present FAULTLESS." Some visitors were down in a coal mine. On the side of the gangway, grew a plant, it was perfectly white. They were astonished that amid the coal-dust this little plant should be so pure and white. A miner, who was with them took a handful of black dust, and threw it upon the plant, but not a particle adhered. The visitors repeated the experiment, but the coal-dust would not cling. If He can keep that herb. can He not keep my heart?

## R E V E L A T I O N .

REVELATION. A peculiarity of the Revelation is that though it is a book of judgment, the Greek word for "THE LAMB," which occurs about 27 times is a diminutive and is not used elsewhere. yet the "little Lamb" is seen to crush all the power of earth and Hell in His grasp.

I. 4, 5. The SALUTATION seems to fix the dispensational place of the Book as future. It is not the Father, but Jehovah, not the Lord Jesus Christ, but "Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness;" the Prince of the Kings of the earth. And the Book speaks from a time when the Holy Spirit *as a Person*, will again be in Heaven to join in the salutation, which He never does in the Epistles of the New Testament.

I. 10. THE LORD'S DAY. We can conceive of no reason why it should be important to record that John had this revelation on any particular day of the week, and it is a gratuitous assumption to suppose that the Lord's Day here means our Sunday. This day in the New Testament is invariably called "the first day of the week" (Matt. xxviii. 1; Mark xvi. 2-9; Luke xxiv. 1; Jno. xx. 1-19; Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2. It was not called the Lord's Day till long after this, and then the practice arose from a misunderstanding of Rev. i. 10. The use of the adjective

brings it into greater and better apposition with man's day (1 Cor. iv. 3). Had the two nouns been used, the emphasis would have been on the word *Lord*, but with the adjective the emphasis is on *day*, characterized by the Lord's presence and action. This is also the case in the only other place where the adjective is used (1 Cor. xi. 20). "The Lord's Supper."

I. 17. "He laid HIS RIGHT HAND upon me." It is very wonderful to recall the way in which, during His earthly life, He seemed to be watching for opportunities of coming into close contact with the sinners He had come to save. On every possible occasion He was claiming identity with them, making every need a means of *using* the nearness which He had descended from Heaven to win, and was going to retain for ever by His death. The place of death is the place where His touch reaches us (Mark. i. 41).

II. 13. ANTIPAS—my witness, my faithful one. Like a ship emerging for a moment out of the darkness, mirrored in the golden pathway of moonlight, and then disappearing again into the darkness. Not mentioned in history, not noted for any great achievement, only a witness, a faithful one, and of such the world takes all too little note—but they know a good deal in Heaven about those who are totally unknown on earth. Jesus delights in unknown ones—faithful ones.

III. 10. 11. HOLD FAST. Not one single word of discouragement from Him in all the Book.

He says to you in His own reassuring tones, "Hold fast." "There is a crown for you." He wants you to win it bravely, to wear it by and by in its undimmed glory. His ability is our stability.

III. 20. "Behold, I stand AT THE DOOR and knock." We can either say, "Come in," "Wait a moment," or "Go away." Stop not to prepare the house, or you will never let Him in. He will set the house in order, and expel all company not compatible with His own presence. Beware! Christ gives last knocks.

V. Two questions seemingly. Who is worthy to foreknow the judgments? Who is worthy to take control of the judgments? (1) So the question comes. WHO IS WORTHY? "The Lion of the tribe of Judah." If so, then He is the Son of Man, but also, "the root of David." Then He is the Son of God, as the root is before the fruit. He who sealed the testimony of God's love of man and hatred of sin, with His own blood, to Him can be committed the testimony of the judgment. He can be trusted with it because His heart is so one with God. He will tell it at the right time, and in the right manner, and to the right persons. It is not God's way to tell things indiscriminately to every one. (2) Who is worthy to pronounce judgment? "The Lamb as it had been slain." He who knows all the merits of the case, whose righteousness is beyond all question, whose judgment cannot be bought. Nay, He who has stood in the condemned one's place, who

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has borne the condemned one's lot; He who has done all that could be done to save the one to be condemned from condemnation.

The fact that He is the only One who bears the mark of sin in Heaven, and that He will bear it, a remembrance of the awful anguish of that moment when His soul pure and shrinking, came into contact with sin—throughout Eternity, *most endears Him to me.*

V. 9. This NEW SONG will embalm the memory of Calvary.

XXII. 6-21. AMEN. John had to wait for His Lord—with him patience had her perfect work, and there is chastened submission as well as holy zeal in the outburst which closes this wondrous Book, "Come, Lord Jesus."