



SYNOPSIS OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

JOHN NELSON DARBY

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**SYNOPSIS OF
THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE**

**BY
JOHN NELSON DARBY**

1857-1862

Synopsis of the Books of the Bible By John Nelson Darby.

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GENESIS

Introduction to Genesis

Genesis has a character of its own; and, as the beginning of the Holy Book, presents to us all the great elementary principles which find their development in the history of the relationships of God with man, which is recorded in the following books. The germ of each of these principles will be found here, unless we except the law. There was however a law given to Adam in his innocence; and Hagar, we know, prefigures at least Sinai. There is scarce anything afterwards accomplished of which the expression is not found in this book in one form or another. There is found also in it, though the sad history of man's fall be there, a freshness in the relationship of men with God, which is scarce met with afterwards in men accustomed to abuse it and to live in a society full of itself. But whether it be the creation, man and his fall, sin, the power of Satan, the promises, the call of God, His judgment of the world, redemption, the covenants, the separation of the people of God, their condition of strangers on the earth, the resurrection, the establishment of Israel in the land of Canaan, the blessing of the nations, the seed of promise, the exaltation of a rejected Lord to the throne of the world, all are found here in fact or in figure-in figure, now that we have the key, even the church itself.

Genesis Chapter 1

Genesis 1:1

Let us examine then the contents of this book in order. First, we have the creation creation in which man is found placed on earth as centre and head. We have first the work of God, and then the rest of God: at the close of His work, rest from labour, without presenting the idea that any one participated in it. God Himself rested from His work. Man comes in to take his place then in happiness at its head.

But here some brief general remarks deserve a place. This revelation from God is not a history by Him of all that He has done, but what has been given

to man for his profit, the truth as to what he has to say to. Its object is to communicate to man all that regards his own relationship with God. In connection with the second Adam he will know as he is known; and already, by means of the work of Christ, he has that unction of the Holy One by which he knows all things. But historically the revelation is partial. It communicates what is for the conscience and spiritual affections of man. The created world therefore is taken up as it subsists before the eyes of man, and he in the midst of it, and in so bringing it forward Genesis gives God's work as the author of it. What is here said is true of the whole Bible. Here it is evident in this, that nothing is said of the creation, but what places man in the position which God had made for him in the creation itself, or presents to him this sphere of his existence as being the work of God. Thus no mention is made of any heavenly beings. Nothing is said of their creation. We find them as soon as they are in relationship with men; although afterwards, as a truth, it is fully recognised of course that they are so created.

Thus also, as regards this earth, except the fact of its creation, nothing is said of it beyond what relates to the present form of it. The fact is stated that God created all things, all man sees, all the material universe. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." What may have taken place between that time and the moment when the earth (for it only is then spoken of) was without form and void, is left in entire obscurity. Darkness was then upon the face of the deep, but the darkness is only spoken of as resting on the face of the deep.

From out of this state of chaos and darkness in which the earth then lay God brought it, first introducing light into it by His word, and then formed seas and dry land, and furnished it with plants and living creatures. In this earth, thus prepared and furnished, man, made after the image of God, is placed as lord of all that was in it. Its fruits are given him for food; and God rests from His work, and distinguishes with His blessing the day which saw His labours closed. Man enjoyed the fruit of God's work rather than entered into the rest; for in nothing had he taken part in the work.

The first four days, God brings light and order out of darkness and confusion: light, the first day; the expanse as a scene of heavenly power

over the earth, the second day; then He divided what was formed and orderly, on the one hand, from the moving powerful but shapeless mass of waters, on the other, and then ornamented the ordered habitable scene with beauty and fruitfulness on the third. The symbols of directing power were set visibly in their places on the fourth.

The scene of man's display and dominion was formed, but man was not yet there. But before He formed man, God created living energies of every kind in the seas, and earth, and air, which, instinct with life, should propagate and multiply, the proof of God's life giving power, that to matter He could communicate living energy; and thus, not only a scene was formed, where His purposes in man should be displayed, but that existence, which man should rule so as to display his energies and rights according to the will of God, and as holding his place as vicegerent over the earth, apart and distinct from all, the centre of all, the ruler of all, as interested in them as his; living in his own sphere of blessedness according to his nature, and as to others, ordering all in blessing and subjection. In the midst of all the prepared creation, in a word, man is set.

But this was not all. He was not to spring out of matter by the mere will of God, as the beasts, by that power which calls things that are not as though they were, and they are. God formed man out of the dust, and when formed breathed from Himself into his nostrils the breath of life, and thus man became a living soul in immediate connection with God Himself. As the apostle states elsewhere, we also are His offspring. It is not said "Let the earth bring forth"; but "Let us make." And He made man in His likeness, created him indeed to multiply as the other living creatures, but gave him dominion over them, and made him the centre and head of God's creation on the earth. The seeds of the fruitful earth were given to him, the green herb and its increase to the beasts. Death and violence were not yet. [See Note #1]

We shall see, in chapter 2, another immensely important principle brought out as to man, when the question of his relationship to God is brought forward. Here his creation is a distinct one from all else; he is presented simply, apart from every other thought, as God's workmanship as a creature, the head and centre of the rest, the ruler over them all. But this we

may remark: while he represents God and is like Him we have nothing of righteousness and holiness here. This came in by redemption and the partaking of the divine nature. There was of course the absence of evil, and so far the likeness of God; but ignorance of it, not what God is in respect of it. It is much more here the place man holds, than his nature, though the absence of evil, and the spring of condescending affections as the centre of being, must have been found there, had he not fallen. These last are more the likeness, his place more the image. He was the central authority of all things, and all things referred to him as their head. All authority and all affections were related to him as their centre and head, and no sin, sorrow, or evil, or insubordinate self-seeking was there. Unfallen moral order would have been his delight.

The first three Verses of chapter 2 (Gen 2:1-3) belong to the first chapter. It is the rest of God, He ceasing from His own works, all very good.

Note #1

Nothing can be more marked than the distinction of man of that being in whom the purposes of God also were to be fulfilled; His delights were with the sons of men, His good pleasure in (not merely good will towards) men proved by His blessed Son becoming a man. Here no doubt it is the responsible man, but the difference from all other creatures is marked as strongly as possible. The sixth day's creation finishes with the usual formula, "And God saw that it was good" (Gen 1:25), before man is spoken of. Then comes a solemn consultation to give him a special place, and the image and likeness of God are introduced by God as that after which He creates him. And it is repeated, "so God created man in his own image." I must say, to make a mere animal of him is monstrous and slights this passage, the emphatic declaration of God. As an order of being, he is evidently the counterpart of the ways of God, though this be only fully accomplished in Christ according to Psalm 8 which just brings this out: compare Rom 5:14 and Hebrews 2.

Genesis Chapter 2

In chapter 2 we have man's relationship with God, and his own portion as such. Hence the LORD [See Note #1] God is introduced: not merely God as a

creator, but God in relationship with those He has created. Hence we have the special manner of man's creation.

Only a word or two is called for as to the garden. It was a place of delights. Eden means pleasure. It has wholly disappeared, and it was meant that it should; only we find, by two at least of the rivers, that it was on this earth substantially as we have it. Jehovah Elohim had formed the man, Jehovah Elohim had planted the garden. The river of God to water the earth had its rise there. The fresh springs of God are found in the place of His delight. Man was set there to dress and keep it. Man and the earth are both now in ruin.

But we have in this chapter, more particularly, the special relationship of man with God, with his wife (type of Christ and His church), with the creation; and the two great principles, from which everything flows as regards man, established in the garden where man was placed in blessing; namely, responsibility in obedience, and a sovereign source of life the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. In these two things, in conciliating these two, lies the lot of every man [See Note #2]. It is impossible out of Christ. It is the question raised in the law, and answered in grace in Christ. The law put life as the result of the perfect obedience of him who knew good and evil, that is, made it depend on the result of our responsibility. Christ, having undergone the consequence of man's having failed, becomes (in the power of a life which had gained the victory over death which was the consequence of that disobedience) a source of life eternal that evil could not reach, and that in a righteousness perfect according to a work which has taken away all guilt from him that has share in it, a righteousness moreover in which we stand before God according to His own mind and righteous will and nature, according to His own glory. His priesthood [See Note #3] applies to the details of the development of this life in the midst of evil, and the place of divine perfectness in which we are set by His work, and reconciles our present infirmities with our divinely given place before God. In the garden the knowledge of good and evil did not yet exist: obedience only in refraining from an act, which was no sin if it had not been forbidden, constituted the test. It was not a prohibition of sin as at Sinai, and a claim of good when good and evil were known.

The condition of man, in contrast with every other creature here below, found its source in this, that, instead of springing from the earth or water by the sole word of God, as a living being, man was formed and fashioned from the dust, and God places him in immediate relationship, as a living being, with Himself; inasmuch as he becomes a living being through God Himself's breathing into his nostrils the breath of life.

All animated creatures are called living souls, and said to have the breath of life; but God did not breathe into the nostrils of any in order to their becoming living souls. Man was, by his existence, in immediate relationship with God, as deriving his life immediately from Himself; hence he is called in Acts 17 the offspring of God, and in Luke it is said "the [son] of Adam the [son] of God."

It is important to consider this chapter as laying down, in a special manner, all the principles of the relationship of man, whether with God, with his wife, or with the inferior creation. Here were all things in their own order as creatures of God in connection with the earth; but man's labour not the means of their growth and fruitfulness. Nor did rain from heaven minister fruitfulness from above. The mist that watered it rose from the earth, drawn up by power and blessing, but not coming down. Yet man was, as to his place, in a peculiar one in reference to God. Man did not dwell in heaven; God did not dwell on earth. But God had formed a place of peculiar blessing and delight for man's habitation, and there He visited him. Out of this garden, where he was placed by the hand of God as sovereign of the world, flowed rivers which watered and characterised the world without. Upon Adam reposed the duty of obedience. The image of God upon earth, in the absence of evil from his nature, and as the centre of a vast system around him and in connection with him, his own proper blessing was in his immediate connection and intercourse with God, according to the place he was set in.

As soon as God had redeemed a people, He dwelt among them. His abiding presence is the consequence of redemption and through it only (Exo 29:46). Here He created, blessed, and visited. Adam, created the conscious centre of all around him, had his blessing and security in dependence on and

intercourse with God. This, as we shall see, he forfeited, and became the craving centre of his own wishes and ambition, which he could never satisfy.

Earthly nature then in its perfection, with man, in relationship with God by creation and the breath of life that was in him, for its centre; enjoyment; a source of abiding life, and a means of putting responsibility to the test; the sources of universal refreshment to the world without; and if continuing in his created condition, blessed intercourse with God on this ground such was the position of the first and innocent Adam. That he might not be alone here, but have a companion, fellowship, and the enjoyment of affection, God formed not another man, for then the one were not a centre but out of the one man himself, his wife, that the union might be the most absolute and intimate possible, and Adam head and centre of all. He receives her, moreover, from the hand of God Himself. Such was nature around man: what God always owns, and man never sins against with impunity, though sin has spoiled it all; the picture of what Christ, the church, and the universe shall be at the end in power in the obedient man. As yet all was innocence, unconscious of evil.

Note #1

That is Jehovah Elohim, a personal name as well as Godhead. It was important too that Israel should know that their God was the original Creator of all. Still it is only used when special ways and connection with man are introduced. The distinction of Jehovistic and Elohistic documents is the merest child's play, and flows from entire ignorance of the ways and mind of God. There is always a reason for one or the other. Elohim is simply God; Jehovah is the acting governing person in time though self-existing, who abides ever the same and having to do with others, who is, and was, and is to come.

Note #2

In Eden the two principles were there, obedience and life; man failed, incurred death, and was excluded from life there. The law did not treat man as lost, though it proves him so, but takes up the two principles and makes life dependent on obedience. Christ takes the consequence of failure for us

on the cross, and is the source of divine life to us, and that in a new resurrection state.

Note #3

The difference between priesthood and advocacy will be treated in its place in John and Hebrews. I only remark here that priesthood refers to help and access to God, advocacy to failure.

Genesis Chapter 3

In chapter 3 we find what, alas! has always happened, and happened immediately when God has set up anything in the hands of responsible man disobedience and failure. So it was in Adam, so in Noah, so in Israel with the golden calf, so in the priesthood with strange fire, so in Solomon son of David, and Nebuchadnezzar. So indeed in the church, Jo1 2:18-19 and Jude. It was always the first thing when what was set up was trusted to man. All is set up again in Christ, the Man of God's purpose. The subtlety of the hidden enemy of our souls is now at work. The first effect is the distrust of God which he inspires; then lusts and disobedience; utter dishonour done to God, whether as regards His truth or His love; the power of natural affections over man; the consciousness of being naked and powerless; effort to hide it from oneself [See Note #1]; terror of God seeking to hide from Him; self-justification, which seeks to cast upon another, and even upon God, that of which we have been guilty. After that, we have, not the blessing or restoration of man, or promises made to him, but the judgment pronounced upon the serpent, and, in that, the promise made to the second Adam, the victorious Man, but who in grace has His birthplace where the weakness and the fall were. It is the Seed of the woman who bruises the serpent's head.

Remark too how complete was the fall and separation from God. God had fully blessed; Satan suggests that God keeps back the best gift out of envy, lest man should be like Him. Man trusts Satan for kindness rather than God, whom he judges according to Satan's lie. He believes Satan instead of God, when he tells him he should not die, as God said he should, and casts off the God who had blessed him, to gratify his lusts. Not trusting God, he uses his own will to seek happiness by, as a surer way, as men do now.

We see in Philippians 2 how completely the Lord Jesus glorified God in all these points, acting in a way exactly opposite to Adam. We may remark too that Adam did it to exalt himself, to be as God, as a robbery; while Christ, when He was in the divine glory, emptied Himself to be like man, and was obedient, not disobedient, unto death. Remark, too, how the hiding of sin from self is gone when God comes in. Adam, who had covered his nakedness, speaks of it when God is there as much as if he had done nothing to cover it. And so it is with all our efforts to make out what shall hide our sin, or make out righteousness. Moreover man flies from God before ever God drives him in righteousness from His presence and blessing. The knowledge of good and evil in a state of disobedience makes us afraid of God, and must have a divine work and righteousness to cover it. Remark farther, what is of great importance, Adam had no promise: there is none to the first Adam; no restoration of the first man, no way back to the tree of life; all is in the Second, the woman's Seed. In judging Satan He and His victory are promised.

What follows is the present result as to the government of God; the temporal sentence pronounced on Adam and his wife, until death, under the power of which he was fallen, seized him. There was a sign however of deeper mercies. Life is recognised as still there though death had come in: Eve is the mother of all living; a faith, it would seem, real, though obscure, at any rate, ours. But there is yet more. Before they are driven out, and shut out from all return back to the tree of life according to nature, God clothes them with a garment which covers their nakedness, a garment which had its origin in death (the death of another), which had come in, but which hid the effects of the sin that had introduced it. Man was no longer naked. So, though out from God's presence in nature, we have not yet indeed the serpent's head bruised, though this is sure to be accomplished; the prince of this world is judged (though he be it still), and we know it by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, when Christ, whom the world led by Satan slew, was seated at God's right hand; but if that be not yet accomplished, we are before God clothed with the clothing which He has put upon us, that best robe. It is not now a promise or a figure, but an accomplished work a work of God. God has made our coat; the world may mock at such a thought, we know what it means. But he is justly driven out of the garden, an outcast

from paradise and God, and hindered from partaking of the tree of life, that he may not perpetuate here below a life of disaster and of misery. The way of the tree of life was henceforth inaccessible to man [See Note #2], according to nature, as the creature of God. There is no return to the paradise of man in innocence. Adam, already in sin and far from God, is the parent of a race in the same condition as himself [See Note #3].

Note #1

He made fig leaves to cover his nakedness as to human shame, but when God came in he was as naked as ever. 'I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, and went and hid myself, for I was naked.' The fig leaves were man's covering. God clothed them with skins which were had through death.

Note #2

The cherubim I believe always to represent judicial government and power.

Note #3

Whatever Eve's own condition as believing promise, what she says at the birth of Cain was the expression of the thought that the fulfilment of promise was in nature, which could not be. Sin was there and death, and the judgment of the hope of promise connected with nature come in. "I have gotten a man from Jehovah" was faith in promise, but expectation of the accomplishment of promise in nature. And Cain had to go out from the presence of Jehovah.

Genesis Chapter 4

But grace could work. The grace of a God above the evil of man, and Abel approaches Him by faith. Hereon follows the separation of the families of God and of the enemy, of the world and of faith. Abel comes as guilty, and, unable as he is to draw near to God, setting the death of another between himself and God, recognises the judgment of sin has faith in expiation. Cain, labouring honestly outwardly where God had set him to do so, externally a worshipper of the true God, has not the conscience of sin; he brings as an offering the fruits which are signs of the curse, proof of the complete

blinding of the heart, and hardening of the conscience of a sinful race driven out from God. He supposes that all is well; why should not God receive him? There is no sense of sin and ruin. Thus is brought in sin, not only against God which Adam had fully wrought, but against one's neighbour, as it has been displayed in the case of Jesus; and Cain himself is a striking type of the state of the Jews.

In these two chapters we have sin in all its forms, as a picture set before us, in Adam's and Cain's conduct sin in its proper original character against God, and then more particularly against Christ (in figure) in the conduct of Cain, with its present consequences set forth as regards the earth. We may remark, in both Adam's and Cain's case, how the government of God on the earth is set in prominence as to the effects of sin. Separation from God of a being capable of, and naturally formed for, intercourse with Him, is there, but left rather for the moral weighing of the soul. The publicly revealed judgment is that of consequences on earth. It is clearly said no doubt, "He drove out the man" with whom He was to have held intercourse (chap. 3); and "from thy face," says Cain, "am I driven out" (chap. 4). But what is developed is the earthly condition. Adam is shut out from a peaceful and unlaborious paradise, to labour and till the ground. Cain is cursed from the earth in this very position, and a fugitive and a vagabond; but he will be as happy there as he can, and frustrate God's judgment as far as he can, and settle himself in comfort in the earth as his, where God had made him a vagabond [See Note #1]; and that is the world. Here it is first pictured in its true character.

Remark also the two solemn questions of God: "Where art thou?" man's own state apart from God intercourse with Him lost; and, "What hast thou done?" sin committed in that state; of which the consummation and full witness is in the rejection and death of the Lord.

In the history of Lamech we have on man's part, self-will in lust (he had two wives), and vengeance in self-defence; but, I apprehend, an intimation in God's judgment, that as Cain was the preserved though punished Jew, his posterity at the end, before the heir was raised up and men called on Jehovah in the earth, would be sevenfold watched over of God. Lamech acknowledges he had slain to his hurt, but shall be avenged.

In the second chapter then we have man in the order of created blessing, the state in which he is; in the third, man's fall from God, by which his intercourse with God on this ground is foreclosed; in the fourth, his wickedness in connection with grace in the evil state resulting from his fall; what the world thereupon became; man being driven out from the presence of Him who accepted by sacrifice in grace, and ordering its comforts and pleasures without God, yet borne with; and a remnant preserved, and the heir of God's counsels, Seth, set up, and men calling on the name of God in relationship with them, that is, on Jehovah. Driven from the presence of God, Cain seeks, in the importance of his family, in the arts and the enjoyments of life, temporal consolation, and tries to render the world, where God had sent him forth as a vagabond, a settled abode and as agreeable as possible, far from God. Sin has here the character of forgetfulness of all that had passed in the history of man; of hatred against grace and against him who was the object and vessel of it; of pride and indifference; and then despair, which seeks comfort in worldliness. We have also the man of grace (Abel, type of Christ and of them that are His) rejected, and left without heritage here below; man, his enemy, judged and abandoned to himself; and another (Seth) the object of the counsels of God, who becomes heir of the world on the part of God. We must remember however that they are only figures of these things, and that in the antitype the Man who is heir of all is the same as He who has been put to death.

Note #1

Nod is "vagabond." God had made him Nod; and he settles himself, calls "the land after his own name," or at least his son's name, as an inheritance, and embellishes his city with arts and the delights of music a remarkable picture.

Genesis Chapter 5

In chapter 5 we have the family of God upon the earth, subject to death, but depositary of the counsels and of the testimony of God. Here we may remark Enoch, who has his portion in heaven, and who bears witness to the world of the coming of Jesus in judgment, but is himself taken up there before it; and Noah, on the other hand, warned for himself, preaching

righteousness and judgment, and passing through the judgments to begin a new world figures of the church and the Jews in connection with Christ's coming.

Genesis Chapter 6

The following commentary covers Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

Finally we find power and force here below, the result, of the sons of God not keeping their first estate, of apostasy; and God executes judgment instead of any longer pleading with men by the testimony of His Spirit in grace, which has its allotted term. The obedience of faith is the security of the warned remnant; but the principle of degeneracy worked on in spite of the testimony, and worked on the accomplishment of the testimony it despised. Man grew worse and worse, and God's creation was utterly defiled and filled with violence, the two universal characters of active will out of God. As regards man, it was now brought out, when he was left to himself (for before the flood, save gracious testimony, he was so left), that every thought of his heart was only evil continually. God creates and destroys; He calls and repents not. Creation was utterly corrupted, and God destroys it wherever the breath of life is. The testimony of these things is gone out everywhere among the heathen. We have here the exact though brief account of them, so far as needed to shew what man was and is, and God's ways with him.

In the midst of the ruin and judgment God points out the way of salvation through the judgment. The remnant taught of God profit by it. The flood is brought upon the world of the ungodly. Up to this, though the seed of the woman had been promised, sacrifice brought in, and testimony given, there were no special dealings of God with man. It was man walking before God in wickedness, no calling out, no law, no judgment. The world, man, was judged (save Noah and his family) and its deeds were hidden under an overwhelming flood. The judgment of God is accomplished; but He remembers His mercy.

Genesis Chapter 9

In chapter 9 begins the history of the new earth. God blesses the earth more than before; and the answer to the sweet savour of the sacrifice assures the world that a universal deluge will never recur. God makes a covenant [See Note #1] with the creation to this effect. Government is established in the hand of man, and death begins to furnish him with nourishment. It does not appear to me that, before this, there had been either government or idolatry. There had been sin against God, violence without restraint against one another, and corruption; the two perpetual characters of sin, amongst men, and even in Satan as far as may be [See Note #2]. God cared for His creation in mercy; but with Noah new principles were brought out. The sacrifice of Christ (in figure) becomes a ground of dealing with the earth, not alone of accepting man, as in Abel; and on this a covenant is founded. That is, God binds Himself in grace, so that faith has a sure ground to go upon, that on which it can count.

Another very important principle introduced was the second referred to government in the hand of man. Covenant was sure, for God is faithful when He binds Himself. Government was entrusted to the hands of men. Alas! this new trial soon has the same result as before. The government confided to Noah loses immediately its honour. The earth, under mercy, relieved (as Lamech had announced) by agricultural care, becomes in its fruits a snare to Noah, who becomes intoxicated, and his own son dishonours him; on whose race consequently the curse falls. This is given in view of the people opposed to Israel, the centre of God's earthly government, and of the relationship of God with that family.

In these chapters then we have the old earth closed and the new begun on new principles. This lasts till the judgment by fire. Man's failure in the old world is set forth, and God's judgment thereon, in Adam and Cain. Now the special judgment and the special blessing in connection with Israel begins to shew itself, for we are yet on the earth here. The historical course of Noah's family is brought out in connection with these two points, the blessing and the curse in Shem and Ham. This is God's survey of the new world, in its three heads Shem, Ham, and Japheth, in a brief declaration of what characterised their position in the earth. Its whole history is stated in a few words. How mighty in everything is the word! He who knows all can state all

briefly and surely. We begin afresh with chapter 10 with the generation or history of Noah's sons. We have thus the establishment of the new earth and its whole general prophetic history, as this earth, in the first account of Noah, and God's communications with him; Shem being owned as the root of God's family in it, allied to the name of Jehovah, with special judgment on Canaan, whose place, we know, Israel took.

Note #1

Covenant, when used in connection with the Lord, is always, it seems to me, some order established by God and announced to man, according to the terms of which He enters into relationship with man, or according to which man is to approach Him.

Note #2

There are three characters of sin violence, falsehood and corruption. The two first are directly ascribed to Satan; alas, man follows him in them, the third is more properly man's. All three are noticed in Col 3:5-9. In fact we get these three characters at the close the false prophet, the beast, and Babylon.

Genesis Chapter 10

The following commentary covers Chapters 10 and 11.

Chapters 10, 11 give us the history of the world as peopled and established after the deluge, and the ways of men in this new world; the great platform of all the development of the human race as peopling this world after the flood, and the principles and judgments on which it is founded. Chapter 10 gives the facts, chapter 11 how it came about in judgment, for chapters 10 and 11 are not to be taken as chronologically consequent; for the division into nations and tongues was consequent on the attempt at unity in human pride in Babel; and then, lastly, we have the family Jehovah owned, to trace the descent in it to the vessel of promise: together with God's orderings of the world. The posterity of Noah is given by families and nations (a new thing in the earth), out of which, from the race of Ham, arises the first power which rules by its own force and founds an empire; for that which is according to flesh comes first. We have then, that the moral history of the

world may be known as well as the external form it assumed, the universal association of men to exalt themselves against God, and make to themselves a name independently of Him [See Note #1], an effort stamped on God's part with the name of Babel (confusion), and which ends in judgment and in the dispersion of the race, thenceforth jealous of and hostile to one another [See Note #2]. Lastly we have the genealogy of the race by which God was pleased to name Himself; for God is Jehovah [See Note #3], the God of Shem.

The importance of these chapters will be felt. The preceding chapters gave us, after the creation, the great original principles of man's ruin, closing with judgment, in which the old world found its close. Here we have the history of our present world, and, as seen in Genesis (which uncovers the roots of all that was to be for the revelation of God's thoughts and the display of His government), in its great principles and original sources, which imprint their character on the results, till another judgment from God Himself obliterates all but its responsibility, and gives room for another and a better world.

The result of this history is that the world is set out by families. The fashion of this world has obliterated the memory and the perception of this, but not the power. It is rooted in the judgment of God, and, when the acquired force of this world becomes weak, will be evermore apparent, as it now really works. The fountain heads were three, first named in the order, Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: the first being the family in which the covenant was to be established on earth, and with which God was to be in relationship; then he who was in hostility with God's family; and last, though eldest and proudest, the Gentile Japheth.

In the detail Japheth is given first. The isles of the Gentiles in general, that is, the countries with which we are familiar, and much of northern Asia, were peopled by his descendants. But the great moral questions, and power of good and evil in the world, arose elsewhere, and the evil now (for it was man's day) before the good.

The East, as we call it, Palestine, down the Euphrates, Egypt, &c., was in the hands of Ham. There power first establishes itself by the will of one in Nimrod. A mighty hunter force and craft works to bring untamed man, as

well as beast, under his yoke. And cities arise; but Babel was the beginning of his kingdom; others he went out and built, or conquered. Then come the well-known Egyptians, Mizraim. Another branch of this family is marked as forming the races in possession of the inheritance destined of God for His people.

Shem comes last, the father of Hebrews, the brother of him who has long despised him, as possessed of an elder brother's title. Such is the general result in the peopling of the world under God's ordering.

The way was this. Man sought to make a centre for himself. Adam, living in the earth, would have been so, and its link with God; as Christ will be hereafter, and ever was in the purpose of God, for Adam was the image of Him that was to come. But will has none but itself. Noah, whose influence would have been just, has no place in the whole history (after his worship), save that he lost the place of authority by falling into sin, in the loss of self-restraint [See Note #4]. Will characterised all now; but in a multitude of wills, all impotent as centres, what can be done? A common centre and interest is sought independent and exclusive of God. They were to fill the earth; but scattered in peaceful quietness, to be of no importance, they would not. They must get a name for themselves to be a centre. And God scatters into nations by judgment what would not fill the earth by families in peace. Tongues and nations must be added to families, to designate men on the earth. The judged place becomes the seat of the energetic will of one of the apostate power. The beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel. Tongues were a restraint, and an iron band round men.

In Shem God's history begins. He is Jehovah, the God of Shem. We have dates and epochs, for after all God governs, and the world must follow: man belongs to God. Other people's ages were shortened surely besides those here named: here we know when. And when the earth was divided, for God after all disposed of it, men's years lost one-half of what they were, as they had already done immediately after the flood. But of known history God's people have ever been the centre. This comes down to Abraham. And here again a new element of evil had become universal, at least practically so idolatry (Jos 24:2), though it had not been the subject hitherto. It is man in

the world; and in Shem, the secret providential ordering of things by God. Still it ended in the power of evil, even in the family of Shem.

We have seen the wickedness and violence of man, his rebellion against God, and Satan's craft to bring him into this state: but here an immense step is made, an astonishing condition of evil appears on the scene. Satan thrusts himself, to man's mind, into the place of power, and seizes the idea of God in man's mind, placing himself between God and him, so that men worship demons as God. When it began, scripture does not say; but the passage cited shews that it had contaminated even Shem's family, in the part of it too which scripture itself counts up as God's genealogy in the earth at the time we have arrived at. Individuals might be pious; but in every sense the link of the world with God was gone. They had given themselves up, even in the family which as a race was in relationship with God, to the worship and power of Satan. What a tale all tells of man! What a tale of the patience of God!

Here therefore we change entirely the whole system and order of thought; and a principle, in exercise without doubt from the beginning as to individual salvation, but not manifested in the order of things, declares itself, and comes into evidence in the history of the earth. Abraham is called, chosen, and made personally the depository of the promises. But remark that here, in order that this great principle may be preserved in its own purity as an act of God, the occasion given in the fact we have referred to is not mentioned. We find it in Joshua 24. God comes down, after judgment, in sovereign grace to have a family of His own by the calling of grace an immense principle.

But it is well to dwell a moment on what was really a most important epoch in the history of God's ways with the world, where the proper history of faith begins, though of course there were believers individually before. But as Adam was the head of the ruined race, so Abraham was the father of the faithful, the head of the race of God on the earth, both after the flesh and after the Spirit. Christ the fulness of all blessing we know, in whom we have far higher blessings than those revealed in Abraham. Still in God's ways upon the earth Abraham was the head of the accepted race. Idolatry, as we have seen, had at this time gained a footing in the family of Shem himself. "Your

fathers," says Joshua (Jos 24:2), "dwelt in old time beyond the flood, Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods." Now these gods were demons (Co1 10:20; it is a citation of Deu 32:17). That is (now that God had interfered in judgment [See Note #5] and in power), these demons had possessed themselves of this position in the spirit of man, and taken the place in his mind of the sources of the authority displayed and of blessing still bestowed. They presented themselves to him as authors of those judgments, of all which drew forth the worship, the gratitude, and the terror of the natural heart of corrupted man, expressed in his worship according to the principles on which he was, on which he alone could be, in relationship with those superior beings, to whom he attributed the power to answer his desires or to avert the things which he feared. It was not merely man corrupted and in rebellion against God, it was his religion itself which corrupted him; and he made of his corruption a religion. The demons had taken the place of God in his mind, and having the ascendancy over his conscience, if man did not forget it, hardened or misled it. He was religiously bad; and there is no degradation like that. What a state! What folly! How long, O Lord?

But if the human race plunge thus into darkness, taking demons for their god, and, incapable of self-sustainment, substitute for their own rebellion against God servitude to what is more elevated in rebellion, placing themselves in miserable dependence upon it, God raises and lifts us up above all this evil, and by His calling introduces us into His own thoughts thoughts far more precious than the restoration of what was fallen. He separates a people to hopes which suit the majesty and the love of Him who calls them, and places them in a position of proximity to Himself, which the blessing of the world under His government would never have given them. He is their God. He communicates with them in a way which is in accordance with this intimacy; and we hear speak, for the first time, of faith (Gen 15:6), based on these communications and these direct testimonies of God, though it may have operated from the beginning.

Note #1

The idea of a building high enough to escape the flood is an idea of which there is not the smallest trace in this passage. It was the pride of man

seeking a centre and a name without God, and coalescing together. The rise of imperial power and dominion came after this, in which individual will and energy gained the ascendancy. They are two phases of human effort without God.

Note #2

Pentecost was a beautiful testimony: God rose there above the confusion and judgment, and found, even in its effects, the means of getting near the heart of man; so that grace overruled judgment, even when it was not exercised in the power which regenerates the world.

Note #3

All in chapter 9 is simply Elohim, God, till we get to Verse 26 (Gen 9:26), where it is Jehovah, the God of Shem.

Note #4

This is a striking fact in the character of the history of man after the flood. We get the full plain statement of what he became.

Note #5

In the deluge. It does not seem that idolatry had crept in before.

Genesis Chapter 12

From chapter 12 then there is developed altogether a new order of events, which refer to the call of God, to His covenants, to His promises, to the manifestation of His people as a distinct people on the earth, to the counsels of God. Before the deluge, it was man such as he was fallen before God; and though there was a testimony from the beginning, still no dispensational intervention of God in His own ways, but man, with that testimony as to divine institutions [See Note #1], left to himself, resulting in such violence and corruption as brought on the deluge in judgment on the world. Afterwards, God having interposed in judgment and begun the world that now is, there was the government of that world and its failure and the consequences of this failure; but, the nations being established and having submitted themselves to the power of demons, the call of God, the deposit

of promise in him who was chosen of God, His elect ones (seed of the depositary of the promises), and subsequently His people, rise up to our view.

Hence we find them at once called upon to separate themselves entirely from all that connected them with their position in nature on the earth, and to belong to God on the ground of promise and confidence in His word. "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." This was a solemn event. It was in principle the judgment of the world, though in the way of grace to those called out if it.

That we may fully understand this, we must remember that the world had been constituted by the judgment of God passed upon the enterprise of building the tower. Countries and nations had been formed, as it is to this day. That was the world. Satan had full hold of it, and the very world which God had providentially formed Abram had to leave. God would have a family, a people for Himself, not of it, though out of it. Another fact adds to Abram's importance. There had been saints individually, known and unknown, but no head of a race since Adam. Adam fallen was the head of a fallen race. Abram was called to be the root of the tree of promise, of God's people natural or spiritual. He was the father of the circumcision, and of all them that believe.

In the outset however, Abram still held to his family; or at least, if it held to him, he did not break with it; and though he quitted his country on the call of God, he stops as far from the land of promise as before. For, thus called, man must belong wholly to God on a new principle. In fine, he sets out as God had said to him.

We have then here Abram called by the manifestation of the glory of God (compare Acts 7) for the journey of faith. The promises are given to him, whether of a numerous posterity, or of the blessing of all the families on the earth in him [See Note #2]. He sets out, he arrives. There are not many experiences, though there will be deeper knowledge of God, in a path which is purely of faith: power is there, and man walks with God. In the history of Jacob we have many. Arrived in Canaan, Abraham enters into possession of

nothing, for his life must still be of faith. And here we see, by comparing this passage with Hebrews 11, the effect of being left as pilgrims and strangers on the earth, not yet in possession of what is promised. Abraham goes in the obedience of faith to the promised land, and there has not so much as to set foot upon; but in virtue of this as God, though He could prove, could not leave faith without an answer; nor, indeed, where tried, without leading it on to the knowledge of further blessing, for He never does he has before him the city which hath foundations, and the yet better country. The energy of faith through grace put him in a position which, as it was not possession, necessarily set him in connection with higher and better things; for he was under the personal calling of God for blessing: so, practically, we are come into the body and heavenly things below. But there is the path of faith not possession and the heavenly scene opens before us. Abraham in Ur could not see the heavenly portion; a stranger in the land of promise, it was his natural object under grace. Such is our own case. Only Abraham rises above his calling; we enter by the Spirit into what we are called to.

But then there is a second revelation of the Lord to him in the land, in the place into which he had been called. The first was to call him out of the place he was in, and make him walk in the path of promise. Now the Lord reveals Himself to him for communion, where he is; speaks with him; unfolds to him how the promise will be accomplished, and Abraham thereon worships Him. He has in the land his tent and his altar. This is the second part of the life of faith. The revelation of God, when far from Him, sets us out on the journey of faith, inspires the walk toward heaven. When in the heavenly position, God reveals Himself for communion and worship and a full revelation of His ways. The Canaanite is in the land; the heir of promise has no possession of the thing promised. We have to do with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, but the Lord reveals Himself, shews the heir and inheritance when the Canaanite will be gone; and so Abram worships by faith, as before he walked by faith. This is the full double function of faith.

The rest of the chapter is the history of his personal want of it. Pressed by circumstances, he does not consult God, finds himself in the presence of the world, where he has sought help and refuge, and denies his true relationship with his wife (just as has been done in respect of the church), is cherished by

the world, which God at last judges, sending Abram again out from it. During this period, and until he was returned to the place from which he started, he had no altar. When he left Egypt and returned to his strangership in Canaan, he had what he had before. But he must return first to the same place and find his altar again. What a warning for Christians as to the relationship of the church with Christ [See Note #3]! And, however the world may be a help for the church, this relationship cannot be maintained when we seek that help. I would again recall here a remark made elsewhere, that in types the woman presents the position in which those prefigured are placed; the man, the conduct, faithful or unfaithful, of those that are there. [See Note #1] Sacrifice may be called an institution of God perhaps, but it was individual. There was no establishment of a people who were God's upon earth.

Note #2

This last promise is repeated only in chapter 22, during Abraham's history, and then to the seed alone; the promise of his posterity and of the land to him and to his seed is often repeated. It is to this promise given to Abram in chapter 12 and confirmed to the seed in chapter 26, that the apostle refers in Galatians. The earthly seed, on the contrary, was to be numerous. The translation of Gal 3:16, should be, "now to Abraham were the promises made, and to his seed." And in the following verse, not in Christ but to Christ. He was the seed of promise.

Note #3

There may be a certain typical reference to Israel while in the world and away from God. But these things happened unto them for ensamples (tupoi) and are written for our admonition on whom the ends of the world are come. Abraham was away from his altar at Bethel.

Genesis Chapter 13

The following commentary covers Chapters 13 and 14.

After this (chap. 13) we have, in the conduct of Abram and Lot, the disinterestedness and self-renunciation of true faith on the one hand, and, on the other, him, who, though a believer, had, as regards the walk of faith, only followed that of another, and was now put to the test by circumstances

which arise: and this, remark, is when they have together left their unbelieving connection with the world as an outward refuge. Lot had done so with Abram, but his inward heart and will clung to the ease of it. Abram had returned in spirit genuinely, perhaps with a deeper experience, to his pilgrim portion in Canaan. Yet the advantages he possessed in it led to the difficulty, for treasure here is not heaven, even if the possessor of it be heavenly-minded: an important lesson. Still Abram behaves beautifully. Lot chooses the world, fair in appearance, not as Egypt, the world as such, but as self-ease, and what did not seem, was not outwardly, separated from, Canaan; but which was soon after the scene and object of what did not appear the sure judgments of God. The renunciation of a present portion down here, and of self in it, by Abram, is the occasion for him of a much clearer knowledge of the extent, and a still firmer assurance of the certainty, of the promise. It is when he gives up all to Lot as he might choose it, that the Lord says to Abram to look north, south, east, west, from where he was, adding he would give it to him and to his seed for ever. In a word, we have the believer acting in the spirit of the heavenly calling the faithful believer, and the worldly-minded believer.

Abram maintains now his own proper portion; he dwells in Canaan, goes here and there as a pilgrim with his tent, and builds his altar. All this was the path of the heavenly man; his characteristic portion here, a pilgrim and a worshipper. Lot had lifted up his eyes, moved by his own will and lust, and sees the plain of Jordan well watered: why should he not enjoy it? God makes Abram lift up his, and shews him all the extent of the promise, and with the promise tells him to walk through it all, to realise, in his experience and knowledge, all the extent of the promise made. The scene soon changes. What is linked with the world must suffer its vicissitudes. Nor can the godly man, though ensnared oft, be content with its evil. Lot (Pe2 2:7-8) suffers from the iniquity by which he is surrounded, and undergoes the ravages of the power of the world, of which Abram is victor, and of which he will receive nothing to enrich himself. Such are the just discipline and faithful ways of God. Nor was it yet all.

These last circumstances are the occasion of the manifestation of the kingly Priest, King of righteousness, and King of peace; that is, Christ, millennial

King of the world, blessing victorious Abram, and, on Abram's behalf, the Most High God, who had delivered his enemies into his hand.

In this picture, then, we have the final triumph of the Lord and the family of faith over the power of the world, realised in spirit by the church (and finally in glory) for a heavenly hope and association with Christ; and literally by the Jews on the earth, for whom Christ will be Melchisedec priest in full accomplished position; Priest on His throne, Mediator in this character, blessing them, and blessing God for them; God Himself then taking, fully and indeed, the character of possessor of heaven and earth. The Most High God is His proper millennial name; Almighty with the patriarchs, Jehovah with Israel, and Most High for the millennium. The discussion of where the Most High is found, in connection with the promises to Abraham and the Messiah, is beautifully brought out in Psalm 91, and Jehovah the God of the Jews is recognised as He who is. It is a kind of dialogue. These are connected with the earth. Our place, and the divine name we are in relationship with God by, are outside all these and properly heavenly. It is the Son who has revealed the Father, and now the Holy Ghost, who gives us the consciousness of sonship, and shews a man, the heavenly Christ, at the Father's right hand in glory, when He had by Himself accomplished the purification of our sins.

But the contrast of the heavenly-minded who do not settle on the earth, and of those who do, with the world's power over the latter, and the entire victory of the former over the power of the world, and then Christ's reign, King and Priest, and God's taking all into His hand by Him, are clearly and wonderfully brought out [See Note #1] [See Note #1] This closes the general history of these great elements of God's ways. Heavenly things are, no doubt, out of sight, save we look behind the scene, where Abram's faith went. Still the path of faith, the snare of the world, the moral victory of unselfish faith, which has God and His promises for its portion, and its actual final victory, and God's possession of heaven and earth under the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ, Priest on His throne, are fully brought out, and the whole scene completed This makes chapters 12-14 a section by itself.

Genesis Chapter 15

When God had thus revealed Himself, according to His establishment of blessing in power on the earth, through the priestly king Melchisedec, naturally the actual blessing of the chosen people finds its place; and we come down to the actual earthly scene, and in chapter 15 have the detailed instruction of the Lord to Abram, regarding the earthly seed and the land given to him, the whole confirmed by a covenant where God, as light to guide and furnace to try, deigns to bind Himself to the accomplishment of the whole. Death makes it sure. Jehovah confirms thus the covenant in going, in grace, through that which bound Him; Abram, heir of the promises, undergoes the terror and shadow of it. It is not here precisely expiation, but what belonged to the confirmation of the promises, by the only thing which could establish them in favour of man a sinner. It is evident that this unfolding of God's ways, and the establishment of the covenant embraces (though the covenant be made in favour of the earthly people) new and important principles. God Himself was Abram's defence and portion. That is the highest portion of all, so far as anything given to man can go. [See Note #1]

But Abram feels yet his connection with the earth as an abiding place in connection with the flesh, and it was indeed God's purpose so to bless him. That is in its nature Jewish, and we have consequently the Jewish portion unfolded. The whole scene descends thus here to earthly hopes, and promises, and covenant, and the land. Abram's mind goes down; for it is going down when God says (on his having refused everything from the world, in view of the world to come as a future hope), 'I am thy reward,' as He had been his shield to say, What wilt thou give me? But the divine word uses it, to unfold on God's part His purposes in this respect, which, as regards the government of this world, are of real importance. I have no heir, says Abram; nothing to continue, by a family tie, the possession of my inheritance on earth, according to promise; for on earth, where men die, there must be succession. And so it was to be. But still, as to the earth, it was to be by dependence on Jehovah, by promise, and by faith. Although connected here with the earth, it was not according to nature: on this footing all was foreclosed against Abram he had no seed. Hence, the seed of faith and promise comes forth not indeed the one seed but the Jews as children of promise. The principle is set forth and faith counted for

righteousness while Abram believed God. Thus, for this world, Israel was the seed of promise, the heir. Then comes covenant as to the land, according to promise made in the call of Abram. The Lord binds Himself to Abram according to death, as we have seen (for indeed it is assured in the death of Christ, without which they could have nothing). This is, as to present fulfilment, connected with the suffering of the people in Egypt, and their subsequent deliverance, when the oppressors of the people and the usurpers of the inheritance would both be judged.

The character of the act by which the covenant was made, we have already noticed. The reader may compare Jer 34:18-19, as to the force of this act. It is not here, moreover, a promise by which Abram is called out by faith, but the assuring the inheritance to his seed by covenant, and here without condition. It is the promise to Israel, the seed of promise, the heir in connection with the earth and flesh. Remark, moreover, that the prolonged sorrow and oppression of God's people the delay of the promised heir is in connection with the patience of God towards those that are to be judged. (Compare Pe2 3:9.) We may remark that the oppressors of Israel are judged for the sake of Israel, the usurpers of his inheritance for him.

Here the laying out of God's plans and purposes closes, even as to the earthly people, and man's ways, and God's ways for their fulfilment, begin to be unfolded with chapter 16 [See Note #2], with the paths of those, or hindrances from those, with whom His people may be connected in any way. These are developed up to chapter 23 when Abraham ceases to be the representative of the stem of promise. Sarah dies, the vessel of the seed of promise, and the risen heir comes into notice as the one whom God sets forth. They that are born after the flesh precede those who are born according to promise. We cannot but remark, what gives so striking a character to the book of Genesis, and such freshness to all that is in it (particularly to what we have gone through hitherto), how all the great principles of man's estate and of God's ways are brought out in it. It is a heading and summary of all man's state and God's ways with him in it not of redemption, though sacrifice and covering of sin be found, nor of its glorious results. Redemption is in Exodus. Man's state and God's ways and fundamental promises are here.

Note #1

The declaration of God in the beginning of chapter 15, is in connection with Abram's refusing to take anything from the world, as related in the end of chapter 14.

Note #2

Chapter 15 stands by itself, between the general principles already treated of and the historical account which follows, but which, though historical, gives great leading principles which, with the exception of Isaac, apply to Israel and the earth. It is the unconditional promise as to Israel, the land, and the covenant. In the subsequent chapters, however, we find the promised seed.

Genesis Chapter 16

Abram seeking, at Sarah's instigation, to anticipate the will of God and the accomplishment of the promise in its time, we have the covenant of the law in Hagar, the source of distress and disquietude. God, however, takes care of the seed according to the flesh. The application of this as a figure is clear from Galatians 4. The pride of man under the law is marked in Hagar's spirit, yet her son cannot be heir. The haste of man, who will not wait God's time, will not wait on Him as to means of accomplishment (so was it with Jacob for the blessing) is full of moral warning to us; it is ever the source of disquietude and sorrow. Hagar, too, was an Egyptian a remembrance, also, of the want of faith in Abram. The law and flesh, and indeed sin, ever go together (see Joh 8:34-36); and in connection with the unbelief of nature, that is, Egypt.

As regards the order of these chapters, I may add, 12, 13, 14 go together, and are dependent on the double manifestation of God to Abram; first, to call him, and then in Canaan. We have power, failure, return, and enduring heavenly faith contrasted with worldliness, and thereto the display of earthly power attached, to that faith, closing with victory; God possessor of heaven and earth, and Melchisedec.

Though chapter 15 stands alone as a whole, chapter 16 is so far connected with it, that it is the fleshly attempt on Sarah's part to have the seed which

was assured by the word of the Lord to Abram in the beginning of chapter 15. Here all is failure; but the purposes of God will be accomplished according to promise, and not of the flesh and man's will.

Genesis Chapter 17

In chapter 17 we have a fresh revelation of the Lord to Abram, and, I think, are upon higher and holier ground. It is not here calling, or worship, or the world and victory over it in Lot (12-14 [See Note #1]), or a revelation by the word of how God would accomplish His earthly promises, and what His people should go through (15) not what God was for Abram, but what He was Himself. It is not, I am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward; but I am God Almighty. This is not all He was, but it is what He was His own name; and Abram is called upon to walk correspondently to this name. Hence, also, he does not worship or request anything from God, however high the privilege, but Elohim talks with him. The various parts of His purposes are unfolded, and what Abram is to be before Him in whom he believed. It is the starting-point of God's history of His connection with, and ways in, the world, Jew and Gentile starting from His original sovereign title. That which brings in the Gentiles as well as Israel is before us. It is not the individual seed of promise, as in chapter 22, to which the promise of chapter 12 was confirmed, but the title of God with the first vessels of promise as root of a people set apart to God. In general God's covenant was with him. It is not a legal binding, but a free engagement of God in grace, according to His own mind, that Abraham should be the father of many nations. It is in three parts. God would be a God to Abraham, and to his seed after him; the land wherein he was a stranger is to be to him and to his seed after him; and nations and kings should come out of him.

All these promises are without condition; but principles are set forth binding on Abraham, and expressive of the character of those who enjoy the privileges of God circumcision and free sovereign promise. Circumcision in contrast with law (see Joh 7:22), but expressive of the death of the flesh (compare Rom 4:10-13) [See Note #2], and next, the promise of the seed is given; but this when Abraham, as to the body, was now dead; and as the character of circumcision was peremptory for flesh cannot have to say to God in light so was it as to the promise; it was to the son of promise. Though

God might outwardly bless the seed according to flesh, the covenant was exclusively with the heir of promise. Death of flesh (for we are away from God), and simple sovereign grace, are peremptory. The barren woman must be the mother of thousands. Abraham rejoices in the promise, and acts obediently in the order of God.

There is another element here, a common one to this purport in scripture; God's giving a name to Abram and to Sarai also. It signifies the title of direct authority, and entering into relationship on this ground. So Adam, so Pharaoh, so Nebuchadnezzar. Here God having revealed His own name gives one to Abram in connection with Himself. Thenceforth He is the God of Abraham, revealing Abraham's place, and the sign of the covenant in separation to Himself too; Abraham is the father of many nations; Ishmael even is preserved and blessed; but the promised seed stands alone, also has his name (laughter), the child of mere promise of her whom God named too, intimating, though not revealing, resurrection (compare Rom 4:19-22). For this world, Israel as to promise holds the place of Sarah thus named, but when dead according to the flesh. [See Note #1] In chapter 12 it is the path of faith, though with failing, that failing the not owning the separated relationship of God's people (the church) to the heir of the world. Then chapters 13, 14 the believer in a worldly place taken as his portion, the victory of the separated ones, the faith which would not take a shoe-latchet. Chapter 15 the revelation of a numerous seed and Israel's place. Chapter 16 the attempt to have the promise in flesh Hagar. See Galatians.

Note #2

I read Verse 12 (Gen 17:12) thus: "And father of circumcision [that is, of true separation to God, such as God owns], not only to those of the circumcision, but to those who walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised." That is, God recognises them (believers from among the Gentiles) as being truly circumcised.

Genesis Chapter 18

Chapter 18 is again a new unfolding of God's ways, here especially in connection with the seed, already in a general way, as part of God's purpose that it should be Abraham's seed according to grace and promise when

Hesh had no hope, and not according to the flesh, but now specifically revealed as a present thing to Abraham. This seed of promise is here the main object in view, and the present immediate object of hope. This is so on to the end of chapter 21. But I apprehend, he* is here seen as heir of the world and judge; while Abraham's personal relationship with God is in grace, by promise, where he is not seen; and, so far, has the ground of faith, and, in figure, a christian position. Hence, God Himself being known (not merely His gifts), Abraham rises higher than in chapter 15, and, instead of asking gifts for himself, intercedes for others. All is the effect of the gift of the heir being known. After chapter 22 the proper figures of the church as yet unrevealed come in, because the seed is raised: we get, however, great individual principles here.

Abraham is accustomed to the divine presence, and it is quickly felt by him; and although he says nothing referring to the divine glory till the Lord is pleased to discover Himself, yet from the first he acts with an instinctive deference which was as fully accepted by Him who came. In Gen 18:3 Abraham addresses himself to One, yet speaks in his hospitality to all, and to this they all answer, and inquire withal for Sarai; but in Verse 10 (Gen 18:10) it is again individual, the effectual promise of the Lord. In the rebuke of Sarah's unbelief Jehovah reveals Himself. He judges flesh and its unbelief, as He promises. Abraham accompanies the three on their way; two go on, and Abraham is left alone with Jehovah. In this respect it is a lovely scene of holy consciousness and yet deferential waiting on the good pleasure of God. The immediate promise of the arrival of the seed is given. Abraham enjoys the most intimate communion with Jehovah, who reveals His counsels to him as to His friend. Intercession is the fruit of this revelation (compare Isaiah 6). Judgment falls on the world; and whilst Abraham, on the top of the mountain, communes with God of the judgment which was to fall upon the world below, where he was not, Lot, who had taken his place in it, is saved so as by fire. Righteousness which walks with the world puts itself in the position of judge, and is at the same time useless and intolerable. Abraham escapes all judgment, and sees it from on high. Lot is saved from the judgment which falls upon the world in which he found himself. The place where Abraham enjoyed God is for him a place of 3 sterility and fear:

he is forced to take refuge there in the end, because he is afraid to be anywhere else.

In general, Abraham has the character here of communion with God, which faith, without sight, gives not by an indwelling Holy Ghost, no doubt, according to the privilege of the saints now (that was reserved for the time of fuller blessing, when the church's Head should be glorified), but in the general character of the blessing. The promised seed is announced as to come, but not yet brought into the world, that is, in the way of manifested glory. Meanwhile, Abraham knows and believes it. God then treats him, as we have seen, as a friend, and tells him, not what concerns himself, but the world, (with a friend I speak of what I have on my heart, not merely of my business with him); and then, as he has received these communications from God, so he intercedes with God a stranger in the place of promise, on high in communion with Him. And this is still more the place of the saints now through the Holy Ghost: the full communication of the mind and ways of God in the word, and the Lord's coming to take them up, so that this is the scene they live in by faith, and founded on that comes intercession. Abraham had the promise of the heir for himself already; here he is the vessel of divine knowledge of what concerns the world too. This puts him in the place of full grace, and so of intercession. His faith associates him with the mind and character of God. It brings out, withal, the patience and perfectness of judgment with God.

Genesis Chapter 19

Lot, in the following chapter, because of his connection with the heavenly man, depository of God's counsels and wisdom, and intercessor, himself down in the plain of this world, which he had chosen, as the Jews have, is delivered by providential power; but he passes through the tribulation, and suffers the loss of all that for which he had refused the heavenly condition, and sought the earth, as ignorant of the judgment as he was of the heavenly treasure. Such is the position of the people of faith when sunk into the world of judgment. Soon abandoned to the uncertainty of unbelief in the presence of visible judgment, he seeks his refuge in that place of Abraham's blessing to which he had previously been afraid to flee, and which he had earlier abandoned for the ease of the well-watered plain; but he is in

miserable darkness, the parent of a perpetual thorn to the people of God. But this last part is only historically given, that Israel might know the origin of Moab and Ammon; and furnishes a general principle for all times. Thus faith had its place, and the world had been judged. So will it be in the days of the Son of man; but here the heir is not yet actually brought in, but expected, and the path of faith, or the opposite, till He comes depicted.

Genesis Chapter 20

The following commentary covers Chapters 20 and 21.

In chapters 20, 21 we have the question of the heir and of the path of faith in another point of view. Abraham denies his relationship with his wife, and is reproved by the world itself, which knows better than he what she should be. God, however, guards the promises in His faithfulness, and judges that which meddles with her who has to say to them. The heir of promise is born; and the heir according to the flesh, son of the bondwoman or of the law, is entirely rejected. Now Abraham reproves the powerful of the earth, before whom he had previously denied his relationship with his wife.

But these two chapters must be somewhat more developed. Like Abram's going down to Egypt, we have unbelief working in respect of the path into which he had been called by grace, shewn, as it ever is, in reference to walking in the intimacy of the relationship in which God had set him, of which woman is the expression in the types. Here Sarah is the mother of the heir of the world, the wife of Abraham, according to promise, and, for Abraham, according to the church's hope, as we have seen (though Israel were the vessel according to flesh). This position he denies. Sarah is again his sister. This was worse than before, for she is, to faith, mother of the heir of the world. Abimelech was wrong, and acted to please himself, but acted unconscious of it. Abraham before God was in the falser position of the two. God warns Abimelech, and preserves Sarah by His own power, whom Abraham's want of faith had connected with the world; and Abimelech returns her, with the cutting reproof to the church, as here typified, that she at least ought to have known her own relationship to Christ. Still, in the main, Abraham was in the place of faith and blessing; and, as God's prophet, to whom none should do harm, intercedes for the faulty Abimelech, for here

all is grace. There is another point to notice here, that this was an arrangement of unbelief when first he started from his father's house (Gen 20:13), so soon was the germ of unbelief at work in the called of promise. But God maintains the divine title to the allegiance of the church at all times. But now the heir is born, the heir of promise.

The effect of this is, that not only is the difference known to faith, but the heir of the bondwoman is utterly cast out as to the inheritance. Historically he is preserved according to God's promise, a figure of legal Israel; but, as regards any portion of the inheritance, wholly cast out.

And here, further, Abraham fears no longer before the prince of this world, but reproves him. He has the world, as well as the heavenly communion, now that the heir is come; and the world owns that God is with him in all things. Hence the well of the oath is the witness of Abraham's title in the world, and Abimelech's owning God to be with him. There, according to the oath and his title thus owned by the world, he plants a grove, takes possession of the earth, and worships, calling on the name of the everlasting God of Him who had once promised to Israel, and never abandoned His purpose, and had now accomplished on the earth what His mouth had spoken: not, indeed, so blessed a portion as the heavenly intercourse and possession of faith, but a proof of the unchangeable faithfulness of the God who had given the promises. There Abraham, in figure, now abides, where the power of the world had been. This will belong to Israel in the letter, but we, on whom the ends of the world are come, have it in a higher and better way. It was the pledge of what should be and will be; our hope is transferred to heaven where Christ is gone. But we reign there in a better way.

Genesis Chapter 22

The following commentary covers Chapters 22, 23, and 24.

But on this introduction of the heir, he necessarily becomes the main subject; and chapter 22 opens with it: "It came to pass after these things," for, indeed, a new scene now opens. The heir of the promise is sacrificed and raised again in figure, and the promise is confirmed to the seed [See Note #1]. The ancient depositary or form of the covenant (even that of

promise), mother of the heir (Sarah), now disappears. Abraham sends Eliezer, the steward of his house, to seek a wife for the risen heir, for his only son Isaac, from the country whither Isaac was not to return in the world such as it is: beautiful figure of the mission of the Holy Spirit, who, fulfilling His office (after the Lord's death and resurrection) with the elect of God who are to form the Lamb's wife in the counsels of God, conducts her (already adorned with His gifts, but waiting the moment when she shall see Him who is heir of all things that belong to His Father) across the desert to her heavenly bridegroom. The call and readiness of the appointed bride is beautifully depicted, and she goes with him, who prefigures the Spirit, to the bridegroom who is heir of all. But mark how false and wretched the position of the espoused wife, if Isaac had lost his hold upon her heart her home in nature left, and she in the wilderness with one who was nothing to her, if not her guide to Isaac. The walk of the Spirit, moreover, in man, is depicted in the most instructive manner in the details of this history, in the conduct of Eliezer: his simple subjection to what was for him the word of God even when all seemed well (Gen 22:21-23); heart reference in thankfulness to God the first feeling (Gen 22:26); purpose of heart in service (Gen 22:33), and the like.

Note #1

This distinct confirmation to (not in) the seed, is what the apostle refers to as the one seed, that is Christ. The general promises as to Israel were of a seed as the stars of heaven for number. This is the confirmation to the one seed, when risen, of the promise given in chapter 12.

Genesis Chapter 25

We have next the election of God which now sets apart the earthly people, Jacob. It is remarkable how little we have of Isaac, nothing but his remaining in heavenly places, I mean of course in the figure, a wife being sought for him on earth. We are on earth; yet the heavenly thing is to us fully revealed and we have the earnest of all. In Abraham, promise and principles are brightly unfolded to us; and the earthly people of promise in Jacob are fully developed; principles which we have all through. Jacob values the promises of God; but if Lot was attracted by the well-watered plain, the unbelief of

Jacob was manifested in the use of carnal means to obtain possession of the promises, instead of waiting upon God. Thus his years were "few and evil"; and he was continually the object of similar deceit too. Remark here, that while the experience of Abraham was altogether higher and better, and he had far fuller communion with God in His mind, as it is with a faithful Christian enjoying the things that are not seen, giving up readily in the world, and interceding for others, yet the unfaithful believer has much more experience in his path, because he is not living with God. This we see in Jacob. He prevails by faith through grace, but he wrestles for himself, Abraham intercedes for others. But if we have in Isaac a risen Christ, bridegroom, as to the figure, of the church which the Holy Ghost has descended to seek here below for Him who is on high; in Jacob we have Israel, driven out of the land of promise, kept of God to enjoy it afterwards. I believe, however, that in his marriages we have the Lord, who, while loving Israel (Rachel), has yet first received the Gentiles or the church, and then the Jews.

These subjects conduct us to the end of chapter 25 the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ, the calling of the church in the figure of Rebecca, and the election of Israel, the younger to the promise and blessing in the earth. As regards the first point, the promises were settled in Isaac living on the earth, as they were in the Person of Christ. There Abraham had to give all up in entire and absolute confidence in God, and trust them, with Isaac, in God's hand. So did Christ: all was His in connection with the promises in Israel. He gave up all on the cross to receive it in resurrection from His Father. Here note, no personal sacrifice is ever made without a fresh ground of relationship with God in grace; for God gives that which sustains us in the sacrifice, which was not needed to enjoy the thing sacrificed. God had given promises in Isaac; but to trust God with a sacrificed Isaac, resurrection must be known; and so Abraham trusted that God would raise him from the dead. For God could not fail in His promises.

In the Epistle to the Galatians the bearing of this part of scripture is considered. I only remark here that the promise made to Abraham (chap. 12) is here confined to the one sacrificed and risen seed, Isaac. There were other promises to a seed numerous as the stars in heaven (itself a promise); but

the promise of the blessing of the families of the earth was given first to Abram alone (chap. 22). Hence the Apostle Paul speaks of one seed. The promise is not spoken of elsewhere to Abram. It is confirmed to the risen seed. In the end of the chapter, besides the general stem of the nations, Rebecca's origin is set forth.

In chapter 23, as we have said, the vessel of promise, Sarah disappears, to make way for Rebecca, the son's bride; but with it, while Abraham has no portion in the land and must buy his sepulchre, he has the sure pledge that he will hereafter have it. He buries his dead there. And now the heir's bride must be sought. Remark, first that she receives tokens of grace; then, as an espoused one gifts. She shews her willing mind through grace, and is led of Eliezer in loneliness across the desert, leaving her father's house to possess all with Isaac, to whom his father has given everything. We have here fully the church in a figure: Isaac, who is the risen man between the man of promise, Abraham, and Jacob when Israel the earthly people comes into the scene must no on any account go back to the country of nature, out of which his wife was to be called. He is exclusively the heavenly man. Rebecca must go to him. With him before her, her journey was blessed; he once out of her mind, she was a stranger who had left all to be homeless and portionless for nothing. Such is the church. But to return was to give up Isaac.

Next mark, in the working of the Holy Ghost presented in Eliezer, entire confidence in God. he asks, and is answered, but it must be entirely according to the word (here Abraham's), "Is she of the kindred?" Next, when the blessing is known, thanksgiving comes before joy; and next, entire and exclusive consecration to the service he had to perform. He will not eat till he has told his errand, and then no hesitation: he has one work and nothing else. Would it were so with all who are Christ's! Eliezer conducts her to Isaac, who is gone out and comes to meet her; and there, to the son's comfort, she replaces Sarah, the vessel of promise, in the yet better place of the risen heir's wife.

Abraham's course was finished. Promises have given place to the church called by grace. But all that spring from him have a place in the record of

God; but Isaac is heir of all, though Ishmael be great and have princes before him [See Note #1].

Gen 25:19 begins, in a measure, a new scene. We are returned from the glimpse of heavenly things in Isaac, to earthly and Jewish things in Jacob. From the barren woman for all must be grace and divine power spring two, in whom election, not only in the grace of calling, but in sovereignty and in contrast with works, is brought out. We have the purpose of God revealed to Rebecca, but of the history we have only so much as gives the character and spring of conduct in Esau and Jacob. In Jacob there was nothing naturally attractive; but Esau despised the gift of God; his judgment of what was valuable had its origin from self. He was profane; though God in His secret counsels, had ordained the blessing in Jacob. Esau saw nothing beyond the earthly advantage of the gift, and nothing of the Giver or relationship with Him. Present things governed him, his own present enjoyment; and God's promise had no further importance. Jacob, however wretched his way of getting it, valued the promise for its own sake; gave up present things, poor things no doubt, but enough to govern Esau's heart, to get it. In this we have merely the presentation of the character of the two sons. God's dealings with them will come later, for Isaac's history now only begins. He is here the designated heir of the world, but was to have, as such heir, the proper portion of Israel in the earth. Chapter 24 gave, in figure, the secret history of the church in connection with the risen heir.

Note #1

Though the subjects in general follow, chapter 25 is not in historical sequence. The "then" has no real force. It is a general gathering up of the different families of Abraham. Isaac was heir of his possessions, he gave gifts to his concubines' sons and sent them away. Then we have his death, and his two well-known sons, but Ishmael, the son after the flesh, first; but Isaac and then Jacob carry on the divine history.

Genesis Chapter 26

Here (chap. 26) Isaac replaces Abraham as heir upon the earth. It is a new revelation, when Isaac is himself in a strange land, like the one made to Abraham at the first; only that Isaac was already in connection with the

calling of God, but not in enjoyment of the promise. There was a famine in the land, and Isaac could not dwell in it, and he goes to those who had part of the land in possession, but had no title the future enemies and oppressors of his people. But God appears to him there, and tells him not to return into the world, but to dwell in the land which He should tell him of. He is maintained in the heavenly places, but still as a place of promise, though not now seeking it as unknown, but still as an object of faith. It was a fresh calling under different circumstances (the Lord appearing to him anew), not indeed to journey to a land, but to dwell where He should shew him, and not to seek natural resources (Egypt). He was not to go back, but to live by faith. But the land is also shewn and the promises renewed, both as to Israel, and the nations, and the land. For the moment he was to sojourn in the land where he was, that is, where the Philistines were. Thus the whole land, Philistines and all, was given to him, and he dwelt in Gerar.

This is the position of Isaac; as the first half of chapter 12 is the position of Abraham. From Verse 7 to the end we have his personal walk as to faith, as Abraham's in the latter part of chapter 12; and the settlement of what should be his portion in his posterity according to the faith that he had. He fails like Abraham, and yet more as to energy. He denies his wife, as Abraham had done, and he leaves in the hand of the enemy the wells which Abraham had dug: he had failed in faith in God before Abimelech, and, though God had said to him "Sojourn in this land," he has to recede before the will of Abimelech, then driven from well to well, and has room only where the Philistine has room. In Beersheba he meets with God, where he has pitched his tent, where Abraham had set his bounds with Abimelech when Isaac was born. But Abraham had not received direction as to sojourning in the land, and had reprovved Abimelech, whose servants had taken the well and Abimelech had given it up. Abraham had dug all these wells as he needed, as a stranger, and they were not taken away: the only one contended for was Beersheba, and that Abimelech gave up. However Beersheba was, in divine providence, the limit of the land according to the faith of Israel. The Philistines did remain till David came, the representative of Christ. The otherwise heirs of the land possessed it not fully. There the Lord appeared and blessed Isaac: there Israel reposed and worshipped. This chapter is Isaac's history; it answers to Abraham's (chaps. 12, 20).

Esau's ways were as careless, as his thoughts as to the birthright were profane. He marries with the women of the land.

Genesis Chapter 27

Jacob's history now begins [See Note #1]. Heir of the promises, and valuing them, he uses means to have them, evil and low in character. God answers his faith, and chastens his evil and unbelief. God could have brought the blessing in His own way (or made Isaac cross his hands as He did Jacob); Jacob, led by his mother, followed his own way, and did not wait for God. But the blessing was prophetic, and not to be recalled. The ways of God and His purpose were not to be changed. Isaac was guilty, and Jacob more so: all was overruled to answer faith and chasten evil in the believer. Esau had deliberately given up the right, when he had the choice: God was not in his thoughts: he cannot receive the blessing when the consequences are there. Man must act by faith alone, when the consequences are not seen, in order to be blessed, when the time for blessing comes.

Note #1

In general, Abraham is the root of all promise and the picture of the life of faith: Isaac, of the heavenly man, who receives the church; and Jacob, of Israel, heir of the promises according to the flesh.

Genesis Chapter 28

Jacob becomes now the picture of cast-out and wandering Israel, heir of the promises, watched over, but an outcast. The wanderings of Abraham were in the land of promise; those of Jacob, out of it: two things very different one from another. God, indeed, was with Jacob, and never left him but Abraham walked with God: in the realisation of His presence he built his altar. Jacob had no altar; he was not in the place of promise. For such a path takes us out of communion. Although God in His faithfulness be with us, we are not with Him. However, so soon as he bows to the chastisement destitute, and with his staff, and a stone for his pillow, God reveals Himself to him, and assures to him all the promises, not in the full revelation of communion, but in a dream. And here all the promises are renewed, but with a notable difference from all before; for now the promise of the

blessings to the nations is to him and his seed; for here we are in connection with Israel and the blessing of the earth. Thus it is not merely the one seed, Christ; but the seed of Israel in possession of the land the millennial possession of the earth. But another promise was added, a precious and important one, that, outcast and a wanderer as he was, God would keep him in all places whither he went, and bring him back to the land, and fulfil all without fail, not leaving him till he had accomplished all. God was above; Jacob, the object of promise and blessing, of the earth; but earth was all under the providential control of heaven; and the angels had Jacob for their care, ascended and descended, accomplishing the will of God [See Note #1]. Awoke up, Jacob binds himself to Jehovah as his God for Jehovah stood at the top of the ladder; and thus He became, prophetically, the God of a restored Israel, with whom, though far from heaven, was the house of God on earth in connection with heaven. It was a legal though just vow, and all prophetic. He is now a stranger, and in many things represents Christ afflicted in the affliction of His people.

Note #1

Christ is the object in John; the ladder is merely to connect the scene.

Genesis Chapter 29

The following commentary covers Chapters 29 through 35.

I have no doubt that in the two wives, as I have said, we have the Gentiles and Israel: Rachel first loved on the earth, but not possessed; but Leah the fruitful mother of children. Rachel had children also afterwards on the earth. Rachel, as representing the Jews, is the mother of Joseph, and later of Benjamin, that is, of a suffering Christ glorified among the Gentiles, while rejected of Israel; and of a reigning Christ, the son of his mother's sorrow, but of his father's right hand.

Jacob's personal history is the sad tale of deceit and wrong done to him; but God, as He had promised, preserving him throughout. What a difference from Eliezer and Abraham, where the power and character of the Holy Ghost is seen! Here providence preserves, but it is Jacob's history. He is bitterly deceived as he had deceived, but preserved according to promise.

At the return of Jacob the hosts of God came to meet him. He receives a new and wondrous proof of God's mighty and gracious care, which should have recalled Bethel to him. But this does not remove his terror. He must anew use the means of unbelief, and sends children and wives and all on before, and presents after presents to appease Esau; but his strength was not there. God would not leave him in the hands of Esau, but He deals with him Himself. He wrestles with him, sustaining at the same time his faith in the wrestling; and, after making him feel his weakness, and that for all his life, gives him, in weakness, the place and part of victor. He is a prince with God, and prevails with God and with men victory in conflict with a God who is dealing with him, but no revelation of, or communion with Him.

This is a wonderful scene: the dealings of God with a soul that does not walk with Him. It is not, however, the calm communion of Abraham with Jehovah: Abraham intercedes for others, instead of wrestling for himself. So also, though God gives Jacob a name and so far recognises his relationship with Himself, He does not reveal to Jacob His name, as He had done to Abraham. Jacob, too, still employs his deceitful ways; for he had no thought of going to Seir, as he said. But he is delivered from Esau, as from Laban, and at last establishes himself at Shechem, buying lands where he ought to have remained a stranger. God removes him out of it, but by strange and humbling circumstances; still God's fear on the nations preserves him. He is not yet back to the point where God had given him the promises and assured the blessing; that was at Bethel. Here, however, he was able to build an altar, using, at the same time, the name which exalted his own position, and which took the ground of the blessing which had been granted to him; an act of faith, it is true, but which confined itself to the blessing, instead of rising up to the Blessor. This, indeed, he was not properly able to do yet. God was dealing with him, and he was, in a measure, thinking on God; but proper communion was not there: so is it in like case with us. However, God led him onward, and now tells him to go up to the place whence he had set out, and there build an altar, where he had entered into covenant with God, the faithful God, who had been with him all the way in which he went. But what a discovery is made here! He must now meet God Himself, and not simply be dealt with for his good God's name still unknown, no full revelation of Him. And this is a great difference. Now he must meet

Him. He remembers he knew it well, although he paid no attention to it until he had to meet God there were false gods in his family. Meeting God Himself not in secret and mysterious struggle, but face to face, so to speak brings all to light. He purifies himself, and the false gods are removed, and he goes up to Bethel. There God reveals Himself openly to him, in grace making known His name, unasked, to him as to Abraham, and confers upon him anew the name of Israel, as if he had not received it before. Rachel gives birth to him who, child of his mother's sorrow, is the son of his father's right hand (remarkable type of Christ the Lord); for this is, figuratively, the establishment of the promise in power in his person, though the former standing of Israel, represented by Rachel, must disappear; but her remembrance is kept up in the land.

Genesis Chapter 36

The apostate world establishes itself in power, while the heirs of promise are still poor pilgrims upon the earth. This last is a distinct point of revelation.

Genesis Chapter 37

The following commentary covers Chapters 37 through 41.

What follows from chapter 37 is the interesting history of Joseph, to which even children ever yield a ready ear, although ignorant of all the beauties which the believer finds who knows Jesus, and recognises Him as prefigured there: for there is an intrinsic beauty, where the heart is not yet hardened, in all that reveals Him. Joseph, as revealed in his dreams (faith alone could thus own it), is, in the counsels of God, heir of the glory and chief of all the family. His brothers are jealous of this; so much the more that he is the beloved of his father. He is sold to the Gentiles by his brethren, and, in the figure, instead of being put to death, as the Jews did to the true Joseph (that being not possible), is passed for dead. Meanwhile Judah falls into every kind of shame and sin, which does not deprive him, however, of the royal genealogy. Joseph is brought low among the Gentiles, through false accusations put in prison, his "feet made fast in the stocks." "The iron enters into his soul:" "till the time came that his cause was known, the word of the Lord tried him."

Rising out of his humiliation, he is elevated, unknown now of his brethren, to the right hand of the throne; and the administration of all power over the Gentiles committed to him. In his humiliation, interpreter of the thoughts and counsels of God; in his elevation, he administers with power according to the same wisdom, and reduces all under the immediate authority of him who was seated on the throne.

Genesis Chapter 42

The following commentary covers Chapters 42 through 47.

At the same time another scene presents itself. His brethren, who had rejected him, forced by famine, are brought, by the path of repentance and humiliation, to own him at length in glory, whom they had once rejected when connected with themselves. Benjamin, type of the power of the Lord upon earth among the Jews, is united to him who, unknown, had the power of the throne among the Gentiles; that is, Christ unites these two characters. But this brings all the brethren into connection with Joseph. Finally, Jacob and his family are placed, as a people apart, in the most favoured country of all that was under the power of the throne of the great king. Nothing can be more touching than the conduct of Joseph towards his brethren; but I must leave these reflections to the hearts of my readers, placing them as far as my hearty desires can, under the precious influence of the Spirit of God. The rapid survey I have given, gives the type a clearer application than more detail would, and that is what is of the deepest interest here.

Only remark that here the repentance is immediately in connection with the rejection of Joseph; this is brought on the conscience of Joseph's brethren. So in the end will it be with Israel. It is not here in reference to the law that we shall have after Sinai but in typical connection with the Messiah Their consciences are fully convinced, and they go back to all the circumstances of his rejection. It is only gradually that Joseph reveals himself, and with many exercises of heart, which his dealings work in his brethren. In the end Judah is brought into prominence in connection with Benjamin. It is when Judah takes the sorrow of Israel to heart, in connection with Benjamin, and the loss of Joseph, and puts himself into it, that Joseph, in his glory, is revealed to them as their brother it is a lovely scene. The perfect grace of Joseph at

the end is a wonderful picture of Christ's revelation of Himself (Gen 45:4-8, et seq.).

It is touching to remark, when Jacob is presented to Pharaoh, though acknowledging that, compared with those of his fathers, his life had been a sad one, he can bless the monarch of all the country, himself a despised shepherd; and "without contradiction the less is blessed of the greater." The least and most faltering of God's children has the superiority, and is conscious of it, in presence of the most elevated men of the world.

The coming down to Egypt was according to God. so we have here Israel viewed as abiding God's time, even when oppressed, not as cast out and wandering as the effect of disobedience. Both are true. God, remark, appears to him as the God of Isaac his father, not of Abraham: his blessing comes under the risen Christ. What hangs on promises Israel has lost by the rejection of Christ; but God can appear for him in pure grace, in connection with a risen Saviour, and fulfil them according to His own faithfulness [See Note #1]; and so it is in figure here. Therefore is Israel blessed in spite of all, though long oppressed and a stranger. When he is in connection with Joseph, the scene changes; that is, in his connection, in the world, with a glorified Christ revealed to him there, he has the best of the land, which is brought into universal order and subjection as belonging to Pharaoh, whom Joseph represented, and whose authority he exercised over it. Beersheba, the border of Israel from henceforward he was a stranger is the place of this revelation of God. One cannot fail to see in the history of Joseph one of the most remarkable types of the Lord Jesus, and that, in many details of the ways of God in regard to the Jews and Gentiles.

Note #1

This is the subject of Rom 11:28-33. In Rom 11:31 read "even so have these not now believed in your mercy that they also might be objects of mercy." They had forfeited the promises, and take them now on no higher ground than a Gentile; that is, pure mercy.

Genesis Chapter 48

The following commentary covers Chapters 48, 49, and 50.

Lastly, in chapter 48 besides the prophetic character important in the history of Israel we see Joseph as heir; the double portion (mark of the eldest, heir of the father, among the Jews) being given to him (see Ch1 5:1-2); and not only as heir, but as heir in Canaan Jacob's heir there where Rachel had died; that is, where Israel, as the Jewish beloved one of God, had failed and gone. Here, too, all is ordered according to the purpose and counsel of God, not according to nature; and Joseph, in his children, possesses, as heir, the portion taken from the hand of the enemy by power; for Joseph, after his rejection, is ever Christ as glorified, and then heir of the world.

We have then the lot of the children of Jacob; and two facts, the burying of Jacob, and the commandment concerning the bones of Joseph, given as a certain pledge of the re-establishment of Israel, left, according to what had been said to Abraham, and in appearance abandoned, in a strange country, whilst the patience of God bore yet with the iniquity of the Amorites, a patience which strikes only when it is impossible to bear the evil any longer (chaps. 49, 50). Remark the beauty of the grace in Joseph (Gen 45:7-8, and Gen 50:17; Gen 50:19-20).

It seems to me that there is this difference between the prophecies of Jacob and Moses as to the tribes. Here the prophecy refers to the responsibility of the first parent source of the tribe, as Reuben, Simeon, Levi; and to the counsels of God, which put forward Judah (the stock from which the Lord sprang as regards the royalty), and Joseph (type of Christ as Nazarene, separated from his brethren, and afterwards exalted). The rest, if we except Benjamin who ravages with power, gives the general characters of the position and conduct of the tribes of Israel; Dan, of his wickedness, and even of his character of traitor. I may add that besides the royal place of Judah maintained as a distinct tribe till Christ came, up to the end of Issachar, it is the sad history of Israel in its responsibility and what befell them. Dan adds to this traitorous unfaithfulness, as indeed he set up, we may say, tribal idolatry. This casts the faith of Jacob on waiting for God's salvation, and grace comes in. All that follows is blessing, and Christ the shepherd and stone of Israel. Moses gives rather the history of the people as entering into the country on leaving the wilderness; and we find the priesthood and

people to be the two points brought into prominence, although power and a special blessing be given to Judah.

I add a few details as to this prophetic blessing, hoping to make it more clear. We may remark, in the tribes, responsibility and the future of Israel as firstborn according to nature. Reuben represents Israel in this character; Simeon and Levi, who come after and will maintain their right by nature's force, are no better. Then we have the purpose of God in the king and the whole of the royal tribe till Christ come, to whom the gathering of the peoples shall be. Joseph comes with Benjamin at the end, the representative of Christ personally glorified, as Benjamin of Christ in judgment on earth. Joseph is a personal representative of Christ, separated from His brethren, glorious and blessed as the heir of all the resources of God. Dan, before this, though owned as a judging tribe and so Israel in him, yet marks out that apostasy and power of Satan in Israel which led the remnant to look beyond the portion of the people, unfaithful in every way, to Him who was the salvation: "We have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah."

I rather think, as already noticed, that in the other tribes we have a distinct contrast of what Israel is as oppressed, before Christ who has taken the full Joseph character in glory, and has answered the faith of the remnant expressed in Verse 18 (Gen 49:18) and after; and that thus, in these characters of the tribes, we have the whole history of Israel. Judah and Joseph have been already marked out and distinguished in the history Judah as surety for and connected with Benjamin, and Joseph in all his history. Thus, after Judah, in Zebulun and Issachar we have Israel mixed with the world, busied in its waters to seek profit, and a slave to it for rest and quiet; but this ends in Dan and apostasy, so that the remnant, in the spirit of prophecy, wait for the salvation which is to come with the true Joseph. All is prosperity when this is looked to. Once overcome, he overcomes at the last: his bread is fat and yields royal dainties in his own land, not seeking them by mixture with, and subjection to, the world. And Naphtali is in the liberty of God, and full of goodly words. In Joseph and Benjamin we have the crowning of all blessing in the double character of Christ, the heavenly Heir of all, and power and strength upon the earth that subdues all. So that the

whole series would be thus: Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, the moral character and failure of responsible Israel. It will be found, as ever, corruption and violence: such is man. Next, the purpose of God in Judah: he remains till Shiloh come, to whom the gathering of the peoples belongs. But He was rejected when He came to Judah, and there was no gathering: "beauty" and "bands" were broken.

Next, the state of Israel being such, intercourse with nations (which, when not in the power of God, is corruption), subjection to their yoke for ease, and apostasy: still owned as a people, however; and then the remnant looking to the only source, and waiting, not for good in Israel, but salvation from Jehovah Elohim. Thereon deliverance and blessing for Israel; and finally (what we have already seen as the double character of Christ separated from His brethren [See Note #1], and then glorified) Joseph and Benjamin present Him to us as the heavenly glorified Man to whom all is entrusted, and the all-conquering Lord on the earth.

On the whole, I think we have a complete history of Israel in this way. First his failure: Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, corruption and violence, as already remarked. Then Judah, God's purpose in His people, in connection with the royal stock and Shiloh. This is plain enough. To Him the gathering of the peoples was to be. Zebulun and Issachar then shew their mixture with, and subjection to, the Gentiles for gain and prosperity; Dan, the treachery of Satanic power, when faith waits for Jehovah's salvation. Gad, Asher, Naphtali, and Joseph and Benjamin, the fruit and power of this salvation when the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, shall be also there when prosperity full in Israel shall overpass its bounds, and victorious power shall belong to them.

Personally the fear of God was in Joseph from beginning to end: a mighty principle, and the true basis of power. Whatever his glory, he does not forget Canaan or the earthly promise he sends his bones there: nor has Christ. So Joseph, when Israel is gone, forgives his brethren their wrong, and nourishes them with his riches. So is it with Christ: He is above the wrong and the just fears of them that rejected Him; He will bless Israel from His own stores of heavenly glory. The Lord hasten it in its day!

Note #1

Joseph is so characterised in Deuteronomy also.

EXODUS

Introduction to Exodus

In the Book of Exodus we have, as the general and characteristic subject, the deliverance and redemption of the people of God, and their establishment as a people before Him, whether under the law, or under the government of God in longsuffering-of a God who, having so brought them to Himself, provided for His unfaithful people; not indeed entrance into His own presence, but a way of approaching Him, at least at a distance, although they had failed. But the veil was unrent: God did not come out to them, nor could they go in to God. And this is of all possible importance, and characteristic of the difference of Christianity. God did come amongst sinful men in love in Christ, and man is gone in to God, in righteousness, and withal the veil is rent from top to bottom. The law required from man what man ought to be as a child of Adam; life was put as the consequence of keeping it, and there was a curse for him if it was not kept. God's relationship with the people had at first been in grace; but this did not continue, and the people never entered thereinto with intelligence, nor understood this grace like persons who stood in need of it as sinners. Let us examine the course of these divine instructions.

Exodus Chapter 1

Exodus 1:1

exo 1:1

The following commentary covers Chapters 1 and 2.

First, we have the historical circumstances which relate to the captivity of Israel-the persecutions which this people had to endure, and the providential superintendence of God answering the faith of the parents of the infant Moses, and thus accomplishing the counsels of His grace, which not only preserved the child's life, but placed him in an elevated position in the court of Pharaoh. The things that are done on the earth He doeth them

Himself. He prepares all beforehand when nothing is as yet apparent to man.

But, although providence responds to faith, and acts in order to accomplish God's purposes, and control the walk of His children, it is not the guide of faith, although it is made so sometimes by believers who are wanting in clearness of light. Moses's faith is seen in his giving up, when grown to age, all the advantages of the position in which God had set him by His providence. Providence may, and often does, give that which forms, in many respects, the servants of God for their work, as vessels; but cannot be their power in the work. These two things must not be confounded. It gives that, the giving up of which is a testimony of the reality of faith and of the power of God which operates in the soul. It is given that it may be given up. This is part of the preparation. This faith acted through affections which attached him to God, and consequently to the people of God in their distress, and manifested itself, not in the helps or reliefs which his position could well have enabled him to give to them, but in inducing him to identify himself with that people because it was God's people. Faith attaches itself to God, and appreciates, and would have part in the bond that exists between God and His people; and thus it thinks not of patronising from above, as if the world had authority over the people of God, or was able to be a blessing to them. It feels (because it is faith) that God loves His people; that His people are precious to Him-His own on the earth; and faith sets itself thus, through very affection, in the position where His people find themselves. This is what Christ did. Faith does but follow Him in His career of love, however great the distance at which it walks.

How many reasons might have induced Moses to remain in the position where he was; and this even under the pretext of being able to do more for the people; but this would have been leaning on the power of Pharaoh, instead of recognising the bond between the people and God: it might have resulted in a relief which the world would have granted, but not in a deliverance by God, accomplished in His love and in His power. Moses would have been spared much affliction, but lost his true glory; Pharaoh flattered, and his authority over the people of God recognised; and Israel would have remained in captivity, leaning on Pharaoh, instead of recognising God in the

precious and even glorious relationship of His people with Him. God would not have been glorified. Yet all human reasoning, and all reasoning connected with providential ways, would have induced Moses to remain in his position: faith made him give it up. All would really have been spoiled.

Moses, then, identifies himself with the people of God. A certain natural activity, and the unconscious habits of a strength which was not purely from on high, accompanied him, perhaps; however, it is the first devotedness which is pointed out by the Holy Ghost [See Note #1] as the good and acceptable fruit of faith. But it ought to have been more entirely subject to God, and to have had its starting-point in Him alone, and in obedience to His expressed will. We have, in this case, an example of the way in which the Lord often acts. The earnest energy of faithfulness is allowed to be manifested, but the instrument is put aside for a moment, in order that the service may depend directly and entirely upon God. There was something analogous to this even in Jesus, save that there was not in Him either false reckoning, or error, or external providences in consequence to deliver Him from them. In Him the perfection of the energy of life within, acted always in the knowledge of who His Father was, and at the same time submitted to His will in the circumstances in which He had morally placed Him. But the Lord appeared as Son with the doctors in the temple, and then was subject to Joseph and Mary till the time and way appointed of God, only alike perfect in both. Moses, fearful even amid faithfulness, and dreading the power which lent him, unconsciously perhaps, a certain habit of energy (for one is afraid of that from which one draws one's strength), and repulsed by the unbelief of those towards whom his love and his faithfulness carried him, for "they understood [him] not," fled to the desert; a type, as to the fact itself, of the Lord Jesus, rejected by the people whom He loved.

There is a difference between this type and that of Joseph. Joseph takes the position (as put to death) of Jesus raised to the right hand of the supreme throne over the Gentiles, in the end receiving his brethren from whom he had been separated. His children are to him a testimony of his blessing at that time. He calls them Manasseh ("because God," says he, "has made me forget all my labours, and all the house of my father"), and Ephraim ("because God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction"). Moses

presents to us Christ separated from His brethren [See Note #2]; and although Zipporah might be considered as a type of the church (as well as Joseph's wife), as the bride of the rejected Deliverer during his separation from Israel, yet, as to what regards his heart, his feelings (which are expressed in the names that he gives to his children), they are governed by the thought of being separated from the people of Israel: his fraternal affections are there-his thoughts are there-his rest and his country are there. He is a stranger everywhere else. Moses is the type of Jesus as the deliverer of Israel. He calls his son Gershom, that is to say, a "stranger there;" "for," says he, "I have sojourned in a strange land." Jethro presents to us the Gentiles among whom Christ and His glory were driven when He was rejected by the Jews.

Note #1

Heb 11:24-26. This is often the case with God's children, faithful in their principles and desires, they have not done with self and its energies; indeed this is always the case till self is utterly judged and known and, so to speak, replaced by Christ, and doing simply God's will. But the world is always stronger than the Christian's energy in the flesh.

Note #2

As a figure he came to his own and they rejected him; see lower down. Stephen notices this morally (Acts 7); and so Christ is separated from His brethren in the world till He returns in power.

Exodus Chapter 3

But at last God looks upon His people, and not only gives the faith that identifies itself with His people, but displays the power which delivers them. That Moses, who was rejected as a prince and a judge, must now appear in the midst of Israel and of the world as a prince and a deliverer. Stephen made use of these two examples, in order to convict the consciences of the Sanhedrim of their similar and still greater sin in the case of Christ. God-who to appearance had left Moses in the power of his enemies, without recognising his faith-manifests Himself now to him when alone, in order to send him to deliver Israel and to judge the world.

Considered as a practical history, this sending away of Moses into the wilderness, and his long sojourn there, is full of instruction. God shews Himself to us as destroying the hope of the flesh, and humbling its strength. He makes of the adopted son of the house of the king, a shepherd, under the protection of a stranger; and this during forty years, before he can undertake God's work, in order that the work might be a work of obedience, and the strength that of God; and Moses' hope and the affection of his heart were left in abeyance all this time. No human issue was apparent.

But God was now about to manifest Himself under the name of Jehovah. He had put Himself in relation with the fathers under the name of God Almighty. That was what they wanted, and this was His glory in their pilgrimage. Now He takes a name in relationship with His people, which implies constant relationship with them; and in which, being established with Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, He accomplishes in faithfulness what He has begun in grace and promise, all the while shewing what He is in patience and in holiness in His government in the midst of His people. For us He calls Himself Father, and acts towards us according to the power of that blessed name to our souls [See Note #1].

But Jehovah is not the first name He takes in His communications with the people through the mediation of Moses. He first presents Himself as interested in them for their fathers' sakes, whose God He was. He tells them their cry had come up to Him; He had seen their affliction, and was come down to deliver them. Touching expression of the grace of God! Upon this He sends Moses to Pharaoh, to lead them up out of Egypt.

But, alas! obedience, when there is only that, and when carnal energy does not mix itself with it, is but a poor thing for the human heart. The fleshly energy with which Moses had slain the Egyptian was now gone; and when God calls upon Moses to go into Egypt for the deliverance of His people, Moses raises difficulties. God gives thereupon a sign, in token that He will be with him, but a sign which was to be fulfilled after the obedience of Moses, and was to strengthen him and to rejoice him when he had already obeyed.

Moses still makes difficulties, to which God answers in grace, until they cease to be weakness, and become rather the working of self in unbelief.

For thither self-indulgence in weakness tends. In the mission which God thus confided to Moses, He declares His name "I Am." At the same time, while declaring that He is that He is, He takes for ever, as His name upon the earth, the name of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob: an important principle, as regards God's ways. "I Am" is His own essential name, if He reveals Himself; but as regards His government of, and relationship with, the earth, His name, that by which He is to be remembered to all generations, is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. This gave Israel, now visited and taken up of God under this name, a very peculiar place.

In Abraham first God had called any out, first to him given any promises. He first had been publicly called apart from the world, so that God called Himself his God. He never calls Himself God of Abel or of Noah, though in a general sense He is the God, of course, of every saint. Faith itself is first here pointed out as the way of righteousness. In Eden, God, in judging the serpent, had announced the final victory of the promised Seed; in Abel, He had shewn what acceptable sacrifice from a sinner was-not the fruits of his labour under judgment, but the blood God's grace had given to him, which answered his need; and this established a righteousness in which he who came to God through the offered sacrifice stood, and of which he had himself the witness, and which was measured by his gift, that is by Christ Himself [See Note #2]; in Enoch, clear and absolute victory over death, and removal from earth, God taking him; in Noah, deliverance through judgments, when the world was judged. Then a new world began, and a ceasing, through the sweet savour of sacrifice, to curse the earth, and a covenant for its preservation from any future destruction by water. But in Abraham we have, after the judgment of Babel, one called out from the world now worshipping other gods, brought into separate and immediate connection with God, and promises given to him; a person called to be the object and depositary of God's promises. This gave him a very peculiar place. God was his God. He had a separate place from all the world with Him, as heir of the promises. He is the root of all the heirs of them. Christ Himself comes as seed of Abraham, who is the father also of the faithful as to the earth. Israel is the promised nation under this title. As regards election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. In this name, consequently, as His eternal memorial, God would now deliver them. At the same time, God foretells that

Pharaoh will not let the people go; but takes clearly the ground of His authority and of His right over His people, and of authoritative demand upon Pharaoh that he should recognise them. Upon his refusal to do so, he would be judged by the power of God.

Note #1

Compare Matthew 5 and John 17. His millennial name is Most High. See the interesting connection of three of these names in Psalm 91. That of Father is not found in the psalms: the Son has revealed it. The other three connect themselves with the earth and the government of the world., Father puts us in the place of sons with God, in the same relationship with God in which Christ Himself is, and, when the time comes, to be like Him and to be heirs of God.

Note #2

Note in Hebrews 11 it is not the divine gift of Christ for us, but the coming in faith by Him to God.

Exodus Chapter 4

Moses still raises difficulties, and God gives him again signs, remarkable signs. The two first seem to me in their character-types, the first, of sin and of its healing; the second, of power, which, having become Satanic, is taken back, and becomes the rod of God; and then presents that which refreshes, coming from God, as having become judgment and death. But we must note here the difference of what was then given to Moses and what occurred in Egypt. Here in the two personal signs there is first restoration (the leprosy is healed), and then power from which Moses fled becomes the rod of God in his hand. The water becoming blood is simple judgment. In Egypt the first is not found, he acted for God there, but there was a much larger development of the two last signs. The persona healing, that is, and removal of sin there was nothing of. But power completely destroys all manifestation of Satanic power and the worshipped source of wealth for the flesh and the world became death and judgment to it. But Moses refuses still and the wrath of God is kindled against him; yet He acts in mercy, in a way, however, humbling to Moses, with whom he now joins

Aaron his brother whom He had already prepared for that, and who had come out of Egypt to meet him; for the folly of His children, while it is to their shame and to their loss accomplishes the purposes of God.

Whatever may be the power of Him that delivers, it is necessary that circumcision should be found in him who is interested in, and who is used as an instrument of the deliverance; for the Saviour-God is a God of holiness; it is in holiness and in judging sin, that He delivers: and acting in holiness He does not suffer sin in those who are co-workers for Him with whom He is in contact; for He comes out of His place in judgment. For us the question is of being dead to sin, the true circumcision; our Moses is a bloody husband to her who has to do with him. God cannot use the flesh in the fight against Satan. He cannot suffer it Himself, for He is in His place in judgment. Satan also would have power over it, and of right; God therefore puts it to death Himself, and this is done for us on the cross, where He who knew no sin was made sin for us (compare Rom 8:3). And He wills that this should be accomplished in us also. This is true of those who compose the assembly; but they can reckon themselves dead. We bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus [See Note #1]. It will be true in one way more evidently, in judgment at the last day, when the Lord pleads with all flesh, and identifies Himself with those who have not taken part spiritually in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, the Christian's place. God will purge Jerusalem by the spirit of burning.

Note #1

In Colossians 3 we find God's judgment of him in whom Christ (compare Rom 8:10); in Romans 6 faith reckons it so: in 2 Corinthians 4 it is practically realised. And God proves the faith, but to confirm the soul in it. See 2 Corinthians 1 and 4.

Exodus Chapter 5

The following commentary covers Chapters 5 through 13.

At the news of the goodness of God, the people adore Him; but the struggle against the power of evil is another matter. Satan will not let the people go, and God permits this resistance, for the exercise of faith, and for the

discipline of His people, and for the brilliant display of His power where Satan had reigned. We have to learn, and perhaps painfully, that we are in the flesh and under Satan's power; and that we have no power to effect our own deliverance, even with the help of God. It is the redemption of God in Christ's death and resurrection, realised in the power of the Spirit given when He had accomplished that redemption and had sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, that delivers; for forgiveness, and escape from judgment, is not deliverance. One refers to sins and God's righteously passing over them, the other to sin and its power.

Before the deliverance, when the hopes of the people are now awakened, the oppression becomes heavier than ever, and the people would have preferred being left quiet in their slavery. But the rights and counsels of God are in question. The people must be thoroughly detached from these Gentiles, who, to this end, are now become their torment under God's hand. Moses works signs. The magicians imitate them by the power of Satan, in order to harden Pharaoh's heart. But when the question is of creating life, they are forced to recognise the hand of God.

At last God executes His judgment, taking the firstborn as representatives of all the people. We have thus two parts in the deliverance of the people; in one, God appears as Judge, but satisfied through the blood that is before Him; in the other, He manifests Himself as Deliverer. Up to this last, the people are still in Egypt. In the first, the expiatory blood of redemption bars the way to Him as Judge, and it secures the people infallibly; but God does not enter within-its value is to secure them from judgment [See Note #1].

The people, their loins girded, having eaten in haste, with the bitter herbs of repentance, begin their journey; but they do so in Egypt: yet now God can be, and He is, with them. Here it is well to distinguish these two judgments, that of the firstborn, and that of the Red Sea. As matters of chastisement, the one was the firstfruits of the other, and ought to have deterred Pharaoh from his rash pursuit. But the blood, which kept the people from God's judgment, meant something far deeper and far more serious than even the Red Sea, though judgment was executed there too [See Note #2]. What happened at the Red Sea was, it is true, the manifestation of the illustrious power of God, who destroyed with the breath of His mouth the enemy who

stood in rebellion against Him-final and destructive judgment in its character, no doubt, and which effected the deliverance of His people by His power. But the blood signified the moral judgment of God, and the full and entire satisfaction of all that was in His being. God, such as He was, in His justice, His holiness, and His truth, could not touch those who were sheltered by that blood [See Note #3]. Was there sin? His love towards His people had found the means of satisfying the requirements of His justice; and at the sight of that blood, which answered everything that was perfect in His being, He passed over it consistently with His justice and even His truth. Nevertheless God, even in passing over, is seen as Judge; hence, so long as the soul is on this ground, its peace is uncertain though the ground of it be sure-its way in Egypt, being all the while truly converted-because God has still the character of Judge to it, and the power of the enemy is still there.

Note #1

Note here the expression, "When I see the blood, I will pass over." It is not said, when you see it, but when I see it. The soul of an awakened person often rests, not on its own righteousness, but on the way in which it sees the blood. Now, precious as it is to have the heart deeply impressed with it, this is not the ground of peace. Peace is founded on God's seeing it. He cannot fail to estimate it at its full and perfect value as putting away sin. It is He that abhors and has been offended by sin; He sees the value of the blood as putting it away. It may be said,. But must I not have faith in its value? This is faith in its value, seeing that God looks at it as putting away sin; your value for it looks at it as a question of the measure of your feelings. Faith looks at God's thoughts.

Note #2

As a figure this may be looked at as final judgment according to the estimate of sin in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus; for the people were brought to God, and the evil enemies come under death and judgment which, as accomplished in Christ, save us. But as the secret of God's dealings experimentally known in our souls, it has another sense; it begins the desert journey, though that has its full character only from Sinai. The path in the

wilderness forming no part of the counsels, but only of the ways of God; it may as to redemption be dropped but then Jordan and the Red Sea coalesce. The Red Sea is Christ's death and resurrection for us; Jordan our death and resurrection with Him, but here we have got into what is experimental.

Note #3

There is further a difference between the passover and the great day of atonement. Here the blood met the eye of God passing through the land in judgment. On the great day of atonement it purified His habitation from our defilements, and, we can say, opened up the way to God's throne and presence; gave us boldness to enter into the holiest by a new and living way. In the passover was added, as it had the character of first deliverance and forgiveness, the bitter herbs of judgment of sin in ourselves, and feeding on the slain Lamb, with loins girded and shoes on our feet, to leave the place of sin and judgment from which as the consequence of sin we had been fully sheltered.

Exodus Chapter 14

At the Red Sea God acts in power according to the purposes of His love; consequently the enemy, who was closely pursuing His people, is destroyed without resource. This is what will happen to the people at the last day, already in reality-to the eye of God-sheltered through the blood.

As a moral type, the Red Sea is evidently the death and resurrection of Jesus, so far as the real effecting of the work goes in its own efficacy, as deliverance by redemption, and of His people as seen in Him; God acting in it, to bring them, through death, out of sin and the flesh, giving absolute deliverance from them by [See Note #1] death, into which Christ had gone, and consequently from all the power of the enemy. As to our standing and acceptance we are brought to God: our actual place is thus in the world, become the wilderness on our way to glory. We are made partakers of it already through faith. Sheltered from the judgment of God by the blood, we are delivered, by His power which acts for us, from the power of Satan, the prince of this world. The blood keeping us from the judgment of God was the beginning. The power which has made us alive in Christ, who has gone

down into death for us, has made us free from the whole power of Satan who followed us, and, as to conscience, from all his attacks and accusations. We have done with the flesh as our standing, and Satan's power, and, brought to God, are in the world with Him. The world, who will follow that way [See Note #2], is swallowed up in it.

Considered as the historical type of God's ways towards Israel, the Red Sea terminates the sequel of events; and so for us. We are brought to God. Thus the forgiven thief could go straight to Paradise. As a moral type, it is the beginning of the christian path, properly so called; that is to say, the accomplishment of the redemption [See Note #3] by which the soul begins its christian course, but is viewed as in the world, and the world become the wilderness of its pilgrimage; we are not in the flesh.

Note #1

Jordan adds our death with Christ, and, as to our state subjectively, our resurrection with Him-analogous to the forty days He passed on earth. To this the teaching of Colossians answers. Hence heaven is in hope. Romans 3:20 to 5:11 gives Christ's death for sins, and resurrection for our justification; thence to the end of chapter 8, death to sin. Sin in the flesh is not forgiven, but condemned (Rom 8:3); but we as having died are not in the flesh at all, we are alive unto God through, or rather in, Jesus Christ. This takes us no farther than the wilderness, though passing through it as alive to God in Christ. In Romans we are not risen with Christ. That involves, as a consequence, our being identified with Him where He is; and so, by the Holy Ghost when we are sealed, union. In Colossians we are risen with Him, but not in heavenly places. Colossians treats of life, with a hope laid up for us in heavenly places; not at all of the Holy Ghost. In Ephesians 2 we are risen with Him and sitting in heavenly places in Him, and then begins the conflict with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, and testimony according to what is heavenly; so far this is Jordan and Canaan, and here the sealing and gift of the Holy Ghost is fully spoken of, and our relationship with the Father and with Christ, as sons, and as body and bride. Only Ephesians begins with our being dead in sins, so that it is a new creation; it is not death to sin. The blood-shedding, however, in one respect, has a more glorious character. God is glorified in it, though by crossing Jordan we are experimentally

placed higher. That too is the fruit of the blood-shedding, in which there is not only the bearing of sins to meet our responsibility, but a glorifying of God, so as to bring us withal into God's glory with Him, which is beyond all questions of responsibility.

Note #2

This is a solemn warning; for the worldlings, who call themselves Christians, do take the ground of judgment to come, and the need of righteousness, but not according to God. The Christian goes through it in Christ, knowing himself otherwise lost and hopeless; the worldling in his own strength, and is swallowed up. Israel saw the Red Sea in its strength, and thought escape was hopeless: so an awakened conscience, death and judgment. But Christ has died and borne judgment for us, and we are secured and delivered by what we dreaded in itself. The worldling, seeing this, adopts the truth in his own strength, as if there were no danger, and is lost in his false confidence.

Note #3

In itself, it is Christ's death and resurrection. But that is not only meeting the holiness of God's nature, which is the blood-shedding, but entering into the whole power of evil that was against us and making it null. Hence, though it be not our realising death and resurrection so as to be in heavenly places, we are owned as having died in Him, and He our life, so that we have left our old standing altogether. In Colossians, we are risen with Him; in Ephesians, also sitting in Him in heavenly places. Colossians is the risen man still on earth, the subjective state, what refers to heaven but is not there, as Christ Himself for forty days-Jordan crossed, but not Canaan taken possession of.

Exodus Chapter 15

Hereupon we enter the desert. They sing (chap. 15) the song of triumph. God has led them by His power to His holy habitation. But they are on this journey, not in Canaan. He will lead them into the place which He has made, which His hands have established. Their enemies shall be unable to oppose themselves to this. So with us. There is a third thing which is found in this beautiful song-the desire to build a tabernacle for Jehovah. This is one of the great privileges which are the result of redemption. God did not dwell with

Adam innocent, nor with Abraham, vessel of promise and root of the enjoyment of it. But when redemption was accomplished, on the one hand, God was fully revealed; and, on the other, man perfectly redeemed. Then God naturally, so to speak, comes to dwell with men as amongst them (Exo 29:46). Here it is an external deliverance; for us an eternal; but the principle, a blessed and important one, is clearly brought out. And note this desire is not our dwelling with God, though the thoughts are linked one with another, but His dwelling with us; and the heart's desire is that He should do so down here. It will never really be effectually so, till Verse 17 be accomplished (Exo 15:17); but the desire is good, like David's, and we are now builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. There are the three things: we are brought to God's holy habitation; there is the desire to prepare Him one; and, then, that which He has prepared. The tabernacle belonged to the wilderness; what they sing is the deliverance effected already by the power of God, and the hope of entering into the sanctuary which the hands of Jehovah have made [See Note #1].

The deliverance, then, of the people is accompanied by a full and entire joy, which, having the consciousness of this complete deliverance by the power of God, grasps the whole extent of His intentions towards them, and knows how to apply this same power to the destruction of all the power of the enemy [See Note #2]. They sing the deliverance of God, note, before a step has been taken in the desert. The soul, in connection with Egypt (that is in the flesh on the ground of a child of Adam), not only is responsible, but its position with God, dependent on its acting up to this responsibility, is still uncertain and in fear. The desert may be never so bitter and trying; but we are free and with God there (brought to His holy habitation), through the redemption and deliverance of God. But the redeemed one is looked at still as on the way to glory, not yet in possession of the promised dwelling-place of God. We are come to God's habitation, to God Himself, but the prepared place is future. Edom and Moab will be still as a stone, but the people have yet to pass over. This difference is important to notice. However, the redeemed soul is looked at in both ways; as in Christ, where as to acceptance all is settled-"as he is so are we in this world" giving boldness for the day of judgment (Jo1 4:17); and as in the wilderness, where faith is put to the test. For the wilderness is what the world is for the new man.

Remark here too some other important elements of the position of the people. First, it is a people. This till then there had never been: just men by grace, believers, called ones, there had been; now, though according to the flesh, these are a people of God on the earth. This was based on redemption wrought by God. Further, God, as we have seen, dwells amongst His people on earth when redemption is accomplished. That is the distinct fruit of redemption; He had not dwelt with innocent Adam; He had not with called Abraham; He does with redeemed Israel [See Note #3]. But thirdly, this dwelling of God, His presence, brings in the definite claim of holiness. Holiness becomes His house for ever. We do not find holiness mentioned in Genesis, if it be not sanctifying the sabbath day. The moment redemption is accomplished, He is glorious in holiness, and there is a holy habitation. All these are important principles.

Note #1

It is practically important to see that the wilderness is no part of God's purpose; of His ways, a most important part. They were brought to God by redemption-Christ's death and resurrection-but not in Canaan. The thief went straight to Paradise with Christ. He has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. See Exodus 3, 6 and 15, where there is no question of the wilderness; see on the other hand, Deuteronomy 8, where it is reviewed when through it. For the difference of our spiritual judgment of ourselves, and God's judgment of us, see Deuteronomy 9 and Num 23:21.

Note #2

The wilderness formed no part of the counsel of God as we have seen, and the song does not refer to it, to its sorrows or its joys, nor the provision for it. That, as far as revealed here, belongs to the book of Numbers.

Note #3

Exo 29:46.

Exodus Chapter 16

The following commentary covers Chapters 16 and 17.

But now the difficulties of the way arrive. They travel three days without water-a sad effect, in appearance, of such a deliverance; and then the water is bitter when they find it. If death has delivered them from the power of the enemy, it must become known in its application to themselves; bitter to the soul, it is true, but, through grace, refreshment and life, for "in all these things is the life of the spirit." It is death and the application of the cross to the flesh practically, after the deliverance; but the wood-Christ's part on the cross, I doubt not-makes it sweet, and refreshment too. Thereupon we have the twelve wells and seventy palm-trees [See Note #1] -types, it seems to me, of those living springs and of that shelter which have been provided, through instruments chosen of God, for the consolation of His people.

Here we have the principle of the people's responsibility and their obedience, put as a condition of their well-being under God's government. Still, however, the part of the history from the Red Sea to Sinai is always grace. The Sabbath-rest of the people-is established in connection with Christ, the true bread of life, who gives it. Then comes the Spirit-living waters which come out of the rock; but with the presence of the Holy Ghost comes conflict, and not rest. Yet Christ, typified here by Joshua, of whom mention is now made for the first time, places Himself spiritually at the head of His people. True rest is by Christ, the bread come down from heaven, and this comes first, before conflict, though man could not really enjoy it by that bread alone, that is Christ incarnate, without death and redemption coming in. Unless we eat the flesh and drink the blood, there is no life to taste and enjoy the bread. But, as yet, the people are characterised by redemption, and their exercises and blessings are under grace. The question of direct access to God is not yet brought before us. The rock indeed is smitten-as it must be to have the living water at all; but this is the figure of what is historical, the event of Christ's death, not the figure of access to God within the veil. It is all the earthly part of God's ways, even in grace.

However sure of victory they may be in fighting the Lord's battles, the entire dependence of the people, at every moment, on the divine blessing, is presented to us in this, that if Moses (who with the rod of God represents to us His authority on high) keeps not his hands lifted up, the people are beaten by their enemies. Nevertheless, Aaron the high priest, and Hur

(purity?) maintain the blessing, and Israel prevails. The cause was a hidden one. Sincerity, valiant efforts, the fact that the battle was God's battle, were, though right, of no avail-all depended upon God's blessing from on high. One would have thought, indeed, that if God made war, and unfurled the banner, it would soon be over; but no! from generation to generation He would make war upon Amalek. For, if it was the war of God, it was in the midst of His people.

Note #1

The Lord adopted this number in His two closing missions of the disciples to Israel.

Exodus Chapter 18

Up to this all was grace, though there were dependence and conflict. The murmurs of the people had only served to shew the riches of the grace of God, who displayed His sovereignty in giving them all they could desire; which appears so much the more striking, because afterwards the same desires, under the law, brought very bitter chastisements. At length, after this reign of grace, follows the order of divine government, what will be realised in the millennium (chap. 18), where the king in Jeshurun judges in righteousness, establishes order and government, the Gentiles eat and offer sacrifices with Israel, and acknowledge that the God of the Jews is exalted above all gods. All this was the acting of God's grace and power.

During the days of the deliverance of Israel Moses's wife had been sent away, as the church during the tribulation, and as the church will appear in the joy of Israel's deliverance, so now Zipporah appears again upon the scene, and we have not only Gershom, "a pilgrim in a foreign land," but a second son, Eliezer; "for," Moses said, "the God of my fathers was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." The application of this to the future deliverance of Israel is too evident to require any lengthened explanation.

Exodus Chapter 19

The following commentary covers Chapters 19 through 23.

But having thus terminated the course of grace, the scene changes entirely. They do not keep the feast on the mountain, whither God, as He had promised, had led them-had "brought them, bearing them, as on eagles' wings, to himself." He proposes a condition to them: If they obeyed His voice, they should be His people. The people-instead of knowing themselves, and saying, "We dare not, though bound to obey, place ourselves under such a condition, and risk our blessing, yea, make sure of losing it"-undertake to do all that the Lord had spoken. The blessing now took the form of dependence, like Adam's, on the faithfulness of man as well as of God. Still farther was it from being, as ours, based on a fulfilled and accomplished redemption; it was not even based on an unconditional promise, as in the case of Abraham [See Note #1]. The people, however, are not permitted to approach God, who hid Himself in the darkness. In fact they undertook obedience far from God, in a state in which they could not approach Him in that majesty to which obedience was due. Nevertheless God gave all possible solemnity to the communication of His law, and sees it good that the people should fear before Him; but what can fear do towards giving power at a distance from Him? The feeling may, perhaps, be proper; but it is not proper to undertake to obey in such a state. Terror, and the condition of obedience when the people are far from God-such is the character of the law, a rule sent out to man, taken in its largest character, when man cannot approach God, but a barrier is set up, and the question of righteousness as the way of life raised and claimed from man when man is a sinner.

Moses, when God had spoken to the people, and the people dared no more to hearken, drew near to the thick darkness, and received the instructions of God for the people-moral and general instructions-relating to their possession of the land, in case they should enter upon it according to the covenant of the law. Two things are pointed out as to worship-the work of man, and his order, in which his nakedness will certainly be made manifest; and they are equally and together prohibited by God.

We have (as we may observe by the way) a beautiful type (chap. 21) of the devotedness of Christ to the church and to His Father, and His love to us. Having served already faithfully His full service as man, during His lifetime,

He would remain a servant even in death for the sake of the Father, the church, and His people. He made Himself a servant for ever. (Compare John 13 for the present time, and Luke 12 even for glory).

Note #1

It is important for us to see that our standing before God does not rest on promise, but on accomplished redemption. All that concerned that and the basis of our assurance of faith is accomplished promise. Glory is in hope.

Exodus Chapter 24

The following commentary covers Chapters 24 and 25.

This covenant, made on condition of the obedience of the people, was confirmed by blood [See Note #1] (chap. 24.) The blood being shed, death having thus come in as God's judgment, the elders go up to enter into relationship with God. They see His glory, and continue their human and terrestrial life; they eat and drink.

But Moses is called near to God, to see the patterns of things more excellent, of heavenly things-of things which make provision indeed for the faults and the failures of God's people, but reveal to them the perfection and varied glories of Him whom they approach as His people. Only they still carry the stamp of the dispensation to which they belong, as is true of everything which is not founded on, and characterised by, association with a glorified Christ, the fruit of eternal redemption, the eternal expression of the counsels of God. That however in which the figures do not answer to the antitypes, as we know them, is not in the things themselves, but in the liberty of access, and the way that has been opened, and we admitted to them, things connected withal with far higher privileges [See Note #2]. The form of realisation was dependent on the actual state of things. Priesthood there was, but many priests because they were mortal; we, but one, because He dies not. The veil, behind which God was and which barred the way to God, is for us rent, and the way into the holiest open, so that the holy and the most holy place are for us in spirit thrown together. Still the general figure remains, and it does not appear that there will be a rent veil in the millennium, though all the blessing depends on Christ's death. Our place is

peculiar; associated with Christ as sons with the Father, and as members of His body; also heavenly in our hope and calling, as belonging to the new creation.

The glories in every way of Christ the Mediator are presented in the tabernacle; not precisely, as yet, the unity of His people, considered as His body, but in every manner in which the ways and the perfections of God are manifested through Him, whether in the full extent of the creation, in His people, or in His Person. The scene of the manifestation of the glory of God, His house, His domain, in which He displays His being (in so far as it can be seen); the ways of His grace and His glory; and His relationship through Christ with us-poor and feeble creatures, but who draw nigh unto Him-are unfolded to us in it, but still with a veil over His presence, and with God, not the Father [See Note #3]. The question is, How is man with God-can he approach? not love coming out to seek, and reception by the Father. God is on the throne justly requiring righteousness and holiness according to His own nature, not in sovereign love seeking men when in a state contrary to it. This, and the relationship of sons, make the whole basis different as to the relationship with God. But the moral ground of its possibility is found in these types, with the contrast already mentioned. Thus the tabernacle had two aspects-the glory which was His own, and the means of the relationship of God with His people. This is true even of the Lord Jesus. I can view His cross in its absolute perfectness, according to the thoughts and the heart of God; I can also find there that which answers all my wants and failures.

It would lead me too far to enter into the details of the construction of the tabernacle and its utensils, but I will make some general remarks. There is a certain appearance of disorder in the description, in that it is interrupted by the description of the vesture, and of the order of consecration, of Aaron. Thus the altar of burnt offering comes before the priest's vesture and consecration, the laver after. But this arises from what I have just said. There are things which are the manifestation of God, the place of meeting with Him and what belongs to it, others which refer to the presentation of man to God, and his service in these places; these things are linked together, for there are some manifestations of God which are the points and means of the approach of man, as the cross; for there indeed man in the height of his

sin, and God in infinite love and laying the ground of righteousness, and righteousness for us, meet. It is the central point in all moral history, where every issue of good and evil was settled for eternity; and while it is the point at which man draws nigh, there is something there besides the act of drawing near, or even of serving God [See Note #4].

The description of the tabernacle presents to us, first, the things in which God manifests Himself, as the object, however, of the spiritual knowledge of human intelligence (by faith of course); and then the priesthood, and that which man does or uses in drawing near to Him who thus reveals Himself.

First, then, there are the things which are found in the holy of holies, and the holy place: the ark of the covenant, the table of the shewbread, and the candlestick with seven branches. This is what God had established for the manifestation of Himself within the house where His glory dwelt, where those who enter into His presence could have communion with Him. In result none could enter into the most holy place, for the high priest only went in to place the blood on the mercy-seat, and not for communion then, and with a cloud of incense that he might not die [See Note #5] (see Heb. 9). But it was in itself the place of approach to God. Then we have the arrangement and structure of the tabernacle which enclosed all these things, and which was divided into two parts; and then the altar of burnt-offerings, and the court where it stood, to the end of Verse 19, chapter 27 (Exo 27:19). We will consider these things first. It is there the first part ends.

In that which follows there is what regards the action of man therein-of the priests; and God orders certain things to be brought in for that. This it is which consequently introduces the priesthood, which acted in it, and which alone could, in fact, so act. Hence the description of the priesthood interrupts the description of the various parts and furniture of the tabernacle; what follows it refers to its exercise.

The ark of the covenant was the throne where God manifested Himself, if any could go in in righteousness [See Note #6], and as the seat of His sovereignty over every living man-the God of the whole earth. It was also, however, the throne of relationship with His people. The law-the testimony of what He required of men-was to be placed there. Over it was the mercy-

seat, which covered it in, which formed the throne, or rather the basis of the throne, as the cherubim (formed of the same piece), which were its supporters, did its sides. In itself it seems to me a marvellous connection of the human and divine righteousness in the Lord Jesus. The law was hid in it, and, in divine government of man on earth, this formed the perfect rule; it was the measure of responsibility of man as a child of Adam, in its abstract foundations, which the Lord adduces-the perfection of creature relationship with God; and we know that the law was in Christ's heart. He was perfect in human obedience and love to His Father. He lived perfectly up to the responsibility of man according to God in His inner man [See Note #7]. But He also glorified God-all that God is in love, divine righteousness, truth, majesty. All God is was glorified by the Son of man, and not only the Son of man goes righteously into the glory of God, but God is fully revealed as the place of access for us in that character: righteousness is proved by His going to His Father. The shittim-wood and the tables of the law are there, but all is clothed with the gold-God's own righteousness is there too. It is with this communion is [See Note #8], only as yet the veil hid it within. The character as yet was a judicial throne. At that time man (save Moses owned in grace) could not go in, and God did not come out. Now He has come out in grace, clothing Himself in humiliation that He in perfect grace may be with us; and man is gone into the glory according to the title of an accomplished redemption.

The cherubim, throughout the Old Testament, wherever they act, are connected with the judicial power of God, or are the executors of the will of that power; and in the Apocalypse they are generally connected with providential judgments, and belong to the throne, but the seraphic character is connected with them there, so that the throne judges, not merely in present governmental judgment, but finally according to God's.

Here, then, God manifested Himself as the Supreme God in His moral being, armed with power to enforce respect to His laws, and to keep account of all that was done. This character of God in Himself also is why the blood-witness of all that had been done for those who were thus responsible, and satisfying all the moral nature of Him who sat there-was put upon the mercy-seat; but every year, a witness that the work which did that was yet

undone [See Note #9]. Nor was it exactly there that God was directly in connection with His people; but thence came forth the communications which were to be made to them: "And there will I meet with thee," said God to Moses, "and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all the things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." Moses, who receives the thoughts of God for the people, was there to have his intercourse with Jehovah, and that without the veil [See Note #10].

It was, then, the most intimate and most immediate manifestation of God, and that which came nearest to His very nature, which does not thus manifest itself. But it was a manifestation of Himself in judgment and in government [See Note #11], it was not as yet in man, neither according to man, but within the veil. In Christ we find Him thus, and then it is in perfect grace and divine righteousness, proved by man's place, and the latter only when the veil has been rent; till then Christ remained alone, for grace was rejected as well as law broken.

Outside the veil was the table with its twelve loaves and the golden candlestick. Twelve is administrative perfection in man-seven, spiritual completeness, whether in good or evil. The two are found outside the veil, inside which was the most immediate manifestation of God, the Supreme, but who hid Himself, as it were, yet, in darkness. Here was light and nourishment: God in power manifested in man; administrative power revealed amongst men, and, in historical fact, in connection with the twelve tribes. But faith recognises both in Christ, and the light of the Holy Ghost makes us know it, if priests, to enter into the holy place, before it is actually revealed in power, while all is otherwise darkness, and God is giving the light of the Holy Ghost [See Note #12]. The twelve tribes were, for the time being, that which answered externally to this manifestation. It is found in the new Jerusalem. The primary idea was the manifestation of God in the holy place in man, and by the Spirit.

Note #1

Death was the penal sanction, as it was also, because such, the delivering power in grace

Note #2

Hence in Hebrews you never have the Father and our relationship with Him, nor with Christ, and in what is found there is more contrast than comparison.

Note #3

We see the glory unveiled in the face of Jesus Christ and approach boldly, because the glory in His face is the proof of redemption and the perfect putting away of our sins, for He who bore them has them not on Him in the glory.

Note #4

We are apt to consider the cross simply in respect of our sins. In coming to God it is the only right, the only possible way. But when, at peace with God, we weigh what it is, we shall find every moral question brought to an issue there; man in absolute wickedness, that is, rejecting God in goodness with scorn and hatred; Satan's full and universal power over him; Man in perfectness in Christ-absolute obedience and absolute love to the Father; God in righteousness against sin in the highest way ("it became Him"), and infinite love to the sinner; all is brought out on the cross in Christ, and all to our blessing, and so that we should be in glory with Him, and like Him, as the fruit of the travail of His soul-a blessed portion.

Note #5

This was the result of the failure of the priesthood, in the person of Nadab and Abihu, which, as everything placed under man's responsibility (and all, save of course actual redemption, has been so) was immediate. So in the case of Adam, Noah, the law, here the priesthood, Solomon son of David, Nebuchadnezzar, and so, as Paul testifies, the church.

Note #6

But not, I think, separate from holiness, for it was in the holiest, and could not be if God was there as His dwelling, and not taking merely duty as the measure of what was accepted. But, while God Himself was to be approached who is holy, it was a throne, and judicial, and so righteous in character. Holiness is the character of a nature delighting in purity, and which repels evil. Righteousness Judges it with authority. It was not merely man's responsibility, but what God was.

Note #7

The first is the essence of creature perfection, adding the place of Son. The second, the actual responsibility of man's place measured by that place.

Note #8

Only now, as already noticed, there is another relationship entered into with the Father. This is relationship, not nature, though of course that nature is necessarily involved in it. Hence, but only after His resurrection, Christ says, I go to my Father and your Father, my God and your God. There is that with God according to the character here spoken of, but there is that with the Father in the relationship and liberty in which Christ Himself is, and into which we are adopted. This difference of nature and relationship is strikingly brought out in John's writings-grace, and what the divine nature makes necessary. See John 4 as to worshippers, and 1 John 1. The Father could not be revealed but by the Son. But also the veil was rent in the cross, and we are before God in divine righteousness according to what He is as such. In the full character of this as to both, we are in Him. Elsewhere I have touched on the difference of the sense of relationship with God as sons, and the knowledge of the Father as such, personally revealed in the Son. The first is Paul's ground, and he seldom goes beyond it; the latter, John's. The epistle to the Hebrews gives direct access to God in the holiest, but the Father is not found in it.

Note #9

Hence there was still an unrent veil.

Note #10

The communications of the Old Testament, and all that belongs to the law come directly from God, but do not belong to a system which gives direct access to Him.

Note #11

This is true; but, in its typical (or perhaps I should say spiritual) application, not in the letter, but in the spirit, there was another important element of truth in it. It was the place where God was approached not where He dealt with man's responsibility as man. This was at the brazen altar, the place of sacrifice, the first thing met, when man had to come as a sinner, when consequently what man ought to be was in question, what he ought to be for God surely, still what man ought to be as man. In coming to the mercy-seat in the holiest of all, what God is was in question. Man has to be meet for God's own presence, then, in the holiest. And in truth the rest was only testing man. He was not innocent in Paradise, and as a sinner could not come to God, according to what God is, being a sinner. It is only through the rent veil in a heavenly Paradise he can have to say to Him; though on the ground of the work then accomplished He will have an earthly people also, in whose heart the law will be written.

Note #12

Therefore it is that, in another sense, we have twelve apostles attached to the Lord in the flesh, and seven churches for Him who has the seven Spirits of God.

Exodus Chapter 26

Next we have the tabernacle itself, which was one, though separated into two parts. There were (as the word teaches us) two meanings in the tabernacle and in its form. In general it was where God dwelt and revealed Himself, hence, the heavens, God's tabernacle; and the Person of Christ, God's dwelling [See Note #1]. The heavenly places themselves, says the apostle, had to be purified with better sacrifices (Heb 9:23). So Christ has passed through the heavens, as Aaron up to the mercy-seat (Heb 4:14). Again, it is used in the same sense as a figure of the created universe (Heb 3:3-4), where it is also used as a whole as a figure of the saints, as the house

over which Christ is as Son. The veil was, we know on the same divine authority, the flesh of Christ, which concealed God in His holiness of judgment-in His perfectness as sovereign justice itself, but manifested Him in perfect grace to those to whom His presence revealed itself.

The tabernacle [See Note #2] itself was formed of the same things as the veil; figurative, I doubt not, of the essential purity of Christ as a man, and of all the divine graces embroidered, as it were, thereon. To this was also added cherubim, the figure, as we have seen, of judicial power [See Note #3], conferred, as we know, on Christ as man: God "will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained:" and again, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son . . . and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."

It seems to me that the other coverings point to Him also: that of the goat-skins to His positive purity, or rather to that severity of separation from the evil that was around Him, which gave Him the character of prophet-severity, not in His ways towards poor sinners, but in separation from sinners, the uncompromisingness as to Himself, which kept Him apart, and gave Him His moral authority, that moral cloth of hair which distinguished the prophet; that of the ram-skins dyed red points to His perfect devotedness to God [See Note #4], His consecration to God (may God enable us to imitate Him!); and that of the badger-skin to the vigilant holiness, both of walk and in external relationship, which preserved Him, and perfectly so, from the evil that surrounded Him. "By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Besides what may be called His Person, these things correspond to the new nature in us, the new man, and of Him, so far as born of the Holy Ghost at His incarnation-His birth in the flesh in which He was the perfect expression of it; but I speak of the thing itself in practice, or what is produced by the Spirit in us, and by the word.

Note #1

We may add, as Christians, "whose house are we." The body is never the subject in Hebrews: we are pilgrims walking by faith. Nor is the Father.

Note #2

If we examine the details more closely, it will be found that in the tent and veil there was no gold, but there were cherubim; in the ephod gold, but no cherubim; in the hangings before the holy place neither Within, in both holy place and holy of holies, all was gold. So Christ as man (and the veil we know was His flesh) had the judicial authority and will have it as man, not only in government, but in final divine judgment; but He was man, and walked as man; within all was divine The priesthood in its Aaronic character could not have the cherubim that is judicial authority in heaven, but His presence there is identified with divine righteousness. As He appeared outside down here all was perfect grace, but in outward appearance He took neither.

Note #3

When fully depicted, the cherubim shewed the powers of creation and God's attributes as displayed in the throne, in the four heads of the earthly creation: man, cattle, wild beasts, and birds; intelligence, stability, power, and rapidity of judgment. Man had made gods and idols of them; they formed the throne on which God sat.

Note #4

This is drawn from the occasions on which the ram was used in the sacrifices.

Exodus Chapter 27

In the court God meets the world (I do not speak of the world itself through which we walk: [See Note #1] this was the desert); but it is where those coming up out of the world draw near to God, where His people (not as priests or as saints, but as sinful men) draw near to Him. But in coming out of the world, it is an enclosure of God's, who is known only to those who enter therein. There the altar of burnt-offerings was first found; God manifested in justice as to sin, but in grace to the sinner, in His relationship with men, in the midst of them, such as they were. True, it was the judgment of sin, for without this God could not be in relationship with men; but yet it was Christ in the perfection of the Spirit of God who offered Himself a sacrifice, according to that justice, for sin, to put sinners in relationship with

God. He has been lifted up from the earth. Upon earth the question was as to the possibility of men's relationship with Him who is holy and living: that could not be. On the cross He is lifted up from the earth, rejected by the world; nevertheless He does not enter into heaven. Upon the cross Christ has been raised from this world-has left it; but He still remains presented to it, the object of faith as a full satisfaction to the justice of God, as well as the witness of His love, of the love withal of Him who has glorified all that God is in this act. He is the object still, I say, to the eyes of the world, though no longer on it, if, through grace, one goes there and separates from this world, while God in justice (for where has this been glorified as in the cross of Jesus?) can receive according to His glory, and even be glorified there, by the most wretched of sinners. As regards the approaching sinner, it was for his guilt and positive sins. In itself the sacrifice went much further, a sweet savour to God, glorifying Him.

It is here then that the altar of burnt-offerings is found, the brazen altar: God manifested in righteous judgment of sin (meeting however the sinner in love by the sacrifice of Christ) not in His being (spiritual and sovereign object of the adoration of saints), but in His relation with sinners according to His righteousness, measured [See Note #2] by what their sins were in His sight but where withal sinners present themselves to Him by that work in which, by the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost Christ has offered Himself without spot unto Him, has satisfied all the demands of His righteousness, and more, has glorified Him in all that He is, and has become that sweet-smelling savour [See Note #3] (of sacrifice) in which, in coming out of the world, we draw near to God, and to God in relation with those, sinners in themselves and owning it, who draw near to Him, but find their sins gone through the cross on their way; and, besides that, come in this savour of His sacrifice who made Himself a whole burnt-offering. It was not the sacrifice for sin burnt outside the camp: there no one approached. Christ was made sin by God, and all passed between God and Him; but here we draw near unto God.

All the manifestations of God thus arranged, we come now to the services that were rendered to Him in the courts, and in the places where He manifested Himself (Exo 27:20). The priests were to take care that the light

of the candlestick should be always shining outside the veil which hid the testimony inside, and during the night; it was the light of the grace and of the power of God by the Spirit that manifested God spiritually. It was not Himself upon the throne, where His sovereign being was keeping the treasure of His righteousness: that treasure Christ alone, in His Person and in His nature, could be Himself; nor was it righteousness in His relationship with sinful man outside the holy place, of which man's duty was the measure, and for which the law of God gave the rule; but it was a light, through which He manifested Himself in the power of His grace, but which applied itself to His relationship with man viewed as holy or set apart for service to Him, all the while that it was the manifestation of God. Essentially it was the Holy Ghost. This we see in the Apocalypse; but it might rest upon Christ as man, and that without measure; or it might act as from Him, and by His grace in others, either as the Spirit of prophecy, exclusively so before He came, or in some other way more abundant and complete, as was the case after His resurrection and glorifying, when the Holy Ghost Himself came down. But whatever these manifestations in men may have been in action, the thing itself was there before God, to manifest Him in the energy of the Spirit Himself; but the priesthood was essential here for us [See Note #4], in order to maintain this relation between the energy of the Holy Ghost and the service of men in whom He manifested Himself, in order that the light might shine (Exo 27:20-21). We find, therefore, immediately afterwards, the ordinance for the establishment of the priesthood.

Note #1

This would be the grace of Christianity, the seeking and saving what is lost. The figures of the tabernacle have to say to our coming to God, not to His coming to us. This is proper to Christianity. Hebrews takes up the figures we are speaking of, only with the changes introduced by Christianity even in these.

Note #2

Here we must remark that while final judgment refers to, and is measured by, our responsibility, forgiveness cannot be separated from our entrance into the presence of God (though in experience there may be progress as to

this), because it is by a work of Christ in which the veil was rent and God fully revealed. This the great day of atonement shewed, for there the blood was brought in to God, and yet it was for sins, but sins as defiling God's presence, as well as their being all carried away. But at the brazen altar there was both the love that gave and the value of the sacrifice, so that divine favour and complacency were brought in; "therefore doth my Father love me." Here sin-offerings and burnt offerings were offered, but they both referred to acceptance, negatively and positively, not simply to the holiness of God as the blood on the day of atonement. We have redemption by His blood, the forgiveness of sins, but according to the riches of His grace.

Note #3

It is interesting to know that the word burn is not at all the same in Hebrew for the sacrifice for sin, and for the burnt-offering: in the case of the latter, it is the same as for the burning of incense. I add here a word upon the sacrifices. In the sacrifice for sin burned outside the camp, God came out of His place to punish, to take vengeance for sin. Christ has put Himself in our place, has borne our sins, and died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. In the sacrifice for sin His blood was shed, our sins washed away. But this blood, infinitely precious, has been carried by the high priest inside the holiest, and put upon the mercy-seat; and thus the sure foundation of all our relationship with God has been laid; since, as to him that comes, sin exists no longer in the sight of God. But it is not only that God has fully reached sin in judgment in the death of Christ, but the work which Christ has accomplished has been perfectly agreeable to God. "I have glorified thee on the earth." God was glorified in Him; and God owed it, in justice to Christ, to glorify Him with His own self. The very being of God, in righteousness and in love, had been fully glorified (publicly before the universe) though the eye of faith alone is open to see it, and hence it was the part of this very righteousness to place Christ in a position that corresponded to the work. The love of the Father towards Him surely did not turn from this. Thus it was not only that the holiness which takes vengeance on sin, had already dealt with that sin in the death of Jesus, and had nothing more to do as to the putting of it away, but (for him who knows that in his Adam-nature there is no resource, and still less in the law) there is, by grace, through the faith of

Jesus, the righteousness of God Himself, a justifying righteousness-not merely the putting away of sins, but the positive value of all that Christ has done as glorifying God in this. We are accepted in the Beloved. God must raise Christ in consideration of that which He had done, and place Him at His right hand; and we are cleared from our sins according to the perfectness of God, between whom and Christ alone this work was accomplished, and, He being entered in as man in virtue of that work, since He has carried His blood there, we also-objects of that work-are in virtue of it accepted as He is. Thus then the sinner, believing in God, draws near to the brazen altar where the sacrifice is offered (the way being open to him by the blood), and (now we can add, the veil being rent) draws near unto God manifested in holiness, but according to the sweet-smelling savour of the sacrifice of Christ, an expression inapplicable to the sacrifice for sin burnt outside the camp (there He was made sin), according to all the sweet-smelling savour of the devotedness and obedience of Christ upon the cross, that is to say, unto death. Notice that, besides this, the priests draw near as priests, and even into the holy place. But of this more hereafter.

Note #4

For the full manifestation of it, in His personal and free manifestation down here, the glorifying of man (Christ) according to divine righteousness was needed, but this would take us out of our present subject. I must again recall that we have only the shadow, not the very image of the things. What is in the text refers to man under God's government down here as vessel of the Spirit. The priesthood supposes man in weakness here, and Christ, another Person for us on high.

Exodus Chapter 28

The garments were composed of everything that is connected with the Person of Christ in this character of priesthood; the breastplate, the ephod, the robe, the brodered coat, the curious girdle, and the mitre. The ephod was, par excellence, the priestly garment; made of the same things as the veil, only that there was no gold in the latter, and there were cherubims (but all enclosed inside the veil was gold, for God's government and judgment were in Christ as Son of man): in the ephod, gold but no cherubim [See Note

#1], because the priest must have divine righteousness, but was not in the place of rule and government (compare Num. 4). It signified also the essential purity and the graces of Christ. The girdle was the sign of service. The girdle was of the same materials as the ephod to which it belonged. Arrayed in these robes of glory and beauty, the high priest bore the names of the people of God in the fulness of their order before God; upon his shoulders, the weight of their government, and upon the breastplate on his heart-breastplate which was inseparable from the ephod, that is, from his priesthood and appearing before God. He also bore, according to the perfections of God's presence, their judgment before Him. He maintained them in judgment before God according to these things. They therefore looked for answers through the Urim and Thummim that were in the breastplate; for the wisdom of our conduct is to be according to this position before God. Upon the hem of the robe of the ephod [See Note #2] there was the desirable fruit, and the testimony of the Holy Ghost, which depended on the priesthood. I think that Christ, in entering heaven, made Himself heard through the Holy Ghost in His people-hem of His garment (compare Psalm 133); and He will make Himself heard through His gifts when He comes out also. Meanwhile He bears within also the iniquity of the holy things in holiness before the eternal God. (This holiness is upon His very forehead.) Not only His people, but their imperfect services are presented according to the divine holiness in Him.

The sons of Aaron were also clothed. Their natural nakedness was not to appear, but the glory and the honour with which God clothed them. The girdle of service also distinguished them.

The dress of the high priest demands a little further explanation. That which characterised him in service was the ephod, to which was inseparably attached the breastplate in which the Urim and Thummim were placed. With the ephod, therefore, the description begins. It was that in which, as thus clothed, he was to appear before God. It was made as the veil, with the addition of gold, for the veil was Christ's flesh, the actings of which could not be separated from what was divine; but in the exercise of priesthood He appeared before God within the veil, that is, figuratively, in heaven itself; and there what met, and had the nature and integral essence of (along with

the heavenly grace and purity) divine righteousness, had its place and its part as found in Him: as it is written, looking at Him in a somewhat different aspect, but alike as to this [See Note #3], "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The groundwork of the priesthood, then, was absolute personal purity in man, in its highest sense as a nature flowing intelligently from God, and in the priesthood glorified [See Note #4], every form of grace interwoven with it, and divine righteousness. It was service, and the priest was girded for it, but service before God. The loins were girt, but the garments otherwise down to the feet. This was especially the case with the robe all of blue.

But to pursue the ephod itself. The high priest represented all the people before God, and presented them to Him, and this in a double way. First, he bore them on his shoulders-carried the whole weight and burden of them on himself. Their names were all graven upon the two onyx stones which united the parts of the ephod; there was no wearing the ephod-that is, exercising the priesthood-without carrying the names of the tribes of Israel on his shoulders. So Christ carries ever His people.

Next, the breastplate was attached inseparably to the ephod, never to be detached. There also he carried the names of his people before the Lord, and could not, as thus dressed in the high priestly robes, be there without them. As it is expressed, he bore them on his heart before Jehovah continually. They shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before Jehovah. Thus are we borne ever before God by Christ. He presents us, as that which He has on His heart, to God He cannot be before Him without doing so; and whatever claim the desire and wish of Christ's heart has to draw out the favour of God, it operates in drawing out that favour on us. The light and favour of the sanctuary-God as dwelling there-cannot shine out on Him without shining on us, and that as an object presented by Him for it.

This was not, however, all. The Urim and Thummim were there-light and perfection. The high priest bore the judgment of the children of Israel in their present ways and as to their present relationship [See Note #5] upon his heart before Jehovah, and this according to the light and perfection of God. This we need, to get blessing. Stood we before God, such as we are, we must draw down judgment, or lose the effect of this light and perfection

of God, remaining without. But, Christ bearing our judgment according to these, our presentation to God is according to the perfection of God Himself-our judgment borne; but then our position, guidance, light, and spiritual intelligence are according to this same divine light and perfection. For the high priest inquired and had answers from God according to the Urim and Thummim. This is a blessed privilege [See Note #6].

Introduced into the presence of God according to divine righteousness in the perfection of Christ, our spiritual light, and privileges, and walk, are according to this perfection. The presentation in divine righteousness gives us light, according to the perfection of Him into whose presence we are brought. Hence we are said (1 John 1) to walk in the light as He, God, is in the light-a solemn thought for the conscience, however joyful a one for the heart, telling us what our conversation ought to be in holiness [See Note #7]. Christ bearing our judgment takes away all imputative character from sin, and turns the light which would have condemned it and us, into a purifying enlightening character, according to that very perfection which looks on us. This breastplate was fastened to the onyx stones of the shoulders above, and to the ephod above the girdle below. It was the perpetual position of the people, inseparable from the exercise of the high priesthood as thus going before the Lord. What was divine and heavenly secured it-the chains of gold above, and the rings of gold with lace of blue to the ephod above the girdle beneath. Exercised in humanity, the priesthood, and the connection of the people with it, rests on an immutable, a divine, and heavenly basis. Such was the priestly presentation of the high priest. Beneath this official robe he had a personal one all of blue.

The character of Christ too, as such, is perfectly and entirely heavenly. The sanctuary was the place of its exercise. So the heavenly Priest must Himself be a heavenly Man; and it is to this character of Christ, as here in the high priest, that the fruits and testimony of the Spirit are attached-the bells and the pomegranates. It is from Christ in His heavenly character that they flow; they are attached to the hem of His garment here below. His sound was heard when He went in and when He came out; and so it has been and will be. When Christ went in, the gifts of the Spirit were manifested in the sound

of the testimony; and they will be when He comes out again. The fruits of the Spirit, we know, were also in the saints [See Note #8].

But not only were there fruits and gifts. Worship and service-the presenting of offerings to God-was part of the path of the people of God. Alas! they also were defiled. It formed thus also part of the priest's office to bear the iniquity of their holy things. Thus the worship of God's people was acceptable, in spite of their infirmity, and holiness was ever before Jehovah in the offerings of His house-borne on the forehead of the high priest as His people were on the one hand presented to Him, and on the other directed by Him, according to His own perfections through the high priest [See Note #9].

The coat of fine linen was that which was more proper to himself and personal, what was within-personal purity, but embroidered, adorned with every grace. Such was, and indeed is, Christ.

The application of this to Christ is evident. Only we must remember the remark of the apostle; that is, of the Spirit of God, that these were the shadow of good things to come, not the very image of the things. Our High Priest, though He ever liveth to make intercession for us, is set down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. In spirit all this is ours; He presents us, receives grace and direction for us through the Spirit, and bears the iniquity of our holy things. All our service is accepted, as our persons, in Him. In the literal fact the high priest never used the garments of glory and beauty to go within the veil. He was to use them for going into the sanctuary [See Note #10]; but this was forbidden after Nadab and Abihu's death, save on the great day of atonement, and then he went in in other garments, namely, the linen ones. So death and entrance thereon were needed for us in Christ's fulfilment of the type. And, as regards the Jews, He is gone in in this last way, all this time being His absence in the sanctuary and they must wait, till He come forth, for the knowledge of the acceptance of the presentation of His work: we know it by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; He came out when the Lord went in, so that we anticipate in spirit the glory He is in. This constitutes essentially the Christian's place. In His glorious high priest's garments, it would have been the intercourse of an

accepted people through the high priest. Hence we have it in spirit, though this be not the whole truth as regards our position [See Note #11].

Note #1

See note, page 73.

Note #2

This was all of blue under the ephod; I suppose what was essentially heavenly, not the display of purity and graces in man.

Note #3

The priesthood in Hebrews is not for sins, save once in chapter 2 to make propitiation, because they are all put away, and we have no more conscience of them; it is for grace to help that we may not sin.

Note #4

Compare Jo1 2:29; Jo1 3:1-3, where remark how the Spirit passes from Godhead to manhood and manhood to Godhead in one person, according to the relationship spoken of. This is very beautiful, and makes us know what the new nature in us is, which flows from and is through the Holy Ghost, capable of appreciating Him. He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. So practically in detail: we all beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image (2 Corinthians 3), and actually we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is, and he that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself as He is pure.

Note #5

The great day of atonement met the guilt.

Note #6

We must remember that all this is not children with a Father, but man drawing near to God, only with Christ there for us. We are seen on earth (not in heavenly places), and He appearing in the presence of God for us, securing our place according to God (only for us the veil is rent, a very great difference); yet we are here on earth with a heavenly calling. Compare

Hebrews. There note, the priesthood, as now exercised on high, is not for committed sins, but for grace to help in time of need that we may not sin. The sins are borne and put away once and for ever as the basis of priesthood. See chapters 9, 10 and Heb 8:1, and Heb 1:3. Advocacy with the Father applies when we have to restore communion. Compare John 13 and Numbers 19.

Note #7

Dispensationally all was dark; God not revealed, the veil not rent; but I speak in the text of what was figured in the high priest's dress.

Note #8

The colours were blue, purple, and scarlet; heavenly, royal, and earthly glory. These, while belonging to Christ personally, were hidden when He went in, will be displayed when He comes out. We ought to display them characteristically, but as connected with a rejected Christ down here, bringing in the cross as the way to the crown.

Note #9

Our relationship with God is more immediate, the veil being rent. Still our High Priest is there for us, only set down on the right hand of God. The name of Father does not come in here.

Note #10

Their use is referred to going into the holy place before Jehovah when expressly spoken of, except the golden plate on the mitre or turban (Exo 28:29-30; Exo 28:35); and for the golden plate, see Exo 28:38. This characteristic use was forbidden: see Leviticus 16.

Note #11

We must always remember that we have only the shadow of good things to come. The great principles of the heavenly scenes are depicted, but not the change by the rending of the veil through which we enter ourselves boldly into the holiest, Christ being in glory at the right hand of God, and that

through an eternal redemption. Also, as noticed already, the Son not being come, the Father's name and relationship does not come in.

Exodus Chapter 29

For their consecration they were all washed. Aaron and his sons together always represent the church, not as gathered in a body (a thing hidden in the Old Testament), but in varied positions sustained individually before God. There is only one sanctification for all-divine life. Christ is the spring and the expression of it. We are made partakers of it, but it is one [See Note #1]. Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. But Aaron is first anointed separately without sacrifice, without blood. But his sons are then brought and with him are sprinkled with blood upon the ear, the thumb of the right hand, the great toe of the right foot [See Note #2]; obedience, action, and walk, being measured and guarded, both through the price, and according to the perfection of the blood of Christ. And then they were sprinkled with blood and with the oil of consecration, that is to say, set apart by the blood and by the unction of the Holy Ghost. The washing is the Spirit's work in the sanctifying power of the word; the anointing, His personal presence and energy in intelligence and power-God working in us.

And it is important to remark here that the seal of the Holy Ghost follows on the sprinkling with the blood, not on the washing with the water. That was needed. We must be born again, but it is not that cleansing which, by itself, puts us in a state God can seal: the blood of Christ does. We are thereby perfectly cleansed as white as snow, and the Spirit comes as the witness of God's estimate of the value of that blood-shedding. Hence, too, all were sprinkled with Aaron The blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost have set us in association with Christ, where He is according to the acceptableness of that perfect sacrifice (it was the ram of consecration), and the presence, liberty, and power of the Holy Ghost.

All the sacrifices were offered. That for sin, the burnt-offering of a sweet-smelling savour, the ram of consecration (which had the character of a peace-offering), accompanied by the meat-offering. These sacrifices have been explained elsewhere, and I only recall their import: Christ made sin for

us, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; first need of the soul, the sin-offering; Christ obedient unto death, devoting Himself to the glory of His Father-but according to God's nature, and the existence of sin, and that in us-and to us as belonging to the Father, the burnt-offering; the communion of God, of the Saviour, of the worshipper, and of the whole church, the peace-offering; and Christ devoted in holiness of life upon the earth, but proved even to death, the meat-offering.

It is to be observed that, when Aaron and his sons were sprinkled and anointed, the sons were anointed with him, and their garments also, and not he with them. Everything is connected with the Head. Aaron and his sons ate the things with which the atonement had been made. Such is our portion in Christ, the food of God whereby we dwell in Christ and Christ in us.

Then, connected with this priesthood, comes the perpetual sweet-smelling savour of the burnt-offering, in which the people present themselves before God-sweet-smelling savour which is found there, as it were in the midst of the people, according to the efficacy of which they stand in His presence round about. There God met the people. With the mediator He met above the ark without veil, and gave him commandment for the people according to His own perfection. Here He puts Himself on a level with the people, though speaking with the mediator. The dwelling of God in the midst of the people is sanctified by His glory. The tabernacle, the altar, the priests, are sanctified, and He dwells in the midst of the people surrounding Him. For this purpose had He brought them out of Egypt (Exo 29:46): a blessed picture of how, in a far higher and better way, God dwells in the midst of us [See Note #3]. He never dwelt with man, we may moreover remark, till redemption was accomplished: not with Adam innocent, nor with Abraham, or others; but, so soon as redemption is accomplished, He says, "They shall know that I am Jehovah their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them" (Exo 29:46).

Note #1

Aaron is always united to his sons in such types, for Christ cannot be separated from His own or they would become nought. But he had been

anointed personally without blood, a thing that has been verified in Christ's history. He was anointed while on earth; His disciples after His death. He received the Spirit for the church in a new way (Act 2:33), when He was risen from among the dead in the power of the blood of the eternal covenant: for it is according to the efficacy of that blood in behalf of His people, that He has been raised as their Head. In Christ's anointing on earth the Holy Ghost was witness to Christ's own personal righteousness and sonship; in ours He is the witness of our being clean through His blood, the righteousness of God in Him, and sons by adoption.

Note #2

Aaron is first simply anointed with the anointing oil poured upon his head (Exo 29:7). Then the sons are brought, and the ram of consecration brought, and some of its blood put upon Aaron's ear, and then on the tip of the ear of his sons, their right thumb and the great toe of the right foot. It might be supposed that it was only on Aaron's ear, but comparing with Lev 8:23 it would seem that "their," in Exo 8:20 here, includes Aaron. The great principle is our association with the blessed Lord; but He was obedient unto death, and no act or walk needed to be purified. The great principle for us is, that nothing should pass into the thought, no act be done, nothing occur in our walk which is not according to the perfection of consecration in Christ's sacrifice: we have its value upon us as to imputation, but here it is consecration, for both are in His blood.

Note #3

He dwells in us both individually and collectively by the Holy Ghost, Christ being gone up on high as man; so that the body of the sealed saint is a temple, and we are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. The last runs out now to all Christendom.

Exodus Chapter 30

The following commentary covers Chapters 30 and 31.

Having thus established the priesthood, and the relationship of the people with God who dwelt in the midst of them, the intercession of Christ in grace (all that was in Him ascending as a sweet savour to Jehovah), is presented

(Exo 30:1-10); and His service in making the manifestation of God in the Spirit shine forth (Exo 30:7). The people were identified with this service through redemption (Exo 30:11-16). They could neither be there, nor serve [See Note #1]; but they were all represented as redeemed. We then have the laver between the brazen altar and the tabernacle-purification [See Note #2] for communion with God, and for service to Him therein: the hands and feet (for us only the feet, as our walk alone is concerned), every time they took part in it.

Finally, we have the oil and the incense, the fragrant oil, which were for priests only: the nature of man, as man, or his natural condition in the flesh could not partake of it. The incense typifies the precious perfume of the graces of Christ, the savour of divine graces manifested, and a sweet odour in the world in man. He alone answers to it, though we may seek of and from Him to walk in them.

The institution and obligation of the sabbath was associated with the tabernacle of the congregation, as a sign, as it had been with every form of relationship between God and His people: for to be made partakers of God's rest is what distinguishes His people. In fine, God gave Moses the two tables of the law.

Note #1

The places were seen; but not our entrance into them, with all the rent veil brings with it.

Note #2

It was the washing of water by the word, the purification of the worshipper (first, of the heart) to constitute him one by being born again of the word. But this was not the laver. The priests had their bodies washed first to be such, but it is not said this was in the laver. There they washed their hands and their feet, when they had come into priestly service by the sacrifices, being already washed as to their bodies. That is, they were priests already when they washed their hands and feet in the laver; their bodies had been washed, and the consecrating sacrifices offered; and then in respect of practice, according to the purity of divine life by the Spirit, there was the

washing through the word, and especially if they had failed (compare John 13). For communion requires not only acceptance but purification. Without this the presence of God acts on the conscience, not in giving communion, but in shewing the defilement. Christ, even as a man, was pure by nature, and He kept Himself by the words of God's lips. With us, this purity is received from Him; and we must also use the word to purify ourselves. The idea and measure of the purity are the same for Christ and for us: "he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked"- "to purify himself, even as he is pure." For the ordinary relationship of the people, looked at as worshippers, it was the red heifer (Num. 19); its ashes, which typified this purification on failure, were put into running water; that is, the Holy Spirit applied, by the word, to the heart and conscience, the sufferings of Christ for sin to purify man; sufferings which could have all their moral and purifying power, since the ashes of separation shewed forth that sin had been consumed in the sacrifice of Christ Himself for sin, as to imputation, by the fire of the judgment of God. The blood of the heifer had been sprinkled seven times before the door of the tabernacle-the place where, we have just seen, God met the people; but to worship and serve there must be the actual purification according to the standard of Christ: at least as far as realised, so that the conscience be not bad. This being in His presence, and the judgment of failure, is the means of progress also. Note, the rules as to the red heifer, shew that however it came (for there were cases viewed merely humanly which were inevitable, but, they shew that however it came), God could not have impurity in His presence.

Exodus Chapter 32

Whilst God was thus preparing the precious things connected with His relationship with His people [See Note #1], the people, only thinking of what they saw in the human instrument of their deliverance, completely abandon Jehovah: a sad and early, but sure fruit of having undertaken obedience to the law as a condition, in order to the enjoyment of the promises. Aaron falls with them.

Such being the state of the people, God tells Moses to go down; and now everything begins to be put on another footing. God, in His counsels of grace, has not only seen the people when they were in affliction, but in their

ways. They were a stiff-necked people. He tells Moses to let Him alone, and that He would destroy them, and make of Moses a great nation. Moses takes the place of mediator, and, true to his love for the people as God's people, and to the glory of God in them, with a self-denial which cared only for this glory, sacrificing every thought of self, intercedes in that magnificent pleading which appeals to what that glory necessitates, and to the unconditional promises made to the fathers [See Note #2]. And Jehovah repented. The character of Moses shines in all its beauty here, and is remarkable amongst those which the Holy Ghost has taken pleasure in delineating, according to the precious grace of God, who loves to describe the exploits of His people, and the fruit they have borne, though He Himself is the source of them.

But it was all over with the covenant of the law; the first and fundamental link-that of having no other gods-was broken on the part of the people. The tables of the covenant never even came into the camp on the simple ground of law. The people had made a complete separation between themselves and God. Moses, who had not asked God what was to be done with the law, comes down. His exercised ear, quick to discern how matters stood with the people, hears their light and profane joy. Soon after he sees the golden calf, which had even preceded the tabernacle of God in the camp, and he breaks the tables at the foot of the mount; and, zealous on high for the people towards God because of His glory, he is below on earth zealous for God towards the people because of that same glory. For faith does more than see that God is glorious (every reasonable person would own that); it connects the glory of God and His people, and hence counts on God to bless them in every state of things, as in the interest of His glory, and insists on holiness in them, at all cost, in conformity with that glory, that it may not be blasphemed in those who are identified with it.

Levi, responding to Moses's call, says to his brethren, the children of his mother, "I have not known you;" and consecrates himself to Jehovah. Moses now, full of zeal though not according to knowledge, but which was permitted of God for our instruction, proposes to the people his going up, and "peradventure" he shall make an atonement for this sin. And he asks God to blot him out of His book rather than that the people should not be

forgiven. God refuses him; and, while sparing them through his mediation, and placing them under the government of His patience and long-suffering, puts each one of them under responsibility to Himself-that is, under the law, declaring that the soul that sinned He would blot out of His book.

Thus the mediation of Moses was available for forgiveness, as regards government, and to put them under a government, the principles of which we shall see by-and-by; but it was useless as regards any atonement which would protect them from the final effect of their sin (its effect as regarded their eternal relationship with God), and withdraw them from under the judgment of the law [See Note #3]. God spares them and commands Moses to lead the people to the place of which He had spoken, and His angel should go before him. What a contrast do we here remark, in passing, with the work of our precious Saviour! He comes down from above-from His dwelling-place in the glory of the Father-to do His will, and did it perfectly; and (instead of destroying the tables, the signs of this covenant, the requirements of which man was unable to meet), He Himself bears the penalty of its infringement, bearing its curse; and, having accomplished the atonement before returning above, instead of going up with a cheerless "peradventure" in His mouth, which the holiness of God instantly nullified, He ascends, with the sign of the accomplishment of the atonement, and of the confirmation of the new covenant, with His precious blood, the value of which was anything but doubtful to that God before whom He presented it. Alas! the church has but too faithfully reflected the conduct of Israel during the absence of the true Moses, and attributed to providence what she had fashioned with her own hands, because she would see something.

Note #1

The tabernacle had a double character. It was the manifestation of the heavenly things, and a provision for a sinful people to be brought near again to God there. It is interesting to consider the tabernacle under another aspect; for, as a pattern of heavenly things, it is of the highest interest. First, it signifies the heavens themselves; for Christ is not entered into the tabernacle, but into heaven itself. In a certain sense, even the universe is the house of God; but, moreover, the unity of the church as a heavenly building is presented by it: we are His house, the tabernacle of God in Spirit. These

two meanings are closely connected in the beginning of Hebrews 3—Christ, God, has built all things, and we are His house. He fills all in all, but He dwells in the church; it is a concentric circle, although quite different in its nature. Compare the prayer in Ephesians 1, which also connects these two things under the headship of Christ, and still more distinctly in Ephesians 3; Ephesians 1 being headship, not dwelling, though the relationship be the same. Compare Eph 4:4-6, though there it is in the form of Spirit, Lord, and God, that is, not simply dwelling in. What most fully answers is the prayer of Ephesians 3, where, note, "height," &c., is not of the love, but of the whole scene of God's glory, we being at the centre to look out into it all, because Christ, who is the centre, dwells in us. In another point of view, the person and the fulness of Christ Himself are there; for God was in Him, and thus the rending of the veil is applied by the apostle to the flesh of Christ, or, if you please, the veil itself; "through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." It is evident that the dwelling place of God is the central idea of these things, just as a man lives in his house, in his property, &c.

Note #2

This is a universal principle, where the full restoration of Israel is in question. Solomon, Nehemiah, and Daniel only go back to Moses; an important remark as to the fulfilment of God's ways toward Israel.

Note #3

Hence it is that this revelation of God, though the character proclaimed be so abundant in goodness, is called by the apostle (2 Corinthians 3) the ministration of death and condemnation. For if the people were still under the law, the more gracious God was, the more guilty they were.

Exodus Chapter 33

The following commentary covers Chapters 33 and 34.

We have now to examine a little what was taking place among the people, and on Moses's part, the faithful and zealous witness, as a servant of God in His house; for we shall find a new mediation going on peacefully, if one may so speak, and holily, weighing by faith, these relationships where the mercy and the justice of God meet in their application to His government. It is not

the indignation of holy wrath, which had indeed its place at the sight of the evil, while it knew not what to do-for how put the law of God beside the golden calf? Jehovah says that He will send an angel, and that He will not go in the midst of the people, seeing it is stiff-necked, lest He should destroy them by the way. But I will state succinctly the facts connected with this new intercession, which are of touching interest.

God had first said that He would come up in a moment in the midst of them to destroy them. This present excision of the people in judgment, Moses's intercession had averted, and Jehovah calls upon Israel now to put off their ornaments, that He might know what to do unto them. Holy grace of God! who, if He sees the insolence of sin before His eyes, must strike, but wills that the people should at least strip themselves of that, and that He may have time (to speak the language of men) to reflect as to what He should do with the sin of a people now humbled for having forsaken Him. However, God does not forsake the people. Moses enters holily, and by the just judgment of conscience, into the mind of God by the Spirit; and, before the tabernacle of the congregation was pitched, he entirely leaves the camp, and makes a place for God outside the camp, afar off from the camp, which had put a false god in His place, and changed their glory into the similitude of an ox which eateth grass. He calls it the tabernacle of the congregation-the meeting-place between God and those who sought Him. This name is in itself important, because it is no longer simply God in the midst of a recognised assembly, which was one of the characters we have already observed connected with the tabernacle. [See Note #1] Moses being outside the camp, God now declares that He will not go up in the midst of them, lest He should destroy them by the way, as He had threatened. Moses begins his intercession, having taken an individual position, the only one now of faithfulness to God; but his connection with the people being so much the stronger by his being nearer to God, more separated unto Him. This is the effect of faithful separation when it is for God's glory, and one is brought near to God in it. It must be remarked here, that God had taken the people at their word. They had said, acting according to their faith, or rather to their want of faith, "This Moses that brought us up out of Egypt." God says, "Thy people, which thou broughtest out of Egypt, have corrupted themselves." Hence God says to Moses, "Thou," addressing Himself to the mediator.

Moses says to God, "Thy people." This earnest power of faith does not, though separating from evil, loose God from this blessed claim (Exo 32:1; Exo 32:7; Exo 32:12-34). Afterwards, however, the people having stripped themselves of their ornaments, and Moses being in the position of mediator, God says (Exo 33:1), "Thou and the people which thou hast brought up." [See Note #2] Everything now hangs upon the mediator. Moses having taken his place outside the camp, God reveals Himself to him as He never had done before. The people see God standing at the door of the tabernacle which Moses had pitched; and they worship, every man at his tent door. Jehovah speaks unto Moses face to face, as a man speaks unto his friend. We shall see that it is to these communications that God alludes when He speaks of the glory of Moses (Num 12:8), and not to those on Mount Sinai. Moses, as mediator in the way of testimony, goes into the camp; but Joshua, the spiritual chief of the people (Christ in Spirit), does not depart out of the tabernacle [See Note #3] Moses now recognises what God had told him, that he has to bring up the people; he is there as the mediator on whom everything depends. But he dares not entertain the thought of going up alone, of going up without knowing who would be with him. God has fully acknowledged him in grace, and he desires to know who will go before him. He therefore asks, since he has found grace (for so God had told him), that he may know His way, the way of God; not only to have a way for him (Moses) to get to Canaan, but "thy way;" thus will he know God, and in His path and conduct, will find grace in His sight. God replies that His presence shall go, and He will give rest to Moses: the two things he perfectly needed as crossing the wilderness. Moses then brings in the people, and says, "Carry us not up hence," and that "we have found grace, I and thy people." This also is granted of Jehovah; and now he desires for himself to see the glory of Jehovah; but that face which is to go and lead Moses and the people, God cannot shew unto Moses. He will hide him while He passes by, and Moses shall see His back parts. We cannot meet God on His way as independent of Him. After He has passed by, one sees all the beauty of His ways. Who could have been beforehand in proposing such a thing as the cross? After God of Himself has done it, then all the perfectness of God in it overflows the heart. God then lays down two principles: His sovereignty, which allows Him to act in goodness towards the wicked-into this He

retreats that any may be saved-for in justice He would have cut off the whole people: and the conditions of His government under which He was putting the people, His character such as it is manifested in His ways towards them. Hid whilst He passes by, Moses bows down at the voice of God, who proclaims His name and reveals what He is as JEHOVAH. These words give the principles contained in the character of God Himself in connection with the Jewish people-principles which form the basis of His government. It is not at all the name of His relationship with the sinner for his justification, but with Israel for His government. Mercy, holiness, and patience, mark His ways with them; but He does not clear the guilty. Moses, ever bearing the people of God on his heart, beseeches God, according to the favour in which he stands as mediator, that the Lord Himself, thus revealed, may go up in their midst; and this, because they were a stiff-necked people. How should he bring such a people safe through without Him? The relationship between Moses personally and God was fully established, so that he could present the people such as they were, because of his (Moses's own) position; and, consequently, make of the difficulty and sin of the people a reason for the presence of God, according to the character He had revealed. It is the proper effect of mediation; but it is exceedingly beautiful to see, grace having thus come in, the reason God had given for the destruction of the people, or at the very least for His absence, becoming the motive for His presence [See Note #4]. It, no doubt, supposed forgiveness as well. This Moses asks for, and adds, in the consciousness of the blessing of the name and being of God, "Take us for thine inheritance." In answer to this prayer, God establishes a new covenant with the people. The basis of it is complete separation from the nations which God was going to drive out from before the people. It supposes the entrance of the people into Canaan in virtue of the mediation of Moses, and the presence of God with the people consequent upon his intercession. He is commanded to maintain their relationship with Him in the solemn feasts under the blessing and safeguard of God. It is well to have the order of facts clear here as to Moses's position. He broke the tables; the Levites at his summons slay their friends and relations; and then he pitches the tabernacle far off from the camp. There the cloud comes down (Exo 33:9). There the basis of all was laid, first in absolute sovereign grace, and then in the character of Moses's

personal relationship. This was at the door of the tabernacle outside the camp. Then chapter 34 he goes up again, and there, he being in this relationship, quite a new governmental covenant is made, founded on God's character mediatorially, and the law put into the ark. They were put back in principle under law; real atonement could not be made, of course, by Moses (Exo 34:10-17). But Israel was never directly and properly under the covenant of the law, but mediatorially under Exo 34:5-10; though the commandments were, of course, before them as their rule. But this new covenant of chapter 34 was what they were under as to the law; and hence they, as under the law, were apostate and left of God before they got it; and Moses and the cloud of God's presence outside the camp. People sought the Lord and went there. Utter separation from all mixture with the idolatrous people, and consecration, characterises the new covenant of chapter 34. In chapter 23 they were told to destroy their altars and serve Jehovah who would cut these nations off But the covenant is not so characterised. It is of moment to see that God retreats into His own sovereign grace to spare them. But this was at the door of the tabernacle and with Moses alone; the covenant of gracious government was based on it. That was on the mount. The people were only on that ground. There was no real basis of relationship; the law, which would have been one, broken, and no atonement made, nor could be. Moses had a special revelation of grace. But this seems to have been personal and unrecorded. I have rather enlarged upon these conversations of Moses with the people, because (and it is very important to remark it) Israel never entered the land under the Sinai covenant, that is, under simple law (for all this passed under Mount Sinai); it had been immediately broken. It is under the mediation of Moses that they were able to find again the way of entering it. However, they are placed again under the law, but the government of patience and grace is added to it. In Deu 10:1, we see there is no longer question of introducing the law openly into the camp where God had been dishonoured. It was to be put into the ark, according to the predetermined plans of God [See Note #5], arranged to enable the people, miserable as they were, to draw near unto Him, though only outside unto the brazen altar. Moses abides there with Jehovah. There was enough in the contemplation of what God was, as He had revealed Himself, to occupy him. He had not now to be occupied with the instructions

[See Note #6] God was giving him on the details of the tabernacle, but with God according to the revelation He had made of Himself; he neither ate nor drank; he was in a state above nature, where the flesh could not intermeddle, in some sort apart from humanity [See Note #7]. The Lord writes His law anew on the tables which Moses had prepared. But the effect of this communion with God was manifest; the skin of his face shone when he came down. However, here it was a glory as it were external and legal, not like that of Jehovah Himself in the Person of Jesus. Thus Israel could not behold it. We are in quite a different position: for us, there is no longer a veil; and we behold with open (that is unveiled) face the glory of the Lord. For the glory now is not applied to make good the law in the conscience; for the glory in the face of Moses did this, only the people consequently could not bear it [See Note #8], nor consequently understand the figures of grace: the law (as rule of human righteousness) being broken and gone as ground of relationship with God, and laid up in the ark, they turned the figures of grace into law, as men do. The glory we see is the proof of the putting away of sins and divine righteousness, for it is seen in Him who bore our sins and is that righteousness for us. We are rather in the position of Moses when he entered into the most holy place.

Note #1

He anticipates by faith, jealous of God's glory, the tabernacle which was to be set up according to the thoughts and commandments of God, which he had seen in communion with Jehovah. That was indeed the principal thing; but it was without the camp, and a sort of disorder in the eyes of men, and was without the ornaments and the forms commanded of God in the tabernacle, and there was not one express word of God for it to be done. Nevertheless, the presence of God was there, and the main thing for faith was there; that is, a tent where God was seen, and where He might be sought, even in a manner in which faith was more manifest than when the tabernacle was regularly set up. Then the pillar came down as a blessed testimony to the faith of Moses.

Note #2

And Moses really represents Christ here, not Christ outside the camp.

Note #3

This is the place we have in spirit, but it is sometimes hard to connect the two.

Note #4

We know this ourselves; my sinfulness in itself would be the reason for God's giving me up. But now I am in grace, I can plead it with God as a reason, blessed be His name, for His going with me; never should I overcome and get safe across the wilderness, if He was not with me. Surely the flesh is there. But it is wondrous grace. Nothing shews more clearly the difference between justifying forgiveness, and governmental mercy, than this part of Israel's history. God forgives, but does not clear the guilty-atonement was not made: no doubt, even in possibility of government all was based on it.

Note #5

Thus Christ was in reserve, though at the same time fore-ordained, even from eternity. He was only manifested as the true propitiation when the law had been presented, and man had failed under it. Its only existence now is, as giving great recognised principles of the righteousness required from man (in its highest elements we may add from the creature) but hidden and buried in Him who gives His character to the throne of God. But it was necessary to break or hide those tables (terrible to man) of the perfect but inflexible law of God. God will write them on the heart of once disobedient Israel in the latter day.

Note #6

The little that was said to Moses in the covenant was prohibitory of all association with the nations strangers to Jehovah, and the establishment of links with Him, consecration to Him in everything as redeemed, absence of leaven, and I think the prohibition of what was devilishly against nature. What was of nature as of God, was not to be violated There was redemption, as the key to all connected with the judgment of evil, but also the firstfruits of nature were to be consecrated to God, and the relationship of nature not violated.

Note #7

Here, however, is seen the excellency of the Lord Jesus, who in all things must have the pre-eminence Moses, naturally far off, is separated from his natural state, in order to draw near unto God. Christ was naturally near there, and more than near; He separates Himself from nature to meet the adversary on the behalf of man.

Note #8

It had the character of claim on them coming with the law from above, and thus they could not see the prefigurement of Christ, when it came out either (see 2 Cor. 3). The whole position is of all importance. On the ground of law, that is, man's responsibility, all being gone, God retreated into His own sovereignty (Moses pleading as to Israel God's unconditional promises), and Israel were placed under the governmental name and dealings of God as they are to this day, only having since rejected Christ and promise and grace.

Exodus Chapter 35

The following commentary covers Chapters 35 through 40.

Besides the separation of Israel from the inhabitants of the land wherein they were to dwell, which is found in chapter 34, there is in chapter 35 another part of the instructions of Moses which he gave when he came down. It is not now the certainty of entering, and the conduct suited to those who have found grace, abstaining from all that might tend to bring sin back when they were enjoying the privileges of grace; Moses speaks to them of the portion of the people under the influence of that communication which the mediator, as head of grace, had established. The sabbath [See Note #1] is appointed; and, moreover, His people (grace thus manifested) are encouraged to shew their goodwill and their liberality in everything that concerned the service of God. Consequently we find the manifestation of the spirit of wisdom and of gift in service; God calling specially by name those He designed more particularly for the work. This was done liberally: they brought more than was sufficient; and every wise-hearted man worked, each the things for which he was gifted; and Moses blessed them.

Thus was the tabernacle set up, and everything put into its place, according to the commandment of God. Thereupon (which we might have remarked before), the whole is anointed with oil. Christ was thus consecrated, anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power; and, moreover, Christ having made peace by His blood, having all things to reconcile (being the One who first descended, and afterwards ascended, to fill all things with His presence, according to the power of redemption in righteousness and love divine), the unction of the Holy Ghost must carry the efficacy of this power in redemption everywhere. Therefore had the tabernacle been sprinkled with blood. It is the power of the presence of the Holy Ghost which is spoken of, not being born again. God takes possession of the tabernacle by His glory, and the cloud of His presence and of His protection becomes the guide of the people (now forgiven), happy, and so greatly blessed, in being under the government and guidance of God, and at the same time His habitation and His inheritance. But all still depended on human obedience, the people's obedience, nor was atonement, though revealed in figure, accomplished in fact.

Note #1

The sabbath is always found whenever there is any principle whatever of relationship established between the people and God; it is the result proposed in every relation between God and His people, that they enter into His rest. It is to be noted that, while the people are distinctly put under law, the principle of the second tables was law after present forgiveness and mercy. This is exactly the ground Christians want to be upon now-to bring in law after grace and mercy. But this it is Paul calls the ministration of death and condemnation. For, the first time he went up, his face did not shine; and it is to that the apostle refers in 2 Corinthians 3.

LEVITICUS

Introduction to Leviticus

The Book of Leviticus is the way of drawing near to God, viewed as dwelling in the sanctuary, whether in respect of the means of doing so, or of the state in which men could; and therewith, consequently, especially the subject of the priesthood; that is, the means established of God for those outside the sanctuary drawing near unto Him; and the discernment of the defilements unbecoming those who were thus brought into relationship with God; the function of discerning these being, in any case that rendered it necessary, a part of the service of the priesthood. There are also in Leviticus the several convocations of the people in the feasts of Jehovah, which presented the special circumstances under which they drew near unto Him; and, lastly, the fatal consequences of infringing the principles established by God as the condition of these relationships with Him.

Here the communications of God are consequent upon His presence in His tabernacle, which is the basis of all the relationships we are speaking of. It is no longer the lawgiver giving regulations from above, to constitute a state of things, but one in the midst [See Note #1] of the people, prescribing the conditions of their relationship with Him.

But whatever be the nearness and the privileges of the priestly position, the sacrifice of Christ is ever that which establishes the possibility and forms the basis of it. Hence the book begins with the sacrifices which represented His one perfect sacrifice. As presenting the work of Christ in its various characters and diverse application to us, these typical sacrifices have an interest that nothing can surpass. We will consider them with some little detail.

The types which are presented to us in the scriptures are of different characters; partly, of some great principle of God's dealings, as Sarah and Hagar of the two covenants; partly, they are of the Lord Jesus Himself, in different characters, as sacrifice, priest, etc.; partly, of certain dealings of

God, or conduct of men, in other dispensations; partly, of some great future acts of God's government.

Though no strict rule can be given, we can say in general that Genesis furnishes us with the chief examples of the first class; Leviticus, of the second, though some remarkable ones are found in Exodus; Numbers, of the third: those of the fourth class are more dispersed.

The employment of types in the word of God is a feature in this blessed revelation not to be passed by. There is peculiar grace in it. That which is most highly elevated in our relationship with God almost surpasses, in the reality of it, our capacities and our ken, though we learn to know God Himself in it and enjoy this by the Holy Ghost. In itself, indeed, it is needful that it should surpass infinitely our capacities, because, if I may so speak, it is adapted to those of God, in respect of whom the reality takes place, and before whom it must be effectual, if profitable for us. All these profound and infinite objects of our faith, infinite in their value before God or in the demonstration of the principles on which He deals with us, become, by means of types, palpable and near to us. The detail of all the mercies and excellencies which are found in the reality or antitype are, in the type, presented close to the eye, with the accuracy of Him who judges of them as they are presented to His, but in a manner suited to ours, which meets our capacity; but for the purpose of elevating us to the thoughts which occupy Him Christ, according to the mind of God, in all His glory, is the picture presented. But we have all the lines and explanations of what is contained in it, in that which we hold in our hand-of Him who composed the great reality. Blessed be His name!

To apply this to the sacrifices in the beginning of Leviticus, the establishment of the tabernacle embraces two points quite distinct,-the display of the plans of God in grace [See Note #2], and the place of access to Him, and also the means of meeting the necessity and sin which gave occasion for its present exercise. All its structure was according to a pattern given in the mount-a pattern of heavenly things including the intercourse between heaven and earth, and shews forth the order which finds its accomplishment in the better tabernacle not made with hands. But the economy of the tabernacle was only actually set up after the sin of the

golden calf, when the jealousy of God against sin had already broken forth; and His grace was ministered from the throne in the sanctuary by offerings which met transgression, and transgression which in result barred the entrance of the priests at all times into the sanctuary, but supplied in grace all that met the need of a sinful people.

Hence also it is that the first mention we have of the tabernacle is upon the occasion of the sin of the golden calf, when Moses's anger waxed hot against the mad impiety which had rejected God, before they had received the details and ordinances of the law of Moses, or even the ten words from the mountain. Moses took the tent, and pitched it without the camp, far off from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation, though that really was not yet erected; and all that sought Jehovah went forth to the tabernacle of the congregation without the camp. It was a place of meeting for God and those among the people who sought Him. In the law there was no question of seeking God. It was the communication of God's will to a people already assembled, in the midst of whom God manifested Himself, according to certain demands of His holiness. But when evil had come in, and the people as a body had apostatised and broken the covenant, then the place of assembly, where God was to be sought, was set up. This was before the tabernacle, as regulated according to the pattern shewn in the mount, was set up; but it established the principle on which it was founded in the most striking manner.

The order of the tabernacle as originally instituted was never carried out, as the law in its original character never was brought in. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire the first day, and Aaron was forbidden the holiest save on the great day of atonement in another way. The tabernacle itself was set up according to the pattern, but the entrance to the inner sanctuary was closed. What was done referred to the state of sin, and was provisional, but a provision for sin, only not a finished work as we have it.

This meeting of Jehovah with the people, or the mediator, was twofold: apostolic, or sacrificial; that is, for the purpose of communicating His will; or of receiving the people in their worship, their failures, or their need, even as Christ Himself is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession-expressions which allude to the circumstances of which we treat. Jehovah's presence in

the tabernacle, for the communication of His will (with which we have to do only inasmuch as what occupies us is an example of it [See Note #3], is thus spoken of in Exodus 25, 29. In chapter 25, after describing the structure of the ark and its appendages in the most holy place, it is said, "And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony which I will give thee. And there I will meet with thee [Moses], and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment with the children of Israel." This was for the mediator with Jehovah alone in secret. In chapter 29 we read, "A continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before Jehovah: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. And there will I meet with the children of Israel." That is where, though through a mediator, as all was now since the law was broken, Jehovah met the people, not Moses alone, with whom He communicated from between the cherubim in the most holy place.

On this ground Leviticus commences.

Note #1:

This is the character in which God puts Himself thus into relationship. Consequently most of the directions given suppose those to whom they apply to stand already in the relation of a people recognised of Him as His people. But the people being really without, and the tabernacle presenting the position in which God was putting Himself in order to be approached, the instructions which are given in cases supposing the people or the individuals to be thus placed, furnish those who are without with the means of drawing near to God, when they are in that position, though no previous relationship have existed. It is very important to observe this: it is the basis of the reasoning of the apostle, in Romans 3, for the admission of the Gentiles and so of any sinner whomsoever. It is true, nevertheless, that most of the directions apply to those who are already in proximity with the throne. Besides, all, in spite of themselves, have to do with it, although they do not approach it, and especially now that, as a testimony of grace, the blood is on the mercy-seat, and the revelation and testimony of glory without a veil, the result of grace and redemption, gone out. The conditions

of relationship with the throne that God establishes, where He condescends to be approached by His creatures, are presented, which includes the details of those He sustains with His people.

The reader will remember, as regards our drawing nigh to God, the position of the Christian is entirely changed from that of the Jew. Then (Hebrews 9) the way into the holiest was not made manifest, and no one, not even the priests, could go into the presence of God within the veil; and the services were a remembrance of sins. Now, the work of Christ being accomplished, the veil is rent. It is not a people in a certain relationship with God yet always remaining without, drawing near to the altar, or, at best, some to the altar of incense. It is full grace going out to the world; and then, redemption being accomplished, and believers righteous before God, their having all perfect boldness to enter the holiest. Hence, our subject is not the character of approach, but the figures of the means by which we approach, in order to have communion with God. I need hardly add, the Father's love does not come in question. It was a throne of judgment which was in the sanctuary, and who could approach that?

Note #2:

My impression is that the tabernacle is the expression of the millennial state of things, save as to royalty, with which the temple is connected—the throne of God, in the holiest. I do not see that the veil will then be rent for those on earth, though all be founded on the sacrifice of Christ; but the high priest will go at all times into the holy place, and then in his robes of glory and beauty. The shew-bread and the seven-branched candlestick represent thus Israel in connection with Christ, as manifesting government, and light in the world, but in the place of priesthood with God. For us the veil is rent, and we enter with boldness into the holiest.

Note #3:

For prophecy is a thing apart.

Leviticus Chapter 1

Leviticus 1:1

lev 1:1

God speaks not from Sinai, but out of the tabernacle, where He is sought; where, according to the pattern of His glory, but according also to the need of those who seek His presence, He is in relationship with the people by mediation and sacrifice. In Sinai, in terrible glory, He demanded, and proposed terms of, obedience, and thereupon promised His favour. In this the communication was direct, but the people could not bear it. Here He is accessible to the sinner and to the saint, but by a provided mediation and priesthood. But then the centre and ground of our access to God thus is Christ's obedience and offering. This therefore is first presented to us when God speaks in the tabernacle.

The order of these sacrifices is first to be remarked. The order of their application is uniformly opposed to the order of their institution. There are four great classes of offerings: 1, The burnt-offering; 2, The meat-offering; 3, The peace-offering; and 4, The sin-offering. I name them in the order of their institution, but, in their application, when offered together, the sin-offerings always come first, for there it is restoration to God [See Note #1]; and, in approaching God by sacrifice, man must approach by the efficacy of that which takes away his sins, in that they have been borne by another. But in presenting the Lord Jesus Himself as the great sacrifice, His being made sin is a consequence of His offering Himself in perfectness to God, and though as made sin for us, still in His own perfectness, and for the divine glory, we say, His Father's glory; this is a great but blessed mystery. He gives Himself up, coming to do His Father's will, and is made for us sin, Him who knew no sin, and undergoes death.

Furthermore, our sins being put away, the source of communion is thus in the excellency of Christ Himself, and in His offering, who offers Himself to God, without spot; glorifying God by death inasmuch as sin was there before Him and death by sin; and He gives Himself wholly up to God's glory in respect of this state [See Note #2], and then our presentation according to the preciousness of this on high, though the actual bearing of our sins be of absolute necessity to introduce us into this communion. In this is the difference of the great day of atonement. Then the blood was put on the mercy-seat in the holiest; but this, while giving access there on the ground

of perfect cleansing through an offering of infinite value, was in respect of actual sins and defilement, not the pure sweet savour of the offering in itself to God. Yet it supposed sin. The offering would not have had its own character nor value if it had not. Hence, as presenting Christ, and our approach to God when sin has been fully dealt with and holiness tested, the burnt-offering, meat-offering, and peace-offering (in which latter our communion with God is presented to us), come first, and then the sin-offerings apart; needful, primarily needful to us, but not the expression of the personal perfectness of Christ, but of His sin-bearing, though perfectness were needed for that. It is evident, from what I have said, that it is Christ we are to consider in the sacrifices which are about to engage our attention: the various forms of value and efficacy which attach to that one all-perfect sacrifice. It is true, we may consider the Christian in a subordinate point of view as presented to us here, for he should present his body a living sacrifice. He, by the fruits of charity, should present sacrifices of sweet savour, acceptable to our God by Jesus Christ; but our object now is to consider Christ in them.

I have said that there are four great classes presented to us—burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, peace-offerings, and offerings for sin. These may be seen thus classed in chapter 10 of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But then there is a very essential distinction which divides these four into two separate classes—the sin-offerings, and all the others. The sin-offerings, as such, were not characterised as offerings made by fire, of a sweet savour unto Jehovah (although the fat was in most of them burnt on the altar, and in this respect the sweet savour was there, and so it is once said, Lev 4:31; for indeed the perfection of Christ was there though bearing our sins), the others were distinctly so characterised. Positive sins were seen in the sin-offerings: they were charged with sins. He that touched those of them which fully bore this character, as being for the whole people [See Note #3] (Leviticus 16, Numbers 19), was defiled. But in the case of the burnt-offering, though not brought for positive sins, sin is supposed; there blood was shed, and it was for propitiation, but burnt on the altar, and all was a sweet savour to God. It was Christ's whole sacrifice of Himself to God, and perfect as an offering in every respect, though sin, as such, was the occasion of it. By this sacrifice, in result, sin will be put away out of God's sight for ever—what joy! see Joh

1:29 and Heb 9:26. But then we brought to the consciousness of our state of sin say, He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. This is a consequence, but the basis is that, besides bearing our sins, He glorified God perfectly there where He was made sin. It was as in the place of sin that His obedience was perfect and God perfectly glorified in all He is (John 13 and 17). Indeed there is but one word for sin and sin-offering in the original. They were burnt, but not on the altar; the fat, save in one case, of which we may speak hereafter, was (chap. 4). The other offerings were offerings made by fire of a sweet savour unto Jehovah-they present Christ's perfect offering of Himself to God, not the imposition of sins on the substitute by the Holy One, the Judge. These two points in the sacrifice of Christ are very distinct and very precious. God has made Him to be sin for us, Him who knew no sin: but also is it true, that through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God. Let us consider this latter, as first in the order presented in Leviticus, and naturally so.

The first sort of sacrifice, the most complete and characteristic of those characterised by being offerings made by fire of a sweet savour, was the burnt-offering. The offerer was to bring his offering [See Note #4], in order to his acceptance with God, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and to kill it before Jehovah.

First, of the place, the whole scene of the tabernacle ritual consisted of three parts: first, the holiest of all, the innermost part of the boarded space covered with tents, separated from the rest by a veil which hung before it, and within which was the ark of the covenant and the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat, and NOTHING ELSE. This was the throne of God, the type also of Christ, in whom God is revealed, the true ark of the covenant with the mercy-seat over it.

The veil, the apostle tells us, signified that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest while the old economy subsisted [See Note #5]. Immediately outside the veil-its efficacy, however entering within, and whence, indeed, on certain occasions, incense was taken in a censer and offered within-stood the golden altar of incense. In the same, or outer chamber of the tabernacle, called the holy, as distinguished from the most holy place, or holy of holies, stood, on either side, the shewbread and the

candlestick-types, the former of Christ incarnate, the true bread in union with and head of the twelve tribes, on the one hand; and the latter, of the perfection [See Note #6] (still, I have no doubt, in connection with Israel in the latter day) of the Spirit, as giving light, on the other. The church owns Christ thus, and the Holy Ghost dwells in it, but what characterises it, as such, is the knowledge of a heavenly and glorified Christ, and the Holy Ghost, as in divine communications, present in unity in it. These figures, on the other hand, give us Christ in His earthly relation, and the Holy Ghost in His various displays of power, when God's earthly system is established. Compare Zechariah 4, and Revelation 11 where there is the testimony to, but not the actual perfection of, the candlestick; God's testimony on the earth. The Epistle to the Hebrews affords us all needed light as to how far and with what changes, these figures can be applied now. But that epistle never speaks of the proper relationships and privileges of the church and Christians. These are viewed as pilgrims on earth, an earthly people. There is no union with Christ. He is in heaven and we in need on earth; no mention of the Father's name, but only so much the more precious as to our access to God, and needed supplies of grace for our path down here. It is properly Christian; we are partakers of the heavenly calling; but it may reach out and give what is available for the remnant, slain after the church is gone. Into the holy place the body of the priests, and not merely the high priest, entered continually, but they only. We know who, and who alone, can now thus enter, even those who are made kings and priests, the true saints of God: only, we can add, that the veil that hid the holiest and barred the entrance is rent from top to bottom, not to be renewed again between us and God. We have boldness to enter into the holiest. The veil has been rent in His flesh. He is not merely bread from heaven or incarnate, but put to death, denoted by flesh and blood, and the door fully opened for us to enter in spirit where Christ is. Our ordinary privilege and title is in the holy place-type of the created heaven, as the most holy is of the heaven of heavens, as it is called. In a certain sense, as to spiritual approach and intercourse, the veil being rent, there is no separation between the two, though in the light which no man can approach unto God dwells inaccessible. In the heavenly places we now are as priests, though only in spirit.

In approaching to this was the outside court, the court of the tabernacle of the congregation [See Note #7]. In entering this part, the first thing met with was the altar of burnt-offering, and between that and the tabernacle the laver, where the priests washed [See Note #8] when they entered into the tabernacle, or were occupied at the altar, to perform their service. It is evident that we approach solely by the sacrifice of Christ, and that we must be washed with water by the word before we can serve in the sanctuary. We have need also, as priests, of having our feet, at least, washed by our Advocate on high for our continual service there. (See John 13.) [See Note #9] Christ also thus approached, but it was in the perfect offering of Himself, not by the offering of another. Nothing can be more touching, or more worthy of profound attention, than the manner in which Jesus thus voluntarily presents Himself, that God may be fully, completely, glorified in Him. Silent in His sufferings, we see that His silence was the result of a profound and perfect determination to give Himself up, in obedience, to this glory-a service, blessed be His name, perfectly accomplished, so that the Father rests in His love towards us.

This devotedness to the Father's glory could, and indeed did, shew itself in two ways: it might be in service, and of every faculty of a living man here, in absolute devotedness to God, tested by fire even unto death; or in the giving up of life itself, giving up Himself-His life unto death, for the divine glory, sin being there. Of this latter the burnt-offering speaks; of the former, I judge, the meat-offering: while both are the same in principle as entire devotedness of human existence to God-one of the living acting man, the other the giving up of life unto death.

So in the burnt-offering; he who offered, offered the victim up wholly to God at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. Thus Christ presented Himself for the accomplishment of the purpose and glory of God where sin was. In the type the victim and the offerer were necessarily distinct, but Christ was both, and the hands of the offerer were laid on the head of the victim in sign of identity. Let us cite some of the passages which thus present Christ to us. First, in general, whether for life or for death, thus to glorify God; but exactly as taking the place of these sacrifices, the Spirit thus speaks of the Lord, in Hebrews 10, citing Psalm 40: "Then said I, Lo I

come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is within my heart." Christ, then, giving Himself up entirely to the will of God is what replaces these sacrifices, the antitype of the shadows of good things to come. But of His life itself He thus speaks (Joh 10:18): "I lay it down of myself, no one taketh it from me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again: this commandment have I received of my Father." It was obedience, but obedience in the sacrifice of Himself; and so, speaking of His death, He says, "The prince of this world [Satan] cometh, and hath nothing in me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do." So we read in Heb 9:14).

How perfect and full of grace is this way of the Lord! as constant and devoted to draw near when God should be thus glorified, and submit to the consequences of His devotedness-consequences imposed by the circumstances in which we are placed-as man was to depart from God for his pleasure. He humbles Himself to death that the majesty and the love of God, His truth and righteousness, may have their full accomplishment through the exercise of His self-devoting love. Thus man, in His person, and through His work, is reconciled to God; takes the true and due relationship to Him; God being perfectly glorified in Him as to, and (wondrous to say) in the place of, sin, and that according to all the value of what Christ has done to glorify God. It was in the place of sin, as made it for us, for there it was God had to be glorified, and there all He is came out as nowhere else, and there perfectly, in love, light, righteousness, truth, majesty, as by man's sin He had been dishonoured; only that now it was infinite in value, God Himself, not merely human defacing of God's glory. I do not here say men, but man. And the blessed result was, not merely forgiveness, but introduction into the glory of God.

The sacrifice was to be without blemish; the application of this to Christ is too obvious to need comment. He was the Lamb "without blemish and without spot." The offerer [See Note #10] was to kill the bullock before Jehovah. This completed the likeness to Christ, for, though evidently He could not kill Himself, He laid down His life: no one took it from Him. He did it before Jehovah. This, in the ritual of the offering, was the offerer's part,

the individual's, and so Christ's as man. Man saw, in Christ's death, man's judgment-the power of Caiaphas, or the power of the world. But as offered, He offered Himself before Jehovah.

And now comes Jehovah's and the priest's part. The offering was to be made the subject of the fire of the altar of God; it was cut in pieces and washed, given up, according to the purification of the sanctuary, to the trial of the judgment of God; for fire, as a symbol, signifies always the trial of the judgment of God. As to the washing with water, it made the sacrifice typically what Christ was essentially-pure. But it has this importance, that the sanctification of it and ours is on the same principle and on the same standard. He is in this sense our sanctification. We are sanctified unto obedience. He came to do the will of His Father, and so, perfect from the beginning, learns obedience by the things which He suffered; perfectly obedient always, but His obedience put ever more thoroughly to the test, so that His obedience was continually deeper and more complete, though always perfect. He learned obedience, what it was to obey, and that by growing sufferings and the sense of what was around Him, and finally by the cross [See Note #11]. It was new to Him as a divine Person-to us as rebels to God-and He learned it in all its extent.

Furthermore, this washing of water, in our case, is by the word, and Christ testifies of Himself that man should live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. This difference evidently and necessarily exists, that as Christ had life in Himself, and was the life (see Joh 1:4; Jo1 1:1-2,) we, on the other hand, receive this life from Him; and while ever obedient to the written word Himself, the words which flowed from His lips were the expression of His life-the direction of ours. We may pursue the use of this water of cleansing yet farther. It is the power of the Spirit also, exercised as by the word and will of God [See Note #12]; so even the commencement of this life in us. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (Jam 1:18). And so in Pe1 1:23, we are born of the incorruptible seed of the word. But then this finds us walking in sins and living in them, or, in another aspect, dead in them. These are really the same thing, for being alive in sins is being spiritually dead towards God; only the latter sets out with our whole state discovered; the

former deals with our responsibility. In Ephesians we are viewed as dead in sins; in Romans alive in them; in Colossians chiefly the latter, but the former is touched on. The cleansing must be, therefore, by the death and resurrection of Christ; death to sin and life to God in Him. Hence, on His death, was shed forth out of His side water and blood, cleansing as well as expiating power. Death then is the only cleanser of sin as well as its expiation. "He that is dead is freed [See Note #13] from sin," and water thus became the sign of death, for this alone cleansed. This truth of real sanctification was necessarily hidden under the law, save in figures: for the law applied itself to man, alive, and claimed his obedience. Christ's death revealed it. In us-that is, in our flesh-good does not dwell. Hence, in the symbolical use of water in baptism, we are told that as many of us as are baptised unto Christ, are baptised unto His death. But it is evident that we cannot stop at death in itself. In us it would be the herald and witness of condemnation, but, having life in Christ, death in Him is death to the life of sin and guilt. It is the communication of the life of Christ which enables us thus to treat the old man as dead, and ourselves as having been dead in trespasses and sins. The body is dead because of sin, and the Spirit is life because of righteousness, if Christ be in you. So we are told as to the truth of our natural state (it is not here what faith holds the old man to be if Christ be in us): "You, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him." When we were dead in sin, He hath quickened us together with Him; and, as baptised unto His death, it is added, "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." It is only in the power of a new life that we can hold ourselves to be dead to sin. And, indeed, it is only by known redemption we can say so. It is when we have apprehended the power of Christ's death and resurrection, and know that we are in Him through the Holy Ghost, that we can say, I am crucified with Him; I am not in the flesh. We know then, that this cleansing, which was apprehended as a mere moral effect in Judaism, is, by the communication of the life of Christ to us, that by which we are sanctified, according to the power of His death and resurrection, and sin as a law in our members is judged. The first Adam, as a living soul, corrupted himself; the last, as a quickening Spirit, imparts to us a new life.

But, if it is the communication of the life of Christ which, through redemption, is the starting-point of this judgment of sin, it is evident that that life in Him was essentially and actually pure; in us, the flesh lusts against the Spirit. He, even according to the flesh, was born of God. But He was to undergo a baptism, not merely to fulfil all righteousness as living-though perfectly pure-in a baptism of water, but a trial of all that was in Him by the baptism of fire. "I have," says He, "a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Here, then, Christ, completely offered up to God for the full expression of His glory, undergoes the full trial of judgment. The fire tries what He is. He is salted with fire. The perfect holiness of God, in the power of His judgment, tries to the uttermost all that is in Him. The bloody sweat, and affecting supplication in the garden, the deep sorrow of the cross, in the touching consciousness of righteousness, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"-as to any lightening of the trial, an unheeded cry-all mark the full trial of the Son of God. Deep answered unto deep,-all Jehovah's waves and billows passed over Him. But as He had offered Himself perfectly to the thorough trial, this consuming fire and trying of His inmost thoughts did, could, produce nought but a sweet savour to God. It is remarkable that the word used for burning the burnt-offering is not the same as that of the sin-offering, but the same as that of burning incense.

In this offering, then, we have Christ's perfect offering up of Himself, and then tried in His inmost parts by fiery trial of God's judgment. The consuming of His life was a sacrifice of a sweet savour, all infinitely agreeable to God-not a thought, not a will, but was put to the test-His life consumed in it; but all, without apparent answer to sustain, given up to God; all was purely a sweet savour to Him. But there was more than this. The greater part of what has been said would apply to the meat-offering. But the burnt-offering was to make atonement, an expression not used in chapter 2. There the personal intrinsic perfectness of Christ was tested, and the manner of His incarnation, what He was as man down here unfolded, but death was the first element of the burnt-offering, and death was by sin. There where man was (otherwise for him it could not be); where sin was; where Satan's power as death was; where God's irreversible judgment was, Christ had to glorify God, and it was a glory not otherwise to be displayed: love, righteousness, majesty, in the place of sin and death. Christ, who knew

no sin, made sin for us, in perfect obedience and love to His Father goes down to death; and God is glorified there, Satan's power of death destroyed, God glorified in man according to all He is, sin being come in, in obedience and love. He was in the place of sin, and God glorified, as no creation, no sinlessness, could. All was a sweet savour in that place, and according to what God was as to it in righteousness and love.

When Noah offered his burnt-offering, it is said, "And Jehovah smelled a sweet savour, and Jehovah said in his heart, I will no more curse the ground for man's sake, for the imaginations of man's heart are only evil continually." It had repented Him that He had made man, and grieved Him at His heart; but now, on this sweet savour, Jehovah says in His heart, "I will no more curse." Such is the perfect and infinite acceptableness of Christ's offering up of Himself to God. It is not in the sacrifice we are considering that He has the imposition of sins on Him (that was the sin-offering), but the perfectness, purity, and self-devotedness of the victim, but in being made sin, and that ascending in sweet savour to God. In this acceptability-in the sweet savour of this sacrifice-we are presented to God. All the delight which God finds in the odour of this sacrifice-blessed thought!-we are accepted in. Is God perfectly glorified in this, in all that He is? He is glorified then in receiving us. He receives us as the fruit and testimony of that in which He has been perfectly glorified, and that as revealed in redemption, in which all that He is is wrought out in revelation. Does He delight in what Christ is, in this His most perfect act? He so delights in us. Does this rise up before Him, a memorial for ever, in His presence, of delight? We, also, in the efficacy of it, are presented to Him; in one sense we are that memorial. It is not merely that the sins have been effaced by the expiatory act; but the perfect acceptability of Him who accomplished it and glorified God perfectly in it, the sweet savour of His sinless sacrifice, is our good odour of delight before God, and is ours; its acceptance, even Christ's, is ours.

And we are to remark that, though distinct from laying our sins upon Him, yet death implied sin, and the sacrifice of Christ, as burnt-offering, had the character which resulted from sin being in question before God, namely, death. It made the trial and suffering so much the more terrible; His obedience was tested before God in the place of sin, and He was obedient

unto death, not in the sense of bearing sins and putting them away, though in the same act, but in the perfection of His offering of Himself to God, and obedience tested by God; tested by being dealt with as sin, and therein, only, and a perfect sweet savour. Hence it was atonement; and, in one sense, of a deeper kind than the bearing of sins, that is, as the test of obedience and glorifying God in it. If we have found peace in forgiveness we cannot too much study the burnt-offering. It is that one act in the history of eternity in which the basis of all that in which God has glorified Himself morally, that is, revealed Himself as He is, and of all that in which our happiness is founded (and its sphere)-for blessed be God they go together-is laid; and laid in such a way that Christ could say, Therefore doth My Father love Me; and that in total, self-sacrifice made sin before God (oh, wondrous thought!) and for us. It became Him. Where is God's righteousness against sin known? where His holiness? where His infinite love? where His moral majesty? where what became Him? where His truth? where man's sin? where His perfectness? and, absolutely, where Satan's power, but its nullity too? All in the cross, and essentially in the burnt-offering. It is not as bearing sins, but as absolutely offered to God and in atonement-blood shedding about sin.

There is another point to remark in this sacrifice distinguishing it. It was wholly for and to God; for us no doubt, but still wholly to God. Of other sacrifices (not of the two first, for sin-but of these hereafter) in some form or other men partook, of this not; it was wholly for God and on the altar. It was thus the grand absolute essential sacrifice; as to its effect, connected with us, as blood-shedding was (Heb 9:26 and Joh 1:29, the Lamb of God) present in it (compare Eph 5:2). Hence, though having the stamp of sin being there in blood-shedding and propitiation, it was absolutely and wholly sweet savour, wholly to God.

Note #1

As to acceptance, the Christian has no more conscience of sins; but the Israelite had never learnt this; and hence, as we have seen, his way of approaching served, as to the means, to portray the sinner's first coming to God. The import of Christ's sacrifice is often too little seen. Man must come as a sinner, and about and owning his sins. He cannot come truly otherwise, but when entered in peace into God's presence, feeble as we may be, we

view it from God's side, and daily see more of the reality and value of this great fact which stands alone in the history of eternity, and on which all and eternal blessing is immutably founded. Every point and power of good and evil was there brought to an issue; the absolute enmity of man's heart against God revealed in grace; Satan's complete power over men; man (Christ) perfect in obedience and love to His Father in the very place needed when He was made sin; God perfect in justice against sin (it became Him), and perfect in love to the sinner. And this being accomplished, the perfect ground was laid in justice, and in what was accomplished and immutable, for the display of God's love and God's counsels, in what morally could not change.

Note #2

It is to be remarked that we read of no positive sin-offerings before the law. The clothing of Adam may suppose it, and Gen 4:7 may be taken to speak of it, but they are not professedly offered; burnt-offerings frequently. These suppose sin and death, and no coming to God but by sacrifice and death, and reconciliation through it. But the sacrifice is viewed in the perfect self-offering of Christ, so that God should be perfectly glorified in that which was infinitely precious in His sight, and all He was, righteousness, love, majesty, truth, purpose, all glorified in Christ's death so that He could freely act in His grace. Sin is supposed in it, and perfectness of self-sacrifice to God there where it was; but God glorified rather than individuals' sins borne. Hence worship according to the sweet savour of it is involved in it. A man far departed from God, as such I cannot come to God at all but on this ground, and it will remain valid for eternity and secure all things: the new heaven and earth are secured as the dwelling-place of righteousness by it. But my actual sins being put away is another thing. In one, the whole relationship of man, indeed of all things with God, is in question; in the other, my personal sins. Hence all acceptable sacrifice was of the former kind: sacrifices for sins when the relationship of a people with God was established, where every act referred to His actual presence.

Note #3

In these cases the burning was outside the camp. It was the same as to the scape-goat, which immediately connected itself with the rest of the work.

Note #4

The burnt-offerings as such were brought voluntarily; still, it seems clear that this is not the sense of the Hebrew word "ratzon" here, but for his acceptance, to be in divine favour. It remains, just the same doctrinally true that Christ, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God.

Note #5

This is a signal instance that the order set up in the wilderness was not the image, but only a shadow of good things to come; for the veil unrent forbade entrance, the rent veil gives us, through the cross, full boldness to go in. So that in relationship to God there was contrast.

Note #6

The number seven is the number of perfection, and twelve also, as may be seen in many passages of Scripture: the former, of absolute completeness in good or evil; the latter, of completeness in human administration.

Note #7

The door of the tabernacle of the congregation is not simply the veil of the holy place, but the court where they entered from without. The altar of burnt-offering was at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Note #8

It does not appear that the washing of the priests for their consecration was at the laver; that was according to what was within when they had got there. But it is always the word, which is figured by the water.

Note #9

In the first edition, I had added here the "renewing of the Holy Ghost," referring to Titus 3. But though the Holy Ghost surely renews the heart continually, yet I doubt the justice of the application of this passage here. The renewing seems more absolute there, anakainoseos. I might have

simply left it out, perhaps, but that I would call the attention of the reader to the fact that "regeneration" is not the same word as being "born again." It is paliggenesia, not anagenneesis. It is only found again, to denote the millennium, in Matthew 19. It is in its import, the "washing of water," or being "born of water," not the reception of life by the Spirit. Water is a change of condition of what exists, not in itself receiving of life, which is being "born of the Spirit." it is the anakainosis.

Note #10

That is, it was not yet the priest's part. It may be translated, "one was to kill him." It was completing the offering, not presenting its blood in a priestly way.

Note #11

Much deep instruction is connected with this, but its development belongs to the New Testament. See Romans 12 and 6, and 1 Peter.

Note #12

Water thus used as a figure signifies the word in the present power of the Holy Ghost.

Note #13

Literally, "justified." You cannot accuse a dead man of sin. And note, it is not "sins" here, but "sin."

Leviticus Chapter 2

I now turn to the meat-offering. This presents to us the humanity of Christ; His grace and perfectness as a living man, but still as offered to God and fully tested. It was of fine flour without leaven, mingled with oil and frankincense. The oil was used in two ways; it was mingled with the flour, and the cake was anointed with it. The presenting (Christ's presenting Himself as an offering to God) even unto death, and His actually undergoing death, and shedding blood [See Note #1], must have come first; for, without the perfectness of this will even unto death, and that shedding of blood by which God was perfectly glorified where sin was, nothing could have been

accepted; yet Christ's perfectness as a man down here had to be proved, and that by the test of death and the fire of God. But the atoning work being wrought, and His obedience perfect from the beginning (He came to do His Father's will), all the life was perfect and acceptable as man, a sweet savour under the trial of God-His nature as man [See Note #2]. Abel was accepted by blood; Cain, who came in the way of nature, offering the fruit of his toil and labour, was rejected. All that we can offer of our natural hearts is "the sacrifice of fools," and is founded on what is failure in the spring of any good, on the sin of hardness of heart, which does not recognise our condition-our sin and estrangement from our God. What could be a greater evidence of hardness of heart than, under the effects and consequences of sin, driven from Eden, to come and offer offerings, and these offerings the fruit of the judicial toil of the curse consequent on sin, as if nothing at all had happened? It was the perfection of blind hardness of heart.

But, on the other hand, as Adam's first act, when in blessing, was to seek his own will (and hence by disobedience he was, with his posterity such as he, in this world of misery, alienated from God in state and will), Christ was in this world of misery, devoting Himself in love, devoting Himself to do His Father's will. He came here emptying Himself. He came here by an act of devotedness to His Father, at all cost to Himself, that God might be glorified. He was in the world, the obedient man, whose will was to do His Father's will, the first grand act and source of all human obedience, and of divine glory by it. This will of obedience and devotedness to His Father's glory, stamped a sweet savour on all that He did: all He did partook of this fragrance. It is impossible to read John's [See Note #3], or indeed any of the Gospels, where what He was, His Person, specially shines forth, without meeting, at every moment, this blessed fragrance of loving obedience and self-renouncement. It is not a history-it is Himself, whom one cannot avoid seeing,-and also the wickedness of man, which violently forced its way through the coverture and holy hiding-place which love had wrought around Him, and forced into view Him who was clothed with humility-the divine Person that passed in meekness through the world that rejected Him: but it was only to give all its force and blessedness to the self-abasement, which never faltered, even when forced to confess His divinity. It was "I am," but in the lowliness and loneliness, of the most perfect and self-abased obedience;

no secret desire to hold His place in His humiliation, and by His humiliation: His Father's glory was the perfect desire of His heart. It was, indeed, "I am" that was there, but in the perfectness of human obedience. This reveals itself everywhere. "It is written," was His reply to the enemy, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." "It is written" was His constant reply. "Suffer it thus far," says He to John the Baptist, "thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." "That give," says He to Peter, though the children be free, "for me and for thee." This historically. In John, where, as we have said, His Person shines more forth, it is more directly expressed by His mouth: "This commandment have I received of my Father," "and I know that his commandment is life eternal." "As the Father hath given me commandment, so I do." "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." "I have kept," says He, "my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." "If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not."

Many of these citations are on occasions where the careful eye sees through the blessed humiliation of the Lord, the divine nature-God-the Son, only more bright and blessed, because thus hidden; as the sun, on which man's eyes cannot gaze, proves the power of its rays in giving full light through the clouds which hide and soften its power. If God humbles Himself, He still is God; it is always He who does it. "He could not be hid." This absolute obedience gave perfect grace and savour to all He did. He appeared ever as one sent. He sought the glory of the Father that sent Him. He saved whoever came to Him, because He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him: and as they would not come without the Father's drawing, their coming was His warrant for saving them, for He was to do implicitly the Father's will. But what a spirit of obedience is here! He saves whom? whomsoever the Father gives Him-the servant of His will. Does He promise glory? "It is not mine to give, but to those for whom it is prepared of my Father." He must reward according to the Father's will. He is nothing, but to do all, to accomplish all, His Father pleased. But who could have done this, save He who could, and He who at the same time would, in such obedience, undertake to do whatever the Father would have done? The infiniteness of the work, and capacity for it, identify themselves with the perfectness of obedience, which had no will but to do that of another. Yet

was He a simple, humble, lowly man, but God's Son, in whom the Father was well pleased.

Let us now see the fitting of this humanity in grace for this work. This meat-offering of God, taken from the fruit of the earth, was of the finest wheat; that which was pure, separate, and lovely in human nature was in Jesus under all its sorrows, but in all its excellence, and excellent in its sorrows. There was no unevenness in Jesus, no predominant quality to produce the effect of giving Him a distinctive character. He was, though despised and rejected of men, the perfection of human nature. The sensibilities, firmness, decision (though this attached itself also to the principle of obedience), elevation, and calm meekness which belong to human nature, all found their perfect place in Him. In a Paul I find energy and zeal; in a Peter ardent affection; in a John tender sensibilities and abstraction of thought united to a desire to vindicate what he loved, which scarce knew limit. But the quality we have observed in Peter predominates, and characterises him. In a Paul, blessed servant though he was, he does not repent, though he had repented. He had no rest in his spirit when he found not Titus, his brother. He goes off to Macedonia, though a door was opened in Troas. He wist not that it was the high priest. He is compelled to glory of himself. In him, in whom God was mighty towards the circumcision, we find the fear of man break through the faithfulness of his zeal. John, who would have vindicated Jesus in his zeal, knew not what manner of spirit he was of, and would have forbidden the glory of God, if a man walked not with them. Such were Paul, and Peter, and John. But in Jesus, even as man, there was none of this unevenness. There was nothing salient in His character, because all was in perfect subjection to God in His humanity, and had its place, and did exactly its service, and then disappeared. God was glorified in it, and all was in harmony. When meekness became Him, He was meek; when indignation, who could stand before His overwhelming and withering rebuke? Tender to the chief of sinners in the time of grace; unmoved by the heartless superiority of a cold Pharisee (curious to judge who He was); when the time of judgment is come, no tears of those who wept for Him moved Him to other words than, "Weep for yourselves and your children,"-words of deep compassion, but of deep subjection to the due judgment of God. The dry tree prepared itself to be burned. On the cross, when His service was

finished, tender to His mother, and entrusting her, in human care, to one who, so to speak, had been His friend, and leant on His bosom; no ear to recognise her word or claim when His service occupied Him for God; putting both blessedly in their place when He would shew that before His public mission He was still the Son of the Father, and though such, in human blessedness, subject to the mother that bare Him, and Joseph His father as under the law; a calmness which disconcerted His adversaries; and, in the moral power which dismayed them by times, a meekness which drew out the hearts of all not steeled by wilful opposition. What keenness of edge to separate between the evil and the good!

True, the power of the Spirit did this afterwards in calling men out together in open confession, but the character and Person of Jesus did it morally. There was a vast work done (I speak not of expiation) by Him, who, as to outward result, laboured in vain. Wherever there was an ear to hear, the voice of God spoke, by what Jesus was as a man, to the heart and conscience of His sheep. He came in by the door, and the porter opened, and the sheep heard His voice. The perfect humanity of Jesus, expressed in all His ways, and penetrating by the will of God, judged all that it found in man and in every heart. But this blessed subject has carried us beyond our direct object. In a word, then, His humanity was perfect, all subject to God, all in immediate answer to His will, and the expression of it, and so necessarily in harmony. The hand that struck the chord found all in tune: all answered to the mind of Him whose thoughts of grace and holiness, of goodness, yet of judgment of evil, whose fulness of blessing in goodness were sounds of sweetness to every weary ear, and found in Christ their only expression. Every element, every faculty in His humanity, responded to the impulse which the divine will gave to it, and then ceased in a tranquillity in which self had no place. Such was Christ in human nature. While firm where need demanded, meekness was what essentially characterised Him as to contrast with others, because He was in the presence of God, His God, and all that in the midst of evil,-His voice was not heard in the street,-for joy can break forth in louder strains when all shall echo, "Praise his name, his glory."

But this faultlessness of the human nature of our Lord attaches itself to deeper and more important sources, which are presented to us in this type

negatively and positively. If every faculty thus obeyed and were the instrument of the divine impulse in its place, it is evident that the will must be right-that the spirit and principle of obedience must be its spring; for it is the action of an independent will which is the principle of sin. Christ, as a divine Person, had the title of an independent will. "The Son quickens whom he will;" but He came to do His Father's will. His will was obedience, sinless therefore, and perfect. Leaven, in the word, is the symbol of corruption-"the leaven of malice and wickedness." In the cake, therefore, which was to be offered as a sweet savour to God, there was no leaven: where leaven was, it could not be offered as a sweet savour to God. This is thrown into relief by the converse: there were cakes made with leaven, and it was forbidden to offer them as sweet savour, an offering made by fire. This occurred in two cases, one of which, the most important and significant, and sufficing to establish the principle, is noticed in this chapter.

When the firstfruits were offered, two cakes were offered baked with leaven, but not for an offering for a sweet savour. Burnt-offerings and meat-offerings were also offered, and for a sweet savour; but the offering of the firstfruits-not (see Verse 12 of this chapter Lev 2:12, and Lev. 23). And what were these firstfruits? The church, sanctified by the Holy Ghost. For this feast and offering of the firstfruits was the acknowledged and known type of the day of Pentecost-in fact was the day of Pentecost. We are, says the Apostle James, a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. It will be seen (Lev. 23) that, the day of Christ's resurrection, the first of the fruits was offered, ears of corn unbroken, unbruised. Clearly there was no leaven there. He rose, too, without seeing corruption. With this no sin-offering was offered, but with the leavened cakes (which represented the assembly sanctified by the Holy Ghost to God, but still living in corrupted human nature) a sin-offering was offered; for the sacrifice of Christ for us, answered for and puts away in God's sight the leaven of our corrupted nature, overcome (but not ceasing to exist) by the operation of the Holy Ghost; by reason of which nature, in itself corrupt, we could not, in the trial of God's judgment, be a sweet savour, an offering made by fire; but, by means of Christ's sacrifice, which met and answered the evil, could be offered to God, as is said in Romans, a living sacrifice. Hence it is said, not merely that Christ has answered for our sins, but that "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the

flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." God has condemned sin in the flesh, but it was in Christ as for, that is as a sacrifice for, sin, making atonement, undergoing the judgment due to it, being made sin for us because of it, but dying in doing so, so that we reckon ourselves dead. The condemnation of the sin is passed in His death, but death to it is therein come to us. It is important for a troubled but tender and faithful conscience to remember that Christ has died, not merely for our sins [See Note #4], but for our sin; for surely this troubles a faithful conscience much more than many sins past. As the cakes then, which represent the church, were baked with leaven, and could not be offered for a sweet savour, so the cake, which represented Christ, was without leaven, a sweet savour, and offering made by fire unto Jehovah. The trial of the Lord's judgment found a perfect will, and the absence of all evil, or spirit of independence. It was "thy will be done" which characterised the human nature of the Lord, filled with and animated by the fulness of the Godhead, but the man Jesus, the offering of God.

There is another example of the converse of this which I may notice in passing-the peace-offerings. There Christ had His part, man also. Hence in this were found cakes made with leaven along with the others which were without it. That offering, which represented the communion of the assembly connected with the sacrifice of Christ, necessarily brought in man, and the leaven was there-ordained symbol of that leaven which is ever found in us. The assembly is called to holiness; the life of Christ in us is holiness to the Lord; but it remains ever true that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwells no good thing.

This leads us to another great principle presented to us in this type: namely, the cake was to be mingled with oil. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and in ourselves, born simply of the flesh, we are naturally nothing but corrupted and fallen flesh-"of the will of the flesh." Though we are born of the Spirit of God, this does not uncreate the old nature. It may attenuate to any conceivable degree its active force, and control altogether its operations [See Note #5]; but the nature remains unchanged. The nature of Paul was as disposed to be puffed up when he had been in the third heaven, as when he had the letter of the chief priest in his robe to destroy the name

of Christ if he could. I do not say the disposition had the same power, but the disposition was as bad or worse, for it was in the presence of greater good. But the will of the flesh had no part whatever in the birth of Christ. His human nature flowed as simply from the divine will as the presence of the divine upon earth. Mary, bowing in single-eyed and exquisite obedience, displays with touching beauty the submission and bowing of her heart and understanding to the revelation of God. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord [Jehovah], be it unto me according to thy word." He knew no sin; His human nature itself was conceived of the Holy Ghost. That holy thing which was born of the virgin was to be called the Son of God. He was truly and thoroughly man, born of Mary, but He was man born of God. So I see this title, Son of God, applied to the three several estates of Christ: Son of God, Creator, in Colossians, in Hebrews, and in other passages which allude to it; Son of God, as born in the world; and declared Son of God with power as risen again from the dead.

The cake [See Note #6] was made mingled with oil, just as the human nature of Christ had its being and character, its taste, from the Holy Ghost, of which oil is ever and the known symbol. But purity is not power, and it is in another form that spiritual power, acting in the human nature of Jesus, is expressed. The cakes were to be anointed with oil; and it is written how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. It was not that anything was wanting in Jesus. In the first place, as God, He could have done all things, but He had humbled Himself, and was come to obey. Hence, only when called and anointed, He presents Himself in public, although His interview with the doctors in the temple shewed His relation with the Father from the beginning.

There is a certain analogy in our case. It is a different thing to be born of God, and sealed and anointed with the Holy Ghost. The day of Pentecost, Cornelius, the believers of Samaria on whom the apostle laid their hands-all prove this, as also many passages on the subject. We are all "the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus." But "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our

inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession." "This spake he," says John, "of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." The Holy Ghost may have produced, by a new nature, holy desires, and the love of Jesus, without the consciousness of deliverance and power—the joy of His presence in the knowledge of the finished work of Christ. As to the Lord Jesus, we know that this second act, of anointing, was accomplished in connection with the perfectness of His Person, as it could, because He was righteous in Himself, when, after His baptism by John (in which He who knew no sin placed Himself with His people, then the remnant of Israel, in the first movement of grace in their hearts, shewn in going to John, to be with them in all the path of that grace from beginning to end, its trials and its sorrows), He, sinless, was anointed by the Holy Ghost, descending in a bodily shape like a dove, and was led of the Spirit into the conflict for us, and returned conqueror in its power, in the power of the Spirit, into Galilee. I say conqueror in its power; for if Jesus had repulsed Satan simply by divine power as such, firstly, there evidently could have been no conflict; and secondly, no example or encouragement for us. But the Lord repulsed him by a principle which is our duty every day—obedience, intelligent obedience; employing the word of God, and repulsing Satan with indignation the moment he openly shews himself such [See Note #7]. If Christ entered into His course with the testimony and joy of a Son, He entered into a course of conflict and obedience (He might bind the strong man, but He had the strong man to bind). So we. Joy, deliverance, love, abounding peace, the Spirit of sonship, the Father known as accepting us: such is the entrance to the christian course, but the course we enter on is conflict and obedience: leave the latter, and we fail in the former. Satan's effort was to separate these in Jesus. If Thou be the Son, use Thy power—make stones into bread—act by Thine own will. The answer of Jesus is, in sense, I am in the place of obedience—of servitude; I have no command. It is written, Man shall live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. I rest in My state of dependence.

It was power, then, but power used in the state and in the accomplishment of obedience. The only act of disobedience which Adam could commit he did commit; but He, who could have done all things as to power, only used His power to display more perfect service, more perfect subjection. How

blessed is the picture of the Lord's ways! and that, in the midst of the sorrows, and enduring the consequences of the disobedience, of man, of the nature He had taken in everything save sin. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, [seeing the state we are in,] in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Jesus, then, was in the power of the Spirit in conflict. Jesus was in the power of the Spirit in obedience. Jesus was in the power of the Spirit in casting out devils, and bearing all our infirmities. Jesus was also in the power of the Spirit in offering Himself without spot to God; but this belonged rather to the burnt-offering. In what He did do, and in what He did not do, He acted by the energy of the Spirit of God. Hence it is that He presents an example to us, followed with mingled energies, but by a power by which we may do greater things, if it be His will, than He-not be more perfect, but do greater things; and morally, as the apostle tells us, all things. On earth He was absolutely perfect in obedience, but by that itself He did not, and, in the moral sense, could not, do many things, which He can do, and manifest now, by His apostles and servants. For, exalted at the right hand of God, He was to manifest, even as man, power, not obedience; "Greater things than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father."

This puts us in the place of obedience, for by the power of the Spirit we are servants to Christ-diversities of ministrations, but the same Lord. Hence greater works were done by the apostles, but mingled in their personal walk with all sorts of imperfections. With whom did Jesus contend, even if He was in the right? before whom manifest the fear of man? when did He repent of an act which He had done, even if afterwards there was no reason for repentance? No! there was a greater exercise of power in apostolic service, as Jesus had promised; but in vessels whose weakness shewed all the praise to be of Another, and whose obedience was carried on in conflict with another will in themselves. This was the great distinction. Jesus had never need of a thorn in the flesh, lest He should be exalted above measure. Blessed Master! Thou didst speak that Thou knewest, and testifiedst that Thou hadst seen; but to do so Thou hadst emptied, humbled Thyself, made Thyself of no reputation, and taken the form of a servant, in order to our being exalted by it. The height, the consciousness of the height, from which He came down, the perfectness of the will in which He obeyed where He

was, made no exaltation needed to Him. Yet He looked on the joy that was set before Him, and was not ashamed, for He was humbled even to this, to rejoice in having respect to the recompense of reward. And He has been highly exalted. "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth." For there was yet besides, in the meat-offering, the frankincense-the savour of all Christ's graces.

How vast too the grace which has introduced us into this intimateness of communion, has made us priests in the power of quickening grace, to partake of that in which God our Father delights; that which is offered to Him as a sweet savour, an offering made by fire to Jehovah; that with which the table of God is supplied! This is sealed by covenant as a perpetual, an eternal, portion. Hence the salt of the covenant of our God was not wanting in the sacrifice, in any sacrifice; the stability, the durability, the preservative energy of that which was divine, not always perhaps to us sweet and agreeable, was there-the seal, on the part of God, that it was no passing savour, no momentary delight, but eternal. For all that is of man passes; all that is of God is eternal; the life, the charity, the nature, and the grace continues. This holy separating power, which keeps us apart from corruption, is of God, partaking of the stability of the divine nature, and binding unto Him, not by what we are in will, but by the security of divine grace. It is active, pure, sanctifying to us, but it is of grace, and the energy of the divine will, and the obligation of the divine promise binds us indeed to Him, but binds by His energy and fidelity, not ours-energy which is mingled with and founded on the sacrifice of Christ, in which the covenant of God is sealed and assured infallibly, or Christ is not honoured. It is the covenant of God. Leaven and honey, our sin and natural affections, cannot find a place in the sacrifice of God, but the energy of His grace (not sparing the evil, but securing the good) is there to seal our infallible enjoyment of its effects and fruits. Salt did not form the offering, but it was never to be wanting in any-could not be in what was of God; it was indeed in every offering.

We must remember in this offering, as in the former, that the essential characteristic, common indeed to all, was its being offered to God. This could not be said of Adam: in his innocence he enjoyed much from God; he returned, or should have returned, thankfulness for it; but it was enjoyment

and thankfulness. He was not himself an offering to God. But this was the essence of Christ's life-it was offered to God; and hence separated from all around it, essentially separated [See Note #9]. He was holy, therefore, and not merely innocent: for innocence is the absence of-ignorance of-evil, not separation from it. God (who knows good and evil, but is infinitely above and separated from the evil, as it is opposite to Him) is holy. Christ was holy, and not merely innocent, being consecrated in all His will to God, and separate from the evil, and living in the energy of the Spirit of God. Also, as offered, the essence of the offering was the fine flour, oil, and frankincense, representing human nature, the Holy Ghost, and the perfume of grace. Negatively there was to be no leaven or honey: so, as to the manner, there was the mingling with oil and the anointing with oil; also, for every sacrifice, the salt of the covenant of God: here noticed, because in what concerned the grace of His human nature, what concerned man (a man offering Himself to God-not as dying, but as living, though tested even to death), it might have been supposed to be wanting, that it was as man's act just as good. But its being offered on the altar to God, burned as a sweet savour, and the three things first named, formed the substance and essence of the meat-offering.

Note #1

And this for a double reason: He came to meet our case, and we were in sin, and the basis of all must be blood-shedding in virtue of what God is, and His obedience all through must have this perfect character-unto death. Hence, too, there was no eating it. Sin being there, it was according to what God is, and wholly to God. Sin was before Him and He glorified as to it.

Note #2

Thus the holocaust gives what the sinful man's state according to God's glory needed; the meat-offering, the sinless perfect man in the power of the Spirit of God in obedience; for His life was obedience in love.

Note #3

In John, the divine displayed in man, specially comes out. Hence Gospel attracts the heart, while it offends infidelity.

Note #4

Judgment in the last day is according to works, but by the state of sin we were wholly alienated from God and lost.

Note #5

We never have any excuse for any sin of act or thought, because Christ's grace is sufficient for us, and God is faithful not to suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear. It may be that at a given moment we may not have power, but then there has been neglect.

Note #6

This was in various forms, but all bringing out the two principles noticed. First, the great general truth: fine flour, oil poured on it, and frankincense; baked in the oven, cakes mingled, or wafers anointed, with oil-of course unleavened; if in a pan, flour unleavened mingled with oil; if in the frying-pan, fine flour with oil. Thus in all forms in which Christ could be looked at as Man, there was absence of sin; His human nature formed in the power and character of, and anointed also with, the Holy Ghost. For we may consider His human nature, as such in itself: oil is poured on it. I may see it tried to the uttermost: it is still purity, and the grace and expression of the Holy Ghost, in its inward nature, in it. I may see it displayed before men, and it is in Holy Ghost power. We may see both together in essential, in inward, reality of character, in public walk, in every part (as presented to God) of that nature which was perfect and formed by Holy Ghost power: absence of all evil, and the Holy Ghost's power is manifested in it. So, when broken into pieces, every part of it was anointed with oil, to shew that if Christ's life were, so to speak, taken to pieces, every detail and element of it was in the perfectness of, and characterised by, the Holy Ghost.

Note #7

The two first temptations (Matt. 4) were the wiles of the enemy. In the last he is openly Satan.

Note #8

In the first case in which this happens, after saying it, He goes down immediately with His disciples, and His mother (Joh 2:12), and brethren. He could be in the midst of all that influences man naturally, yet separate from it because He was inwardly perfect. All the gospels, and personally Joh 19:26, shew these natural relations formed of God fully owned.

Note #9

This was what was properly signified by salt. So every sacrifice is seasoned with salt. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt. It is what gives a divine taste, a witness of God to everything.

Leviticus Chapter 3

The peace-offering now presents itself to our notice. It is the offering which typifies to us the communion of saints, according to the efficacy of the sacrifice, with God, with the priest who has offered it in our behalf, with one another, and with the whole body of the saints as priests to God. It comes after those which presented to us the Lord Jesus Himself in His devoting Himself to death, and His devotedness and grace in His life, but even unto death, and the testing of fire, that we may understand that all communion is based on the acceptability and sweet odour of this sacrifice; not only because the sacrifice was needed, but because therein God had all His delight. I have already remarked that, when a sinner, that is a guilty person, approached, the sin-offering came first; for the sin must be borne and put away that he might approach as qualified to do so. But, being cleansed and clean, he approaches; and so here, according to the sweet savour of the offering of God, the perfect acceptability of Christ, who knew no sin, but consecrated Himself in a world of sin to God, that God might be perfectly glorified-and His life also, that all that God was in judgment might be also glorified-glorified by man in His Person; and hence infinite favour flow forth on them that were received and that came by Him. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." He does not say here, because I have laid it down for the sheep; that was rather the sin-offering. He speaks of the positive excellence and value of His act; for in this Man wrought all perfectness. In this all the majesty and truth, the righteousness against sin, and love of God were infinitely glorified in man,

though much more than a man, and, where poor estranged man had got by sin, in Him who was made sin for us. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead." The evil which Satan had wrought was infinitely more than remedied, in the scene where the ruin was brought in; yea, by the means through which the ruin was effected. If God was dishonoured in and by man, He is a debtor in a certain sense to man in Jesus for the full display of His best and most blessed glory: though even this be all His gift to us, yet Christ making Himself man has wrought it out. But all that Christ was and did was infinitely acceptable to God; and in this we have our communion-not in the sin-offering [See Note #1]. Hence the peace-offerings follow here at once, though, as I have remarked, the sin-offering came first of all where the case of application arose.

The first act in the case of the peace-offering was the presenting and killing it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation and sprinkling the blood, which formed the basis of every animal offering, the offerer being identified with the victim by laying his hands on his head [See Note #2].

Next, all the fat, especially of the inwards, was taken and burnt on the altar of burnt-offering to the Lord. Fat and blood were alike forbidden to be eaten. The blood was the life, and necessarily belonged essentially to God; life was from Him in an especial manner; but fat also was never to be eaten but burnt, and so offered to God. The use of this symbol, fat, is sufficiently familiar in the word. "Their heart is fat as grease." "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." "They are enclosed in their own fat, with their mouth they speak proudly." It is the energy and force of the inward will, the inwards of a man's heart. Hence, where Christ expresses His entire mortification, He declares "They could tell all His bones; and, in Psalm 102, "By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin."

But here, in Jesus, all that in nature was of energy and force, all His inward parts, were a burnt-offering to God, entirely sacrificed and offered to Him for such a sweet savour. This was God's food of the offering, "the food of the offering made by fire unto Jehovah." In this Jehovah Himself found His delight; His soul reposed in it, for surely it was very good-good in the midst of evil-good in the energy of offering to Him-good in perfect obedience. If

the eye of God passed, as the dove of Noah, over this earth, swept by the deluge of sin, nowhere, till Jesus was seen in it, could His eye have rested in complacency and peace; there on Him it could. Heaven, as to the expression of its satisfaction, whatever its counsels, was closed till Jesus (the second and perfect Man, the Holy One, He who offered Himself to God, coming to do His will) was on earth. The moment He presented Himself in public service, heaven opened, the Holy Ghost descended to dwell in this His one resting-place here, and the Father's voice, impossible now to be withheld, declares from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Was this object (too great, too excellent, for the silence of heaven and the Father's love) to lose its excellence and its savour in the midst of a world of sin? Far otherwise. It was there its excellency was proved. If He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, the movement of every spring of His heart was consecrated to God. He walked in communion, honouring His Father in all-in His life and in His death. Jehovah found continual delight in Him; and above all, in Him in His death: the food of the offering was there. Such was the great principle, but the communion of our souls with this is further given to us. The fat being burnt as a burnt-offering, the consecration to God is pursued to its full point of acceptance and grace.

If we turn to the law of the offerings, we shall find that the rest was eaten. The breast was for Aaron and his sons, type of the whole church; the right shoulder for the priest that sprinkled the blood, more especially type of Christ, as the offering priest; the rest of the animal was eaten by him who presented it, and those invited by him. Thus there was identity and communion with the glory and good pleasure-with the delight-of Him to whom it was offered, with the priesthood and the altar, which were the instruments and means of the offering, with all God's priests, and among those immediately taking part. The same practice existed among the heathen; hence the reasoning of the apostle as to eating things offered to idols. So, alluding to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, the purport of which is strongly associated with this type, "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" And this was so much the case, that in the desert, when it was practicable (and the analogous order needful to maintain the principle was established in the land), no one could eat of the flesh of any animal unless he first brought it to

the tabernacle as an offering [See Note #3]. We indeed should eat in the name of the Lord Jesus, offering our sacrifices of thanksgivings, the calves of our lips, and so consecrate all we partake of, and ourselves in it, in communion with the Giver, and Him who secures us in it; but here it was a proper sacrifice.

Thus then the offering of Christ, as a burnt-offering, is God's delight: His soul delights and takes pleasure in it; it is of sweet savour with Him. Before the Lord, at His table so to speak, the worshippers, also coming by this perfect sacrifice, feed on it also, have perfect communion with God in the same delight in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, in Jesus Himself thus offered, thus offering [See Note #4] Himself-have the same subject of delight as God, a common blessed joy in the excellency of the work of redemption of Jesus. As parents have a common joy in their offspring, enhanced by their communion in it, so, as filled with the Spirit, and themselves redeemed by Him, the worshippers have one mind with the Father in their delight in the excellency of an offered Christ. And is the Priest, who has ministered all this, the only one excluded from the joy of it? No; He has His share also. He who has offered it has part in the joy of redemption. Further, the whole church of God must be embraced in it.

Jesus then, as priest, finds a delight in the joy of communion between God and the people, the worshippers, wrought and brought about by His means-yea, of which He is the object. For what is the joy of a Redeemer but the joy and communion, the happiness, of His redeemed? Such then is all true worship of the saints. It is joying in God through the means of the redemption and offering of Jesus; yea, one mind with God; joying with Him in the perfect excellency of this pure and selfdevoted victim [See Note #5], who has redeemed and reconciled them, and given them this communion, with the assurance that this their joy is the joy of Jesus Himself, who has wrought it and given it to them. In heaven He shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them.

This joy of worship necessarily associates itself also with the whole body of the redeemed, viewed as in the heavenly places. Aaron and his sons were to have their part also. Aaron and his sons were ever the type of the church, not as Christ's body (that was wholly hidden in the Old Testament) but

viewed as the whole body of its members, having title to enter into the heavenly places, and offer incense-made priests to God. For these were the patterns of things in the heavens, and those who compose the church are the body of heavenly priests to God. Hence worship to God, true worship, cannot separate itself from the whole body of true believers. I cannot really come with my sacrifice unto the tabernacle of God, without finding necessarily there the priests of the tabernacle. Without the one Priest all is vain; for what without Jesus? But I cannot find Him without His whole body of manifested people. The interest of His heart takes them all in. God withal has His priests, and I cannot approach Him but in the way which He has ordained, and in association with, and in recognition of, those whom He has placed around His house, the whole body of those that are sanctified in Christ. He who walks not in this spirit is in conflict with the ordinance of God, and has no true peace-offering according to God's institution.

But there were other circumstances we must remark. First, none but those that were clean could partake among the guests. We know that moral cleansing has taken the place of the ceremonial. "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." God has put no difference between us and them, having purified their hearts by faith. Israelites then partook of the peace-offerings; and if an Israelite was unclean, through anything that defiled according to the law of God, he could not eat while his defilement continued. Christians then, whose hearts are purified by faith, having received the word with joy, alone can worship really before God, having part in the communion of saints; and if the heart is defiled, that communion is interrupted. No person apparently defiled has title to share in the worship and communion of the church of God. It was a different thing, remark, to be not an Israelite, and not clean. He who was not an Israelite had never any part in the peace-offerings; he could not come nigh the tabernacle. Uncleanness did not prove he was no Israelite (on the contrary, this discipline was exercised on Israelites only); but the uncleanness incapacitated him from partaking, with those that were clean, in the privileges of this communion; for these peace-offerings, though enjoyed by the worshippers, belonged to the Lord (Lev 7:20-21). The unclean had no title there. True worshippers must worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. If worship and communion be

by the Spirit, it is evident that those only who have the Spirit of Christ, and also have not grieved the Spirit (and thus rendered the communion, which is by the Spirit, impossible by the defilements of sin) can participate.

Yet there was another part of this type which seemed to contradict this, but which indeed throws additional light on it. With the offerings which accompanied this sacrifice, it was ordered (Lev 7:13) that leavened cakes should be offered. For though that which is unclean is to be excluded (that which can be recognised as unclean), there is always a mixture of evil in us, and so far in our worship itself. The leaven is there (man cannot be without it); it may be a very small part of the matter, not come in to the mind, as it will be when the Spirit is not grieved, but it is there where man is.

Unleavened bread was there also, for Christ is there, and the Spirit of Christ in us who are leavened, for man is there.

There was another very important direction in this worship [See Note #6]. In the case of a vow, it might be eaten the second day after the burning of the fat-Jehovah's food of the offering; in the case of thanksgiving-offering, it was to be eaten the same day This identified the purity of the service of the worshippers with the offering of the fat to God. So is it impossible to separate true spiritual worship and communion from the perfect offering of Christ to God. The moment our worship separates itself from this, from its efficacy and the consciousness of that infinite acceptability of the offering of Christ to God-not the putting away of sins, without that we could not approach at all, but its intrinsic excellency as a burnt-offering, all burnt to God as a sweet savour [See Note #7] -it becomes carnal, and either a form, or the delight of the flesh. If the peace-offering was eaten separately from this offering of the fat, it was a mere carnal festivity, or a form of worship, which had no real communion with the delight and good pleasure of God, and was worse than unacceptable-it was really iniquity. When the Holy Spirit leads us into real spiritual worship, it leads us into communion with God, into the presence of God; and then, necessarily, all the infinite acceptability to Him of the offering of Christ is present to our spirit. We are associated with it: it forms an integral and necessary part of our communion and worship. We cannot be in the presence of God in communion without

finding it there. It is indeed the ground of our acceptance, as of our communion.

Apart from this then our worship falls back into the flesh; our prayers (or praying well) form what is sometimes called a gift of prayer, than which nothing often is more sorrowful (a fluent rehearsal of known truths and principles, instead of communion and the expression of praise and thanksgiving in the joy of communion, and even of our wants and desires in the unction of the Spirit); our singing, pleasure of the ear, taste in music, and expressions in which we sympathise-all a form in the flesh, and not communion in the Spirit. All this is evil; the Spirit of God owns it not; it is not in spirit and in truth; it is really iniquity.

There was a difference in the value of the various kinds of this offering: in the case of a vow it might be eaten the second day; in the case of thanksgiving only the first. This typified a different degree of spiritual energy. When our worship is the fruit of unfeigned and single-eyed devotedness, it can sustain itself longer, through our being filled with the Spirit, in the reality of communion, and our worship be acceptable-the savour of that sacrifice being thus longer maintained before God, who has fellowship with the joy of His people. For the energy of the Spirit maintains His joy in His people in communion acceptable to God. When, on the other hand, it is the natural consequence of blessing already conferred, it is surely acceptable as due to God, but there is not the same energy of communion.- The thanks are rendered thus in communion with the Lord, but the communion passes away with the thanksgiving really offered. Note we also, that we may begin in the Spirit and pass into the flesh in worship. Thus, for example, if I continue to sing beyond the real operation of the Spirit, which happens too often, my singing, which at the beginning was real melody in the heart to the Lord, will terminate in pleasant ideas and music, and so end in the flesh. The spiritual mind, the spiritual worshipper, will discover this at once when it happens. When it does happen, it always weakens the soul, and soon accustoms to formal worship and spiritual weakness; and then evil, through the power of the adversary, soon makes its appearance among the worshippers. The Lord keep us nigh to Himself to judge all things in His presence, for out of it we can judge nothing!

It is good to bear strongly in mind this expression, "which pertain to Jehovah" (Lev 7:20); the worship, what passes in our hearts in it, is not ours—it is God's. God has put it there for our joy, that we may participate in the offering of Christ, His joy in Christ; but the moment we make it ours, we desecrate it. Hence what remained was burnt in the fire; hence what was unclean must have nothing to do with it; hence the necessity of associating it with the fat burnt to Jehovah, that it may be really Christ in us, and so true communion, the giving forth of Christ, on whom our souls feed, towards God. Let us remember that all our worship pertains to God, that it is the expression of the excellency of Christ in us, and so our joy, as by one Spirit, with God. He in the Father, we in Him, and He in us, is the marvellous chain of union which exists in grace as well as in glory: our worship is the outgoings and joy of heart founded on this, towards God, by Christ. So, as Himself ministering in this, the Lord says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." He surely is in joy and knows redemption is accomplished. May we be in tune with our heavenly Guide! He shall well conduct our praises, and agreeably to the Father. His ear shall be attentive when He hears this voice lead us. What perfect and deep experience of what is acceptable before God must He have, who, in redemption, has presented all according to God's mind! His mind is the expression of all that is agreeable to the Father, and He leads us, taught by Himself, though imperfect and feeble in it, in the same acceptableness. We have the mind of Christ.

The "calves of our lips" is the expression of the same Spirit in which we offer our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, proving what is His good and perfect and acceptable will: such our worship, such our service, for our service should be in a certain sense our worship.

There is added to the directions of this sacrifice a commandment to eat neither fat nor blood. This evidently finds its place here, inasmuch as the peace-offerings were the sacrifices where the worshippers ate a great part. But from what we have said, the signification is evident; the life and inward energies of the heart belonged wholly to God. Life belonged to God and was to be consecrated to God; to Him alone it belonged or could belong. Life spent or taken by another was high treason against the title of God. So as to

fat-that which characterised no ordinary functions, as the movements of a limb, or the like, but the energy of the nature itself expressing itself-belonged exclusively to God. Christ alone rendered it to God, because He alone offered to God what was due; and hence the burning of the fat in these and other offerings represented His offering Himself a sweet savour to God. But it was not less true that all belonged to God and belongs to God: man could not appropriate it to his use. Use might be made of it in the case of a beast dying or torn; but whenever man of his will took the life of a beast, he must recognise the title of God, and submit his will, and own the will of God as alone having claim.

Note #1

Though the perfect offering for sin is the basis of all; we should not without it have the thing to have communion in, and this point was carefully guarded in the type of the peace-offering-it could not be acceptably eaten but in connection with what was offered to God (see chap. 7). Only it is communion in the joy of the common salvation, not special priestly delight in what Christ was for God.

Note #2

The exceptions to this rule are sin-offerings of the day of atonement, and the red heifer, which confirm the great principle, or fortify a peculiar portion of it. The sprinkling of the blood was always the priest's work.

Note #3

Life belonged to God. He only could give it. Hence, when allowed to be taken in Noah's time, the blood was reserved. There was, of course, no eating connected with death before the fall (unless the warning not to bring it in), nor allowedly before Noah. Hence, as life belonged to God, death had come in by sin, and there could be no eating of what involved death, no nourishment by it, unless the life (the blood) was offered to God. This being done, man could have his living nourishment through it. It was indeed his salvation through faith.

Note #4

Offering has a double character distinguished in Greek by *prosphero* and *anaphero*, in Hebrew by *Hikrib* and *Hiktir*. Christ offered Himself without spot through the eternal Spirit to God; but, having done so, God laid the iniquity on Him, made Him to be sin for us, and He was offered up on the cross as an actual sacrifice.

Note #5

This expression, in a measure, brings in the meat-offering.

Note #6

It may be well to remark that the peace-offering supposes fellowship in worship, though many principles are individually applicable.

Note #7

We may add of Jesus with the Father, and that in connection even with His laying down His life, but this is not our direct subject here (see Joh 10:17). But there, note, it is not done as for sinners, but for God.

Leviticus Chapter 4

The following commentary covers Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7.

We come now to the sacrifices which were not sacrifices of sweet savour—the sin and trespass-offerings, alike in the great principle, though differing in character and detail: this difference we will notice. But first a very important principle must be noticed. The sacrifices of which we have spoken, the sacrifices of sweet savour, presented the identity of the offerer and the victim: this identity was signified by the laying on of the hands of the worshippers. But in those sacrifices the worshipper came as an offerer, whether Christ or one led by the Spirit of Christ, and so identified with Him in presenting himself to God—came of his own voluntary will, and was identified as a worshipper with the acceptability and acceptance of his victim.

In the case of the sin-offering, there was the same principle of identity with the victim by laying on of hands; but he who came, came not as a worshipper, but as a sinner; not as clean for communion with the Lord, but

as having guilt upon him; and instead of his being identified with the acceptability of the victim, though that became subsequently true, the victim became identified with his guilt and unacceptableness, bore his sins and was treated accordingly. This was completely the case where the sin-offering was purely such. I have added, "though that became subsequently true," because in many of the sin-offerings a certain part identified them with the acceptableness of Christ, which, in Him who united in His Person the virtue of all the sacrifices, could never be lost sight of. The distinction between the identity of the victim with the sin of the guilty, and the identity of the worshipper with the acceptance of the victim, marks the difference of these sacrifices and of the double aspect of the work of Christ very clearly.

I now come to the details. There were four ordinary classes of sin and trespass-offerings, besides two very important special offerings, of which we may speak hereafter: sins where natural conscience was violated; that which became evil by the ordinance of the Lord, as uncleannesses which made the worshipper inadmissible, and other things (this had a mixed character of sin and trespass, and is called by both names); wrongs done to the Lord in His holy things; and wrongs done to the neighbour by breaches of confidence and the like. The first class is in Leviticus 4; the second, attached to it, down to Verse 13 of chapter 5 (Lev 5:13); the third, from Verse 14 to the end (Lev 5:14-19); the fourth, in the first seven Verses of chapter 6 (Gen Lev_6:1-7).

The two other remarkable examples of sin-offering were the day of expiation, and the red heifer, which demand an examination apart. The circumstances of the offering were simple. In the case of the high priest and the body of the people sinning, it is evident that all communion was interrupted. It was not merely the restoration of the individual to communion which was needed, but the restoration of communion between God and the whole people; not the forming a relation (the day of atonement effected that), but the re-establishment of interrupted communion. Hence the blood was sprinkled before the veil seven times for the perfect restoration of this communion, and the blood also put on the horns of the altar of incense. When the sin was individual, the communion of the people in general was not interrupted, but the individual had lost his enjoyment of

the blessing. The blood was sprinkled therefore, not where the priest approached-at the altar of incense; but where the individual did-at the altar of burnt-offering. The efficacy of the sin-offering of Christ is needed, but has been once for all accomplished, for every fault; but the communion of the worshipping body of the church, though lamed and hindered, is not cut off by the individual sin; but when this is known, restoration is needed and the offering demanded [See Note #1]. That the Lord may punish the whole congregation, if the sin lie undetected, we know; for He did so in Achan. That is, the power belonging to a state in which God is ungrieved, is enfeebled and lost, and where conscience is awake and the heart interested in the blessing of God's people, this leads to search out the cause. But this is connected with the government of God; the imputation of sin as guilt is another matter, but sin in itself has always its own character with God. "Israel," said He, "hath sinned;" but Achan only suffers when the evil is known and purged, and blessing returns, though with much greater difficulty. The truth is, that He who knows how to unite general government with particular judgment, even where there is general faithfulness, puts in evidence individual evil, or permits it not (a yet higher and happier case); and, on the other hand, can employ the sin of the individual as a means of chastening the whole.

Indeed it appears to me very clear, in the case alluded to, that, though the occasion of the chastening is evident in the sin of Achan, Israel had shewn a confidence in human strength which was chastised and shewn vain in the result, as divine strength was shewn all-sufficient in Jericho. However that is, it is evident from the detail of these sin-offerings that God can let nothing pass; He can forgive all and cleanse from all, but let nothing pass. The sin hidden to a man's self is not hidden to God; and why is it hidden to himself, but that negligence, the fruit of sin, has stupified his spiritual intelligence and attention?

God judges sins according to the responsibility of those who are judged. But in the sovereign work of grace God judges of sin in those who approach Him, not according to what becomes man, but what becomes Himself. He dwelt in the midst of Israel, and Israel must be judged according to what becomes God's presence: our privileges are the measure of our

responsibility. Men admit to their society what becomes themselves, and do not admit the base and corrupt, allowing their evil, because it is suited to their estate so to act. And is God alone to profane His presence by acting otherwise? Is all the evil which man's corruption leads him into to find its sanction only in the presence of God? No; God must (in order to make us happy by His presence) judge evil, all evil, according to His presence, so as to exclude it from it. Has the moral stupidity, which is the effect of sin, made us ignorant of it in ourselves? Is God to become blind because sin has made us so-to dishonour Himself and make others miserable, and all holy joy impossible everywhere, even in His presence; to let pass the evil? Impossible. No; all is judged, and judged in the believer according to the place grace has brought him into.

God is ignorant of nothing, and evil, however hidden to us, is evil to Him. "All things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." He may have compassion, enlighten by His Spirit, provide a way of approach so that the greatest sinner may come, restore the soul that has wandered, take account of the degree of spiritual light, where light is honestly sought; but that does not change His judgment of evil. "The priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sin wherein he erred and wist it not, and it shall be forgiven him. It is a trespass-offering; he hath certainly trespassed against Jehovah."

I have now to remark certain differences in these sin-offerings full of interest to us in the detail. The bodies of those in which the whole people, or the high priest (which came to the same thing, for the communion of the whole body was interrupted), were concerned, were burnt without the camp; not those for individuals, nor those which were for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire, though the whole were burnt. But those for the high priest, or the whole people were: they had been made sin, and were carried out of the camp as such. The sacrifice itself was without blemish, and the fat was burnt on the altar; but, the offender having confessed his sins on its head, it was viewed as bearing these sins, and made sin of God, was taken without the camp; as Jesus (as the epistle to the Hebrews applies it) suffered without the gate, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood. This was always the case when the blood was brought into the

sanctuary for sin. One of the sacrifices, of which I do not enter into the details here, was abstractedly and altogether viewed in this light of sin, and was slain and burnt, fat and blood (part of the blood having been first sprinkled at the door of the tabernacle), and every part of it, without the camp. This was the red heifer. In the three other sacrifices, which concerned the whole people, the bodies were burnt indeed without the camp, but the connection with the perfect acceptance of Christ in His work, as offering Himself, was preserved, in the burning of the fat on the altar of burnt-offering, and thus gave us the full sense of how He had been made sin indeed, but that it was He who knew no sin, and whose offering in His most inmost thoughts and nature was in the trial of God's judgment perfectly agreeable. But though the fat was burnt on the altar to maintain this association and the unity of the sacrifice of Christ, yet, maintaining the general character and purpose of the diversity, it is not habitually called [See Note #2] a sweet savour to Jehovah.

There was a difference, however, between one of the three last-mentioned sacrifices, the sacrifice of the great day of atonement, and the two others mentioned in the beginning of Leviticus 4. In the sacrifice of the great day of expiation the blood was carried within the veil; for this was the foundation of all other sacrifices, of all relationship between God and Israel, and enabled God to dwell among them so as to receive the others. Its efficacy lasted throughout the year-for us, for ever-as the apostle reasons in the Hebrews; and on it was based all the intercourse between God and the people. Hence the blood of it was sprinkled on the mercy-seat, to be for ever before the eyes of Him, whose throne of grace, as of righteousness, that mercy-seat was thus to be. And God, by virtue of it, dwelt among the people, careless and rebellious as they were.

Such also is the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. It is for ever on the mercy-seat, efficacious as the ground of the relationship between us and God. The other sin-offerings referred to were to restore the communion of those who were in this relationship. Hence, in Lev 4:1-21, the blood was sprinkled on the altar of incense, which was the symbol of the exercise of this communion; the residue poured out, as habitually in the sacrifices, at the altar of burnt-offering-the place of accepted sacrifice; the body, as we have seen, was

burnt. In the case of the offerings for the sin and trespass of an individual the communion of the body was not directly in question or interrupted, but the individual was deprived of the enjoyment of it. Hence the altar of incense was not defiled or incapacitated, as it were, in its use; on the contrary it was continually used. The blood of these sacrifices, therefore, was put on the horns of the altar of burnt-offering, which was always the place of individual approach. Here, by Christ and the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ once offered, every individual soul approaches; and, being thus accepted, enjoys all the blessing and the privileges of which the church at large is continually in possession. But for us the veil is rent, and as to conscience of guilt we are perfected for ever. If our walk be defiled, water by the word restores the communion of our souls, and that with the Father and with His Son. To speak of resprinkling of blood consequently upsets the real position of the Christian, and throws him back on his own imperfect state as to acceptance and righteousness. There may be a repeated remedy, but one who is on that ground drops the question of holiness, and makes continuous righteousness in Christ uncertain. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity," is unknown in such cases; as is also that the worshipper once purged should have no more conscience of sins. Were it so, as the apostle urges, Christ must have suffered often. Without shedding of blood is no remission.

But there was another circumstance in these sin-offerings for the individual. The priest who offered the blood ate the victim. Thus there was the most perfect identity between the priest, and the victim which represented the sin of the offerer. As Christ is both, the eating by the priest shews how He did thus make it His own. Only, in Christ, what was thus typified was first effected when victim, and the priesthood, as exercised for us now in heaven, comes after. Still this eating shews the heart of Christ taking it up as He does for us when we fail, not merely its being laid vicariously on Him, though then His heart took up our cause. But He cared for the sheep.

The priest had not committed the sin; on the contrary, he had made atonement for it by the blood which he had sprinkled, but he identified himself completely with it. Thus Christ, giving us the most complete consolation-Himself spotless, and who has made the atonement, yet

identified Himself with all our faults and sins, as the worshipper in the peace-offering was identified with the acceptance of the sacrifice. Only that now, the one offering having been made once for all, if sin is in question, it is in advocacy on high that He now takes it up, and in connection with communion, not with imputation. There is nothing more to do with sacrifice or blood sprinkling. His service is founded on it.

The fat was burnt on the altar, where the priest was identified with the sin which was on the offerer of the victim, but transferred to it. It was lost, so to speak, and gone in the sacrifice. He who drew nigh came with confession and humiliation, but, as regarded guilt and judgment, it was taken up by the priest through the victim; and, atonement having been made, reached not the judgment-seat of God, so as further to affect the relation between God and the offender. Yet here it was perpetual repetition. Communion was restored in the acceptance of the sacrifice, as the sin which hindered the communion was entirely taken away, or served only to renew (in a heart humbled into the dust, and annihilated before the goodness of God) the communion founded on goodness become infinitely more precious, and established on the renewed sense of the riches and security of that mediation there typically exhibited, but which Christ has accomplished once for all, eternally for us, as sacrifice, and makes good as to the blessings flowing from it continually on high; not to change the mind of God to us, but to secure our present communion and enjoyment, in spite of our miseries and faults, in the presence, the glory, and the love of Him who changes not [See Note #3].

Some interesting circumstances remain to be observed. It is remarkable that nothing was so stamped with the character of holiness, of entire, real separation to God, as the sin-offering. In the other cases, perfect acceptance, a sweet savour, and in some cases our leavened cakes, are found therewith in the use of them; but all passed in the natural delight, so to speak, which God took in what was perfect and infinitely excellent, though it supposed sin and judgment to be there; but here the most remarkable and exact sanctions of its holiness were enjoined (Lev 6:26-28). There was nothing in the whole work of Jesus which so marked His entire and perfect separation to God His positive holiness, as His bearing sin. He

who knew no sin alone could be made sin, and the act itself was the most utter separation to God conceivable, yea, an act which no thought of ours can fathom, to bear all, and to His glory. It was a total consecration of Himself, at all cost, to God's glory; as God, indeed, could accept nothing else. And the victim must have been as perfect as the self-offering was.

As a sacrifice then for sins, and as made sin, Christ is specially holy; as indeed, now in the power of this sacrifice, a Priest present before God, making intercession, He is "holy, harmless, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens." Yet, so truly was it a bearing of sins, and viewed as made sin, that he who carried the goat before his letting loose, and he that gathered the ashes of the red heifer, and sprinkled the water of separation, were unclean until even, and must wash to come into the camp. Thus are these two great truths in the sin-offering of Christ distinctly presented to us in these sacrifices. For, indeed, how can we conceive a greater separation to God, in Christ, than His offering Himself as a victim for sin? And, on the other hand, had He not really borne our sins in all their evil, He could not have put them away really in the judgment. Blessed for ever be His name who has done it, and may we ever learn more His perfectness in doing it!

We have, then, in these sacrifices, Christ in His devotedness unto death; Christ in the perfection of His life of consecration to God; Christ, the basis of the communion of the people with God, who feeds, as it were, at the same table with them; and finally, Christ made sin for those who stood in need of it, and bearing their sins in His own body on the tree. We shall find that in the law of the offerings the question is chiefly as to what was to be eaten in these sacrifices, and by whom, and under what conditions.

The burnt-offering and the meat-offering for a priest were to be entirely burnt. It is Christ Himself, offered wholly to God, who offers Himself. As to the burnt-offering, the fire burnt all night upon the altar and consumed the victim, the sweet-smelling savour of which ascended thus to God, even during the darkness, where man was far from Him, buried in sleep. This too is true, I doubt not, as to Israel now. God has the sweet savour of the sacrifice of Christ towards Him, while the nation forgets Him. However this may be, the only effect for us of the judgment of the holy majesty of God-

the fire of the Lord, now that Christ has offered Himself, is to cause the sweet smell of this precious sacrifice to ascend towards God. Of the other sacrifices, the meat-offering and the sin-offering, the priest ate. The first pictures the saint in his priestly character feeding on the perfectness of Christ; the last, Christ, and even those who are His, as priests, in devoted love and in sympathy with others, identifying themselves with their sin and with the work of Christ for that sin. To Him alone it was, of course, to bear that sin; but founded on His work our hearts can take it up in a priestly way before God. They are connected in grace with it according to the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ; they enjoy the grace of Christ therein. Christ entered into it directly for us, we in grace into what He did. This is, however, a solemn thing. It is only as priests that we can participate in it, and in the consciousness of what it means. The people ate of the peace-offerings, which, though they were holy, did not require that nearness to God. It was the joy of the communion of believers, based on the redemption and the acceptance of Christ. Therefore the directions for these of offerings follow those given for the sacrifices for sin and trespass, although the peace-offering comes before the sin-offering in the order of the sacrifices, because, in the former, it required to be a priest to partake of them. There are things which we do as priests; there are others which we do as simple believers.

Note #1

Only we must always remember that in Christ it has been done once for all. We have only a shadow of good things to come, and in certain points, as in this, contrast-a contrast fully developed in Hebrews 10. In Hebrews, however, it is not restoration after failure, but perfecting for ever, in the conscience, which takes the place of repeated sacrifice. The restoration of communion on failure is found in Jo1 2:1-2, founded on the righteous One being before God for us, and the propitiation made.

Note #2

There is one case only where it is, Lev 4:31.

Note #3

There are points in the New Testament it may be well to notice here. The Hebrews views the Christian as walking down here in weakness and trial, but as perfected for ever by the work of Christ, no more conscience of sins, and the priesthood is exercised not to restore communion, but to find mercy and grace to help. 1 John speaks of communion with the Father and Son. This is interrupted by any sin, and Christ is our Advocate with the Father to restore it. The Hebrews is occupied with access to God within the veil, the conscience being perfect, and we enter with boldness, hence failure and restoration are not in question. The Father is not spoken of. In John, as I have said, it is communion and the actual state of the soul is in question. And it is so true that it is the standing in Hebrews, that if one falls away, restoration is impossible. In the tabernacle there was no going within the veil. No such standing was revealed, and priesthood and communion as far as enjoyed were mingled together, the Father unknown.

Leviticus Chapter 8

The following commentary covers Chapters 8 and 9.

The sacrifices and the rules for partaking of them being thus appointed, priesthood is established (chap. 8) according to the ordinance. Aaron and his sons are washed; Aaron is then clothed, and the tabernacle, and all that was therein, was anointed, and Aaron also, and this without blood. In this we have, I apprehend, a bright inlet into the way in which the universe is filled with glory. When Aaron alone is anointed without blood, the tabernacle is also. The fulness of the divine power and spiritual grace and glory which is in Christ, fills the whole scene of created witness of the glory of God; that is, the energy of the Holy Ghost fills it with the claim and witnesses of the excellency of Christ. When the creature has had to do with it, then, indeed, as on the great day of atonement, it has all to be purified and reconciled with blood. But this does not undo the direct title in grace and divine excellency in Jesus. It is His on this ground too. It is His as Creator of it all. It may have contracted impurity. Redemption is the ground of the restitution of all things, and the creature is delivered from the bondage of corruption. But as His creation it all belonged to God. As the normal order it was, as created-consecrated to God (see also Col 1:16 and Col 1:21).

When Aaron's sons are brought in, the altar is purified with blood, because we have got out of the mere personal excellency and title of Christ. When the sons of Aaron are clothed with the priestly garments, sacrifices are offered, beginning with the bullock for a sin-offering, and Aaron and his sons have its blood put upon ear and thumb and toe; and then Aaron and his garments, his sons and their garments with him, are sprinkled with oil and blood according to the directions given in Exodus. The blood of Christ and the Spirit are the ground on which we, associated with Him, have our place with God.

On the eighth day Jehovah was to appear and manifest the acceptance of the sacrifices offered on that day, and His presence in the glory in the midst of the people. This manifestation took place accordingly: first Aaron, standing by the sacrifice, blesses the people; and then Moses and Aaron go into the tabernacle, and come out and bless the people. That is, there is first Christ, as Priest, blessing them, in virtue of the offered sacrifice; and then Christ, as King and Priest, going in and hiding Himself for a little in the tabernacle, and then coming out and blessing the people in this twofold character. When this takes place, as it will at the coming of Jesus, the acceptance of the sacrifice will be publicly manifested, and the glory of Jehovah will appear to the people, then become true worshippers through that means.

This is a scene of the deepest interest; but there is a remark to be made here. The church is not found in this place (though there are general principles which apply to any case of connection with God), unless it be in the persons of Moses and Aaron. The blessing comes and is made manifest; that is, the acceptance of the victim is made manifest when Moses and Aaron appear at their coming out of the tabernacle. It will be thus with Israel. When the Lord Jesus appears, and they recognise Him whom they pierced, the efficacy of this sacrifice will be manifested in favour of that nation. It will be public by the manifestation of Christ. Our knowledge of that efficacy is during the stay of Christ within the veil, or rather in heaven itself, for the veil is now rent. Israel will not know the acceptance of the sacrifice until Christ comes forth as King; for us the Holy Ghost is come forth while He is yet within, so that we have the anticipatory certitude of that

reception, and are connected with Him there. And it is this which gives to the Christian his proper character.

Here the manifestation takes place in the court where the sacrifice was offered, and when Moses and Aaron have come to the place where God talked with the people (not where He Communed with the mediator only, that is, the ark of the testimony, where the veil was no longer on the face of him who also communed with the Lord), and answering to this figure the manifestation will be here. There is a very peculiar circumstance connected with that. There had been no sacrifice whose blood was carried into the holy place, though the body of the bullock was burnt without the camp [See Note #1]. A sin-offering was indeed offered, but it was such as ought to have been eaten by the priest (see Lev 10:17-18). The relationships which had been established were comparatively external. The sin and defilement were carried clean out of the camp and done away; but there was no entering in within the veil, or meeting God there.

Note #1

It does not exactly appear whether the goat for the people (Lev 9:3) was burnt without the camp. It is said in Lev 10:16 that it was burnt, and that its blood was not brought into the holy place for sin, so that they ought to have eaten it. So that if it was burnt outside the camp it was an error; the bullock for Aaron was, though the blood was not carried within the veil. Of the goat it is merely said, "offered it for sin, as the first," (Lev 9:15). Aaron's sacrifice seems to shew that the character of Christ's priesthood does not bring Israel into fellowship with what is within the veil, though Christ may have suffered on the cross for them. The blood was put on the altar in the court. The sons should have eaten that for the people, as for a particular fault of a people already in relationship with God. They are the offerings after the consecration of Aaron, not those of his consecration. Then there was naturally no offering for the people there. Now his hands were filled. The reader may remark, as regards the remnant of Israel (the one hundred and forty-four thousand who are on Mount Sion with the Lamb, the Sufferer in Israel, now King there), that they are on earth, but they learn the song sung in heaven, though they are not there to sing it.

Leviticus Chapter 10

Lastly, we have what, alas! is always the case with man. The first day the priesthood is established, it comes short of the glory of God. Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire, acting as men in nature in their relationship with God, not founding their service on the altar of sacrifice, and they die.

The priests must on no account whatever depart from their consecration (Lev 10:6-7); therefore they must be Nazarites (Lev 10:9), apart from that which is only the excitement of the flesh, separated unto God from all that which would let nature loose in His presence; from that which would prevent them from feeling its power—a state of abstraction in which the flesh has no place. The presence of God must have its full power, and the flesh must be silent before Him. It is only thus that they would be able to discern between that which is unclean and that which is pure—that which is profane and that which is holy. There are lawful things, real joys, which, however, do not belong to priesthood—joys which flow from God's blessings, and which do not keep the flesh in check as does His presence; for there is always a certain restraint on the heart, on nature and its activity, produced by the presence of God. But priesthood is exercised before Him.

Leviticus Chapter 11

The following commentary covers Chapters 11 and 12.

Priesthood being established, there comes the discernment between holy things and profane, and the judgment of defilements (chaps. 11-15), and what was to be done for the purification of defiled persons. We see that it is this nearness of separation unto God which alone can discern thus, and such is the service and ever the duty of priests.

First, as to food, that which is allowed to be eaten. In general the principle seems to be, that anything is allowed that is clean, in this sense, first, that it is thoroughly according to its element, that is, in principle, divine order (of course here presented in a figure), as fishes having scales; secondly, that was allowed which united mature digestion to the absence of that wilful energy which goes boldly through everything. These two qualities must be united. The grossness which swallows down things as they are, or the lack

of quiet firmness, rendered unclean. To be clean, it must be that which at the same time chews the cud and divides the hoof. Of birds, the carnivorous night birds and those which cannot be tamed are forbidden; creeping things also, whatever grovelled and trailed itself on the earth. In general, there was to be in their eating the discernment of what was clean.

Then we have the judgment of God fallen on that which would have been, for unfallen man, joy and blessing. The birth of a man, connected now with sin, renders unclean; that of a woman, in whom was the transgression, being deceived, still more so [See Note #1].

Note #1

Connected with this was the weakness of fallen nature (compare Gen 1:2). All that belonged even to weakness of nature, being the effect of sin, rendered unclean under the law. This is also true spiritually. All this was the result of some manifestation or other of the life that was in the flesh. It was so with the leper; raw flesh rendered unclean, as well as any other case where this life (which had become unclean, and had been as set aside and under judgment through sin), manifested itself externally, even though weakness alone were the cause of its manifestation.

Leviticus Chapter 13

The following commentary covers Chapters 13 and 14.

Leprosy requires a little more detail. It was found in persons, in garments, in houses. Leprosy was sin acting in the flesh. The spiritual man-the priest-discerns as to it. If the raw flesh appears, he is unclean; the strength of the flesh is at work. If the man was white all over, it was only the effect, as sin entirely confessed but no longer active; he was clean. The thing spreads in man, if it be evil in the flesh. The first step is for him to confess; and to confess under full spiritual discernment, and the judgment of God who has brought to light what was acting in his nature. He makes up his mind as one judged and detected. He has no part in the assembly of God, though making part of it in one sense. He is put out, without the camp.

Leprosy (sin) manifested itself in circumstances, in that which surrounds us, as well as in personal conduct. If it was only a spot, the garment was

washed, and it was clean; if the plague spot, on the contrary, spread, the whole was burned; if the plague, though it did not spread, remained, after washing, unchanged, the whole was burned. If changed and it spread no more, the spot was torn out. If we get thus defiled by our circumstances, and it is not in the things themselves, we need only wash and remain where we are; if a part of them be essentially bad, that it spread defilingly in our whole condition, all that part of our outward life must be given up; if, in spite of washing, sin be still found the same there, if we cannot walk therein with God, such a position must be wholly given up at any cost; if it be affected by the washing and cease to spread, the general state being unaffected, the particular thing which has defiled is to be given up.

As to purification, the leper was first considered as being outside the camp, not belonging to it; but if the activity of the disease was stopped in him, he was healed, but not yet purified. Thus this type supposes that the flesh, instead of being active and characteristic of the state of man, is judged and arrested in its activity. It is the enjoyment of a recognised relationship with God which is to be established [See Note #1]. The first part of the purification relates to this position. Christ being dead and risen, man sprinkled with His blood is fit, as regards the controversy with God, and His requirements, to enter the camp of God's people; and then he can share in the efficacy of the means which they can use there, of that which is found within, in order to present himself as acceptable before the tabernacle of God. Two birds were to be taken, and one killed by some one, at the command of the priest; for the priest's office never properly began till there was blood to offer or sprinkle, though the high priest represented Israel on the great day of atonement [See Note #2]. The two birds, however, are identified, so that we hear no more of that which was killed, though the efficacy of the blood be everything in the work of cleansing; the second is dipped in the blood of the first.

Thus Christ dead is no more found; but, being raised, He sprinkles His blood, as priest, on the unclean sinner. The earthen vessel, over running water, presents to us the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, according to the all-powerful efficacy of which, in Christ as man, this work of the death of Jesus has been accomplished: through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to

God-God having brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. He, the sinner, was under the efficacy of Christ's work.

But now there is, before he can offer, the work done on himself, the actual cleansing applied to him. He who cleansed himself washed himself—a purification of water as well as of blood, which is always found; the moral judgment of sin viewed as that which excludes from God's presence, so that the sinner is, in principle and faith, morally as well as judicially cleansed. Of the last blood is the emblem; but the water is the estimation of sin as shewn in Christ's death, and the forsaking of God. It is in virtue of the death of Christ, seen as His work for us, for the water comes out of His pierced side. He came by water and blood. The leper rids himself of anything to which impurity might have attached, or had a share in, and now he enters the camp; and the work of bringing him into communion with God in his conscience begins [See Note #3].

This is through realising all the efficacy of the work of Christ, with reference to conscience itself—not only as to the acceptance of the person, according to God's knowledge of that acceptance, but as to the purification of the conscience, and as to a knowledge of God, based on a moral appreciation of the work of Christ in every aspect, and the excellent work of the power of the Spirit of God. This is the second part of the cleansing of the leper, that which took place after he had re-entered the camp. It is important to recognise the work of Christ under these two aspects; its intrinsic efficacy for the acceptance of the person on the one hand; and, on the other, the purification of the conscience itself, in order that there may be communion with God, according to the price and the perfection of that work, known in the conscience as a means of drawing near to God, and as the moral condition of that nearness.

Let us now examine what took place. The first thing was the trespass-offering. The conscience must be purified, by the blood of Christ, of all that with which, as a matter of fact, it is charged, or would be chargeable in the day of judgment; and man must be consecrated to God with an intelligence which applies the value of that blood to his whole walk, his whole conduct, his whole thoughts, and upon the principle of perfect obedience. It is the

judicial purification of the whole man, upon the principle of intelligent obedience—a purification acting upon his conscience, not merely an outward rule for a man freed from the present power of sin, but a purification of his conscience felt in the knowledge of good and evil, of which the blood of Christ is the measure before God. Man being a sinner, having failed, the work must take place in the conscience, which takes an humbling knowledge of it; and in becoming cleansed through the precious efficacy of the blood of Christ, does so through the sorrow for all that is contrary to the perfection of that blood, and which has required the shedding of it.

It is thus man is consecrated. The heart is first purified in the conscience. The things to which he had given way are, as it were, brought to the conscience, which takes a painful knowledge of them, according to the value of the blood of the precious Lamb of God, who, without spot, and perfect in obedience, had to suffer the agony caused by the sin from which we have to be cleansed—wretched creatures that we are. Afterwards the heart makes progress in the power of its communion, through the knowledge of the most precious objects of its faith. As to communion—though never as to the conscience of imputation (see Heb. 10), and as to communion it is by water (see John 13 and 1 John 2). This work must go on again from time to time in the conscience, whenever there is something in our nature which is not in subjection to Christ, which is not brought captive to the obedience of Christ.

The blood, then, was put upon the tip of his right ear, his right hand, his right foot—his thoughts, his conduct, and his walk purified on the principle of obedience according to the measure of Christ's death, and the claim of the love displayed in it. Over that they sprinkled oil—the presence and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit as given to us, by which we are anointed and sealed—not washing (that was typified by water, the application of the word by the Spirit), but given to consecrate in knowledge and power of purpose and affection to God (with whatever gifts might be added thereto); the whole man being thus consecrated, according to the intelligence and the devotedness wrought by the Holy Spirit, to God. After that the oil was put upon his head, his whole person being thus consecrated to Him. The work was complete upon him who was to be cleansed [See Note #4]. After that the sin-offering was offered; that is, Christ (not only for the purification of

the conscience in a practical sense, for its actual faults, but that sin might be judged in its full extent before God; for Christ was made sin for us, as well as bore our sins) thus acts on our consciences with regard to those sins-makes us estimate sin, such as it is in itself, seen in the sacrifice of Christ.

Then the burnt-offering with the meat-offering was offered; the former, the appreciation of the perfection of the death of Christ, seen as the devoting of Himself to God unto death, to vindicate all the rights of His majesty, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself-in view of the existence of sin; the latter, the absolute sinlessness of Christ, His perfection, and the acting power of the Spirit in Him even to death, and full testing by it. This death was of infinite perfection in itself, as a work, for it can be said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." It was not as bearing our sins, but absolute devotedness to God and His glory, in the circumstances that sin had brought us into, and into which Christ also came by grace, that God might be fully glorified in Him. In the meat-offering was found, besides, all the perfectness of the grace of Christ in His life-humanity, pure without doubt, but kneaded with oil; humanity having in it all the strength, the taste, and savour of the Holy Spirit in its nature; for it is in that aspect that it is presented here, not as anointed with oil [See Note #5] -as power-but kneaded with oil in its substance. Now the man is clean.

And how great is the importance and the reality of the reconciliation of a soul to God, if it values all that is thus unfolded of the work of Christ, and of its application to the soul; and certainly its reconciliation does not take place without. Alas! our trifling hearts pass, perhaps lightly, over this, and the dealings of that hand of God which does marvellous things with the quiet ease which perfect grace and power give. However, we do see, sometimes, in some souls (according to the wisdom of God), the anguish and the suffering which accompany this work, when the conscience, in view of the reality of things before God, and through Christ, takes knowledge of the state of the heart, sinful and distant from God in its nature. This is the restoration of the soul on the part of God. It is all the working of divine power, not merely as to the work and resurrection of Christ, but even as to the soul itself; for the case here under supposition is that of a man already vitally cleansed. The priest judged him already clean, but the leper was not

himself restored to God in his conscience [See Note #6]; and the Spirit of God, for this purpose, goes over the work of Christ, and its application to the soul itself, and its relationship with the work and presence of the Holy Spirit in its work, whether in purifying the sinner, or in consecrating the man. May our gracious God render us attentive to this! happy that the work should be His, though it takes place in us as well as for us.

There remains to be considered leprosy in a house. In the case of the leprosy person, the whole referred to the tabernacle. They were still in the wilderness: the walk in the world was what was in question. But here the being in the land of promise is supposed. It does not refer to the cleansing of the person; it is more typical of an assembly. When defilement appears there, they take out the stones and the plaster: the external walk is quite changed, and the individuals who have corrupted this walk are taken out, and thrown amongst the unclean. If the whole be thereupon healed, the house remains; if not, it is wholly destroyed; the evil is in the assembly itself, and it was manifest, as in the case of the leper. If its source was in the stones taken away, if it was only there, the end was accomplished by taking out the stones and removing the plaster, reforming the whole external walk. Purification consisted in taking away the wicked who corrupted the public testimony-that which was manifested outside. It was not a question of restoring the conscience; the whole rests anew on the primitive efficacy of the work of Christ, which renders the assembly acceptable with God. We shall find that the apostle Paul, in his epistles addressed to assemblies, says, "grace and peace"; and, when writing to individuals, adds "mercy." Philemon seems an exception; but the church is addressed with him. In the case of garments it is no question about cleansing one's person, but of getting rid of defiled circumstances. We see that the case of the house is presented separate, being in the land of promise, and not in the walk of the wilderness. The same truth is found in the application, I doubt not. The assembly is in the land of promise; the individual walks in the wilderness. However, stones which corrupt the house may be found there.

Note #1

This difference is important; it is that between the work in us which makes a sin a judged thing in us, judged by us, and the work of Christ which supposing that, puts us in a condition for relationship with God.

Note #2

It was the high priest who did it, but it was not a properly priestly act. That is, it was not one going between individuals or even the people and God, but representing them as such in his own person: as Christ, His people on the cross.

Note #3

When it was a question of consecrating those who were recognised as to their persons (the priests), they were first washed, and the sacrifice of Christ, viewed under every aspect, was the measure of their relation with God in every way, and the basis of their communion in its inward efficacy upon the soul. But here, the sinner being viewed in his sin outside the camp, it was necessary first to lay the basis for the possibility of intercourse with God. This was done in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Then, being washed (the efficacious operation of the Spirit by the word), he can be in relationship.

Note #4

Note here how very distinctly the ground of introduction into the new christian place is stated in its completeness. Culpability is fully met, guilt removed, cleansing by blood as to all committed sins perfect, and the Holy Ghost given, giving competency for all that was to follow. The man stood, to apply the figure, personally on christian ground. The sin-offering and the burnt-offering go further, hence only the trespass-offering is used to introduce the leper and have him anointed.

Note #5

The fact of anointing the person comes after the trespass-offering. But this circumstance is of moment as shewing that it is Christ, in what He was in Person intrinsically-not the display of power, so as to say, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come amongst you,"

but what He was in all His blessed life in perfectness to God and in love. This is what we feed on. Note here that what is said in Verse 18 (Lev 14:18) does not mean, I apprehend, that the oil in itself made an atonement, but the trespass-offering, for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul. But it is not the less true that the man was not there until he had been anointed with the oil; nor is a man in heart and conscience before God till he have received the Holy Ghost, though the ground and measure of all be the blood with which he is sprinkled. It is the same in Verse 29 (Lev 14:29). See what follows.

Note #6

This difference is important, and shews how the working of sin may be stopped, and the desires and will set right, and in a certain sense the affections, but the conscience not yet be restored; communion consequently not yet re-established, nor the blessed confidence and affections founded on it.

Leviticus Chapter 15

Other cases connected with the weakness of nature are mentioned, but which point out that, sin having come in, all that is of nature, of the flesh, defiles (whatever may be the excuse as to the weakness and the unavoidable character of the thing). If it cannot be avoided, it is the manifestation, or at least the inevitable existence, of that which is shameful, because it is a nature fallen and sinful. We shall find, however, that, though being shameful, the case is supposed less morally serious than leprosy. In leprosy there was the manifestation of positive corruption, existing beforehand in the nature, which was admitted in the heart, so that a long process was necessary to purify the conscience. Here they only washed once, and they offered merely a sin-offering, and they were thereby able, in offering their burnt-offering, to enter into communion through the sweet savour of Christ.

Leviticus Chapter 16

Having made provision for such defilements of the people as allowed of it, we have the revelation, first, of the general provision for the purification of

the sanctuary which was in the midst of a people who defiled it, and secondly, for the atonement of the sins of the people themselves. In general, there are two great ideas; first, that the atonement was made, so that the relationship of the people with God was maintained notwithstanding their sins; and then, in the second place, in the difficulties which surrounded the entrance of Aaron into the holy place, there was the testimony (according to the Epistle to the Hebrews itself) that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest during that dispensation.

It is important to examine this chapter under these two points of view. It stands alone. No mention is made anywhere else of what took place on that solemn day. The sacrifice of Christ, as meeting God's righteousness against sin as the ground of redemption, was typified by the passover. It was a question of drawing near unto God who revealed Himself on His throne-of cleansing defilements-of taking away the sins of those who would draw near, and of purifying their conscience. Now, while presenting to us in figure God's means of doing this, it signified indeed that the thing was not done. As to the general idea of its efficacy, the high priest drew near personally, and filled the most holy place with incense. So Christ goes in personally in the perfect savour of what He is for God. The place of God's presence was full of it.

The expression "that he die not" expresses the absolutely obligatory nature of anything which was fulfilled in Christ. Personally he appears before God, being as ointment poured forth, a sweet savour, connected with fire from the altar, that is, based on judgment and death, but only bringing out a perfect sweet odour to God: not blood for others, but fire for the testing of his perfectness; not in this case to cleanse, but to bring out the odour of this good ointment. Then he took some blood, which he put on the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat. Atonement or propitiation was made according to the requirement of the nature and majesty of the throne of God Himself, so that the full satisfaction made to His majesty rendered the throne of justice favourable, a place of acceptance; grace had free course, and the worshipper found the blood there before him when he drew near, and even as a testimony before the throne. Then, secondly, the high priest cleansed

the tabernacle, the altar of incense, and all that was found there. But it was only that which was within.

There were thus two things; the blood presented to God, the throne was a throne of grace according to righteousness-the conscience being purified, so that we enter with boldness now; and then the place was cleansed, with all that belonged to it, according to the nature and presence of God, who dwelt there. In virtue of the sprinkling of His blood, Christ will reconcile all things in heaven and earth-but here this is only shewn as to the heavenly part-having made peace through the blood of His cross. There could be no guiltiness in the tabernacle, but it was the place of God's dwelling, and God would cleanse away the defilements, that they might not appear before Him.

In the third place (but this as a distinct service) there was no cleansing of that which was outside, but the high priest confessed the sins of the people over the scape-goat, which, sent away unto a land not inhabited, bore all the sins away from God, never to be found again. It is here that the idea of substitution is presented most clearly. There are three things: the blood on the mercy-seat, the reconciliation of the sanctuary, and the sins confessed and borne by another. It is evident that, though the scape-goat was sent away alive, he was identified as to the efficacy of the work with the death of the other. The idea of the eternal sending away of sins out of remembrance is only added to the thought of death. The glory of God was established, on one side, in the putting of the blood on the mercy-seat; and, on the other, there was the substitution of the scape-goat, of the Lord Jesus, in His precious grace, for the guilty persons whose cause He had undertaken; and, the sins of these having been borne, their deliverance was full, entire, and final. The first goat was Jehovah's lot-it was a question of His character and His majesty. The other was the lot of the people, which definitively represented the people in their sins.

These two aspects of the death of Jesus must be carefully distinguished in the atoning sacrifice He has accomplished. He has glorified God, and God acts according to the value of that blood towards all [See Note #1]. He has borne the sins of His people; and the salvation of His people is complete. And, in a certain sense, the first part is the most important. Sin having come

in, the justice of God might, it is true, have got rid of the sinner; but where would then have been His love and His counsels of grace, pardon, and even the maintenance of His glory according to His true nature as love, while righteous and holy too? I am not speaking here of the persons who were to be saved, but of the glory of God Himself. But the perfect death of Jesus-His blood put on the throne of God-has established and brought into evidence all that God is, all His glory, as no creation could have done it; His truth (for He had passed sentence of death) is made good in the highest way in Jesus; His majesty, for His Son submits to all for His glory; His justice against sin; His infinite love. God found means therein to accomplish His counsels of grace, in maintaining all the majesty of His justice and of His divine dignity; for what, like the death of Jesus, could have glorified them?

Therefore this devotedness of Jesus, God's Son, to His glory-His submission, even unto death, that God might be maintained in the full glory of His rights, has given its outlet to the love of God, freedom to its action; wherefore Jesus says, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" His heart, full of love, was driven back, in its personal manifestation, by the sin of man, who would not have it; but through the atonement it could flow forth to the sinner, in the accomplishment of God's grace and of His counsels, unhindered; and Jesus Himself had, so to speak, rights upon that love-a position we are brought into through grace, and which has none like it. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. We speak with reverence of such things, but it is good to speak of them; for the glory of our God, and of Him whom He has sent, is found therein established and manifested. There is not one attribute, one trait of the divine character, which has not been manifested in all its perfection, and fully glorified in that which took place between God and Jesus Himself. That we have been saved and redeemed, and that our sins have been atoned for in that same sacrifice, according to the counsels of the grace of God, is (I presume to say it, precious and important as it is for us) the inferior part of that work, if anything whatever may be called inferior where everything is perfect: its object at least-we sinners-is inferior, if the work is equally perfect in every point of view. Nor can they indeed be separated; for if sin had not been there, where would that in God have been displayed, which has been in

putting it away? Nor is it here only, though we know it here; we shall be eternally in glory, the proof and living witness as to the efficacy of Christ's work. Having considered a little the grand principles, we may now examine the particular circumstances.

It will have been observed that there were two sacrifices; one for Aaron and his family, the other for the people. Aaron and his sons always represent the church, not in the sense of one body, but as a company of priests.

Thus we have, even in the day of atonement, the distinction between those who form the church, and the earthly people who form the camp of God on the earth. Believers have their place outside the camp, where their Head has suffered as sacrifice for sin; but, in consequence, they have their place in the presence of God in the heavens, where their Head has entered. Outside the camp [See Note #2], here below, answers to a heavenly portion above: they are the two positions of the ever blessed Christ. If the professing church takes the position of the camp here below, the place of the believer is always outside. It is, indeed, what she has done; she boasts of it-but it is Jewish. Israel must indeed recognise themselves outside at last, in order to be saved and to be brought in again, through grace; because the Saviour, whom they despised in a day of blindness, has in grace borne all their sins as a nation, owned in the remnant, for He died for that nation. We anticipate that position whilst Christ is in heaven. The heart of the remnant of Israel will indeed be brought back to Jehovah before that time; they will only enter into the power of the sacrifice when they shall look upon Him whom they pierced, and mourn for Him. Therefore was it prescribed that it should be a day to afflict their souls, and that he who did not should be cut off.

The day of atonement supposes, moreover, according to the state of things found in the wilderness, that the people were in a state of incapacity for the enjoyment of the relations with God fully manifested. God had redeemed them, had spoken to them; but the heart of Israel, of man however favoured, was incapable of it in its natural state. Israel had made the golden calf, and Moses put a veil over his face; Nadab and Abihu had offered strange fire upon the altar of God-fire which had not been taken from the altar of burnt-offering. The way into the holiest is closed; Aaron is forbidden to enter there at all times. He never went in in his garments of glory and

beauty. When he went in, it was not for communion, but for the cleansing of the sanctuary defiled by the iniquities of a people among whom God dwelt; and the day of atonement is only introduced with a prohibition of entering at all times into the holy place, and is conspicuous as taking place after the death of the sons of Aaron. He does it with a cloud of incense, lest he die. It was truly a gracious provision, in order that the people should not perish on account of their defilements; but the Holy Ghost was signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest.

In what, then, is our position changed? The veil is rent; and we enter, as priests, with boldness into the holiest, by a new and living way through the veil, that is to say, the flesh of Christ. We enter in without conscience of sins, because the blow which rent the veil, to shew all the glory and the majesty of the throne, and the holiness of Him who sits thereon, has taken away the sins which would have incapacitated us from entering in, or from looking within. We are even seated there in Christ our Head-the Head of His body the church.

In the meantime, Israel is outside. The church is seen in the Person of Christ, the High Priest, and the whole of this dispensation is the day of atonement, during which Israel's High Priest is hid within the veil. The veil which hid the import of all these figures is indeed done away in Christ, so that we have full liberty by the Spirit, but it is upon their hearts. He maintains there within, it is true, their cause through the blood which He presents; but the testimony to it is not yet presented to them outside, nor their consciences freed by the knowledge that their sins are lost for ever in a land not inhabited, where they will never be found again.

Now our position is, properly speaking, inside, in the person of Aaron, the blood being on the mercy-seat. We are not only justified by the scape-goat, as being without; that is done, it is clear, and once for all, for the veil is only on the heart of Israel, it is no longer between us and God. But we have gone in with the High Priest, as united to Him; we are not waiting for reconciliation till He comes out. Israel, though the forgiveness be the same, will receive these things, when the true Aaron comes out of the tabernacle. This is why that which characterised the sacrifice of Aaron and his sons was the blood put inside on the mercy-seat, and the going in of Aaron in person.

But the church is composed of persons who are here below, who have committed sins. Thus seen in the world, they are, as to their conscience, in the rank of the outside people, as well as Aaron himself, not viewed as a typical individual; and the conscience is purified by the certainty that Christ has borne all our sins in His body on the tree. Our position is within according to the value of the blood of Christ, and the perfect acceptance of His Person.

It is the same with regard to the expectation of Christ. If I consider myself as a man responsible upon earth, I expect Him for the deliverance of all things, and to put an end to all suffering, and to all the power of evil; and so individually myself, as a servant, I look to receive, at His appearing here, the testimony of His approval, as a Master, before the whole world, though if we had done all that was commanded us we have only to say we are unprofitable servants, we have done that which it is our duty to do-I speak merely of the principle. But if I think of my privileges, as a member of His body, I think of my union with Him above, and that I shall come back with Him when He shall come to appear in His glory.

It is well we should know how to make this distinction; without it there will be confusion in our thoughts, and in our use of many passages. The same thing is true in the personal religion of every day. I can consider myself as in Christ, and united to Him, seated in Him in heavenly places, enjoying all the privileges which He enjoys before God, His Father, and also as united to Him as Head of the body. I may also look upon myself as a poor weak being, walking individually upon the earth, having wants, faults, and temptations to overcome; and I see Christ above, whilst I am here below, Christ appearing alone for me before the throne-for me, happy in having, in the presence of God, Him who is perfect, but who has gone through the experiences of my sorrows; who is no longer in the circumstances in which I find myself-but with God for me who am in them. This is the doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews [See Note #3]; whilst the union of the church with Christ is more particularly taught in that to the Ephesians; in John's writings we are taught that the individual is in Him.

Note #1

See Joh 13:31-32, and Joh 17:1; Joh 17:4. And this entitles man to glory, does not merely justify him.

Note #2

The camp is an earthly religious relationship with God outside the sanctuary, and established on earth with priests between men and God. This the Jews were; they cast Christ out of it; and it is now utterly rejected.

Note #3

The difference of 1 John 2 is this: there communion is in question, and Christ is our Advocate with the Father. Sin interrupts that communion, but the advocacy is founded on righteousness and propitiation. In Hebrews it is approach to God which is in question, and for this we are perfected for ever, have boldness to enter into the holiest. Sin is not thus in question, but mercy and grace to help in time of need.

Leviticus Chapter 17

After this quite special instruction of the day of atonement come some directions, not to purify from defilements, but to preserve from them either the people or the service of the priests (chap. 17). It is to maintain them as a people holy to God, and keep them from all that would dishonour Him in their relations with Him, and themselves in their relations with others. Life belongs to God. And where it is taken, it must be offered in sacrifice and in sacrifice of course to God. The blood must be sprinkled, and the fat burned on the altar. Thus the danger of secret departure of the heart to demons was guarded against, and God's title to life, and the truth of sacrifice were maintained-all vital truths. Thus God was owned and honoured, and man's relationship with Him.

Leviticus Chapter 18

Chapter 18 keeps them from dishonouring themselves in the things which belong to nature itself-to what man ought to be in his natural relations, that he might not dishonour himself. Man ought not to do it; but, not having honoured God, he has been left to dishonour himself (compare Rom. 1). The people of God, being brought into nearness to Him, are taught on this

subject. They were separated from the evil of the world they were called out of, and the reckless profligacy into which Satan had driven degraded man as his sport. Verse 6 (Lev 18:6) is the great principle which is insisted on in the chapter-not to confound the intimacies of marriage with the confidence of natural relationship. Those things are forbidden into which, in the satanic and unnatural indulgence of flesh, Satan plunged man, and to which God had given them up to work all uncleanness with greediness. The comeliness of nature is maintained; what is defiling forbidden. Jehovah's statutes and judgments were to guide them: man in probation walking in them would live.

Leviticus Chapter 19

The following commentary covers Chapters 19 and 20.

Chapters 19, 20, carry us somewhat farther. They were to be holy, for Jehovah was holy. Chapter 19 takes up rather the side of good, though keeping themselves from all that was profane, or profaning what was holy; but we find what is good and kind and comely, what ought to be their conduct, in various details, in the relationship they sustain one with the other, either with regard to various dangers to which they were exposed in their walk, in their every-day circumstances: for they had to do with God, and Jehovah was their God. The people of God were, in all their ways, to walk in a manner worthy of this relationship, and even to understand what was suitable to man, to every relationship in which they were found, according to God. Thus, though it was not here priesthood, it was the practical maintenance of this relationship with Him who dwelt among them, and to whom they drew nigh, by guarding against defilements unsuited to those who were in it. It is here we find the precept to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Chapter 20 guards more against the evil and corruption which was found amongst the nations. In both they are called to be holy, in chapter 19 more in conformity to the character of God, in chapter 20 to keep apart from idols and evil because Jehovah had sanctified them to Himself. It insists upon purity in every respect.

Leviticus Chapter 21

The following commentary covers Chapters 21 and 22.

Chapter 21 specially presents what becomes the priests as set apart for Jehovah: this more intimate nearness supposed a conduct corresponding with it. All in their state must be fit for God's presence. So it is with us.

Chapter 22. If there was, through weakness or neglect, anything unbecoming this nearness, they were to keep at a distance. Consequently there were things of which the priests, and those of their families in priestly separation, alone could eat. It is the same with us: there are things of the spiritual food of Christ, offered to God, upon which we can only feed, inasmuch as the heart is really separated unto Him, by the power of the Spirit. The offerings themselves must be pure, and such as become the eyes of God to whom they are presented, and a right appreciation of His majesty, and of our relationship with Him. All this indeed is found in Christ. No hardness of nature is allowed, but holiness. In what is connected with our own joy before God, holiness must be maintained in what is offered.

In chapter 20, where they are forbidden to follow the brutal and superstitious customs of idolatry (to which Satan had degraded man) and are warned against all impurity, which indeed was always inseparable from it, and for which the influence of the devil gave license, we have this simple and beautiful exposition of the principle which was to govern them:

"Sanctify yourselves, therefore, and be ye holy: for I am Jehovah your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am Jehovah which sanctify you." They are bound to holiness and to sanctify themselves practically, because they are in the house, and the Master of it is holy. Sanctification supposed that they were in an acknowledged relationship with God, who will have the inmates of His house clean according to His own cleanness. But then His word was to be the rule. They were to obey Him in His directions, for it was He who was separating them to Himself. This is a very instructive word as to the standard of all our thoughts with regard to that. If any are in my house, I will have them clean, because they are there; those outside are no concern of mine [See Note #1]. Then it was Jehovah who was separating them for that. There are interesting instructions with regard to what the priests ate, which we shall find again in the following book, and consider when we come to it.

Note #1

I do not speak of responsibility or mercy here.

Leviticus Chapter 23

We have now come to the feasts (chap. 23). It is the full [See Note #1] year of the counsels of God towards His people, and the rest which was the end of those counsels. There were consequently seven—a number expressive of perfection well known in the word: the sabbath, the passover and the feast of unleavened bread, the firstfruits of harvest, Pentecost, the feast of trumpets in the seventh month, the day of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles. If the sabbath be separated and reckoned by itself, the passover would be distinguished from the feast of unleavened bread, which would make the seven. I do not say this to preserve the number, but because the chapter itself speaks thus: having counted the sabbath amongst the others, it resumes and calls the others (without the sabbath) the solemn feasts. For, in one sense, it was indeed a feast; in another, it was the rest, when the whole was ended [See Note #2]. In general these feasts present us, then, with all the bases on which God has entered into relationship with His people; the principles on which He has gathered them around Him, in His ways with this people, upon the earth. Their bearing was wider than that, in other respects; but it is in this point of view that these circumstances, that is, these facts, are here considered. They are seen in their accomplishment upon the earth.

There is another way of dividing them, by taking the words, "And Jehovah spake unto Moses" [See Note #3] as the title of each part: the sabbath, the passover, and the unleavened bread (Lev 23:1-8); the firstfruits and the Pentecost (Lev 23:9-22); the feast of trumpets (Lev 23:23-25); the day of atonement (Lev 23:26-32); the feast of tabernacles (Lev 23:44). This latter division gives us the moral distinction of the feasts; that is, the ways of God therein. Let us examine them a little more in detail.

The very first thing presented is the sabbath, as being the end and the result of all the ways of God. The promise is left us of entering into God's rest. It is a feast to Jehovah; but the feasts, which present rather the ways of God to lead us there, begin again at the fourth verse, as we have already said (Lev

23:37-38). This distinction being noticed, we can take the sabbath, [See Note #4] the passover, and the feast of unleavened bread as making a whole (Lev 23:1-8). Of the two latter, the unleavened bread was the feast, properly speaking; the passover was the sacrifice on which the feast was grounded. As the apostle says, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with leaven," etc. What was indeed necessary for the sabbath, for the rest of God, was the sacrifice of Christ, and purity; and though all these feasts lead on to the rest of God, yet these two, the passover and unleavened bread, are the basis of all, and of the rest itself for us. Christ's sacrifice and the absence of all principle of sin, form the basis of the part we have in the rest of God. God is glorified in respect of sin; sin is put away for us, out of His sight, and out of our hearts. The perfect absence of leaven marked Christ's path and nature down here, and is accomplished in us, so far as we realise Christ as our life, and recognise ourselves, though the flesh be still in us, as dead and risen with Him [See Note #5]. It is thus that we have seen the manna connected with the sabbath in Exodus 16. To be without leaven was the perfection of the Person of Christ living upon earth, and becomes in principle the walk upon earth of him who is partaker of His life. In the true and final sabbath, of course, all leaven will be absent from us. The sacrifice of Christ and purity of life render one capable of participating in God's rest.

After that comes power, the firstfruits; that is, the resurrection of Christ on the morrow after the sabbath-the first day of the week. It was the beginning of the true harvest-harvest gathered, by power, outside and beyond the natural life of the world. According to the Jewish law nothing of the harvest could be touched before: Christ was the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. With this first of the firstfruits were offered sacrifices for a sweet savour, but not for sin. It is clear there was no need for it. It is Christ who has been offered to God, quite pure, and waved before God-placed fully before His eyes for us, as raised from the dead, the beginning of a new crop before God-man in a condition which not even innocent Adam was in, the Man of God's counsels, the second Man, the last Adam: not, all hanging on obedience which might fail, and did, but after God had been perfectly glorified in the place of sin, past death, past sin (for He died unto sin?, past Satan's power, past judgment, and consequently by thus wholly out of the

scene where responsible man had stood, on a totally new footing with God after His finished work, and God perfectly glorified; such a work too as gave Him title to say, therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again, and made it God's righteousness to set Him at His right hand in glory.

Connected with that comes the meat-offering at the end of the seven weeks. It is no longer Christ here, but those who are His, the firstfruits of His creatures; they are considered as being upon earth, and leaven is found in them. Therefore, though offered to God, they were not burned as a sweet savour (Lev 2:12); but with the loaves was offered a sin-offering, which answered by its efficacy to the leaven found in them. They are the saints of which Pentecost commenced the ingathering.

This feast was followed by a long space of time, in which there was nothing new in the ways of God. Only they were commanded, when they reaped the harvest, not to make clean riddance of the comers of the field. A part of the good grain was to be left in the field, after the harvest was gathered into the garner, but not to be lost; it was for those who were not enjoying the riches of God's people, but who would participate exceptionally by grace in the provision which God had made for them-in the abundance which God had granted them. This will take place at the end of this age.

Pentecostal work being ended, another series of events begins (Lev 23:23) with the words referred to, "And Jehovah spake unto Moses." They blow up the trumpet in the new moon (compare Psalm 81; Num 10:3; Num 10:10). It was the renewal of the blessing and the splendour of the people-Israel gathered as an assembly before Jehovah. It is not yet the restoration of joy and gladness, but at least the renewal of the light and reflected glory which had disappeared takes place, and enlightens their expectant eyes; and they gather the assembly to re-establish the glory. But Israel must at least feel their sin; and in the solemn feast which follows, the affliction of the people is connected with the sacrifice of the day of atonement: Israel shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn. The nation (at least the spared remnant who become the nation) will participate in the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, and that in their state here below, repenting, and recognised of God, so that the times of refreshing will be come. This is then

the repentance of the people, but in connection with the atoning sacrifice. The efficacy is in the sacrifice; their participation in it is connected with the affliction of their souls (compare Zechariah 12). But Israel did nothing-it was a sabbath-they were assembled in humiliation in the presence of God. They accept the pierced One under the sense of the sin of which they have been guilty in rejecting Him.

Then follows the feast of tabernacles. They offered, during seven days, offerings made by fire unto Jehovah; and on the eighth day there was again a holy convocation-an extraordinary day of a new week which went beyond the full time-including, I doubt not, the resurrection; that is, the participation of those who are raised in that joy. It was a solemn assembly-that eighth day, the great day of the feast, on which the Lord (having declared of the then time that His hour was not yet come to shew Himself to the world-His brethren [the Jews] not believing in Him either) announced that for him who believed in Him there would be, in the meanwhile, rivers of living water which would flow from his belly; that is, the Holy Spirit, who would be a living power working in, and flowing forth from the heart, and in the expression of its intimate affections. Israel had indeed drunk of the living water out of the rock in the wilderness, the sojourn in which, now past when the feast of tabernacles is celebrated, was celebrated with joy in the memorial of that which was over, to enhance the joy of the rest into which they were ushered. But believers now meanwhile were not only to drink, for blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed; the river itself would flow from the heart; that is, the Holy Spirit in power, which they would have received through Christ before He should be manifested to the world, or they have their place in the heavenly Canaan.

Thus, the feast of tabernacles is the joy of the millennium, when Israel have come out of the wilderness where their sins have placed them; but to which will be added this first day of another week-the resurrection joy of those who are raised with the Lord Jesus, to which the presence of the Holy Ghost answers meanwhile.

Consequently, we find that the feast of tabernacles took place after the increase of the earth had been gathered in, and, as we learn elsewhere, not only after the harvest but after the vintage also; that is, after separation by

judgment, and the final execution of judgment on the earth, when heavenly and earthly saints should be all gathered in. Israel was to rejoice seven days before Jehovah. The passover has had its antitype, Pentecost its also; but this day of joy is yet awaiting Him who is to be the centre and spring of it all, the Lord Jesus, who will rejoice in the great congregation, and whose praise will begin with Jehovah in the great assembly (Psalm 22). He had already done it in the midst of the assembly of His brethren; but now the whole race of Jacob is called to glorify Him, and all the ends of the world shall remember themselves.

The expression, solemn assembly, is not found applied to any of the feasts but this, except to the seventh day of the passover (Deuteronomy 16), as it seems to me somewhat in the same sense. The feast of tabernacles could not be kept in the wilderness. In order to observe it, the people were to be in possession of the land, as is plain. It is also to be observed, that it never was kept according to the prescriptions of the law from Joshua till Nehemiah (Neh 8:17). Israel had forgotten that they had been strangers in the wilderness. Joy, without the remembrance of this, tends to ruin; the very enjoyment of the blessing leads to it. It will be remarked that, properly speaking, all the feasts are types of what is done on earth and in connection with Israel, unless we except the eighth day of tabernacles. The church period, as such, is the lapse of time from Pentecost to the seventh month. We may, and of course do, get the benefit of, at any rate, the two first; but historically the type refers to Israel.

Note #1

I add, to give the intelligence of this expression, that the word translated "feast" signifies an appointed or definite time, and which returned consequently at the revolution of the year. The series of the feasts embraced the whole year, inasmuch as they returned regularly each consecutive year. This shews too the difference of the sabbath, God's rest-only here of creation; and, I may add, of the new moon-figure I doubt not of Israel's restoration. The great new moon was in the seventh month.

Note #2

The idea of these feasts is God gathering the people around Himself as a holy convocation. The solemn feasts were, then, the gathering of God's people around Him, and in detail the ways of God in gathering them thus. Hence the distinction made in this chapter. It is evident that the sabbath, the rest of God, will be the great gathering of the people of God around Him, as the centre of peace and blessing. So that the sabbath is truly a solemn feast, a holy convocation; but? also, it is evidently apart and distinct from the means and the operations which gathered the people. Hence we find it mentioned at the beginning, and reckoned amongst the solemn feasts; then the Spirit of God begins afresh (Lev 23:4) and gives the solemn feasts, as embracing all the ways of God in the gathering of His people, leaving out the sabbath. In reckoning the feasts, the passover and the feast of unleavened bread may be considered as one, for both were at the same time, and treated together; or, looking upon the sabbath as separate, they may be estimated as two feasts. Both these things are found in the word.

Note #3

It is well to observe, in passing, that this formula gives, in the whole Pentateuch, the true division of the subjects. Sometimes the directions are addressed to Aaron, which supposes some internal relations based on the existence of priesthood-sometimes to Moses and Aaron; and in that case they are not purely communications and commandments to establish relations, but also directions for the exercise of functions thus established. Consequently we have in Leviticus 10, for the first time I think, "Jehovah spake unto Aaron";-chapter 11 to "Moses and Aaron"; because that, whilst it treats of commandments and ordinances given for the first time, it is also a question of the discernment consequent upon relations existing between God and the people, and in which the exercise of the priesthood came in. These general principles will assist in apprehending the nature of the communications made by God to His people (see chap. 13). Chapter 14, as far as Verse 32 (Lev 14:1-32), consists of ordinances to settle simply what priesthood must do; Verse 33 (Lev 14:33), priestly discernment is again in exercise.

Note #4

I shall here add a few words on the subject of the sabbath, submitting them to the spiritual thoughts of my brethren. It is well to be subject to the word. First, the participation in God's rest is what distinguishes His people-their distinctive privilege. The heart of the believer holds that fast, whatever may be the sign that God has given of it (Heb. 4). God had established it at the beginning; but there is no appearance that man ever enjoyed in fact any share in it. He did not work in the creation, nor was he set to labour or toil in the garden of Eden; he was to dress and keep it, indeed, but he had nothing to do but continually to enjoy. However the day was hallowed from the beginning. Afterwards the sabbath was given as a memorial of the deliverance out of Egypt (Deu 5:15), and the prophets specially insist on that point-that the sabbath was given as a sign of God's covenant (Ezekiel 20; Exo 31:13). It was plain that it was but the earnest of the word, "My presence shall go, and I will give thee rest" (Exo 31:13; Exo 33:14; Lev 19:30). It is a sign that the people are sanctified to God (Eze 20:12; Eze 20:13-16; Eze 20:20; Neh 9:14: compare Isa 56:2-6; Isa 58:13; Jer 17:22; Lam 1:7; Lam 2:6; Eze 22:8; Eze 23:38; Eze 44:24). Besides these passages, we see that, whenever God gives any new principle or form of relation with Himself, the sabbath is added: thus in grace to Israel (Exo 16:23); as law (Exo 20:10). See also, besides the Verse we are occupied with, Exo 31:13-14; Exo 34:21; when they are restored afresh by the patience of God through mediation (Lev 35:2), and in the new covenant of Deuteronomy already quoted in the passage. These remarks shew us what was the radical and essential importance of the sabbath, as the thought of God and the sign of the relation between His people and Himself, though, being only a sign, a solemnity, and not in itself a moral commandment; for the thing signified the association with God in His rest, and is of the highest order of truth in connecting the heart with God. But if that be of the utmost importance, it is of an equal and even higher importance to remember that the covenant between God and the Jewish people is entirely set aside for us, and that the sign of this covenant does not belong to us, although God's rest be yet quite as precious to us, and even more so; that our rest is not in this creation-a rest of which the seventh day was the sign; and moreover (which is more important still) that the Lord Jesus is Lord of the sabbath, a remark of all importance as to His Person, and null if He was to do nothing with regard to the sabbath; and that, as a fact,

He has omitted all mention of it in the sermon on the mount, where He has given such a precious summary of the fundamental principles suited to the kingdom, with the addition of the name of the Father and the fact of a suffering Messiah, and the revelation of the heavenly reward, making a whole of the principles of His kingdom, and that He uniformly thwarted the thoughts of the Jews on this point; a circumstance which the evangelists (that is, the Holy Ghost) have been careful to record. The sabbath itself Jesus passed in a state of death, a terrible sign of the position of the Jews as to their covenant-for us, of the birth of much better things. It has been tried, with much trouble, to prove that the seventh day was in fact the first. A single remark demolishes the whole edifice thus reared; it is, that the word of God calls this last the first in contrast with the seventh. What is, then, the first day? It is for us the day of all days-the day of the resurrection of Jesus, by which we are begotten again unto a lively hope, which is the source of all our joy, our salvation, and that which characterises our life. Thus we shall find the rest of God in the resurrection. Morally, in this world, we begin our spiritual life by the rest, instead of finding it at the end of our labours. Our rest is in the new creation; we are the beginning, after Christ, who is the Head of it, of that new dispensation. It is clear, then, that the rest of God cannot, in our case, be connected with the sign of the rest of creation here below. Have we any authority in the New Testament for distinguishing the first day of the week from the others? For my part, I do not doubt it. It is certain we have not commandments like those of the old law; they would be quite contrary to the spirit of the gospel of grace. But the Spirit of God has marked out, in divers manners, the first day of the week, though that day is not made binding upon us in a way contrary to the nature of the economy. The Lord, being raised on that day according to His promise, appears in the midst of His disciples gathered according to His word: the week following He does the same. In the Acts the first day of the week is marked as the day on which they gathered together to break bread. In 1 Corinthians 16 Christians are exhorted to lay by of what they had earned, each first day of the week. In Revelation it is positively called the Lord's day, that is, designated in a direct manner by a distinctive name by the Holy Spirit. I am well aware that it has been sought to persuade us that John speaks of being in spirit in the millennium. But there are two fatal objections to that

interpretation. First, the Greek says quite another thing, and uses the same word that is used for the Lord's supper, lordly or dominical-the dominical supper, the dominical day. Who can doubt as to the meaning of such an expression, or, consequently, can fail to admit that the first day of the week was distinguished from others (as the Lord's supper was distinguished from other suppers), not as an imposed sabbath, but as a privileged day? But the reasoning to prove it refers to the millennium is founded on a totally false idea, in that only a minimum portion of the Revelation speaks of the millennium. The book is about the things which precede it, and in the place where the expression is found, there is decidedly no mention whatever of it, but of the existing churches, whatever withal might be their prophetic character; so that, if we hold to the word of God, we are forced to say that the first day of the week is distinguished in the word of God as being the Lord's day. We are also bound to say, if we desire to maintain the authority of the Son of man, that He is superior to the sabbath-"Lord of the sabbath"; so that in maintaining for us the authority of the Jewish sabbath as such, we are in danger of denying the authority, the dignity, and the rights of the Lord Jesus Himself, and of re-establishing the old covenant, of which it was the appointed sign, of seeking rest as the result of labour under the law. The more the true importance of the sabbath, the seventh day, is felt, the more we shall feel the importance of the consideration that it is no longer the seventh, but the first day which has privileges for us. Let us take care, on the other hand, because we are no longer under law but under grace, not to weaken the thought not only of man's rest but of God's-a governing thought in the whole of the revelation of His relationships with man. The final rest for us is rest from spiritual labours in the midst of evil, not merely from sin; a rest which we, as fellow-labourers, shall enjoy with Him who has said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Note #5

There are three points which we may notice here as to this. First in Colossians 3 God counts us dead with Christ (in Col. also risen); in Romans 6 we reckon ourselves dead to sin, and alive not in Adam, but through Him; in 2 Corinthians 4 it is practically carried out; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our

flesh. Ephesians is on different ground: we are not such as have died to sin, but were dead in sins, and then a wholly new creation. Sovereign grace had put us into Christ with the same power that raised Christ from the grave to the throne of God.

Leviticus Chapter 24

The remaining chapters of this book appear to me to have a special bearing. The Spirit of God has presented, in chapter 23, the history of the ways of God towards His people upon earth from beginning to end, from Christ to the millennial rest.

Chapter 24 presents first the internal work, so to speak, which related to priesthood alone on the one hand, and the public sin of an apostate on the other-the fruit of the alliance with an Egyptian who blasphemed Jehovah. Through the care of priesthood (whatever might be God's public ways, and the state of Israel) the gracious light of the Spirit would be maintained, and that particularly from the evening until the morning-the time during which darkness brooded over Israel. Moreover, the incense which was on the memorial of the bread, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, was burned as a sweet smell to Jehovah, and the priests identified themselves with the tribes by eating this bread-the action of eating having the significance of continued identification.

Thus priesthood maintained the light with respect to Israel, when all was darkness in the midst of them, and the memorial of Israel was in sweet savour before God, the priesthood identifying itself with them; although the people were in the eyes of man as lost, they exist through the priesthood of Jesus on high, as a memorial before God. There is a certain sense in which the church participates in this, as is explained doctrinally in Romans 11. This is only as far as promise goes, and the being children of Abraham, not the mystery in which we are taken up as lost sinners, without promise, and placed by sovereign grace in the same glory as the Lord Jesus. In Isaiah 54 we see that believers are reckoned to Jerusalem, in grace, though she were a widow. Externally the judgment of cutting off and death without mercy is executed against him that had cursed.

Leviticus Chapter 25

Chapter 25. The land itself is held for Jehovah, as being His; it must enjoy God's rest; and moreover he who had lost his inheritance therein should find it again, according to the counsels of God, at the appointed time. The trumpet of the jubilee would sound and God would re-establish each one in his possession, according to His (God's) rights, for the land was His. Their persons also were to be free then, for the children of Israel were God's servants. It was not so with those not belonging to God's people. And although Israel have sold themselves to the stranger, He who made Himself nigh of kin has redeemed them from his hands. The day of jubilee will free the people, whatever may be the power of those who hold them captives.

Leviticus Chapter 26

Chapter 26. We have a touching picture of the ways of God in patience and in chastisement, if Israel walked contrary to Him. When they acknowledged their fault, then He would remember the covenant made with their fathers, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This was a covenant made without condition, and with the land. Then He would remember the covenant made with their ancestors, under His name of Jehovah, when they came out of Egypt [See Note #1]. God will take these two titles on their restoration: Almighty, the name of His relationship with the fathers; and Jehovah, the name of His relationship with the people, viewed as taken to Himself at their coming out of Egypt.

Note #1

I take this to be the covenant of Exodus 6, not the law. It connected itself directly with the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, adding the name of Jehovah, and taking up the people under that name.

Leviticus Chapter 27

The last chapter (27) treats of the rights and the appointments of God in all that relates to things which are devoted to Him through the medium of priesthood. This necessarily finds its place in that which treats of priesthood; but it has, I doubt not, a much wider meaning. The subject treated is that of him who devotes himself to God, and that of the lands belonging to Him-of the rights of Israel, whose possession it was not, and of their selling it to

others. As to Christ, He offered Himself without spot to God; He was valued at a low price. Israel by right belonged to Jehovah. As Emmanuel's land, the Israelites only enjoyed the land without being proprietors, and they could only pledge it till jubilee; it would then return to its possessor as Emmanuel's land. Israel (looked at as the possessor of the gift of God) not having redeemed it when sold to the stranger, when the jubilee comes the land will be absolutely the Lord's; the priest will possess it. In Zechariah 11 Christ is thus valued, "whom they of the children of Israel did value." I only point out the principle presented in the chapter, without pretending to enter into all the details of application which may suggest themselves. The principle is the important thing to enable one to understand the purpose of God; in the case of any vow, whether it be redeemed or not; or of land, whether it shall return in the day of jubilee, when God shall take possession again of His rights in the land of Israel, and cause to enter those whose right it is. Thus the government of God, resulting in His return in grace to His unconditional promise and [earthly] purpose are given to us in chapter 26, and the absolute title of Jehovah in chapter 27. Chapter 26 is in fact a parenthesis shewing God's ways, with return to His promise in grace; chapter 25 man's redeeming, if he could, or his kinsman; chapter 27 God's absolute title.

It is to be observed also, that the judgment is according to the judgment of the priest. But although this be attributed to the priest, it is to the king in Jeshurun (the upright) that the appreciation is entrusted. This shews plainly who is to do it, and under what character, though being according to the discernment, the grace, and the rights of priesthood. It is Christ as Priest, but Christ as King in Israel, who will order all that.

NUMBERS

Introduction to Numbers

The Book of Leviticus contains the revelation of God sitting upon the throne, where He places Himself that He may be approached by the people, as far as they could come; that of the priesthood brought into proximity to the throne, as far as men could have access to it; and then the promulgation of the commandments relative to these two great facts, in that which concerned the generality of the people.

In Numbers we have the service and walk of the people, figuratively of the saints through this world: and, consequently, that which relates to the Levites, and the journey through the wilderness. Now, as Leviticus ended with regulations and warnings respecting the possession of the land, and that with regard to the rights of God, and consequently to the rights of His people, the Book of Numbers brings us through the wilderness to the moment before the entrance of the people into the land at the end of the wilderness journey, and speaks of that grace which justifies the people at the close, notwithstanding all their unfaithfulness.

It is important to keep in mind that as to the efficacy of redemption the people were brought to God at Sinai (Exo 15:13 and Exo 19:4). All in this respect was complete (compare the thief on the cross and Col 1:12). The wilderness journey is a distinct thing; no part of the purpose of God, but of His ways with us. Hence it is here "if" comes in and the time of testing. Jordan coalescing with the Red Sea, coming out and going in (only the ark was in Jordan), there was no question of judgment or enemies. It is the experimental realisation of our death and resurrection with Christ. But as to the journey we must reach the goal to get in.

Numbers Chapter 1

Numbers 1:1

num 1:1

The following commentary covers Chapters 1 and 2.

The first thing to be noticed is, that God numbers His people exactly, and arranges them, once thus recognised, around His tabernacle: sweet thought, to be thus recognised and placed around God Himself! But here it had no reference to calling by faith, but to families, and households, and tribes. That order was carefully maintained when encamped at rest, or on their march; but it was the order of a nation and its tribes. God dwelt there, but the unity of the body, or of the Spirit-union in any sense had no place. Three tribes on each side of the court kept the tabernacle of Jehovah. Levi alone was excepted, in order to be consecrated to the service of God: therefore the tribe of Levi encamped according to their families immediately around the court. Moses, Aaron, and the priests were placed opposite the entrance whereby God was approached. The least things in the word deserve to be noticed. Psalm 80 is entirely opened by the position of the tribes. The spirit of the psalmist asks, in the last days of the desolation of Israel, for God to lead them and to manifest His power as He did when He led them through the wilderness; he asks for the power of His presence on the ark of testimony, as God manifested it when it was said, at the moment when Israel set forward, "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered." Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh were the three tribes nearest the ark in the camp of Israel; that is why it is said, in Verse 2 of the Psalm (Psa 80:2), "before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh." In the setting forward of the camp, the order given was that the tabernacle, surrounded by the Levites, should be in the midst of the tribes, as it was when the camp was at rest (Num 2:17). It was in the midst of them as of an army that was its guard, as the rallying-point of worship and approach when the camp was at rest. They kept the charge of the Lord. In chapter 10 we shall find that another arrangement took place as a matter of fact: of this, in its place.

Numbers Chapter 3

In chapter 3 we have the Levites set apart, according to the thoughts of God, for service. They are a figure of the church, or rather of the members of the church in their service, even as the priests are the figure of Christians drawing near to the throne of God, though both be a shadow, not a perfect image.

The Levites were firstfruits offered to God, for they were instead of the firstborn in whom God had taken Israel to Himself, when He smote the firstborn of the Egyptians. Thus it is that the church [See Note #1] is, as the firstfruits of the creatures of God, holy to the Lord. The number of the firstborn being greater than that of the Levites, those that were over were redeemed, as a sign that they belonged to God, and the Levites became God's possession for His service (Num 3:12-13). It is the same with regard to the church: it belongs wholly to God to serve Him down here.

But, besides, the Levites were entirely given to Aaron the high priest; for the service of the church, or of its members, is wholly dependent on Christ in the presence of God, and has no other object but that which concerns Him, and that which is connected with, and flows from the place and service which He Himself renders to God in the true tabernacle, carrying out in service here the ends for which He is in the holy place up there; but directly connected with the sanctuary-that is for us heaven, for we belong to heaven, and our walk and all our service is referred to, and characterised by our connection with it. Our conversation (living association) is in heaven; we purify ourselves as He is pure, and are called to walk worthy of God, who has called to His own kingdom and glory,-worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. Only, the veil being rent, we are much more fully connected with that than the Levites were even in figure. The service of the saints has no value (on the contrary, it is sin), except as it is united to the priesthood (that is to Christ on high, in the presence of God for us, with whom we, indeed, are also associated in this nearness, priests by grace); and hence all is accomplished in direct reference to Him in that heavenly character. In all its details, consequently, our service is absolutely good for nothing, if it be not linked with our communion with the Lord and with the priesthood of Christ. Christ is "a Son over his own house." "There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord." The Holy Ghost gives the capacity and the gift for service; but in the exercise of this capacity and of this gift, we are the servants of Christ.

Thus, as regards our service, we have these three principles: 1, we are redeemed, delivered from the judgments, under which are the enemies of God, being taken from the midst of those enemies; 2, as a consequence of

this first fact, we belong absolutely to God; bought with a price, we are no longer our own, but God's, to glorify Him in our bodies which are His; 3, we are entirely given to Christ, who is the Head of the house of God, the Priest, for the service of His tabernacle. Blessed bondage, happy self-renunciation, true deliverance from a world of sin! Service is rendered in dependence on Christ, and in the communion of the Lord: it is linked to the priesthood and flows from and is connected with Himself, and the place where He is, and with which He has connected our hopes, our lives, and the affections of our hearts. We serve from, and in view of that: "to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

Service appears to be limited to the tabernacle, that is, to be exercised in the midst of God's people and in connection with their drawing near to God. For the preaching of the gospel to those without made no part of the Jewish system, which was the shadow, but not the perfect image, of the present state of things. The gospel is the expression of grace visiting sinners, to effect their salvation, a love that goes actively out. The institution of the Levites is here presented to us in principle: we shall find, further on, their purification and their consecration to God.

We may remark here, that with regard to that which is most elevated in the calling of the church, all her members are one. The priests, the high priest excepted, accomplished, all equally or together, the service of the offerings to God. And so it is with the church; all its members equally draw near unto God, and are in the same relationship with Him. (A priest acting for another Israelite who brought an offering, or who had sinned, represented rather Christ Himself). The order of the service of the Levites, on the other hand, was according to the sovereignty of God, who put each one in his place. Thus, in the service of the church, the greatest differences are found, and each one has his own place assigned him.

The same thing will likewise, I believe, take place in the glory (compare Eph. 4; 1 Cor. 12). All are conformed to the likeness of the Son; but as each has been filled with the Holy Ghost for service, and thus according to the counsels of God, they-to whom it is given of the Father to sit on the right hand or on the left-are over ten cities or five. All enter together into the joy of their Lord. We are all brethren, having only one Master. But the Master

gives grace to each according to His own will, according to the counsels of God the Father. He who denies brotherly unity denies the sole authority of the Master. He who denies the diversity of services equally denies the authority of the Master who disposes of His servants as He pleases, and chooses them according to His wisdom and His divine rights.

Note #1

I speak always of the church here in its individual members as indicating the class of persons.

Numbers Chapter 4

Next in order come the arrangements prescribed for the carrying of the things which the tabernacle contained, as well as their coverings, when the camp journeyed in the wilderness. I shall point out what appears to be the typical meaning of these prescribed ordinances. This is full of interest and of practical importance. After the instructions intended to teach us how it is given to us to draw near God, the connection between the manifestations of God in Christ, and our walk here below, are for us what is most essential. Now, this last subject is the one treated of in type, in the arrangements made for the carriage of the chief utensils destined for the service of God. When they were in their place, while the camp rested, they were uncovered. Those which were shut up within the tabernacle had reference to heaven; the altar and the laver were outside, before coming to it. In the wilderness, these utensils put on certain characters, one of them especially; but others also, in certain cases. I consider them, therefore, as the manifestation of certain relationships existing between the walk of the Christian, and various manifestations of God in Christ. [See Note #1]

The ark of the covenant represented the throne of God in heaven, the holiness and the justice which are there manifested in God. It was first of all covered with the veil of the humanity of Christ, such as He was here below in His Person; that is, that divine holiness and righteousness have clothed themselves in humanity. Over this were the badgers' skins.

We have seen, in these skins, that practical and watchful holiness down here which keeps itself from the evil to which we are liable in passing through the

wilderness. However, when there is an immediate connection with what God is in heaven itself (and it is thus that He Himself was manifested in Christ), the entirely heavenly character, which results therefrom, manifests itself outside.

Hence, outside even the badgers' skins, there was a covering wholly of blue. This was what appeared in the wilderness. This is what took place with regard to Christ: the ark, by the way, in the wilderness finds no perfect antitype but Himself, considered in His personal walk down here. Nevertheless, the walk of the believer, in as far as it reaches towards this height, has also its expression in this type.

After the ark comes the table of shewbread; it was a figure of Christ in the divine perfection of justice and holiness, according to the power of the eternal Spirit, in connection with the perfection of human administration, which manifests itself in the number twelve and in the loaves, of which the twelve tribes, and the twelve apostles, were the expression. Here the heavenly covering was placed immediately upon the golden table; the part properly divine put on the heavenly character. Upon this covering were put the utensils and the loaves, which were covered over with a second covering of scarlet (that is, as it appears to me, human glory and splendour). [See Note #2] This glory and this splendour were of God, but they were human. Over all were the badgers' skins to preserve the whole from evil. This external protection is always needful for any one, save the Person of Christ. Christ was assuredly sheltered from evil; but it was in an internal and deeper manner. That which was heavenly was seen in Him at the first glance by those who had eyes to see: "the second man is the Lord from heaven." As regards us, we have within ourselves that which is heavenly; but we must keep it carefully, with a vigilance most decided, and commensurate with the evil we are passing through, and from which it is of consequence we should keep ourselves. Therefore Christ, in His relationship with the government of the world in Israel in the age to come, will put on, in principle, that which is here represented by the badgers' skins, which, in the case of the ark, were inside. There will be in Him the divine character, then the heavenly, then the perfection of human government covered over with the brightness of the glory. In His passage in the wilderness, all this was guarded by a power

which, in the wisdom of God, repelled all evil. In the manifestation of the kingdom it will be in the judicial exercise of power. But here we treat of the wilderness. The principle is the same, the repelling of evil, of all injury to the holy thing entrusted to be guarded; only one is moral and spiritual power, the other judicial (see Ps. 101).

Next to the table of shewbread came the candlestick, covered with a cloth of blue and badgers' skins. It was the spiritual perfection of the light of the Spirit; that which covered it was simply heavenly, with the covering of badgers' skins, the guard against the injuries which the entrusted grace might receive in the wilderness. All its utensils bore the same character.

The altar of incense (spiritual intercession) was covered in the same manner. I leave these to the spiritual reflections of the reader, and the intelligence of that which has been explained in its principles. It was so with all that was contained in the holy place, for the sanctuary represented the heavenly places.

With regard to the brazen altar it was different. Its covering was a purple cloth, the royal colour. If we suffer, we shall reign. There is a connection between the cross and the crown upon the earth and in heaven. Thus was it with Christ, the King of the Jews, according to the superscription written on the cross; and the very throne of God was the answer to His sufferings, inasmuch as He was the burnt-offering, offered according to the power of the eternal Spirit acting in man, according to the exigency of the divine majesty. [See Note #3] But what was thus crowned was perfection itself; that which was being accomplished in man, according to the energy of the eternal Spirit, was also divine; so that the Lord could say, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again." However, that which was divine in the act, was divine in the sense of the eternal Spirit acting in man, while the Godhead Itself was the source of it, and on that title it would claim the glory of the Godhead. The circumstances of the death of Jesus were consequent upon His humanity—a truth most precious to us. He was crucified through weakness; He was delivered into the hands of the Gentiles; His throat was dried up, whilst He waited on His God. He was perfect in all these things. They were manifested outwardly, seen of men: it was man. He who could look within saw Him who through

the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God. Thus all that related to the service was placed on purple; the altar was under this covering. The badgers' skins here, as always, were spread over all. [See Note #4]

Note #1

I say the walk of the Christian, applying it to our consciences; but the expression is imperfect, for the subject seems to me to embrace the life of Christ Himself upon earth, and even, in some respects, His life in the time to come, but always upon earth. They shew the relationship between the manifestation of life here below, the forms and the characters it assumes, and the sources of life in the manifestation of God in Christ: a subject of the deepest interest. The badgers' skins, and the circumstances with which this book is occupied, still suppose the walk to be in the wilderness. It is only when we abstract, as to these circumstances, that we see the manifestation of things to come. Thus faith, that of the thief on the cross for example, saw, in Christ's suffering, the King, though all was hidden. I have therefore alluded to it without fear. I only present the idea contained in the type, without unfolding all the consequences of it.

Note #2

It is the idea which has been suggested to me by the examination of all the passages in the word where scarlet is mentioned. Saul adorned the maidens of Israel with scarlet and other delights. Babylon is clothed with scarlet. The colour of the beast is scarlet. Scarlet was cast into the fire when the leper, and he who was defiled by a dead body, were purified. Scarlet is a very brilliant colour.

Note #3

The comparison of Psalms 19, 20, 21, 22 is, under this point of view, most interesting. Psalm 19 contains testimonies of the creation and the law; Psalm 20 presents Messiah suffering, but externally, so that man can take an interest in Him; Psalm 21 Messiah exalted, and, as a consequence, vengeance striking His enemies who had rejected Him; Psalm 22 His sufferings as forsaken by God Himself. This is the expression of Christ alone, whilst in Psalms 20, 21 the Jewish remnant were speaking of His outward sufferings.

There is no vengeance in connection with those sufferings consequent on His being forsaken of God, for it was expiation; there is nothing but blessing, which the mouth of the Saviour announces, and to which He Himself responded by praising in the midst of His saints. This blessing will extend to the ends of the earth during the millennium.

Note #4

The laver is not among the things to which these commands relate. The reason for this omission is apparent from the explanation we have just given of these figures, and confirms this explanation. The laver did not represent a manifestation of God, the efficacy of which is reproduced in the christian life, or in the glory of Christ; but a means for the purification of man. These directions here, only summarily entered on seem to me, if entered into with spiritual intelligence, full of the deepest import and interest.

Numbers Chapter 5

Let us pursue the study of the book. Chapter 5 presents three things, in connection with the purity of the camp, looked at as the dwelling-place of God, and in connection with our pilgrim passage through the wilderness, which is the great subject of the Book of Numbers; a passage in which all is put to the test, and in which the presence of God ungrieved in the midst of us is our only security, and guidance, and strength.

Every defilement was to be purged out. God took knowledge of the wrong done there against a brother. If this be always true, it is the more so when applied to the wrong done to Him, who has not been ashamed to call us His brethren. When the trespass could not be recompensed to the person who had suffered the wrong, or to his kinsman, it was due to God in the person of the priest, beside the sin-offering. In God's camp no wrong could be committed without amends being made for it. Then comes the question of jealousy. If the faithfulness of Israel, the church, or an individual, to God or to Christ, be questioned, there must be the trial of it. It seems to me that the dust of the tabernacle was the power of death in God's presence, fatal to the natural man, but precious, as the death of sin, for him who has life. The water is the power of the Holy Ghost acting by the word on the conscience.

The power of the Holy Spirit judging thus (according to the sentence of death against the flesh), the state of unfaithfulness-which was thought to be hidden from the true husband of the people, makes the sin manifest, and brings down the chastening and the curse upon the unfaithful one, and that evidently by the just judgment of God. Drinking death, according to the power of the Spirit, is life to the soul. "By these things," says Hezekiah, "men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit"; even when they are the effect of chastening, which is not always necessarily the case. But if any of the accursed things be hidden-if there be unfaithfulness towards Jesus, undetected, it may be, by man, and God puts it to the test; if we have allowed ourselves to be enticed by him who has the power of death, and the holy power of God is occupied with death, and comes to deal with this power of the enemy-the concealed evil is laid bare, the flesh is reached; its rottenness and its powerlessness are made manifest, however fair its appearances may be. But if we be free from unfaithfulness, the result of the trial is only negative; it shews that the Spirit of holiness finds nothing to judge, when He applies death according to the holiness of God.

In the offering without either oil or frankincense, the woman is set before God, according to the judgment of God displayed against sin, in His holiness and majesty, when Christ was made sin for us. Sin which is confessed has never that effect; for the conscience is purified from it by Christ. The unfaithfulness here spoken of, is that of the heart of Israel-of the church to Christ. All these things apply, not to the acceptance of the believer, or of the church as to righteousness-that is treated of where drawing near to God is in question-but to the judgment of our ways in the wilderness journey, inasmuch as God is in our midst.

The church would do well to consider how far she has given herself to another. There are some, assuredly, amongst its members who have not done it in heart. If Christ did not discover the iniquity, and cause it to be judged, He would be, so to speak, identified with the iniquity of the bride, and thus defiled thereby (Num 5:31); He will therefore surely do so. What is here said of the church may be equally said of each one of its members: remembering here also, that the question is one, not of salvation, but of the walk down here, the walk in the wilderness being ever the subject of this

book. [See Note #1] Let us also observe that the soul, or the church, can, in other respects, shew a zeal, an extraordinary devotedness, which are indeed sincere, whilst it falls into a fault which it conceals from itself up to a certain point. But nothing can counterbalance unfaithfulness to one's husband.

Note #1

Looked at as a professing whole, or as an individual who makes profession, there may be the discovery that there is nothing real; as the case has been in Israel according to the flesh and will be also in the professing church. They have been unfaithful to their husband.

Numbers Chapter 6

The Nazarite presents to us another character connected with the walk of the Spirit down here-special separation and devotedness to God. They separated themselves unto Him. Christ is the perfect example of this. The church ought to tread in His footsteps. Cases of special call to devote oneself to the Lord come under this class.

There were three things connected with this separation The Nazarite was to drink no wine; he was to let his hair grow; and he was not to make himself unclean for the dead. Wine designated the joy derived from the pleasures of society, which rejoice the heart of those who give themselves up to them. "Wine which cheereth God and man." From the moment Christ began His public service, He was separated from all that nature had its just part in. Invited with His disciples to a marriage, He says to His mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" But in fact even His disciples knew Him "after the flesh." [See Note #1] His intercourse with them was, as to the capacity of their fellowship in it, on the ground of the presenting of the kingdom then as come in the flesh.

As to this too, however, He must take His separate and Nazarite character, and, true as His affection was for His disciples, even in that human sphere where He, who saw through weakness, delighted in the true "excellence of the earth," the poor of the flock that waited on Him, yet He must be separated from this joy too. "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine," says the Lord, "until that day when I shall drink it new with you in my

Father's kingdom." He separated Himself indeed from that intercourse which, miserable as even His own were, His love had led Him to desire to have with them. He had said, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you." These natural affections were already denied, because God's consecration was upon His head. "What have I to do with thee?" had already expressed this to His mother. It is not that He had not the most tender affection for her; but now He was separated from everything to be God's. [See Note #2]

Secondly, the Nazarite let his hair grow: it was neglecting self in yielding oneself to the will of God, renouncing one's dignity and rights as a man; for a long head of hair marked, on the one hand, in a man, the neglect of his person; and on the other, subjection-power on the head. [See Note #3] It was consecration to God in the giving up of the joy, the dignity, and the natural rights of man (man considered as the centre of the affections proper to him), and that to be wholly God's.

Man has his place as the representative and the glory of God, and in that place he is encompassed by a multitude of affections, joys, and rights, which have their centre in himself. He can give up this place for the special service of God, seeing that sin has entered into all these things, which, far from being bad in themselves, are, on the contrary, good in their proper place. This Christ has done. Having made Himself a Nazarite, He did not take His place as a man, His rights as Son of man; but, for the glory of God, He made Himself completely subject; He submitted to all that that glory required. He identified Himself with the godly remnant of the sinful people whom He had loved, and became a stranger to His mother's children. He did nothing that was not prescribed to Him; He lived by the word that proceeded out of the mouth of God; He separated Himself from all the links of human life to devote Himself to the glory, the service of God, and obedience to Him. If He found, in the love of His own, any consolation, which can only have been very small and poor, He had to give up this also, and with regard to this, as to everything else, become, in His death, a complete Nazarite, alone in His separation to God. The church should have followed Him; but alas! she has taken strong-drink; she has eaten and drunk with the drunken, and has begun to smite the servants of the house. The believer may be called to

deny himself, for the precious service of his Saviour, in things which are not bad in themselves. But this act is accomplished inwardly. "Her Nazarites were purer than snow," says Jeremiah. Devotedness is inward. It is proper to consider here to what those who fail in this separation expose themselves.

If we have devoted ourselves to the Lord in a way which is pleasing in His sight, enjoyment follows this devotedness in the measure of the testimony which is rendered to Him. God is with His servant according to His call; but it is a secret between His servant and Himself, though the external effects are seen by others. If we have failed in this separateness, we must begin all afresh: divine influence and power in the work are lost. There may be nothing amiss in other respects; we may arise to shake ourselves, like Samson, but we have lost our strength without being aware of it. God is no longer with us. The case of Samson is an extreme but a solemn one; for it may be that our strength has placed us in the presence of evil, and then, if God be with us, His magnificent glory manifests itself; but if not with us, the enemy has the sad opportunity of glorying over one long known as a champion for God, and apparently over God Himself. In this second alternative the inward secret, the true strength of separation unto God, was lost. Let us beware, in ordinary things, of the first step that would separate us from inward holiness, and that separation of heart to Him which gives us His secret, light from above on all that is around; for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. If grace has called us to separation for an extraordinary service in anything whatever, let us keep ourselves from any lack of obedience to the word of the cross, whereby we are crucified to the world, sin, and the law. [See Note #4]

Generally, the unfaithful Nazarite returns to his separation, through the sacrifice of Christ; he is consecrated anew to God. [See Note #5] But anything which brings us into contact with sin produces its effect on our Nazariteship. We lose the power attached to the communion of God, and the special presence of the Spirit with us, whatever be the measure in which this power was granted to us. Alas! the time which has preceded is lost: we must begin again. It is great grace that all privilege of serving God is not taken from us; but though it be not, we suffer something from the effects of

our unfaithfulness, when the power is restored unto us. A blind Samson was obliged to kill himself in killing his enemies. It belongs to us, in any case, immediately to acknowledge our defilement, to go to Christ, and not pretend to be Nazarites externally, when we are not so in the eyes of God. Nothing is more perilous than the service of God, when the conscience is not pure: however, let us ever recollect that we are under grace.

This separateness and this self-denial are not for ever. Even Christ will not always be a Nazarite. He will know fulness of joy with God and His own. He will say, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." It is by the alone power of the Spirit that we are separated from that which is evil, and often even from that which is natural, to be vessels of service and enjoyment, a testimony to God in the midst of evil. The time will come when, evil being removed, we shall be able to gratify our nature, but it will be a new one; a time in which the operation of the power of the Holy Spirit will only produce joy, and when everything surrounding us will be in communion with us. Then Christ will take a place which it was impossible for Him to take heretofore, although He was ever the perfect sociable man, perfectly accessible to sinners because He was thoroughly separated from them, and set apart for God inwardly, and had denied Himself, [See Note #6] to live only by the words of God. Such is the life of God here below. That which He has created cannot be bad. God forbid we should think it! Such an assertion is a sure sign of the latter days. Christ could think about His mother with tenderness, when the work of His soul on the cross was done. But the Holy Spirit comes in as a power foreign to this life, and takes up man to make him go through it according to that power; so that, the more man is a stranger to it himself, the more he is able to shew, and does indeed shew, sympathy to those who are there according to God. Anything else is only monkish. If we are truly free within, we can sympathise with that which is outside; if we are not so, we shall become monks, with the vain hope of obtaining this freedom.

Lastly, when the Nazarite vow was fulfilled, all the sacrifices were offered, and the hair of the head of his separation was burnt in the fire which consumed the sacrifice of the peace-offerings: a type of the full communion which is the result of the sacrifice of Christ. When, in the time fixed by God,

the sacrifice of Christ shall have obtained, in its effects, its full and entire efficacy, the energising power of separation will merge in the communion which will be the happy consequence of this sacrifice. We are thankful to know that the power of the Holy Spirit, now spent, in a great measure in checking the lusts of the flesh, will then be wholly a power of joy in God, and of communion with all that will surround us.

Let us now speak of the ways of God when the Nazarite vow is ended. Then the result of the work of Christ will be produced; all the varied efficacy of His sacrifice will be acknowledged; His people will enter into the communion of His joy; wine will be taken with joy. Jesus Himself awaits that time. I believe this specially applies to His people here below, to the Jewish remnant in the latter days. Their partaking of the Holy Ghost will be joy and delight.

Something similar, however, awaits us, but in a still better way. So we have this joy by anticipation up to a certain point; for the Holy Spirit produces these two things, the joy of communion, and separation in loneliness for the service of God. It is a little what the apostle means in these words to the Corinthians, "Death worketh in us, but life in you." However, it can always be said of all Christians, "I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you."

After having placed the people around Himself-having counted them by name, having arranged the service, cleansed the camp (which is distinct from the cleansing of defiled individuals, a subject which belongs to Leviticus), and shewn the true position of the devoted servant, a position which Israel might have taken, and which Christ, true servant, set apart for God, has taken-God ends by putting His blessing and His name on the people. The blessing places them under the keeping, the grace, and in the peace of Jehovah; and effectively Jehovah first blessed them in a general way; then, in making His face to shine upon them, He caused them to enjoy His grace; lastly, in lifting up His countenance upon them, He gave them the assurance of peace.

Note #1

It is a striking fact that in no one case did His disciples understand what He said when He expressed what was in His heart. This was utter isolation.

Note #2

The difference of these two phases of the Nazarite character of Christ in His life and in His death is not so great as might appear. He was ever separated from human joy as from all evil-there was no honey as there was no leaven, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief as passing in holy love through a world of sinners-His love driven back, and thus Himself straitened and pent up: the atonement opened its sluices. He is now, in fact, outwardly made separate from sinners. The early rejection of His mother's claim in John has its natural place in John, because in that Gospel He stands from the beginning apart in own Person, and the Jews are a rejected people.

Note #3

Co1 11:10.

Note #4

These are the three things to which the cross is applied in the Epistle to the Galatians.

Note #5

It is not here his own conscience repurified as to guilt. That is never done. All through here it is not redemption, but the walk of a professing people who have to say to God.

Note #6

Not of course that there was any evil nature in Him to deny as there is in us, but in will and nature where there was no evil; as "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" which I take only as an example. On the cross when all was finished, He carefully owned her. Honey could not be in a sacrifice any more than leaven.

Numbers Chapter 7

Here ends this part of the book. The camp, arranged according to God's order, is placed under His blessing. [See Note #1] Thereupon the princes of the people offer a free-will-offering to Jehovah, for the service of the sanctuary and the dedication of the altar according to the number of the

tribes. This was done with a common understanding, each offering the same, and as to the wagons; jointly not the service of the sanctuary, but the united devotedness and free-will-offerings of the people for the service and consecration of the altar when the people came to God. It was done in tribes; they were Israel's gifts in the finitely perfect unity of the twelve-none wanting in the orderly unity, and as a whole as that completeness stood before God in that day. Then we have the form of the communications of Jehovah to Moses to instruct him in the way. We see that it is in the tabernacle from between the cherubim. It is not now a law to the people from Sinai, a covenant, but the regulation of a people in connection with God.

Note #1

Note, chapters 5, 6 give the cleansing of the camp in every way from impurity and wrong, and the consecration of the Nazarite to God, and the blessing. Then comes the free-will-offering. Purity of the camp and personal separation to God-holiness in its twofold character, negative cleansing, and positive consecration to God. Then the freewill-offering. The putting of the name follows the cleansing and consecration.

Numbers Chapter 8

The following commentary covers Chapters 8 and 9.

Chapter 8 speaks of the candlestick. [See Note #1] The lamps were to make the light shine from it, and cause that light to be diffused around and before it. This is the case when that which is the vessel of the Holy Spirit shines with the light of God. Whether it be Israel or the church, it throws light before it. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." It is because the profession of the Christian is clear and unequivocal that men, seeing his good works, know to whom to attribute them. The candlestick was of pure gold only, beaten work; it was properly divine, and that only, God's light in the sanctuary. The twelve loaves, connected with what was divine, were the government of God in man; the table was of wood, though overlaid with gold; the number we have seen as marking divine government, but in man, specially true of Israel, but the testimony of God in light is purely divine.

We have next the purification of the Levites and their consecration to the service of Jehovah. This prefigures the consecration of the members of the church to God for service. The Levites were sprinkled, [See Note #2] then shorn like the lepers, and their clothes washed, all their manifested life purified according to the purification of the sanctuary, their ways suited to the service of God. After that the whole people laid their hands upon them, and they laid theirs upon the sacrifices. In the offerings which accompanied their consecration there was no peace-offering, because it was a question of service and not of communion; but the sacrifices which represented the efficacy of the atonement, and the devotedness unto death of the Lord Jesus, were offered, and characterised the ground and nature of their service. They are the double character of the death of Christ. The meat-offering was there also with the burnt-offering; all that constituted Christ as an offering to God, glorifying God in death as regards sin, bearing sins, and also in living perfection and devotedness fully tried in the fire, were found. In the application the sin-offering comes first.

The children of Levi belonged to Jehovah as His redeemed, having been saved, when He judged sin, and themselves offered as an offering to Jehovah. The laying on of hands identified with the victim the person who did so. If it were an offering for sin, the offering was identified with the sinner in his sin; if it were a burnt-offering, the offerer was identified with the value of the consecration to God's glory of the victim in respect of sin. Rom 15:16 is an allusion to this consecration of the Levites, and considers the church as thus offered to God from among the Gentiles. The Israelites having also laid their hands upon the Levites, the whole people were, so to speak, identified in this consecration with them, as an offering made by them to Jehovah, so that the Levites represented them before Him. We find here again, what we have already seen, that the Levites were given to Aaron and his sons, as the church is given to Christ, the true Priest and Son over the house of God, to be used in the service of the house. They were first offered by Israel to Jehovah for His service by Aaron the priest (Num 8:11); it was a wave-offering (*tenupha*); that is, they were presented before the Lord as consecrated to Him. Then (Num 8:13) they were set before Aaron and his sons, and so under their hand given to the Lord, wholly given to Him instead of the firstborn (Num 8:16-19). How solemn and perfect is the offering up of

the servant of the Lord to Him, according to the purification of the sanctuary and all the value and true character of Christ's offering of Himself to God, and the divine judgment of sin. [See Note #3]

The passover, the memorial of redemption, and in consequence the symbol of the unity [See Note #4] of the people of God, as an assembly redeemed by Him, is obligatory during the journey through the wilderness. [See Note #5] Only God makes a provision, in grace and forbearance, for those who were not able to keep it according to His will, to whom it had reference. But these provisions of forbearance and grace kept continually present the idea of a redeemed people and one under the direct fatherly government of God. Besides this we have the precious declaration that God Himself conducted His people by His presence. At His commandment they pitched; at His commandment they journeyed. They kept the charge of Jehovah, according to the commandment of Jehovah. God grant that we, who have His Spirit, may thus be led in all things, to stay or to go entirely under His immediate direction! If we are near God in His communion, we shall be guided by His eye; if not, we shall be guided by His eternal providence, as horses, and mules, with bits and bridles, that we may not stumble.

Note #1

The introduction of this type at this place shews how much the order of the types, and their introduction in such or such a place, refers to the things typified and to their moral order.

Note #2

The leper was washed, not merely sprinkled. He was outside the camp, wholly unclean before God. It was cleansing, not consecration; he had been, before the washing, brought under the blood-sprinkling-the full abiding efficacy of Christ's work in itself. Then he was washed with water, cleansed personally in the power of the Spirit and word, according to that water that came out of Christ's side. His clothes or outward demeanour were even cleansed too, and all that could harbour defilement removed. Here it was the consecration of those who, in an ordinary sense were clean and within. The sprinkling was a sign calling to remembrance consecration according to Christ's death, what was fit for the sanctuary, bringing them into that

conscious separation to God's service; and so their clothes, their outward demeanour, were washed. It was all of the same nature-the water-but with the leper it was the body of sin destroyed, cleansing from it so as not to serve it. Here it was consecration too.

Note #3

They served from 25 to 50, the first five years a kind of noviciate, as after 50 they ministered, but were not charged with the service.

Note #4

In Israel this unity was simply that of a people redeemed together to the enjoyment of a common portion, not a body as the church.

Note #5

Yet those who had only wilderness character were not in a condition to keep it. None born there were circumcised till they came to Gilgal across the Jordan.

Numbers Chapter 10

Chapter 10 speaks of the silver trumpets which served for calling the assembly of the people, and for the journeying of the camps, but which serve also for other purposes. It was the testimony of God, rendered publicly, with two chief ends in view; to gather the people, and to make them journey. It is so indeed, practically; the testimony of God gathers His people around Him, and makes them go forward. The testimony of God was the sign of His intervention, whilst, at the same time, its result was to produce it. The priests who, in communion with their head, were to be in the intimacy of the thoughts of God, sounded the trumpets when needed. All was thus done according to communion with God in His sanctuary. After the people were brought into the land, if war arose, they sounded an alarm: they proclaimed the testimony of God, without being afraid, and God remembered His people and interfered. So with us, we need never fear the attack of the enemy; instead of being frightened, let us give a faithful testimony, in answer to which God has pledged Himself to come in in power. Let us not fear: in nothing terrified by our adversaries. The trumpets were

also used in the solemn feasts; for the testimony and the memorial of God constitute the joy of His gathered people. Thus the whole people in national unity and order, were assembled as the camp where God was, and were to march in like order. All was complete for the order of the people, and the service of Jehovah.

At length the people are called to take the first stage of their journey. The order followed in the march differs from that which had been prescribed, in this, that the tabernacle, with its curtains, went after the first three tribes, that it might be set up to receive the ark, which followed the second division. Still this was merely a detail in the arrangements, to have all ready when the ark arrived. But God appears in a remarkable manner in grace, outside the whole order He had prescribed; for it is the ark itself which precedes the whole camp. Moses had asked a child of the wilderness to be to them instead of eyes; but what man does not care to do, God takes upon Himself. He comes out of the place which He had taken in the midst of the tribes, to be taken care of, so to speak, and honoured there, and makes Himself, in some sort, their servant, seeking a place where they might rest in the trackless desert.

It was not in Canaan, but a place in the wilderness, where the Lord went a three days' journey to seek a rest for them. A beautiful picture of the tender and precious grace of Him who, if He makes us pass through the wilderness for our good, does not fail to be there with us, and who takes care, in putting out His sheep, to go before them, and to solace them with His love. Mighty leader of His people by the way, He is their joy and their glory when He comes to rest in their midst! This closes the divinely instituted order of the camp and the grace that led them through the wilderness. Compare Psa 132:8, where God at the close of Israel's history (anticipating David) arises into His rest. Psalm 68 is God's intervention to establish the rest.

Numbers Chapter 11

We are now brought to turn our thoughts in another direction-to see the conduct of the people in the wilderness, and alas! what is it except a history of unfaithfulness and rebellion? Let us add, however, that it is also that of the forbearance and the grace of God. It is an extremely humbling and

instructive picture. We shall briefly review the different forms of unbelief which are here presented to us. The first thing we find, after the sweet manifestation of the love of God, is the murmuring of the people. They complain of fatigue, where God is seeking a resting-place for them. God chastens them. Humbled, they cry unto Moses, and upon his intercession the chastening is removed; but their heart remains alienated from the Lord, and, seduced by the mixed multitude who accompanied them, and to whom Canaan was not a land of promise, they get wearied with the manna. How often does Christ, the bread of life, not suffice a heart not in communion with God! The heart seeks elsewhere for its nourishment; it wants something else; it remembers what the flesh used to enjoy in the world, whilst it forgets the bondage in which it was held. It knows no more the power of the word—"he that cometh to me shall never hunger." God grants the people the object of their desires: instead of being ashamed when they see that God is equally able to satisfy them in the wilderness, they greedily gather the quails, and the wrath of God falls upon this wicked people.

Moses, wearied of them as of a heavy burden, complains, in his turn, of his glorious position. God relieves him of the weight of his charge, but not without upbraiding him; and He adjoins seventy persons to him to help him in bearing it. The Spirit of God acts in two of them, though they do not present themselves to receive it where Moses was: they prophesy in the camp. Joshua, jealous of the glory of his master, wishes them to be silenced. But if Moses, [See Note #1] unable to bear the weight of his glory, has been obliged to share it with others, and, up to a certain point, lose part of it, he shews at least, in this circumstance, the depth of the grace that was in him. He does not envy those who prophesy in the camp. "Would God," he says, "that all were prophets!" There is something very beautiful in the spirit which animated this servant of God. Finally, whatever may be God's arrangements, He is sovereign in the dispensations of His Spirit.

Note #1

Remark here the difference even in the blessed apostle's faith, comparing Num 11:12 here and Gal 4:19; see also Co2 11:28. It is possible that this failure of Moses under the pressure of the weight of the people, giving occasion to the prophesying in the camp, was the occasion also of the rising

up of Miriam and Aaron against him. At any rate God maintained the authority of His servant, who, as to himself, held his ground by unfeigned meekness, and leaving all that concerned himself to God.

Numbers Chapter 12

After that (for what form will not rebellion assume?) Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses. It is the prophetess and the priest (one who has the word from God and access to God, the twofold character of the people of God), who rise up against him who is king in Jeshurun, with whom God speaks as unto His friend. In this Moses is in all respects a type of Christ, who stands personally outside the rights which grace has conferred upon the people. Faithful in all the house of God, he enjoys close intercourse with Him. Miriam and Aaron ought to have been afraid. The excuse of the two rebels was, that Moses had taken an Ethiopian woman—a blessed sign for us of the sovereignty of grace which has introduced into the blessing of Christ those who had no right or title to it. The people of God, whatever their privileges, ought to have recognised this sovereignty. Israel would not, and was smitten with leprosy. It is, however, in their character of witness or prophet that they suffer this chastening.

Aaron resumes his place of intercessor, and speaks humbly to Moses (a figure, I think, of the humiliation of Israel, grounded on the value of the intercession of Christ, identifying Himself with the position of the people). God's answer is, that Miriam should be humbled and chastened, shut out, for a time, from intercourse with Him, then restored to favour again. The people wait for her restoration. Let us remember that the Lord here recalls this fact, that the most glorious position for Moses was that when he was separated from the people—when he pitched his tent without the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation or meeting. The people had but too much forgotten this. When the members of the church also, in the thought of making themselves spiritual, take advantage of their glory and position as prophets and priests (characters which do indeed belong to them), to disown the rights of Christ, as king in Jeshurun, having authority over the house of God, there is room for considering whether they are not guilty of the rebellion here spoken of. For my part, I believe they are.

Numbers Chapter 13

The following commentary covers Chapters 13 and 14.

Next, the pleasant land is despised. I shall here call the attention of the reader to some points mentioned on this subject in other parts of the Bible. [See Note #1] Jehovah has brought the people to the borders of the land; Moses tells them to go up. The people propose sending spies; Moses consents. It seems that they had God's sanction, for they went according to the word of the Lord. But this request was prompted by the weakness and unbelief of the people. There are many things commanded of God, and which we are bound to do as soon as they are the object of a command from Him, in the result of which His ways are displayed, which, however, are only owing to our lack of faith. The consequence of it is, that the result abundantly confirms the faith of the faithful, of the remnant; but unbelief reaps what it has sown. So it is in this case. First, the report brought to Moses is in a right spirit; but the difficulties immediately present themselves, and unbelief measures them with man, instead of with God. Then the witnesses draw their words from the people's feelings, and express a judgment founded on their unbelief. Having thus entirely departed in heart from the Lord, and fallen into the current of the unbelief of the people, through their own, they belie the convictions they had formed when enjoying the sight of the goodness of Jehovah, and come to declare that the land even is bad, and end with justifying themselves by complaining of God. For now it is no longer Moses who has brought them here, it is God Himself; they accuse Him of it. Moreover, they cannot contain their rage against those whose faithful testimony condemns their unbelief.

How often is this the case, that the difficulties which draw out the unbelief of the heart lead to speak evil of the position to which we have been divinely called, and of which once we had tasted the blessedness! All flowed from forgetfulness of God: Was He a grasshopper, in comparison with the sons of Anak? What matter if walls were high, if they fell down at the blowing of a ram's horn? But now God Himself interferes. They will be dealt with according to their faith; they shall perish in the wilderness, according to their wish. The faithful ones and the children will alone be brought into the land; but not without undergoing, in their march, the consequences of the

unbelief of the mass. However, other hopes and other consolations will be their portion.

The effect of the intercession of Moses is to obtain from God that the people should be spared; but this is His declaration-He will be glorified in judgment over a rebellious people who despise the promises, and the earth shall thus be filled with His glory. Moses here appeals to the revelation of the name of Jehovah, on which footing He governs the people, and not to the promises made to the fathers; and the answer he receives is in keeping with that name. Caleb prefigures the faithful remnant; Joshua is not named (Num 13:24), for he represents Christ introducing the people into the land of promise.

At the end of the forty years Caleb was obliged to subdue, name for name, the same persons who had filled the souls of the spies with terror. Unbelief, when in spite of it we are to enjoy the effects of the promise, does not make us escape the difficulties. In fine, when we have judged the folly of unbelief, and we see the consequences of it, it is of no avail, because of these last, to undertake a work. God is not with us; and, if we persist in going up, we shall find the enemy such as our unbelief has pictured him to us.

Note #1

See Deu 1:20-23.

Numbers Chapter 15

After all this unbelief of the people, when God had declared that the earth should be filled with His glory, by the cutting off of the rebellious congregation, and when one might have supposed they had forfeited the land for ever, it is perfectly beautiful, in chapter 15, to see the Lord returning into the perfect rest of His fore-ordained counsels, and of His immutable being, and giving instructions relative to the time when the people shall have entered the land He has given them. It speaks of the offerings of righteousness they are invited to bring to Him of their free-will, and of the wine of joy which was to accompany these offerings; and as this is grace, the love of God reaches out beyond Israel, and, bringing the stranger near to His people, He makes one law for both. The firstfruits belong to Him. The

sins of ignorance are forgiven by means of the sacrifice required by the perfectness of the ways of God. The sin committed presumptuously alone brings destruction. God orders them to put upon the fringe of the borders of their garments a riband of blue, that they may remember His commandments, and be kept from that which would render them profane. The heavenly principle must enter into the minutest details of life, even into those that are nearest to the earth, if we wish to escape the serious evils which bring down the judgment of God. The introduction of the stranger in this chapter is of the highest interest, as a testimony to grace. But we have not, as yet, seen the final apostasy which brings down the judgment at the very moment when it is accomplished.

Numbers Chapter 16

Chapter 16 contains the open rebellion against Moses of Dathan and Abiram, but especially the pretension of the ministry in Israel to arrogate priesthood to itself. Some of the chiefs of the people were indeed parties in this rebellion, and for a moment all the people, but too well prepared, were led away by the ambition of a man who discharged the functions of the ministry. The New Testament calls it "the gainsaying of Core"; he is the first addressed by Moses; and the main point of the sin, as Moses insists on it, was this taking too much upon them by the sons of Levi. He drew others in by flattering them, but to the assumption of official priesthood. Dathan and Abiram's was a side question of Moses's authority, of the word of God by him, and the judgment was a thing apart. But this claim of priesthood by the ministry is identified with open rebellion against God in the authority of His word as borne by Moses. It is not, however, the corruption of ministry in teaching error itself, as the distinction made by Jude shews us.

In Cain we see natural wickedness; in Balaam, who taught error for a reward, religious corruption in teaching; in Core, the gainsaying which brings destruction. Let us remember that Jude treats of the results, and the end reserved to the corruption and the corrupters of Christianity. The gainsaying of Core is a revolt against the authority of Christ, and the distinctive character [See Note #1] of His priesthood: a revolt excited by a man, who, occupying the position of a minister, pretends that he is a priest, and sets aside in doing so the only true heavenly priesthood of Christ. Reuben was

the eldest son of Israel, and Core was of the most favoured family among the Levites. The tribe of Reuben and the family of Core were near each other in the camp; but nothing of this is apparent in the motives which led them to act.

In a word, it was open rebellion and audacity presenting itself before God Himself. God soon put an end to their pretensions, for "Who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered?" Moses appeals to Him. Dathan and Abiram take advantage of the effect of the unbelief of the assembly, who might have been in Canaan already, to throw the blame of it upon Moses. As to Core, Moses announces that God will shew who is holy and whom He has chosen. Core and the two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly are consumed; Dathan, Abiram, and theirs swallowed up. But the spirit of rebellion had laid hold of the whole assembly. On the morrow they murmur against Moses and Aaron, saying: "Ye have killed the people of the Lord"-a convenient name to aggrandise themselves. Now, the priesthood and the intercession of Aaron are made evident. Aaron, with a censer, stands between the dead and the living, and the plague is stayed.

We shall see the importance of this last remark in what follows, and what is the principle on which alone, considering sins and the flesh, God can bring His people through the wilderness. There that priesthood is needed which Core had despised; but it is by priesthood alone that man can get through the wilderness with God. [See Note #2] Moses, in replying to Core, declares that God will shew whom He had chosen for this end; and this He soon does in fact. Moses, vexed at the contempt and the injustice of Dathan and Abiram, appeals to the justice and the judgment of God. God intervenes by a judgment of pure destruction. But the glory and the house of God are at stake, when the question is, By whom is He to be approached? Now, authority is insufficient to conduct such as we are through the wilderness. The flesh is rebellious, and the last resource of authority is destruction. But this does not lead a people to a good end for the glory of God, though He is therein glorified in righteousness. Moses, then, in that character of authority which strikes in righteousness, is powerless as regards bringing the people into Canaan. It is priesthood, which the rebellion had so despised, which is invested with authority over His rebellious people. It is Christ the priest, in

His grace and goodness, who leads us through the wilderness. This is the conclusion we come to at the end of the narrative we have of the journeying of the people of God.

Note #1

It is ecclesiastical evil; but as regards the rebellion, the evil went farther. It was the pretension of ministry to be priesthood. That is the evil pointed out by Moses, though Core brought others near also (Num 16:8-10).

Note #2

There is no question here of union with Christ (it was yet the hidden mystery), nor even of being sons; it is the passage of pilgrims through the wilderness. In this character we are viewed as apart from Christ, as in Hebrews. I add here that we get a difference between priesthood and advocacy (Hebrews and John). In Hebrews it is priesthood for mercy, and grace to help in time of need; advocacy is to restore communion when we have sinned.

Numbers Chapter 17

The following commentary covers Chapters 17 through 18.

From chapter 17 to 20 this subject is set forth with the circumstances relative to it. First, the authority of Aaron is established by signs shewn by the power of God, in his rod, put with the others near God-the source of all authority. The power of life and blessing displays itself with a rapidity which makes manifest the presence of God. The buds, the flowers, and the fruit grow on dry wood. Priesthood, living and victorious over death, through divine efficacy, [See Note #1] must lead the people; God's authority is entrusted to it. The carnal people, always astray, bold just before in the presence of the majesty of God, are afraid of His presence now that His grace manifests itself, and say that they cannot draw near Him. This opens the way for still deeper views on the place that priesthood holds in general.

In chapter 18 the place of priesthood is clearly defined, as well as that of the Levites. The priests alone draw near to the holy place; they alone are allowed this intimacy with God. But, in consequence of their position, there

are sins, iniquities which they are called to bear, as an effect of this proximity, which would not be remarked among those who are outside. That which is unbecoming the presence and the sanctuary of God does not become His priests. They bear the iniquity of the holy place. If the people disobeyed the law, doubtless they were punished; but that which defiled the sanctuary fell upon Aaron and his sons. What, then, is the measure of holiness given to the children of God-alone true priests? It is the purification of the sanctuary itself, not what is fit for man, but what is fit for God. The service of the Levites, and the Levites themselves were given as a gift to the priests. Priesthood also was a pure gift to Aaron and his sons. Because of the anointing, the most holy things were given them to eat, which was a special privilege of the priests. The same thing is true with regard to us.

Whatever is precious in the offering of Christ, in every point of view-in His life and in His death; in that bread come down from heaven, contemplated in His life of devotedness and grace here below; and in His death for us-all is the food and nourishment of our souls, in that communion with God in which we ourselves are kept in our priesthood. The priests alone ate the holy things, and they ate them in a holy place. It is only in the sense of the presence of God, and under the efficacy of that oil which is not poured on flesh, that we can truly realise what is precious in the work of Christ.

Verse 10 (Num 18:10) presents something very remarkable; for what is here said, and nowhere else, is that they were to eat them in the most holy place, the holy of holies. There is no difficulty in the terms. I have sometimes thought that it might mean, from among the most holy things; but if it be not that, the meaning is then in the holy of holies, and only relates to the antitype. That is, it is only in the presence and before the throne of the sovereign God Himself that we can really feed on that precious food. Historically the priests were not there; being in the sanctuary of God, they were accounted as being there.

There were things which, though truly belonging to the priestly family, were not properly eaten in the priestly character, such as the heave-offerings, the wave-offerings; the daughters ate of them as well as the sons: all that were clean in the house could partake of them. Thus, in the joys of the children of God, there are some that belong to them as a family. We enjoy our blessings

and all that is offered by man to God. It is a joy for the soul. All that the Spirit of Christ works to the glory of God, even in His members, and still more what He has done in Christ Himself, is the food of the soul of the household of God, and strengthens them. Do not our souls enjoy those firstfruits, the best of the new wine and the wheat-the firstfruits of that noble harvest of God, the produce of His seed on the soil of His election? Yes, we enjoy them in thinking of them. But the sin-offering, the trespass-offerings, the meat-offerings, all that in which we share in spirit in the deep work of Christ, is only eaten in the character and the spirit of a priest. We must, according to the efficacy of this work of Christ, enter into the spirit in which He presents Himself after His sacrifice, moved by His perfect love, in the presence of the Most High-enter into the sentiments of love, of devotedness in the consciousness of the holiness of God; in a word, into the feelings with which He presents Himself as a priest before Him, in order to connect, by love and the efficacy of His offering, the holiness of God, with the blessing of him who has sinned-to realise that which is precious in Christ in that work, to share in it (for so it is) in grace. And, effectively, that only takes place in the most holy place, in the presence of God, where He appears for us. In fine, whether the joys of the family of God's house, or this holy participation in spirit in the work of Christ, all we have just been speaking about belongs to the priesthood. Even the Levites were to recognise in all that God gave them as strangers in the land of promise, the rights and the authority of the priests.

Now, if we make the distinction between the two, all believers are priests; ministers, in their capacity of ministers, are only Levites. Their service (besides that which is towards the world, a character which the dispensation did not bear, and which, therefore, is not the subject here) is to minister to the priestly joy and service of the saints with God. Our service will meet with reward in heaven, our priestly place will be nearness to God and joy in Him. It is evident that partaking in spirit (to partake in it in reality is of course impossible) in the sacrifice of Christ for sin, in eating of it as a priest, is a very holy thing, a privilege enjoyed in a very holy place; everything is specially holiness here.

Note #1

That is grace; righteous judgment could destroy, but not bring through; grace alone can.

Numbers Chapter 19

But if, on the one hand, priesthood must lead the people through the wilderness, and if Moses's rod of authority cannot do this, if it can only smite; on the other, there must be a provision connected with it for removing the defilements taking place during the journey, that the communion of the people with God may not be interrupted. That is the reason why the sacrifice of the heifer is placed here, apart from all the others, because it was prescribed in order to meet the defilements of the wilderness. But if the consideration of Christ (even though it be Christ offered for sin, and the participation in His priestly work, in connection with that sacrifice) was a most holy thing realised in the communion of the most holy place; being occupied with that sin, even in a brother, and that to purify him, defiled even those who were not guilty of it.

These are the subjects of chapter 19. What follows is the ordinance given on this occasion. To touch a dead body was indeed being defiled with sin; for sin is here considered under the point of view of defilement which precluded the entrance into the court of the tabernacle. Christ is presented in the red heifer as unspotted by sin, and as never having borne the yoke of it either; but He is led forth without the camp, as being wholly a sacrifice for sin. The priest who brought the heifer did not kill it; but it was killed in his presence. He was there to take knowledge of the deed. The death of Christ is never the act of priesthood. The heifer was completely burned without the camp, even its blood, except that which was sprinkled directly before the tabernacle of the congregation, that is, where the people were to meet God. There the blood was sprinkled seven times (because it was there that God met with His people), a perfect testimony in the eyes of God to the atonement made for sin. They had access there according to the value of this blood. The priest threw into the fire cedar-wood, hyssop, and scarlet (that is, all that was of man, and his human glory in the world). "From the cedar down to the hyssop," is the expression of nature from her highest elevation to her lowest depth. Scarlet is external glory (the world, if you please). The whole was burned in the fire which consumed Christ, the

sacrifice for sin. Then, if anybody contracted defilement, though it were merely through neglect, in whatever way it might be, God took account of the defilement. And this is a solemn and important fact: God provides for cleansing, but in no case can tolerate anything in His presence unsuited to it. It might seem hard in an inevitable case, as one dying suddenly in the tent. But it was to shew that for His presence God judges of what is suited to His presence. The man was defiled and he could not go into God's tabernacle.

To cleanse the defiled person, they took some running water, into which they put the ashes of the heifer, and the man was sprinkled on the third and on the seventh days; then he was clean: signifying that the Spirit of God, without applying anew the blood to the soul .(that in the type had been sprinkled once for all when the people met God), takes the sufferings of Christ (the proof that sin and all that is of the natural man and of the world have been consumed for us in His expiatory death), and applies them to it. It is the proof, the intimate conviction, that nothing is nor can be imputed. It was in this respect wholly done away in the sacrifice, whose ashes (the witness that it was consumed) are now applied. But it produces upon the heart the deeply painful conviction that it has got defiled, notwithstanding redemption, and by the sins for which Christ has suffered in accomplishing it. We have found our will and pleasure, if only for a moment, in what was the cause of His pain; and this in the face of His sufferings for sin, but, alas! in forgetfulness of them-even for that sin the motions of which we yield to so lightly now: a feeling much deeper than that of having sins imputed. For it is in reality the new man, in his best feelings, who judges by the Spirit and according to God, and who takes knowledge of the sufferings of Christ and of sin, as seen in Him on the cross.

The first feeling is bitterness, although without the thought of imputation-bitterness, precisely because there is no imputation, and that we have sinned against love as well as against holiness, and that we must submit to that conviction. But lastly (and it seems to me it is the reason why there was the second sprinkling), it is the consciousness of that love, and of the deep grace of Jesus, and the joy of being perfectly clean, through the work of that love. The first part of the cleansing was the sense of the horror of

sinning against grace; the second, the mind quite cleared from it by the abounding of grace over the sin.

We may remark that, as it is merely the needed purifying for the way, nothing else is noticed; no sacrifices, as in the case of the leper. There it was drawing nigh to God, according to the value of Christ's work, when cleansed from sin. Here it is the practical restoration of the soul inwardly. There is no sprinkling with blood: the purifying is by water, Christ's death being fully brought in in its power by the Holy Ghost. The details shew the exactness of God, as to these defilements though He cleanses us from them. They shew also that any one who has to do with the sin of another, though it be in the way of duty to cleanse it, is defiled; not as the guilty person, it is true, but we cannot touch sin without being defiled. The value of grace and of priesthood is also made evident.

Numbers Chapter 20

Miriam the prophetess dies; this character of testimony is closed. Israel grows old, so to speak, in the wilderness; and the voice which sang songs of triumph in coming up from the depths of the Red Sea is silent in the tomb. Also they lacked water. The journey was still prolonged. The resources were far from increasing; on the contrary, what there had been of joy and testimony was vanishing. They gather themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. God directs them to the provision He had made against murmurings. If we have just witnessed His holiness, we see now His resources and His blessing.

"Take the rod," says God-He knows of no other now "and speak unto the rock, and it shall give forth its water." There is nothing to be done but to shew the sign of grace (of priesthood intervening on the part of God in the grace with which He has clothed His authority), and to speak the word, and the wants of the people shall be immediately supplied. It was not precisely, that grace which had followed the people from the Red Sea to Sinai; nor was it, either, authority punishing sin; but it was grace taking priestly knowledge of sin and wants; restoring from the defilements of the one, and obtaining all that met the others.

But Moses, whilst taking the rod according to the commandment of God, soured by the rebellion of the people, thinks of his authority and their rebellion; he does not apprehend the counsels of grace, and speaks unadvisedly: "Must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Before, it was "What are we that ye murmur against us?" The rebellion of the people and the contempt of his authority have got a firmer hold on his mind than the intelligence of the grace of God; "he smites the rock with his rod." The first time this must needs have been done. Christ needs to have been smitten, that water might come out, in the behalf of His people; but there can be no repetition of this smiting.

Now under the priesthood we have only to speak according to the living power of this priesthood, which God has established, and there is an answer in grace to all our wants. The fruit and the blossom would be spoiled, if I may so speak, by smiting with it. It is not the thought presented in it. Moses did not sanctify God; he did not sufficiently value the character which God had assumed; he did not respect God in the position He had deigned to take; but God sanctified Himself the more, by acting in grace and quenching the thirst of the people in spite of this. Moses glorified himself, and before God he was abased. He did not know how to abandon the position he had been placed in, to have sympathy with the thoughts of the abounding, sovereign, and good grace of his God, which surpassed in compassion the justice and authority under which He had placed His people. God, however, does not forsake His poor servant. How insignificant we are in comparison with His grace! The grace of priesthood can alone bring such a people as we are through the wilderness. [See Note #1]

But the wandering of Israel is drawing towards its close; and we now come to the enemies who oppose its ending, and the entering of the people into the desired land, that land of promise, so long sought after. Edom, full of jealousy, will not let the way be shortened; Israel turns away from him. There are people who oppose us, and from whom it is right to turn away, on account of some external relation existing between them and ourselves, though they are animated with an implacable hatred: we must know how to discern them. God will judge them in His own time; our hand must not be upon them. As to the enemies of God, they must be our enemies; where the

power of the enemy is evident, it is God's war. But we meet in the way with those who are descended from the sources of promise, although after the flesh, and who are characterised by the flesh; we leave them to God: it is His prerogative to judge of them. The occasion for war is not apparent; it would not be legitimate for the people. Now Aaron also departs. Service in the end takes another character. [See Note #2]

Note #1

This is the character of the Epistle to the Hebrews: perfectness through Christ's offering as to conscience; but going through the wilderness, and so constant dependence but infallible faithfulness in Him on whom we depend. The mediatorial character of this is priesthood, consequent upon our sins being put away.

Note #2

With his death the wilderness history closes. Provision for defilement on the way had been given. Moses clings to law, and does not avail himself of Aaron's rod (priesthood grace), and on this footing cannot take the people into the land. We have this order in this transition period: provision for defilement on the way (chap. 19); the priesthood given up, and so no entrance into the land; then the perpetual hatred of the elder brother, the outward fleshly descendant of the risen man in relentless opposition to the called people. Aaron dies, and wilderness grace closes; the power of Satan overcome, and through weariness (their own fault and want of faith) the deadliness of sin comes in, and the great remedy; Arah's power being resisted is destroyed. But from Num 21:4, it is the state of the soul, the heart gone back to Egypt; Christ (the manna) is despised. The power of the enemy when they were faithful was nothing. Unfaithfulness, murmuring against God, brings them into the sting of death. If they despise the bread of life, they get the fatal sting of death in judgment. There was healing by the look of faith on Christ lifted up for us. This is not priesthood for the journey, but an absolute remedy for death by sin. It is in general what God is for the people outside wilderness care. Then the refreshings of the Spirit and word-dugged well. We have, further, victorious power over all their enemies, though outside Jordan and uncircumcised. It is God for His people in spite of

their imperfect state; closing with their full justification, character, and blessing as in God's mind.

Numbers Chapter 21

The question is not here to conduct the people with patience through the wilderness, where the flesh manifested itself; but there are enemies and difficulties to be met; for there are difficulties distinct from the conduct and the patience of life. The Israelites fight with the Canaanites in the south, though they have not got into the land. But the king of the Canaanites has been informed of their coming by the presence of the spies. This was another fruit of the want of boldness of faith which had caused them to be sent. How little we gain by the prudence of unbelief! It gives occasion to the power and attacks of the enemy. However, though these enemies seem to prevail at first when Israel allow themselves to be attacked, when the Israelites are ready utterly to destroy them God delivers them up to them. Take notice of this. But the people, wearied, murmur again, for the way was long. They were fighting with the Canaanites without yet possessing the land; the question was only about destroying their power and yet possessing nothing. It was the power of evil and that only, and resisted and put down as such. It was for God's sake and His glory only. On their murmurs God interferes and makes them feel all the power of the enemy, the old serpent. Christ made sin for us is the only perfectly efficacious remedy. The mere sight of that wonder procures healing, for the efficacy is in the thing itself before God. Faith sees Christ made sin for us. The question is not here about leading the people, but of answering the judgment of God, either final or in the way of chastening, and the power of the enemy against us in the face of that judgment, and even as the effect of that judgment. In such a case the question is between our souls and God; it is a question of death, or simply of the death of Jesus. We must submit to that, as being in an irremediable condition, and, submitting to God's righteousness, look to His ordinance—that is, to Christ lifted up for us.

Next, Israel goes forward, but they are not yet in the land. God relieves and refreshes them of His own free grace, without their murmuring. He gathers the people. Israel celebrates anew, close by the land, the wells which are found in the wilderness. They can now say themselves, "Spring up, O well";

no more rock to smite, no more murmurings near the land. Life at the end of their course is no longer the question: it is salvation from the deadly wound of the serpent. They are healed; they walk and drink with joy and songs of praise. They dug-for their activity displayed itself in the presence of the grace of God-and the water sprang up in the wilderness.

We meet with people with whom we do not wish to have war, but they will not let us pass peaceably. Our warfare is with the possessors of our inheritance beyond Jordan. If we are attacked, we must defend ourselves; but we are not to be aggressors. Israel wishes to pass quietly through the land of the Amorites; but these will not allow it, and they suffer the consequences of the war they had sought against the people of God. Israel takes their cities, and begins already on this side Jordan to realise, as if beforehand, the possession of the promise.

Numbers Chapter 22

The following commentary covers Chapters 22, 23, 24, and 25.

Moab also opposes in vain. Now they are in the plains of Moab, having only Jordan between them and the land of their rest. But had they a right to enter there? If the enemy cannot oppose by force, he will try another way, by putting under the curse the people who well deserved it. Balak sends for Balaam. The grand question in this touching scene is this, "Can Satan succeed in cursing the people of God, so as to prevent their entrance into the land of promise?" [See Note #1] It is not merely a question of redemption and of the joy of redemption at the beginning of their course, but in the end, when all their unfaithfulness has been manifested-their unfaithfulness even after the Lord has brought them to Himself. Can Satan succeed then? No.

When Moses, in those same plains, has to say, with regard to their conduct towards God, "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you," (and indeed, they had been excessively froward, a most stiff-necked people; do we not know this well?), God says by the mouth of Balaam, the involuntary witness of the truth, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." What a testimony! What wonderful grace! What perfection in the ways of God! God sees aright; He

makes no mistakes. He speaks the truth according to the perfectness of His infinite intelligence; and it is because it is infinite, that He can see no iniquity in the redeemed people. How could He see any in those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb? Nor is it His mind to see it.

In His own dealings with the people He will see everything, take knowledge of everything; but with the accuser it is a question of righteousness. God only sees this, that, according to the counsels of His grace, He has given a ransom; the sins of His people have been atoned for. He could not in justice see those sins. The mouth of the accuser is therefore obliged to confess that there are none, and that there is no power of the enemy against Jacob. And the ground is clearly taught: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, what hath God wrought? Not said of God, but of Israel; and not what hath Israel wrought, but what hath God wrought? Israel had the place, but the work was God's work. This is very perfect. What is peculiarly blessed and comforting in this is, that God acts and judges from His own thoughts. From beginning to end He has had thoughts about us; He has done what was needed to reconcile all His ways, in the accomplishment of them, with eternal righteousness; but He has these thoughts, and acts towards us according to them. It is these faith apprehends, accepts, and builds on. Hence joy and peace; while the presence of God in the midst of an accepted people to whom a new nature has been given, and His judging all there secures practically the holiness which He cannot dispense with, or judges departure from it, so as to vindicate His name. But here it is God acting, judging, in spite of all, according to His own thoughts.

Balaam was a sad character. Forced to see from afar off the blessing of God upon His people, when he is near, and actuated by his own heart and will, he sees nothing but the way of error, into which he wishes to drag them that they might forfeit that blessing (if this were possible), reasoning upon this ground, that the righteous God could not bless a sinful people. One cannot think of any iniquity worse than that.

We shall say a few words as to his typical character. Let us pursue the history. Balak seeks him. Balaam wishes to inquire of Jehovah either from instinctive fear, or to attach, in the sight of others, the importance of the name of Jehovah to what he does. Effectively God does interfere, and even

goes first to Balaam. He takes the matter in hand, and has power over the unjust mind of Balaam against his will; for Balaam has no understanding of the mind of God. God said, "Thou shalt not go: they are blessed." What is his answer? "Jehovah refuseth to give me leave to go." He would gladly have gone; his heart was set upon the reward of Balak; but he fears before God. The blessing of the people does not come into his mind; he is a complete stranger to the generosity of grace-insensible to the thought of their being blessed of God, of delight in His blessing on His people. Consequently, when there is a renewal of the temptation, he says that he cannot transgress the commandment of Jehovah his God: he puts on piety, and, in reality, he was not entirely without sincerity, for God held him close, and, indeed, allowed all this. But, at the same time, Balaam induces the messengers of Balak to tarry and see what God would say further. What did he want to know more about an invitation to curse that people, who, God had told him, were blessed? He had no sympathy whatever with the thoughts of the heart of God, none with Himself; he was governed by the fear of consequences. Otherwise, he would have been so happy in the blessing of the people, that he would have shuddered at the idea of cursing what God had blessed. God, however, will use him, to give a glorious testimony on behalf of His people, whilst, at the same time, condemning the crooked ways of the prophet, for they were indeed crooked. He shews him his perverseness, his folly, to be more stupid than the ass he was riding; but, at the same time, He makes him go on his way. This meeting in the way does serve to force him, through fear, to utter faithfully what God should put into his mouth. Balaam goes to meet-he does not say what. It is plain (Num 24:1) that he had mixed enchantments with the profession of the name of Jehovah, and that he had thus been the enemy's instrument, with the credit of Jehovah's name-a deeply solemn case. He was thus going to meet the mysterious power which came there, and Elohim came to meet him. God restrains and hinders on the behalf of His people all power of the enemy, and causes Balaam to say what He wishes to be said. Balaam looks upon Israel from above, and utters his prophecy.

This prophecy is divided into four parts. It has Israel for its object; but, as to the principle of it, it applies also to the assembly. The first prophecy announces the separation of the people from the world. "The people shall

dwell alone," separated unto God, a people not reckoned among the nations.

The second prophecy declares that God does not repent. God has blessed them; shall He not confirm what He has just said? The people are justified, and without sin in the eyes of God. God it was who had brought them out of Egypt. This people had "the strength of the unicorn," and the enemy, whom he had sought (in his enchantments), had no power against them.

Balaam, seeing at last that God was bent upon blessing, yields to the power of God, goes no longer to the meeting of enchantments, and the Spirit of God comes upon him. The justification of the people being now declared, the Spirit of God can bear testimony to them, instead of confining His testimony to the thoughts and intentions of God. Balaam sees them from above; seeing the vision of the Almighty, he sees the people according to the thoughts of the Spirit of God, as seen in the mind of God from above. The eyes of the prophet are open. And remark, here, that it is neither the anticipation of Canaan, nor Israel in their permanent habitations: Balaam turns his face towards the wilderness and sees Israel abiding in their tents. There the Spirit sees them, and declares the beauty and the order of the people in the eyes of God. The water of the refreshing of God was also always with them there; they were as trees that Jehovah had planted, therefore will they be great amongst the nations, a source of power and joy. They drink from the sources of God, and pour out from them abundantly for others. God had brought them out of Egypt, they were the work of God? and the power of God was to go with them against their enemies. We get here, thirdly, then, beauty, a freshness the sources of which do not dry up, and power (what the Spirit does for the assembly).

Then, in the fourth place is the coming of Christ, the Star of Jacob, who crowns the glory of the people. Only, as it comes in the midst of Israel, it is in judgment. With regard to us, it will be to take us hence, in order to make us participate in the joy of His presence, to the marriage of the Lamb. In a word, we see the separation of the people from the world; their justification; their order, their beauty, as planted by God near the everlasting sources of the river of God; and then the coming of Christ. The prophecy is perfectly beautiful. Remark, too, the prophecies, in the renewed effort to

bring a curse on them, are not repetitions. Each such effort brings out something more of what God had in His mind for His people! for blessing. It is not without interest to see how Balak uses all human and superstitious means to bring the curse on them. He had no idea of God, and it was with God he had to do.

It is very important for us to see sometimes the church from above, in the wilderness, but in the beauty of the thoughts of God, a pearl without price. In the midst of the camp below, in the desert, what murmurings, complainings; how much indifference, what carnal motives, would have been witnessed and heard! From above, for him who has the vision of God, who has his eyes open, everything is beautiful. "I stand in doubt of you," says the apostle; and immediately after, "I have confidence in you, through the Lord." We must get up to Him, and we shall have His thoughts of grace, who sees the beauty of His people, of His assembly, through everything else, for it is beautiful. But for this, one would be either entirely discouraged or satisfied with evil. This vision of God removes these two thoughts at once.

We see the final judgment of the ships of Chittim (that is, of the west, north of the Mediterranean), and that of their chief, after he has afflicted Asshur and Eber also. It will be the terrible judgment of God at the end of this age.

A few words more on the position of Balaam. At the end of a dispensation based on any knowledge whatever of God, when faith is lost and profession retained, this last obtains a renown of which men glory (as now, of the name of Christianity). Satan uses it: power is sought from him. They go to meet enchantments; because, whilst glorying in the revealed name of God, they seek to satisfy their own lusts; and the importance of the name of God is tacked on to the work of the devil. However, God is acknowledged up to a certain point. They fear Him, and He may interfere; but the system is diabolical, under the name of the Lord, with a partial fear of the Lord, and a dread which recognises Him as an object of fear. The people of God are preserved; but it is a very solemn thought, and it is truly the history of the christian system. At last, the unhappy Balaam, whose heart was in the bond of iniquity, seeing that he cannot curse by the power of Satan, seeks to frustrate the blessing of God by leading the people into sin and idolatry. As

regards the people, he is but too successful. God sends chastisement; and, while the people are humbling themselves, the enormity of the evil excites the indignation of Phinehas, who, acting with an energy suitable to the circumstances, stops the plague and acquires a perpetual priesthood in his family.

Note #1

It is of the highest interest to see the special character of this prophecy. It is God who, of His own will, interferes to take the part of His people against the enemy, and that even without their knowing it, or asking for it. It is not, as almost all prophecies are, an appeal to the conscience of the people, accompanied by promises calculated to sustain the faith of the remnant in the midst of the gainsayers. The people know nothing about it; they are perhaps still murmuring in their tents (so beautiful in the eyes of him who had the vision of the Almighty) against the ways of God with them. It is God declaring His own thoughts and confounding the malice of Satan, the enemy He has to do with. That is the reason why this prophecy is so complete; presenting to us, in spirit, our whole portion (literally it is that of Israel, as in the fourth prophecy is evident), separation, justification, beauty in the eyes of God (all that corresponds with the presence of the Spirit of God), and the crown of glory in the coming of the Star of Jacob, of Christ Himself, in glory.

Numbers Chapter 26

The following commentary covers Chapters 26, 27, 28, and 29.

The journey being now ended, God numbers afresh His people, and counts them by name, as heirs ready to take possession of the inheritance. He has kept them through everything, and brought them as far as Canaan; their raiment even did not wax old. He settles the details of the inheritance, and appoints a leader in the room of Moses to introduce them into the land of promise. Chapter 26 presents us with the numbering.

In the beginning of chapter 27 are details upon the order according to which they were to inherit. Moses is favoured with a view of the land, and the people are placed under the conduct of Joshua to enter therein. Moses and Aaron had led them through the wilderness; but here it is a new scene, and

Joshua (as to the assembly, Christ in the power of His Spirit) is appointed to conquer the land. But he is dependent on the priesthood in his progress onward; as effectively the presence and the operations of the Holy Spirit are dependent on the presence of Christ in the holy place.

In chapters 28 and 29 we have the worship of the people, the sacrifices which are the meat of God. We shall dwell a little on these chapters. They are not the ways of God, and the gathering together the people to Himself, as in chapter 23 of Leviticus, but the offerings themselves as offered to God and especially those of sweet savour, made by fire, except that which was purely accessory. First, there are lambs for the regular daily service; that is, for that of the morning and evening, and, for that of the sabbath, two lambs; then, bullocks and goats also for the extraordinary feasts. The lamb has the most simple meaning; it is the constant presentation of the value of Christ and so of believers in Him, the true Lamb of God-the sweet savour of His sacrifice ascending continually, by day and by night; and when the true sabbath is come, its efficacy will only ascend more abundantly, as a matter of intelligence and application. This can be said as regards God Himself, as to the increased display of the fruit of the travail of the Saviour's soul. The bullocks seem to me to represent rather the energy of the devotedness of persons in their estimate of that sacrifice. It was the largest thing that could be offered: still having regard to the sacrifice of Christ and the price set upon it. The ram was always a victim of consecration, or of amends for some violation of the rights of consecration. As to the number of these two last kinds, there were in general two bullocks, a ram, and seven lambs; an additional bullock and ram the first day of the seventh month; one bullock, one ram, seven lambs the tenth of that month; and the decreasing number of the feast of tabernacles. It appears to me that all this gives the testimony of the worship rendered to God upon the earth.

Thus, when the testimony is renewed, when God revives the light which produces it, the first feast noticed here, the answer on the part of man is simple and perfect-the two bullocks (as there were two lambs on the sabbath day), the full and complete testimony to the devotedness of man, for two gave a valid testimony. The ram of consecration is the estimate of the sacrifice of Christ fully developed. Man being still down here, and sin not

out of question, the goat was added as an offering for sin. If the worship of the people was in connection with the resurrection of Christ (Num 28:17), it was the same thing; so in the case of the work of the Spirit in gathering together (Num 28:26). It was the exercise of power on the part of God which made an opportunity for worship; the answer on the part of the people was the same.

The first day of the seventh month had reference to the recall of Israel, which was a speciality, the renewal, according to the value of Christ's work, of God's connection with the earth, and especially with Israel. Hence besides the regular recognition of grace on the first of the month, an additional bullock, ram, and seven lambs were offered. The general testimony or answer to Christ's work was offered, but a special and partial one besides, for the earthly restoration of Israel. So on the day of atonement, when Israel, seeing the Lord, will be fully restored in grace. The general and complete testimony, when the resurrection of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, which allowed the Gentiles also to come in and thus extended to the, perfect testimony of the relations between God and man, produced, as thus witnessed in the offerings, an answer from below which fully recognised the good which God had done, and the relations established thereupon, in being to Him according to the sweet savour of Christ, either in consecration or in the intelligent estimate of the offering of Christ. The unction of the Spirit and joy accompanied it. And the offering took place all the seven days of the feast, a testimony to its completeness. In the former case, then, that is at the feast of the first day of the seventh month, there was one bullock added as witness of a special and peculiar (but at the same time partial) work, but the general testimony to the value of Christ's sacrifice on which it depended was maintained.

It is evident that the same principle applies to the tenth day of the seventh month. It is the application of the atonement of Christ to Israel on earth. But it was the simple apprehension of the worth of Christ's sacrifice; its proper value before God. The principle of consecration and the intrinsic value of the sacrifice remained the same.

The feast of tabernacles introduced another order of ideas, at least a new development of those ideas; it is the coming dispensation. There is no

perfection in that which is offered joyfully of one's own free will to God; but that is nearly realised-thirteen bullocks are offered. The millennium will bring upon earth a joy of worship and thanksgiving, which (Satan being bound, and the blessing of the reign of Christ being spread everywhere) will be, externally at least, almost perfect. The two rams manifest the testimony of abundant consecration, and perhaps outwardly the introduction of Jews and Gentiles (not consecrated in one body, but) adequate witnesses upon earth in a distinct manner of this consecration to God. Then the testimony of the perfectness of the work of Christ being full, upon earth, either for Israel or for the blessing of the Gentiles, its complete efficacy was manifested upon earth; and the question here is only about this manifestation upon earth (understood by faith, however). There were fourteen lambs. There is, however, declension in this devotedness of joy and testimony towards God; it does not cease from being complete, it is true; but its abundance gradually ceases to manifest itself as it did at the beginning. The thing, as established of God, remains in its perfection (Num 28:32). This was found in the seventh day, which completed the part purely earthly.

On the eighth day, we have only one bullock, one ram, and seven lambs. It was the counterpart of what was special to the day of atonement, and the first day of the seventh month: for, if this last designated Israel alone brought back to God, the eighth day, on the other hand, designates that which was outside earthly perfection, and the heavenly people apart. This, it seems to me, is the general idea of what the Spirit of God gives us in this passage.

Numbers Chapter 30

Chapter 30 is the case of the vows of women, which has reference also to the fate of Israel, who have indeed taken these vows upon themselves, in the hearing of God, and He has not disannulled them in His government here below; and Israel have continued responsible to the vow wherewith they have bound themselves, and of which, on the other hand, the precious Saviour has been obliged to take the burden upon Himself.

Numbers Chapter 31

War is found in the wilderness (though it is not characteristic of it) whenever we fall into the snares the enemy there lays for us. There are always conflicts in the heavenly places in order to the enjoyment of the things promised there. But in the wilderness it is patience which is in exercise. But if there be failure, if we fall into idolatry, if we commit fornication with the world by yielding to its baits, if in any way whatever we contract friendship with the world in the desert, we make wars for ourselves, without having even the advantage of acquiring, in this kind of warfare, any spiritual ground. God is obliged to make our relations with the world undergo a total change. If we had not formed intimacies with them, we should not have had that trouble; but, since as our friends they deceive us, we must become enemies. Having no relations whatever with them is our proper and peaceful position.

How often we must act the part of enemies with the world, because we have sought to have to do with them as friends, and they were a snare to our souls! However, God gives a complete victory as soon as we treat them as foes: only, all that seduced must be utterly destroyed. There must be nothing spared, no concession.

The Lord orders also concerning the joy resulting from the wars of His people with their enemies. He chooses whom He will for the war, and honours them; but He will also honour, in their place, those who have been left behind according to His sovereign will, and who have faithfully discharged the perhaps less arduous task allotted to them; but who have, however, done it according to His will. God Himself is also recognised there in the Levites and the priests.

Numbers Chapter 32

The following commentary covers Chapters 32 and 33.

There is another thing connected with this: if we have occasioned wars out of Canaan, it is also through the indispensable wars of the people of God against those who opposed their march through the wilderness, that they have acquired a good land, and, up to a certain point, rest, on this side Jordan, that river of death which serves as a boundary to the true land of promise. Having possessions down here to which the heart clings, the heart

clings also to the blessings which are on this side Jordan, to that measure of rest which the people of God have acquired out of Canaan. "Bring us not," they say, "over Jordan." Moses felt the bearing of this wish. If he could not enter the land, according to the government of God, his heart was there nevertheless. He recalls the contempt of the pleasant land at Kadesh-barnea, and severely rebukes Reuben and Gad.

However, the tribes engaging to go equally forward until the land were conquered, he grants their request and settles them in the land, with the half-tribe of Manasseh. Nevertheless, the history of the holy book shews us that these tribes were the first to suffer, and to fall into the hands of the Gentiles. "Know ye not," says Ahab, "that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and the Syrians possess it?" Happy they who patiently wait for the blessings of God, till they have gone over Jordan, and who, in the meanwhile, take patience for their portion, rather than the blessings which are on this side! Though they are the gifts of the providence of God, they are less secure; and even spiritual blessings, if the assembly take this world as the seat of them, though real, yet deceive the hopes of the saints. There are no frontiers like Jordan, appointed by God as such in His counsels of grace.

If God numbers His people name by name, He shews, at the same time, His government and His faithfulness; for, though He had kept them, as a people, yet there were none of the first numbering left, save Caleb and Joshua. He remembers, also, all their long journey through the wilderness; each stage is before His eyes and in His memory; and now He lays down, in principle, the possession of the land by the people, and the total destruction of the inhabitants, who were to be entirely driven away and not to abide in the midst of Israel: else those who were left would be a torment for the people, and God also would do unto Israel, as He had done to those nations. It is a dangerous charity, then, that which spares the enemies of God, or rather which spares itself, through unbelief, in its conflicts with them, and which is soon led to form with them connections that bring the judgment which those enemies have inherited, and themselves also deserved.

Numbers Chapter 34

The following commentary covers Chapters 34, 35, and 36.

Finally, God takes care of His people in all respects; He marks the limits of the country they were to enjoy. He settles the taking possession, the portion of His servants, the Levites, who were not to have any inheritance.

Six of their cities were to be refuges for those who had unintentionally committed murder; a precious type of God's dealings with Israel, who, in their ignorance, killed the Christ. In this sense, God judges them to be innocent. They are guilty of blood which they could not bear, but guilty in their ignorance, like Saul himself, who is a striking figure, as one born out of due time (ektroma, Co1 15:8), of this same position. Such a murderer, however, remains out of his possession until the death of the priest living in those days. And so it will be with regard to Israel. As long as Christ retains His actual priesthood above, Israel will remain out of their possession, but under the safe keeping of God. The servants of God at least, who have no inheritance, serve as a refuge to them, and understand their position, and recognise them as being under the keeping of God. When this priesthood above, such as it now is, ends, Israel will return into their possession. If they did before, it would be to pass over the blood of Christ, as if the shedding of it were no matter, and the land would be defiled thereby. Now, the actual position of Christ is always a testimony to this rejection, and of His death in the midst of the people. God maintains the inheritance, however, as He has appointed it (chap. 36).

This last part, then, of the book presents, not the passage itself through the desert, but the relationship between that position, and the possession of the promises and of the rest which follows. It is in the plains of Moab that Moses bore testimony, and a true testimony, to the perverseness of the people; but where God justified them, shewing His counsels of grace, in taking their side against the enemy, without even their knowledge, and pursued all the designs of His grace and of His determinate purpose for the complete establishment of His people in the land He had promised them. Blessed be His name! Happy are we in being allowed to study His ways!

DEUTERONOMY

Introduction to Deuteronomy

We now come to the book of Deuteronomy, a book full of interest in its moral warnings as to testimony, but presenting fewer subjects for interpretation and exegesis than those, the summary of which we have hitherto sought to give.

This book takes up Israel just on the borders of Canaan, and insists upon the faithful maintenance of their relationship with God, and on obedience to His commandments, as the only ground on which Israel can enter and continue therein, adding warnings as to the consequence of failure in obedience. It takes, in the main, the ground of their historical state (not of typical forms, presenting the thoughts of God, as the books we have just been considering do). [See Note #1]The body of it, after recalling the history of the wilderness, deals with the ordering of Israel in the land under God without a head on earth. The people are under responsibility to walk in obedience, with only God as their king and ruler. In immediate reference, the people are in enjoyment of the promised land under condition of obedience; but feasts, and such like ordinances, look forward to millennial times. At the end the distinction between possessing the land under condition of legal obedience, and by the grace which accomplishes its purpose in spite of failure is definitely brought out.

The book may be divided into three parts. The first eleven chapters insist upon obedience, presenting various motives to lead the people to it. Then come, as far as the end of the twenty-ninth? divers commandments; to which are added, by way of sanction, the consequences of obedience and the curse upon disobedience. From the thirtieth to the end we have things to come, the blessing of the people, and the death of Moses.

But this division requires more development, which will much aid our understanding of the book. The first part recounts their history, and this as insisting on the unity of an invisible God, their obligation to Jehovah who

has called them, through redemption, to be with Him. This closes with chapter 4, where three cities are secured for the two tribes and a half. Moses cannot enter into the land; Jehovah their God is a jealous God. They are placed under the covenant of Sinai, but He is a merciful God, and in their tribulation they can look to the God of their fathers. In chapter 5 all Israel are called to hear as to their present place, and put upon the basis of the covenant of Sinai-to observe it in the land into which they were going to possess it. The land had been promised, but they held it under the covenant of legal obedience, but on the basis of deliverance wrought by Jehovah out of Egypt. Him they were exclusively to serve, and He was a jealous God. They were to have no kind of connection with the nations found in the land. Further, we have the terms of the government of mercy, still of righteousness, established in Moses's second ascent of Sinai. Thus we have the government of God-His ways taken into account; and so the character of their ways and their object (chapter 8). If they did not give heed they would perish. This leads to recalling, in order to humble them, how they had failed all through in the desert. The second governmental covenant is referred to, and the Lord's love that had chosen them in pure grace, and that in spite of their failures, had already so largely blessed them. They must circumcise their hearts to serve Him and Him only: one only exclusive God, and a God of government. All is summed up hortatively in chapter 11. Over Jordan they were going, there they were to keep all that was commanded. Here Ebal and Gerizim are brought in. To the end of chapter 4 it is Israel outside Jordan; chapter 5 inside the land. The first part presents the one invisible Jehovah of Horeb, jealous but merciful, though His ways in general with the people are there too; the second, the covenant of the ten words with Jehovah, and His government on the ground of their responsibility.

Of the first eleven chapters, the first four form thus a rather distinct part.

That which strikes one in the first chapters is, the pains that Jehovah takes to present all possible motives to that poor people to lead them to obedience, in order that they may be blessed. These things, which ought at least to have touched the heart, served, alas! only to prove its hardness, and to shew that, if man is to be blessed, God must give him a new heart, as it is written in the chapter which closes the second part of His exhortations to

obedience: "Yet Jehovah hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day" (Deu 29:4).

Deuteronomy is, then, of all the books of Moses, that which is the most essentially conditional-that is to say, the first two divisions which I have pointed out.

Chapter 29, which is the last of the second division, ends, consequently, by saying, "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

The chapters which follow throw this into greater prominence, by unfolding the secret things which were to happen after the people had completely failed in the fulfilment of the law, as chapter 30, and, still more strikingly, chapter 32, by speaking of righteousness by faith. For the discussion as to righteousness by the law ended with chapter 29; and chapter 30 supposes the people in a position in which the securing of righteousness by the law was impossible, and where there could only be question of the spirit and end of the law, in the counsels of God.

Now, Christ was the end of it, and it is thus the apostle applies the passage (Romans 10). It is interesting also to see that the Lord always quotes Deuteronomy in answering Satan. He put Himself on the true ground where Israel stood, in order to possess and keep the land; being not only the faithful man, but the Jew, the true Son called out of Egypt, put to the test as to His faithfulness, in the conditions under which the people were placed by Deuteronomy.

Note #1:

After Genesis and the earlier chapters of Exodus, there is very little of which the object is historical in the previous books of Moses. And even in Genesis and the beginning of Exodus principles and types are the most important aspect of what is related. As to the history of Israel the apostle tells us this expressly in Co1 10:11. And this appreciation of the character of these books greatly aids us in understanding them. There is no proof that one sacrifice was offered possibly the fixed ones were; but Amos, quoted by Stephen,

would say the contrary. Those born in the wilderness were not circumcised, and could not rightly keep the passover.

Deuteronomy Chapter 1

Deuteronomy 1:1

deu 1:1

The following commentary covers Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Let us examine a little more closely these chapters, which shew the pains the Spirit took, to set before the eyes of the people all the motives which could induce them to walk faithfully in the career which now lay before them.

He begins with the narrative of what had occurred since the sojourn of the children of Israel at Sinai; and Moses reminds them of the commandment to leave that place and to go to the mount of the Amorites, [See Note #1] to go up and possess the land. They get there, and, discouraged by the spies, they will not go up; then, trying to do so without God, they are smitten before their enemies. Passing by the borders of Esau and Moab, God gives them the land of Sihon and of Og. We learn too here that, though sanctioned by God, the sending the spies was the effect of unbelief among the people-an instructive lesson. God may allow, and so far sanction a course, wise humanly, in His ways-His government, which yet bears the fruit of the unbelief which is at the root of it. In a word, Moses recalls to them, in general, what had taken place in the journey which led to their entrance into the land of which they are to take possession-the patience and the goodness of God.

In reminding them of Horeb, he insists on the privilege they had enjoyed in nearness to God, who Himself had spoken to them out of the midst of the fire, when they saw no similitude; on the authority of the word-its majesty-excluding thus all thought of idolatry. He shews them that all that were of full age had perished, as a consequence of their unbelief; that he himself could not enter into that good land; that God is a jealous God, a consuming fire; and that, if they made any graven image, they would utterly perish from off the land they were about to enter, and would be scattered amongst the

nations and left to serve the gods they had loved; that, nevertheless, they should find God if they sought Him with all their heart, for He is a merciful God, who would not forsake them; that if Sinai had been the brightness of His majesty, it was also true that such a God of majesty had never vouchsafed to come so near to a people, elect and chosen for their fathers' sakes. Such is the basis of the government of this people.

Moses sets apart three cities of refuge, as a token of possession, on the part of God, of what was on this side Jordan. These four chapters are introductory.

Note #1

It is interesting to put together the second and third verses. For an eleven days' journey Israel took forty years. Alas! how often is it thus with us, owing to our unfaithfulness.

Deuteronomy Chapter 5

The following commentary covers Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

In chapter 5 Moses reminds them of the ten commandments given in Horeb; and it is to be remarked, that the deliverance out of Egypt (not the rest of God after the work of creation) is the reason he gives for the sabbath: it became a sign of His covenant with Israel (compare Ezek. 20). These were the basis of a regular covenant; and God here, as we have seen, governs the people in the land of promise according to their responsibility, as a jealous God. Mercy, beyond law, only comes in in chapter 30. There had been mercy (chap. 10) in giving them back the law, and placing them under sparing mercy Still. These chapters give us the great principles of God's government in the land; chapters 12-29 the terms of it.

He reminds them of their fear in the presence of the Lord engages them, in chapter 6, to love God with all their heart, and exhorts them to remember His words in every way, and to keep them, when they should enjoy the land, having nothing to do with other gods. When they should have cast out their enemies, as Jehovah had spoken, and when their children should ask the meaning of the ordinances, they were to tell them of the deliverances and of the signs wrought in Egypt.

They were to destroy every vestige of false gods, being a people holy to Jehovah. Nor did God set His love upon them on account of their own importance, but because of the election and love of God. He assures them that their faithfulness would also be the channel of blessing, for God would recompense them according to their ways. Neither ought they to fear, after all the signs they had seen. Thus they were a people separate to Jehovah. As to Him all was sovereign grace, but sure faithfulness. As to them the ground they were on was the government of God; hence all then depended on their holding fast to Jehovah, and faithful obedience.

Deuteronomy Chapter 8

The following commentary covers Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11.

In chapter 8, in the most instructive and touching language as to the care God had taken of them, while keeping them in dependence, and His object in doing so, he also brings to mind the dealings of God with them by the way, [See Note #1] as a motive; and how God had humbled and had exercised them, lest, through the enjoyment of the blessings of the good land into which He was bringing them, they should be puffed up (for it was God who gave them the needed strength); that otherwise God would destroy them, as He had destroyed the nations. On the other hand (chap. 9), He reminds them of their continual perverseness, in order to shew them that it was not on account of their righteousness, but because of the wickedness of the nations, that God drove them out before them. [See Note #2] This he applies to them (chap 10), reminding them that God had renewed the tables of the law, urging them to circumcise their hearts, to care for the stranger, remembering how God had enlarged them since they went down as strangers to Egypt.

Then, in chapter 11, he brings to their remembrance the judgments upon the Egyptians, and those upon Dathan and Abiram; and declares to them the beauty and excellency of the land into which they are about to enter, a land upon which the eyes of Jehovah ever rested; [See Note #3] and, lastly, he puts before them the blessing and the curse which there awaited them, according to their conduct, when brought in; charging them to keep carefully the commandments of the Lord, and to teach them to their

children. And it is added, that, by keeping the commandments of God, they would be able to take possession, according to the full extent of the promise. But here all depends on their obedience to this conditional covenant which made them Jehovah's, whose exclusively they were to be; sovereign restoring grace does not come till chapter 30.

Note #1

See particularly Deu 8:2-4; Deu 8:15-16.

Note #2

It is important to keep this in mind. Israel was the rod in God's hand to get rid of intolerable evil. Therefore also they were not to spare.

Note #3

The terms in which this is expressed present a perfectly beautiful contrast between the carefulness of man in seeking for blessing, and the grace from above.

Deuteronomy Chapter 12

The following commentary covers Chapters 12 and 13.

The second division begins with chapter 12, and contains the statutes and ordinances they were bound to observe. It is not a repetition of the old ordinances, but what specially referred to their conduct in the land, that they might keep it and be blessed in it. It is a covenant, or the conditions of their relationship with God, and of the enjoyment of His promises, added to what had been said before (see Deu 29:1).

The ordinances tended in general to this, that they were a people belonging to Jehovah, and that they were to give up every other relationship in order to be His; and keep themselves from all that could seduce them to form such relationships, or defile them in those which they had with Jehovah. At the same time, directions are given as to the details of the maintenance of those relationships. One thing specially characterises this part: a fixed place where Jehovah would put His name to which they were to go up to worship. But in all this, and in the whole book, this point is treated as a question of a

direct relationship of the people itself with God. The priests are, in general, mentioned, more as being the objects of the care of the people when in the land, according to ordinances already given. The people were to behave in such-and-such a way towards them; but the relationship is immediate between the people and God.

The first principle laid down to confirm these relationships is the choice of a place as the centre of their exercise. They were to go thither with all their offerings; they might eat flesh elsewhere-without the blood; but the consecrated things could only be eaten in the place chosen of God. They were not to forget the Levites. They were not even to inquire about the ways of those who had been driven out of the land. If the signs of a prophet, who would entice them to serve other gods, came to pass, or if a relative, or the beloved of their souls, enticed them, such were to be put to death; if any of a city, the whole city was to be reduced to a heap of stones. No relationship with any but with the true God was to be allowed-no forbearance toward that which ensnared them to follow another.

Deuteronomy Chapter 14

The following commentary covers Chapters 14 and 15.

Chapter 14 forbids that the people, as being the children of the living God, should imitate the profane customs which indicated the devotedness of idolaters to the impure beings they worshipped. God had chosen Israel for Himself. Neither were they to defile themselves by eating abominable things. They were a holy people. The tithes and all the firstfruits were to be offered to God.

Thus consecrated, each one might eat them in the place where God had put His name. The same command had been given (chap. 12) with regard to the place where they were to be eaten, with the addition that the children, menservants, and maidservants, might partake of them, applying it also to the vows, the free-will-offerings and the heave-offering. These ordinances are very remarkable. [See Note #1] Another, found at the end of chapter 14, may be added here. The tithe of the third year was to be laid up within their gates, and the Levite, the fatherless, and the stranger, were to come and eat of it; and he who did thus would be blessed of Jehovah in all the work of his

hands. Here everything was sanctified, as having been presented to Jehovah. There was thus the recognition, on the one hand, that the people were His, on the other, that all they had was of Him; but in giving Him back what He had given them, they enjoyed, in fellowship with Him, and their families, the things common to God and the people, given by Him, offered to Him, and enjoyed in His presence in communion one with another, God Himself partaking of them, for the whole was offered to Him. It was not here the priests opening out a way for the people to draw near to God: God was honoured by the offering. God enjoyed the piety of the people, and the people themselves offered with joy. Seated before God Himself, in the joy of communion with Him, as at the same table, it was the people who enjoyed the privilege.

In the case of the tithe of the third year, it is not the family joy of the people with God, but rather the grace that brought enjoyment to those who were strangers or in want, and to the servants of God who had no inheritance. It was within their gates that this took place. They had the privilege of acting in grace from Jehovah, in communicating to His poor what He had given them. They did not go to the house of Jehovah, but they invited the widow, the orphan, and the Levite, to their house to rejoice, and Jehovah blessed them. The immediate relationship of the people with God in family fellowship and in grace here is very remarkable. The priests are out of the scene; the Levites being the objects of the liberality of the people, as having no inheritance (compare Deu 12:19).

Chapter 15 teaches each one among the people to consider with liberality and grace their poor brethren (this consideration being besides made sure to them by the year of release, which applied to debts and to the Hebrew slaves). The dependence of him, who thus respected Jehovah in His poor, was to be placed in God, who would bless him in thus acting according to His commandment; for the poor were His poor.

Note #1

It is generally explained that there was a double tithe; that is, that this does not refer to the regular tithe paid to the Levites, as ordered in the other places in the law, and that the Levitical tithes remained as they were

according to the previous prescriptions of the law; and it is to be remarked they were to be locally paid to the Levites, not where Jehovah had placed His name. Two years they carried the different offerings to the place chosen of Jehovah, and ate and rejoiced, but the third, invited the Levite and the poor at home. gives us historically all these different tithes and offerings; only it appears that, the ten tribes being in rebellion and apostasy, pious people carried the Levitical tithes to Jerusalem. Amo 4:4 shews. there was some special habit of tithing every third year, then at Bethel. At any rate what characterises Deuteronomy is their enjoying God's goodness together, and making the poor enjoy it with them, Levites and strangers; while priests, though named, are on these points wholly ignored (see Deu 12:6-7; Deu 12:11-12; Deu 12:17-18; Deu 14:22-28). The priests' portion is in Deu 18:3-4. But firstlings and firstfruits in chapter 12 are not the same word; nor is Deu 14:23. But the whole tone of Deuteronomy is fellowship and enjoyment only before the Lord, not priestly or altar service.

Deuteronomy Chapter 16

Chapter 16 connects the people with the dwelling-place of Jehovah, by solemnities in which He surrounds Himself with His people, blessed and happy in the deliverance which He has granted them under His reign.

It gives us three solemn feasts-the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The spirit of each of these feasts suggests a few remarks. The Passover recalled deliverance, deliverance from bondage in Egypt [See Note #1] -for us under sin and Satan. The unleavened bread, truth in the inward parts, was here the bread of affliction. The knowledge of Christ, or the application of Christ to the heart, though coupled with deliverance and salvation, when it takes the form of repentance (and this is the case, when the question is of remembering one's deliverance), has always something bitter in it. Joy is not the point here. One has gone out in haste, by the mighty arm of God; and if one is happy, it is only as having escaped, feeling that it is through the power of God alone, and conscious of the state which required it all. They ate it during the night, and every one returned in the morning to his tent. They went home with the sense of the goodness of God, with the sense that it was a deliverance from the evil under which they had been by their own fault and to their own ruin.

Holiness is presented in repentance and deliverance from the power of evil, under the form of conscience and judgment of sin; it is an obligation. One dares not remain any longer in evil. They were cut off if leaven was found in the house; whereas this holiness is in itself the joy of the redeemed. They were bound to keep the feast wherever God should put His name. God gathered the people around His dwelling-place, and linked them with His name and with Himself. [See Note #2] Their nationality and all their recollections were connected with the worship of Jehovah. It was another safeguard against idolatry (Deu 16:5-7).

Seven weeks having elapsed, the people were again to gather around Jehovah. They numbered seven weeks from the time they began to put the sickle to the corn, from the day they began to reap the fruit of the land of promise. They waited for the perfect time of the work of God. That which first of all characterised this feast was, that every one offered a free-will-offering, according to the blessing wherewith Jehovah his God had blessed him. It is the Holy Spirit, and the blessing flowing from Him, which this type presents to us. It is not only redemption, but the power of the things which are the result of it-not in full, however; they were only firstfruits offered to God. The presentation of these firstfruits to God is the effect of the power of the Holy Ghost. They are the remnant of Israel, historically in the beginning of Christianity, on the principle of redemption and of the new covenant; but, in fact, Christians themselves become the firstfruits of the creation of God. But the effect produced by the Holy Spirit, the effect of His presence in general, is that which characterises this feast. There was no mention of free-will-offerings at the passover; they ate in haste and returned home. But the Holy Spirit has made the renewed heart willing; and according to the enjoyment of the fruits of the promise-according to the measure of the blessing of the Spirit of God, it can and will render to God the firstfruits of the heart, and of all that He has given us. Therefore (and it is what always accompanies this free-will-fruit of the Holy Spirit) they were to rejoice in the presence of Jehovah their God.

The fruits of grace and of the Spirit manifest themselves in joy and in grace. [See Note #3] Blessing manifests itself in the spirit of blessing, in the joy and the good-will of grace. Blessed and precious results! Joy, and the desire for

the joy of others, always flow from grace, known according to the power of the Spirit of God. Thus the worshipper, his son and his daughter, his manservant and his maidservant, the Levite within his gates, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, were to rejoice together in the place where Jehovah had set His name. God surrounded Himself with joy, the fruit of grace and of His blessing. The remembrance of having been themselves bondmen was to touch the heart and influence the conduct of Israel; and by comprehending the grace which had delivered them when they were in that condition, they were to be led to act in grace towards those who were bondmen to them. They are admonished, at the same time, to observe the statutes of Jehovah; for the presence of the Holy Spirit, whilst ministering joy, leads to watchfulness and obedience. We enjoy the earnest and the firstfruits before God; but still it is down here, where watchfulness and restraint are needed.

When the ingathering of the harvest and vintage were ended (that is, God having gathered in His own, hidden them in His garner, and trodden His enemies in the winepress), then came the Feast of Tabernacles; a feast, the antitype of which we have not, it is certain, yet seen. Although all the effects of the Passover and Pentecost are not yet accomplished, yet they have been fulfilled as to the event marked by them; but there has been as yet no fulfilment of the Feast of Tabernacles. This will take place when Israel, restored to their land after the end of this dispensation, will fully enjoy the effect of the promise of God. Consequently joy is put in the foreground, whilst in that which prefigured the presence of the Holy Ghost upon earth the free-will-offering came first.

This feast was to be kept during seven consecutive days. It is joy, full and complete joy; not according to the measure of the blessing, as in Pentecost, but because God had blessed them in all the works of their hands: therefore they certainly ought to rejoice. The spirit of that day belongs to us, although the fulfilment of it has not yet taken place. [See Note #4] There is a joy that manifests itself in us in connection with the measure of the present effect of the presence of the Holy Spirit, a joy which requires watchfulness and to walk in the narrow way, and in which the remembrance of our former condition strengthens in us the spirit of grace towards others, and the presence of the

Lord is specially marked. There is a joy known to the heart, although the things which cause it have not yet had their accomplishment, a joy connected with the time of rest, when labour will be ended, and when there will no longer be any need of vigilance, nor of the remembrance of our misery, to urge us to share our blessings with others. The feast itself will suffice for the joy of all: "Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast." The Lord recalls the great principle of the three feasts, namely, to appear before Jehovah three times in a year, bringing offerings to Jehovah.

[Note: Deu 16:18-22 is discussed in the next chapter.]

Note #1

Egypt signifies properly the flesh, but that involves sin and Satan.

Note #2

This we have seen was part of Deuteronomical worship.

Note #3

This also characterises Deuteronomical worship.

Note #4

But it is to be remarked here, that in the account of tabernacles in this chapter, there is no reference to an eighth day as elsewhere. All refers properly to Israel placed in the land in present responsibility, but with promise of yet better things under the new covenant. To us it is anticipatively the eighth day, that great day of the feast. See John 7 where we get what to us is now in the place of the feast, connected with the glory of a rejected, but exalted, Christ-the outflowing fulness of the Holy Ghost.

Deuteronomy Chapter 17

Verse 18 [from Chapter 16] (Deu 16:18) begins a new subject: the pains taken, and the instruments used, to preserve the blessing and execute the judgments necessary to that effect. The thought is still to maintain the people in relationship with God alone. They were to appoint judges and officers in their gates. Whatever led to idolatry was forbidden; he who enticed them to it was to be stoned (chap. 17). If the matter were too hard,

they were to come to the priests and the judges, and the people were to abide by their judgment.

The case of the people desiring a king is anticipated; and they are told that he must be of the people, and not act so as to open the way for intercourse with Egypt, nor so as to lead the people to idolatry; but he is to write a copy of the book of the law with his own hand, and read therein all the days of his life, being subject to it, so as not to despise his brethren.

Deuteronomy Chapter 18

The priests and the whole tribe of Levi have their portion assigned to them. The people are forbidden to do after those abominations, on account of which the nations which inhabited the land were driven out before Israel, inquiring of those who used divination. Jehovah would raise up a prophet like unto Moses, unto whom the people should hearken. These ordinances foresee in the people the lack of the faith needful in order to walk simply with the Lord. Christ is the true and only answer. They were not to fear a prophet who gave a sign which did not come to pass, for Jehovah had not spoken by him.

One word here as to the portion of the priests. First, the normal condition of the people was that of being guided by the priests, and, in case of need, by judges raised up in an extraordinary way; and to abide under the keeping of God in the land, enjoying His blessing. It was, properly speaking, theocracy. The laws of God directed the people; they enjoyed the blessing of God; and the priests settled any questions which arose, a judge being raised up in exceptional cases. The priests are introduced here in connection with that which was necessary to the enjoyment of the land, not as a means of drawing near to God. Consequently, they were there to fulfil their ministry before God, and a certain portion belonged to them.

The king was only thought of in the case when the people would ask one, in order to be like the nations; and in that case he was to remain, as much as possible, simple in the midst of Israel, that the law of God might have its full authority. The people are always accounted to be themselves responsible before God, and enjoying the land under this responsibility, though for that reason subject to the decisions of the priests. They had the land from God.

The position spoken of here is not that of drawing near to Him, but acknowledging His deliverance and His goodness, as in the feasts which we have considered. Thus he who went up to the place which Jehovah had chosen ate with his family, and sometimes with the Levite, the stranger, etc., the tithes [See Note #1] of each year (in the third year there were some for the Levite and the poor), the firstling of the herd and of the flock, the vows, the free-will-offerings, and the heave-offerings, all before Jehovah. But at the same time that they offered them to Jehovah, the offerer partook of the enjoyment of them (see Deu 14:23; Deu 14:28-29; Deu 12:7; Deu 12:11-12; Deu 12:17); whilst, in chapter 18 the priest had a certain portion of the sacrifice, the firstfruit of the corn, of the wine, and the oil, and the first of the fleece of the sheep.

The first part of these ordinances is so much the more remarkable that in the book of Numbers (chap. 18), the firstborn, [See Note #2] the heave-offerings, all sorts of offerings for sin, and the meat-offerings, are given to the priests, and the tithes to the Levites. But these are assumed, not reordained here, that the true character of Deuteronomic worship may be maintained, rejoicing before Jehovah in the enjoyment of what He gives, not drawing near to Him in the holiest.

We may remark here the difference between that which was in this case for the priests, and that which in Deuteronomy the people are to eat of before the Lord, and in the other books what is given to the priests. We have already pointed out the difference of position. In the three preceding books, what is brought before the mind is drawing near to God, and the priests alone are looked upon as able to do this; and thus, in the relationship of priests, they ate in the holy place all that was offered. They alone were near God, and that which was offered to God (according to the force of the word, [See Note #3] that which was brought near to God) was theirs, as being near. They were all as one company in the camp, and the whole was essentially typical.

Thus all the arrangements of the tabernacle were made for a people who found themselves in the wilderness-strangers there; and it is to be observed that Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, never speaks of anything but the tabernacle, never of the temple. The relationship he speaks of is that of

pilgrims with God. It is no longer thus in Deuteronomy. There the dwelling of the people in the land of promise is considered; and, consequently, the people are accounted, not as needing to learn how to draw near to God, [See Note #4] but as enjoying, from God, the effect of His promise in His presence and before Him, so that the people are directly concerned in the sacrifices. They are in the enjoyment of the promises, in the presence of God, and they realise, in the communion of Jehovah, all the means through which it is enjoyed, and they partake, in communion, of all that is devoted to Him, as a sign of the redemption through which this enjoyment was procured for them.

It is otherwise with regard to the firstfruits of the land-that which it yields. Enjoying those fruits of the goodness of God, the people gave Him back the firstfruits, as a testimony that all came from Him, and that all was His, and that His grace had communicated it to them (see chap. 26). Therefore the firstfruits were not for the people to eat: they offered them to God, and ate of all the rest. It was the recognition of God, while sharing His blessings. The firstfruits then were offered to God, and thus fell into the hands of the priests as their portion.

Note #1

See note in chapters referred to; they were second tithes, not Levitical ones. The people never paid tithes to the priests; but to the Levites at home, they to the priests. The tithes of the third year (not Levitical) were eaten at home. We have nothing of Levitical tithes in Deuteronomy.

Note #2

Firstborn males. See notes to chapters 12 and 14.

Note #3

The word translated "an offering" (that is, corban) comes from a word which means "to draw near," and, in the form Hiphil (causative active form), "to bring near."

Note #4

This very important difference characterises the book. It is no question how near we can get to the holiest, to God Himself, but communion in the enjoyment of all the fruits of His promise in His presence and in the spirit of grace. It is not wilderness connection with God, a yet deeper principle of connection with Him.

Deuteronomy Chapter 19

The following commentary covers Chapters 19, 20, and 21.

Chapter 19 opens with ordinances which contemplate the people in possession and enjoyment of the land; they were to observe them, that the land might not be defiled, and that the people might walk in the strength of Jehovah.

Three cities of refuge are appointed, and he who kills his neighbour, without hating him, is distinguished from the murderer: an important principle, as to the fate of the Jewish nation, which makes' a distinction between those who have taken a voluntary part in the death of the Lord, or who afterwards heartily approve the deed, and those who have done it ignorantly. The regulations of righteousness also against false witnesses are given here. In chapter 20 we have the ordinances relative to war.

In chapter 21 we have three interesting cases, because of the principles which apply to the ways of God with Israel: the case of the man found slain; that of the child of the hated wife; and that of the rebellious son. The land of Jehovah must be kept pure. Israel will have to make this confession in the latter days, and to clear themselves of the blood of Messiah. If the case of the two wives applies to Israel upon earth, it applies still more closely to Christ (Head of the Gentiles) and the assembly with whom He will inherit all things, although upon earth Israel be the wife beloved. However, Israel, as a rebellious son under the old covenant, is condemned and cut off; as regards the redeemed, the curse of the law has fallen upon another. Those who read the Bible are too well acquainted with the application of the end of this chapter to make it needful for me to dwell upon it. The point here under consideration is the defiling of the land, which Jehovah had given for an inheritance to the people; the hardness of heart of the priests in applying the precept under the circumstances is appalling, yet natural.

I will now briefly sum up the subjects we have looked at from Deu 16:18. We have the means, in point of authority, employed of God to maintain the people in His ways, and in the knowledge of His will, that they might enjoy the land in peace. Judges and officers were to be appointed, and to judge with uprightness. The priest and the judge, raised up in an extraordinary manner, were to communicate, in case of need, the judgment and will of God, and the people were to obey them. In case the people wished for a king, directions are given respecting his conduct. Directions are given for those Levites who should devote themselves to the service of Jehovah, in the place chosen by Him as His dwelling-place. The people, seeking to know the will of God, were not to consult diviners. Jehovah would raise up a prophet. Afterwards there is provision made to keep the land from being polluted with blood; the elders of the city were to take knowledge of the deed, whether the slayer had killed without set purpose. The cities of refuge present a beautiful type of the state of Israel, as to their sin, in having killed the Lord Jesus, whether ignorantly (as the grace of God looks upon it with regard to those who repent), or knowingly (as perseverance in rejecting Him would be the proof of): this is the principle upon which God will judge them. So, in this last point of view, the people were placed under the searching severity of the law. In chapter 20 provision is made to reconcile any war that might arise with the enjoyment of the land and the blessing of God, either individually or in case of conquest; and directions are given to secure the presence of the power of God, and to shew how the enemies were to be treated according to the mind of God; all mercy towards the nations of Canaan being prohibited, in order that Israel might not learn the abominations they were guilty of. Chapter 21 gives another provision for preventing the land from defilement by blood, while declaring (as elsewhere) that life belongs to God-that, when His rights are infringed, He will not wink at it. We cannot fail to see that the blood of Christ is, above all, that of which Israel is here (chap. 21) guilty (see Psalm 51), and the blood of Jesus is the only atonement for the sin which shed it. The elders excuse themselves by pleading their ignorance of what had been done. The same thing will take place with regard to Israel. So pleads also Paul. However, there is nothing but the blood of the heifer which never bore the yoke that can wipe away sin. Thus will the guilt of innocent blood be taken from off

the people. The following directions are indeed practical directions for Israel; but they seem to me to contain, at the same time, some of God's principles towards His people. Thus Israel upon earth, and the assembly in heaven, have both been the true firstborn, whom God will not disinherit. And the rebellious son presents also Israel in final disobedience to God.

Deuteronomy Chapter 22

The following commentary covers Chapters 22, 23, 24, and 25.

Chapter 22 appears to contain ordinances to guard the people from want of benevolence and mercy, and of that which would offend the sensibilities of nature, either with regard to tenderness or purity. So also all mixture was forbidden in ploughing or sowing. We find the same with regard to women: they were protected against the dishonour done to them by a brutish, inconsiderate husband; whilst impurity was punished with death.

Thus (chap. 23) the people are taught what sentiments became them, according to God, with reference to the nations (taking the ways and doings of those nations into consideration) in case of war. They are also instructed in what was proper, as to the purity of the camp in case of war, seeing God was there. So with regard to all sorts of things, such as the slave that was escaped from his master; things morally impure; even the neighbour's vineyard; and (chap. 24) a more serious thing, divorce, and everything relative to it; delicacy towards the poor, the hire of labourers, the gleaning for the poor. The spirit of all these ordinances is very instructive, and the goodness and the tenderness of God, who deigns to take knowledge of all these things, and to teach His people delicacy, propriety, consideration for others, sensitiveness, and those feelings which, by removing brutality, and softening the hardness of the heart of man, fashion his ways according to that love with which the Spirit of God clothes Himself when He acts in the heart of man. Here, it is true, everything is imperfect. There are things taken for granted here, which form the basis of these ordinances, which the full operation of the Spirit of Christ would entirely take away; divorce, for instance, and other things endured; owing their existence to the hardness of man's heart. But the limitations and conditions, assigned by the law of God,

keep in check the wickedness of that will which hardens itself, while it oppresses others.

Chapter 25 adds ordinances which are a continuation of what we have already read; taking care that none of their brethren should be dishonoured in their eyes, and that no family should perish from among the people (there being, at the same time, the maintenance of purity and uprightness).

As to the inveterate enemies of God and His people, Israel was never to seek peace with them. Human amiability is often enmity with God. This ordinance is so much the more remarkable, because it follows so many others which made provision for kindness, even to a bird.

Jehovah had taken care that an Egyptian should find the entrance into the assembly of God; but those affections were to be in exercise towards the Egyptians for the good of the souls of the Israelites themselves. They were not to harden their hearts against those in whose midst they had sojourned. But to spare the Amalekites (who came to meet Israel to shut up their way and destroy the feeble ones among them) was to forget what was due to God, who brought them back; and, as regarded the people, it would have proved indifference of heart to evil, and not the effusion of a natural affection; neither was it yielding to remembrances, with which charity might mingle for good, by a becoming forgetfulness of wrongs formerly received. [See Note #1] Where there is nobleness of sentiment, men who know (though they have injured) each other, still will own one another when the evil is over.

But there is a spirit which claims nothing but disgust: to tolerate it is only sparing oneself, and admitting that very spirit into one's heart so as to partake of it. What is in question is not judging, but the state of one's own heart. The distance of an Egyptian from God was recognised; but if he were in relationship with Him during three generations, why should he be kept at a distance? why should he remain a stranger? But Amalek did not fear God—did not recognise Him. What then could be recognised in such a nation? We must bring God into our affairs—our relationships; and charity, firmness, justness in our judgments, will each find its place, and be reproduced in all our ways.

Note #1

The Egyptians were merely that in which Israel was held naturally. The Amalekites were positive active enemies against them when the redeemed people of God. One was really man, though fallen man without God-I honour all men; the other, the positive direct power of the enemy.

Deuteronomy Chapter 26

To close this succession of ordinances, we have (chap. 26) a most beautiful picture of the worship consequent on the enjoyment of the land according to the promises of God, a picture full of instruction for us too. First, we find the main subject of this book appears as everywhere else: Israel is in the land which God had given him for an inheritance. But, as to worship, it is not looked at here in the light of drawing near to God in the holy place, by means of sacrifices which, supposing sin, opened the way for the people into the presence of Jehovah. This characterises the whole book. Then the question was, could they, or how far could they, or how near could they or the priests-draw near to Jehovah in the sanctuary of His holiness. What Deuteronomy presents is, while acknowledging their previous state, the festal enjoyment of the effect of all the promises, only as coming from, and they themselves identified with Jehovah. (So in chaps. 12 and 14). [See Note #1] They enjoy the promise, and present themselves as worshippers, giving thanks as enjoying it. In presenting the firstfruits of the land of promise, they were to go up to the place where the Lord had placed His name. What then was the spirit of that worship?

First, it was based on the open confession that they were in the full enjoyment of the effect of the promise of God. "I profess this day unto Jehovah that I am come unto the country which Jehovah sware unto our fathers to give us." That is the first feature of that worship-the full profession of being in the enjoyment of the effect of the promise. It was the acknowledgment of the faithfulness of God in the present communion of His goodness. Thereupon the offering was presented.

Then, in the presence of Jehovah, the worshipper made confession of the redemption and deliverance of the people. A Syrian, ready to perish, was his father; and afterwards, when his children, oppressed by the Egyptians, cried

unto Jehovah, Jehovah had heard and delivered them with an outstretched arm, and had, by a display of His power, brought them up into the land they were enjoying.

The second feature, then, is the confession of what their misery had been, of their impotency in time past, and that their redemption has been accomplished by Jehovah alone, to whom they were indebted for all these blessings. Thereupon the worshipper directly addresses Jehovah, presenting Him with the firstfruits of those blessings. It was the recognition of God in the blessings (the infallible effect of a work of God in the heart), and the only means of truly enjoying them; for God's blessings turn the heart away from Him, if their first effect is not to turn it to Him. That is the history of Israel, and a thousand times alas! in the details of life, that of our own hearts. A pious heart acknowledges God Himself in the blessing, before enjoying it. See a beautiful example in the conduct of Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, sent to fetch a wife for Isaac.

Then it is added, "And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which Jehovah thy God hath given unto thee." They were to enjoy them with God; and, consequently, observe here, that in this the spirit of grace manifests itself at once: "Thou, the Levite, and the stranger that is within thy gate." It is impossible truly to rejoice in the blessing of God before Him, without the spirit of grace being present-without returning blessing for cursing, knowing that we are called to inherit His blessing. The same truth is found again in the tithes of the third year, given to the poor, the Levite, &c., according to the spirit which we have just spoken of. Another feature of the state of heart of the true worshipper was holiness in consecrating to Jehovah, with uprightness of heart, that which was due to Him according to grace. He was not to be robbed in anything for appropriation to oneself: nothing was to be profaned by applying it to self-to defiled or interested uses. In a word, the conscience was good as regarded consecration to Jehovah, in the things by which the worshipper acknowledged Him as the true and sole Author of all the blessings. And if Jehovah was the Author of them, communion with Him, in acknowledging Him, was enjoyed in the spirit of holiness, of consecration to Him, and in the spirit of goodness and grace that was in Him towards His poor and forsaken ones. The character of God is introduced again and again,

and His name brought in, in that which is recognised in the communion of His people; if overlooked, the people were guilty and defiled, in that they had profaned the name of the Lord. This consecration in purity to God, and this expression of His goodness, are singularly beautiful. Then the blessing of God was implored not only upon oneself, from God who cared for all His people, but upon all Israel, upon the land which was the proof of the faithfulness of God and of the riches of His goodness.

This chapter is of great importance, and a kind of summing up of the spirit proposed of God in the whole book: it is the last chapter of the body of its contents. It refers to no promises to Abraham, Isaac, etc., but takes the history of Israel from Jacob's going down into Egypt, a Syrian ready to perish; oppressed in Egypt they cried to the God of their fathers, historically so known (not the promises), and they were delivered with great signs, and Jehovah had brought them into that good land where they were, and they brought the firstfruits of the land Jehovah had given them. It was the acknowledgment of the possession of blessing in the land given by Jehovah through grace. This was their worship; and they, and Levites, and strangers rejoiced together there in all the good Jehovah had given. They did so also, when they had given to fatherless, widows, Levites, strangers, the tithes of the third year, which were eaten within their gates, they declare their cleanness and uprightness; there had been no profanation, but obedience in all things as to their ordinances; and thereupon an appeal to God for blessing on the people and the land. The land possessed, its firstfruits offered to Jehovah; then comes rejoicing in all the good Jehovah gave; then fellowship in grace with all in need every third year, and with this, avowal of purity of ways, thoroughness in doing it, and obedience, and so a blessing looked for. It is a picture of the true state of the people with Jehovah, and in the land, and walking uprightly, considering the needy, that the blessing might rest upon them; and on this ground they now entered into covenant with Jehovah to possess and enjoy the land in obedience, and be fully blessed and exalted. This worship was, then, a bond between the people and God, in the communion of what He was; that is, a bond in worship by acknowledging what He was; and by bearing witness to it. Thus, according to the commandments of Jehovah, looked at as the conditions of this bond,

God had that day acknowledged the people, and the people had acknowledged Jehovah for their God. This closes the teaching of the book.

Note #1

These two characters of worship, the wilderness worshipper's approach to Jehovah, and the enjoyment of promises in the land, are not separated for Christians as they are in these books, because we have entered into, and are in, the holiest, in heavenly places, and the things we enjoy are the things that are there. It is all one, though we shall reign over a subject inheritance, but our undefiled inheritance is there where we are entered. This is a blessed truth. It is with, not from. We have from; but we joy in God.

Deuteronomy Chapter 27

Now comes the sanction-that is to say, that which gives vigour to His law-in the consequences (blessings and curses) which were to correspond with obedience or disobedience. This is brought out in chapter 27 and two following chapters. Chapter 27 is by itself, however, and is of rather wide scope in the understanding of the word of God. If individual piety expressed itself in the manner we have seen in the preceding chapter, the public relations of the people with God were based on the threats of the law. When the people should have gone over Jordan to take possession of the land of promise (an idea which constantly presents itself), having set up great stones and plastered them with plaster, they were to write the law upon them. This law contained the conditions on which the land was to be enjoyed.

The people were to divide themselves into two companies of tribes, part being placed upon Mount Gerizim to bless, the other upon Ebal to curse. Upon the latter was an altar to be erected to Jehovah, not for sin-offerings, but for burnt-offerings and peace-offerings: a worship pre-supposing a righteous people in communion with Jehovah, but placed under the curse if they should break the law. The announcement of the curses follows, ending with that curse which would rest on every one, not continuing in all the things which were written in the book of the law to do them. But the blessings of Gerizim are entirely omitted. It is needless to insist upon the importance of this blank. The apostle seizes on it as the place of all under

the law. "As many as are of the works of the law [See Note #1] are under the curse," says the apostle: "for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law." There is no possibility of escape. No one, except the Lord Jesus, has accomplished it; and He, if one may so speak, did not raise an altar for burnt-offering, an altar of worship for a righteous man who had fulfilled the law-for Himself alone; but He offered Himself for us on that mountain of cursing as an offering for sin, and has thus silenced for ever all those threats and curses. The blessing of Gerizim, consequently, is not sufficient either. Heaven, and, moreover, for Him, the Father's throne, are the only worthy answer and reward for what He has accomplished by suffering for our sins. But this is the righteousness of God, giving to Christ, and so consequently to us, what He was fully entitled to in having glorified God, and to us what He has obtained for us.

The connection between the principles of chapter 26 and those of chapter 27 is deeply interesting: the fulfilment of the promise in the enjoyment of the land, the basis of thanksgivings and of the worship which has its source in redemption; afterwards the altar, the service to be rendered to God, a service linked to His law, the violation of which, in a single point, brought the curse. This was the condition of their enjoyment of it. It is in that point of view, the only one which went to the root of the question, that the apostle looks at it. It is on the ground of this covenant of Deuteronomy that the people became the people of Jehovah on their entering the land (compare Deu 27:2; Deu 27:10; and Deu 29:1).

Note #1

This expression does not contemplate the conduct, but the principle on which we stand before God. Those who are of faith are linked with faithful Abraham; those that are of the works of the law are under the curse, for the law saith, "Cursed," etc.

Deuteronomy Chapter 28

The following commentary covers Chapters 28 and 29.

In chapter 28 we have the principles of God's government in the midst of that people, and the immediate consequences of obedience or disobedience-consequences so solemnly fulfilled in the fate of that unhappy people, still beloved for the fathers sakes. The consequences of the violation of the law as a principle of relationship with God, as to the point of a righteousness which was adequate ground of God's acceptance, must not be confounded with the temporary consequences of disobedience under the government of God. It is to these latter that chapter 28 has reference. We may notice for ourselves the deep instruction of Verses 47, 48 (Deu 28:47-48). As to Israel, universal history presents to us the accomplishment of the threats of the chapter.

Chapter 29 is the personal application to the conscience of the people, both collectively and individually, of all that precedes, that there may be no bitter root of sin (compare Heb 12:15, the application of this exhortation to the discipline and the loving care of saints now). Verse 29 (Deu 29:29) requires to be noticed. We find in it the contrast between the consequences thus revealed of obedience and disobedience, and the purposes of God in behalf of the people, notwithstanding their disobedience-purposes which evidently could not be a rule for their conduct. The rule was found in the ordinance of the law. The meaning of this Verse has been so twisted, that it is worth while thus to point out its force. The secret things are the purposes of God with regard to the people, though they should have been disobedient and driven out of the land; but, although they are not the rule of conduct, they are revealed and are of deep interest. In what follows, God begins already to present them to our attention, and surely it becomes us to consider them.

Thus we have, in these chapters, the relationship of the pious Jew with God, grounded upon the accomplishment of the promises made to the fathers, in the present enjoyment of the land; the relationship of the people with God, in view of the curse pronounced upon the violation of the law; the relationship of the people with God, according to the principles of His government, the consequences brought in, either by their obedience or disobedience: and, finally, after the disobedience, and when this has produced its fruit, the designs of God according to His purpose, which nothing could alter.

Deuteronomy Chapter 30

We must now dwell a little on this last point. Chapter 30 furnishes us with an important principle. It supposes that the people have already incurred the consequences of disobedience, and they are seen as driven out of the land, and strangers among distant nations. The law could not be followed out in such a case; and, indeed, the violation of the law had even then produced its fruits. But then quite a new principle is introduced: the return of the hearts of the people to Jehovah, and obedience, one must add, in spirit. Thereupon Jehovah brings them back into their land, and blesses them in it. The curse is put on their enemies; and they are to observe in the land the ordinances of Jehovah, enjoying anew His full blessing; for the commandment was neither in heaven, nor beyond the seas, but in the mouth and in the heart. This was not the new covenant, but faith laying hold of the spirit of the law in principle, and turning the heart towards Jehovah, when the law was externally impracticable.

The establishment of the new covenant, based on this return of the heart, at a time appointed of God, will be something well defined. Here we have the principle of their return when under the curse of the law they had broken. Hence, the apostle quotes this passage for the basis of the principle, as a testimony given to what righteousness by faith was, applying it to Christ Himself-the return of the heart to the object and end of the law, when judgment was on them for its violation, and hope of righteousness by its accomplishment impossible-how Christ was the end of the law for righteousness. The principle is found here. The apostle brings in Christ as the true accomplishment of it. At the end of the chapter, Moses declares that he has now set before them the good and the evil, and that they would have to bear the consequence of their choice.

Deuteronomy Chapter 31

In chapter 31 he introduces Joshua, as the leader under whom the people were to take possession of the promised land. He orders that the law should be read before all every seventh year, in order that every one might take notice of it, in that solemn moment when, enjoying afresh, as it were, the blessing which it secured to them, they submitted to it as a testimony that

the land, as well as everything, belonged to Jehovah. Afterwards, when Joshua is established in his charge, Moses is ordered to communicate to the people a song inspired of God, which, based upon the certainty of the iniquity of the people, announces the ways of the Lord towards them; commanding the Levites, at the same time, to put the written law by the side of the ark, as a witness against the people.

Deuteronomy Chapter 32

We have the prophetic song, which is based on the foreknown fall of the people. First, it declares the perfectness of Jehovah, whatever may take place; it is Israel who have corrupted themselves (compare Psa 22:3. Christ can say, "Why?") At the same time (Deu 32:8) we have an all-important declaration; namely, that God, in His government of the world, had made Israel the centre, and had arranged the nations of the earth, in their various localities, as having respect to the bounds of Israel as being the first object of those ways. For His earthly people are Jehovah's portion, His inheritance upon earth. But Jeshurun (Israel) waxed fat, and kicked, and forsook the Rock of his strength. Consequently God moves them to jealousy with those that are not a people. It is the call of the Gentiles, according to Rom 10:19.

The judgment, nevertheless, falls upon Israel, so that God would have destroyed them, had not the glory of His name hindered Him, for the Gentiles proved themselves perfectly wicked. Then, the people being distressed, without strength and without hope, He remembers them, and finally takes vengeance on their enemies, those idolatrous Gentiles. But, though avenging Himself, it is then that, having restored His people Israel, He will cause the Gentiles to rejoice in Him.

This principle is true already; but the testimony it furnishes will be fully accomplished when Israel is again restored to the enjoyment of the promises; when God will manifest His mercy towards His land, as well as towards His people. The whole course of His dealings, in respect of the people who form the centre of His ways upon earth, is thus fully brought out. Afterwards, Moses puts obedience (the great end of this book, Israel being placed under the condition of obedience for continuance in the enjoyment of the promises) before them again, and reminds them that

thereby they would prolong their days in the land which they were going up to possess.

At last poor Moses has to go up Mount Nebo, to see the land into which he cannot enter, not having answered the requirement of the glory of God in the wilderness, nor sanctified His name by faith. It is the unavoidable consequence of the just government of God towards a servant-I mean under the law. He does not get into the enjoyment of the promise. A single fault deprives him of it.

Deuteronomy Chapter 33

We have also the blessings of this man of God, pronounced over the people before his death (chap. 33). The blessings of Jacob were more historical regarding the future. Here they are rather relationship with God according to His government. Twelve is still the number of the tribes (Simeon being omitted to make room for two tribes of the posterity of Joseph, the firstborn as to the inheritance, instead of Reuben). Here it is according to the blessing of God, and not according to the rights of nature. Upon this latter principle, Israel, represented by Reuben, will be diminished, but will not die. Jehovah is there in majesty, with the terror of the law in His right hand; but He loves the people, that is to say, His saints there surrounding Him to receive His words. The people receive a law, through the mediation of Moses, which is the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. This Moses is there as king. These, then, are the relationships on which these blessings are based.

The blessings are not here presented historically as those of the children of the fathers, and, consequently, in connection with Shiloh, the Rock of Israel, nor as a complete view of God's ways in Israel, as in Genesis; but the subject is the relationship of Jehovah with the people, as in possession of the land (as in the rest of the book), and placed under the government of God: Jehovah blessing, but blessing according to the majesty of Sinai, and of His revelation of Himself in the bush; Moses, the king, being the channel of these blessings, which had thus reference to the nation, and were based upon this relationship with God. Thus Levi is blessed, having been faithful to Jehovah; Joseph has the blessing and the goodwill of Him that dwelt in the

bush, having been separated from his brethren, fearing God, and being the vessel of His purposes. This was accordingly the position of the two tribes in the land, as Simeon, not mentioned here, was, so to speak, lost in the land; his portion was where the Philistines dwelt.

We must also remark here, that the chief blessings rest upon him who, for the sake of God, neither knew his father, nor his mother, that is, Levi; and upon Joseph, who, for the glory of God, was separated from his own. Both were His. Levi has the most excellent place; his separation, which should actually take place, was a fruit of faithfulness. Joseph has, perhaps, more sensible enjoyment; he was faithful to God in his involuntary separation. Both these are completely realised in Christ.

If the blessing of God preserves life to Reuben, with but few men, Judah is presented to Jehovah, that he may be heard, and that the help of Jehovah may be with him. The expression, "Bring him unto his people," deserves careful notice, in the relations which have existed between that people and God, seeing the position of Judah in their history, under the government of God, and its present dispersion, and in that which is yet to take place, when the union of the whole people will be restored in their own place.

Levi occupies the third place, Simeon being left out. The request of the prophet-king for him (Levi) is the everlasting priesthood of the people of God (upon earth, of course). "His holy one" is used in the sense of piety towards God-grace in the heart. He requests that light and perfection (Urim and Thummim) in the intelligence of the relations which would in reality exist at all times between the people and God, and between God and the people in return, might be with the man of grace and piety, officially the priestly tribe. But the basis of this request is remarkable, as to the government of God. God proved the people at Massah, and strove with them at Meribah. Now, that is precisely what is attributed to Israel historically. They tried (or tempted) God at Massah, and strove With Him at Meribah. But where the flesh manifested itself in Israel, there did God put His priest to the test, and at the waters of Meribah, where Moses did not sanctify Him, He was in controversy with Moses. [See Note #1] Painful circumstances-the being deprived of the stream of manifest and sensible blessings in the midst of the people of God, a state which makes room for

the manifestation of rebellious flesh, and for murmurs against God in the wilderness, tempting God and saying, "Is He amongst us?"-are trials to which God subjects His priests. The church, in her priestly position, and especially those who have the good of the church at heart, are also put to the test, to see whether they know how to reckon upon the blessing of God, however things may be.

But, although Levi was put to the test in his priesthood, he had been put to the test in order to obtain it; and Levi had not hesitated one moment in choosing between man and God-even man in the nearest relationship according to the flesh. That is the sole basis of all-priesthood. One can only stand before God on the behalf of another, in proportion as one has oneself stood truly for God before man. For with what God would one be a mediator? It would not be with the holy God, who has a right to our whole being. There could only, as to sinners, be the sympathy of the flesh, which connects itself with sins. One must be accepted in the presence of God according to His holiness, in order to be able to intercede for man in his weakness. This is absolutely true of Jesus, and of us all in a practical sense. But to be so, there must be the testimony when the question is raised; and this must needs cost us something before men. One must be for God, not sparing oneself, hating father and mother. This instruction is important. There must also be the distinguishing between the trial of our priesthood and the trial of ourselves before entering upon it. Here the practical trial, where we are so, is spoken of, for we are priests by grace, yet fitted by full exercise of heart, separating us to God.

It would seem that the place of Benjamin, in relation with Jehovah, was in His favour; being kept near Him, as has been the case with that tribe, within whose limits was Jerusalem. Joseph had his earthly blessing by the title of firstborn; as to the inheritance, his land is blessed, the double portion is assigned to him.

I have no remarks to make on the other blessings, except that those of Zebulun and Issachar seem to be yet future, and those of Gad to establish the relations which existed already.

But, moreover, if the ways of God towards His people were connected with their faithfulness and the manifestation of Himself-if God suited His ways to their conduct to manifest His government and Himself-He also exalted Himself above all to bless and to keep. He would fall back upon the title of His own glory in order to be to them an infallible source of blessing and security; He would make known His glory in the behalf of Israel; He rode upon the heavens in their help. Where His majesty was, there was the help of the people. He would uphold them also, would destroy their enemies, and then should Israel dwell in safety alone. The nations should dwell in a fruitful land, on which the heavens would drop down blessings as dew. Happy people! objects of the deliverance of God, who was unto them as a shield and a sword. Their enemies would be subdued under them. Thus, whatever might be the details of the relationship of the people with God, in His government of them, He would bless them in the end, as a people, according to His sovereign glory and majesty.

Note #1

No doubt the fall of this man of God was the effect of his previous state, for he was a man. Trial, when we are not going on well, is chastening, but needful chastening, and a blessing in result. Therefore, at the same time that it is a blessing, it is said, "Lead us not into temptation."

Deuteronomy Chapter 34

We have now to consider a little the prohibition to which Moses was subjected, not to enter the land of promise. Moses, the man of God, might pronounce the blessings on Israel as in the land; but he himself, as servant of God, belonged to the wilderness. There are more things than one to be weighed here. As to the position of Moses, it was that of the government of a people, placed under the principles of Sinai; that is, while under the government of God, it was in the flesh that His people were subjected to that government (compare Rom 9:5, where the subject is fully discussed).

Now, man in the flesh, under the government of God, cannot come into the enjoyment of the promise. This is true even of a Christian. Risen with Christ, he is seated in the heavenly places, he enjoys the promise in the presence of God; or, at least, his affections look up there, his life is hid there with Christ;

[See Note #1] but, as a man upon earth, he is under the government of God, who acts towards him according to the manifestation of the spiritual life here below; and Christ is between him and God, exercising priesthood and advocacy, which do not establish righteousness (that is done once for all), but which maintain the relationship of weak men with God in the light-to the fellowship of which they are called in Christ who is in it-by obtaining mercy and grace to help in time of need so that they should not fall, or to restore them if they do, through the advocacy by the operation of the Spirit upon earth. Crossing Jordan was our death and resurrection with Christ in a figure. Joshua always represents Christ, Head of His people, according to the power of the Spirit. But the wilderness is this world. Moses directs and governs the people there according to God; consequently he does not enter into Canaan.

The difference (we shall dwell on that more at length when we study the Book of Joshua) between the Red Sea and Jordan is, that the Red Sea was the efficacy of redemption through the death and resurrection of Christ Himself, and we are viewed, withal, in Him; Jordan was the application of it to the soul, as having died with Him in order to the enjoyment of the promises. The passage of the Red Sea was followed by songs of joy; that of Jordan, by conflict and the realisation of the promises.

As to Moses himself, personally, the fault which precluded his entrance into the land is well known. Provoked by the rebellion of Israel, and wearied with caring for the people, instead of exalting God in the eyes of Israel, he exalted himself. He made use of the gift of God for that purpose; he did not sanctify Jehovah in the eyes of the people; he did not give Him His place. God does not become weary in His goodness; and thus acting in discipline, for the good of His people, according to His majesty, He can always fall back upon those ways of direct blessing which flow from His unfailing grace. Man wearied with the evil that vexes him, tries to exalt himself, to put himself above the evil, and to shelter himself from it, because he is not above it. He no longer glorifies God; he exalts himself and he is abased. If Moses, instead of acting according to the flesh, had remembered that it was not he or his glory which was in question (and how often had he himself told them so!) but God, he would have felt that the people could not touch the glory of

God; and this unfailing glory would have sustained him, looking only at that glory which ever maintains itself; so that if we only seek to maintain it, we may rest upon it. But he lacked faith, and was forbidden to enter into that which only the perfection of glory could open to men; and, indeed, what could lead Israel safely through the desert and into the land of Canaan? Pure grace alone. Moses was not able to apprehend the height of the grace that conquers everything. It was according to that grace, as we have seen, that God acted at Meribah.

Now, the law could not lead into life; and, therefore, the flesh, the world, and the law, ever correlative in the ways of God, were found in the journey through the wilderness; and Moses remains there. He might, as a man of God and a prophet, tell of grace, as making sure the blessing of Israel (Deu 33:26-29). Faithful in all his house, as a servant, he remains on this side Jordan; a proof, in these touching circumstances, that an absolutely new creation is needed to enjoy the promises of God, according to that grace which can alone, after all, bring one in safety even through the wilderness—the unfailing grace of our God.

Moses dies, and, buried by Jehovah, does not serve as an object of carnal veneration to a people at all times ready to fall into this sin, when his name gave them honour according to the flesh; just as they continually opposed him, when his presence according to God thwarted the flesh. He was a man honoured of God, who scarcely had his equal (He of course excepted who had none); but nevertheless he was man, and man is but vanity.

Note #1

The former is the teaching of the Ephesians, the second, of the Colossians. In the former, dead in sin, he is raised up and set in Christ in heavenly places. It is a new creation. In the latter, he has died to sin and is risen, with Christ, and his affections are to be set on heavenly things. In this last epistle he is viewed also as dead in sins and quickened together with Christ, but not as sitting in heavenly places.

JOSHUA

Introduction to Joshua

We have gone through, by the goodness of God, the five books of Moses. They have set before us, on the one side, the great principles on which the relations of man with God, and of God with man, in their great elements, are founded, such as redemption, sacrifice, and the like; and on the other, the deliverance of a people set apart for Himself, and the different conditions in which they were placed, whether under grace in the form of promise, under law, or under God's government established over them by the special mediation of Moses.

We have had occasion in them to examine the history of this people in the wilderness; and the pattern presented, by the tabernacle, of things to be afterwards revealed; sacrifices and priesthood, means of relationship with God granted to sinners, wherein is indeed wanting the image of our perfect liberty to approach God, the veil not being then rent, but wherein the shadow of heavenly things is placed before our eyes with most interesting detail.

Finally, we have seen that God-having at the end of the journey, in the wilderness, pronounced the definitive justification of His people, and caused His blessing to rest upon them in spite of the efforts of their enemies—declares under what conditions the people should retain possession of the land, and enjoy His blessing in it; in the liberty and grace of God's free gift in immediate relationship with Himself; and what would be the consequences of disobedience; revealing, at the same tune, His purposes with respect to this people, purposes which He would accomplish for His own glory. [See Note #1] This brings us to the taking possession of the land of promise by the people under the guidance of Joshua.

As the Book of Numbers sets forth the spiritual journey through the wilderness in which the flesh was tested and tried, so this book is full of interest and instruction, as setting before us in type the conflicts of the

inheritors of heaven with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, when we have entered into them, with a sure title, but having to take possession of them by the energy which overcomes the enemies who would keep us out, which is the other part of the christian life. Christians are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, as Israel was to enjoy temporal blessings in earthly places. It is easy to understand that, if we may rightly use (as I do not doubt) the name of Canaan as a figurative expression of the rest of the people of God, that which we have here to do with is not the rest itself, but the spiritual conflict which secures the enjoyment of the promises of God to true believers. The close of the Epistle to the Ephesians presents that which precisely answers, indeed alludes, to the position of Israel in this book. The saints in the assembly having been quickened and raised up with Jesus, have their conflict in the heavenly places, as it is to those who dwell there that the assembly is a testimony-the testimony of the manifold wisdom of God.

It is worthy of notice, if Jordan represent death, and Canaan rest and glory, how short common christian views must come of some intended christian position; for the effect of the crossing of Jordan, and what characterised what followed, was war. The angel of Jehovah comes with a drawn sword as captain of Jehovah's host. It leads us to see that the Christian is to learn that he is dead and risen while here, and has his place in the heavenlies in Christ, and that it is in this position that his true conflicts take place.

Joshua, then, represents Christ, not as coming down in person to take possession of the earth, but as leading His people through the power of the Holy Ghost, who acts and dwells in the midst of this people. Yet in Joshua, as in all other typical persons, those errors and sins are found which betray the weakness of the instrument, and the fragility of the vessel in which, for the time, God has condescended to put His glory.

Note #1:

Their typical revelations in these books, which though interwoven with the history are their real subject, are invaluable to us; only the special privileges of Christians and of the assembly of God, in sovereign grace, are not communicated.

Joshua Chapter 1

Joshua 1:1

jos 1:1

Let us apply ourselves now to the study of this book. The first chapter shews us Joshua placed in service by Jehovah who commands him to go over Jordan into the land which He had given to the children of Israel. Let us pause a moment over this immediate commission from Jehovah. Moses here holds the place, not of the living mediator, but of the written word. All that he commanded, being from God, was evidently the word of God for Israel. Joshua is the energy which brings them into possession of the promises.

First of all, we have the principle on which possession is taken; not in the simple exercise of divine power, as that which will take place at the end, but in the energy of the Spirit and in connection with the responsibility of man. The boundaries of the promised land are given; but the knowledge of the boundaries assigned by God was not enough: God had defined them very accurately; but a condition was attached to their possession. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that I have given unto you." They must go there, overcome the obstacles with the help and by the power of God, and take actual possession. Without that they could not possess it; and, in fact, this is what happened. They never took possession of all the land which God had given. Nevertheless, to faith the promise was sure: "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." The power of the Spirit of God, of Christ by His Spirit (the true energy of the believer), is all-sufficient. For it is, in fact, the power of Christ Himself, who has almighty power. At the same time, the promise of never being left nor forsaken (Deu 31:6; Deu 31:8) is maintained in all its force. This is what may be reckoned upon in the Lord's service—such a power of His presence that none shall be able to stand before His servant, a power which will never forsake him. With this full encouragement, he who walks by the Spirit is called upon to be strong and of a good courage.

After this comes Jehovah's exhortation, in Verse 7 (Jos 1:7), "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all

the law which Moses, my servant (the title always given him here), commanded thee." Spiritual strength and energy, the courage of faith, are necessary, in order that the heart may be bold enough to obey, may be free from the influences, the fears, and the motives which act upon the natural man, and tend to turn believers aside from the path of obedience, and that they may take heed unto the word of God.

There is nothing so unreasonable in the world as the walk set before us in the word-nothing which so exposes us to the hatred of its prince. If, then, God be not with us, there is nothing so foolish, so mad; if He be with us, nothing so wise. If we have not the strength of His presence, we dare not take heed to His word; and, in that case, we must beware of going out to war. But having the courage, which the almighty power of God inspires by His promise, we may lay hold of the good and precious word of our God: its severest precepts are only wisdom to detect the flesh, and instruction how to mortify it, so that it may neither blind nor shackle us.

The most difficult path, that which leads to the sharpest conflict, is but the road to victory and repose, causing us to increase in the knowledge of God. It is the road in which we are in communion with God, with Him who is the source of all joy; it is the earnest and the foretaste of eternal and infinite happiness. If only this word from God, Jehovah, is heard-"Turn not from it, to the right hand nor to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest"-what joy for him who, through grace, comes forward to do the work of God!

The Lord then exhorts him to the diligent study of this book of the law: "For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Here, then, are the two great principles of spiritual life and activity: 1st, the assured presence of the almighty power of God, so that nothing can stand before His servant; 2nd, the reception of His word, submission to His word, diligent study of His word, taking it as an absolute guide; and having courage to do so, because of the promise and exhortation of God.

In short, the Spirit and the word are all in all for spiritual life. Furnished with this power faith goes forward, strengthened by the encouraging word of our God. God has a way in the world where Satan cannot touch us. This is

the path where Jesus walked. Satan is the prince of this world; but there is a divine path through it, but no other, and there God's power is. The word is the revelation of it. So the Lord bound the strong man. He acted by the power of the Spirit, and used the word. The Spirit and the word cannot be separated without falling into fanaticism on the one hand, or into rationalism on the other-without putting oneself outside the place of dependence upon God, and of His guidance. Mere reason would become the master of some; imagination, of others.

Moreover, there is nothing more imaginative than reason, when destitute of guidance! In result, the enemy of souls would take possession of both. We should have man under Satan's influence, in the place of God. Miserable exchange! for which the unbeliever is consoled by flattering himself that there is nothing beyond his reach, because he reduces everything to the limits of his own mind. Nothing appears to me more pitiful than this unbelief, which pretends that there is nothing in the moral and intellectual sphere beyond the thoughts of man, and which denies man's capacity to receive light from a more exalted mind-the only thing that raises man above himself, while at the same time rendering him morally excellent, by making him humble through the sense of superiority in another. Blessed be God, that some are to be found who have profited by the grace which has communicated to man of His perfect wisdom! Even though the imperfect vessel which received it may have a little impaired its features and its perfection, they have nevertheless profited by it so as to take their true place. Happy place, before the presence of Him whom to know is infinite and everlasting joy!

There is yet an important practical rule to be recognised in these words, "Have not I commanded thee?" (Jos 1:9). If we are not conscious that we are doing the will of God-if, before we begin to act, we have not assured ourselves of this in His presence, we shall have no courage in performing it. Perhaps indeed what we are doing is the will of God; but, not being conscious of this, we act with hesitation, without confidence, without joy; we are repulsed by the smallest opposition, whilst, when we are assured of doing His will, and that He has said, "Have not I commanded thee?" nothing, through grace, can alarm us. Nevertheless I add one word, or rather I call

the reader's attention to what God says; for although the command of God inspires us with a courage which we could not have had without it, yet no revelation is by itself strength for action. But God adds, "Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for Jehovah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

We have in the New Testament a striking exemplification of this principle: Paul was caught up to the third heaven, where he heard things which it is not lawful for man to utter. Was this his strength in conflict? Doubtless it inwardly gave his views a scope which reacted upon his whole work; but this was not his strength for the work. On the contrary, it tended to feed the false confidence of the flesh; at least the flesh would have used it for self-exaltation. Such revelations rendered humiliation needful, and drew from God, not fresh favours (though all was favour), but, that which humbled the apostle, and rendered him weak and contemptible as to the flesh [See Note #1]. Being then weak, strength is given him in another way: not in the use or in the consciousness of revelations, that would have made him weak, by ministering to the exaltation of the flesh, but, in the grace and strength of Christ, which were made perfect in this infirmity. There lay his only strength; and he gloried in this infirmity, in which the power of Christ was perfected in him, which gave occasion for the manifestation of this power; and which, in proving that Paul was weak, proved that Christ Himself was in the work with Paul. We always need immediate strength from Christ, when acting on the part of Christ-strength which is made perfect in weakness, to do His work-abiding strength, for without Him we can do nothing. Let us remember this truth.

I add but one word on the end of the chapter. There are Christians (I cannot say approved of God) who take their place on this side of Jordan-that is to say, on this side of the power of death and resurrection, applied to the soul by the Spirit of God. The place in which they settle is not Egypt; it is beyond the Red Sea, it is within the limits of Israel's possessions outside Egypt and this side the Euphrates, river of Babylon. But it is not Canaan. It is a land they have chosen for their cattle and their possessions; they establish their children and their wives there. It is not Joshua who conquered that land it is not the place of testimony to the power of the Spirit of God-that Canaan

which is beyond Jordan. However, although the children and their families might be placed there, yet the men of war must, whether they will or no, take part in the conflicts of the children of God, who seek no rest except where the power of God is found—that is to say, in Canaan, in the heavenly places, all enemies being driven out. And indeed when the sin of Israel, and their consequent weakness, exposed the people to the successful attacks of their enemies, of the enemies of God, this country was the first that fell into their hands. "Know ye that Ramoth Gilead is ours?" leads to no blessing to the people when sorrowful on account of its loss. For the time all was well; that is, as long as Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh remained under the authority of Joshua, and through him the power of God conducted the people. They too say to Joshua that which God had said, "Be strong and of a good courage."

How often among the children of God some principle or line of conduct is brought in, that is inferior in nature to the excellence of that work which is going on in the purpose of God; but which, as long as the power of God is working according to this purpose, does not disengage itself, so to say, from the work, so as to assume any prominence, and produce uneasiness and sorrow! But when this divine stream becomes shallow in consequence of man's unfaithfulness, then bitter fruits appear; spiritual declensions, weakness, heart-burnings, divisions, and direct subjection to the evil power, flowing from the impossibility of reconciling that which is spiritual with that which is carnal, and of maintaining a spiritual testimony while conforming to the ways of the world. But this testimony belongs to the other side of Jordan. The two tribes and a half may follow this course if they will, but we cannot come out of Canaan to join them. Alas! these beautiful meadows, well suited to feed their flocks, have found but too many Lots, and tribes of Israel, to settle in them to their loss. The shoals that are met with in our christian voyage may perhaps be safely crossed at high tide; but at low tide skilful pilotage is needed to avoid them, and to float always in the full current of the grace of God in the channel it has made for itself. But there is a sure and stedfast pilot; and we are safe if we are content to follow Him. God has given us what we need for this. Perhaps we must be satisfied with a very little boat: the unerring pilot will be in it. At the first Moses was not pleased with the proposal of the two tribes and a half. The thing was

permitted certainly. But in general the first thoughts of faith are the best; they only contemplate the promises, the full effect of the promises and the thoughts of God. After thoughts are not in connection with that.

Note #1

Idle curiosity inquires what this thorn in the flesh could be. It matters little to us what it was. There might be a different thorn for each case in which God saw fit to send one. It would be always something suited to humble him who needed it. It is enough for our spiritual instruction to know by the word, that as to Paul it was an infirmity which tended to make him personally contemptible in his preaching (see Gal 4:14; Co2 10:10). The object of God, in such a trial, as meeting the danger, is so evident to every spiritual mind, that it were useless to dwell upon it.

Joshua Chapter 2

The second chapter contains the interesting history of Rahab. How beautiful. it is to see the grace of God setting up its way-marks from the beginning, that the eye of faith may know where to rest, when God was obliged to narrow His dealings with respect to man, and to limit Himself in His relationship to man, until the precious blood of Christ gave that grace its full scope and liberty! Seed of the woman, seed of Abraham, seed of David-it narrows more and more. The promises even, as to the government of God, give place to the law, until a small remnant of Israel, proud in proportion to its poverty, becomes the vessel which contains the yet smaller remnant of faithful ones who were waiting for the redemption of Israel. And what shallow thoughts, though true ones, were found in the hearts of these precious saints, in comparison with the hopes of an Abraham and the solemn declarations of an Enoch! The Lord, ever perfect, ever precious, might well say (one understands it, although the depths of His heart are infinitely beyond our reach), "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" But there have always been these signals for faith. If God acts, He goes beyond the limits of the existing dispensation, and oversteps His established relationships with man.

It is thus that the divine nature of Jesus, and the divine rights of His Person, manifested themselves. He was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of

Israel. This was the limit of His formal relationship with men. But if faith lays hold of the goodness of God, can this goodness deny itself, or limit itself to those who, for the time being, were the alone subjects of His dispensation? No, Christ could not say, God is not good, I am not good, to the degree you have imagined. How could God deny Himself? The Syrophenician woman obtains what she asks for. Precious prerogative of faith, which knows and owns God through everything; which honours Him as He is, and ever finds Him what He is!

Wherein was manifested that faith in Rahab which the apostle cites as a pattern?-admirable proof that the way in which God acts in grace is before and above law; that grace overleaps the boundary which law prescribes to man, even while maintaining its authority-an authority however which can only manifest itself in condemnation! What then was Rahab's faith? It was the faith which recognises that God is with His people, all weak and few as they may be and not yet possessed of their inheritance, wandering on the earth without a country, but beloved of God.

If Abraham believed God when there was not a people, Rahab identified herself with this people when they had nothing but God. She well knew that the inheritance was theirs, and that, however strong their enemies might be, in spite of their walled cities and their chariots of iron, their heart was melted. This is always the case with the instruments of the enemy, whatever appearances may be, when the people of God are under the guidance of the Spirit of God in the path of obedience which God has marked out for them. Thus, in the midst of heathens, this poor simple woman, a bad and despised member of an accursed race doomed to destruction, is saved, and her name is a testimony to the glory of God. Her house, recognised by the sure mark, the line of scarlet thread, becomes the refuge and the security of all who take shelter in it, trusting to the promise given.

Joshua Chapter 3

And now the people are to enter the promised land; but how enter it? For Jordan, with its flood at the highest, lay as a barrier before the people of God, guarding the territory of those that oppose their hopes. Now Jordan represents death, but death looked at rather as the end of human life, and

the token of the enemy's power, than as the fruit and testimony of the just judgment of God. The passage of the Red Sea was also death; but the people were there as having part (in type) in the death and resurrection of Jesus accomplishing their redemption, and setting them free for ever from Egypt, their house of bondage-that is, from their place in flesh and thus from all the power of Satan [See Note #1]-as the blood on the door posts had from the judgment of God. It was complete redemption, the death and resurrection of Christ in its proper and intrinsic value. But in this aspect it is a complete and finished work, and brings us to God-not a history of what we may go through in actually arriving at this result (see Exo 15:13; Exo 15:17; Exo 19:4). Hence, judgment even was executed. In Sinai, but not till then, law took the place of worship, historically. It was then that the people entered upon their pilgrimage in the wilderness [See Note #2]. Redemption, complete salvation, purchased by the precious blood of Jesus, introduces the Christian into this pilgrimage. With God he only passes through the world as a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; still, this pilgrimage is but the life down here, although it is the life of the redeemed [See Note #3].

But, as we have seen, there is the heavenly life, the warfare in the heavenly places, which goes on at the same time with the wilderness journey. When I say at the same time, I do not mean at the same instant, but during the same period of our natural life on the earth. It is one thing to pass through this world faithfully, or unfaithfully, in our daily circumstances, under the influence of a better hope; it is another thing to be waging a spiritual warfare for the enjoyment of the promises and of heavenly privileges, and to conquer the power of Satan on God's behalf, as men already dead and risen, as being absolutely not of the world. Both these things are true of the christian life. Now, it is as dead and risen again in Christ that we are in spiritual conflict: to make war in Canaan we must have crossed the Jordan [See Note #4].

The Jordan, then, is death and resurrection with Christ, looked at in their spiritual power, not as to their efficacy for the justification of a sinner, but as to the change of position and state in those who have part in them, in order to the realisation of life in connection with the heavenly places, into which Christ has entered [See Note #5]. A comparison between Philippians 3 and

Colossians 2, 3, shews how death and resurrection are bound up with the true character of the circumcision of Christ. In Philippians 3 the return of Christ is introduced as completing the work by the resurrection of the body. We are not looked at as now risen with Him; but as practically running the race, with Christ and resurrection in view—a place which indeed characterises the epistle. It is not what faith assumes as to position, but the actual present race towards its possession. Hence it is objective, not being in Christ, or even with Him; but that I might win Christ and the resurrection from among the dead. Paul has given up everything for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and is looking for the power of His resurrection, and even justification is looked at as at the end of his course. In both Philippians and Colossians the heavenly life is spoken of as a present thing; but there is entire separation, even down here, between the pilgrimage and this heavenly life itself, although the latter has a powerful influence on the character of our pilgrim life.

And this introduces a very important subject, which I cannot treat at large here, the connection between life as manifested here, and the objects it pursues. They that are after the Spirit have their minds on the things of the Spirit. The new life flows from what is divine and heavenly, from Christ, and this is specially John's part in teaching; hence it belongs to the risen state in glory, has its full development and place there. Our citizenship is there, and this makes us pilgrims; the heavenly life belongs to heaven; the second Man is "out of heaven." But in its full development there is no pilgrimage; we are at home in our Father's house, like Christ. But here it is developed in pilgrimage; has this character from its being heavenly. It has a growing development in a growing apprehension of what is heavenly (see Co2 3:3; Co2 3:17-18; Co2 4:17-18; Eph 4:15; Jo1 3:2-3, and many other passages). This necessarily, our object being on high, makes us strangers and pilgrims here, declaring, in the measure of our fidelity, that we seek a country, the country to which our life belongs; but it forms itself thereby for the display of Christ here, it is adapted to the scene through which we pass, has duties, obedience, service there. The starting-point is sure, that we have died and are risen with Christ, in one aspect; and in another, we are sitting in Him in heavenly places. But this last is not our subject here, it is Ephesian doctrine; this is more Colossian. Christ Himself, though Himself that life and its

manifestation down here in pilgrimage, yet, as a Man down here, had objects-for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross and despised the shame, and is set down. And this is deeply interesting; His life-God Himself (the last is more John's doctrine)-was what was to be expressed, expressed suited to the scene He passed through; but, being a true Man, He walked with objects before Him, which acted on the tenor of His path. The fact that He was this life, and that for His living it had not to die in His death, as we have, to an evil nature, makes it more difficult to realise in His case; but obedience, and He learned what it was, suffering, patience, all referred to His place here; compassion, grace as to His disciples, and all the traits of His life, though divine and such that He could say, "the Son of man who is in heaven," all were the development of the heavenly and divine life here. Its influence was perfect and entire in His case; but His life in connection with men, although the ever-perfect expression of the effect of His life of heavenly communion and of His divine nature, was evidently distinct from it. The joy of the heavenly life entirely set aside all the motives of the lower life; and, leading to the sufferings of His earthly life in connection with man, produced a life of perfect patience before God. In Him all was sinless; but His joys were elsewhere, save in acting in grace in the midst of sorrow and sin-a divine joy. Thus also with the Christian; there is nothing in common between these two spheres of life. And, besides, nature has no part whatever in that above; in that below, there are things which belong to nature and to the world (not in the bad sense of the word "world," but considered as creation). Nothing of this enters into the life of Canaan.

Christ alone could pass through death, and exhaust its strength, when in it, as shedding the blood of the everlasting covenant; and He alone could rise again from death, in the reality of the power of the life that was in Him, "for in him was life." But it was proper divine power by which this was done. God raised Christ from the dead, testimony of His full acceptance of His work. Christ, being God, could say: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up": nor was it possible that He could be holden of death. But it is not by any force of spiritual life, as Man, that He raised Himself; though we know, as He laid it down of Himself, so He took it again, and this by commandment received of the Father-so that in this we cannot separate the deity and humanity-I speak of the act, not of His Person. He had power to

take it again, but it was still obedience; we feel at every step, no one knows the Son but the Father. He has opened this way; He has converted death into a power that destroys the flesh which shackles us, and a deliverance from that in us which gives advantage to the enemy with whom we are to fight, being thenceforward brought into Canaan. Therefore the apostle says, "All things are yours, whether life, or death." Now, every true Christian is dead and risen in Christ; the knowing and realising it is another thing. But the word of God sets christian privilege before us according to its real power in Christ.

The ark of Jehovah passed over before the people, who were to leave the space of two thousand cubits between it and them, that they might know the way by which they must go; for they had not passed this way before. Who indeed had passed through death, to rise beyond its power, until Christ, the true Ark of the Covenant, had opened this way? Man, whether innocent or sinful, could do nothing here. This way was alike unknown to both, as was also the heavenly life that follows. This life, in its own sphere, and in the exercises here spoken of, is altogether beyond Jordan: the scenes of spiritual conflict do not belong to man in his life below; though, as we have seen, the realisation of the heavenly things we are brought into act on the character of our faith down here; and our sorrows and trials down here, under God's grace, tend to clear our vision as regards the glory hoped for. See Co2 5:2-5, and how the hope of Verse 2 (Co2 5:2) is returned to in Verse 5 (Co2 5:5). No wilderness experience, be it ever so faithful, has anything directly to do with this heavenly life although the grapes of Canaan may cheer the pilgrims by the way. But Christ has destroyed all the power of death for His people, so far as it is the power of the enemy, and the token of his dominion. It is now but the witness of the power of Jesus. It is indeed death; but, as we have said, it is the death of that which fetters us.

I will add some brief remarks. "Lord of all the earth" is the title Joshua repeats, as that which God had here taken: for it is in testimony to this great truth that God had planted Israel in Canaan. Hereafter He will establish in power, according to His counsels, that which had been put into the hands of Israel that they might keep it according to their responsibility. This last principle is the key to the whole history of the Bible, as to man, Israel, the

law, and all it has to do with. All is first trusted to man, who ever fails, and then God accomplishes it in blessing and power. [See Note #6] Thus this chapter supplies us with very clear indications of that which God has promised to accomplish in the last days, when He will indeed shew Himself to be "Lord of all the earth," in Israel brought back in grace by His mighty power. And we must attend to this testimony of the purpose of God in establishing Israel in their land. Harvest time will come, and the strength of the enemy will overflow its banks; but we, as Christians, are already on the other side. The strength of the enemy passed all bounds in the death of Jesus; and we do not say now, "Lord of all the earth"; but "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

Let us remark, also, how God encourages His people. They must combat. The sole of the foot must tread on every part of the promised land to possess it; and it must be in conflict that the power of the enemy and entire dependence upon God are realised. But, while fighting boldly for Him, He would have us know that victory is certain. The spies said to Joshua, "Truly Jehovah hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us." That is what we know and prove by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, so different from that of the flesh as brought by the ten who came back with Caleb and Joshua.

Note #1

It is important first to see Jesus alone in life and in death: there we have the thing itself in its perfection. It is equally important then to know that God sees us as having been there, that it expresses our place; that God sees us in Him, and that it is our place before God. But then there is also our taking that place, by the Spirit, in faith and in fact. The former was the Red Sea; as to death, it was Christ's death; Jordan, our entering into death with Him. The Red Sea was deliverance from Egypt; Jordan, entrance into Canaan subjectively; that is, a state suited to it in spirit, not possession of it, as Christ when risen-for us, by faith only of course as yet, as risen with Him. sitting in heavenly places is an entirely distinct thing, and on distinct ground; an absolute work of God. The Red Sea was the condemning of sin in the flesh, in Christ in death for sin; and so deliverance, when known by faith. But this is Jordan. Only Jordan goes further, for it brings us, as risen with Him, into the

state which makes us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. The people followed the ark in going through Jordan, the ark remaining there in its power against death till all were passed.

Note #2

This supposes being really born again (see Rom 8:29-30). The wilderness journey after Sinai supposes this christian position taken, but individual reality tested. To this all the "if s" of the New Testament apply; that is, to the Christian on the road to the promised land, but with a certain promise of being kept to the end, if faith is there (Co1 1:8-9; Joh 10:28). It is dependence, but on the fidelity of God There is no "if" as to redemption, nor as to our present place in Christ, when once we are sealed.

Note #3

To this the Epistle to the Romans answers.

Note #4

To this Ephesians answers; only Ephesians has nothing to do with our death to sin. It is, as to this question, simply God's act, taking us when dead in sin and placing us in Christ on high. Colossians is partially both, life here in resurrection, but it does not set us in heavenly places, only in our affections there. By heavenly life I mean living in spirit in heavenly places. Actually Christ was divinely there; we as united to Him by the Holy Ghost.

Note #5

This is not mere communication of life, as by the Son of God, but passing as a moral being out of one condition into another, out of Egypt into Canaan; for that is it, the wilderness being dropped as another thing The Red Sea and Jordan in this aspect coalesce.

Note #6

And that in much fuller glory, according to His counsels before the world was, and in the Second Man.

Joshua Chapter 4

But if we are introduced into a life which is on the other side of death, by the power of the Spirit of God, as being dead and risen in Christ, there must be the remembrance of that death, by which we have been delivered from that which is on this side of it, of the ruin of man as he now is, and of the fallen creation to which he belongs. Twelve men, one out of each tribe, were to bring stones from the midst of Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm with the ark, while all Israel passed over on dry ground. The Holy Ghost brings with Him, so to speak, the touching memorial of the death of Jesus, by the mighty power of which He has turned all the effect of the enemy's strength into life, and deliverance from what could not enter into heavenly things, and has laid the basis for our having part in them. Death comes with us from the grave of Jesus: no longer now as death, it is become life unto us, and, subjectively for faith, the absence of that which cannot have part in what is heavenly. This memorial was to be set up at Gilgal. The meaning of this circumstance will be considered in the next chapter. We will only dwell here on the memorial itself. The twelve stones, for the twelve tribes, represented the tribes of God as a whole. This number is the symbol of perfection in human agency, in connection here, as elsewhere, with Christ, as in the case of the shewbread.

Here also the Spirit sets us-Christians-in a more advanced position. There were twelve loaves of the shewbread, and we form but one in our life of union by the Holy Ghost with Christ our Head, which is the life we speak of here. Now it is His death that is recalled to us in the memorial left us by the loving-kindness of our Lord, who condescends to value our remembrance of His love. I only speak here of this memorial as the sign of that which should always be a reality. We eat His flesh, we drink His life given for us. Being one now in the power of our union with Christ risen and glorified, for here I speak of our whole place, dead to the world and to sin, it is from the bottom of the river into which He went down to make it the way of life-heavenly life-for us, that we bring back the precious memorial of His love, and of the place in which He fulfilled His work. It is a body whose life by blood is closed [See Note #1] which we eat, a poured out blood which we drink; and this is the reason why blood was entirely prohibited, to Israel after the flesh; for how can death be drunk by those who are mortal? But we drink it because, alive with Him, through the death of Christ we live, and it is in realising the

death of that which is mortal that we live with Him. The remembrance of Jordan, of death when Christ was in it, is the remembrance of that power which secured our salvation in the last stronghold of him who had the power of death. It is the remembrance of that love which went down into death, in order that, as to us, it should lose all its power, except that of doing us good, and being a witness unto us of infinite and unchangeable love.

Note #1

The word "broken" is wrongly introduced in the common text. It was after He had given up His spirit to the Father, in full strength, that the blood was shed through the soldier's spear. He laid down His life of Himself.

Joshua Chapter 5

The power of resurrection-life takes all strength from Satan: "He who is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." In our earthly life, the flesh being in us, we are exposed to the power of the enemy, though Christ's grace is sufficient for us, His strength made perfect in weakness; but the creature has no strength against Satan, even though it should not be drawn away into actual sin. But if death is become our shelter, causing us to die unto all that would give Satan an advantage over us, what can he do? Can he tempt one who is dead, or overcome one who, having died, is alive again? But, if this be true, it is also necessary to realise it practically. "Ye are dead . . . therefore mortify" (Colossians 3). This is what Gilgal means. Nay, we are always to bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body (Co2 4:10) [See Note #1]. The matter in hand was not yet the taking of cities, the realisation of God's magnificent promises. Self must first of all be mortified. Before conquering Midian, Gideon must cast down the altar that was in his own house.

Remark further, the wilderness is not the place where circumcision is carried out, even though we may have been faithful there. The wilderness is the character the world takes when we have been redeemed, and where the flesh which is in us is actually sifted. But death, and our entrance into heavenly places, judge the whole nature in which we live in this world. But

then, consequent upon our death and resurrection with Christ, it is practically applied, and circumcision is the application of the Spirit's power to the mortification of the flesh in him who has fellowship with the death and resurrection of Jesus (compare Co2 4:10-12). Therefore Paul says (Philippians 3), "We are the circumcision." As to an outwardly moral life, Paul had that before. Had he now added true piety to his religion of forms, the true fear of God to his good works? It was far more than that. Christ had taken the place of all in him-first of all as to righteousness, which is the groundwork. But further, the apostle says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead." Therefore it is in "pressing towards the mark" that he waits for the coming of Jesus to accomplish this resurrection as to his body.

In the Epistle to the Colossians, chapter 2, he speaks to us of the circumcision of Christ. Is it only that he has ceased to sin (the certain effect indeed of this work of God)? No; for in describing this work he adds, "Being buried with him in baptism, wherein also we are risen with him, through faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead." The consequences of this heavenly life are found in Col 3:1, which is in immediate connection with the Verse just quoted. Here also the work is crowned by the manifestation of the saints with Jesus when He shall appear. Not the rapture; the heavenly part is omitted in Colossians, save that our life is hid there, and that what is there is an object of hope; we are made meet for it, which indeed is just what is done here.

Our Gilgal is in Jos 5:5: "Mortify therefore." It is not "die to sin." Mortify is active power. It rests on the power of that which is already true to faith: "Ye are dead: mortify therefore." This being the standing, it is realised. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead," said the apostle (Romans 6), when speaking on the same subject [See Note #2]. This is the practical power of the type of the stones brought from Jordan. They are a symbol of our place, being the result of death with Christ who was dead [See Note #3]. But we are also raised up together with Him [See Note #4], as having died with Him. But there is another aspect of truth, we were dead in sins. He came down in grace where we were, on the way down, so to speak, atoning for our sins.

God has quickened us together with Him, having forgiven us all trespasses [See Note #5]. All that He did was for us; and now, associated with Him in life, united to Him by the Spirit, I am also sitting in, not yet with, Him in heavenly places [See Note #6]. I appropriate to myself, or rather God ascribes to me, all that He has done, as though it had happened to myself: He is dead to sin, in Him I am dead to sin. Therefore I can "mortify": which I could not do as being still alive in the flesh. Where was the nature, the life, to do it in? I am risen with Him; I am also in Him sitting in heavenly places. But here it is not the Ephesian doctrine-which teaches the purpose and counsels of God, and, Christ being exalted to the right hand of God, shews the simple act of divine power which takes us when dead in sins and sets us in Him-it is the process, so to speak, through which we pass as having been alive (not dead) in sins, and passes us through death, in Christ, into a better life. The other is equally true, so I have spoken of it; but, it is the change, the essential but subjective change spoken of in Colossians as far as death and resurrection with Him go, which is our present subject in Joshua.

Now, circumcision being the practical application of that of which we have been speaking-the death of Christ to sin, to all that is contrary to our risen position, "the body of the flesh"-we remember the death of Christ, and the mortification of our members on the earth is accomplished through grace, in the consciousness of grace. Otherwise it would only be the effort of a soul under the law, and in this case there would be a bad conscience and no strength. This is what sincere monks attempted; but their efforts were not made in the power of grace, of Christ and His strength. If there was sincerity, there was also the deepest spiritual misery. In order to mortify there must be life; and if we have life, we have already died in Him who died for us. The stones set up in Gilgal were taken out of the midst of Jordan, and Jordan was already crossed before Israel was circumcised. The memorial of grace and of death, as the witness to us of a love which wrought out our salvation, by taking up our sins in grace, and dying to sin once, stood in the place where death to sin was to be effected. In that He died, He died unto sin once; and we reckon ourselves dead to sin. Christ dying for sins, in perfect love, in unfailing efficacy, and His death to sin, give us peace through His blood as to both, but also enable us through grace to reckon ourselves dead to sin, and to mortify our members which are on earth. In every

circumstance, then, we must remember that we are dead, and say to ourselves, If through grace I am dead, what have I to do with sin, which supposes me to be alive? Christ is in this death in the beauty and in the power of His grace; it is deliverance itself, and introduction morally into the condition in which we are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. As to the glory, as running the race down here, the apostle says, "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." But that is another subject.

Thus, in being dead, and only thus, will the reproach of Egypt be taken away. Every mark of the world is a reproach to him who is heavenly. It is only the heavenly man who has died with Christ that disentangles himself from all that is of Egypt. The life of the flesh always cleaves to Egypt; but the principle of worldliness is uprooted in him who is dead and risen with Christ and living a heavenly life. There is in the life of man, alive as such in this world (Col 2:20), a necessary link with the world as God sees it, that is, corrupt and sinful; with a dead man there is no such link. The life of a risen man is not of this world; it has no connection with it. He who possesses this life may pass through the world, and do many things that others do. He eats, works, suffers; but, as to his life and his objects, he is not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. Christ, risen and ascended up on high, is his life; he subdues his flesh, he mortifies it, for in point of fact he is down here, but he does not live in it. The camp was always at Gilgal. The people-the army of Jehovah-returned thither, after their victories and their conquests. If we do not do the same, we shall be feeble: the flesh will betray us. We shall fall before the enemy in the hour of conflict, even though it may be honestly entered into in the service of God. It is at Gilgal the monument of the stones from Jordan is set up; for if the consciousness of being dead with Jesus is necessary to enable us to mortify the flesh, it is through this mortification that we attain to the practical knowledge of what it is to be thus dead. We do not realise the inward communion (I am not speaking now of justification), the sweet and divine enjoyment of the death of Jesus for us, if the flesh is unmortified. It is impossible. But if we return to Gilgal, to the blessed mortification of our own flesh, we find there all the sweetness (and it is infinite), all the powerful efficacy of this communion with the death of Jesus, with the love manifested in it. "Always bearing about in the body,"

says the apostle, "the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our body." Thus we do not remain in Jordan; but there remains in the heart all the preciousness of this glorious work, a work which the angels desire to look into, which is for us, and which Christ, in His love, appropriates to us. We find Him with us at Gilgal-a place of no outward show or victory to attract the eyes of men; but where He, who is the source of all victory, is found in the power and the communion which enable us to overcome.

But there were also twelve stones set up in the midst of Jordan; and indeed, if we apply the power of the death of Christ to mortify the flesh, the heart-exercised in, and fully enjoying heavenly things-loves to turn again to Jordan, to the place where Jesus went down in the power of life and obedience, and to gaze upon that Ark of the Covenant, which stood there, and stayed those impetuous waters till all the people had passed over. One loves, now that He is risen, while viewing the power of death in all its extent, to behold Jesus there, who went down into it, but who destroyed its power for us. In the overflowing of the nations, Christ will be the security and the salvation of Israel; but He has been our security and our salvation with respect to much more terrible enemies. The heart loves to stand on the banks of that river-already crossed-and to realise, while studying what Jesus was, the work and the wondrous love of Him who went down into it alone, until all was accomplished. But in one sense we were there. The twelve stones shew that the people had to do with this work, although the ark was there alone when the waters were to be restrained.

In the Psalms we can especially there contemplate the Lord, now that we are in peace on the other side the stream. Oh, that the Christian-each one in the assembly-knew how to seat himself there, and there meditate on Jesus gone down into death alone, and death when it overflowed all its banks, bearing its sting and the power of divine judgment with it! In doctrine the Psalms set forth also the connection between the death of Jesus and the residue of Israel passing through the waters of tribulation in the last days.

Behold, then, the people out of Egypt and in Canaan, according to the faithfulness of 'God's promise; but as yet nothing of Canaan possessed, nor any victory gained. It is a type for us of what is taught in the Colossians:

made meet to be partakers, but the inheritance of the saints in light still in hope [See Note #7]; not only redeemed out of Egypt, but brought into Canaan, the reproach of Egypt being rolled away, and the people of God having taken their place at Gilgal-the true circumcision of heart of which we have spoken. Israel encamped at Gilgal.

The character of their communion with God is then pointed out, before their victories. They keep the passover in the plains of Jericho. Jehovah prepared a table before them in the presence of their enemies. The blood was no longer sprinkled, as in Egypt, upon the lintel and the two side-posts, that they might be sheltered from the destroyer, and preserved from the last judgment which spread terror throughout every house where the blood was not seen. We need this aspect of the blood of Christ, while judgment threatens in the territory of sin and Satan, although called of God to come out of it. God's justice and our consciences require it. But here the passover is no longer this; it is the memorial of accomplished salvation. Neither is it participation by grace in the power of the death and resurrection of Christ. It is the soul's communion; it is the sweet spiritual recollection of a work all His own, of His death as a lamb without blemish. We feed upon it, as His redeemed people, in the enjoyment of this position in the land of promise and of God-a land which belongs to us in consequence of this redemption, and of our being raised up with Christ. The death of Jesus can only be thus enjoyed on the other side of Jordan, as risen with Him. Then, in peace, in fellowship with Him, and with ineffable feelings of thankfulness, we return to the death of the Lamb; we contemplate it; we feed upon it. Our heavenly happiness and intelligence only increase our sense of its preciousness.

On the morrow after the passover the people ate of the old corn of the land. Thus, raised up, and in title and nature suited to it, and taking our place thus in fitness and hope in the heavenly places, it is Christ known as heavenly who feeds the soul, and maintains it in vigour and in joy [See Note #8]. From thenceforward, also, the manna ceased. This is the more remarkable, because Christ, we know, is the true manna, but Christ down here, Christ after the flesh, and suited to man, and to his wants in the wilderness; nor will He ever be forgotten as such. I contemplate Jesus (God manifest in the flesh) with adoration. My soul feeds upon the mighty attractions of His

grace in His humiliation; delights in the blessed testimony of His love who bore our sorrows and carried our sicknesses, and learns to be nothing and serve, in Him who took the lowest place. It is in this He ministers to the secret affections of the heart as we pass through this world; still in that condition He remained alone. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die; otherwise it abides alone. But-while knowing what He has been-it is a Christ seated above, who came from above, who died and is raised again, and ascended up where He was before, whom I now know. His death, of the memorial of which we have spoken, is undoubtedly the basis of all. There is nothing more precious: but it is a heavenly Christ with whom we have now to do as the living One. For the rest, we remember Him in His humiliation and death; but this He gives us as its character. Even in the Lord's supper, analogous to the passover here celebrated it was "Do this in remembrance of me." And so in all His life, it was in the wilderness, and suited to us for the wilderness also; it is, in our little measure, in heart or in fact, the fellowship of His sufferings.

We contemplate, while seeking to imitate, the precious model which He has set before us, as a heavenly man upon the earth. But, beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. He has for our sakes sanctified Himself, that we might be sanctified through the truth. We delight ourselves with the contemplation of all His grace here below; our affections are drawn out by a suffering Saviour. Nothing more precious than the Son of God winning the confidence of man's heart to God by His love in their midst when far from Him; but our present fellowship is with a Christ in heaven. And the Christ, whom we know on earth, is a heavenly Christ, and not an earthly Christ, as He will be to the Jews by-and-by. It was bread on earth no doubt, but bread come down from heaven; and this is a very important consideration. In passing through this wilderness (and we are passing through it), Christ, as the manna, is infinitely precious to us. His humiliation-His grace-comfort, also relieve, and sustain us. We feel that He has passed through the same trials, and our heart is sustained by the thought that the same Christ is with us. This is the Christ we need for the wilderness-the bread which came down from heaven: but, as a heavenly people, it is Christ, as belonging to heaven and heavenly things, as associated with Him, the old

corn of the land; for it is to Christ ascended up on high that we are united; it is there that He is our life. In a word, we feed on heavenly things, on Christ above, on Christ humbled and dying indeed as a sweet remembrance, but on Christ living as the present power of life and grace. We feed on the remembrance of Christ on the cross; this is the passover. But we keep the feast with a Christ who is the centre of heavenly things, and feed upon them all (Col 3:1-2). It is the old corn of the land into which we have entered. For He belongs to heaven. Thus, before giving battle, in front of the very walls of Jericho (representative of the enemy's power), God gives us to enjoy the fruit of this heavenly land as being all our own. We remember the death of Jesus, as redemption long since wrought out; and we feed on the old corn of the land, on heavenly things, as our own present portion. For, being risen with Christ by His grace, all is ours.

After this beautiful picture of the position and the privileges of God's people, who-according to God's own rights-may enjoy everything before engaging in a single battle, we find that war must follow. But there is one thing necessary for making war and obtaining blessings by conquest. Jehovah presented Himself as Captain of the host; it is He Himself who leads us. He is there with a drawn sword in His hand Faith owns no neutrality in heavenly things. [See Note #9] "And Joshua said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay, but as captain of the host of Jehovah am I come."

Remark here that the presence of Jehovah, as Captain of the host, as much demanded holiness and reverence, as when He came down to redeem His people (Exodus 3) in that divine holiness and majesty which were manifested according to their just requirements in the death of Jesus, who gave Himself that He might magnify and establish them for ever. Such as He was, who called Himself "I am," when He thus came down in righteousness and majesty; such also is He when standing in the midst of His people to bless and lead them in conflict. The almighty power of God is with the church in its warfare. But His infinite holiness is there also, and He will not make good His power in their conflicts if His holiness is compromised by the defilement, the negligence, the heedless levity, of His people; or by their

failure in those feelings and affections which become the presence of God, for it is God Himself who is there.

Note #1

Colossians 3 is God's declaration of our position; Romans 6 exhortation to take it up in faith; 2 Corinthians 4 carrying it out in practice in the inner man (Col 3:5-17).

Note #2

We have three steps in this process: God's judgment, "Ye are dead"; the recognition of it by faith, "Reckon yourselves dead"; and the carrying it out in practice, "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."

Note #3

The Epistle to the Romans gives, in the desert, faith's estimate of the position which Christ's death has given to us, of death to sin and life to God in this world, as involved in our being saved by His death into which we were baptised, but our resurrection which takes us out of the desert, and is Colossians and Jordan.

Note #4

Thus far the Colossians.

Note #5

Thus far, also, the Colossians; but we are not viewed there as dead in sins, but as having lived in them, now dead and risen.

Note #6

This is Ephesian teaching. And this is God's sovereign act of power which has taken us when dead in sins and put us into Christ.

Note #7

Christ's state (only that He was actually raised) between His resurrection and ascension helps to understand it. He belonged evidently to heaven, not to this world, though He was not in heaven.

Note #8

Let us remark, also, that christian simplicity and sincerity, the practical holiness of the christian life, the unleavened bread which was eaten on the morrow after the passover, is a heavenly thing. Nothing on this side Jordan can be this. It is of the growth of that land; therefore it is connected with Jesus, and peace through His death as a thing previous.

Note #9

I say, in heavenly things, because the heart is sensible of good qualities in the creature. The Lord loved the rich young man when He had heard his replies. But when a rejected and ascended Lord is to be followed, the will always sets itself either for or against. Faith knows this; it knows too the rights of God, and it maintains them.

Joshua Chapter 6

In chapter 6 we find the principles on which the conquests of Israel are founded. The work is altogether God's. He may indeed exercise His people in conflict, but it is He who does all. "They went up every man straight before him." There is submission here in the use of means, readiness to follow a course which, in the eyes of the world, is absurd and without object; but which loudly proclaims the presence of the Lord in the midst of His people. There is entire dependence upon God, a perfect confidence in Him, which openly declares it has nothing else to do but to obey Him. The promise is sure; they act in obedience. That is the principle Joshua-type of the energy and the mind of the Spirit in one who enjoys communion with the Lord-is certain of success; and in this assurance of faith he acts without hesitation. In effect, all the strength of the enemy falls to the ground without the use of any means that could account for it. Another principle is, that there must be no fellowship whatever with that which constitutes the power of the enemy of God, with the world, and that which is its strength. All is accursed. It is so with us in this world. If the world of Sodom had enriched Abraham, he would have been dependent on that world; he would have owed it something; he would not have been at liberty from it to belong entirely to God. "And ye in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed." God may use these things by consecrating them

to Himself, if He will. But if man, if the Christian, meddle with them, the Lord must judge him. cities walled up to heaven, the greatest obstacles are as nothing; how can they be with God? But holiness, complete separation from the world because power is of God-that is the condition of strength. Jericho, representing the enemy's power and means of defence (inasmuch as it was the first city standing as a barrier to arrest the progress of God's people), is put under a curse for ever; and sentence is passed against any one who should rebuild it (see Kg1 16:34). The abstract principles of the power of God and the enemy's strength are presented by this city and its fall, in what evidences them, and in contrast. But, if God is there, and the world is utterly condemned, His grace calls out from this world a people saved by faith from its abominations, and Rahab, a poor unworthy sinner, is saved from its judgment, and has her place and part with the people of God [See Note #1].

Note #1

It is noticeable that she, like Ruth, the stranger, is in the line of the Lord's royal genealogy (Mat 1:5).

Joshua Chapter 7

Chapter 7 lays open the principles of God's government, or His ways in the midst of His people who are in conflict. Victory leads to negligence. The work is thought easy. After a manifestation of God's power there is a kind of confidence which in reality is only self-confidence, for it neglects God. What proves this is that God is not consulted. Ai was but a small city. Two or three thousand men could easily take it. They went up and viewed the country, but God was forgotten. The consequence of this will be seen. If they had taken counsel of Jehovah, either He would have given no answer on account of the accursed thing, or He would have made its presence known. But they did not seek His counsel; they went forward, and they were defeated. The people of God surrounded by the enemy, have lost their strength, and flee before the least city in the land. What Will they do now? This is more than they know. Engaged in battle, and unable to conquer, what can they do there, where victory alone is their safety? "The hearts of the people melted and became as water." Joshua cries unto Jehovah, for in such a case even he who has the Spirit is taken by surprise, not having acted according to the

Spirit. He must fall on his face before Jehovah, for their condition is not normal, not according to the Spirit who is the only guide and wisdom of His people. Joshua however recalls the power by which God had brought the people over Jordan, and contrasts it with their present condition, so evidently inconsistent with it. "Wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan, O Lord! what shall I say?"

This was a perturbed state of mind, the effect of a mixture of unbelief with the remembrance of the wonders which the power of God had wrought. Joshua loves the people, and he sets before God the glory of His name; yet with a timorous wish that they had remained on the other side of Jordan (and what to do there? for unbelief ever reasons badly), away from the conflict which led to such disasters—a wish that betrayed the unbelief which disturbed his heart.

Such is the state of a believer's soul in the conflict which the Holy Ghost brings him into, when the state of his soul does not inwardly correspond with the presence of the Holy Ghost who is our only strength for conflict. There is no escape. The position in which the saints find themselves is one which absolutely requires strength; yet the very nature of God prevents His bestowing it. We lament, we recognise His power, we dread the enemy. We talk of God's glory: but we are thinking of our own fears and our own condition. Yet the thing was very simple. "Israel hath sinned." Man, even when spiritual, looks at results (because he is in close contact with them), even while owning the power of God, and the connection between Him and His people. But God looks at the cause, and also at what He is Himself. It is true that He is love, but He cannot sacrifice the very principles of His being, nor deny Himself in those relationships which are founded upon what He is. His glory is indeed connected through grace with the well-being of His people. But He will vindicate His glory, and even bless His people in the end, without compromising these principles. Faith must count on the sure result of His faithfulness, but bring the heart (submitting to God's ways) into accordance with those principles. It would not be maintaining His glory in the midst of His people if He tolerated amongst them anything contrary to

His essential character, and made use of His power to maintain them in a condition which would deny His nature. The relationship would be broken, and God Himself compromised—a thing absolutely impossible. They had sin amongst them, and the strength of God is no longer with them; for God cannot identify Himself with sin.

And let us remember that there was sin also in the neglect which went forward without seeking counsel from God. Joshua's cry did not at once bring deliverance, but, first of all, discovery of the sin, with respect to which God is very precise and exact. When the government of His people is in question, He searches into everything, and takes cognisance of the smallest details (see Jos 7:11). Further, God not only said, "therefore Israel could not stand," but "Thou canst not stand." Their weakness would continue. Sorrowful change! Before it was "No man shall be able to stand before thee." Now they could not stand themselves. Where there is not holiness, God allows the weakness of His people to be practically seen; for there is no strength but in Him, and He will not go out with them where holiness is wanting, nor thus sanction and encourage sin. Only, let us remark here, that God does not always withdraw His blessing at once from those who are unfaithful. He frequently chastens them on one hand, and blesses them on the other. He deals patiently, He instructs them, in His grace; He does not bless them on the side where the evil is, but He acts with admirable tenderness and perfect knowledge, taking the trouble, so to say, of following the soul in detail according to its condition and for its good; for He is full of grace. How often He thus waits for the repentance of His people! Alas! how often He waits for it in vain. But we have here the great principle on which He acts (as in the case of Jericho, that of His power exercised on behalf of His people), proving that all is of God.

Another important principle is here set before us. The people of God are viewed corporately, as to the effects of sin amongst them. God is in their midst. sin is committed there. He is there. But since there is only one God there, and the people are one, if God is displeased and cannot act, the whole people suffer in consequence, for they have no other strength but God. The only remedy is to put away the accursed thing. We find the same thing at Corinth, modified according to the principles of grace. The wicked person

must be put away. If not, they are all identified with the sin until they have put it away, and have thus "approved themselves to be clear." In doing so, they take God's part against the sin, and the relationship between God and the body reassumes its normal state. Nevertheless all this cannot fail to produce certain painful effects. If the accursed thing is there, although God may have been glorified in the manifestation of the perfection of His ways-of His jealousy of sin, and perfect knowledge of all that happens (for Achan's confession justifies God, and the people have not a word to say), still, though the sin is no longer concealed, discipline must be carried out. The confession of Achan (whose sin had been brought to light, through the obedience of the people, or of Joshua, to the Lord's directions) does but ratify, in the eyes of all, the just judgment.

But it is well to remember here that christian discipline has always the recovery of the soul for its object. Even if the offender should be delivered unto Satan, it is for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord-a most forcible reason for exercising this discipline, according to the measure of our spiritual power; for we cannot go beyond that. At the least we might always humble ourselves before God, in order that the evil may be removed. To be indifferent to the presence of evil in the church is to be guilty of high treason against God; it is taking advantage of His love to deny his holiness, despising and dishonouring Him before all. God acts in love in the church; but He acts with holiness and for the maintenance of holiness: otherwise it would not be the love of God which acted; it would not be seeking the prosperity of souls.

It is interesting to see that this valley of Achor, the witness and the memorial of the first sin committed by Israel after they had entered the land, is given them "for a door of hope" (Hos 2:15), when the sovereign grace of God is in action. It is always thus. Fear sin, but do not fear the bitterness of its discovery, nor that of its chastisement: for at this point God resumes the course of blessing. Blessed be His gracious name for it! Alas! Shinar (Babylon) and money soon begin to affect the ways of the people of God. They find these things amongst their enemies, and the carnal heart covets them. Observe also that, if there is faithfulness and obedience, God

never fails to manifest and take away that which hinders the blessing of His people. Let us follow the history of the people's restoration to God's favour.

Joshua Chapter 8

Chapter 8 exhibits the return of Israel to their strength in God. If all the people were compromised by Achan's sin, it was needful that they should be sensibly restored to confidence, that they should be established, and consequently that they should go through whatever was necessary to their restoration. They must experience many things. Much experience of this kind would be avoided by walking in the simplicity and integrity of faith. Jacob had more of it than Abraham, and it was when unfaithful that Abraham went through the most (that is, of such experience as is really felt to exercise the heart). But God makes use of this to teach us what we are, and what He is: two things which-if we know them not-render experience necessary.

Success is now certain: but all the people must go up against this small city which, judging by human strength, might have been taken by two or three thousand men. Pride and false confidence are sharply rebuked by this. How much trouble must Joshua now take! Lay an ambush, feign to flee: all this to take a small city, and not much glory after all. It costs more pains to return into the path of blessing than it would have done to avoid the evil. But the simplicity of faith and its natural vigour can be regained no other way.

Meanwhile, the power of God is with them, and everything succeeds; although the manifestation of this power is not such as it was at Jericho. At length by God's command Joshua stretches out the spear that was in his hand toward the city. It does not appear that the ambush saw it, or that it was a concerted signal [See Note #1]. But as soon as it was stretched out, the ambush arose, entered the city, and set fire to it. It is thus that the Lord, working by His Spirit at the opportune moment produces activity in those even who may not know why. At a given time they are impelled onwards, and think they act from motives of their own, while it is the Lord who directs all their steps in harmony with what He is doing elsewhere: and thus He brings about the success of the whole affair. It is highly interesting to see the Lord thus the hidden spring of all action, giving impulse to the activity of

His children, who in detail are ignorant of what it is that puts them in motion although, on the whole, the mind of God is revealed to them, even as Israel had the general orders of Joshua. When Christ stretches out the spear, all is activity to bring about the counsels of His wisdom and lead to the predetermined results of His mighty grace. May we only have faith to believe it!

We have still two other important facts to consider in this chapter. Jehovah had already shewn in the taking of Jericho that it was His might alone that gave victory, or rather that made everything fall before Israel, the prince of this world having no power against Him; and that, the gold and silver being Jehovah's, the people were not to seek the treasures of the conquered world, nor to enrich themselves with its spoils. In general, however, when Israel had exterminated their enemies, they took possession of everything, as of the promised land. Now that these two great principles are established, (namely that the power of God is with His people, and that He will have holiness and consecration to Himself maintained in the camp,) Joshua takes formal possession of the whole country, as belonging to Jehovah. This is not celebrating the memorial of their salvation by the blood of the Lamb; nor is it feeding on the old corn of the heavenly land in the place of rest; where the grace and perfection of Christ and the redemption He has wrought out are peacefully remembered. The people treat the land itself as belonging of right to Jehovah, according to the strength of the spiritual might which is in activity to assert His rights, and which recognises them, although the conquest of the land is only just begun. Before Jericho (in type) they had fellowship with the cross, and with things above, without striking a blow.

Here, the conditions of the warfare being laid down, they publicly declare beforehand that it is Jehovah's land. Though Satan is still in possession of the contested land, by right it is Jehovah's. There were two actions by which Joshua verified this. He commanded the dead body of the king of Ai to be taken down from the tree as soon as the sun was down. This was the ordinance in Deu 21:22-23, "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day (for he that is hanged is accursed of God); that thy land be not defiled, which Jehovah thy God

giveth thee for an inheritance." Israel's victory was complete. The curse hung over their enemies, who were also God's enemies. They were made a curse, and declared to be so. Now, according to Joshua's faith, the land was so entirely Israel's, as the gift of God, that it ought not to be defiled; he had, therefore, the dead body taken down that it should not be so in fact.

The other action was Joshua's building an altar on Mount Ebal. Having taken possession of Canaan as a consecrated land, they recognise Jehovah as the God of Israel by worshipping Him in the land. The altar was there as a witness, and as a bond between the people and Jehovah who had given them the land. The erection of this altar has been already spoken of, when considering the Book of Deuteronomy; I will not recur to it. I leave it to the reader to judge whether Joshua would have done better to set up this altar as soon as they had crossed the Jordan. Be that as it may, we do not always turn at once to God, when we enjoy that which His power has wrought. Our not doing so only proves our folly, whether it be in things connected with our joy or our safety. It was the Lord's mind here to give us the testimony of divine strength and human weakness before this public assumption of the land in His name; the practical realisation of being beyond Jordan in power and of Gilgal, brought home to them by its contrast. It is taken possession of in connection with Israel's responsibility under the law. Joshua now reads, before all the people, not only the curses attached to the violation of the law, but all that made known the ways of God in His government of the people.

Note #1

It the more appears that this was not a concerted signal, but that the action had the meaning which I have here assigned to it, because Joshua drew not his hand back till they had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai; and this does not agree with the idea of a mere signal.

Joshua Chapter 9

But, if such a position as this proclaims the rights of God and manifests the confidence of the people, it soon leads to conflict. The enemy will not consent to the invasion and the taking possession of all the territory he has usurped. But the wiles of the enemy are more to be feared than his

strength; indeed it is only these that are to be feared: for in his strength he meets the Lord: in his wiles he deceives, or seeks to deceive, the sons of men. If we resist the devil, he flees; but to stand against his wiles, we need the whole armour of God. Christ met his wiles with Scripture, in the path of simple obedience, and, when he manifested himself, the Lord said, "Get thee hence, Satan."

The inhabitants of Gibeon pretended to have come from far. The princes of Israel use their own wisdom instead of asking counsel of Jehovah. This time it is confidence, not in the strength, but in the wisdom of man. The princes of the congregation, accustomed to reflect and to guide, are more likely to fall into this snare. Bad as they are in their unbelief, the people, eager for the result, are often nearer the mind of God to whom the result is sure. The princes had some misgivings, so that they are inexcusable. Apparently there was much advantage in gaining allies in a place where they had so many enemies. The Gibeonites flattered them too, as the servants of Jehovah. Everything was calculated to set their minds at rest. Satan can talk religiously as well as another; but he deceives only when we take the management into our own hands, instead of consulting the Lord. Communion with Him was needed to discern that these were people of the country, enemies who dared not to be enemies; but to make peace with such is to deprive oneself of a victory, and of one's right to make good the judgment and the glory of God, in the unmingled possession of the land of blessing. Allies can only set aside that single-eyed dependence upon God, and that purity of moral relationship which exist between God and His people, when it is His power alone that sustains them. For allies were not Israel. Israel spares the enemy; and the name of Jehovah, which had been brought in, obliges His people to retain a perpetual snare in their midst.

Four centuries later, in the days of Saul, this produced its sorrowful fruits. To a spiritual mind the presence of the Gibeonites would always be an evil. Besides, what had Israel to do with allies? Was not Jehovah sufficient? May He give us always to trust in Him, to seek counsel of Him, to own none but Him, and to be always subject to Him! This will ensure victory over every enemy, and the land will be all our own.

Joshua Chapter 10

Moreover, this peace with the Gibeonites only brought fresh attacks upon Israel. But now all is plain. Jehovah says to Joshua, "Fear them not, for I have delivered them into thy hand." This is all that conflict means for one who walks in the Spirit before God. There must be conflict, but conflict is only victory. It is the Lord who has delivered the enemy into our hands; none can stand before us.

All things are ours. The sun stands still, and the moon stays its course, witnessing to the power of God and to the interest He takes in blessing His people. We may be sure that, whithersoever the Spirit will go, there the wheels will go (Eze 1:20). Joshua defeated all his enemies, because Jehovah, the God of Israel, fought for Israel. This time they were faithful, they made no peace. What had Canaanites to do in Jehovah's land? Has Satan any right to the land of promise? This is the light in which Joshua always beholds the land of Canaan (Jos 10:27). But, after the victory, Israel returned to the camp of Gilgal. We have already explained what Gilgal means. But the return thither of the conquerors of the Canaanitish kings contains the instructive lesson that, whatever our victories and our conquests may be, we must always return to the place that becomes us before God in the annihilation of self; to the application of the knowledge we have of God (the resurrection of Christ having set us in the heavenly places), to the judging and the mortifying of the flesh-to spiritual circumcision, which is the death of the flesh by the power of resurrection. There is a time to act and a time to be still, waiting upon God that we may be fit for action. Activity, the power that attends us, success, everything, tends to draw us away from God, or at least to divide the attention of our fickle hearts. But the camp is the starting-point for victory, and the return from triumph for true strength is always to Gilgal. It is not there that the enemy attacks us if we are faithful. The attack will be on our side, whatever the manoeuvres of our adversaries may be.

Let us observe also that, in spite of the people's and Joshua's failures, everything turned out well in the end. There were faults, and these faults received their chastisement, as in the case of Gibeon and of Ai. But, the walk of the people being faithful in the main, God made everything work together for good. Thus the peace with Gibeon led to victory over the kings who attacked that people. There was cause for humiliation and for

chastisement in the details of their history; but, as a whole, the hand of God appears in it most manifestly. It is seldom that every step of our way is taken in faith and dependence upon God. We do well to humble ourselves on account of this. But when the object is the Lord's object, He goes before us, and orders all things for the triumph of His people in this holy war, which is His own war. Only failures may bring their fruits for a long while.

Joshua Chapter 11

Israel's victories bring fresh war upon them; but the confederation of their enemies only serves to deliver them all together into their hands. If God will not have peace, it is because He will have victory. A new principle is now set before us. God will in nowise allow the world's seat of power to become that of His people; for His people depend exclusively on Him. The natural consequence of taking Hazor would have been to make it the seat of government, and a centre of influence in the government of God, so that this city should be that for God which it had before been for the world; "for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms." But it was just the contrary. Hazor is totally destroyed. God will not leave a vestige of former power; He will make all things new. The centre and the source of power must be His, entirely and exclusively His: a very important lesson for His children, if they would preserve their spiritual integrity.

In a certain sense the conquest of the land seemed complete; that is to say, there was no outward strength left, either to stand before them or to form a kingdom. But Israel had still many enemies in this land, enemies who did not, indeed, molest them while they continued faithful, but who taught the people many things that afterwards helped on their ruin. They had divided the conquered land; they had rest from war. When all is finished, we may reckon up our victories, but not before; till then we ought rather to be occupied in gaining more.

We may remark here that, in the result of God's dealings, the fault committed previously to the attack upon Ai seems blotted out, and had even contributed to the development of His purposes. At the time it had kept them back, and was punished. But God applied Himself to Israel's moral restoration to the confidence of faith, and the grand object of His dealings

was in nowise hindered. This is no excuse; but it is a sweet and strong consolation which leads so much the more into worship. The fault committed in the matter of the Gibeonites appears to me more serious. It did not delay their progress; but, being the act of Joshua and the princes, it set them for ever in a false position with respect to those whom they spared. Chapter 11 closes the first division of the book, that is to say, the history of Joshua's victories (typically that of the Lord's power by the Spirit, giving His people possession of the promises).

Joshua Chapter 12

The following commentary covers Chapters 12 through 24.

Chapter 12 is only a summary of their conquests. The Holy Ghost not only gives us the victory over our enemies, but makes us understand and know the whole extent of the country, and defines the particular portion of each; giving us details of everything it contains; of God's perfect arrangements for the appropriation of the whole, and the distribution of each part of His people, so as to produce a well-ordered whole, and perfect in all its parts, according to the wisdom of God. But here we have to realise the distinction maintained in the New Testament between the gifts of God, and the enjoyment of the gifts given. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." "He hath made us sit together in heavenly places by the same power which placed Christ there, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him above every name that is named. Alas! how many earthly things still remain unsubdued among Christians. But the Holy Ghost takes cognizance of this condition, in view of, and in connection with, that which rightfully belongs to them: it is this which enables us to understand the second division of this book.

Although there was still a considerable part of the land to be possessed, Joshua parcels out the whole amongst the tribes of Israel, according to the command of Jehovah, who declares that He will Himself drive out its inhabitants before them. But the people poorly responded to this promise. The cities of the Philistines were indeed taken, but their inhabitants were not exterminated; they were spared, and soon regained power. Here we may remark that, wherever there is faithfulness, there is rest. The effect of

Joshua's work was, that "the land had rest from war"; so also with that of Caleb (Jos 14:15). When the cities of the Levites were allotted them, we find the same thing again (Jos 21:43-44). It is not so in detail. The whole extent of country is given to Israel, and each tribe has his share; the portion, therefore, which fell to each tribe was given them in full right by Jehovah Himself. Their borders were marked out; for the Spirit of God takes notice of everything in distributing the spiritual inheritance, and gives to each according to the mind of God. There is nothing uncertain in God's arrangements. But we find that not one tribe drove out all the enemies of God from His inheritance, not one realised the possession of all that God had given him.

Judah and Joseph take possession of their lots. We know that they always remained chief amongst Israel, fulfilling thus the counsels of God as to royalty for Judah, and the birthright which fell by grace to Joseph (chaps. 15-17; see Ch1 5:2). The tabernacle of God was also set up in peace (chap. 18); but, once at rest, the tribes are very slow in taking possession of their portion-too frequently the history of God's people. Having found peace, they neglect His promises. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the Spirit of God did not fail to point out to the people in detail all that belonged to them.

The cities of refuge are appointed (chap. 20); that is, the land being Jehovah's, provision is made that it may not be defiled, and for the return of every man to his inheritance, after he had fled from it for a time, because of killing some person unawares. We have already seen the force of this. Only we may remark here, that not only have we seen spiritual title to all at once before Jericho-the rights of Jehovah maintained in the case of the king of Ai and mount Ebal, as the ground of present possession-but provision for restoration to enjoyment of the inheritance in detail when temporarily lost, which, in figure, applies to the people in the last days.

The establishment of the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan gave rise to difficulties and suspicions. Nevertheless these tribes were faithful at heart. Their position had done them harm, their self-seeking having somewhat marred the energy of their faith: still, faithfulness to Jehovah was found in them.

Finally, Joshua sets the people, in the way of warning, under a curse, or under a blessing, according to their obedience or disobedience; and then recapitulates their history, telling them that their fathers had been idolaters, and that the people around them were so still.

But the people, not having yet lost the sense of the power of God who had blessed them, declare that they will serve Jehovah alone. They are thus placed under responsibility, and undertake to obey, as the condition of their possessing the land and enjoying the fruit of God's promise. They are left there, it is true, in peaceable possession of it all, but under the condition of obedience after having already allowed those, who should have been utterly destroyed, to remain in the land; and when, from the outset, they had not at all realised that which God had given them. What a picture of the assembly ever since the days of the apostles!

There is yet one remark to be made. When Christ shall return in glory, we shall inherit all things, Satan being bound. The assembly ought to realise now, by the Holy Ghost, the power of this glory. But there are things, properly called heavenly, which are ours, as being our dwelling-place, our standing, our calling; there are others which are subjected to us, and which are a sphere for the exercise of the power that we possess. Thus the limits of Israel's abode were less extensive than those of the territory to which they had a right. Jordan was the boundary of their abode, the Euphrates that of their possession. The heavenly things are ours; but the manifestation of the power of Christ over creation, and the deliverance of this creation, is granted to us. It will be delivered when Christ Himself shall exercise the power. Thus the "powers of the world to come [See Note #1]" were deliverances from the yoke of the enemy. These were not things proper to us; nevertheless they were ours.

Note #1

So called, I doubt not, because they were samples of that power which will entirely subdue the enemy when Christ shall appear.

JUDGES

Introduction to Judges

The Book of Judges is the history of the failure of Israel. Joshua sets before us the energy of God acting in the midst of the people, though there may be failure. In Judges we see the miserable state of the nation, now become unfaithful; and, at the same time, the intervention of the God of mercy in the circumstances into which their unfaithfulness had brought them. These interventions correspond with what are called revivals in the history of the church of God.

In this book we no longer see blessing and power marking the establishment of the people of God. Neither does it contain the fulfilment of God's purposes, after the people had manifested their inability to retain the blessing they had received, that indeed is yet to come for them, and for the assembly; nor the forms and government which, in spite of the evil and internal unfaithfulness of the people, could maintain their external unity, until God judged them in their leaders. God was still the only leader acknowledged in Israel; so that the people themselves always bore the penalty of their sin.

The misery into which their unfaithfulness brought them moving the compassion of God, His mighty grace raised up deliverers by His Spirit in the midst of the fallen and wretched people. "For his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." "And Jehovah raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them." "And when Jehovah raised them up judges, then Jehovah was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, all the days of the judge; for it repented Jehovah because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them." But Israel was unchanged. "And yet they would not hearken unto their judges." "And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn ways." This is the

sorrowful history of the people of God; but it is also the history of the grace of God, and of His compassions towards His people.

Judges Chapter 1

Judges 1:1

jdg 1:1

Thus, in the beginning of the book, we see evil and failure, and also simple and blessed deliverances. But alas! the picture darkens more and more. There are grievous features even in the conduct of the judges, and the state of Israel becomes worse and worse; until weary of the results of their own unfaithfulness, in spite of the presence of the prophet, and the express word of God, they reject the kingship of the Almighty to adopt human forms of government, and establish themselves on the same footing as the world, when they had God for their king!

This unfaithfulness, indeed, foreseen of God, was the reason why God left some of the nations in the midst of His people to prove them. The presence of these nations was in itself a proof of Israel's lack of energy and confidence in the power of God, who nevertheless would have preserved them from their subsequent disasters. But in the wisdom of His counsels, God, who knew His people, left these nations in their midst, as a means of proving them. Israel will be fully blest only under Messiah, who by His might will bring in their blessing, and by His might will preserve it to them.

Alas! this history of Israel in Canaan is also that of the assembly. Set up in heavenly blessing on the earth, it has failed from the beginning in realising that which was given to it; and evil developed itself in it as soon as the first and mighty instruments of blessing which had been granted it were removed. Things have gone from bad to worse. There have been revivals, but still the same principle of unbelief; and the decay of each revival has marked increasing progress in evil and unbelief in proportion to the good which has been thus forsaken. The revival never reaches to the extent of laying hold of what God is, what He revealed Himself as at first for His people, what the first power of revelation and action of the Spirit. When departed from, God is more and more lost. The part of His blessing afresh

brought forward is neglected and abandoned, so that there is a more entire forgetfulness of Him, and nature and the world resume their place, but now not merely without, but to the exclusion of, God, and setting up of man and nature, by departing from the primitive source of blessing and strength [See Note #1].

Nevertheless God has always had His own people, and His faithfulness has never failed them, whether in secret, or manifesting openly, in His kindness, His grace towards His assembly in public power-a power that it ought always to have enjoyed. This sad succession of falls will have an end at the coming of Jesus, who will accomplish His purposes respecting the assembly in its heavenly glory; purposes, of which it should have always been the faithful witness here below.

The power and the presence of God did not forsake Israel at the time of Joshua's departure. It was always to be found wherever there was faith to make use of it. This is the first truth which this book presents. It is what Paul said to the Philippians, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do."

This presence of God with them in blessing to faith makes itself known at one time by victory over most powerful enemies (Jdg 1:1-7); at another by the obtaining of special blessing, "springs of water" (Jdg 1:13-15), and in all the detail of their realisation of the promises. The Philistines even were driven out (Jdg 1:18). But at the same time, the faith of Judah and Simeon, of Ephraim and Manasseh, and of all the tribes failed; and consequently their energy, and their sense of the value of God's presence, and of their own consecration to Him, failed also, together with their perception of the evil existing among their adversaries-a perception which would have rendered their presence in the midst of them insupportable.

What dishonour to God, what sin, to spare, to tolerate, such people! What unfaithfulness towards God was this indifference; and what an infallible source of evil and corruption in Israel! But they were insensible to all this. They were wanting in spiritual discernment as well as in faith; and the

sources of evil and misery dwelt beside the people, even in the land, the land of God and of Israel.

Note #1

It is a striking fact in man's history that the first thing that he has always done when God has set up something of His own on the earth has been to spoil it. Man himself eats the forbidden fruit; Noah gets drunk; Aaron's sons offer strange fire; Israel makes the golden calf; Solomon falls into idolatry; Nebuchadnezzar sets up his idol and persecutes. God's patience has gone on dealing with souls, all through, in spite of it.

Judges Chapter 2

Alas! if such was the condition of the people, and they were satisfied with it, chastening, as at Ai, was no longer in question. But the angel of Jehovah (the operative power of God in the midst of the people) quits Gilgal (that spiritual circumcision of heart, which precedes victory, and tempers the soul anew that we may overcome in conflict) and comes up to Bochim, to the place of weeping, in the midst of the people, declaring that He will no longer drive out the enemy whom Israel had spared. God had been then at Gilgal! What a blessing amid those exercises and inward conflicts of heart, in which true practical circumcision is accomplished, in which the source and influence of sin are felt in order to judge it before God; so that, the flesh being judged, we may in conflict (and also in communion) enjoy the strength of God, who cannot grant it to the flesh and to sin.

This inward mortification is a work of no outward glory; it is unseen, or little and pitiful in the eyes of man; it makes us little in our own, but God and His grace great, and associates the heart with Him, giving the moral consciousness of His presence. Not as if we were strong; on the contrary there is the sense of entire dependence (compare 2 Cor. 12), but dependence on divine strength, which really does all that is done, though God may do it through instruments if He sees good, and then the responsibility of man comes in. At Jericho God did all, to shew, being without man, who was the doer-then at Ai, responsibility. The strength was not shewn at Gilgal. It was shewn against the Amorites of the mountains, at Gibeon; but it was gathered at Gilgal. Historically it did not appear that the

strength of God was at Gilgal. To have manifested it would have destroyed the proper work of Gilgal-the judgment in humbleness because of God, of everything in which flesh works. But, when forsaken, it was discovered that the angel of Jehovah had been there. It is exchanged for tears. But the tears are for lost blessings. God may be worshipped in Bochim: His relationship to the people was unaltered. He accepts these tears. But what a difference! The strength and the light of Jehovah's countenance are not there. But He is always the same for faith to count on, as when the sea fled from before His face, and Jordan was driven back. The sorrow of the position is felt, but alleviated by the sense that His grace cannot and will not fail (see Jdg 6:13-14). This change from Gilgal to Bochim is the key to the book; it is so, alas! but too often, the condition of God's children.

The Holy Ghost, having laid these general foundations, goes on to the historical development of Israel's position. All the days of Joshua and of the elders that outlived him, Israel walked before Jehovah. It is the history of the assembly. While the apostles were there, it was preserved; but Paul (Act 20:29) and Peter (2 Peter 2) alike warned the saints that unfaithfulness and rebellion would unhappily follow their departure. These evil principles were already there. The intermixture of unbelievers (the enemy's work) would become the means through which the evil would unfold itself and gain ground amongst them. The Lord had spoken of this (Matthwe 13), not indeed as to the assembly, but as to the good seed which He had sown; and Jude develops its progress and results with solemn perspicuity and precision.

But when another generation arises in Israel, which has not known Jehovah, and has not seen all the great works of His hand; and when they serve the gods of the people whom Israel had spared, God no longer protects them. Unfaithful within, the Israelites fall into the hands of the enemy without. Then, as we have seen, in their affliction Jehovah, moved with compassion, raised up judges, who, acknowledging His name, brought back the manifestation of His power in their midst.

Judges Chapter 3

The following commentary covers Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

God, knowing what the people were, and what was their condition, had left within the borders of their land that which put obedience to the proof—the Philistines, the Sidonians, etc., that they might learn war, and experience the ways and the government of Jehovah. Thus the wisdom and foreknowledge of God, who knows what is in man, turned the unfaithfulness of the people into blessing. Outward prosperity, without trial, would not have remedied unbelief, whilst it would have deprived them of those exercises and conflicts in which they might learn what God was, His ways and His relations to them, as well as what their own hearts were. We go through the same experience, and for the same reasons.

I will now go over the principal subjects presented in the history of this book. Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar were, in succession, the first instruments raised up by God to deliver His people. First we have to remark the failure of the people, who begin to serve false gods; thereupon their servitude. In their distress they cry unto Jehovah. This is always the way in which deliverance comes (Jdg 3:9; Jdg 3:15; Jdg 4:3). In this last instance Jehovah departs from His usual ways. The nation had lost its strength and energy, even as to its internal affairs. This is the effect of repeated falls; the sense of God's power is lost.

At the period of which we speak, a woman judged Israel. It was a sign of God's omnipotency, for she was a prophetess. But it was contrary to God's ordinary dealings, and a disgrace to men. Deborah calls Barak (for where the Spirit of God acts, He discerns and directs); she communicates to him the command of God. He obeys; but he lacks faith to proceed as one who has had direct instruction from God and consequently needs no other. These direct communications give the consciousness of God's presence, and that He interposes on behalf of His people. Barak will not go without Deborah. But this want of faith is not to his credit. Men will keep the place which answers to the measure of their faith; and God will again be glorified through the instrumentality of a woman. Barak has faith enough to obey if he has some one near who can lean immediately on God, but not enough to do so himself. This is too often the case. God does not reject him, but He does not honour him. In fact, it is by no means the same faith in God. And it is by faith that God is honoured.

We have, moreover, in this case, not the immediate destruction of the enemy, but the discipline of the people in war to recover them from the state of moral weakness into which they had fallen. They began with small things. A woman was the instrument; for fear does not honour God, and God cannot allow His glory to rest on such a condition as this. But little by little "the hand of the children of Israel prevailed against Jabin until they had destroyed him." The usual effect of such a work of the Holy Ghost as this is to present the people as willingly offering themselves (Jdg 5:2).

Nevertheless the Spirit of God has shewn us that unbelief amongst the people had caused many of them to stay behind; and thus they lost the manifestation and the experience of the power of God. The judgment of God amounts to a curse where there was an entire holding back, a refusing to be associated with the people in their weakness.

Judges Chapter 6

But again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of Jehovah, and He delivered them into the hand of Midian. And the children of Israel cried again unto Jehovah. God reveals the cause of their distress to the consciences of the people. This was indeed an answer; but, for the moment, He left them as they were. He did not act in their midst by delivering them at once; but He acted for them in the instrument whom He had chosen to effect their deliverance. God glorified Himself in Gideon: but the concentration of this work in one man proves the people to be in a lower condition than before. Nevertheless, in these humiliating circumstances, God chooses means which display His glory in every way. Where He works, there is strength; and faith also, which acts according to that strength in its own sphere.

We will examine a little into the history of Gideon, and the features of the Spirit's work in this deliverance, as well as in the faith of him whom He raised up. It is evident that many thoughts had occurred to Gideon, many serious reflections, before the angel spoke to him. But it was the angel's visit that caused him to give form and expression to the thoughts with which his heart was occupied. Gideon suffered with the rest from the oppression of God's enemies; but it led him to think of God, instead of making up his mind to endure the bondage as a necessary evil. The angel

says to him, "Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." That which preoccupied the mind of Gideon is now manifested. It was not his own position, but the relation between Jehovah and Israel [See Note #1]. "If Jehovah," said he, "be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not Jehovah bring us up from Egypt? But now Jehovah hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

Faith, indeed, was the source of all these reasonings and exercises of mind. Jehovah had wrought all these wonders. He had brought the people up from Egypt. If Jehovah was with Israel, if such was His relation to His people, why were they in this sorrowful condition? (Oh, how applicable would this reasoning be to the assembly!) Gideon acknowledges, too, that it is Jehovah who delivered them into the hands of the Midianites. How the thought of God raises the soul above the sufferings one is enduring! While thinking of Him one recognises, in these very sufferings, the hand and the whole character of Him who sent them. It was that which lifted up this poor Israelite, labouring under the weight of oppression. "And Jehovah looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel." The visit and the command of Jehovah imparted their form and their strength to that which before was only heart-exercise.

Nevertheless it was this heart-exercise which gave him strength; for it was the inward link of faith with all that Jehovah was for His oppressed people, in the consciousness of the relationship existing between them. We will look now at the development of this faith, and see it employed for the deliverance of God's people. Gideon experiences at first the sense of his own littleness, whatever may be the relationship between Jehovah and the people (Jdg 6:15). Jehovah's answer shews him the one simple means, "Surely I will be with thee." Precious condescension! Sweet and powerful encouragement to the soul! Gideon's faith was weak. The present state of the people tended, by its duration, to blot out the remembrance of the wonders which Jehovah had wrought when they came out of Egypt, and to weaken their consciousness of His presence. The angel of Jehovah condescends to tarry with him in order to strengthen his faith.

Gideon, who had addressed him with a secret consciousness that it was Jehovah, now knows indeed that he has seen the angel of Jehovah, of Elohim, face to face. It was a positive revelation, sufficient to annihilate him in himself, as was indeed the case; but also mightily to strengthen him in his walk amongst others, who had not known Jehovah in the same way. Although not with similar visions, yet it is always thus when God raises up a special instrument for the deliverance of His people. Jehovah had made Himself known, and now he reassures Gideon: "Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.?" A man who is humbled by the presence of God receives strength from God, if that presence is in blessing. Gideon recognises and lays hold of this for himself: Jehovah is with him in peace and in blessing. The word Shalom, translated "Peace be with thee," is the same as that used in the name of the altar.

When God acts powerfully on the heart, the first effect shews itself always in connection with Himself. Gideon's thoughts are occupied with Jehovah, they were so before this manifestation. But being taken up with Jehovah, it is by worship that he expresses his feelings [See Note #2], when he receives an answer from Jehovah to all his thoughts [See Note #3]. He builds an altar to the God of peace. The relationship of peace is thus established between God and His servant; but all this is between Gideon and Jehovah.

Now comes his public service, which is also fulfilled by re-establishing, first of all, in the bosom of his own family, and in his own city, the relationship between God and His people. Israel must put away Baal before God can drive out the Midianites. How could He do so, while the blessing might be ascribed to Baal? Gideon is therefore commanded to give a striking testimony, which calls the attention of the whole people to the necessity of casting out Baal, in order that God may intervene. Faithfulness within precedes outward strength: evil must be put away from Israel before the enemy can be driven out. Obedience first, and then strength: this is God's order.

When Satan's power in superstition (in whatever way it may be outwardly manifested) is despised, it is destroyed; supposing always that God is with him who pours contempt on it, and that he is in the path of obedience. Gideon overthrows Baal; and, on the anger of the people fearful through

superstition-What can this god do? he cannot defend himself, said even he to whom the altar belonged. The power of God acted on their minds, for faith was there. But the opposition of the enemy did not cease on that account. There is nothing so despicable as a despised god. But if Satan cannot be a god amongst men, he is not at the end of his resources, he will incite them to open hostility against those who overthrow his altars; but if we are standing on God's side, the only effect of this will be to bring him thereby into the presence of God's power, and to give us victory, deliverance, and peace.

The Midianites come up against Israel. All is ready for the Lord's intervention. The Spirit of Jehovah comes upon Gideon. This is a new phase in the history; not only faithfulness, but power. Gideon blows the trumpet, and those who shortly before would have slain him now follow in his train. He sends messengers to all his tribe. Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali come up also. The power of the Spirit, which sways the minds of men, is with the faith that acknowledges God, that acknowledges Him in His relationship to His people, and faithfully puts away the evil which is incompatible with that relationship.

God gives another proof of His great condescension, by granting a sign to strengthen the weak but real and sincere faith of Gideon; who feels, whilst repeating his request (Jdg 6:39), that God might well chasten him for his lack of faith. Nevertheless the Lord grants his petition.

Note #1

Not the elevation of Abrahamic promises, but the manifestation of redeeming power in Jehovah in favour of Israel. Something like Moses, to whom Jehovah had said, "thy people," but who ever said, "Thy people." So Gideon cannot separate himself from all Israel-God's people. "Jehovah is with thee," said the angel. "If Jehovah be with us," says Gideon, "why then is all this befallen us?" But this is an immensely important principle of faith and its activities. Note, too, what was passing in the heart of faith was the ground Jehovah took in testimony (Jdg 6:8), only adding the charge of disobedience.

Note #2

We observe a similar feeling in Eliezer (Gen 24:27). It is very interesting to notice the different circumstances in which altars have been built to Jehovah. I will name a few passages: Gen 8:20; Gen 12:7; compare Gen 13:4; see Gen 21:33; Gen 22:9; Gen 26:25; Gen 33:20; Gen 35:7. We may also remark Exo 24:4; Jos 8:30; and here Judges 6. It appears even that Gideon built two altars; the one for himself in worship, and the other by command as a testimony. Sa1 7:17; Sa1 14:35; Kg1 18:32. We may add Sa2 24:25; Ezz 3:2.

Note #3

It is instructive to observe here the difference between the exercises of heart which are the result of faith, and the answer of God to the wants and difficulties which are caused by those exercises. In Jdg 6:13 we have the expression of these exercises in a soul under the weight of the same oppression as his brethren, but who feels it thus because his faith in the Lord was real. Then we have the answer which produces peace, and, with peace, worship. It is the same, when, after having suffered death, the risen Jesus reveals Himself to His disciples with the same words that God uses here, and lays down the foundation of the church gathered together in worship. In Luke 7 we find the same experiences in the woman who was a sinner. She believed in the person of Jesus. His grace had made Him her all; but she did not know yet that one like her was pardoned and saved, and might go in peace. This assurance was the answer given to her faith. Now this answer is what the gospel proclaims to every believer. The Holy Ghost proclaims Jesus. This produces conviction of sin. The knowledge of God in Christ, and of ourselves, casts down (for sin is there, and we are in bondage, sold under sin); but it produces conflict, perhaps anguish. Often the soul struggles against sin, and cannot gain the mastery; it cannot get beyond a certain point (the greater number of the sermons from which it expects light go no farther); but the gospel proclaims God's own resources for bringing it out of this state. "Peace be unto thee," "thy sins are forgiven." "Thy faith" (for she has faith), says Christ to the poor sinful woman, "hath saved thee." This was what she knew not yet. Compare Act 2:37-38.

Judges Chapter 7

Thirty-two thousand men followed Gideon. But Jehovah will not have so many. He alone must be glorified in their deliverance. Their faith was indeed so weak, even while the Spirit of God was at work, that, when in the presence of the enemy, twenty-two thousand men were content to return at Gideon's invitation. The movement produced by the faith of another is quite a different thing from personal faith. But ten thousand men are still too many. Jehovah's hand alone must be seen. Those only may remain who do not stop to quench their thirst at their ease, but who refresh themselves hastily, as opportunity offers, more occupied with the combat than with their own comforts by the way. This was what was needed for Israel—that Jehovah should have His place in their hearts and faith; and it suited the just judgment of God in Israel that they should, as to their place in the work, be left out of the glory of it.

Gideon now displays entire confidence in God. Previously, the weakness of his faith had made him look too much at himself, instead of simply looking to God. His deep sense of Israel's condition prevented his hesitating for a moment because the people were not with him; what could be done with this people? In the mistrust which arose from a disposition to look too much to himself, what he needed was the certainty that Jehovah was with him. But, having now the assurance that Jehovah will deliver Israel by his means, he trusts entirely to Him.

Jehovah throws terror and alarm into the midst of the enemy; and acquaints Gideon with this. It is affecting to see the care which God takes to impart confidence to His servant, suitably to the need which the state of things had created. Already the name of Gideon resounded with dread in the numerous army of the Midianites. Then, terror-stricken, they destroy each other. The confidence of the Midianites, founded only on Israel's want of power, melted away before the energy of faith; for the enemy's instruments have always a bad conscience. It is Jehovah who does everything. The trumpets and the lamps alone announce His presence, and that of His servant Gideon. The multitude of Israel pursue the enemy, profiting by the work of faith, although without faith themselves: the usual result of such a movement.

Judges Chapter 8

Nevertheless, they did not all unite with Gideon in pursuit of the Midianites. But, for the moment, Gideon despises the cowardice which disowns him through a remaining fear of the oppressor's power. On his return he chastises, in the righteous indignation of faith, those who at such a moment had shewn themselves favourable to the enemy, when the servants of God were "faint yet pursuing" (chap. 8). While the work was yet to do, they were taken up with the work and passed on: there is time enough for vengeance when the work is done. Gideon has also the prudence to set himself aside, in order to allay the jealousy of those who felt their pride wounded, because Gideon had had more faith than themselves. They did not boast of their own importance, or request to be called, when Midian had power over the land of Israel. It would be wrong to contend with such persons. If you are satisfied with having done the work of God, they will be satisfied with the spoil they find in pursuing the enemy; they will make a victory of it to themselves. It must be allowed them; for in fact they have done something for the cause of God, although tardy in espousing it. They came when they were called, and willingly, as it appears; they followed Gideon's directions, and brought him back the heads of the princes. The secret of faith and of Jehovah was with Gideon. It was useless to speak of it to them. The people did not know their own weakness. Gideon must be strong on Jehovah's side for Israel, since Israel could not be so with him. But for that very reason they could not understand why they were not called before. It had to be left unexplained; a proof of the sad state of Israel. But the danger was removed, and the difficulty set aside, in that Gideon wisely contented himself with calming their minds, by not insisting upon his own importance, which arose from a faith of which they did not feel themselves incapable, and the difficulties of which they could not appreciate, since they possessed it not. We must be near God in order to feel what is wanting in His people's condition as to Him: for it is in Him we find that which enables us to understand both His strength, and the exigencies of our relationship with Him. During the lifetime of Gideon, Israel dwelt in peace.

Although the details of this deliverance have an especial interest, it appears to me to mark a lower condition of the people than at the period of the preceding ones. It then seemed quite a natural thing that some servant of Jehovah, trusting to His arm, should deliver the people from the yoke that

oppressed them. Or else the people-awakened by the words of a prophetess-released themselves, and, by the help of God, obtained the victory over their enemies. But in this case even the sense of Jehovah's relationship to His people had to be restored. That is what God does with Gideon, as we have seen, and that with touching condescension and tenderness. But it was requisite to do it. Therefore God alone accomplished the deliverance of His people. The people must not be employed in it, lest they should attribute it to themselves; for the farther off we are from God, the more ready we are to ascribe to ourselves that which is due only to Him.

Judges Chapter 9

The following commentary covers Chapters 9, 10, 11, and 12.

After Gideon's death we see the results of this distance from God in the internal struggles which took place between the children of Israel. They are ungrateful to the house of Gideon, and war breaks out amongst them through the leader whom they set up, and who, instead of fighting with the enemies of God, only seeks dominion over the people who are now at peace (Judges 9).

The overthrow of the men of Shechem and of Abimelech is followed by temporary peace, after which the people fall again into their idolatrous iniquity, and Jehovah sells them into the hands of the nations whose gods they serve. Sorely distressed by their enemies, the children of Israel cry unto Jehovah, who reproaches them for their past conduct, and sends them back to the gods they had been worshipping. Then the people put away the strange gods from among them. Jehovah is moved with compassion (Judges 10).

Israel, without a leader, have recourse to the captain of a troop of "vain men," and promise to obey him if he will put himself at their head. Jephthah consents. But although this was a deliverance, yet we see in it all how deeply Israel had fallen. Jephthah himself suffers cruelly from his rash vow; and, moreover, when the pride of the Ephraimites led them to complain that they had not been treated with due respect, the calmness and wisdom of one who knew Jehovah as Gideon did, were not found in Jephthah. What a difference between these days and those of Joshua! God multiplies His

deliverances; but this has no effect on the unbelief of the people, and their condition continues to grow worse and worse (Judges 11, 12).

After Jephthah, Israel again enjoys an interval of peace under the guidance of several judges whom God raises up. But they soon return to their former course of sin, and Jehovah delivers them into the hand of the Philistines. Samson's history gives us the commencement of Israel's relationship with these bitter enemies, which only ceased when David had subdued them. The Philistines at this period were at the height of their power. But the important thing here is the history of Samson (Judges 13-16).

Judges Chapter 13

Samson, as a type, sets before us the principle of Nazariteship, entire separation to God, the source of strength in conflict with our enemies, looked at as enemies who seek to gain the upper hand amongst the people of God, within their own limits and in their own heart.

The Philistines were not a scourge, a chastisement sent from without; they dwelt in Israel's own territory, in the land of promise. Undoubtedly, before this, other nations whom the faithlessness of the people had left in the midst of Canaan had been a snare to them, leading them to intermarriage with idolaters, and to the worship of false gods; and Jehovah had given them up into the hands of their enemies. But now, those who had been suffered to remain in the conquered land assume dominion over Israel.

Here, then, that which can give victory and peace to the heirs of promise is the strength imparted by separation from all that belongs to the natural man, and entire consecration to God, so far as it is realised. This Nazariteship is spiritual power, or rather that which characterises it, when the enemy is within the land. For Samson judged Israel during the dominion of the Philistines (Jdg 15:20). Afterwards Samuel, Saul, and above all David, entirely changed the state of things.

When the Canaanite, when the power of the enemy, reigns in the land, Nazariteship alone can give power to one who is faithful. It is a secret unknown to the men of the world. Christ exemplified it in its perfection. Evil reigned amongst the people. The walk of Christ was a walk apart, separate

from evil. He was one of the people, but, like Levi (Deu 33:9), He was not of them. He was a Nazarite. But we must distinguish with respect to this. Morally, Christ was as separate from sinners while on earth, as He is now. But, outwardly He was in their midst; and, as the witness and expression of grace, He was spiritually in their midst also. Since His resurrection He is completely separate from sinners. The world sees Him not, and will see Him no more save in judgment.

It is in this last position, and as having put on this character of entire separation from the world, that the assembly, that Christians, are in connection with Him. Such a High Priest became us. The assembly retains its strength, Christians retain their strength, so far only as they abide in this state of complete separation, which the world does not understand and in which it cannot participate. Human joy and sociability have no part in it; divine joy and the power of the Holy Ghost are there. The life of our adorable Saviour was a life of gravity, always grave and generally straitened (not in Himself, for His heart was a springing well of love, but because of the evil that pressed Him on every side): I speak of His life and of His own heart. With regard to others, His death opened the flood-gates, in order that the full tide of love might flow over poor sinners.

Nevertheless, whatever may have been the Lord's habitual separateness, He could say, with reference to His disciples, "These things I speak in the world that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." It was the best of wishes, divine joy instead of human joy. The day will come when these two joys shall be united, when He will again drink wine, though in a new way, with His people in the kingdom of His Father; and all will be His people. But at present this cannot be; evil reigns in the world. It reigned in Israel, where there ought to have been righteousness. It reigns in Christendom, where holiness and grace should be manifested in all their beauty.

The separation unto God, of which we have been speaking, is under these circumstances the only means of enjoying the strength of God. It is the essential position of the assembly. If it has failed in it, it has ceased to manifest the essential character of its Head, in connection with itself, "separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens"; it is but a false

witness, a proof among the Philistines that Dagon is stronger than God; it is a blind prisoner.

Nevertheless it is remarkable that, whenever the world draws away, by its allurements, that which God has separated from it unto Himself, this brings down the judgment of God upon the world, and leads to its ruin. Look at Sarah in the house of Pharaoh; and in this instance, Samson, blind and prisoner in the hands of the Philistines; and again also Sarah in the house of Abimelech, although God, on account of the integrity of his heart, did but chasten the latter.

The Nazarite then represents Christ, such as He was here below in fact and by necessity; and also such as He now is completely and in full right, seated on the right hand of God in heaven, hidden in God, where our life is hid with Him. The Nazarite represents the assembly or an individual Christian, so far as the one and the other are separated from the world and devoted to God, and keep the secret of this separation. This is the assembly's position, the only one which God recognises. The assembly, being united to Christ who is separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens, cannot be His in any other manner. It may be unfaithful to it, but this is the standing given it with Christ. It can be recognised in no other.

Samson represents to us also the tendency of the assembly, and of the Christian to fall away from this position, a tendency which does not always produce the same amount of evil fruit, but which causes the inward and practical neglect of Nazariteship, and soon leads to entire loss of strength, so that the assembly gives itself up to the world. God may still use it, may glorify Himself through the havoc it makes in the enemy's land (which ought to be its own); He may even preserve it from the sin to which the slippery path it treads would lead it. But the state of mind which brought it there tends to yet lower downfalls.

Judges Chapter 14

The following commentary covers Chapters 14 and 15.

God makes use of Samson's marriage with a Philistine woman to punish that people. Still, in the freshness of his strength, his heart with Jehovah, and

moved by the Holy Ghost, Samson acts in the might of this strength in the midst of the enemies he has raised up against him; and, in point of fact, he never marries this Philistine woman. I have said that God used this circumstance. It is thus He may use this spiritual strength of the assembly, so long as in heart it cleaves to Him, although its walk may not be faithful or such as He can approve. For it is evident that Samson's marriage with a daughter of Timnath was a positive sin, a flagrant infringement of Jehovah's ordinances, which is in no wise justified by the blessing which the Lord bestowed upon him when wronged by the Philistines. It was not in his marriage he found blessing, but quite the contrary. Accordingly Samson has not Israel with him in the conflicts occasioned by his marriage; the Spirit of God does not act upon the people as He did in the case of Gideon, of Jephthah, or Barak.

Moreover, when Nazariteship is in question, opposition must be expected from the people of God. A Nazarite is raised up in their midst, because they are no longer themselves thus separated unto God. And this being the case, they are without strength, and will allow the world to rule over them, provided that outward peace is left them; and they would not have any one act in faith, because this disquiets the world and incites it against them. "Knowest thou not," said Israel, "that the Philistines are rulers over us?" Even while acknowledging Samson as one of themselves, the Israelites desire to give him up to the Philistines in order to maintain peace. But in the part of Samson's life now before us there are some details which require more attention.

His marriage was a sin. But the separation of God's people had no longer that measure of practical application which the mind of God had assigned it. The fact itself was inexcusable, because it had its origin in the will of Samson, and he had not sought counsel from God. But, owing to the influence of circumstances, he was not conscious at the time of the evil he was committing, and God allowed him to seek peace and friendship with the Canaanite world (that is to say, the world within the inclosure of God's people), instead of making war against them; so that, as to the Philistines, Samson had right on his side in the contentions which followed.

Before his marriage Samson had slain the lion, and had found honey in its carcase. He had strength from God while walking in his integrity. This is the "riddle," the secret of God's people. The lion has no strength against one who belongs to Christ. Christ has destroyed the strength of him that had the power of death. By the might of the Spirit of Christ our warfare is victory, and honey flows therefrom. But this is carried on in the secret of communion with the Lord. David maintained this place better in the simplicity of duty. Samson did not keep himself from those connections with the world to which the condition of the people easily led. This is always a Christian's danger. But whatever may be their ignorance, if the children of God make any alliance with the world, and thus pursue a line of conduct opposed to their true character, they will assuredly find disappointment. They do not keep themselves apart for God; they do not keep their secret with God, a secret which is only known in communion with Himself. Their wisdom is lost, the world beguiles them, their relationship with the world becomes worse than before, and the world despises them, and goes on its own way, regardless of their indignation at its behaviour towards them.

What had Samson to do there? His own will (chap. 15) is in exercise, and takes its share in the use of that strength which God had given him (like Moses when he slew the Egyptian). We always carry a little of the world with us when, being children of God, we have mingled with it. But God makes use of this to separate us forcibly and thoroughly from it, making union impossible by setting us in direct conflict with the world even in those very things which had formed our connection with it. We had better have remained apart. But it is necessary that God should thus deal with us, when this union with the world becomes an habitual and a tolerated thing in the church [See Note #1]. The most outrageous circumstances pass unnoticed. Think of a Nazarite married to a Philistine! God must break off such a union as this by causing enmities and hostilities to arise, since there is no intelligence of that moral nearness to God which separates from the world, and gives that quietness of spirit which, finding its strength in God, can overcome and drive away the enemy, when God leads into conflict by the plain revelation of His will. But if we are linked with the world, it will always have dominion over us; we have no right to resist the claims of any relationship which we ourselves have formed. We may draw nigh to the

world, because the flesh is in us. The world cannot really draw nigh to the children of God, because it has only its own fallen and sinful nature. The approximation is all on one side and always in evil, whatever the appearance may be. To bear testimony in the midst of the world is another thing.

We cannot therefore plead the secret of the Lord, the intimate relationship of God's people to Himself, and the feelings they produce; for the secret and the strength of the Lord are exclusively the right and the strength of His redeemed people. How could this be told to his Philistine wife? What influence would the exclusive privileges of God's people have over one who is not of their number? How can we speak of these privileges when we disown them by the very relationship in which we stand? We disown them by imparting this secret; for we then cease to be separated and consecrated to God, and to confide in Him as we can do in no other. This experience should have preserved Samson, for the future, from a similar step. But in many respects experience is useless in the things of God, because we need faith at the moment; for it is God Himself whom we need. Nevertheless Samson here still retains his strength. The sovereign will of God is fulfilled in this matter, in spite of very serious faults which resulted from the general state of things in which Samson participated. Once in the battlefield, he exhibits the strength of Jehovah who was with him; and in answer to his cry Jehovah supplies him with water for his thirst (chap. 15).

It is here that this general history of Samson ends. We have seen that the people of God, his brethren, were against him-the general rule in such a case. It is the history of the power of the Spirit of Christ exercised in Nazariteship, in separation from the world unto God; but in the midst of a condition entirely opposed to this separation; and in which he who is upheld by the power of this Spirit, finding himself again in his habitual sphere, is always in danger of being unfaithful; and so much the more so (unless he lives very near to God in the repose of obedience) from his consciousness of strength.

Christ exhibited the perfection of a heavenly walk under similar circumstances. We see that no one understood the source of His power, or His authority. He must have given up all hope of satisfying men with respect to the principles by which He was guided. They must have been like Him to

comprehend Him, and then they would not have needed to be convinced. To walk before God and leave His justification with God was all that could be done. He silenced His enemies by the well-known principles of God and of all good conscience; but He could not reveal the secret between Him and the Father, the element of His life, and the spring of all His actions. If the truth came out, when Satan pushed things so far that nothing else could be said, His enemies treated Him as a blasphemer, and He openly denounced them as the children of Satan. We find this particularly in John's Gospel (see chap. 8). But at that time Jesus held no longer the same relationship to the people. Indeed, from the beginning of this Gospel, they are treated as rejected, and the Person of the Son of God is brought forward.

From the commencement of His ministry, He maintained the place of an obedient servant, not entering on public service until called of God, after having taken the lowest place in John's baptism. This was the point at issue when He was tempted in the wilderness. The tempter endeavoured to make Him come out of His place as the obedient man, because He was the Son of God. But the strong man was bound there: to remain in obedience is the only way to bind the adversary. Christ ever walked in this perfect separation of the inner man, in communion with His Father, and entire dependence upon Him in obedience without a single moment of self-will. Therefore was He the most gracious and accessible of men: we observe in His ways a tenderness and a kindness never seen in man, yet we always feel that He was a stranger. Not that He came to be a stranger in His relationship with men; but that which lay deepest in His own heart—that which constituted His very nature, and consequently guided His walk by virtue of His communion with the Father—was entirely foreign to all that influences man. He abode emphatically alone. It is striking that not once His disciples understood what He said. The one only trace of a heart going with Him was Mary at Bethany; and that had to be told to the whole world. In Him, sympathy for every sorrow; for His, none.

This spirit of self-denial, entire renunciation of His own will, obedience, and dependence upon His Father, is seen throughout the life of Jesus. After John's baptism He was praying when He received the Holy Ghost. Before calling the apostles He spent the whole night in prayer. After the miracle of

feeding the five thousand with five loaves He went up into a mountain apart to pray. If the request is made to sit on His right hand and on His left in His kingdom, it is not His to give, but to them for whom it is prepared of His Father. In His agony of Gethsemane, His expectation and dread of death is all laid before His Father; and the cup which His Father has given Him, shall He not drink it? The effect is that all is calm before men. He is the Nazarite, separated from men by His entire communion with His Father, and by the obedience of a Son who had no other will than to fulfil the good pleasure of His Father. It was His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work.

But it was when man would not receive Him, and there was no longer any relationship whatever between man and God that Jesus fully assumed His Nazarite character, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens. It is Christ in heaven who is the true Nazarite, and who, having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, has sent Him forth upon His disciples, in order that, by the power of the Holy Ghost, they might maintain the same position on the earth, through communion with Him and with His Father; walking in the separateness of this communion, and capable therefore of using this power with a divine intelligence that enlightens and sustains the obedience for which they are set apart unto the glory of Christ, and for His service. "If ye abide in me," said He to His disciples, "and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." They were not of the world, even as He was not of the world. The assembly, which was formed of His disciples, should walk as separated from the world and set apart unto Himself in a heavenly life.

Christ is then the antitype of Samson's history, as to the principle it contains. But its detail proves that this principle of strength has been entrusted to those who were alas! but too capable of failing in communion and obedience, and thus of losing its enjoyment.

Note #1

In this union, when it takes place between the world and true Christians, or those at least who profess the truth the world always rules; when, on the contrary, it is with the hierarchy that the world is connected, it is then a

superstitious hierarchy that rules, for this is necessary in order to restrain the will of man by religious bonds adapted to the flesh.

Judges Chapter 16

Samson sins again through his intercourse with "the daughter of a strange god"; he connects himself again with women of the Philistines, amongst whom his father's house and the tribe of Dan were placed. But he retains his strength until the influence of these connections becomes so great that he reveals the secret of his strength in God. His heart, far from God, places that confidence in a Philistine which should have existed only between his soul and God (chap. 16). To possess and keep a secret proves intimacy with a friend. But the secret of God, the possession of His confidence, is the highest of all privileges. To betray it to a stranger, be he who he may, is to despise the precious position in which His grace has placed us; it is to lose it. What have the enemies of God to do with the secret of God? It was thus that Samson gave himself up to his enemies. All attempts were powerless against him so long as he maintained his Nazariteship. This separation once lost, although Samson was apparently as strong, and his exterior as goodly as before, yet Jehovah was no longer with him. "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that Jehovah was departed from him."

We can scarcely imagine a greater folly than that of confiding his secret to Delilah, after having so many times been seized by the Philistines at the moment she awoke him. And thus it is with the assembly: when it yields itself to the world, it loses all its wisdom, even that which is common to man. Poor Samson! his strength may be restored, but he has lost his sight for ever. But who has ever hardened himself against the Lord, and prospered? Job 9:4.

The Philistines ascribe their success to their false god. God remembers His own glory, and His poor servant humbled under the chastisement of his sin. The Philistines assemble to enjoy their victory and glorify their false gods. But Jehovah had His eye on all this. In his humiliation, the thought of the Lord had more power over the heart of Samson; his Nazariteship was regaining strength. He makes his touching appeal to God. Who would fear a

blind and afflicted prisoner? but who amongst this world knows the secret of Jehovah? A slave and for ever deprived of sight, his condition affords an opportunity, which his strength had not been able to obtain, before his unfaithfulness deprived him of it. But he is blind and enslaved, and he must perish himself in the judgment which he brings upon the impiety of his enemies. He had identified himself with the world by hearkening to it, and he must share the judgment which falls upon the world [See Note #1]. If the unfaithfulness of the assembly has given the world power over it, the world has on the other hand assailed the rights of God by corrupting the assembly, and therefore brings down judgment upon itself at the moment of its greatest triumph: a judgment which, if it puts an end to the existence, as well as to the misery of the Nazarite, destroys at the same time in one common ruin the whole glory of the world. In the details of prophecy this applies to the closing history of the Jewish people [See Note #2]. Only there the remnant is preserved, to be established on a new base for the accomplishment of the purposes of God.

Note #1

There was something of this, though in a very different form and manner, in Jonathan. His faith was not perfect. He held the world with one hand and David with the other, though the excuse of natural relationship might be there.

Note #2

As to the professing church it is somewhat different, because the saints are taken away to glory, and the rest, being apostate, are judged; but the fact of judgment on the world is identical.

Judges Chapter 17

The following commentary covers Chapters 17 through 21.

The chapters that follow (17-21) are not comprised in the historical order of this book. They lift the veil to disclose some incidents of the inner life of this people whom the patience of God bore with so long, touched with the afflictions of His people in the sufferings occasioned by their sins. Had they been obedient when Jehovah was their King, their prosperity had been

secure. Self-willed as they were, the absence of restraint-when they had no king-gave room to all kinds of licence. The last event, related in this book, shews to what a height disorder had risen in Israel and how they fell away immediately from God. But it affords a very important lesson. If the state of God's people collectively gives rise to iniquities which require discipline, the whole people are involved in the chastisement that follows; the effect of which is to make them take their condition to heart. That condition had prevented the repression of iniquity, or its immediate punishment when committed. But the people are set in the presence of God, who judges the whole matter, and all the people must have to do with it.

Israel at first did not even take counsel with Jehovah to learn how the sin should be dealt with. They acted from natural indignation (which was nevertheless quite righteous). Jehovah allowed all this in order that the people might learn where they were. The evil which required chastening had so blunted their spiritual state that they had not the thought of waiting in the first place on Jehovah to know what was to be done. Their course of action is determined before they consult Him, for they were far from Him. They merely ask who is to go up first. Jehovah points out Judah, but Judah is defeated. Twice beaten when they expected an easy victory, the people humbled and in tears have recourse again to Jehovah, and inquire if they shall go up. Jehovah then gives them the victory. Gibeah well deserved this discipline; but, to execute it, Israel itself needed discipline, and God allowed all to take part in it in order to make it take effect upon all.

But what a state were they all in, when the whole tribe of Benjamin joined the men of Gibeah, when guilty of such enormities! And observe, that Phinehas was still high priest, although he had already grown to manhood in the wilderness.

How patiently God dealt with this people, delivering them when they had so quickly fallen into sin and into such depths of sin! What does God not see in this world, and even in His people? It is important to note this bringing to light of that inward state which, in the general history, is not done. It sheds a much fuller light on the ways of God.

But it must be remarked that this is disaster and shame within, and from within, and under God's hand, but not judgment by enemies without through departure from God Himself.

RUTH

Introduction to Ruth

The Book of Ruth tells us also of the days of the judges, when there was no king in Israel; but it shews us the fair side of those days, in the operations of the grace of God, who (blessed be His name!) never failed to work in the midst of the evil, as also in the steady progress of events towards the fulfilment of His promises in the Messiah, whatever may have been the simultaneous progress of the general evil.

Ruth, a stranger seeking shelter by faith under the wings of the God of Israel, is received in grace, and the genealogy of David, king over Israel according to grace, is linked with her. It is the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Himself after the flesh.

This book appears to me to set before us in type, the reception in grace of the remnant of Israel in the last days, their Redeemer (the kinsman, who has the right of redemption) having taken their cause in hand.

Eli-Melech (which signifies God the King) being dead, Naomi (my delight, my pleasure) becomes a widow, and eventually loses her children also. She typifies the Jewish nation, who, having lost her God, is like a widow and has no heir. Yet there shall be a remnant, destitute of all right to the promises (and therefore prefigured historically by a stranger), who will be received in grace (similarly to the Gentiles and the assembly [See Note #1]-who will faithfully and heartily identify itself with desolate Israel; for Ruth clave to her and to her God (see). God will own this remnant, which, poor and afflicted itself, will in heart obey the commands given to the people.

Naomi, who in her destitution is a type of the nation, acknowledges her condition: she calls herself Mara (bitterness).

He who was nearest of kin, who would willingly have redeemed the inheritance, refuses to do so, if Ruth must be taken with it. The law was

never able (nor the assembly either) to re-establish Israel in their inheritance, nor to raise up in grace the name of the dead.

Boaz (in him is strength), upon whom the remnant had no direct claim (and who typifies Christ risen, in whom are the sure mercies of David), undertakes to raise up the name of the dead, and to re-establish the heritage of Israel. Acting in grace and in kindness, and encouraging the patient humble faith of the remnant, the meek of the earth, he shews himself faithful to fulfil the purpose and the will of God with respect to this poor desolate family. Nothing can be more touching and exquisite than the details given here. The character of Ruth, this poor woman of the Gentiles, has great beauty.

"Naomi took the child that was born to her, and laid it in her bosom"; and they said, "There is a son born to Naomi." In fact the heir of the promises will be born unto Israel as a nation, although the fulfilment of the promise affects the remnant only, which, fully identifying itself with the interests of God's people, has sought neither the rich nor the poor, but, in faith and obedience, has kept the testimony of God amongst the people in the path appointed by Him.

Thus, if on one side the Book of Judges shews us the falling away of the people of Israel, and their failure under responsibility, even when God was their helper, on the other side this touching and precious book sets before us, as the dawn of better things, grace acting in the midst of difficulties, securing the fulfilment of promise, and embellishing this scene of misery and sin by lovely and beautiful instances of faith, precious fruits of grace, whether in weakness and devotedness, or in strength and kindness, and always in accordance with the perfect will of God, and assuring by this touching history, as a type, the full restoration of Israel to blessing according to promise. It is a refreshing and lovely picture in the midst of the hard-mindedness and sorrows of Israel.

In the succeeding books we shall see prophecy, and the history of God's dealings, developing the body of events which tended to the fulfilment of His designs, the first principles, the elements, of which are laid down in that which is shewn us in this. For Ruth furnishes a kind of intermediate link

between the fall of Israel under God's immediate government, and the future fulfilment of His purposes.

Prophecy, which unfolds these purposes and gives moral proof of this fall, begins with Samuel: we learn this from the apostle Peter, and that Christ is the object of prophecy (see Act 3:24).

Eli, the last judge and priest, departs; his family is to be cut off; the ark of the covenant is taken by the Philistines; and Samuel, consecrated to God in a new and extraordinary manner, comes in with the special testimony of the Lord.

Note #1:

Compare Mic 5:3, last part.

Ruth Chapter 1

Ruth 1:1

rut 1:1

The following commentary covers Chapters 1 through 4.

The Book of Ruth tells us also of the days of the judges, when there was no king in Israel; but it shews us the fair side of those days, in the operations of the grace of God, who (blessed be His name!) never failed to work in the midst of the evil, as also in the steady progress of events towards the fulfilment of His promises in the Messiah, whatever may have been the simultaneous progress of the general evil. Ruth, a stranger seeking shelter by faith under the wings of the God of Israel, is received in grace, and the genealogy of David, king over Israel according to grace, is linked with her. It is the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Himself after the flesh.

This book appears to me to set before us in type, the reception in grace of the remnant of Israel in the last days, their Redeemer (the kinsman, who has the right of redemption) having taken their cause in hand. Eli-Melech (which signifies God the King) being dead, Naomi (my delight, my pleasure) becomes a widow, and eventually loses her children also. She typifies the Jewish nation, who, having lost her God, is like a widow and has no heir. Yet

there shall be a remnant, destitute of all right to the promises (and therefore prefigured historically by a stranger), who will be received in grace (similarly to the Gentiles and the assembly [See Note #1])-who will faithfully and heartily identify itself with desolate Israel; for Ruth clave to her and to her God (see Rut 1:16). God will own this remnant, which, poor and afflicted itself, will in heart obey the commands given to the people. Naomi, who in her destitution is a type of the nation, acknowledges her condition: she calls herself Mara (bitterness). He who was nearest of kin, who would willingly have redeemed the inheritance, refuses to do so, if Ruth must be taken with it. The law was never able (nor the assembly either) to re-establish Israel in their inheritance, nor to raise up in grace the name of the dead.

Boaz (in him is strength), upon whom the remnant had no direct claim (and who typifies Christ risen, in whom are the sure mercies of David), undertakes to raise up the name of the dead, and to re-establish the heritage of Israel. Acting in grace and in kindness, and encouraging the patient humble faith of the remnant, the meek of the earth, he shews himself faithful to fulfil the purpose and the will of God with respect to this poor desolate family. Nothing can be more touching and exquisite than the details given here. The character of Ruth, this poor woman of the Gentiles, has great beauty. "Naomi took the child that was born to her, and laid it in her bosom"; and they said, "There is a son born to Naomi." In fact the heir of the promises will be born unto Israel as a nation, although the fulfilment of the promise affects the remnant only, which, fully identifying itself with the interests of God's people, has sought neither the rich nor the poor, but, in faith and obedience, has kept the testimony of God amongst the people in the path appointed by Him.

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touching history, as a type, the full restoration of Israel to blessing according to promise. It is a refreshing and lovely picture in the midst of the hard-mindedness and sorrows of Israel.

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Note #1

Compare Mic 5:3, last part.

1 KINGS (1 SAMUEL)

Introduction to 1 Samuel

We have seen that the Book of Ruth occupies, in its purport, an intermediate place between the end of the period in which Israel was governed by God Himself, who interposed from time to time by means of judges, and the setting up of the king whom He selected for them. This period, alas! came to an end through the people's failure, and their inability to make a right use, by faith, of their privileges.

The Books of Samuel contain the account of the cessation of Israel's original relationship with God, founded on their obedience to the terms of the old covenant, and the special prescriptions of the Book of Deuteronomy; the sovereign interference of God in prophecy; and the setting up of the king whom God Himself had prepared, with the circumstances which preceded this event. It is not merely that Israel failed under the government of God: they rejected it.

Placed under the priesthood, they drew nigh to God in the enjoyment of privileges which were granted them as a people acknowledged by Jehovah. We shall see the ark-which, as it was the nearest and most immediate, so was it the most precious link between Jehovah Elohim and the people-fall into the hands of the enemy. What could a priest do, when that which gave his priesthood all its importance was in the enemy's hands, and when the place where he drew near to Jehovah (the throne of God in the midst of Israel, the place of propitiation by which in mercy Israel's relationship with God, through the sprinkled blood, was maintained) was no more there?

It was no longer mere unfaithfulness in the circumstances in which God had placed them. The circumstances themselves were entirely changed through God's judgment upon Israel. The outward link of God's connection with the people was broken; the ark of the covenant, centre and basis of their relationship with Him, had been given up by the wrath of God into the hands of their enemies. Priesthood was the natural and normal means of

maintaining the relationship between God and the people: how could it now be used for this purpose?

Nevertheless God, acting in sovereignty, could put Himself in communication with His people, by virtue of His grace and immutable faithfulness, according to which His connection with His people existed still on His side, even when all acknowledged relationship between Him and them was broken off by their unfaithfulness. And this He did by raising up a prophet. By his means God still communicated in a direct way with His people, even when they had not maintained their relationship with Him in their normal condition. The office of the priest was connected with the integrity of these relations; the people needed him in their infirmities. Still under the priesthood the people themselves drew nigh to God through the medium of the priest, according to the relationship which God had established and which He recognised. But the prophet acted on the part of God outside this relationship, or rather above it, when the people were no longer faithful.

The setting up of a king went much farther. It was a new order of relationship which involved most important principles. The relationship of God with the people was no longer immediate. An authority was set over Israel. God expected faithfulness from the king. The people's destiny depended upon the conduct of the one who was responsible before Jehovah for the maintenance of this faithfulness.

It was God's purpose to establish this principle for the glory of Christ. I speak of His kingdom over the Jews and over the nations, over the whole world. This kingdom has been prefigured in David and in Solomon. To ask for a king, rejecting God's own immediate government, was folly and rebellion in the people. How often are our follies and our faults the opportunity for the display of the grace and wisdom of God and for the fulfilment of His counsels hidden from the world until then! Our sins and faults alone have conduced to the glorious accomplishment of these counsels in Christ.

These are the important subjects treated of in the Books of Samuel, so far at least as the establishment of the kingdom. Its glorious condition and its fall are related in the two Books of Kings.

It is the fall of Israel which puts an end to their first relationship with God. The ark is taken; the priest dies. Prophecy introduces the king—a king despised and rejected, man having set up another, yet a king whom God establishes according to the might of His power. Such are the great principles unfolded in the Books of Samuel.

History shews us here, as everywhere, that there is but One who has remained faithful—an humbling result for us of the trial to which God has subjected us, but one well adapted to keep us humble.

If we have spoken of the fall of the priesthood, we must not infer from it that priesthood ceased to exist. It was always necessary to a people full of weakness (as it is to ourselves on earth); it interposed in the things of God to maintain individual relationship to Him in them, but it ceased to form the basis of relationship between the whole people and God. The people were no longer capable of enjoying this relationship through this means alone; and the priesthood itself could suffice no longer, having so deeply failed in its standing. We shall do well to dwell a little on this, which is the turning-point of the truths we are considering.

In Israel's primitive state, and in their constitution generally, as established in the land given to them, priesthood was the basis of their relationship with God; it was that which characterised and maintained it (see Heb 7:11). The high priest was their head and representative before God, as a nation of worshippers; and in this character (I speak here neither of redemption from Egypt nor of conquests, but of a people before God, and in relationship with Him), on the great day of atonement he confessed their sins over the scape-goat. It was not merely intercession. He stood there as head and representative of the people, who were summed up in him before Jehovah. The people were acknowledged, although faulty. They presented themselves in the person of the high priest, that they might be in connection with a God, who, after all veiled Himself from their eyes. The people presented everything to the priest; the high priest stood before God. This relationship did not imply innocence. An innocent man should have stood himself before God. "Adam, where art thou?" This question brings out his fall.

Still the people were not driven away, though the veil was between them and God; the high priest, who sympathised with the infirmities of the people, being one with them, maintained the relationship with God. They were a very imperfect people, it is true; yet by this means they stood themselves in connection with the Holy One. But Israel was not able to maintain this position; not only was there sin (the high priest could remedy that), but they sinned against Jehovah, they turned away from Him, and that even in their leaders. The priesthood itself, which should have maintained the relationship, wrought for its destruction by dishonouring God and repelling the people from His worship, instead of attracting them to it.

I pass over the preparatory circumstances; they will be considered in detail in their place. God then sets up a king, whose duty it was to preserve order and to secure God's connection with the people by governing them, and by his own faithfulness to God. This is what Christ will accomplish for them in the ages to come; He is the anointed. When the king is established, the priest walks before him (Sa1 2:35). It is a new institution, the only one capable of maintaining the relationship of the people with God. Priesthood is no longer here an immediate relationship. It provides indeed, in its own functions, for the wants of the people. The king watches over it, and secures order and blessing.

Now the assembly's position is altogether different. The saint now approaches God directly. Together with the priesthood, which is exercised for the saints on earth, to maintain them in their walk here and in the enjoyment of their privileges, it is united to the Anointed; the veil exists no longer. We sit in the heavenly places in Christ, made accepted in the Beloved. The favour of God rests upon us, members of the body of Christ, as upon Christ Himself. That which has unveiled the holiness of God has disclosed all the sin of man, and has taken it away [See Note #1].

Thus in Christ, members of His body, we are perfect before God, and perfectly accepted. The priest seeks neither to give us this position, nor to maintain relationship with God as to those who are not in this position. The work of Christ has placed us in it. How intercede then for perfection? Can intercession make the Person and the work of Christ more perfect in the sight of God? Certainly not. But we are in Him. In what manner then is this

priesthood exercised for us? In maintaining mercy-needing creatures in their walk, and so in the realisation of their relationship with God [See Note #2]. The Christian indeed enters into a still clearer manifestation of God and more absolute relationship with God, that of being in the light as God is in the light. We are seated in the heavenly places, made accepted in the Beloved, loved as He is loved, the righteousness of God in Him. He is our life; He has given us the glory that was given Him. Now the Holy Ghost, who came down from heaven after that Jesus was glorified, has introduced us consciously into the unveiled presence of God. Nevertheless we, though without excuse in doing it, fail and pick up defilement here below. Through the advocacy of Him who is in the presence of God for us our feet are washed by the Spirit and the word, and we are rendered capable of maintaining a communion (of which darkness knows nothing) with God in that light. Hereafter, in the presence of Jesus the King, priesthood will no doubt sustain the connection of the people with God, whilst He will bear the weight of government and of blessing for the people in every sense.

Note #1:

I refer here to that of His believing people.

Note #2:

There is a shade of difference between the priesthood and the advocacy of Christ. The priesthood is in Christ appearing in the presence of God for us; but this as to our place before God is perfection. It does not therefore refer to sin in its daily exercise, but mercy and grace to help in time of need. We enter boldly into the holiest. Advocacy refers to our sinning, because the question, where it is spoken of (Jo1 2:2), is communion, and this is wholly interrupted by sin.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 1

1 Kings (1 Samuel) 1:1

sa1 1:1

We find then, in the beginning of this book, priesthood existing before God in the original form we have mentioned. Eli, pious himself, and fearing God,

maintained no order in the priestly family. The priesthood, instead of binding the people to God, morally separated them. Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were at Shiloh; but their conduct made the offering of the Lord to be abhorred of the people. Such was the state of things in Israel. At the same time, in the family of Elkanah, Hannah, chosen of Jehovah for blessing, was in trial; the desires of her natural heart were not satisfied, and the adversary tormented her by means of the prosperous Peninnah. But He, whose strength is perfected in weakness, having made manifest (as ever in such a case) the powerlessness of nature, gives blessing according to His own will, against all hope, in order that that which was of Him should be evidently wrought by His own power. Hannah has a son according to her petition, a son devoted to the Lord. His family was of the tribe of Levi (1 Chronicles 6).

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 2

In the beautiful song of 1 Samuel 2 Hannah recognises this great principle of sovereign grace, and of the power of God; that He brings down the proud and those who trust in the flesh, and exalts the weak and impotent. "For the pillars of the earth are Jehovah's; and he hath set the world upon them." This was what Israel, poor and fallen, and a feeble remnant waiting for Jehovah, needed to learn; that is, that everything hung upon God and God alone, who did not seek for power in man, but manifests it in His own dealings by destroying all His enemies, and who will at length "give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed." It is the history of God's interposition in favour of poor fallen Israel; and that by the manifestation of His power in giving strength to His King, His Christ. It is a prophecy of the ways of God, of the great principles of His government with respect to the position of Israel, from the moment of its utterance until the establishment of the millennial kingdom in the Person of the Lord Jesus.

Immediately after this testimony from God upon which faith might rest, the inward state of the people is revealed, and the iniquity of the priesthood, which should have been the instrument for cleansing this iniquity of the people, but which, on the contrary, brought down judgment upon them. "Ye make Jehovah's people to transgress," said Eli. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against Jehovah, who

shall intreat for him?". Such was the state of things according to Eli himself. "Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because Jehovah would slay them. And the child, Samuel, grew on, and was in favour both with Jehovah, and also with men, happy in sharing (however feeble the copy) the testimony borne to Jesus Himself. As to the sons of Eli, they are an example of that which but too often happens. How frequently, alas! do we see that, when the judgment of God is on the point of breaking forth, people are unconscious of it (their moral perception being darkened by the evil). The eyes of God are elsewhere, as well as the spiritual discernment which He gives to His own, as was the case here with Samuel. Nevertheless God warns Eli by means of a man of God. His judgment on the priestly family and on the priesthood is pronounced before Jehovah reveals Himself to Samuel. This judgment announces the change in the order of divine government, which was to take place through the setting up of a king, an anointed one (a Christ), and through the consequent position of the priesthood, as we have already remarked (Sa1 2:35)." And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind; and I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before mine anointed [See Note #1] for ever. Such, I apprehend, will be millennial order.

Note #1

Joshua, on the contrary, went in and out under the direction of Eleazar, who inquired of God.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 3

In chapter 3 God reveals Himself to Samuel; and he is known to be a prophet of Jehovah from Dan even to Beersheba.

Eli, judged for having loved his sons more than Jehovah, comforts our hearts nevertheless by his submission. If he failed in the energy of faithfulness, he was yet true in heart to Jehovah, and his personal piety is the more conspicuous in the devotedness to God's glory which he manifests in these circumstances, finding his death in the Ichabod of His people. Sad and affecting history of the effect of God's righteous judgment upon one whose heart was set upon His glory in His people, but who had not had firmness enough to prevent the people, and even his own sons, from dishonouring

Jehovah Himself in the priestly service! Here begins the display of the means which God employs in His sovereignty to be in relationship with His people, when the ordinary relations He had established are interrupted.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 4

The following commentary covers Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

In chapter 4 the enemies of God and of His people display their strength; the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel. God, in overruling providence, makes all things concur to bring about the purposed result. We shall do well to pause a moment here; for the Philistines are of considerable importance, on account of the part they take in this history, as the power of the enemy. They appear to me to represent the power of the enemy acting within the circle of God's people. They were in the territory of the Israelites—within the land, and even on this side of the Jordan. They were not, like the Egyptians or Assyrians, enemies from without. Habitually hostile to Israel, to those who by God's appointment should have possessed the land of promise—so much the more dangerous from being always at hand, and claiming possession of the country, the Philistines set before us in type the power of the enemy acting from within. I do not mean the flesh, but the enemy within the pale of the professing church, acting of course through instruments, the oppressor of God's true people to whom the promises belong.

Israel, corrupt in all their ways, and daring in their ways with God, because they had forgotten His majesty and His holiness, seek to identify Jehovah* with them in their unfaithful condition, as He had been in their original state, instead of coming before Him to learn why He had forsaken His people. God will neither acknowledge nor succour them. On the contrary, the ark of the covenant, the sign and the seat of His relationship with the people, is taken. His throne is no longer in the midst of the people; His tabernacle is empty; all ordered relationship is interrupted. Where can they offer sacrifice? where draw nigh to Jehovah their God! Eli, the priest, dies; and his pious daughter-in-law, overwhelmed by these disastrous tidings, pronounces the funeral oration of the unhappy people in the name she bestows on that which could

no longer be her joy. The fruit of her womb bears but this impress of her people's calamity; it is only Ichabod in her sight.

What a blessing to have had through grace the song of Hannah already given by the Spirit to sustain the faith and hope of the people! All outward connection is broken; but God upholds His own majesty; and if unfaithful Israel had not been able to withstand the worshippers of idols, the God whom Israel had forsaken vindicates His glory, and proves, even in the heart of their temple, that those idols are but vanity. The Philistines are obliged to acknowledge the power of the God of Israel, whom Israel could not glorify. His judgments suggested a means to their natural conscience which, while proving that the influence of the almighty power of God is felt even by creatures devoid of intelligence, causing them to act against their strongest instincts, manifests also that it was indeed Jehovah, the Omnipotent God, who had inflicted the chastisement under which they were suffering. God maintains His majesty even in the midst of Israel. He is no longer among them securing their promised blessings. His ark, exposed through their unfaithfulness to the unworthy treatment of the Philistines and of the inquisitive, becomes (as the token of God's presence) the occasion of judgment inflicted on the temerity of those who dared to look within it, forgetful of His divine majesty who made it His throne and kept His testimony therein. But how often the absence of God causes His value to be felt, whose presence had not been appreciated! Israel, still deprived of Jehovah's presence and glory, laments after Him. Let us remark here that God could not remain among the Philistines. Unfaithfulness might subject His people to their enemies, although God was there. But, left (so to say) to Himself, His presence judged the false gods. Association was impossible; the Philistines desire Him not. You cannot glory in a victory over One who, when captured, is your destroyer. The Philistines get rid of Him. Never can the children of Satan endure the presence of the true God.

Moreover the heart of God is not alienated from His people. He finds His way back to the people of His choice in a sovereign manner, which proves Him to be the God of all creation. But, as we have seen, He asserts His majesty. More than fifty thousand men pay the penalty of their impious temerity. God returns; but still it needs that He open a way for Himself after

His own purposes and dealings, according to which He re-establishes His relationship with the people. Thus Samuel appears again on the scene when, the ark having abode in Kirjath-jearim twenty years (chap. 7), Israel laments after Jehovah. The ark is not put back in its place, nor is the original order restored.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 7

Samuel begins to act, by his testimony, upon the conscience of the people, and to put away that which weakened them by dishonouring God. He tells them that, if they will turn to Jehovah with all their heart, they must put away the strange gods, and serve Jehovah alone. A mingled worship was intolerable. Then would Jehovah deliver them. The prophet Samuel is now the meeting-point between the people and God. God now acknowledges him alone.

The ark is not found again in its place until the king chosen of God is established on the throne; it is only placed entirely in God's order when the son of David rules in peace and in strength at Jerusalem [See Note #1]. It is consulted once (Sa1 14:18-19), but its presence is without effect and without power. It exists, but in connection with those in whom faith and integrity were no longer found, so that nothing resulted from it. It rather proved that God was elsewhere, or at least that He wrought elsewhere.

But we will pursue the history. At Samuel's call the strange gods are put away. The people gather around him, that he may pray for them. They offer no sacrifice; they draw water and pour it out upon the ground in token of repentance (see Sa2 14:14); they fast and confess their sin. Samuel judges them there. But if Israel assembles, even for humiliation, the enemy at once bestirs himself in opposition; he will tolerate no act which places the people of God in a position which recognises Him as God. The Israelites are alarmed, and have recourse to Samuel's intercession. Samuel offers a sacrifice [See Note #2], token of entire surrender of self to the Lord, and of the people's relationship with Him; but it is not before the ark. He entreats Jehovah, his prayer is heard, and the Philistines are smitten before Israel. And it was not an exceptional case, although they lost nothing of their formidable character, or of their hatred for Israel. Samuel brings down God's blessing

upon the people, and the hand of Jehovah was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

The cities of Israel were restored. There was peace between Israel and the Amorites. Samuel judged Israel at Ramah and built an altar there. All this is an exceptional and extraordinary position for Israel, in which they depended entirely on Samuel, who, while living himself as a patriarch, as though there were no tabernacle, becomes, through his own relationship with God, by faith, the support and upholder of the people, who in fact had no other.

Note #1

Compare Psa 78:60-61; Psalm 132. The ark is in connection with Sion, the seat of kingly grace. Solomon only, as the man of peace, could build the house.

Note #2

That is to say, a burnt-offering. This is remarkable. It was not sacrifice for sin, but sacrifice which recognised the relationship existing between the people and God. Christ only, as we have seen elsewhere, is the true burnt-offering.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 8

The following commentary covers Chapters 8, 9, and 10.

But faith is not transmitted by succession. Samuel could not make prophets of his sons. They were no better as judges than Eli's sons had been as priests, and the people had no faith themselves to lean immediately upon God. They ask to be made like unto the nations. "Make us now a king," said they to Samuel. Where was Jehovah? For Israel, nowhere. But it was evil in the eyes of Samuel, and he prayed unto Jehovah. While acknowledging that the people had, as usual, rejected Him, God commands Samuel to hearken unto their voice. Samuel warns them according to God's testimony, and sets before them all the inexpediency and consequences of such a step; but the people will not hearken unto him. God brings to the prophet, through providential circumstances, the man whom He had chosen to satisfy the carnal wishes of the people. In all this He judges the people and their king. ("He gave them a king in his anger, and took him away in his wrath.") But He remembers His people. He does not forsake them. He acts by Saul on their

behalf, while shewing them their unfaithfulness, and afterwards in cutting off the disobedient king. Beauty and height of stature distinguished the son of Kish. But in the signs that Samuel gave him, when he had anointed him, there was a meaning which should have carried his thoughts beyond himself. How often there is a meaning, a language, perfectly intelligible to one who has ears to hear, but which escapes us, because our gross and hardened heart has no spiritual intelligence or discernment! And yet all our future hangs upon it. God has shewn our incapacity for the blessing it involved. Nevertheless the means were not wanting. Although the significance of this circumstance was less evident than that of the other signs, yet Rachel's sepulchre should have reminded Saul, the son and heir according to the flesh of the one who was born there, that the son of the mother's sorrow was the son of the father's right hand (Gen 35:18).

Now God had not abandoned Israel; faith was still there; men were going up to God. There were some in Israel who remembered the God of Bethel, who had revealed Himself to Jacob when he fled [See Note #1], and who in His faithfulness had brought him back in peace; and God gave Saul favour in their eyes. The servants of the God of Bethel salute him and strengthen him on his way. But the hill of God was possessed by the garrison of the Philistines-another circumstance which, by its significance, should have gone to the heart of a faithful Israelite who desired the glory of God and the good of His people. But the sign which accompanied it made it much more forcible; for the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Saul in this place, and he was turned into another man, called therefore to "do as occasion served him, for God was with him" (Sa1 10:7) [See Note #2]. It often happens, that faith sets forth clearly what should be done, while the heart, waxen fat and unfaithful, does not see it at all. And what do these signs mean? There are those in Israel who remember the God of Bethel, and who seek Him-upright and prepared hearts, who know Him as the resource of faith. But the hill of God, the public seat of His strength, is in the enemy's hands. Still, if this be so, the Spirit of God is upon the man who takes cognisance of it, and it is at this very hill that the Spirit comes upon him. The name of God is also significative here. It is God abstractedly-God the Creator: God Himself is in question. The Spirit of Jehovah comes upon Saul, because He resumes there the course of His relations with Israel.

But Samuel is still the only one whom God recognises as the link between Himself and the people. It is when Saul has had to do with Samuel, that he is another man. He must wait for Samuel, that he may know what to do, and that blessing may rest upon him. He must thus acknowledge that blessing is connected with the prophet, and not act without him; he must wait for him with perfect patience (seven days), a patience which, submitting to God's testimony, will not seek for blessing apart from His ways.

Here also we see in the Philistines the enemies who put faith to the proof. We have often enemies over whom we gain an easy victory, and on whose account we are considered spiritual, yet they are not such as (on God's part, and it may also be said on their own part) put faith to the proof. With these patience must have her perfect work. And the Philistines held this place with respect to Saul. It was all well that the people should be delivered from their other enemies; but they were not the ones which were a snare to them, and which manifested the power of the enemy in the very midst of Israel and the promises. Do spiritual powers rule over us in the assembly, in the place where the promises of God should be fulfilled? And what power do we see to overthrow the power of evil and spiritual wickedness within the borders of the professing church? It was from the Philistines that Saul should have delivered the people of God (see Sa1 9:16). The hill of God was in the Philistines' hands (see also Sa1 14:52). If Saul had waited for Samuel, he would have declared unto him all that he should do. Now we shall see that, two years later, Saul is put to the proof as to this in the presence of the Philistines; and whatever may have been the delay, the thing had not been altered; all the intermediate success should have increased his faith and strengthened him in obedience.

Samuel calls the people together at Mizpeh. There he sets before them their foolishness in rejecting the God of their salvation. But he proceeds to the choice of a king, according to the command of God. God meets the wishes of the people. If the flesh could have glorified God, nothing was wanting to induce them to trust in Him. God adapts Himself to them in outward things; and further, as we know, had the people followed Jehovah, Jehovah would not have forsaken them (Sa1 12:20-25). And now that God has set up a king, those who will not own him are "men of Belial." The people however

scarcely see God in it at all: they only recognise Him in those things which the flesh can perceive, such as the beauty of the king and the success of his arms, that is to say, the things in which God suits Himself to nature, and in which He grants blessing, in order that He may be known and trusted. In this they rejoice, but they go no farther. Faith is not of nature.

Note #1

The God who had said to him in the day of his trouble, when driven out from before his enemy, that He would not forsake him.

Note #2

Accordingly it was the Spirit of prophecy, the Spirit which acted in blessing, which indicated the presence of God, and that to which Saul should have recourse, even though (yea, because) the hill of God, the public seat of His authority in Israel, was in the hands of the enemies of the true people of God. This scene pictured the whole state of Israel.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 11

As yet all goes well with Saul; he does not take vengeance on those who oppose him. Before his faith is tried, his natural character would gain him favour with men. And now, in those things which have given rise to the carnal movement that led the people to desire a king, all apparently prospers to their wish. The Ammonites are so thoroughly defeated, that two of them are not left together. Here also Saul acts with prudence and generosity. He does not allow the people's desire for vengeance to be carried out. He owns the Lord in the blessing granted to the people. In truth God was with them, granting to the flesh all the means and helps necessary for walking with Him, had the thing been possible. Samuel is there on God's part, and supports by his authority the king whom God has set up. At Samuel's invitation the people assemble at Gilgal (a place memorable for the blessing of the people and their association with Jehovah, the flesh being judged, on entering the land), to renew the kingdom there, and again to recognise a throne whose authority had just been confirmed by successful efforts for the deliverance of God's people. Peace-offerings and great rejoicing make the ceremony more imposing.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 12

Samuel (chap. 12) receives the people's testimony to his fidelity. He sets before them the ways of God towards them, their ingratitude and foolishness in having asked for a king and rejected God. Nevertheless, while giving a sign from God which added the weight of God's own testimony to his words, he declares to the people that, if henceforth they would obey Jehovah, both the king and the people should continue to follow Jehovah (that is, they would walk under His blessing and guidance); but if not, Jehovah would be against them. For Jehovah would not forsake them, and he himself (Samuel) would assuredly not cease to pray for them, and would teach them the good and the right way: that is to say, he places the people, as to their public conduct, in the position they had chosen, and set them under their own responsibility before Jehovah; but at the same time, full of love to them as the people of God, their rejection of himself does not for a moment suggest the thought to him of giving up his intercession or his testimony for their welfare. Beautiful picture of a heart near the Lord, which, in forgetfulness of self, can love His people as its own! To fail in this would have been to sin against the Lord (compare Co2 12:15).

Here then is Saul established in his place, and his authority confirmed by the blessing of God. Samuel retires, confining himself to his prophetic office, and Saul is now called to prove himself faithful and obedient in his present position, surrounded by all the advantages which the blessing of God and the solemn act of His prophet could confer upon him.

Let us now recapitulate the history we have been examining. Israel, unfaithful, no longer maintain their relationship with God under priesthood. The ark is taken, the priest dies, and Ichabod is written on the condition of the people. God raises up a prophet, who becomes the means of communication between Himself and the people; but, threatened by the Ammonites, the people at length demand a king. God grants their request, testifying at the same time His displeasure, since He Himself was their King. The Spirit of prophecy continues nevertheless to be the channel of divine communication to the people. Signs, which indicate the state of the people, are given to Saul, the elected and anointed king: first of all, some faithful ones who own the God of Bethel-that is to say, the faithful God of Jacob,

who had promised not to leave him till He had performed all that He had promised him; and, next, the hill of God-the seat of authority among the people-in possession of the Philistines, the power of the enemy in the land of promise. The Spirit of prophecy comes upon Saul, shewing him where God was amid these circumstances; and Samuel tells him to wait for him at Gilgal. Meantime, as we have seen, he is strengthened by the blessing of God upon his undertakings.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 13

Saul reigns two years. He then selects three thousand men: two thousand are with him, and one with Jonathan. Jonathan, a man of faith, acts with energy against the enemies of God's people, and smites the Philistines; but the energy of faith, acting (as it always does) in the very stronghold of the enemy, naturally provokes their hostility. The Philistines hear of it: Saul is roused to action, and calls together, not Israel, but the "Hebrews." Let us remark here that there is faith in Jonathan. The flesh, placed in the position of leader to God's people, follows indeed the impulse given by faith, but does not possess it; and the word Hebrews, the name by which a Philistine would have called the people, indicates that Saul relied on the gathering of the nation as a constituted body, and understood no better than a Philistine would have done the relation between a chosen people and God. And this is the position set before us in the history of Saul. It is not premeditated opposition to God, but the flesh set in a place of testimony and used in accomplishing God's work. We see in it a person linked with the interests of God's true people, doing the work of God according to the people's idea of their need-a true idea as to their actual need; but he is one who seeks his resources in the energy of man, an energy to which God does not refuse His aid when there is obedience to His will, for He loves His people; but which in principle, in moral and inward motive, can never of itself go beyond the flesh from which it springs. In the midst of all this faith can act, and act sincerely, and this is Jonathan's case. God will bless this faith, and He always does so, because it owns Him; and in this instance (and it is His gift) because it sincerely seeks the good of God's people. All this is, in principle, a kind of picture of the professing church, which in this point of view anticipates the true reign of Christ, and in this position even fails in her faithfulness to God.

True faith, in the midst of such a system, never rises so high as the glory of the coming One, the true rejected David, but it loves Him and cleaves to Him. If the church is merely professing, she persecutes Christ; but that in her which acts by faith loves and owns Him, even when He is hunted like a partridge on the mountains.

Jonathan having thus in faith attacked the Philistines, Saul, who ostensibly leads the people before God, is put to the proof. Will he shew himself competent? Will he remember the true principle on which the blessing of the people rests? Will he act as a royal priest, or will he acknowledge the prophet to be the true link of faith between the people and God—a link the importance and necessity of which he ought to have recognised, since he owed to it his present place and power, and it had proved to him its own mission and prophetic authority by establishing his? When the critical moment arrives, Saul fails.

It is worth while to retrace here the tokens of the unbelief of the flesh. The Philistines are smitten. The nation, active and energetic, hear of it; nothing could be more natural. Saul has but the same resource—no call upon God, no cry to Jehovah, the God of Israel; Samuel does not occur to his faith, although he remembers what Samuel had told him. If the Philistines have heard, the Hebrews must hear also. Israel fears; God gives no answer to unbelief when the trial of faith is His object. Saul calls the people after him to Gilgal, but they were soon scattered from him at the report of the Philistines having gathered together. Saul is at Gilgal, and Samuel comes again into his mind. It was no longer as when the kingdom had been renewed. The circumstances naturally suggested Samuel as a resource. Saul tarries seven days for him according to his word. He waits for him long enough to satisfy the exigence of conscience. Nature can go a long way on this principle; but it has not that sense of its own weakness, and that all depends on God, which makes it wait on God, as the alone resource and worker. Then, as the people once brought the ark into the camp, he offers the burnt-offering. But, if he had had confidence in God, he would have understood that, whatever might be the result, he should wait for Him; that it was useless to do anything without Him, and that he ran no risk in waiting for Him. A faithful God could not fail him. He had thought of Samuel, and of

his having told him to wait, so that he was without excuse; he remembered that the guidance and blessing of God were found with the prophet. But he looks at circumstances: the people are scattered, and Saul seeks to bring God in by an act of devotion without faith. It was the decisive moment; God would have confirmed his kingdom over Israel, would have established his dynasty. But now He had made choice of another.

Observe here, that it is not through being defeated by the Philistines that Saul loses the throne. The fault was between himself and God. The Philistines do not attack him. It is enough for Satan if he succeeds in frightening us away from the pure and simple path of faith. Samuel departs after having made known to Saul the mind of God. The Philistines pillage the land, which is defenceless. The people moreover had neither sword nor spear. What a picture of the state of God's people! How often we find that those who profess to be the children of God, to be of the truth, and heirs of the promises, are unarmed before the enemies who despoil them!

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 14

But faith in God is always blest; and if God has shewn the effect of unbelief, He also shews its folly, since wherever faith is found, there all His strength is displayed; and then it is the enemy who is defenceless. Jonathan makes up his mind to attack the Philistines in the energy which he derives from faith in God; and if unbelief is manifest in Saul, the beauty of faith is exhibited in his son. The difficulties are not lessened. The Philistines are in garrison, and their camp situated in a place of unusually difficult access, a narrow pathway up perpendicular rocks being the only means of approach. The Philistines were there in great number, and well armed. But it is hard for faith to endure the oppression of God's people by the enemy, and the dishonour thus done to God Himself. Jonathan endures it not. Where does he seek for strength? His thoughts are simple. The Philistines are uncircumcised; they have not the help of the God of Israel. "There is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few"; and this is the thought of Jonathan's faith, that fair flower which God caused to blossom in the wilderness of Israel at this sorrowful moment. He does not think about himself. Jehovah, says he, has delivered them up to Israel. He trusts in God, and in His unfailing faithfulness towards His people: his heart rests in this [See Note #1], and he does not

imagine for an instant that God is not with His people, whatever their condition may be. This characterises faith. It not only acknowledges that God is great, but it recognises the indissoluble bond (indissoluble because it is of God) between God and His people. The consequence is, that faith forgets circumstances, or rather nullifies them. God is with His people. He is not with their enemies. All the rest is but an opportunity of proving the real dependence of faith. Thus, there is no boasting in Jonathan; his expectation is from God. He goes out and meets the Philistines. He is there a witness for God. If they are bold enough to come down, he will wait for them and not create difficulties for himself, but he will not turn away from those which meet him in his path. The indolent and at the same time foolish and imprudent confidence of the enemy is but a sign to Jonathan that Jehovah has delivered them up. Had they come down, they would have lost their advantage; in bidding him come up, they set aside the insurmountable difficulty of access to the camp. Happy in having a faithful companion in his work of faith, Jonathan seeks no other assistance. He does not talk of the Hebrews; but he says, "Jehovah has delivered them up into the hand of Israel." He climbs the rock with his armour-bearer. And in truth Jehovah was with him; the Philistines fall before Jonathan, and his armour-bearer slays after him. But while honouring the arm which faith had strengthened, God manifests Himself. The dread of God took hold of the Philistines, and everything trembles before the man whom faith (God's precious gift) had led into action.

Faith acts of itself. Saul is obliged to number the people to find out who is absent. Alas! we are entering into the sad history of unbelief. Saul endeavours to obtain some directions from the ark, whilst elsewhere God was triumphing over the enemy without Israel. The tumult of their defeat continues to increase; and unbelief, which never knows what to do, tells then the priest to withdraw his hand. The king and the priest were not the link between God and the people. There was neither the people's faith in God without a king, nor the king whom God Himself had given. Here again, instead of Israel (whom Jonathan alone recognised), we find those whom even the Spirit of God calls Hebrews [See Note #2], who, although they were "of the fountain of Jacob," are among the Philistines, content to be at ease

among the enemies of God. Now that the victory is gained, all are glad to share the triumph and pursue the Philistines.

And poor Saul, what does he do? Never can unbelief-however good its intentions in joining the work of faith-do anything except spoil it. Saul speaks of avenging himself on his enemies. Jehovah is not in his thoughts; he thinks of himself, and hinders the pursuit by his carnal and selfish zeal. May God preserve us from the guidance and help of unbelief in the work of faith! God Himself can succour us through every means; but when man mixes himself up with the work, he does but spoil it, even when seeking to bring in strength. Saul, at the moment of such blessing, is zealous to maintain the idea of honouring Jehovah's ordinances, as he sought to do previously in asking His counsel at the ark, making much of His name, as though the victory had been due to him, and it was only some hidden sin which prevented his obtaining an answer from God. He had nearly put Jonathan to death, through whom God had wrought. He would discover the sin by bringing in God, who acts indeed, but only to make manifest the folly of the poor king. Observe that faith in full energy can thankfully avail itself of the refreshment which God sets before it in its toilsome course, whilst the carnal zeal of that which is but an imitation of faith, and which never acts with God, makes a duty of refusing it. All that Saul can do, when he takes the lead, is to prevent their reaping the entire fruit of the victory. His intervention could only spoil the work of others; he has no faith to perform one himself. Nevertheless God has pity on Israel, and keeps their enemies in check by means of Saul; for although unbelieving, he had not yet turned his hatred against God's elect. He was not yet forsaken of Jehovah.

But this painful and solemn moment is at hand. Meanwhile he strengthens himself. There was constant war with the Philistines; but Saul, warlike as he was, could not overcome them, as David or even Samuel did. He sought carnal means amongst his fellows to attain his object. Observe here with what frightful rapidity, and how even at once, the enemy gains the upper hand when we are not walking in the ways of God (compare Sa1 7:12; Sa1 7:14, and Sa1 13:16-23). Observe also that all the forms of piety and of Jewish religion are with Saul; "Jehovah's priest in Shiloh (Sa1 14:3), wearing an ephod," and the ark (Sa1 14:18). He consults with the priest. He prevents

their eating flesh with blood. He builds an altar. The priest consults God; and, God giving no answer, Saul is ready to slay Jonathan as guilty, because he had eaten in spite of the oath. Observe, at the same time, that it is the first altar Saul had built; that the priest is of the family which God had condemned. He builds his altar when rejected, and after the outward blessing which God had given, and which he attributes to himself, although he had only spoilt it. On the other hand Jonathan's faith acts without taking counsel of flesh and blood: as the people said (Sa1 14:45), he wrought with God. The people did not know that he was absent. Happy Jonathan! faith had led him so far in advance that he did not even hear the senseless curse which his father invoked on whoever tasted food. The folly of another's unbelief did not reach him. He was at liberty, as he went along, to avail himself of the kindness of his God with joy and thanksgiving, and he pursued his course refreshed and encouraged-happy walk of simplicity which acts with God! The consideration of these two chapters is very instructive, as setting before us the contrast between the walk of faith and that of the flesh, in the position which the latter takes, by virtue of its profession, in the work of God. It was the first time that Saul had faced the enemy on whose account God raised him up.

Note #1

See the same proofs of faith in David, when he went out against Goliath.

Note #2

This is the more remarkable, because the Spirit calls those who were with Saul and Jonathan Israelites. This gives special force to the word "Hebrews," wherever it is found. God does not refuse the name of Israelite to the most timorous of the people (Sa1 13:6), but He refuses it to those who join the Philistines. The idea was lost of the connection between the people and God. It was a nation like any other.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 15

Nevertheless Saul is put to a final proof. Jehovah, by the mouth of Samuel, sends him to smite Amalek, and utterly destroy them and all that belonged to them. They were the cruel and determined enemies of God's people (Deu

25:17-19). They had been chief among the nations, their name and their pride were everywhere known (Num 24:7; Num 24:20); but it was a nation doomed of God.

God now entrusts Saul with the fulfilment of Deu 25:19. In this case all Israel accompanied him without fear. These were not the enemies from within who were daily wearing away their strength and courage. The victory is complete. The only question now is that of faithfulness to God, and of preferring His glory to self-interest. But Saul fears the people. The Spirit of God says "Saul and the people"; Saul says "the people"; and that it was for God they spared. But our excuses, even when true, only condemn us. Saul, not having faith, not looking to God, fears the people more than God. What a slave is the unbeliever! If not the slave of the enemy, he is that of the people whom he appears to govern. Saul, unfaithful to God in the midst of the people, and surrounded by blessings from Jehovah, is at length deprived of the kingdom. No humiliation, no brokenness of heart-he confesses his sin, hoping to avoid its punishment; but, unable to escape it, he entreats Samuel to honour him in spite of it. Samuel does so and then forsakes him. Everything changes now, and David appears on the scene. It is well to remark that the connected history of Saul's reign closes with the end of chapter 14. Chapter 15 is given as a separate history on account of the importance of its contents-the definite rejection of Saul, a rejection which introduces David.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 16

In chapter 16 Samuel is sent of Jehovah to anoint this His chosen one. All glorying in the flesh and its birthright are here set aside; and the youngest, despised and forgotten of all, who kept the sheep, is chosen of God; "for Jehovah seeth not as man seeth." Samuel, taught of God, hesitates not in his decision, and can accept none of the seven who are at home. "Are here all thy children?" At length he anoints David, brought in from the field.

But God does not set David at once in the height of power, as He did in the case of Saul. He must make his way by grace and faith through all kinds of difficulties; and, although filled with the Holy Spirit, he must act in the presence of a power devoid of the Spirit, and which God has not yet set

aside. He must be subject and be humbled, he must feel his entire dependence on God, that God is sufficient in all circumstances; and his faith must be developed by trial in which God is felt to be all. Beautiful type of One who, without sin, journeyed through far more painful circumstances! and not only a type, but at the same time a vessel prepared by God for the Holy Spirit, who could fill him with sentiments which, while describing so touchingly the sufferings of Christ Himself and His sympathy with His people, exhibit, to those who were to tread in weakness the same path as Himself, their resource in God. For one cannot doubt that the trials of David gave rise to the greater part of those beautiful psalms, which, depicting the circumstances, the trials, and the complaints of the remnant of Israel in the last days, as well as of Christ Himself (who, in Spirit, has identified Himself with them, and has undertaken their cause), have thus furnished so many other burdened souls with the expression and the relief of their sorrows; and although their interpretation of these psalms may have been incorrect, yet their hearts were not mistaken [See Note #1].

We will return to our history. The Spirit of Jehovah came upon David and forsook Saul, who, at the same time, is troubled by an evil spirit. The providence of God brings in David by means of one of Saul's servants who knew him, and presents him to Saul. Saul loves him, and keeps him in his presence; he becomes his armourbearer, and he plays on a harp when the evil spirit troubles Saul. David, in God's sight, is the anointed king, but he must suffer before he reigns, however great his energy may be.

Note #1

This unintelligent use of the Psalms, however, has tended to keep pious souls down below their privileges as Christians. A child's place with the Father is never found in any of the Psalms, nor the spiritual feelings generated by the consciousness of the relationship. The word may be used as a comparison, but the relationship is never recognised, and could not be.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 17

The Philistines, that type of the enemy's power, present themselves again with their champion at their head, against whom no one dares to fight. David had returned home, and was living in the simplicity of his usual life.

Although that which precedes gives the general idea of the position in which he had been placed, it appears that David had not remained long with the king (Sa1 17:15). His father sends him to see his brothers, who are in Saul's army. There he sees the Philistine who defied the armies of Israel. Jonathan does not appear here. There is but one who can destroy this champion, who centres in his own person all the energy of evil. David's faith sees no difficulty in it because he sees God, and in the enemy an enemy of God without strength. He was but one of the "uncircumcised"; the rest matters little. In the performance of his ordinary duties David had already met with difficulties too great for a full-grown man; yet, although a mere youth, he had overcome them for a very simple reason—"Jehovah delivered." He had not boasted of this (it was the fulfilment of his duty); but he had learnt in it the strength and faithfulness of Jehovah. And this experience is now repeated. Man's armour is rejected; faith knows it not. God will perform the work by the most simple means.

David declares wherein his strength consists. "I come to thee in the name of Jehovah of hosts." He then identifies himself with the people of God. "All the earth shall know that there is a God in Israel." Remark how the simplicity of faith rises to the consciousness of power and its effects in the hands of God (Sa1 17:46). So ever when God leads the heart. The stone which sinks into the forehead of Goliath deprives him of strength and of life. David cuts off the head of Goliath with his own sword, like Him who by death destroyed him that had the power of death.

The whole army of Israel profits by David's triumph. Saul, who had forgotten him, will not suffer him to go away. Alas! the flesh, and even the flesh in rebellion, can love Jehovah's elect on account of his kindness and the relief he ministers; but it knows him not. When he is doing Jehovah's work, he is as much a stranger to Saul as if they had never met.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 18

The following commentary covers Chapters 18 and 19.

But when Christ makes Himself known, the remnant (which Jonathan represented) loves Him as his own soul, and this beloved one becomes the object of his whole affection. This does not however, in its bearing, go

beyond the personal reign of Christ. Jonathan represents the remnant which has loved Him in humiliation. As to this world, it is so always; there is a remnant who love Christ, and desire His kingdom, although it will put an end to the economy in which they stand. Of the assembly, properly so called, there is nothing here. It is a remnant who desire the coming of Christ. Saul, who sought his own glory and endeavoured to uphold his house by carnal means, seeks the death of him who is to come and establish the kingdom. So the Jews with Christ.

The faith of David had rather a different character from that of Jonathan, although both conquered the Philistines. Jonathan is not deterred by difficulties: he sees the God of Israel and does the work of God which Saul neglects. It is the true and energetic faith of God's people. But David, the king-secretly so indeed, but chosen and anointed-meets face to face the great enemy of his people in all his might, the mere sight of whom dismayed the people, who fled before him. That which distinguishes the faith of Jonathan most touchingly is his attachment to one who (to judge after the manner of men, as Saul did) eclipses his glory. But Jonathan is absorbed by his affection for the one whom God has chosen. He sees in him the true head of Israel-worthy to be so-who, however despised at the present moment, must prosper and reign as of God. It was also David's qualities which gained his affection. It was a personal attachment. He could appreciate David, and he forgot his own interests in thinking of him. The voice and the words of David sink deep into his heart, and bind him to the king whom God has chosen, while unknown, and in spite of everything. Saul, the professed head of the people, jealous of any one who might displace either himself or his descendants, is at enmity with David and forsaken of God; he is the instrument of the enemy against Jehovah's anointed. At length he falls by the more direct and open power of the enemy of God's people. Sorrowful end of that which had been a vessel of blessing and an instrument in the work of God, although but in a carnal way.

God causes David's true glory to outshine the official importance of Saul. The victories of the former are sung in such a manner as to excite the king's jealousy. We will now briefly trace the features of David's faith in these new circumstances. Never does he lift his hand against Saul; he serves him

obediently, he does his duty, and patiently bears the jealousy and malice which pursue him. Poor Saul! troubled by the evil spirit, David plays on the harp to soothe him, and Saul seeks to slay him. David escapes. Saul fears him; for the God by whom he is himself forsaken is with David. He employs him at a distance from himself, but where he is more than ever in the view of the people. God always carries out His purposes in spite of all the carnal precautions of man. David is prudent. He has the wisdom of God, who is with him in all his ways. Energetic and unpretending, always successful, he is beloved by all Israel and Judah, before whom he goes in and out with all the strength and superiority of faith.

Saul seeks to turn all this to his own account; apparently he honours David, but he only does so in order to expose him to the enemy and get rid of him. David abides in his lowliness, and Merab is given to another. Michal affords Saul a more specious opportunity. As he was only required to destroy the power of the enemies of God's people, David accepts Saul's proposal and succeeds. Saul perceives more and more that Jehovah is with David, and becomes still more afraid of him: sad development of a sad state of soul! Yet Saul was not deficient in fine points of natural character, which manifested themselves at times in better feelings. But God was not in them (chap. 19). Jonathan's intercession has power over his father, and for a time all is well. But Saul, being forsaken of God, cannot bear that He should be with David. War breaks out; and David, God's own instrument in what He does for His people, defeats the Philistines and drives them away. It will be observed here, that it is the Philistines who are there, through whom the power of faith is in question. It is with them that the battle of God and of faith is fought, that David always succeeded, and that Saul failed.

Saul is again troubled; and David, who seeks to refresh him, narrowly avoids being slain. He makes his escape and goes away to Samuel. Remark here how the grief, which egotism and self-love produce, makes room for the action of the evil spirit on the soul. The power reappears here, which, hidden as it was, still governed the fate of Israel. David recognises it, and, when he can no longer remain with Saul, he does not seek in anywise to magnify himself by rising up against the outward form which God had inwardly judged but not destroyed. Instead of opposing it, he contents

himself with acknowledging that manifestation of the power of God which had placed Saul in his royal position, and from which he had himself received the testimony and the communication of the strength and of the will of God; he takes refuge with Samuel. He is pursued thither by Saul and by his messengers, who, with their master, are subjected to this same power—a power which does not influence their hearts or guide their conduct, a power of which Saul had forfeited the blessing. What a picture of a useless, ruined vessel! sometimes prostrate under the energy of Satan, sometimes prophesying in that of God, from whom his heart is far away, by whom he is forsaken. His outward conduct is not disorderly; he does no harm except when Jehovah's anointed excites his jealousy and his hatred.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 20

David is now driven away from the presence of Saul, and becomes a wanderer in the earth. It is no longer entire submission to Saul, whilst himself the vessel of the energy of God. Driven away by Saul, David had returned to the source of God's testimony; and Saul had again dared to seek his life, even when he was with Samuel. He has completely thrown off the last restraint, and forgotten all that should have reminded him of God, and stayed his hand. Seeking his own glory, and taking advantage of his acquired position, the presence of Samuel has no longer any hold upon his conscience. It is even no longer "Honour me before the elders of my people"; he does not value the prophet at all; he comes, in spite of himself, under an influence which he has despised. David is thus shielded from his malice. He could not now return to Saul. It would have been to unite himself with the despoliation of God's testimony. For, what can be done when a man prophesies, and yet runs counter to the power which he cannot deny? David takes flight. But Saul's state is again tested by this state of things. Jonathan can scarcely credit his father's ill-will. But, before putting it to the proof, his devotion to David is very plainly manifested. His faith and his heart acknowledge that which the blinded Saul cannot receive (Sa1 20:13-17).

Even when David is driven away, Jonathan's faith is not shaken; his heart is not separated from the one whom his soul loved, when, radiant with youth and the glory of his victory over Goliath, David replied to Saul with a modesty that heightened its lustre. He loves him when dishonoured and a

fugitive. He acknowledges him as God's elect, and links the hopes of his house with the glory of his beloved [See Note #1]. But Jonathan does not follow David, and he falls with Saul. Whatever opinion we may entertain with respect to the typical meaning of this part of his history, we see in him that whatever is allied to the carnal system, which is outwardly connected with the interests of the people and name of God, falls, as regards this world, with the system that perishes entirely. David, informed by Jonathan of Saul's state of mind, departs; and Jonathan returns into the city.

Note #1

See Sa1 23:16-17. But what Jonathan proposed there could not be; that is, connection between the old system in the flesh and God's grace and purpose. Jonathan, though loving David, walked with the old, which God was going to judge.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 21

The elect king is now rejected. He repairs to the priest, who gives him the hallowed bread, according to the sovereign grace of God, who rises above the ordinances that are connected with blessing, when that blessing is rejected-when He Himself is rejected in His chosen one, and in the power of His testimony. When this is the case, He sets faith above ordinances in His sovereign grace. Since God Himself and His testimony are rejected, the shewbread was considered common. God in fact was ordering all anew. It was precisely the case of the Lord Jesus. The Person of the rejected One is above all the carnal ordinances, which have lost their signification where He is. Christ submitted indeed to all the ordinances and authorities; but the rejection of God's testimony in Him caused it to be perceived by degrees that He was One greater than the ordinances-One who set them aside, and replaced them by the manifestation of the effectual and eternal grace of God. It was much more important to give David food than to keep that which had grown old. God cared more for him than for the bread of the tabernacle.

David then takes the sword of Goliath. It was by the power of death that the Lord destroyed all his strength who had the power of death. Death is the best weapon in the arsenal of God, when it is wielded by the power of life.

David, his mind full of Saul's enmity, seeks refuge among the Philistines. What business had he there? This time God drives him thence without chastisement, but abundantly proving to him at the same time that he was out of place there. We escape from the wisdom which leads us into the midst of God's enemies, by the shame of that folly which causes us to be driven out again.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 22

David now takes his place fully with the excellent of the earth (Heb 11:38). There the prophet Gad joins him; he is guided in a direct manner by the plain testimony of God, and soon after he is joined by the priest also; so that, rejected as he is, all that belonged to the testimony and the dealings of God gathers around him. He was the king; the prophet was there; the priest was there also. The outward forms were elsewhere. Saul, on the contrary, as he had shewn his contempt for Samuel by pursuing David even into his presence, without pity as without fear of God, and without remorse, rids himself of the priests by the hand of a stranger, an Edomite, a merciless enemy of the people, when the consciences of the latter would have withheld his hand. It is on this occasion that the priest is brought by God to David, in like manner as we find the prophet there after Saul had manifested his contempt of him. Thus a hostile king, he is a despiser of the prophet, an enemy of the priest of God. What a sad history of the gradual but progressive fall of one who, having the form of good, has not faith in God, and whom God has forsaken! How sure are the ways of God, whatever appearances may be!

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 23

David, despised as he may be, is the king and saviour of the people; he puts the Philistines to flight with great slaughter. He finds nothing but treachery in Israel, of which Saul makes use in the hope of seizing David. But as the wisdom of the prophet is with David, so has he also God's answer by the ephod of the priest which is with him.

Let us observe in passing, that Saul has greatly aggrandised himself to outward view. He is no longer with his six hundred men who followed him trembling; he can speak of his captains of thousands and captains of

hundreds; he can bestow fields and vineyards; he has his Doeg, the head over his herdsmen. Before God, inwardly, he makes frightful progress in evil; he is not only forsaken of God, but he breaks through all the restraints of conscience, and of the testimony and ordinances of God. For the prophet Samuel and the priests ought to have been a restraint to one who professed to be identified with the interests of God's people. Outward progress in prosperity, joined to actual progress in evil inwardly, is a very solemn thing. It is at once a snare to the flesh and a trial to faith. David, on the contrary, is apparently-and in fact, as to circumstances-driven out from the people. He has neither home nor refuge. But the testimony of God, in the person of the prophet Gad, and communion with God by the priest's ephod, are his portion in his exile. Cast out by man, he is where the resources of God are realised according to the need of His people.

Remark also that David himself acts as priest, to obtain the expression of God's mind. He takes the ephod to seek counsel of God; he eats the shewbread, a remarkable type of Christ teaching us that, when all is ruined, blessing is made over to those who by faith walk in obedience, understanding the duty of the believer who discerns the moral place of faith, what it owes to God, and how it may rely on Him.

Remark, also, that that which here distinguishes David is not shining deeds, the fruit of the power of faith, but the instinct and intelligence of that which is suitable to his position a moral discernment of that which is pleasing to God, and of the line of conduct which His servant should pursue as the vessel of His spiritual energy, while the power which belongs to him is in the hands of another. It is the walk of one who has apprehended that which is suitable to this difficult position, in all the circumstances it brings him into; who respects that which God respects, and does the work of God without fear when God calls him: a remarkable type of Jesus in all this, and example for us. Besides this spiritual perception, these moral suitabilities; the greater part of this history sets before us the way in which God makes everything tend towards the accomplishment of His purposes (in spite of all the motives and intentions of men) in order to place David, through patience and the energy of faith, in the position He had prepared for him.

Nevertheless David needs the intervention and the safeguard of God. Having quitted Keilah (chap. 23), in consequence of God's warning, he goes into the wilderness. There he is surrounded by Saul's men. But at the moment when Saul would have taken him, the Philistines invade the land, and Saul is obliged to return.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 24

"And David went up and dwelt in the strongholds of Engedi." Saul pursues him thither, after following the Philistines, more occupied with his jealousy of the king whom God had chosen than with the enemies of his people. But this expedition is not to his honour. An opportunity to kill his persecutor presents itself to David; but the fear of God rules him, and even Saul's heart is touched for the moment by a preservation which proved that David respected him in a way he had not imagined. He sees clearly what the result will be, and engages David to protect his posterity; but David does not return to Saul. The relationship was broken.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 25

At length Samuel dies. This forms an epoch, because he who was the true link between the people and God was gone. Israel acknowledged him when dead, although they had despised him while living.

And now David's position changes, and Abigail is brought in. Jonathan never separated from the system in which he stood, never united himself to David, although loving him, and never shared his sufferings. But Abigail identifies herself with him; existing relationships do not prevent her acknowledging David; and she is united to him after her husband's death. Jonathan prefigures the remnant in the character of the remnant of Israel, who acknowledge the future king, and adhere to him, but go no farther. As regards old Israel they come to nothing with it; they will be blessed as reigned over in the kingdom, but not be associated with Christ on the throne. Jonathan does not suffer with David, and does not reign with him. He remains with Saul, and, as to that position, his career ends with Saul. Abigail, and even the malcontents who joined David, shared his sufferings. Abigail separates herself completely from the spirit of her husband; and it is on account of her faith and wisdom that David spares Nabal's life. God

judges the latter, and then Abigail becomes the wife of David. Historically David had nearly failed in his high standing. In fact it is on account of the faithful remnant, the Abigail of the foolish nation, that Israel itself has been spared; and the Lord's connection with the assembly is in the character of pure grace, not in that of the avenger (as hereafter with Israel). At this time it is that David, during his rejection, surrounds himself with those who will be the companions and the retinue of his glory in the kingdom. But he also takes a wife. Abigail speaks of Saul as a man. Jehovah, she says, will make a sure house to David. This is the intelligence of faith [See Note #1]. It is the truth of God's counsels (Sa2 7:11), and in its fulness, as to this. She was forming for herself, without knowing it, the position of the assembly, in the future she was preparing for herself [See Note #2].

Note #1

In fact, when the priesthood had been judged, nothing remained for faith, which apprehended the mind of God, except the prophet Samuel and the king given by God, David. Abigail understands this. The assembly should think as God Himself thinks, in spite of existing circumstances. Abigail thinks nothing of Saul. Samuel is dead; David is now everything to her. "The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of heaven is preached, and every man presseth into it." Where were the high priests and all their company? Nevertheless the Lord submitted to them as to an ordinance, as David did to Saul.

Note #2

She takes a much more humble place than Jonathan did, and one which, even at the time, acknowledged David much more fully. It is not a friend like Jonathan; it is a submissive soul which, in spirit, gives David his place according to God, taking her own place before him. It is exactly that which distinguishes the spirit of the assembly-of the true Christian. In Jonathan we see the remnant under the Jewish aspect. But Abigail enters into the spirit of God's purposes respecting David, although he was now in distress; and David, who, while thoroughly submissive, can act according to the faith that owns him, hears her voice, and accepts her person. Let us mark the features of Abigail's faith. All rests upon her appreciation of David (it is this which

forms a Christian's judgment-in every respect he appreciates Christ); his title as owned of God; his personal perfection; and that which belonged to him according to the counsels of God. She thinks of him according to all the good which God has spoken of him; she sees him fighting God's battles, where others only see a rebel against Saul; and all this from her heart. She judges Nabal, and looks upon him as already judged of God on account of this, for with her everything is judged according to its connection with David (1 Sam. 26); a judgment which God accomplishes ten days later, although Nabal was at peace in his own house, and David an exile and outcast. Nevertheless the relation of Abigail to Nabal is recognised until God executes judgment. She judges Saul. He is but a man, because, to her faith, David is king. All her desire is that David may remember her. Jonathan says, when he goes out to David, "I shall be next unto thee" and David abides in the wood, while Jonathan returns to his house. In the order of things which God had judged (a judgment that faith recognised) he remains with his family and shares its ruin. This is important to a Christian. For instance, he respects, in so far as based on God's authority, official Christianity-which, in the world, is the religion of God while God bears with it-and does not stand up against it. As to faith and personal walk, this Christianity is nothing at all just as Saul was only a man to Abigail's faith.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 26

Alas! Saul is unchanged; instigated by the Ziphites, he seeks David anew, but it is only to fall again, and more publicly, into David's hands. Observe that David now appeals more directly to the Lord to judge between him and Saul. The separation is more complete. Saul was incorrigible. This appeal to God was becoming. It is not becoming, it is not according to the way of the Spirit, to accustom ourselves to evil. Righteous Father," said the Lord at length, "the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee; and these have known that thou hast sent me." That which characterised David in everything is, that he puts himself entirely into Jehovah's hands; it is the spirit of Christ in the Psalms.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 27

But David, after all, is only a man; and immediately after this testimony that God was with him (a testimony that even Saul acknowledged), his faith fails, and he passes over into the midst of the enemies of God's people. God, no doubt, makes use of this means to remove David from peril. But at the same time, he is tried and chastened, and is exposed to the dreadful necessity of appearing ready to fight against Israel. There is but One whose perfection and wisdom were His safeguard in every trial. We may remark that it was immediately after an evident interposition of God (Sa1 26:12) that David's faith fails. It is the same with Elijah (1 Kings 19). One would say that, in our hearts, faith exhausts itself by an unusual effort. Faith may carry us through the crisis; but the heart, which was the vessel of faith, is terrified by it; whilst in Jesus we find an equability of perfection altogether divine.

David removes to a distance from the royal city. In the land of the Philistines he gains their king's favour, not by faith, but by a prudence inconsistent with truth. It is an unhappy position; nevertheless, God does not forsake him. He chastises him, and in a painful manner, but He spares and preserves him. We have seen similar ways of the Lord in the case of the fugitive Jacob. Achish, who knows David, wishes to employ him in his service, and David cannot refuse; for when he who possesses the energy which the Spirit of God imparts by faith, has placed himself in a false position through unfaithfulness, he has no power against the one under whose authority he has placed himself; and if he does not use the energy with which he is endowed in favour of his protector, he very naturally excites his jealousy. He would have avoided all this by going to Ziklag, but he could not. God in His mercy preserved David, but he was now in a sad and false position.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 28

Saul, as well as Israel at present, was in a still worse position, having succour neither from God nor from the enemy. Saul is forsaken of God. Samuel is dead; so that Israel is no longer in connection with God through him. David, who at least made head against the Philistines, was, through Saul's own doings, in their midst. The outward zeal of the king had put down all those who had the spirit of witchcraft. He seeks direction from God, but obtains no answer. He has now neither conscience nor faith. The case is urgent; and he throws himself, not into outward service to God, as formerly (he has the

sad and solemn conviction that it belongs to him no more), but into those things which he had condemned and cut off as evil when he maintained a religious character-things which he still knew were evil. But the Philistines were there, and his heart greatly trembles. He seeks out a woman who had a familiar spirit. God meets him here. Samuel ascends, but in such a manner as to terrify the woman. She recognises the presence of a power superior to her enchantments. Samuel declares to Saul, without reserve and without any sympathy (for this was no longer possible), the solemn judgment of God.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 29

The following commentary covers Chapters 29 and 30.

In chapter 29 God, in His loving-kindness, brings David out of his difficulty by means of the jealousy of the lords of the Philistines. Nevertheless, to maintain his credit with Achish, David falls still lower, it seems to me, and protests that he is quite ready to fight against the enemies of the Philistine king, that is to say, against the people of God. This appears to me the most wretched part of David's life-at any rate, before he was king. God makes him sensible of it; for while he is there, the Amalekites strip him of everything and burn Ziklag, and his followers are ready to stone him. All this is grievous; but the grace of God raises him up again, and the effect of this chastisement is to bring him back to God, for he was ever true to Him in heart. David encouraged himself in Jehovah his God, and inquires of Him what he shall do. What patience, what kindness in God! What care He takes of His people, even while they are turning away from Him!

David is truly brought back to God, and rescued from his false position, and he walks and acts with God. God was, unknown to him, preparing a very different position for him, and was purifying and preparing him for it. How dreadful would it have been, had David been with the Philistines, and taken part in the defeat of God's people, and in the death of him whose life he had often spared so touchingly! How far the child of God may go astray when he puts himself under the protection of unbelievers, instead of relying on the help of God in all the difficulties which beset the path of faith! It is through these very difficulties that every grace is developed. And observe the danger

the believer is in-if his faith be not simple, but fails ever so little-of being thrown into the arms of God's enemies through the persecution of professors. Nature grows weary, and seeks comfort afar from the narrow path which leads through the briars. This happens whenever the people of God, following their own will, confide their interests to those who seek nothing but their own advantage in a less difficult position, which is neither that of God nor that of faith. And the more glorious a work there is for faith, the more nature grows weary, if faith becomes weak. Ziklag is taken during David's absence, but he pursues the spoilers, and recovers all the booty. David, upright and generous, found, in the difficulty which arose from the selfishness of his people, an opportunity to institute that which was conformable to the will of God; and instead of seeking to enrich himself through his share of the spoil, he uses it to maintain kindly relations with the elders of his people, and to prove to them that Jehovah is still with him.

1 Kings (1 Samuel) Chapter 31

Chapter 31 recounts the solemn death of Saul and of Jonathan also, closing, with the total discomfiture of Israel, this touching history. The whole account of Saul and his family, as raised up to withstand the Philistines, is ended: Saul and his sons fall into their hands; they are beheaded, their armour sent in triumph to the house of the Philistines' idols, and their bodies hung upon the walls of Beth-shan. Sad end, as that of the flesh will ever be in the battle of Jehovah!

Let us briefly retrace the history of David. Simplicity of faith keeps him in the place of duty, and contented there, without desire to leave it, because the approbation of God suffices him. Consequently he can there reckon upon the help of God, as thoroughly secured to him; he acts in the strength of God. The lion and the bear fall under his youthful hand. Why not, if God was with him? He follows Saul with equal simplicity, and then returns to the care of his sheep with the same satisfaction. There, in secret, he had understood by faith that Jehovah was with Israel; he had understood the nature and force of this relationship. He sees, in the condition of Israel, something which does not answer to this; but, as for himself, his faith rests upon the faithfulness of God. An uncircumcised Philistine falls like the lion. He serves Saul as musician with the same simplicity as before; and, whether with him,

or when Saul sends him out as captain of a thousand, gives proof of his valour. He obeys the king's commands. At length the king drives him away; but he is still in the place of faith. There is little now of military achievement, but there is the discernment of that which became him, when the spiritual power was in him, but the outward divine authority was in other hands. It was the same position as that of Jesus in Israel. David does not fail in this position, its difficulties only the better bringing out all the beauty of God's grace and the fruits of the Spirit's work, while very peculiarly developing spiritual affections and intimate relationship with God, his only refuge. It is especially this which gave rise to the Psalms. Faith suffices to bring him through all the difficulties of his position, in which it displays all its beauty and all its grace. The nobleness of character which faith imparts to man, and which is the reflection of God's character, produces in the most hardened hearts, even in those who, having forsaken God, are forsaken of Him (a state in which sin, selfishness, and despair, combine to harden), feelings of natural affection, the remorse of a nature which awakens under the influence of something superior to its malice-something which sheds its light (painful, because momentary and powerless) upon the darkness which encompasses the unhappy sinner who rejects God. It is because faith dwells so near God as to be above evil, that it withdraws nature itself from the power of evil, although nature has no power of self-mastery. But God is with faith; and faith respects that which God respects, and invests one who bears something from God with the honour due to that which belongs to God, and which recalls God to the heart with all the affection that faith entertains for Him, and all that pertains to Him. This is always seen in Jesus, and wherever His Spirit is; and it is this that gives such beauty, such elevation, to faith, which ennobles itself with the nobility of God, by recognising that which is noble in His sight, and on account of its relationship to Him, in spite of the iniquity or abasement of those who are invested with it. Faith acts on God's behalf, and reveals Him in the midst of circumstances, instead of being governed by them. Its superiority over that which surrounds it is evident. What repose, to witness this amid the mire of this poor world!

But, although faith, in the place it gives us in this world, suffices for all that we meet with in it, yet alas! communion with God is not perfect in us. Instead of doing our duty whatever it be without weariness, because God is

with us, and when we have slain the lion, being ready to slay the bear, and through this, more ready still to slay Goliath-instead of faith being strengthened by victory, nature grows weary of the conflict; we lose the normal position of faith, we debase and dishonour ourselves. What a difference between David, who, by the fruit of grace, draws tears from the heart of Saul, re-opening (at least for the moment) the channel of his affections, and David, unable to raise his hand against the Philistines whom he had so often defeated, and boasting himself ready to fight against Israel and the king whose life he had spared! My brethren, let us abide in the place of faith, apparently a more difficult one, yet the place where God is found, and where grace-the only precious thing in this world-flourishes, and binds the heart to God by a thousand links of affection and gratitude, as to One who has known us, and who has stooped to meet our need and the desires of our hearts. Faith gives energy; faith gives patience; and it is often thus that the most precious affections are developed-affections which, if the energy of faith makes us servants on earth, render heaven itself happy, because He who is the object of faith is there, and fills it in the presence of the Father.

Nature makes us impatient with circumstances, because we do not sufficiently realise God, and draws us into situations where it is impossible to glorify Him. On the other hand, it is well to observe, that it is when man had thoroughly failed, when even David's faith had been found wanting, and departing from Israel-he had thrown himself among the Philistines, it was then that God gave him the kingdom. Grace is above all failure: God must glorify Himself in His people.

2 KINGS (2 SAMUEL)

Introduction to 2 Samuel

The Second Book of Samuel sets before us the definitive establishment of David in the kingdom; and afterwards, the miseries of his house, when prosperity had opened the door to self-will.

The path of faith and its difficulties, is that in which we walk with God, and in which we celebrate the triumph which His presence secures to us. A state of prosperity makes it evident how little man is able to enjoy it without its becoming a snare to him. Prosperity not being the path of faith, that is to say, of strength, the evil of the heart comes out in the walk. Compare 2 Samuel 22 (the psalm by which David closes the path of difficulty) with chapter 23, which contains his last words, after his experience of the enjoyment of the prosperity and glory in which faith had placed him.

2 Kings (2 Samuel) Chapter 1

2 Kings (2 Samuel) 1:1

sa2 1:1

The following commentary covers Chapters 1 and 2.

Nevertheless piety, and pious (and hence generous) sentiments, were genuine in David. He did not pretend to feel for Saul's misfortunes, and then seize upon the kingdom without regret as soon as Saul had ceased to exist. David's heart was really melted when he heard of Saul's death. Woe to the hard-hearted man who, impelled by the hope of reward, thought to be the bearer of good tidings in announcing it to him. Whatever Saul's misfortunes, he was the king of Israel to David. Whatever his faults, he was an unfortunate king. David had been beloved by him, and had dwelt in his house, where the king's affliction manifested itself, and commanded the respect of all around him. And if Saul had unjustly persecuted David, at this moment it was readily forgotten. Now that he has fallen, David will only remember that which can do him honour; and, above all, that it is Jehovah's

anointed, and Jehovah's people, who have fallen before their enemies. David causes the man to be put to death who, deluded by selfishness, accused himself of lacking all fear of Jehovah, all good and generous feeling. For David fears God; and Jehovah's anointed is precious in his sight. He then pours out his heart before God in the touching accents of a grief which, in solemn and affecting language, recalls whatever would exalt Saul, and expresses the tender and affectionate recollections which his heart suggests. Beautiful exhibition of the fruits of the Spirit of God! David is in no wise discouraged, for his faith is in action. If this misfortune grieves him, it gives him also the opportunity of guarding against a similar calamity. He bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow, by which weapon Saul was slain. David, still humble, goes on well. He asks Jehovah if he should go up to Judah, and to which place; and Jehovah directs him. David testifies also to the men of Jabesh-gilead his satisfaction at their conduct with respect to Saul.

Nevertheless war has not yet ceased; if not against enemies from without, it is carried on against those from within. That which was linked with Saul's fleshly importance cannot support David. All is however now changed, for Ishbosheth was not Jehovah's anointed, and to make him king was in fact to rebel against God. David makes war upon him by his captains.

2 Kings (2 Samuel) Chapter 3

The following commentary covers Chapters 3 and 4.

Alas! the history of this period plunges us into the ways of man. It is no longer merely David walking in the path of faith. It is Joab, a clever, ambitious, bloody-minded, and heartless man. It is Abner, a man morally superior to Joab, but who fights on fleshly principles as a party man against the king whom God has chosen. Abner is related to Ishbosheth as Joab is to David. When his pride has been wounded, he throws himself into David's interests, and Joab kills him as much from jealousy as to avenge his brother's death. And wherein is the prowess and valour of the chiefs of Benjamin and Judah now manifested in this "field of strong men"? In slaying each other. The Philistines were forgotten. But the family of Saul were entirely in the wrong. It was nature which, with its pretended rights, would

not submit to God and to His will. As David now begins to do, so will Christ, the King of Judah, bring all around into subjection to Himself after He has taken the throne. It is well however to observe, that David does not appear in all this. Joab is the actor; and it appears to me, from the details given, that evil had already begun. I do not see that David had sought counsel of Jehovah; and Joab had certainly not done so, for he was nothing more than an ungodly man, who understood that it was more prudent to honour God, and not to depart too far from Him merely to gratify one's passions; but this did not preserve him from being at length ensnared in his own calculations. And, after all, it is not the energy of Joab which puts the kingdom into David's hands but the wounded pride of Abner, the chief of Ishbosheth's party, who ends by reaping from men that which he had sown. But all this is very sad.

By providential means God accomplishes His purposes, and David is successful. Generally also, in his combats at this period, and in his exaltation, he typifies the Lord Jesus. And I doubt not that the establishment of Christ's kingdom will be accomplished in detail after His appearing; the prophecies of Zechariah and Micah 5 prove this; but, as a history, we are, as I have said, in the midst of men. In the matter of Ishbosheth's death David maintains his integrity; and with respect to Abner's assassination he manifests the sentiments which become a man of God. Nevertheless Sa2 3:39 exhibits the weakness of man as the instrument of God's government. David appeals to the God of judgment. The election of one in whom God's counsels are accomplished must necessarily take place before his establishment in the place which Jehovah had appointed. It is still more evident that this election precedes the rest of the chosen one, and this is true as to Christ Himself; only He came down into it in grace.

2 Kings (2 Samuel) Chapter 5

David, the king of Judah in Hebron for seven years and a half, becomes the king of all Israel upon Ishbosheth's death And now David is no longer the man of faith who, himself the head of the armies of Israel walking in dependence upon God, guided the enterprises which the circumstances of Israel required of faith; but he is a king who can exalt whom he will The man very soon appears, the energetic man, but not the man of God. "Whosoever

getteth up to the gutter," the king said should be rewarded; "he shall be chief and captain" (Sa2 5:8). Joab goes up, and he has natural claims upon David [See Note #1]. Nevertheless, in the main David is guided by God, and he takes the city which God had chosen for His throne upon the earth. It was on this account he could say of those who had it in possession, "they are hated of David's soul"; for in fact they who possess the true seat of God's power, the place which He loves, and who, trusting to their natural strength, resist and scoff at the king whom God has chosen, are more hateful than any people, and are hated by those who have the Spirit of the Lord who establishes His throne upon the earth.

It is well to remark here, that David is a type of Christ in rejection, and of Christ making war in power for the establishment of the millennium; as Solomon is of Christ reigning in millennial peace. David's wars with the Philistines are subsequent to the taking of Jerusalem, and to the entire subjugation of Israel to David. It is not David, neither is it Christ reigning over the earth, who takes Jerusalem. Christ will descend from heaven for the destruction of Antichrist; but He destroys the enemies of Israel by means of His own people, after having established His throne in Zion (compare Zechariah 9 and 10). I do not enlarge upon this; I merely point out the grand features which the word supplies on this subject.

David establishes himself in Zion; he is acknowledged by some friendly Gentiles; he is conscious too that it was God who made him king. But the natural heart soon shews itself. Strengthened in his kingdom by Jehovah, he does what he likes, he follows his own will (compare Deu 17:17).

Nevertheless the consolidation of his power does not overthrow the hopes of his former enemies [See Note #2]; it excites their jealousy. They neither know the arm of his strength, nor the purpose of Jehovah who exalted him. They rush on to destruction. And now, with the danger that awakens him, we find again the man of God, the type of the Lord Jesus, inquiring of Jehovah, and obedient to His word. He gains signal victories under the express guidance of God, whose strength goes before him and puts his enemies to flight. Accordingly he gives God the glory.

Note #1

Joab was evidently clever and enterprising: but it is remarkable that he is not named among those who distinguished themselves by brilliant exploits, when individual faith had to fight for God's glory. When it is a question of being chief and captain, a place which David had held till then, Joab immediately comes forward.

Note #2

It is evident, from many Old Testament prophecies, that it will be the same when Christ returns to the earth. And yet at that period, if man exalts himself, it will be but for sudden destruction.

2 Kings (2 Samuel) Chapter 6

Although God has established a king in power, who is at the same time the victorious leader of His people, yet the bonds of the covenant are not yet restored. The ark is still in the place where individual piety had sheltered it when God was obliged to be the guardian of His own glory. David would bring it to the place where his throne is now established. He desires that the Jehovah of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim, should be honoured, and that He should be at the same time the glory of the king of Israel's throne. They are bound together in his mind. Now the kingdom of Melchisedec was not yet in exercise, not even in type. For Melchisedec is king of Salem (this is, king of peace). God was still maintaining His own glory. He could bless David, the elected and anointed king; but that order of things which united all together under the king's authority was not yet in force. It was to be set up later under Solomon.

Israel should have acknowledged God's order. But even while seeking to honour God, David thinks of himself, and there is definitely but a faulty imitation of that which the Philistine priests had done when acted upon by the terror of Jehovah. The result was unhappy. What man had done, man seeks to sustain; but in doing this he touches the glory of Jehovah and falls before His majesty. Jehovah vindicates His glory. He dwells not yet in the midst of His people.

At once pained and alarmed-pained because his heart truly sought Jehovah's glory, although he did not understand its height, and had

forgotten the majesty of Him whom his heart desired to have nearer to him- David leaves the ark in the house of Obed-edom; and there Jehovah shews that it is His nature to bless, whenever His majesty is not so forgotten that men deal with Him as they think proper. If we detract from His glory, He maintains it; as also He manifests what He is by the blessing He bestows. The heart and affections of David are restored; he causes the ark to be carried from Obed-edom's house, and places it in the tabernacle he had pitched for it. Here we only see David, and we see him clothed with the ephod He is the head of his people, when he re-establishes the relationship [See Note #1] between them and his God, and it is with joy, with offerings, and songs of triumph. It is he also who blesses the people, being in all this a remarkable type of Jesus, and of that which He will perform in Israel in the last days. All this however was not building the temple, which was a work reserved for the Prince of Peace. It was the king, by faith head of the people, acting up to a certain point for faith as priest, on the principle of Melchisedec, although the order and the blessing belonging to that title were not yet established. The king offers sacrifices, he blesses the people. As their sole head, he had united all Israel, he had beaten his enemies.

But after all it was a transitional period. The ark of the covenant abode still in a tent; David had triumphed, but the peace he enjoyed was but transitory. The establishment of the ark on the hill of Zion formed however an epoch; for mount Zion was the seat of royal grace, where the king who had suffered-and as having suffered-had established his throne in power and grace with respect to Israel. This is the key to Revelation 14-a book in which the Lamb is always (as it appears to me) the Messiah who has suffered, but who is seated on the throne of God while waiting for the manifestation of His glory; seated there in this character, although as such He had accomplished things far otherwise important (for salvation and the assembly are far more excellent than the kingdom); but it is evidently the kingdom that we have to do with here. I doubt not that the hundred and forty-four thousand who are with the Lamb on mount Zion, are those who have suffered for Messiah's sake in the spirit of His own sufferings in the midst of Israel. They are with Him in His kingly position in Zion, and follow Him whithersoever He goeth. They are morally near enough to heaven to learn its song, which none other on earth can learn. They are the firstfruits

of the earth. They are not in heaven. This explains Heb 12:22 also; in which we find Zion in contrast with Sinai, where the people had been placed under their own responsibility, the law having the sanction which the terror of Jehovah's presence gave it. But in the passage referred to, Zion is clearly distinguished from the heavenly Jerusalem [See Note #2].

I doubt not that at the end a similar relation will exist between Christ and the remnant of His people who have waited for Him. It is a period during which Jesus is fully triumphant, and acts in power and as a king, but does not yet rule in peace; and during which He forms, develops, and establishes, the relationship of His people with Himself on the earth in His triumphs and in His kingdom, according to the rights of which He will subject His enemies to Himself. The Psalms also open this part of Christ's reign to us prophetically and in type (see Psalm 110). After having seated David's Lord at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, the Spirit says, "Jehovah shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning [the morning of His glory, the dawn of day]; thou shalt have the dew of thy youth [of the young men who follow Him]." The whole of this psalm unfolds the same idea, the warlike kingdom of Christ, having Zion chosen of God for its seat, and the place whence His power shall go forth during the triumphant wars of the Messiah. Let us pursue this latter point.

After having described the ruin of Israel, Psalm 78 shews us Jehovah awaking; but it sets aside all rights of inheritance, and testimony to His former dealings with Israel; for (I Chron. 5) the birthright was Joseph's-"He CHOSE the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. He CHOSE David his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds," etc. This psalm mentions indeed His sanctuary, but the mountain on which it was built is never represented as the object of God's election. This psalm reaches farther than our present history; but it applies election to David and to Zion.

Psalm 132 sets before us precisely the sentiments with which the Spirit inspired David when he placed the ark upon mount Zion. It is but a tabernacle, but it is that of the mighty God of Jacob on the earth. And Jehovah has chosen Zion. There the horn of David shall bud. Observe here,

that Jehovah's answer goes each time beyond the request and desire of David—a beautiful testimony to the rich goodness of God. Jehovah's rest is in the midst of His people. He will enjoy this rest here in the midst of His own, although He establishes His glory in the temple; and it is there that every one speaks of it. In the wilderness this glory had not had a place of rest. Israel was on a journey, and Jehovah, who dwelt among the people, went before them to search out a resting-place for them (Num 10:33). Neither was it the case at Shiloh, when His rest among them depended on their faithfulness. "He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, and delivered his strength into the enemy's hand" (Psa 78:61-62). Election and grace alone—by means of "one chosen out of the people"—(Psa 89:19)—establish the rest of God among His people.

There is yet a remark to make on the subject of Psalm 132. We have seen that God maintains His majesty in His government, and does not allow any one to touch His ark. He gives David time to learn that God is a God of blessing and of grace; but, however good the intentions of His people may be, it is necessary that truth, that what He is, should be clearly demonstrated in His public dealings. If it were otherwise, if His government were not stable, all would go to ruin; the levity of man would constantly lead him into the paths of self-will. It is true that God is full of patience, and that after having formed the relationship between His people and Himself, He continues to act according to this relationship as long as possible, although forced to chasten at the same time; but judgment comes at length.

In the case we are considering, God had broken this relationship as originally established by His sitting between the cherubim; He had delivered His strength into captivity, His glory into the enemy's hand. David, as victor, restores to Him His place, but on a new principle, that of grace and power. Nevertheless, in examining Psalm 132, we discover much deeper sentiments, a heart which desires to have God glorified among His people in a much more developed and much more intimate manner than was indicated by that which the outward pomp and train, in which Israel could take part, represented; sentiments to which God responded in a very different way than by the death of Uzzah. This psalm, it is true, was written after the touching communications which are revealed in 2 Samuel 7, as Sa2 6:11-

12 prove. It teaches us however in what spirit David went to fetch the ark, the ardent desire of his heart to find a habitation for Jehovah [See Note #3], which, as we have seen, Christ will accomplish. Now it appears to me, that it was the consciousness of this desire that led to David's failure. Alas for man! In the consciousness of it he seeks to put it into execution, and he a little forgets the supreme glory of God, the sin which had caused God's departure from His people, and the majesty proper to Him. When God acts according to the requirements of His glory, and smites the man who lent David his assistance in accomplishing the desire of his heart, David is displeased. The death of Uzzah was the result of David's conduct, and he is angry with Jehovah when this result takes place. This was truly the flesh. God made David sensible of that which was becoming to the service of the God of Israel (see Ch1 15:12-13) [See Note #4], and He restored his soul by shewing him that He was the true source of blessing, and that the leaving the ark aside was leaving blessing aside too.

Moreover the position of David, zealously maintaining a sense of Jehovah's glory in the midst of his exaltation, as portrayed in the psalm, is of the highest moral beauty, and has a very peculiar aspect in reference to the divine economies. The place which Solomon occupies at the dedication of the temple presents, no doubt, a more striking picture. The Melchisedec priesthood is there in its simplicity and its fulness, but this was the fruit of the accomplishment of blessing; and the moral condition of those who took part in it was much less the result of deep exercise of heart, and of the close communion with God which is its consequence; it was, therefore, much less connected with the intelligent expectation of Christ. Solomon enjoyed the present realisation of the glory upon which, in its true accomplishment in Christ, David relied by faith; Solomon does not go to a higher source than David's faith, and the responsibility of the people which flowed from it. The temple is the scene of this. David rises higher. He lays hold of God's purpose, as to the seat of Jehovah's kingdom; and at a time when this required faith, he becomes, as far as possible, the royal priest, and consequently ascends to God Himself, who is the source of this priesthood. Taught of God, he has understood the election of Zion, the seat of Christ's kingly glory; and in this sense his moral position, when dancing before the ark as an obscure man, and to his shame before the world, appears to be a much higher one than

that of Solomon upon his brazen scaffold. The ark is also the sign of the re-establishment of God's power in the midst of His people by this moral link; but this re-establishment takes place, by what was in type the victory and the energy of Christ who prevails over His enemies, as will be the case, and not merely in the enjoyment of the glory.

In all this part of the history David (though as to himself with individual failure) is more personally a type of Christ. It is while difficulty exists, before the reign of peace when power will have removed every obstacle to the full enjoyment of it, that he restores the people's connection with God, and blesses and feeds them as Melchisedec. Blessing flows from his person in the presence of all that still opposes it, and in spite of every difficulty. The position which David still takes is that of servant, the immediate servant of God, by grace. He is not a priest upon his throne; but the king makes himself a priest, and this while still performing service. Samuel, as given to Jehovah, was clothed with a linen ephod. It was the priestly garment, and he was not a priest after the order of Aaron. He served in the tabernacle, by grace and by the Spirit, as one chosen and set apart for God. He was in his right place, but on God's part it was in grace, when the gloomy night of Ichabod already threatened the people with its darkness. Here it is the king who, taking this place, puts on the priestly ephod; not the garments which God had given the priests for glory and for beauty, but those which distinguished the priest considered as the type of Christ as priest [See Note #5], and which belonged to the essence of his functions [See Note #6], and in fact he took the place rather of a Levite, that is, of one set apart to serve before the ark, before Jehovah. The leading idea connected with the ephod is that he who wears it presents himself to God. But, even though making request, Melchisedec rather presents himself to the people; although he is before God for the people, as king and priest upon his throne.

Having offered his sacrifices, the king blesses the people. There were yet the Philistines, the Syrians, and other nations, to be subdued; but the connection of the people with God was established and maintained in security by the king in Zion, although the ark on which this connection rested was still within curtains. Blessing was also secured through the king himself, who had brought the sign of the covenant and the elect king

together in the place which God had chosen, and who was still the servant for this. The ephod did not pertain to Melchisedec; but, in honouring Jehovah who had preserved the people, he who wore it maintained as priest the blessing of the people before God. Michal, who in the spirit of Saul her father only dreamt of earthly glory, cannot participate in this. Abasement before Jehovah was incomprehensible to her. She neither understood nor tasted His glory or the joy of knowing Him as the heart's sole master. That which belongs to Saul can have no share in David's kingdom, nor can it suffer with a despised and rejected one. In short, we have a king devoted to Jehovah and to the people, who secures and communicates blessing to the latter; and not as yet a king characterised above all by the enjoyment of established blessing, which is Solomon's condition.

Now the first of these two conditions appears to me to represent Christ, such as He has always been in principle and in right, and especially such as He will be after the destruction of Antichrist, and before the destruction of those enemies who will still oppose themselves to the establishment of His kingdom in peace. His people, all Israel, will be united under Him. The rod of His strength will go out of Zion, and He will rule in the midst of His enemies (Psalm 110); but it will not yet be the fulfilment of Psalm 72 or of Zac 6:12-13. Compare also Psalm 2, in which Christ is looked upon as the Son of God born upon earth, and in which His universal rights to the possession of the earth, which flow from this, are set forth, acknowledged by God and proclaimed to the kings of the earth. In Psalm 110 Christ is seated at the right hand of God, waiting until His enemies are made His footstool. In Psalm 8 He is the Son of man, and all things are put under Him.

Under Solomon all Israel rejoices in all the good things which Jehovah had bestowed upon Solomon, as well as upon David. Here David in his own person provides that which is necessary to feed the people, and deals to every one a "good piece." [See Note #7] He returns to bless his house, for David has his own house to which he returns after having blessed Israel; it is something nearer to him than Israel. Michal, we have seen, could not really belong to it. David finds it a joyful thing to humble himself before Jehovah, and he reproves her. How overwhelming was the reply he made to her!

Note #1

I say "relationship," because, in fact, the ark of the covenant was the outward link, the sign of the formal relationship between God and Israel. This gives much importance to the circumstance we are considering. The loss of the ark had been, on the contrary, the Ichabod of the people.

Note #2

The construction of the sentence (Heb 12:22) makes it more easy to distinguish the different parts of which it is composed. The word "and" separates them: Zion-the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem-the angels, the general assembly-the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven-God the judge of all, etc.

Note #3

We may compare Exo 15:2 in the English Version, though the translation is questionable. But see Exo 29:46.

Note #4

This is not mentioned in Samuel; because it is David as the type of the Lord, whom the Spirit sets before us here.

Note #5

For the high priest (after the strange fire offered on the day of their consecration) it seems, never wore the garments of glory and beauty in the most holy place He only went in in white garments on the day of atonement.

Note #6

This priesthood He (Christ) exercises now. The glorious garments He will come out in. He is personally already crowned with glory and honour, but the all things are not put under Him; nor has He taken His Melchisedec throne, which indeed will be on earth. He is on His Father's throne, while His fellow heirs are being gathered.

Note #7

Psalm 2 shews us the King set upon the holy hill of Zion, the Son of God begotten in time (a distinct thing from His relationship as Son, one with the

Father before the world was-a doctrine taught in John 1, Hebrews 1, Colossians 1, and elsewhere-yet I do not believe one could be without the other, though the "therefore" of Luk 1:35 shews it to be a distinct thing, and His Sonship in this place is also a truth of the greatest importance), owned as such by Jehovah, and the kings of the earth charged to submit to Him. Psalm 8 speaks of Him as the Son of man to whom all things are subjected according to the eternal purposes of God. In Psalm 110 He who had been despised and rejected, being seated at the right hand of God, is to rule in the midst of His enemies. Compare Psalms 24 and 102. In the first, He is acknowledged as Jehovah of hosts, the King of glory, after having conquered His enemies: in the second, as the Creator Himself.

2 Kings (2 Samuel) Chapter 7

Ardently desiring Jehovah's glory, David is troubled at dwelling in a house of cedar, while Jehovah dwelt within curtains. He wishes to build Him a house-a good desire, yet one which God could not grant. The work of building the temple belonged to the Prince of Peace. David represented Christ as suffering and conquering, and, consequently, not as enjoying the earthly kingdom by undisputed right, and opening to all nations the gates of the temple in which the Lord of righteousness was to be worshipped. He returns then, so to say, into his own personal position, in which God blessed him in a very peculiar manner. David was more than a type; he was truly the stock of that family from which Christ Himself should spring. This is taught in the beautiful seventh chapter. An elect vessel to maintain the cause of Jehovah's people in suffering, and to re-establish among them the glory of the Lord's name (Sa2 7:8-9), Jehovah had been with him; and David, most especially honoured in this, was also in his faithfulness a vessel of promise of the future peace and prosperity destined for Israel in the counsels of God. But these were yet future things. The perpetuity of the kingdom over Israel is established in his family, which God will chasten if needful, but not cut off. His son shall build the house. Already, at the time of the exodus, the man in whom was the Spirit, desired to prepare a habitation for Jehovah (Exo 15:2) [See Note #1]. But the Messiah was needed for this. Till then Israel was a wanderer, and God with him. The following are the chief subjects of the revelation made to David, and of his reply:-the sovereign call of God; that

which God had done for David; the certainty of future rest for Israel; the establishment, on God's part, of David's house; his son shall be the Son of God, shall build the house; the throne of his Son shall be established for ever.

David's first thought-and it is always so when the Spirit of God works-was not to rejoice, but to bless God. These are the striking features of the prayer of thankfulness: he is in peace and freedom before God; he goes in and sits before Him; he acknowledges at the same time his own nothingness, and how unworthy he was of all that God had already done. Yet this was but a small thing in the sight of God, who had declared to him the future glories of his house. It was God, and not the manner of man. What could he say more? God knew him; there lay his confidence and his joy. He acknowledged that God did it in truth and "of his own heart." It was grace to make His servant know it. The effect of all this was to make David recognise the excellency of Jehovah. There was none beside Him, and none upon the earth therefore to be compared to His elect people, whom He went to redeem for a people to Himself, and whom He had now confirmed to Himself, that Israel might be His people for ever, and that He Himself might be their God. The highest kind of prayer is that which does not spring from a sense of need, but from the desires and the intelligence which the revelation of God's purposes produces-purposes which He will fulfil in love to His people and for the glory of Christ. Finally he asks that his house may be the place of God's own blessing. In a word, he desires that the purposes of God, which had awakened all his affections, may be accomplished by Jehovah Himself, who had revealed them unto His servant.

Note #1

The translation is very questionable; it was however God's thought. See Exo 29:46.

2 Kings (2 Samuel) Chapter 8

Being entirely delivered from the insurrections of the people,* David exercises his power in bringing his enemies into subjection. The Philistines, who dwelt within the land of Israel, are subjugated. Metheg-ammah signifies "bridle of the capital." David held the key of power. Moab is

subdued and made tributary. At length the outward enemies, the Syrians, also, are either conquered or submit themselves. The Edomites become David's servants, and Jehovah preserves David whithersoever he goes. In all this we have again the man of faith and the type of the Lord Jesus, King in Zion, who is victorious over the enemies of Israel, and puts Israel in possession of the promised land (Gen 15:18) as far as the Euphrates. He dedicates the spoil to Jehovah. He reigns over all Israel, and executes judgment and justice unto all his people. The companions of his pilgrimage participate in the glory of his kingdom—a type, in all this, of the kingdom of Christ.

Note #1

Compare Psa 18:43, where the righteous suffering Christ (under the figure of David) is the source of all blessings for Israel from Egypt to the end.

2 Kings (2 Samuel) Chapter 9

He acts in grace also towards the humble remnant of Saul's house; and if Mephibosheth is not associated with the glory of his kingdom, he enjoys the privilege of the king's table, who shews him kindness; although Mephibosheth belongs to the family of his enemy and persecutor, but at the same time to that little remnant which favoured the king whom God had chosen (being itself, on that account, hated by those in power). He enjoys also the whole of his family's inheritance. This touching and beautiful testimony to David's kindness and faithfulness through grace, appears to me to give us a picture of Christ's relations to the remnant of Israel, or at least that of the spirit of these relations. It was "the kindness of God" which sought out the family of Saul, the enemy of David's crown—and which rests upon the representative of Jonathan, whose history we have read, and who typifies those that will attach themselves to Christ in prospect of the kingdom, to which their thoughts are limited. The remnant enjoys the effect of the establishment of the kingdom, but does not rank among those that surround the throne after having shared the sufferings of the despised and rejected king.

2 Kings (2 Samuel) Chapter 10

Chapter 10, the details of which we pass over, sets before us the general principle of the king's rule in Zion. When grace is despised by those to whom it is manifested, the king's judgment follows. Opposition and rebellion only serve to establish his authority in the very place where resistance is attempted. It is useless to strive against the power of God's chosen king.

2 Kings (2 Samuel) Chapter 11

The following commentary covers Chapters 11, 12, and 13.

The history of David and the wife of Uriah follows. David is no longer acting by faith in God's service. When the time comes at which kings go forth to war, he stays at home at his ease, and sends others in his place to fight Jehovah's battles. At ease and in indolence he falls readily into sin, as was the case when he sought for rest among the Philistines. He was no longer standing by faith. The nearer David was to God, the more ineffectual were his attempts to conceal his sin. Given up to himself for the time in chastisement, he adds a second transgression to the first; he completes it, and enjoys its fruit, now that the removal of every obstacle gives a semblance of lawfulness to his course. What a sad history! What unworthiness! He forgets his position as king, and a king from God. Was it reigning in righteousness to take advantage of his royal power to oppress Uriah? He makes himself a slave to the wretched Joab by rendering him accessory to his crime. How degrading! How much happier was he, when, though hunted like a partridge in the mountains, he had a living faith and a good conscience! But who can shun the eye of God? Accordingly God, who knows and loves him, fails not to visit his sin. This was a very great sin: David committed it in secret; God punishes it in the sight of all Israel. If David knew not how to glorify God, nor while reigning in His name to maintain a true testimony as to the nature of God's kingdom; if he had on the contrary falsified its character, God Himself will know how, in the sight of all men, to retrace its features through the chastisement He will send upon the man who has thus dishonoured Him, and who had taken away the only witness to His government which God had set up before men.

This history shews us how far sin can blind the heart, even while the moral judgment continues sound; it shews also the power of the faithful word of

God. God manifests at the same time the sovereignty of His grace; for although He chastened David by the child's death, it is another son of Bathsheba who was the elect of God, who became king and the head of the royal family, the man of peace and blessing, the beloved of Jehovah. David submits himself under the hand of God; his heart bows under it in the depth of its affections. He understands it better than his servants do, although more guilty than they. He acts becomingly according to spiritual intelligence. There was confidence in God and intimacy with Him; and therefore David can lay open the tenderest part of his heart to God, the part in which God had wounded him; but when the will of God is manifest, he submits entirely. We see here the evident work of the Spirit. It is the same Spirit who wrought in Jesus at Gethsemane, although both the occasion and the extent of the suffering were not only different, but far otherwise important; but the heart is opened to God completely and the submission complete when God's will is known.

The sin of David has been extremely great; but we can plainly see in him the precious work of the Spirit. Confounded by the simple faithfulness of Uriah, he cannot escape the hand of God! David is pardoned, for he confesses his sin; but as to His government, God shews Himself to be inflexible, and while sparing the king-for he deserved death-He announces to him that the sword shall never depart out of his house. We have seen a similar case in Jacob's unfaithfulness. David's punishment also answers to his sins (compare Sa2 11:10; Sa2 11:12 with the history of Absalom). As to David's affections, the chastisement was in the death of his child, a chastisement which he deeply felt; and the public government of God was manifested in that which was done, according to His word, before all Israel and before the sun.

It is possible that the children of Ammon deserved severe judgment, and that this period was the time of their judgment; they were the insolent enemies of the king whom God had set up, and who had given proof of his kind feeling towards them. But as to his personal condition, I know not whether David would have treated his enemies in this manner when he was walking in the narrow path of faith. As a type, this judgment brings to mind the righteous judgment of the Messiah, and the dreadful consequences of having despised and insulted Him even in His glory. We learn from it also,

that when a people are ripe for judgment, God will bring it upon them, even although others may seek to act in grace.

When David had shewn that he had forgotten God, and had failed in his entire dependence upon Him, the evils in his house soon broke out. He had added to the number of his wives. The root of bitterness buds and brings forth bitter fruits. Although in the main David's heart was upright before God and deeply acknowledged Him, yet, when once out of that path of humble dependence which is produced by faith and the sense of God's presence, he embittered the remainder of his days through following his own will in the midst of his blessings. There is sin in his house, wrath on account of the sin, vacillation through partiality for Absalom. Joab appears on the scene, as is the case every time that these matters of intrigue and wickedness recur in the history. This is all that need be said of the sorrowful story of Amnon and Absalom.

2 Kings (2 Samuel) Chapter 14

The following commentary covers Chapters 14 through 20.

David's partiality for Absalom had yet other and more painful results, and heavy chastisements. It is painful to see the conqueror of Goliath driven from his home and his throne by his beloved son, and that under God's hand. For if God had not allowed it, who could have driven God's elect from the royal seat in which Jehovah had placed him? The sword was in his house; the word of God, sharper than a two-edged sword. How just is Jehovah! But whom He loves He chastens. Accordingly, whilst all this is a manifestation of the righteous rule of God, it is to David an occasion of deep heart-exercise, and of a more real and more intimate knowledge of God; for his heart was truly and eternally bound to God, so that all his sorrows bore fruit, although they were occasioned by his faults.

In this respect also, although the cause of his grief was so widely different from that of the Lord's grief, he becomes the type of Christ in suffering, and the vessel of the expression of His sympathy for His people. This is even so much more the case, because with a faithful heart, and in a certain sense with perfect integrity towards God, the king's faults and transgressions gave rise to those confessions and to that humiliation which the Spirit of Christ

will produce in the remnant of Israel; so that on the one hand he speaks of his integrity, while on the other he confesses his faults. Now that is what Christ causes His people to say, and what He says for them. Nevertheless we must remember it is not David himself, as a godly man, who speaks in the Psalms; it is by the inspiration of the Spirit he utters them; and it is a very precious thing for us that, in circumstances where faith might fail and the heart be discouraged, the word supplies us with language suitable to faith, and to faith in one who has perhaps been unfaithful: a precious testimony that, even in this condition, God does not cast us off, and that Christ sympathises with us, since He furnishes us with expressions and sentiments adapted to such a condition.

The Psalms supply this, and in especial suitability to the remnant of Israel in the last days. They are characterised by integrity of heart and confession of sin. The Spirit of Christ gives the sentiments, and assures of His sympathy. Psalm 16 gives us very strikingly this position of Christ. His goodness extends not to God. It is not His divine place, "equal with God," which He is taking. He calls Jehovah His Lord; but of the saints on earth He says, "in whom is all my delight." By His baptism, which was the expression of this, He connected Himself, not with Israel in their sin, but with the first movement of the Spirit responding in the remnant to the condemnation of the people as such. This is the principle of the Psalms—the upright and faithful man in the midst of the perverse nation, the object of the counsels and purposes of God. The book opens with this distinction drawn by God; it next presents us with the King in Zion according to the decree of God, rejected by the nation and hated by the heathen who oppress the people. All this develops itself through a variety of circumstances, and all the relationships of the remnant are there depicted, as well as all affections of the heart. All connected with it is gone over by the hand and the pen of God, and according to the Spirit and the sympathies of Christ.

Chapter 20 ends this part of David's history, and his history in general. He is re-established on his throne, and has overcome the efforts of his enemies and the rebellion of his own people. The order of his court and officers is restored in peace. Sundry details are added by the Spirit of God.

2 Kings (2 Samuel) Chapter 21

And, first of all, the government of God, who forgets nothing, and with whom everything has its results, is recalled to David and to his people by means of the Gibeonites. It is no longer necessary for the establishment of God's economy that David should pursue the house of Saul. There is a righteous judgment, a moral principle of God, which is above all economies. Saul in his formal and fleshly zeal, although it was for God, had not acted in the fear of God. It is this which especially distinguishes a godly zeal from a zeal for the outward interests of His kingdom. Saul forgets the oaths which Israel made to the Gibeonites. God remembers it, and does not despise the poor Gibeonites. David also recognises its obligation; after having inquired of Jehovah on account of the thrice repeated chastening upon Israel, he submits to the demand of the Gibeonites [See Note #1]. The whole house of Saul perishes, except the little remnant attached to David. With respect to the latter, the circumstances of Rizpah's touching and faithful affection awaken in David's heart the remembrance of brighter moments in poor Saul's career, and he pays the last honours to his memory. After this God was entreated for the land.

If with a sling and a stone faith can overthrow its enemies, the flesh is at fault before their attacks. David, when king, as we have clearly seen, gave himself up more to his lusts and to his own will than David suffering. Nevertheless it is beautiful to see that, where faith has acted amid the people's ruin, it has stirred up many other instruments, who animated and encouraged by its success-act fearlessly with the same power as that which wrought the first deliverance. It is well however to observe, that to conquer valiant foes, when all Israel was flushed with success and strengthened the hands of the mighty men, is a very different thing from the faith which reckons upon God, when strength and success are on the enemy's side and the people are fleeing before him. The latter was David's case with Goliath; the former, that of the men who slew the other giants.

Note #1

However, in yielding to the Gibeonites, David did not consult Jehovah as to what he should do. We see the government of God as to Saul's house, and Saul's act towards those he had wronged; but though in its general

character righteous and upright, had he consulted Jehovah, some happier way of being righteous might have been found.

2 Kings (2 Samuel) Chapter 22

The following commentary covers Chapters 22 and 23.

The songs that follow contain instruction of deep interest. In chapter 22 David comes forth from his sufferings and his affliction with a song of triumph and of praise. He had learnt what God was in his sufferings. He celebrates all that God had been for him, all that he had found Him to be in his necessities and dangers, the effect of God's power on his behalf, and the glorious and blessed result of this power. All this is given in a song, the expression of which will only be fully accomplished in Christ Himself. In chapter 23 he celebrates his prosperity. But what a difference! He declares, it is true, what Christ will be when He reigns; and he does so in language of most attractive beauty, a beauty which ravishes the mind and transports it into the reign of Christ, that blessed "world to come of which we speak." But then this sorrowful thought presents itself-"my house is not so with God."

In the first of these two songs there is something more of profound interest. David speaks as a prophet; and, as he had done in so many other instances, he personifies the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus in connection with Israel. This song then sets before us the sufferings of Christ (as the representative of Israel, and often speaking of the nation as though it were Himself), sufferings which obtained also other deliverance of far surpassing excellence, as the cause of the deliverance out of Egypt and of all Israel's blessings, until the establishment of Messiah's glory in the age to come. He surrounds the agony of Christ with the whole history of Israel in salvation and in blessing, from Pithom and Rameses unto the destruction of the violent man at the end of days, and the submission of the nations to Messiah's sceptre; and he gives a voice to their distress in Egypt.

In chapter 23 the covenant is, "all his salvation and all his desire," although at that time "he made it not to grow." Judgment must be executed ere the full blessing he expected could be brought in; and these thorns of iniquity

must be "utterly burned in the same place." This will take place at the coming of Christ.

If God honours and glorifies David, He does not forget those whom the energy of David's faith had brought around him. The Holy Ghost enumerates the mighty men of David, and recounts their deeds of valour and devotedness-deeds which obtain a name and a place for them when God writes up the people (Psalm 87). Joab is not among them.

2 Kings (2 Samuel) Chapter 24

Chapter 24 leads us into a subject which requires particular notice. The wrath of God is kindled again against Israel. It is not in the mind of the Spirit to inform us on what occasion this took place, but to lay open God's dealings both in government and grace. In the preceding chapter God "writeth up" the mighty men who prefigure the companions of the true David in glory. Here it is His grace in staying His anger and bringing in His blessing.

God punishes the pride and rebellion of Israel by leaving them to the consequences of the impulse of David's natural heart. Joab's habitual cleverness and good sense made him perceive its folly. The flesh, when it is in another, is easily discerned. Joab felt that it was not worth while to despise God when nothing was to be gained by it; for in this way the flesh fears God. But the thing was of Jehovah, and Satan gains his point. When in truth can man's good sense avail in opposition to the will of God in chastening, and to Satan's malice? It is an awful thing to be given up to his power. Nine months of sin on David's part, and of patience on God's part, shew us the fatal influence of the enemy; but the sin accomplished only awakens David's conscience. The enjoyment of the fruit of our sin undeceives us. It is the pursuit of it which allures our hearts. When Satan has succeeded in inducing the children of God to commit the evil to which he tempts them, he cares no longer to conceal from them its emptiness and folly. Happily, where there is life, conscience resumes its power in such a case.

Nevertheless chastening must follow sin which has been carried out in spite of so much long-suffering. But God, who reaches His servant's conscience,

brings into play the sincere affections of his heart, in order to bring about His own sovereign purpose. David exhibits that never-failing token of a heart that knows the Lord-confidence in God above all, and at whatever cost. "Let me fall into the hand of Jehovah." Sweet and precious thought of what the Lord is unto His people! and well He knows how to fill the heart with the certainty that He deserves its confidence. Even while chastening, God is more loving, more faithful, more worthy of confidence than any other. The plague breaks out; but in the midst of judgment Jehovah remembers mercy, and commands the destroying angel, when he had reached Jerusalem, to stay his hand. It is Jerusalem, the city of His affections, that attracts His attention. God chooses it for the place where His altar shall be built, and His grace shewn forth-His appointed mercy-seat. It is there that His wrath, justly kindled against Israel, ceases; and sin gives occasion to the establishment of the place and of the work in which He and His people shall meet, according to that grace which has put away the sin. This characterises the cross of Christ; this will stay the plague in Israel, and introduce the reign of the true Prince of Peace. David stands in the breach to deliver the people; and at his own cost (Sa2 24:17), and, typically according to the counsels of God, he offers the sacrifice of appeasement.

The thoughts on the First Book of Chronicles will contain a fuller examination into this latter part of David's history. But it is a striking close to this book, after all the governmental history of David, that it closes with the atoning sacrifice which stops the wrath through grace, and lays the foundation of the meeting-place of God with Israel and the place of their worship.

3 KINGS (1 KINGS)

Introduction to 1 and 2 Kings

The Books of Kings shew us the kingly power established in all its glory; its fall, and God's testimony in the midst of the ruin; with details concerning Judah after the rejection of Israel, until Lo-ammi had been pronounced upon the whole nation. In a word, it is the trial of kingly power placed in the hands of men, not absolute, as in Nebuchadnezzar, but kingly power having the law for its rule; as there had been a trial of the people set in relationship with God by means of priesthood. Out of Christ nothing stands.

Although the kingly power had been placed under the responsibility of its faithfulness to Jehovah; and although it had to be smitten and punished whenever it failed in this, it was yet at this time established by the counsels and the will of God. It was neither a David, type of Christ in his patience, who, through difficulties, obstacles, and sufferings, made himself a way to the throne; nor a king who, although exalted to the throne and always victorious, had to be a man of war to the end of his life; a type in this, I doubt not, of what Christ will be in the midst of the Jews at His return, when He will commence the coming age by subjecting the Gentiles to Himself, having been already delivered from the strivings of the people (Psa 18:43-44). It was the king according to the promises and the counsels of God, the king established in peace, head over God's people to rule them in righteousness, son of David according to the promise, and type of that true Son of David, who shall be a priest upon His throne, who shall build the temple of Jehovah, and between whom and Jehovah there shall be the counsel of peace (Zac 6:13).

Let us examine a little the position of this kingly power according to the word; for responsibility and election met in it, as well as the foreshadowing of the kingdom of Christ. In chapter 7 of the Second Book of Samuel we have seen the promise of a son whom God would raise up to David, and who should reign after him, to whom God would be a father, and who should be His son, who should build the temple of Jehovah, and the throne of whose

kingdom God would establish for ever. This was the promise: a promise which, as David himself understood, will be fully accomplished only in the Person of Christ (Ch1 17:17). Here is the responsibility: "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men" (Sa2 7:14); which David well understood also (Ch1 28:9). The book which we are considering shews us that this responsibility was fully declared to Solomon (Kg1 9:4-9), Psa 89:28-37 sets the two things also before us very plainly, namely, the certainty of God's counsels, His fixed purpose, and the exercise of His government in view of man's responsibility. In the Book of Chronicles we have only what relates to the promises (Ch1 17:11-14), for reasons of which we will speak when we examine that book. From all these passages, we perceive that the royalty of David's family was established according to the counsels of God and the election of grace; that the perpetuity of this royalty, dependent on the faithfulness of God, was consequently infallible; but that at the same time the family of David, in the person of Solomon, was in fact placed upon the throne at that time under the condition of obedience and faithfulness to Jehovah [See Note #1]. If himself or his posterity were to fail in faithfulness, God's judgment would be executed; a judgment which nevertheless would not prevent God's fulfilling that which His grace had assured to David.

The Books of Kings contain the history of the establishment of the kingdom in Israel under this responsibility, that of its fall, of the longsuffering of God, of God's testimony amid the ruin which flowed from the unfaithfulness of the first king, and finally that of the execution of the judgment, a longer delay of which would but have falsified God's own character, and the testimony that should be given to the holiness of that character. Such delay would have borne a false testimony with respect to that which God is. We shall see that, after Solomon's reign, the greater part of the narrative refers to the testimony given by the prophets Elijah and Elisha in the midst of Israel, and in general to that kingdom which had entirely departed from God. Little is said of Judah before the complete ruin of Israel. After this the ruin of Judah, brought on by the iniquity of their kings, is not long delayed, although there were moments of restoration.

Note #1:

This is the universal order of God's ways: to set up blessing first under the responsibility of man, to be accomplished afterwards according to His counsels by His power and grace. And it is to be noted that the first thing man has always done is to fail. Thus Adam, thus Noah, thus under law, thus the priesthood, thus as here the royalty under law, so Nebuchadnezzar where it was absolute, so, I add, the church. Already in the apostles' days all sought their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. God continues His own dealings in grace in spite of this, all through, besides His government according to responsibility in the public body in this world, but a government full of patience and grace.

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 1

3 Kings (1 Kings) 1:1

kg1 1:1

The following commentary covers Chapters 1 and 2.

Before David's death the iniquity and ambition of a son whom he "had not displeased at any time "led to the solemn proclamation of Solomon, to whom God had destined, and David promised, the throne. In this circumstance Joab, long restrained by prudence in David's lifetime, shews himself as he is. He makes himself necessary to Adonijah, as he had been to David. Abiathar, long under the sentence of God, takes the same course. Solomon, the elect of God, who held his rights from God, did not suit them. But after all, man's prudence fails before the judgment of God. God arranges events in such a manner as, sooner or later, to exhibit the most prudent in their true light. Apparently all goes on well. The elder and beloved son of the king, the captain of the host whom David himself could not resist, and the priest who had always accompanied David, are there, as well as all the king's sons, excepting the elect of God; but the thought of God, or His will, had no place there. The companions of David, who had truly served with him for the glory of God, were not there either. The prophet of God, the witness to His will, is employed in the fulfilment of that will, and Solomon is proclaimed king, and inaugurated before the eyes of David himself.

David's faith, if it had not energy enough to give each one his place in judgment, had at least full intelligence of what was proper. He communicates his judgment to Solomon, who is to execute it according to his word [See Note #1]. Solomon at first shews clemency to Adonijah; but the still restless will of the latter, who desired the deceased king's wife, awakens the righteous judgment destined for those who had failed in integrity, and who had risen up against God's anointed. It is the first character attached to the king reigning in glory. He executes righteous judgment in the earth. There is no escaping the vigilance of this judgment. This is seen in the case of Shimei. We find at the same time the fulfilment of the word given to Samuel, namely, the humiliation of the priest. Solomon, Jehovah's anointed, sends Abiathar away, and puts Zadok in his place.

Note #1

It is to David also, and not to Solomon, that God communicated the plan of the temple. Solomon, in glory, performs these things, and possesses the requisite discernment for executing justice and judgment, but it is in David that intelligence displays itself. In fact if Christ, reigning in glory, exercises just judgment, He is already wisdom, and, indeed, it is in His connection with the assembly in the present time of grace, that the communication of the purposes of God, and the intelligence of His ways, are found.

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 3

But there is another element in the history of the king of glory, in which he oversteps the limits of the king of Israel's legitimate position; he allies himself with the Gentiles, and marries Pharaoh's daughter. Neither the house of Solomon, nor that of Jehovah, was yet built; but the daughter of Pharaoh, whom the king espouses in grace, dwells in the place where the suffering and victorious king had provisionally placed the ark of the covenant, which secures blessing to the people, and which, when placed in the temple, will form the source of blessing for Israel. This ark was not a covenant made with Pharaoh's daughter; but she dwelt where the symbol of the covenant was hidden, and she was placed under the safeguard, and sheltered by the power, of Him who had made this covenant, and who could not break it, whatever might be the unfaithfulness of a people who ought

always to have enjoyed its benefits. I doubt not, that hereafter a remnant of the Jews will find themselves through sovereign grace in the same position [See Note #1] (before the glory of the kingdom, and of the house of God, is established) under shelter of the covenant attached to the city of David, the seat of royal grace, but the provisional seat in anticipation of the full and entire result of the king's power. But we confine ourselves here to recognising the principle of the bringing in of the Gentiles, manifested in the reception of Pharaoh's daughter as Solomon's bride.

It is well to remark, that the passage we are considering does not introduce the light and intelligence of the heavenly places, but only, in connection with the kingdom, the principle through which the position of those who enjoy that grace is established. And therefore, while admitting the Gentiles, the principle applies to this Jewish remnant of the latter days, who are intelligent and faithful according to their intelligence, a remnant which will be admitted according to the same principles of grace. The people in general do not enter into this thought. The kingdom itself even, and the blessing of the kingdom, are not established on that footing. All doubtless will be founded on the new covenant, and that by the presence of the Mediator of this covenant. Still, even then, the connection of the people with God, as an earthly people, will not be established on the efficacy of a faith which enters into the enjoyment of the grace of the covenant while the mediator of it is hidden, and which anticipates the public establishment of it as made with Judah and Israel, but on the positive enjoyment of its results, when the king shall have settled everything by his power. The brazen altar was not in the sanctuary but in the court, marking indeed a rejected one lifted up from the earth (and on this the future blessings of Israel depend), but not gone into heaven and hidden, save to faith, there. It is by that the people will approach God. It is the earth which is the scene of the development of their religious affections and the knowledge of God manifested on the earth. The efficacy of the cross, as the means of approaching God on the earth, will be known to them. Without it they could not approach Him. They will mourn when they shall see Him whom they have pierced, but see Him as manifested down here to those below. Blessing, pardon, new life, will be brought them down here. They will not

enter into the power of these things as hidden within the veil. Being established on the earth, it would not even be suitable for them to do so.

To return to our history: if the ark is on Mount Zion, there are two ways of approaching God-before the ark, and at the altar which in fact is confounded with the high places. Until the temple is built, the people are on the high places, earthly and carnal even when approaching the true God [See Note #2]. God bears with it. Solomon himself goes thither, and God hears him there. The temple is not built. If it had been, it ought to have been the only centre of service and worship. That God bears with a thing, until power shall act, is quite another thing from sanctioning it after power has acted. We must remember that, if Solomon went to Gibeon, it is because the tabernacle and the brazen altar were there; and it was there that, according to the law, the priests performed their functions (Ch1 16:36-40). The ark of the covenant was not there. David had placed it in a tent in the city of David. These latter points are more developed in the Chronicles (and I refer the reader to that which will be said in the examination of that book); but the passage we are considering would hardly have been understood without some anticipation of what is found there.

As to the responsibility of the moment, the state of the people in this respect appears to me to be set before us as a sorrowful state; and Solomon himself is but on a level with the existing state of things-a state borne with indeed by God in grace, but not after His heart. The king thought neither of the ark nor of the hidden blessing of the covenant, as that from which all his thoughts and actions should spring [See Note #3], and as the only means of his connection with Jehovah. He loved Jehovah. It was given him to accomplish all that was requisite for the manifestation of His glory; but his heart rose not to the height of that faith which reckoned upon the secret of God's love, when the glory was not manifested, and which discerned it through all the existing things, even while God still bore with them. It was this which formed the strength of David personally. The ark of the covenant in the city of David was the symbol of this and for the time its expression. Solomon walked no doubt in the statutes of David, and he loved Jehovah; but he approached Him without rising above the level of the people. Only our chapter says that he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. This

continued until Hezekiah. The lustre of a great blessing often keeps out of sight something which God bears with, as we have said, but which produces disastrous effects when the energy which gave rise to the blessing has disappeared. Better to be little and despised at the ark, than to possess the glory of the kingdom and to worship on high places.

Moreover, although loving Jehovah, if we are not by faith in the secret of the covenant at the ark, we shall always let in something which is not according to integrity even in our own path. Before we are in the glory, we are never on a level with the position we hold, while we have only this position to sustain us. We must look above our path to be able to walk in it. A Jew, who had the secret of Jehovah and who waited for the Messiah, was pious and faithful according to the law. A Jew, who had only the law, assuredly did not keep it. A Christian, who has heaven before him and a Saviour in glory as the object of his affections, will walk well upon the earth; he who has only the earthly path for his rule will fail in the intelligence and motives needed to walk in it; he will become a prey to worldliness, and his christian walk in the world will be more or less on a level with the world in which he walks. The eyes upward on Jesus will keep the heart and the steps in a path conformable to Jesus, and which consequently will glorify Him and make Him known in the world. Seeing what we are, we must have a motive above our path to be able to walk in it. This does not prevent our needing also for our path the fear of the Lord to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, knowing that we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

Solomon goes to Gibeon to offer burnt-offerings. Jehovah appears to him there in a dream. Solomon is conscious that he needs the help of Jehovah to fulfil the duties before him; and, through the grace of God, he manifests a state of heart with respect to this, which is pleasing to Jehovah. The sense of the difficulty of performing the duties of his position, towards a people who belong to Jehovah, makes him feel his own littleness; and the desire of not failing in the task entrusted to him of God is uppermost in his heart, and leads him to ask for the wisdom requisite to accomplish it. The genuineness of this sentiment is so much the more evident, from its being in a dream that he replies to God. God adds glory and riches to the fulfilment of this prayer. The sense of God's goodness and the joy of his heart, bring him before the

ark of His covenant who had thus revealed Himself to him beyond his expectation. God's answer places the king immediately under the condition of obedience. The wisdom he had asked for is manifested in the judgment he gives, and the people acknowledge that it comes from God. Strict justice in vengeance had cut off the wicked at the beginning; now it is the justice which maintains order and blessing among the people of Jehovah. Thus will it be also with Jesus.

Note #1

Consider here Rev 14:1, and Heb 12:22.

Note #2

The position of Solomon is morally worthy of attention He loves Jehovah; he walks in the statutes of David; but he does not cleave to the ark which David had placed in Zion; he offers sacrifices in the high places. How often Christians, who do not walk outwardly in sin, do not seek in Christ the secret of His will according to the revelation He has made of Himself while hidden! For us the temple is not built. We may draw nigh to the ark-Christ rejected and gone up on high; or to the brazen altar and the high places, for this altar is confounded with them.

Note #3

He drew nigh to it, under the influence of granted blessings, to render thanks to God (Kg1 3:15).

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 4

The following commentary covers Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 4 contains an enumeration of the officers who served Solomon, and upheld the glory of his throne; and then, the manner in which the whole country provided for the maintenance of his household, Judah and Israel being multiplied and full of joy The king's authority extends as far as the Euphrates. Peace reigns all around. The wisdom and understanding which God had given him surpassed all that was known in the world; so that from the ends of the earth they came to hear the wisdom of his lips.

His proverbs, his songs, and his knowledge, bore testimony to the excellent spirit with which God had endowed the king His throne is established, and the glory of the son of David abounds. The Gentiles now-the king of Tyre, emblematic of the world and its desirable things-are at Solomon's disposal, and apply themselves joyfully to the fulfilment of the king of Israel's projects, and to his service in building the house of Jehovah.

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 6

The house may be looked at in two ways-as a type of the Father's house, and as in fact the habitation of God on the earth when Jesus reigns. In the latter aspect I only look for the grand thoughts and character of the government revealed in it. In the former, as a typical house, two circumstances give it its character. It is, first of all, God's house, His dwelling; and then there are chambers all around it [See Note #1]. God surrounded Himself with dwellings, in the very place where He had fixed His habitation. As the dwelling-place of God at that time in the midst of His people, the presence of God in the temple depended on the faithfulness of Solomon.

That which characterised the house in general is that nothing except gold was to be seen in it. All was bright with the glory of divine righteousness that distinguished the throne of God which was placed there. But it is not transparent as glass. Beauty and holiness are not what characterise the earthly throne, but righteousness and judgment. Nor are there seraphim. In the Revelation we have the seraphic character added to the cherubim, and the gold is transparent as glass. Emblems, as we have seen, of judicial power, the cherubim had a new position (those belonging to the ark remained the same); the wing of one of these new cherubim touched the wall of the house on one side, and on the other the wing of the other cherub. Their wings extended from one side of the house to the other. They looked not towards the ark, but outwards [See Note #2]. At this time, righteousness reigning and being established, these symbols of God's power can look outwards in blessing, instead of having their eyes fixed on the covenant alone. During the time that there was nothing but the covenant, they gazed upon it; but when God has established His throne in righteousness, He can turn towards the world to bless it according to that righteousness.

Note #1

It is to this, I doubt not, that the Lord alludes, when He says, "In my Father's house are many dwellings"-at any rate, to the fact that other priests besides the high priest dwell there.

Note #2

The word in Hebrew is "towards the house," which is used as a preposition for inwards; but here, being at the bottom of the most holy place, "towards the house" was outwards. I anticipate the Chronicles here a little. This circumstance of their looking outwards, which is not brought in here by the Holy Ghost, refers to the aspect of this history given in the Chronicles, that is, to the glorious reign of the Son of David. Here, the typical character of the heavenly house and glory being the object, the veil is not seen, nor the circumstance as to the cherubim which gave its character to the governmental blessing of the earth. Both are in Chronicles. Here, while the veil is not mentioned, in its place are folding doors. I make this allusion to that which is written in the Chronicles, in order to give a general idea of the whole, and to link the two accounts together. I will give here something more definite, as to the contents of chapters 6 and 7 of the book that occupies us. There are three parts in this description: the temple itself; the different houses of cedar; and, lastly, the brazen vessels. 1. The temple. The idea which it presents has been already pointed out. It is the dwelling-place, the house of God: there are chambers all around; but it is the house of God. Within, all is gold. Nothing is said about the veil. Dwelling, not drawing near, is the idea. But there are folding doors which open. 2. After this comes the royal connection of Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter with the world without, but with a view to the glory and elevation of this position. It is not the dwelling-place of God, but the royal position of the king, the judge, and of his bride. It is Christ in His glorious administration. All is solidity, magnificence, and grandeur, within and without. 3. Then comes the manifestation, according to the power of the Spirit of God, and in a glorious manner, of all that belonged to His reign here below. All was of brass, the pillars and the sea. Nothing is said of the altar, because drawing near to God is not the question; but the manifestation of God in Christ who reigns in sight of the world-divine righteousness in respect of man's responsibility,

not of approach to God Himself. Thus we behold the dwelling-place of God where all is gold, the glory of divine righteousness; the house as the dwelling of the king, and the porch of judgment: the house of his bride. It is the sovereign glory of Christ in manifestation according to the dispensation of glory; and then the development, in this world, by the power of the Spirit, of what Christ is, of what God Himself is. There is no mention of silver—the type of the immutable steadfastness of God's purposes and ways in the wilderness. It is gold; the house of cedar; brass. In the description given by the Book of Chronicles there are an altar and a veil, because there the positive administration of the things and circumstances of the true Solomon's reign is much more the question; the state of things which will in fact exist upon earth, rather than the abstract idea, and the type of that which is manifested of God Himself, as well as of the king's glory; and this, whether in the dwelling-place of God, or on the earth, as the sphere where He will unfold that which He is according to the Spirit.

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 7

It is rather, to my mind, the house of Solomon that prefigures the church, as such, in connection with Christ; the temple, the Father's house on high, where we are brought to dwell. "We are his house"; as the house of the forest of Lebanon prefigures His glory among the Gentiles. The porch of judgment characterises this glorious reign. The glory was not all on the outside. The inner court was equally beautiful. The glory was not hidden either. The outer court, as well as the inner, exhibited His royal glory who built the whole. It was the same thing also towards the great outer court. Thus even the great court, as well as the inner court of the house of Jehovah, was built with costly stones and with cedar. The house itself had its peculiar glory. Everything manifested the glory, the riches, and the power of the great king. With respect to this outward glory, Pharaoh's daughter had a house similar to the king's. This outward glory of the walls, of the courts of Jehovah, of the king's house, and of all the others, exhibits the connection between these things in Christ in the day of His manifested glory.

The vessels of Jehovah's house were made on a much larger scale than those of the tabernacle; but they were the same, although greater in number. The only new things were the pillars, Jachin and Boaz; that is to say,

"He will establish," and, "in Him is strength" (names which make the meaning of these pillars evident). I doubt not that the passage in Rev 3:12 alludes to these pillars. We find here also the union of Jews and Gentiles recognised; and the latter employed in the work for the temple of Jehovah.

The ark is not altered. It was put in the temple, which was but a house for its reception, as the seat of His presence who dwelt between the cherubim. As to the token of God's presence, and of the establishment of His throne on the earth, the ark had entered into its rest, as well as Jehovah whose seat it was (compare Psa 132:8).

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 8

The circumstances which revealed the character of this rest were remarkable. The staves, with which the priests had borne the ark, were now the memorial of their journeys with God, who, in His faithfulness, had led and preserved them, and brought them into the rest which He had prepared for them. But that which, in the passage through the wilderness, had been the token of their means of grace, was no longer in it: nothing but the law remained there. Aaron's rod and the pot of manna would not have been in harmony with the glorious reign and the rest of Canaan. The law was there; it was the basis of the administration of the kingdom, and the rule of that righteousness which was to be exercised in it.

The ark of the covenant once set in its place of rest, Jehovah comes and seals it with His presence, and fills the house with His glory. As the rod, the emblem of the priestly grace which had led the people, and the manna, which had fed them in the wilderness, were no longer there, so did the priesthood no longer exercise its ministry on account of the presence of the glory.

For the moment Solomon fully assumes the character of priest. It is he who stands before Jehovah, as well as between Jehovah and the people—a remarkable type, as to his position, of what Christ as King will be for Israel in the day of His glory. He has built a house for Jehovah to dwell in a fixed habitation—that He may dwell in it for ever. Remark here also that all refers to the deliverance out of Egypt, to Horeb, to the law, and not to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. It was doubtless, up to a certain point (and fully so,

typically), the fulfilment of the promises made to them; but Solomon does not refer to them as to his present position. This is seen in Verse 56 (Kg1 8:56).

In examining the blessing pronounced by the king (which, like almost all that is termed blessing, consisted of thanksgiving), and his prayer, we shall again find the same principles that we pointed out at first-the fulfilment of the promises made to David as present blessing (verses 20-24 Kg1 8:20-24); but the enjoyment of this blessing granted under condition of obedience (verses 23-25 Kg1 8:23-25). The prayer sets the people under the terms of a righteous government, abounding indeed in kindness and forgiveness, yet one which will not hold the guilty to be innocent; and it presents God as the people's resource, when the consequences of their sin fall upon them according to the principles laid down by Moses in Deuteronomy and elsewhere.

Moreover, while confessing that the heaven of heavens could not contain Jehovah, the king entreats Him to grant every prayer that should be addressed to Him in this house-a petition which was granted (Kg1 9:3), so that the house was established as the throne of the God of heaven upon earth-the place in which He revealed Himself, and in which He had put His name. This fact has a very wide bearing. It was the establishment of Jehovah's government upon the earth in the midst of His people-a government entrusted to a man, the son of David; so that it is said that Solomon sat upon the throne of Jehovah. This enables us to understand the importance of the events which took place under Nebuchadnezzar, by whom this throne was cast down, according to the judgment pronounced by God Himself. The house was not elect; but, built under God's own direction, it was hallowed by Himself, that His name might dwell there for ever. The close of chapter 8 gives a very lively figure of Israel's millennial blessing.

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 9

The answer which God gives establishes the house as the place in which He has set His name for ever. His eyes and His heart shall be there perpetually; but, at the same time, for the enjoyment of the granted blessing, the dynasty of Solomon, the people of Israel, and even the house itself, are subjected to the condition of faithfulness to Jehovah on the part of

Solomon and his children. If he, or his posterity, should turn away to serve other gods, Israel should be cut off; and the house should become a testimony of the judgment of God to every one that passed by. We see here to what an extent the fate of Israel hung upon their king.

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 10

The king of Tyre also was dependent on the king of Israel; and the queen of Sheba comes from the far south to delight herself in the wisdom of the head of God's people, and to be filled with wonder at the sight of his glory, and to praise Jehovah who had raised him so high, and who had blessed the people in giving him to be their king. She also came with gifts; for the king's renown had spread into distant lands. Nevertheless, although it was a true report that she had heard, the sight of his glory went far beyond all that had been said of it.

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 11

The following commentary covers Chapters 11 and 12.

Till now we have had the beautiful picture of God's blessing resting upon the son of David, whose only desire it had been to possess wisdom from God, that he might know how to govern His people. Jehovah had in addition given him riches, magnificence, and glory. The reverse of this picture, painful to the heart, serves nevertheless to instruct us in the righteous dealings of God. In the event, foreseen by God, of Israel's having a king, he was forbidden to multiply his wives or his riches, and to go down into Egypt to multiply horses (Deu 17:16-17). Now with whatever blessings we may be surrounded, we can never forsake the law of God with impunity, nor the walk appointed in the word for His children. God had bestowed the abundance of riches and honour on Solomon, who had only asked for wisdom; but the study of the law, which was prescribed to the king (Deu 17:19-20), should have prevented his using the means he did in acquiring his riches. These chapters teach us that he did precisely that which the law forbade his doing. He multiplied silver and gold, he multiplied the number of his wives, and had a great number of horses brought from Egypt. God's promise was fulfilled. Solomon was rich and glorious above all the kings of his day; but the means he used to enrich himself shewed a heart at a

distance from God, and led to his ruin according to the just judgment and sure word of God. How perfect His ways, how sure His testimony! Holiness becometh His house. His judgments are unchangeable. Solomon enjoys the sure promises of God. He sins in the means by which he seeks to satisfy his own lusts; and although the result was the accomplishment of the promise, yet he bears the consequences of so doing. Outwardly only the fulfilment of the promise was seen; in fact there was something else. Without sending for horses from Egypt, and gold from Ophir, Solomon would have been rich and glorious, for God had promised it. By doing this he enriched himself, but he departs from God and from His word. Having given himself up to his desires after riches and glory, he had multiplied the number of his wives, and in his old age they turned away his heart. This neglect of the word, which at first appeared to have no bad effect (for he grew rich, as though it had been but the fulfilment of God's promise), soon led to a departure more serious in its nature and in its consequences, to influence more powerful and more immediately opposed to the commands of God's word, and at last to flagrant disobedience of its most positive and essential requirements. The slippery path of sin is always trodden with accelerated steps, because the first sin tends to weaken in the soul the authority and power of that which alone can prevent our committing still greater sins—that is, the word of God, as well as the consciousness of His presence, which imparts to the word all its practical power over us. God brings chastening and trouble upon Solomon during his life, and takes from his family the rule over the greater part of the tribes, declaring that He will afflict the posterity of David, but not for ever.

According to the king's lamentation (Ecc 2:19), he to whom Solomon left all the fruit of his labour was not wise. His folly brought the consequences upon him which, in God's counsels, were attached to his father's sin. Under the guidance of Jeroboam ten tribes shook off the authority of the house of David. Looked at with an eye to its responsibility, the house of David has entirely and for ever lost its glory. We have to follow the history of the two kingdoms, and yet more particularly that of the kingdom of the ten tribes, which retained the name of Israel, although God still caused the lamp of David to shine at Jerusalem.

Now, the moral fall of the new king-of Jeroboam-was not long delayed. Judging by human wisdom and forgetting the fear of Jehovah, he made two golden calves, in order that the powerful links of a worship in common might be broken, and no longer attach his subjects to Judah and Jerusalem. A new priesthood had to be set up; everything, with respect to worship, was devised of his own heart. Israel's sin was an established rule, and the phrase, "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin," became the sad designation of their first king.

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 13

But the testimony and the judgment of God tarried not according to the mercy of God towards His people. Prophecy immediately re-appears; for the faithful love of God to His people never grows weary. His mercy endureth for ever. The testimony of His word-prophecy-that is to say, the intervention of God in testimony, when the people go astray and the ordinary connections between God and His people are broken, does not fail. Rehoboam himself is forbidden, by prophecy, to carry out his intention of fighting against Israel, to bring them again under his dominion; but, in the case of Jeroboam, Jehovah vindicates the rights of His glory against the king himself and against his altar. The altar is rent, the ashes poured out, the king's arm-put forth against the prophet-is dried up, and only restored through the prophet's intercession. Here too Jehovah makes known that He has not forgotten the house of David in the midst of all this evil. From his house shall proceed the repairer of the breach, and the judge of that iniquity which caused the breach; for Judah is still recognised as the place of His throne.

The prophet, charged with such a testimony as this, is forbidden even to drink water among a people who call themselves Israel, but who are rebellious and defiled. No participation in such guilty confusion is allowed; and the prophet himself suffers the consequences of God's just judgment upon his disobedience. Such was the severity of God with respect to an action that countenanced a state of unfaithfulness, which the light He had given was sufficient to judge. The details of this case deserve some notice. By the word of God the prophet had knowledge of the judgment of God. His heart should have recognised, morally as well as prophetically, the dreadful

evil of Israel's position; and the moral sense of this evil should have given the prophetic testimony its full power over his own heart. At any rate the word of God was imperative: he was neither to eat nor to drink there. He knew it, and he remembered it; but there was in appearance another testimony, a motive for neglecting the Lord's command. The old prophet (and he was a prophet) told him that Jehovah had said unto him, "Bring him back into thine house that he may eat bread"; so the prophet from Judah went back with him. It was very desirable for the unfaithful old prophet, that a man whom God was using for testimony (and whose testimony he himself also believed) should sanction his unfaithfulness by association with it. Outwardly he appeared to honour the testimony of God, and the man who bore it. In fact the prophet from Judah, by returning with the old prophet, destroyed the power of his own testimony. The old prophet-although truly such-bore with the evil around him. The testimony of God, on the contrary, declared that the evil was not to be borne with. It was with this testimony that the other prophet was charged; and the refusal to eat or drink in the place was the moral and personal testimony of his own faithfulness, of his conviction, and of his obedience. This refusal was the testimony that, in this matter, he took God's part. But, by returning with the old prophet, he nullified his testimony, and countenanced the old prophet in his unfaithfulness. God did not reverse His word, if the prophet was disobedient to it. The old prophet was punished, in that God made use of his mouth to announce the consequences of his fault to the prophet from Judah. It is also a lesson which teaches us, that, whenever God has made His will known to us, we are not to allow any after influence whatever to call it in question, even although the latter may take the form of the word of God. If we were morally nearer to the Lord, we should feel that the only true and right position is to follow that which He told us at first.

In every case our part is to obey what He has said. His word will put us in a true position-in position apart from evil, and from the power of evil, even when we have not spiritual intelligence to appreciate it. If we fail in this obedience, we lose our sense of the falseness of our position, because the moral sentiment is weakened. At best there is uneasiness, but no liberty. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Unfaithfulness to the simple

and primary testimony of God's word never sets us at liberty, whatever may be the reasons which apparently justify our putting it aside.

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 14

The following commentary covers Chapters 14, 15, and 16.

In spite of this testimony, Jeroboam perseveres in his sin. The only one of his sons in whom any piety is seen dies; and the judgment of God is pronounced upon his house.

Judah having walked in all sorts of iniquity also, during the reign of Rehoboam, Jerusalem is taken, and all the riches which Solomon had amassed became the prey of the Egyptians. Abijam, his son, follows no better course. There was constant war between the two kingdoms-the sad story, so often renewed, of man placed in the enjoyment of God's blessing, and the effect of his fall. In what a condition do we see the kingdom of God's people, and the house of David itself, recently so glorious!

Asa, pious himself and faithful to Jehovah, pressed by the power of Baasha, king of Israel, who had dethroned the house of Jeroboam, seeks that help from the Syrians which he did not know how to find in God. The family of Baasha falls, as that of Jeroboam had done, and the chief captains contend together for the throne, which remains at last in the hands of Ahab's father. Ahab added to the sin of his predecessors the worship of Baal, the god of his idolatrous wife; and, in the enormity of his transgressions against Jehovah, he went beyond all the kings of Israel that were before him. But in the midst of all this moral ruin, the word of God reaches those who violate it; and Joshua's prophetic judgment upon whosoever should rebuild Jericho is fulfilled in the family of Hiel, the Bethelite. Not only are the ways and government of God manifested in full vigour, however great His patience with a rebellious people, but the energy of the king's iniquity, in the presence of God's long-suffering, gives occasion for a testimony remarkable in proportion to the evil which made it necessary. The reign of Ahab was the occasion of the testimony of the prophet Elijah. Israel, at that time, was hastening to its doom. But, whatever their iniquity may be, God does not smite a people who have forsaken His ways, until He has sent them a

testimony. He may chastise them previously, but will not definitively execute His judgment upon them.

The character of the testimony deserves particular attention here. In Judah the prophets, who bore testimony in the midst of an order of things which God Himself had established, performed no miracles. They dwell upon the people's sin, and put them in mind of the law of Jehovah, His ordinances, and the obedience due to Him. They proclaim the advent of the Messiah, and the future blessing of Israel; but, the system in the midst of which they give this testimony being still owned of God, they perform no miracles.

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 17

The following commentary covers Chapters 17 and 18.

Elijah and Elisha, on the contrary (witnesses for God in the midst of a people that according to grace God still recognised as His own, but who had openly forsaken God and worshipped golden calves), perform striking miracles in proof of their divine mission. They maintain the power and the rights of Jehovah in the midst of a people who disavow His title; while the prophets of Judah, standing amid those who publicly profess to own Jehovah's authority, insist upon the consequences of this position. God sent indeed to Israel by the mouth of His prophets-such as Hosea and Amos-threatenings similar to those addressed to Judah; but it does not appear that miracles were wrought in Judah by the prophets who bore witness there.

Elisha's miracles, of which we will speak farther on, have a different character from those of Elijah. The latter have a character which none but the miracles of Moses share with them. They are judicial miracles with respect to the people among whom the prophet dwelt. Accordingly God preserved His servant in a miraculous manner. I only speak now of what Elijah did in testimony in the very midst of the people. Elijah's miracles are few in number, and of striking character. He shuts up the heavens [See Note #1] over a rebellious and apostate people, so that there should be no rain. He brings down fire from heaven upon the captains sent by the king to take him prisoner. At length he proves that Jehovah is God, and (in spite of all that had happened) the God of all the tribes of Israel, according to immutable rights which depend upon His counsels, and upon what He is in

Himself. When the people confess this, by executing judgment themselves upon the priests of Baal, Jehovah grants His blessing anew, and the heavens give rain [See Note #2]. The import of these signs is evident. Moses was in a different position. The people of God were in captivity, not in rebellion, and the judgment falls on their oppressors. It is neither the heaven become brass closed over the people, nor heaven the source of judgment which falls from thence. The earth, given to the children of men, and possessed by those who will not acknowledge that Jehovah is its God, or that He has any rights over its inhabitants, is smitten with all kinds of plagues. The earth, the water, the fruits of the earth, the cattle, the air, and, finally, man himself in his firstborn, all is smitten by the rod of God, according to the powerful word of God's witness. The Egyptians, enjoying the providential bounties of the gracious Creator, have not judgment inflicted upon them until they have refused to let go the people of God and to recognise His rights, who claims them for His own. After having refused to hear, they are first of all smitten in the enjoyment of the earthly blessings which they hold from Him, and afterwards the people themselves are smitten in the persons of their firstborn.

We may remark here, that the power of the two witnesses in the Apocalypse manifests itself in these two kinds of signs. They shut heaven that it rain not, they bring down fire from heaven: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. That is Elijah. They smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will. That is Moses. Their testimony also will, no doubt, be given in the midst of a people who bear the double character of a rebellious people, and of a people in captivity, oppressed by the world who will not hear the God of the earth whose rights their testimony proclaims.

If, in the case of Elijah, God shut heaven over His rebellious people, He takes care of the remnant according to grace, overstepping even in this grace the limits of the covenant of law. There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah the prophet, but unto none of them was he sent, save unto a widow of Sarepta in Sidon, a widow who hearkened to the voice of God's testimony, and by faith acted on that testimony in a case that required self-denial; and her life is preserved. The grace—a hard thing to the hearts of

Jews-which is a revelation of His heart, whom they knew not, reveals itself in power equal to the need; and the dead is restored to life. The poor widow receives her son by a power which is that of resurrection, and her faith is fully established in the word of God [See Note #3].

Afterwards God blesses Israel again, when they are brought back to the confession of His name by a striking manifestation of His power which confounds the priests of Baal. These are all slain by the people, now convinced of the folly of idolatry and made the instrument of God's judgment. It is here that-looked upon as the general expression of the mind of God-Elijah's mission closes, although his ministry was prolonged for some time.

Note #1

Let us remark here that this book gives us, as a solemn and positive declaration of the prophet's, that which we know from James's testimony to have been an answer to the prayer of a man like ourselves. This is the history of all true spiritual energy. It appears to man as a simple action, accompanied with more or less demonstration on God's part, and as a proof of the authority and spiritual power of the man who performs it; and so it is. But at the same time, in fact, all these things flow from the energy of divine life, and from communion with God; they are its expression and its fruit, but in power exercised on God's part. Compare Christ's words. at the tomb of Lazarus. It is profitable to examine such cases when presented to us in the word. There are others also which have two aspects. Historically the mission of the spies was according to the will of God; it was nevertheless, as to its origin, the fruit of the people's unbelief, an unbelief which soon manifested its effects. Paul's journey to Jerusalem, related in Acts 15, is apparently the same which he mentions in Galatians 2, but we find in the latter elements and motives which are not spoken of at all in the Acts.

Note #2

Elijah had said "but at my word," yet the rain is given when God is glorified; for Elijah was, as a witness, the witness of the government of Jehovah, of Jehovah the God of Israel, despised by Israel. Hence the truth and reality of

Jehovah's authority and the principles of His government were both displayed.

Note #3

This reference to the sovereign rights and exercise of power of God in grace, out of the limits of Israel, is frequent and full of interest; and here, as followed by the renewed blessing of Israel, looked at as composed of the whole twelve tribes, is very striking. It will be remembered that Jesus refers to it in the Gospel of Luke, which is the witness of this great principle, and causes thereby the anger of the Jews. Pride sinks the lowest and worst when it clothes itself with a religious form.

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 19

Until now the prophet had stood before Jehovah (Kg1 17:1; Kg1 18:15) and had spoken in His name; but now, terrified by the threats of Jezebel, he flees from the dangers of the place into which his testimony had brought him. Just as we have seen in Moses at Meribah, Elijah's faith* does not rise to the height of Jehovah's grace and patience, who is full of goodness and mercy to His people. It is this failure which puts an end to Elijah's testimony, as it had shut Moses out of Canaan; for who can equal Jehovah in goodness? Elijah does not look to God; he thinks of himself, and takes flight; but God has His eye upon him. He who had not God's strength amid the evil had no refuge but the wilderness. There was a heart true to God, but not faith equal to meet Satan's hostile power in the place of testimony to the end. He must either be a witness for God amongst His rebellious people, or be entirely apart from them.

The heart of Elijah and the hand of God led the prophet into the wilderness, where, overwhelmed perhaps, yet precious in Jehovah's sight, he will be alone with God. Elijah's forty days' journey in the wilderness has only a partial resemblance to the forty days which Moses spent with God, in the same Horeb to which the prophet was going, or to those which Jesus spent in the wilderness for conflict with the enemy of God and man. In the two latter cases nature was set aside. Neither Moses nor the Lord ate or drank. As for Elijah, the goodness of God sustains the weakness of tried nature, makes manifest that He considers it with all tenderness and thoughtfulness,

and gives the strength needed for such a journey. This should have touched him, and made him feel what he ought to be in the midst of the people, since he had to do with such a God. His heart was far from such a state. Impossible, when we think of ourselves, to be witnesses to others of what God is! Our poor hearts are too far from such a position.

Elijah goes on till he reaches Horeb. But coming before God to speak well of himself and ill of Israel is a very different thing from forgetting self through the power of the Lord's presence, and setting Him before the people in His power which is patient in mercy in spite of all their evil.* People sometimes come before God because they have forgotten Him in the place where they ought to have stood and borne testimony for Him. And thus God asks Elijah, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Terrible question! like those addressed to Adam, to Cain, and now to the world with respect to Jesus. The answer does but betray (as is always the case) the sad and fatal position of one who has forgotten God. The voice was not a voice of thunder, but one that made Elijah feel it was the voice which he had forgotten. Wind, fire, earthquake, these heralds to man of the power of God, would have suited the angry heart of Elijah as instruments of divine power against Israel; but these manifestations of His power were not God Himself. The still small voice reveals His presence to Elijah. That which would have satisfied his will, and that which would perhaps have been just towards others, did not awaken his own conscience. But the still small voice by which God reveals Himself penetrates Elijah's heart, and he hides his face before the presence of Jehovah. Nevertheless the pride of his embittered heart is not yet subdued. He repeats his complaints, unsuitable as they were at the time when he had himself just destroyed all the prophets of Baal, and proving that his faith had not been able to find, by the light of his testimony, all that God saw of good in Israel.

God's answer, although just, is sorrowful to the heart. Vengeance shall be executed, and Elijah is commissioned to prepare its instruments—a sad mission for the prophet, if he loved the people. As to Elijah, he should be succeeded by Elisha in his prophetic office. But if the deserved vengeance was to be executed in his time, and if the saddened prophet was to announce it, God has still seven thousand souls who had not bowed the

knee to Baal, although Elijah had not been able to discover them. Oh! when will the heart of man, even in thought, rise to the height of God's grace and patience? If Elijah had leant more upon God, he would have known some of these seven thousand. He would at any rate have known Him who knew them, and who raised up his testimony to strengthen and comfort them. But the time was not ripe for the fulfilment of God's purposes; and God will not give up the patience of His grace towards His people to satisfy the prophet's impatience. Elisha is anointed; but, Ahab having humbled himself when God threatened him on account of his iniquity, the judgments are withheld even during the life-time of Ahab and of his son. This displays another feature in God's government, namely, that judgment upon the evil-doer may not only have been pronounced in the counsels of God, but may be already marked out in His dealings, and be even ready to be executed a long time before it is really poured out. The prophet, or the spiritual man, will know or will understand in spirit that it is so, and will have to wait for the moment that suits this perfect patience, which itself waits upon the slowness of our hearts and the filling up of the iniquity of the wicked, or at least for their refusal to repent.

Note #1

We see here how far the energy of the outward life of faith may continue to exist, while the inward life grows weak. It was at the moment of the most striking testimony to the presence of God in the midst of the rebellious people, and when Elijah had just caused all the prophets of Baal amongst them to be slain by the people's own hands, that his faith entirely fails at a mere threat from Jezebel. His life was not inwardly sustained by this faith in proportion to the outward testimony. His testimony excites the enemy in a way for which his personal faith was not prepared. This is a solemn lesson. The still small voice (which, unknown to him, was still heard among the people) had not perhaps its due influence upon his own heart, where the fire and manifestations had held too much place. Thus he did not know himself the grace which was still in exercise towards the people; he could not love them for the sake of the seven thousand faithful ones as God loved them, nor hope as charity hopes. Alas! what are we, even when so near God! And his complaint when he came to God, for a person so blessed, has a sad

deal of self in it. I have been zealous, he says, and they have cast down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets; just when he had cast down Baal's and killed all his prophets; and then, I am left alone. It is a humbling testimony.

Note #2

It was different too from Moses who, with God, interceded for the people, setting himself aside.

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 20

According to the outward history of Israel, that which follows the revelations made to Elijah in Horeb looks like a time of restoration and blessing; and outwardly it was so. Benhadad is overcome and Israel delivered from his power; but Ahab has no knowledge at all of the mind of God, and he lets the man whom God had condemned escape. There are cases in which levity only proves that the honour of God and His thoughts have no influence over the heart. It was not for Ahab to be on brotherly terms with a king whose constant aim was the oppression of God's people. It was putting himself on a level with a Gentile king, forgetting the position both of Israel and of Israel's king, with respect to God. In such a case as this, severity of conduct is the suitable accompaniment of the sense of God's perfect grace towards His people. He who, from love to God's people, desired in Mount Horeb to be blotted out of the book of Jehovah, is also he who said, in the presence of evil, "Consecrate yourselves to-day unto Jehovah, every man upon his brother, his companion, and his neighbour"; but the weakness, which despisal of God produces in one who holds the place of God's servant, assumes the character of kindness towards men.

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 21

At Jezebel's instigation, Ahab adds sin to sin, and a piece of flagrant injustice fills up the apostasy of the king of Israel. He enjoys the fruit of a crime which he had not courage to commit himself. His enjoyment was short-lived. Sent by God to meet the king, Elijah goes before him into the vineyard, which Ahab went down to possess. The king's heart bows before the word of Jehovah, and the fulfilment of the judgment is put off until the days of his

son: a new proof of the longsuffering of a God ever ready to accept and respond to any movement of man's heart towards Himself.

The reign of Ahab, looked at historically, was in general prosperous and glorious. Moab was tributary. Syria subject and quiet. The king had an ivory palace, and built fresh cities: a new motive to own Jehovah, a snare to one who worshipped Baal. God did not regard all this prosperity. In a moral point of view, this reign stamps its character upon the kingdom of Israel. It is apostasy and iniquity, but at the same time the testimony of a faithful and patient God.

3 Kings (1 Kings) Chapter 22

The last chapter presents another element of this history, namely, the guilty alliances which were formed between the royal families of Israel and Judah. Both of them prosperous at this period, they seek the establishment and increase of their power by peace and mutual alliances. On Jehoshaphat's side it was nothing but unfaithfulness and forgetfulness of God. And, if God did not forsake him, Jehoshaphat saw the commencement of chastisements, the results of which were deeply disastrous to his house.

We see also the false prophets in power: Ahab had four hundred of them. We may remark also, that they made use of Jehovah's name, and no longer, as it appears, of Baal's [See Note #1]. Nor was Elijah, as we see, the only prophet of Jehovah. The intermixture continues. Outwardly the state of things is less offensive; but the heart of Ahab is unchanged. At the request of Jehoshaphat, who is uneasy in this false position, Ahab sends for the prophet of Jehovah; but he does not hearken to him and has to meet the consequences. We learn also here in what manner a lying spirit deceives and leads the wicked to ruin, fulfilling the purposes and judgments of Jehovah.

During all this time Elisha constantly accompanies Elijah and, led to this intimacy by grace, he is morally imbued with his spirit before he is clothed with it in power. He seems identified with him.

Note #1

Nevertheless the worship of Baal had not ceased.

Conclusion to 1 Kings

Before passing on to the Second Book of Kings, I will add some general remarks, which apply equally to the two books. That which is here in question is the government of God. Now the principles of this government are laid open to us in the revelation made to Moses, when he went up the second time to Mount Sinai (Ex. 33). There was, first of all, goodness and mercy; then the declaration that the guilty shall not be held innocent; and, thirdly, a principle of public government, which caused the effects of misconduct to be felt, namely, that their children should bear its consequences (a principle which could not be applied where the soul is in question); but this principle important and salutary in the outward government of the world is verified daily in that of providence. This government of God was in exercise in the case of the kings; but the condition of Israel depended on the conduct of the kings.

We have already seen that the fall of the priesthood and the demand for a king had placed the people in this position—a position which will be one of blessing when Christ shall be their King; but, meantime, God had set up prophecy, a more intimate and real connection between the counsels of God and His people. The existence of a king placed the people under the effect of their governor's responsibility. The prophet was there on the part of God Himself in testimony and in grace. He recalled to the people the duties attached to this responsibility; but he was himself a proof of those counsels which assured them of future blessing, and of the interest which God took in their enjoying it both then and at all times. He supplied the key also to God's dealings, which were difficult to be understood without this. We, Christians, have both these things. God will have us act by faith upon our own responsibility; but close communion with Him reveals to us the cause of many things, as also the perfection of His ways. Thus, in His public government, God could well bless Israel after the events related in chapter 18. They strengthened the faith of His own people. Chapter 19 shews us the secret judgment of God upon the real state of things; and it was speedily manifested. Ahab knows not how to profit by the blessing; he spares Benhadad; and the affair of Naboth shews that Jezebel's influence is as strong as ever.

But to what a degree are the patience and mercy of God manifested in all this, according to Exodus 33! Ahab, rebuked by Elijah, humbles himself, and the evil comes to pass neither in the days of Ahab, nor in those of Ahaziah, but in the days of Jehoram, who was also his son, and that according to the principle already laid down. Personally Jehoram was less wicked than his father and his brother. He did not worship Baal. Israel, however, who had been led into the worship of this idol, still bows down to it.

Observe the difference between the judgment of God and the appearance of things. The judgment of God was pronounced against the king and against Israel (chap. 19); yet prosperity and peace generally marked this reign, as we have seen. Syria is subdued, Moab tributary; and Judah in unaccustomed prosperity leagues itself with Israel. The king of Judah was as Ahab, his people as Ahab's people, and his horses as Ahab's. It was even proposed to send to Ophir for gold, as in the days of Solomon. Nevertheless judgment was only suspended, and its suspension was revealed to none but Elijah.

But what was morally the character of this alliance? It is Jehoshaphat who comes to Ahab, and not Ahab to Jehoshaphat. The latter asks, as a favour, that Jehovah may be consulted. After this request the false prophets make use of Jehovah's name to announce the success of the enterprise. This was natural enough; for the Syrians having been overcome, and having failed in performing the conditions of peace laid upon them, Ahab was going to assert his rights with the help of the king of Judah. In short Jehovah's name is in the mouth of the false prophets. Micaiah (for the king of Judah was uneasy)-Micaiah, being come, announces misfortune. But Ahab's mind was made up; and the king of Judah was bound by his engagement. It was no longer time to consult Jehovah: to inquire after the truth, in such a position as this, was but to learn a judgment which they had resolved to contemn. Ahab was more consistent than Jehoshaphat. The conscience of the latter only made every one uncomfortable, and proved his own folly. To please Jehoshaphat by speaking to him of Jehovah was no more than decency required; but it was all that Ahab did for Jehoshaphat, except that he unwillingly sent for Micaiah. Jehoshaphat helped Ahab against Syria; he helped Jehoram against Moab; but neither Ahab nor his son helped

Jehoshaphat in any one thing, except to be unfaithful to Jehovah. Ahaziah was willing indeed to go with him, but it was in order to obtain gold from Ophir. It would rather appear that this alliance was the cause of that between Moab, Ammon, and Seir against Jehoshaphat. Happily it was no question then of succouring Israel. Such is the history of the alliances of believers, not only with unbelievers, but with the unfaithful. The latter are very willing that we should go with them; but to walk in the ways of truth is another thing. This is not the question with them; if they so walked, they would cease to be unfaithful. A true union would necessarily have made Jerusalem the centre and capital of the land: for Jehovah and His temple were there. The alliance took it for granted that Jehoshaphat had given up all such idea, since it shewed that he recognised Ahab in his position. There is no equality in an alliance between truth and error; since, by this very alliance, truth ceases to be truth, and error does not thereby become truth. The only thing lost is the authority and obligation of the truth. I have anticipated some of the events related in the Second Book of Kings, in which we find the greater part of Jehoshaphat's history. Let us now proceed to examine the contents of this Second Book.

4 KINGS (2 KINGS)

Introduction to 2 Kings

The Books of Kings shew us the kingly power established in all its glory; its fall, and God's testimony in the midst of the ruin; with details concerning Judah after the rejection of Israel, until Lo-ammi had been pronounced upon the whole nation. In a word, it is the trial of kingly power placed in the hands of men, not absolute, as in Nebuchadnezzar, but kingly power having the law for its rule; as there had been a trial of the people set in relationship with God by means of priesthood. Out of Christ nothing stands.

Although the kingly power had been placed under the responsibility of its faithfulness to Jehovah; and although it had to be smitten and punished whenever it failed in this, it was yet at this time established by the counsels and the will of God. It was neither a David, type of Christ in his patience, who, through difficulties, obstacles, and sufferings, made himself a way to the throne; nor a king who, although exalted to the throne and always victorious, had to be a man of war to the end of his life; a type in this, I doubt not, of what Christ will be in the midst of the Jews at His return, when He will commence the coming age by subjecting the Gentiles to Himself, having been already delivered from the strivings of the people (Psa 18:43-44). It was the king according to the promises and the counsels of God, the king established in peace, head over God's people to rule them in righteousness, son of David according to the promise, and type of that true Son of David, who shall be a priest upon His throne, who shall build the temple of Jehovah, and between whom and Jehovah there shall be the counsel of peace (Zac 6:13).

Let us examine a little the position of this kingly power according to the word; for responsibility and election met in it, as well as the foreshadowing of the kingdom of Christ.

In chapter 7 of the Second Book of Samuel we have seen the promise of a son whom God would raise up to David, and who should reign after him, to

whom God would be a father, and who should be His son, who should build the temple of Jehovah, and the throne of whose kingdom God would establish for ever. This was the promise: a promise which, as David himself understood, will be fully accomplished only in the Person of Christ (Ch1 17:17). Here is the responsibility: "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men" (Sa2 7:14); which David well understood also (Ch1 28:9).

The book which we are considering shews us that this responsibility was fully declared to Solomon (),

Psa 89:28-37 sets the two things also before us very plainly, namely, the certainty of God's counsels, His fixed purpose, and the exercise of His government in view of man's responsibility.

In the Book of Chronicles we have only what relates to the promises (Ch1 17:11-14), for reasons of which we will speak when we examine that book.

From all these passages, we perceive that the royalty of David's family was established according to the counsels of God and the election of grace; that the perpetuity of this royalty, dependent on the faithfulness of God, was consequently infallible; but that at the same time the family of David, in the person of Solomon, was in fact placed upon the throne at that time under the condition of obedience and faithfulness to Jehovah [See Note #1]. If himself or his posterity were to fail in faithfulness, God's judgment would be executed; a judgment which nevertheless would not prevent God's fulfilling that which His grace had assured to David.

The Books of Kings contain the history of the establishment of the kingdom in Israel under this responsibility, that of its fall, of the longsuffering of God, of God's testimony amid the ruin which flowed from the unfaithfulness of the first king, and finally that of the execution of the judgment, a longer delay of which would but have falsified God's own character, and the testimony that should be given to the holiness of that character. Such delay would have borne a false testimony with respect to that which God is.

We shall see that, after Solomon's reign, the greater part of the narrative refers to the testimony given by the prophets Elijah and Elisha in the midst

of Israel, and in general to that kingdom which had entirely departed from God. Little is said of Judah before the complete ruin of Israel. After this the ruin of Judah, brought on by the iniquity of their kings, is not long delayed, although there were moments of restoration.

Note #1:

This is the universal order of God's ways: to set up blessing first under the responsibility of man, to be accomplished afterwards according to His counsels by His power and grace. And it is to be noted that the first thing man has always done is to fail. Thus Adam, thus Noah, thus under law, thus the priesthood, thus as here the royalty under law, so Nebuchadnezzar where it was absolute, so, I add, the church. Already in the apostles' days all sought their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. God continues His own dealings in grace in spite of this, all through, besides His government according to responsibility in the public body in this world, but a government full of patience and grace.

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 1

4 Kings (2 Kings) 1:1

kg2 1:1

If God has shewn that He took notice of His servant's fault, and did not pass it lightly over, He did not fail towards him in either tenderness or faithfulness. He acted towards him as towards a beloved and faithful servant, even at the moment in which He made him sensible of his failure in the energy of faith; for He did not make others aware of it, although He has communicated it to us for our instruction. I said failure in the energy of faith; for, with respect to the mass of the people, Elijah's judgment was just. God reveals His thoughts and His intentions to him, and even points out to him the agents He will employ; and, while definitely replacing the prophet by Elisha, God nevertheless makes him publicly re-enter His service, by commanding him to call Elisha to accompany him in his work. Thus Elijah resumes his ministry in the midst of Israel.

Now Ahaziah walked in the way of his father, and openly confessed Baal to be his god by sending to consult Baal-zebub at Ekron. Sent to meet the

king's messengers, Elijah pronounces his sentence from the Lord. Incensed at being opposed in his iniquity, Ahaziah sends men of his army to take him. We find again here the same judicial character in Elijah's miracles which was spoken of before—a character pointed out by Jehovah Himself. He calls down fire from heaven to consume these men. The last of those sent by the king, owning the authority and power of Elijah, has his life spared. Elijah goes down with him to the king, to declare again to him in person Jehovah's judgment which awaited him.

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 2

And now we reach the end of the troubles and afflictions of this precious and faithful servant of God. And, if we do not find in his case the calmness of the ascension of Jesus, who, while blessing His disciples, ascends to His eternal and familiar home; if this peculiar characteristic became His departure alone, who—perfect in Himself and in His human life, in which nothing had been found out of harmony with the heaven He was re-entering—went back to His Father, from whom He came; if in Elijah's rapture we find not the elevation of One who, having come forth from the Father and come into the world, again left the world and returned to His Father, without having for one moment departed from this word—"The Son of man which is in heaven," and who had so much the more right and title to be there, that He had perfectly glorified the Father here below; if, in a word; he who goes up is not the God-man ascending after having finished the work committed to Him, at least the presence of God is felt throughout the whole scene in the most solemn manner—a God whose presence alone can abrogate the laws of His government, and set aside, in His servant's behalf, that which is appointed unto men. Moreover it is not surprising that such an event should have been accompanied with the mysterious solemnity which in fact surrounds it, and that those who were present should feel that something was about to happen which was beyond the common track of human joy and sorrow. Elijah, taken away by the power of God, quits the earth without passing through death. We find in the fact itself a marvellous testimony to the sovereign goodness of God, and to the approbation He bestowed upon His faithful servant. The details are worthy of all attention.

If the prophet's translation to heaven is the great object presented to faith, we find also that he goes to every place that had a voice with respect to God's relationship to Israel. Elijah maintained, in spite of the king, the relationship between God and Israel, according to God's faithfulness, and as a prophet upon the earth [See Note #1]. He did not maintain it by the king, which, since David, was the normal state of the people. This earthly relationship was impossible, and was to close by an act of judgment. It is this which took place, with respect even to Judah, in the rejection of Christ. Nevertheless the counsels of God change not; they will be fulfilled in heavenly power.

Elisha, is, so to say, the link between these two things as to prophecy. He does not return to Horeb, to announce the uselessness of an earthly ministry, and, in some sort, to place the broken law again in His hands who gave it, but who was really acting in grace [See Note #2]. The starting-point of his ministry is the ascended man, evidently quite a new starting-point in God's messages to Israel. Up to this point he constantly attached himself to Elijah. The latter had thrown his prophetic mantle over him (1 Kings 19); Elisha thenceforth was as if identified with him.

At the present moment, when Elijah is under the extraordinary power which is to snatch him away from Elisha, will the faith of Elisha maintain this position? Yes: the power of God upholds him, and he accompanies Elijah until the chariots of God Himself separate them, and in such a way that he may see Elijah ascending to heaven upon them. Through grace the whole heart of Elisha was in the prophet's ministry, and by faith he walked in the height of God's thoughts in this respect.

Let us trace their path upon the earth. It is no longer the weakness of man, as when he went to Horeb, but the power of God; and Elijah traverses all that in type had to do with God's relationship with Israel, even death itself (and that dry-shod), up to heaven. Gilgal [See Note #3] is his starting-point-the consecration of man to God by death applied to the flesh-the place where Israel was cleansed from all remembrance of Egypt, where the people were set apart for God, where their camp was fixed for their victories under Joshua; in a word, it was the place where, by circumcision [See Note #4], Israel was definitively separated unto God. Elijah repairs

thither, and acknowledges it thus according to God, although it was now only a place of sin to the people [See Note #5]. He attains the mind of God with respect to the people, as separated from evil and consecrated to God. He sets out with this. He thinks with God: this is faith. Elisha will not leave him; and they go away to Bethel; that is to say, Elijah places himself in the testimony of God's unchangeable faithfulness. to His people [See Note #6]. He acknowledges it; he takes his place in it; and Elisha is with him. These were the two main branches of faith-of the faith of God's people: the setting apart of the people, of man, unto God; and the unchangeable and perpetual faithfulness of God to His people, whatever their circumstances may be. Israel (what a triumph to Satan!) had set their false gods, their golden calf, in Bethel. Elijah (and this is faith) links himself with the mind of God there in spite of this. These two things compose the life of Jesus on earth in the midst of Israel. Elijah cannot stay there. What will he find in going farther? The scene changes: he is still with God. But if transgression is multiplied at Gilgal, and if false gods are worshipped at Bethel, as "the king's chapel and the king's court," the curse will meet him (for Israel has placed itself under it). He goes to Jericho. It was there that formerly the power of the enemy barred the whole land against Israel, and God had smitten Jericho and pronounced a curse against it. Man had rebuilt it to his own destruction (Kg1 16:34). Pleasant as its situation was, the curse of God still rested on it. Elijah goes thither, and Elisha accompanies him, and refuses to leave him. But he does not remain there either; he is still under the mighty hand of God, Elisha following him. The sons of the prophets give their testimony to that which shall take place (but they only look on from afar, when the two prophets draw nigh to Jordan); Elisha knows it too, and puts an end to a discourse which, adding nothing to his knowledge of the mind of God, and disturbing the concentration of his thoughts, tended rather to weaken the union of his soul with Elijah. Elijah comes at length to Jordan, the type of death, which should carry him out of the land of earthly promise, and break the links of God Himself with Israel on that footing. He crossed it indeed dry-shod. We know that he ascended without having tasted death, but typically he passed through it. (It is not a question here of expiation, but of passing through death). And now, beyond the borders of Israel-the land of law, forsaken of God-he can freely propose blessing to Elisha according to his desire. As Jesus

said, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." In every detail death is the path of liberty.

Elisha, attached by the power of God to the prophet-to the same ministry which Elijah had just left-asks for a double portion of his spirit; and, although now separated from him, yet associated by faith with Elijah, gone up on high (testified by his having seen him in his heavenly condition), his request is granted. He again receives Elijah's mantle; but it is that of the ascended Elijah. As we have said, the starting-point of his ministry is not Sinai. It is heaven beyond the borders of Canaan, the other side of Jordan, which is the type of death. For, the law having been broken, and prophecy-which set before the people their relation to God on earth, and His blessing on that earth-having been proved powerless for restoration, the faithful prophet, forsaking a land which had rejected him, had taken his place outside a blind and ungrateful people, and had been taken up to Him who had sent him (hidden, so to speak, in God; although that expression, in its fulness, is true of the precious Saviour alone).

Up to Jordan Elijah demanded, by his ministry, that the righteous claims of God upon His people should be satisfied. He sets these claims before them. He must withdraw, and God takes him away from a people who did not know Him. At Sinai he acted in human weakness, although God had revealed Himself. Why retire to Horeb, where the law dwelt which the people had broken? This could be only to demand the execution of justice. While manifesting that He could in His own time exercise justice, God reserved to Himself His sovereign rights of grace. But in effect it is fitting that it should be exercised in a sovereign manner beyond the limits of man's responsibility. The relationship of Christ with Israel, with man, clearly explains this. Therefore God first shews that grace has reserved the perfect number who were known of God in Israel; then, having sent Elijah to fill up the long-suffering of the will of God in grace towards the people, instead of cutting Israel off, He places ministry in a position with respect to Israel, in which He can act sovereignly in grace towards every one who has faith to avail himself of it.

After Elijah had passed the Jordan, we have seen that all was changed. Until then Elisha is on probation; after that, grace acts. In principle it is the

position of Christ towards the assembly [See Note #7] or at least towards men in grace; that is to say, it is sovereign grace, to the actings of which death has given free course, justice having nothing more to say, and no longer resting on the responsibility of man who had undertaken to obey, and from whom obedience was due. Justice now consists in God's having His rights, in His glorifying Himself, as is just, by being consistent with His entire being, love, justice, sovereignty, majesty, truth, and every attribute which forms a part of His perfection. He does so according to His sovereignty; and He does it by the Christ who has glorified Him on the earth in all these respects, in every part of His being, so indeed as to make Him known. The testimony of it is that He has exalted Christ as man to His right hand. It must be remembered here that the application of this regards Israel, so that the rejection of the people is considered to have taken place by the very fact of Elijah's rapture. God has ceased to maintain His relationship with them. In His sovereign counsels God never withdraws His love from Israel; but, on the ground of the people's responsibility, God has judged them. He has stretched out His hands all the day to a rebellious and gainsaying people. Therefore Elisha says to the king of Israel, "Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee." Elisha nevertheless returns to Israel in grace. His ministry has then this distinctive character, that it is a testimony to the rejection of all that belonged to the condition of responsibility in which the people had been placed; but at the same time it is a testimony to grace by faith, according to election and the sovereignty of God, in order to maintain the people in blessing; and that through the righteous execution of the judgment which their sin had brought upon them. This is what the return of Christ will be for Israel, rather than what it will be for the assembly, notwithstanding that fundamentally the principle is the same.

Elisha, in the power of resurrection, re-enters the scene of Elijah's labours, who had sought in vain-as He also had done who was more excellent than Elijah-to gather Israel unto the God of their fathers (that is to say, to bring back man in the flesh to some faithfulness towards God). Jericho (pleasant in itself yet, as we have seen, an accursed place) ceases to be so; the curse is removed, and the spring of waters permanently healed, by means of salt

brought in a new cruse: a type, I doubt not, of the purifying power of grace which separates man from evil, and which removes evil, as contrary to the relationship of man with God; a moral power, which will take away the curse from the world, and especially from the Jews, who are the centre of rebellion against God. Salt represents purifying power in the efficacy and the permanency that distinguish the work of God which heals the object of blessing; and it characterises, according to the faithfulness of God, the source of blessing itself. The new vessel is an image of the renewed condition of all things through resurrection.

From Jericho Elisha goes up to Bethel, which, as we have seen, is a place commemorative of the unchangeable faithfulness of God [See Note #8] towards Israel; a faithfulness which can now bring forth all its fruits through death and resurrection. From Bethel he proceeds to Carmel [See Note #9], that is to God's fruitful field, the place where judgment had been executed upon Baal, the prince of this world; a place typical of that condition of Israel which will be the fruit of the fulfilment of God's faithful promises. It will be seen that all this answers perfectly to the character of his ministry, as we have considered it, and answers to it in so much the more interesting a manner from being in contrast with Elijah's ministry; the path of each corresponding with the ministry which we have ascribed to them respectively. From Carmel Elisha returns to Samaria, in connection with which his ordinary ministry is fulfilled.

There remains another circumstance to be noticed in this history. Elisha curses the children who mock him. This action not only shews us the prophet's authority upheld by God; it characterises his position. For although sovereign grace, in spite of Israel's fall, is in exercise towards the people, yet, together with grace, judgment shall be manifested with respect to those who despise the messenger of God. It will be well to remark that the judgment happens when he re-enters the land of Israel, before he takes his place in the unchangeable promises of God to His people. Thenceforth it is the Carmel of God which is presented to our faith. We may observe also, in this chapter, how little man realises and believes what he knows, if in spirit he is not identified with it. The sons of the prophets knew that Elijah was to be taken away. Nevertheless they propose to search for him.

Note #1

This consideration makes Elijah's position pretty evident. We have seen that prophecy was the means of maintaining God's relationship with Israel, in a sovereign manner, when the ark had been taken and the priesthood was fallen. Prophecy still holds this place in the presence of royalty in a state of failure, which, instead of maintaining the people in relationship with God, causes them to depart from Him. While presenting their true King to the people according to Zechariah's prophecy, Christ filled also this prophetic office according to the word of Moses, only in a manner quite peculiar. It must be remembered that, in comparing Elijah and Elisha with the Lord, Christ is looked at in this character. This gives a very important position to the function of prophecy. (Compare Hos 12:13).

Note #2

It is this grace, which Elijah had not properly understood; that was the only means by which God could maintain His relationship with the people; so that a return to Horeb could only put an end to the relation itself as standing on Sinai ground, and especially to the ministry of Elijah which took no higher position. Nevertheless God wrought for the revelation of all this.

Note #3

Reflection will shew us that all this is a moral history of the life of Christ, save that Christ is what He makes us to be. But this is everywhere true. Still it was experimentally realised in Him. He had not to be circumcised; still it was the circumcision of Christ. See following note. So the high priest was washed as well as the priests. Though absolutely obedient in nature and will, He learned obedience.

Note #4

This, as we have seen in the Book of Joshua, was in Canaan after the passage of Jordan, as the circumcision of Christ (that is, His separation from evil which, always true in His Person, was externally made good in His death) has a true heavenly character, and to us is by being risen, and in heavenly places.

Note #5

See Amo 4:4; Hos 9:15, and many other passages in the prophets. This is a very striking fact, just as the cross now is a matter of constant idolatry. The memorial of good, of the denial and death of flesh too, is to flesh the power of evil. Oh, what is man!

Note #6

See Gen 28:13-15. Here too one of the calves was set up; the place of special blessing again made the place of idolatry.

Note #7

And of course towards Israel also.

Note #8

This is the reason why Paul (Act 13:3; Act 13:5) quotes these words, "I will give you the sure mercies of David," in proof of the resurrection of Christ, "no more to return to corruption." Death rendered blessing possible with respect to a rebellious people, and resurrection gave complete stability to the conferred blessing; this was secured. Compare Isaiah 55 where grace towards Israel and the nations, through a risen Saviour, is gloriously proclaimed.

Note #9

Compare Isa 32:15-18.

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 3

The following commentary covers Chapters 3 and 4.

In the following chapter we enter into the historical part of Elisha's ministry. Jehoram goes to war; and, although less wicked than his father, the prophet no longer regards him. Jehoshaphat is still something to him: but the prophet seeks to abstract himself from the influence of the whole scene. He then proclaims blessing, and directs the counsels of the united kings. He is a saviour of Israel. He provides (chap. 4) for the need of the poor of his people, and delivers them from their distress. He bestows the heart's desire

upon faith, which recognises and receives the prophet; and restores life to the dead, thus binding up the broken heart. He feeds the sons of the prophets during the famine, and multiplies the scant measure of bread. Death having been mingled with the food, he remedies the evil so that they eat with impunity.

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 5

Elisha goes also beyond the borders of Israel in dispensing the blessing of which he is the instrument; and, when the king of Israel is troubled at Naaman's coming, Elisha heals the leprosy of this Gentile, who is brought to acknowledge Jehovah, the God of Israel, as the only true God. The Lord Jesus points out the sovereign grace of God on this occasion, which, overstepping the narrow limits of Israel, and, owning no longer their rights, acts towards the Gentiles in the way of election.

As it has been frequently remarked, the means used were simple, and humbling to the flesh and to the pride of man, having their efficacy in full apprehension of, and full submission of heart and faith to, death, which is become life unto man, and that which heals him and cleanses him from sin. The man who was the most closely connected with Elisha, a prey to covetousness, suffers the painful consequences of a hardened heart; and that from which the Gentile had been freed comes irremediably upon him. Such is the position of Israel, outwardly nearer to Jehovah, but morally afar from Him.

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 6

The sons of the prophets must enlarge their dwelling-place, and Elisha, who consents to go with them, secures them from the results of their negligence by reversing the laws of nature. I know not if we should seek here for anything beyond the general character of the miracle, or find a type in the fact that Jordan is in question. So far as Jordan has a typical meaning, that meaning is abiding. It means death. The house built with that which was taken thence, and the power of the stream overcome and destroyed by the piece of wood cast into it, by means of which that which was beyond hope and lost was rescued from it, easily suggest a typical meaning. I dare not say

positively that it is the mind of the Spirit; and we must not give way to imagination.

Elisha preserves Israel after this from the attacks of their powerful enemies. The king of Syria seeking to take Elisha prisoner, it is Elisha, on the contrary, who captures the whole host that came to seize him, thus teaching his blind servant, who had eyes and saw not, the unfailing care with which the Almighty constantly surrounds His own people. After having taught the enemy the power of Israel's God, and the folly of attacking His people when the messenger of His covenant is with them, Elisha lets the Syrians go; and these men come no more into the land of Israel. All these miracles sufficiently characterise Elisha's ministry. The poor comforted, the Gentiles healed, Israel delivered and protected, the election blessed, Israel and their unfaithful king set aside as regards the prophet's testimony—all this we find in it. These miracles are more numerous than Elijah's. The burden which weighed upon Elijah's heart had no place in Elisha's; and therefore he sought relief neither in judgment upon the evil, nor in withdrawing from a useless labour.

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 7

The iniquity of Israel plunges the nation again into distress; and Samaria is desolated by famine. The judgment produces indignation against Jehovah's testimony; for, although Jehoram did not worship Baal, his heart was unchanged. Then comes the despair which considers it useless to wait any longer upon Jehovah [See Note #1]. This is the result of professing Jehovah's name, when there is no faith in Him. It was so with Israel in the wilderness: "Wherefore hath Jehovah brought us up hither to destroy all this people?" Elisha appears here again as saviour, or, at least, as proclaiming Jehovah's salvation. The unbelief of the king's attendant, who considered this deliverance impossible, is punished at the moment when he sees the abundance. When all is impossible to man, Jehovah interposes; and in a moment the whole scene is changed.

Note #1

It may be doubted whether what is said in Kg2 7:33 be not the words of Elisha.

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 8

The history of the woman [See Note #1], whose son Elisha had raised to life again, gives us a little picture of all God's dealings with Israel. During long years, as determined by Jehovah, Israel is deprived of everything; but God has preserved all for them, and in the day of blessing all will be restored to them; and they shall receive double the fruit of their years of affliction. It is the son restored to life that brings blessing. Nevertheless the judgments of God are being accomplished. Elisha goes to Damascus, and Hazael, the rod of Jehovah to chastise His people, is placed on the throne of Syria. On the other hand, Elisha is acknowledged by the Gentiles themselves. The Spirit of God takes notice of the consequences of Judah's alliance with Israel; but with this exception, Judah for the time is out of sight.

Note #1

It seems to me that Gehazi stands here in a grievous position. Smitten by the hand of God, because his heart clung to earth, even in the presence of Jehovah's mighty and long-suffering testimony, he is now a parasite in the king's court, relating the wonderful things in which he no longer took part. This poor world grows weary enough of itself to lead it to take some pleasure in hearing anything spoken of that has reality and power. Provided that it does not reach the conscience, they will listen to it for their amusement, taking credit to themselves perhaps for an enlarged and a liberal mind, which is not enslaved by that which they can yet recognise philosophically in its place. But that is a sad position, which makes it evident that formerly we were connected with a testimony, whilst now we only relate its marvels at court. Nevertheless God makes use of it; and it does not follow that there was no truth in Gehazi. But to rise in the world, and entertain the world with the mighty works of God, is to fall very deeply.

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 9

The following commentary covers Chapters 9 and 10.

In chapter 9 the judgment on Ahab's house commences. He who executes it does not remove, in so doing, the rod which God had lifted up against Israel in the person of Hazael. By means of Jehu God judges the house of Ahab;

but Israel was oppressed by the Syrians, and their land overrun by them during the whole of Jehu's reign. Going farther than Jehoram, Jehu destroyed Baal and his worship at the same time as the house of Ahab: but he did not return unto Jehovah. He saw the folly of idolatry: energetic and ambitious, his interest lay on the other side. When the prophet of the Lord announces to him the near possession of the throne, he hearkens unto him. Sincere perhaps in the conviction that Jehovah was God, he was quite ready to honour Him when his interest agreed with his convictions. He displayed all his energies in accomplishing a work to which he had devoted himself. Ahab's religion had no charm for him. He had felt in his conscience the power of Elijah's testimony; and he understood that it was madness to fight against Jehovah, whose part he had taken. What he did for Jehovah, he did well, according to his wonted energy. Nevertheless his vengeance is without the fear of Jehovah; it is carnal (see Hos 1:4). At the same time the golden calves still existed, as the sanctuary of the kingdom, with whose origin they were connected, and of which they were the national religion. This Jehu did not care to touch. God recognises a zeal which had judged evil uprightly; for the question here was His outward government, and not His judgment of the secrets of the heart; and in fact Jehu acted faithfully in destroying Baal root and branch. Thus he slays the king of Judah, who was confederate with the evil, and the royal family of Judah, who had come to visit that of Israel. Everything falls before his avenging sword, and the words of Elijah, the servant of Jehovah, are fulfilled. Thus it is Elisha who performs the function of Elijah [See Note #1] in his stead, prophetically anointing Hazael and Jehu, although not with his own hands.

Note #1

In this respect Elijah and Elisha form but one prophet, with the difference that has been pointed out. Elisha was a "prophet in his room," an expression not used with regard to prophets in general. In fact it is Christ risen who will execute, or cause to be executed judgments of God upon apostate Israel (see Psalms 20, 21).

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 11

The following commentary covers Chapters 11 and 12.

In chapter 11, the judgment of God falls upon the family [See Note #1] which had corrupted Israel, and even Judah also. The daughter of the house of Ahab, the usurper of the throne of Judah, Athaliah, is cut off through the faithfulness of the high priest, whose wife had preserved one of the offspring of David.

Nevertheless there is not true zeal for Jehovah. The priests keep the money to themselves, which they had agreed to use for repairing the house of the Lord, until the king interposes to set things in order.

Note #1

During the time that Ahab, stirred up by Jezebel, as well as his family and sons are the instruments of Israel's apostasy and corruption God sends the testimony of Elijah and Elisha. This is, in the main (after Solomon), the subject of the two Books of Kings. The fall of the house of David, brought on by its alliance with Israel, or by the example of their kings, is related in the end of the book, where we find also the connections of the Assyrians with the people of God.

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 13

The following commentary covers Chapters 13 through 17.

Walking in the steps of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, the house of Jehu was no protection to Israel against Hazael. But the compassion of Jehovah raised up a deliverer. To His pitiful heart there was yet space for long-suffering towards His people. Elisha, at the point of death, puts the king in the way of deliverance; but his heart was unable to embrace it in its full extent. Still, in the reign of Jehoash, the Syrians were driven back into their own land; and Jeroboam, although walking in the evil ways of the son of Nebat, was able to recover all the original possessions of Judah; for God had pity on Israel, and had seen that their affliction was very bitter.

Alas! when it is not the faith of God's people that is the source of their strength, one enemy destroyed only makes room for another. The Assyrian soon appears on the scene. Elisha being dead, Israel-deprived of this last link with God-soon fall into anarchy and ruin. The Assyrian invades the land. Israel, leagued with the king of Syria, turn their last efforts against Judah. A

sorrowful picture of the people of God! The alliance between Syria and Israel brings out the king of Judah's unfaithfulness, and entangles him in the snares of the Assyrian.

Elisha, already dead, restores life to a corpse which was being hastily buried on account of an invasion of the Moabites. His history, unto the end, is stamped with the character of the power of life [See Note #1]. This resurrection, wrought by contact with the bones of Elisha, appears to me to give the comforting instruction, that, while apparently lost to Israel, the true prophet is still the vessel and guardian of all their hopes; and that when Israel is, as it were, dead and forgotten, He will, after all, restore them to life in a manner as unexpected as powerful.

We come now to the connection of Judah with the Assyrian, fruit of the inward demoralisation of the former. Ahaz plunged into the worst idolatry. Full of worldly wisdom, he seeks in the new power of Assyria a support against enemies nearer home, and he succeeds to his ruin. We see again here the nullity of the high priest in presence of the king. It appears that the people had lost their confidence in the house of David, as had the latter in the faithfulness and goodness of the Lord.

Hoshea, although less wicked than his predecessors, concludes the list of kings, whom the patience of God had borne with in Israel. God thought of His people; and now there was no more hope of them. They were not even a vessel fit to contain the election of God, to whom He made Himself known. Brought under subjection to the king of Assyria, Hoshea had sought help from Egypt. After the king of Assyria had put him in prison, Samaria and all Israel could not long resist. The people of God are carried into captivity, and dispersed among the cities of Assyria and Media; and the land which belonged to Jehovah, and which had been given in possession to Israel, is peopled by strangers, sent thither by the king of Assyria.

In the prophecies of Hosea the two great principles of God's dealings may be seen, one of which has been set before us in Elisha (the connection between the resurrection of the man about to be buried, and the first Verse I shall quote, is remarkable), namely, redemption from the power of death (Hos 13:14); and the governmental dealings of God (Hos 14:9). But how the

prophet labours to adapt his voice to the foolishness of Israel, and to make it reach the conscience of this erring people! He comes after Elisha's death. Elisha's presence among them, and the subsequent testimony of Hosea, bring out the marvellous patience and kindness of God towards them. Hosea gives us more than the internal history—he unfolds the causes of the judgments, although God may have sometimes interposed for restoration, and may have appeared to smite when the king was less wicked than ordinarily. In the language of the prophets we find what the people really were in the sight of God. The promise of their restoration, and in principle even that of our present blessing, is found there also.

The history of that which happened after foreign nations were brought in shews the strange confusion which had taken place in Israel. It is one of the former priests of Jeroboam's system who comes to instruct them in the fear of Jehovah. Together with this they worship their own gods. A medley, hateful to the Lord, is the consequence. In the same way that, in spite of their unfaithfulness, Jehovah retained His sovereign rights over the people, we find Him also vindicating His claim to the land after the people were driven out. He maintains these rights for ever.

Note #1

To understand all this part of the history which we are considering, the prophets Hosea and Amos must be read, and Isaiah 7 and 8 (compare Hos 5:13; Hos 8:4; Hos 11:5; Amo 5:27; and also is, 26; Hos 13:10-11); but, to understand well God's dealings, the whole of these prophecies should be read. I have only quoted the passages which mark the connection with the history; but the internal condition of the people is much more seen in the prophets than even in the books which instruct us as to their public history.

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 18

The following commentary covers Chapters 18 and 19.

Chapter 18 brings us to a rather different subject, namely, the relations of Judah with the Assyrian, who had become their oppressor through their unfaithfulness; and also their relationship with Babylon.

In order to set His dealings with His people in their true light, God raises up a faithful king, distinguished by this, that he puts his trust in Jehovah as no king had done since David until this period, and as none did after him until the captivity [See Note #1].

That which happened with respect to the brazen serpent shews us the tendency of the heart to idolatry. And how many things, to which man continues attached in a carnal way, remain hidden in the midst of so many blessings and chastenings. This teaches us also how near-with such hearts as ours-is the remembrance of blessing, to idolatry of the symbols of blessing. Faith gets rid of these things; for God had given the brazen serpent, not to be a token of the remembrance after the cure, but in order to cure. Man preserved it by a very natural feeling; but this is not of God, and it soon became the instrument of Satan.

Hezekiah smites the Philistines, those inward and perpetual enemies of God's people, and in a great measure subdues them. It is after this that the king of Assyria comes up.

The king of Assyria had carried Israel away captive. His successor seeks to conquer Judah likewise. According to the prophet's expression, the waters of this river reached even to the neck. The power of the allied kings of Israel and Syria appears to have had some attraction for the people of Judah, who, on the other hand, despised the weakness of the house of David; for God was little in their thoughts. In this confederacy, favoured apparently by the people of Judah and Jerusalem, they proposed to set aside the house of David in favour of the son of Tabeal. There was an apparently well-conceived plan on the one side, and an imminent danger on the other. But these were not God's thoughts. In His mercy He would not yet put out the lamp of David's house. He sends the promise of Emmanuel, and exhorts the remnant to put their trust in Jehovah Himself. We shall examine this more in detail when we consider the prophecy of Isaiah. I only refer to it now, in order to elucidate the history and exhibit the condition of the people. Ahaz, who did not trust in Jehovah, was the instrument of fulfilling His purposes; but the Assyrian, in whose power he trusted, became through him the scourge of Judah.

But in order still to bless and preserve Jerusalem and Judah, God raises up Hezekiah, a godly and faithful king, who put his trust in Jehovah. Hezekiah is unable to repulse Sennacherib; so that the people are punished. He submits to Sennacherib, offering to pay whatever he demands; but whether the king's resources were insufficient, or that the king of Assyria, after having accepted the present which Hezekiah sent him, broke his engagement (compare Isaiah 33), Sennacherib, taking advantage of the king's apparent weakness, requires complete submission, both from the king and the kingdom, and invites the inhabitants of Jerusalem to come out of the city and place themselves under his command.

We see however, that even while blaspheming Jehovah, Sennacherib is conscious that he is in the presence of a principle and a power that he does not understand. The people, obedient to the king's commandment, make him no answer. Drawn elsewhere by tidings of the king of Ethiopia's attack, Sennacherib repeats in a letter his blasphemies and insults. Hezekiah lays all these things before Jehovah, and seeks His answer through the prophet Isaiah. The same night God smote the army of the Assyrians. Sennacherib returns to his own country, and dies there by the hand of his own sons.

Hezekiah is thus a type of the true Emmanuel, of Him before whom the Assyrian, the desolater of Israel, will fall. This is a very important history, as foreshadowing the events of the last days; but it will be studied more advantageously when examining the Book of Isaiah, which frequently applies it in this manner. It is but the general idea that needs to be touched upon here.

Note #1

We shall see, farther on, that which characterised Josiah.

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 20

We find here again in a figure the principle with which Israel's deliverance, and that of all men, is connected—a principle pointed out in Elisha, and accomplished in Jesus. Hezekiah is raised as from the dead. He had been sick unto death; but Jehovah heard his prayer, and, on his humiliation, revokes the sentence which He had pronounced through Isaiah.

But man can scarcely bear exaltation. Blessed of Jehovah he boasts himself of that which he has received. After having displayed all his riches to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, who were sent to congratulate him on his recovery, he is warned that they shall all be carried away even to Babylon. The king of Babylon felt, perhaps, some satisfaction in allying himself with one who had not yielded to the power of the king of Assyria; but the world's wisdom, which cultivates profitable connections with the people of God, is always a snare to them. Hezekiah might have made known the source and giver of all this; but he acted as a man. Nevertheless he submits graciously and humbly to the word of Jehovah, which was spoken to him on this occasion.

But, at this period, the people had deeply corrupted themselves, and the impulse which God had given disappeared entirely with the man in whom it acted. The son of Hezekiah was a model of wickedness. God was about to transfer power to the Gentiles; and, even while making it manifest that certain blessing attended faithfulness and trust in Himself, He allowed the house of David to give themselves up to debasement.

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 21

When Hezekiah died at the age of fifty-four, his son was but twelve years old. Beguiled himself, Manasseh seduced the people, who were but too willing to commit greater iniquity than the nations who knew not God. The particular events of Manasseh's life are not related here. The Holy Ghost, having given us the details, in that which precedes, of God's public government in Israel, until He had said, "Lo-ruhamah," then shews us God's dealings with Judah, governed by the conduct of their kings, until God has said, "Lo-ammi." This had been already announced on account of Manasseh's heinous sins; and Josiah's piety could not change the just judgment of God. There was yet for Judah some prolongation of tranquillity; but their repentance under Josiah was but outward [See Note #1], and evil regained the mastery immediately after his death. Amon did but follow the evil ways of his father Manasseh.

Note #1

See Jer 3:10. This passage teaches us how seldom the heart, which is what God judges, corresponds with the semblance of zeal for Him and for His glory, which appears on the surface, when, moved by the Spirit of God, a man of faith presents himself to promote His glory. See also under Hezekiah's reign the condition of the people and God's judgment-Isaiah 22.

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 22

The following commentary covers Chapters 22 and 23.

Observe what grace raised up Hezekiah and Josiah, both of whom were born of fathers given up to idolatry, and followed by sons who were equally abandoned to it. But the sovereign grace of God towards Israel again raised up this testimony, and manifested that He was always ready to bless, even if Israel refused to be blessed, and chose their own ruin instead. Without God, what is the heart of man? In all this the patience of God's government was fully demonstrated; for, under Hezekiah, many things still existed which escaped the king's eye and judgment, through lack of watchfulness in the fear of the Lord.

That which distinguished Josiah was his carefulness to observe the law of Moses, the book of which had been discovered in the temple; trust in Jehovah had characterised Hezekiah; and in these respective characteristics they are both unequalled as to their walk.

The kingdom of Assyria was declining, and Josiah exercises his royal power through the whole extent of the country. The threat addressed to Jeroboam of old is fulfilled. All the high places of Israel are destroyed. Perhaps the heart of Josiah was lifted up. Be that as it may, God performed His promise, and took him away from the evil, the dreadful accomplishment of which was hastening onwards; for, whatever might be the sincerity of Josiah's piety, all hearts were corrupted. Compare with this Ch2 30:17, etc.-the account of that which happened long before his reign.

4 Kings (2 Kings) Chapter 24

The following commentary covers Chapters 24 and 25.

The kings of Israel had been the fatal examples of a course which had led Judah and all Israel to their ruin (see Kg2 16:3). The pious Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab was the origin of all this, for evil bears fruit which continues long to reproduce itself. Alas! alas! what is man when he turns aside from Jehovah's ways, from the narrow and straight path of God's word and will, from the path of faith-the true path of an obedient spirit?

The history which we have been going over has given us an account of the Assyrian's connection with the people of God. He was a cedar of Lebanon; but he is cut down. Pharaoh thought, for a moment, of making the empire his own; he sought to exalt himself that he might rule over the trees of the forest. Judah, brought out in former days with a high hand by the power of God from Pharaoh's country, is subject to him. But, whatever Pharaoh's pretensions may be, this is not the purpose of God. If God writes "Lo-ammi" on His people, it is Babylon which is to begin the times of the Gentiles [See Note #1]. Pharaoh returns into his own country, and Jehoiakim, powerless and without God, comes under the dominion of Nebuchadnezzar [See Note #2]. We need not go into the details. His son, as wicked as himself, rebels against Nebuchadnezzar; for Judah, the son of the Most High, was little used to bondage; but this heifer also must bend its neck to the yoke (Hos 10:11), and Jehoiachin is carried captive to Babylon. The kingdom and the temple still exist; but Zedekiah, having broken the oath which he had made in the name of Jehovah [See Note #3], and, allowing himself to be governed by the princes, persists in his rebellion and is taken prisoner. His sons having been slain before his eyes, and himself deprived of sight, he is carried away to Babylon. The temple is burnt; the walls of Jerusalem are broken down; the seat of Jehovah's throne is trodden under foot of the Gentiles. Sorrowful result of His having entrusted His glory to men among whom He had placed His throne! Sorrowful, thrice sorrowful, conduct of man-of that generation whom God had so honoured! On the other hand, God will take occasion from it to manifest that infinite goodness, which, in sovereign grace, will re-establish the very thing that man has cast under foot to the profane.

The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel must be read to have the complete history, and the internal history of the spirit of the people, and that of the

king; the history at once of the condition which drew down the judgment, and of the patience of God, who, even until the very taking of the city, continued to send them most affecting calls to repentance—alas! in vain; and the times of the Gentiles began. The reader who would thoroughly understand the events of all this history, the marvellous patience of God, and the way in which He raised up faithful kings, in order that He might bless, should read the prophets Hosea, Amos, Jeremiah, and certain chapters of Isaiah, which speak to the people in the name of Jehovah and tell them of their true condition.

Note #1

As a figure, this is an important principle; for Egypt is the state of nature, out of which the assembly is brought; Babylon is the corruption and worldliness into which she falls.

Note #2

How sorrowful is this part of the history, in which the only question is, whether Egypt or Babylon is to possess the land of God's people, the land of promise! It being no longer a doubtful point whether Israel shall continue to possess it, it must become a prey to one or the other of these hostile and unbelieving powers. Alas! Israel was unbelieving with more light than the others, who did but take advantage of the position and the strength which the unbelief of Israel gave them, and acknowledged in them.

Note #3

This filled up the measure of sin. We shall draw the reader's attention to this when considering the prophecy of Ezekiel, who dwells upon it. By making use of an oath in Jehovah's name in the hope of preventing revolt, Nebuchadnezzar shewed more respect for that name than Zedekiah did, who despised such an oath. God permitted thus final evidence of iniquity. Zedekiah might have remained a spreading vine of low stature. One who was above all, alone knew how to render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

1 CHRONICLES

Introduction to 1 Chronicles

These Books, written or drawn up after the captivity (see Ch1 6:15), preserve God's history of His people, recorded by the Holy Ghost, as He loved to remember it, exhibiting only such faults as require to be known in order to understand the instructions of His grace.

He records at the same time the names of those who had gone through the trials mentioned in this history without being blotted out of the book. Here indeed it is but the outward figure of this blessed memorial of the people of His grace; but in fact this is what we find here. All Israel is not there; but all are not Israel who are of Israel. At the same time the Spirit of God goes farther back, and gives us the genealogy from Adam of the generation blessed by grace according to the sovereignty of God, with that which belonged to it outwardly, or after the flesh. He puts into relief, sufficiently to make it apparent, the part owned in grace, which stood externally in relationship with that which was merely outward and natural; putting always that which is natural first, as the apostle tells us.

1 Chronicles Chapter 1

1 Chronicles 1:1

ch1 1:1

Thus, beginning with Adam, we have the family of Seth down to Noah. Then comes the family of Japheth and of Ham, one of whose descendants began to be mighty on the earth; and finally that of Shem, whose God was Jehovah, and whose line is followed down to Abraham. Abraham, called out from among men, becomes, as it were, a fresh stock. His posterity after the flesh is first given us; then Isaac, the child of promise, a fresh stock, whose children after the flesh are exhibited, with their kings and their chiefs, before the child of election.

1 Chronicles Chapter 2

At length, in the second chapter, we find Israel, all of whose sons were more or less under the care of God who had loved Jacob. Judah is then introduced to lead us to the royal race of David, the object also of the promises according to the election of God. Besides this, we find a picture of the prosperity of Judah's family in general, and that of Caleb's family in particular, who was faithful to God in his generation. God has preserved the memorial of it in this place [See Note #1]. Thus also the way in which the land was peopled and its internal history are vividly presented to the reader.

Note #1

It is well to remark here, that in all these genealogies, when a family has been established in a place, the name of the place is often used for that of the family; that the descendants, through several generations, are named together as children of the head of the race (compare Ch1 4:1 with the commencement of chap 2); and that, without having been named before, the eminent man of a family is taken to begin a genealogy anew (Ch1 8:29; Ch1 8:33).

1 Chronicles Chapter 3

The following commentary covers Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

The genealogy of David's family is next given us, as far as several generations after the return from the captivity; and then that of the tribes in succession; but in relationship with their position in Israel, and with the addition of certain notices of possessions acquired either by families or by an entire tribe. Dan and Zebulun are wanting; Judah is found (Ch1 4:1). Simeon (Ch1 4:24) had had his lot within the territory of Judah, but he had enlarged his domain; and some of this tribe, having gone beyond the borders of the land, had escaped the captivity. Reuben (Ch1 5:1), Gad (Ch1 5:11), and the half tribe of Manasseh (Ch1 5:23), had remained eastward of Jordan. These tribes together had also much extended their territory, and had enriched themselves at the expense of their enemies. These tribes come together, Judah as the royal tribe; Simeon is brought in with him, because his territory was within Judah's; then Reuben, the firstborn, and with him the tribes beyond Jordan as connected with him. Also they were carried away captive before the rest. The God of Israel brought judgment upon

them. Levi came genealogically next; but I apprehend there was a stronger reason; that it was the priestly tribe, as Judah the royal.

1 Chronicles Chapter 6

The following commentary covers Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9.

In the genealogies of Levi (chap. 6) we see, first of all, the line of high priests until the captivity; and then the Levites, their services and their cities. After Levi come Issachar (Ch1 7:1), Benjamin (Ch1 7:6), Naphtali (Ch1 7:13), few in number; the other half tribe of Manasseh (Ch1 7:14), Ephraim (Ch1 7:20), and Asher (Ch1 7:30). Then we find Benjamin again (chap. 8), first of all with reference to Jerusalem, and afterwards in connection with the family of Saul.

But that which has been preserved here of the genealogies of the people-an affecting remnant (through grace) of those who had fallen under the sorrowful condemnation of "Lo-ruhamah" and "Lo-ammi"-reveals to us another circumstance, namely, that, wherever there has been faith, God has blessed His people individually. Jabez (Ch1 4:9-10), the son of affliction, seeking blessing in the presence of the God of Israel, failed not to find it. Jehovah enlarged his borders, and so kept him from evil that it grieved him not. Simeon, although dispersed in Israel, was able to drive out the enemy and possess their land, even unto mount Seir. The two tribes and a half beyond Jordan enlarged their territories also, and possessed the gates of their enemies, "because they cried unto God." Afterwards they were carried away captives, because they forsook God. Thus, although there was neither the power of the king nor the order of the kingdom, yet, wherever there was faith, God blessed those of His people who trusted in Him.

These genealogies were imperfect. The condition of Israel bore the impress of the ruin which had befallen them; but also that of the goodness of God who had brought back a remnant, and who had preserved all that was needful to place those who formed it in the record of His people. If the needful proof to give them a title to this were wanting, such as were of the people ceased to enjoy their proper privileges, and the priests their sacerdotal position, until a priest stood up with Urim and with Thummim. For these genealogies served as a means to recognise the people. Happy he

who had preserved his own, and who had so appreciated the heritage of Jehovah as to attach value to it! It was a proof of faith; for, it might have been said, Of what use are these genealogies in Babylon?

As to the Levites-for it is good to serve the Lord-their genealogies, their cities, and their services were known with sufficient certainty, even with respect to those that dwelt at Jerusalem. The mercy of God has not forgotten either to preserve a lamp in the house of Saul; for in judgment God remembers mercy. Chapter 9 teaches us the use which they made of their genealogies; for those mentioned in it are persons who had returned from the captivity, as may be seen in Nehemiah 11. This portion of the book closes at Ch1 9:34. Verse 35 (Ch1 9:35) begins the narrative.

1 Chronicles Chapter 10

The following commentary covers Chapters 10, 11, and 12.

A brief recital of the ruin of Saul's house introduces Jehovah's establishment of the house of David. All that took place before the people gathered themselves to David at Hebron, and before the kingdom was established in his house over all Israel at Jerusalem, is passed over in silence.

After this we find, as a general subject, the order of the kingly power, and of the kingdom as established in the house of David-the kingdom, looked at as ordained of God in blessing, rather than the historical account of all that took place;-excepting, so far as was necessary to furnish this picture. There is not perfection here; but there is the order which God appointed. The faults and the sufferings of David, whether before or after he was made king, are consequently passed over in silence.

After having mentioned the king himself, anointed by Samuel according to the word of Jehovah to rule over all Israel, the history begins with that which constituted the strength and glory of David's kingdom. The high priest no longer occupies the foreground. Jehovah's anointed is essentially a man of war, although it is not always to be so. Joab and the mighty men who had been David's companions in arms come immediately after the king. The first place next to the king is his who delivered Zion out of the enemy's hands [See Note #1]; and this spot, chosen of Jehovah, becomes the city of

David and the seat of royal power. We are then told how David's companions in arms successively joined him, though yet for a long time rejected and pursued by Saul, mean as yet in appearance, a fugitive and without power to resist.

The first who are pointed out as having come to him—a proof that God and the knowledge of His will had more value in their eyes than parentage and the advantages which flow from thence—are from among the brethren of Saul (that is, of the tribe of Benjamin), and men of the greatest skill in handling the bow and the sling, the weapons with which Saul was slain in the battle in which he was overthrown. There were some who came from beyond Jordan to David, while he was still concealed in the wilderness; for faith and the manifestation of God's power tend to bring into play the energy and strength of those who connect themselves with it. He with whom God is attracts those with whom God is working; and their energy develops itself in proportion to the manifestation of His presence and favour. Many of these had been with Saul, but when with him they were not mighty men; many also had never been with him. Yet even in Saul's camp David had been able to slay the Philistines when all Israel was in terror. After that, similar achievements become almost common. At the beginning such things required immediate communion with God, so as to shut out the influence of all that surrounded the man who enjoyed this communion. Afterwards the surrounding influence was favourable, and, in this sense, faith propagates itself. These were but the chief of the mighty men whom David had. When God acts in power, He gives strength to the weak, and produces, by the energy of faith and of His Spirit, an army of heroes. In those who came from Benjamin and Judah we see that there was this link of faith (Ch1 12:16). They knew that David's God helped him. David committed himself to God with respect to those who joined him, for he was in a very difficult position towards the end of his career of trial and affliction. Those to whom God had given energy and strength came to him in great numbers; for everything was ripe for his elevation to the throne of Israel, and for the transfer of Saul's kingdom to him.

There were various characteristics in this army of God: all famous for their valour, some among them had understanding of the times to know what

Israel ought to do, and, in this case, all their brethren were at David's command; others were armed for battle; others had all instruments for war, and were not of a double heart. And these things were according to the gift of God, and they all came with one heart to make David king; their brethren had prepared everything in abundance, for there was joy in Israel. It is always thus when Christ is really magnified by upright hearts who only seek His glory.

Note #1

David having built the city from Millo round about, Joab repaired the rest of the city. We may observe that Shammah the Harorite is not mentioned here. Perhaps it is Shammah in Ch1 11:27: but this is doubtful (see Sa2 23:25). It may also be observed that the exploits of these mighty men consisted especially of victories over the Philistines, the enemies by whom Saul, who had been raised up for the purpose of destroying them, was overcome. Whatever may have been their subsequent achievements, it was there they learnt to conquer, and that they acquired the reputation which procured them a place in the archives of God. It is well that the reader should remember the connection between this whole history, and the establishment of the power of Christ, the Son of David, on the earth.

1 Chronicles Chapter 13

David immediately thinks of the ark (see Psalm 132). He consults with the captains of the thousands of Israel in order to bring it back amongst them. Loving the people, and beloved by them, he acts with and for them: but his zeal was still too much connected with his warlike spirit; and, while giving himself up to joy, he did not sufficiently consider Jehovah's ways. He imitates no doubt the means by which God had glorified Himself, when the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines. These were quite right in having nothing to do with it, and in leaving God to act, and to testify of Himself, that He was the God of all creation, exercising a power that overrules nature in His creatures. This was faith in the Philistines; but it was not faith in Uzza to touch the ark. Amongst God's people it is His word that must direct. God may act in sovereignty outside of all this; but here the word rules. Perez-Uzza is a witness that it cannot be neglected with impunity, and that the

order of His house in the midst of His people is a thing which He will cause them to reverence. It was through having failed in this reverence that David's joy was turned into sorrow and fear; but the house of Obed-edom was nevertheless a proof that the presence of God assuredly brings blessing.

1 Chronicles Chapter 14

The history of the royalty continues. David establishes himself at Jerusalem, and Jehovah confirms the kingdom in his hands, and it is lifted up on high because of His people. Having inquired of God and exactly followed His directions, David twice gains a complete victory over the Philistines. Being thus blessed of Jehovah, his fame goes out into all lands.

1 Chronicles Chapter 15

He makes himself houses in Jerusalem, and prepares a place for the ark of God, pitching a tent for it. Warned by the calamity [See Note #1] which his neglect had brought upon Uzza, the first time he undertook to bring back the ark, David now gathers, not only all Israel together, but also the Levites and the children of Aaron. This gives occasion to the setting forth of the whole order of Levitical service as it had been appointed by David, and of the relation between the priesthood and royalty; that is, that the former is subordinated to the latter, the king being Jehovah's anointed, although the service of the sanctuary belonged to the priesthood.

As the head, David orders everything and appoints psalmody for the service of God. Then by the help of God, the ark is brought from the house of Obed-edom into the tent prepared for it in Zion, with offerings to God who helped the Levites by His power, and with joy and songs of triumph. David himself, clothed with a robe of fine linen and an ephod, dances and plays before the ark of Jehovah who was going up to His place in Zion. This action-unintelligible to the unbelieving Michal, to whom the king's behaviour was therefore unintelligible also-was of very great importance. It identified kingly power in Zion (that is to say, the kingly power of Christ, as deliverer in grace) with the token of Jehovah's covenant with Israel-a token established there in grace, when Israel had already failed entirely under the law, and even after their rejection of God as their King.

The Aaronic priesthood was not able to maintain the people's relationship with their God, and consequently the outward order had completely failed. The altar at which the priests were to sacrifice was elsewhere (at Gibeon), and not before the tent which contained the ark. And the ark, which was the sign of the covenant and of the throne of Jehovah, was at a distance from the altar at which the priests ministered.

The covenant of Jehovah is connected with the kingly power, and that in Zion-the place which He had chosen for His rest. David himself assumes somewhat of the Melchisedec character, but only in testimony and by anticipation (Ch1 16:1-3). In these Verses the priests do not appear. In order to apprehend more clearly the import of the removal of the ark to Zion, it will be well to consider Psa 78:60-72 and Psalm 132, and to compare Ch1 15:8 of the latter with what Moses said during Israel's journey in the wilderness (Num 10:35-36). It is interesting to see that each petition in the earlier part of Psalm 132 is exceeded by its fulfilment at the close.

The circumstance of the ark not being taken to the tabernacle at Gibeon was also of deep significance. It was completely judging the whole system connected with this tabernacle. The tabernacle was still in being, as well as the altar, and the priests offered sacrifices there; but the ark of the covenant of Jehovah had been taken away from it. The king disposed of the latter by his authority, placing it elsewhere. Ever since the ruin of Shiloh this judgment had continued as a chastisement executed by the enemy; but, now that God interposes by means of David and acts in power, this power places the visible sign of His covenant with His people elsewhere. The kingly power is established at Jerusalem, and the sign of God's covenant is taken away from the tabernacle of the congregation to be placed on Mount Zion, the seat of the kingly power. When the people were to journey, Moses said [See Note #2], "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee." This was when the ark went before them to search out a resting-place for them. When it rested, he said, "Return, O Jehovah, unto the ten thousand thousands of Israel." But, when God had up to a certain point given rest to Israel, they knew not how to enjoy it. They took the ark out of its place to carry it into the camp of Israel, when defeated on account of their unfaithfulness by their enemies; but this

was not now the place for the ark. Neither the one nor the other of Moses's expressions was suitable to this transfer of the ark to the midst of the camp. The ark was taken, and, as we have seen elsewhere, Ichabod was pronounced upon the people [See Note #3]. But the faithfulness of God is abiding; and, now that He has interposed in grace and power, and that the throne is established as the vessel of this power and grace, another word is given: "Arise, O Jehovah, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength" (Psa 132:8). Israel, the camp, and the priesthood were no longer the rest of God.

Note #1

It is to be observed, that, although this had its origin in the guilty forgetfulness of David, it nevertheless gave occasion through grace to his being set in his true position for the regulation and appointment of all that concerned the Levites' service. It is always thus with regard to faith, for the purposes of God are fulfilled in favour of it. Man in his zeal may depart from the will of God, and God will chasten him, but only to bring him into more honour, by setting him more completely in the position which God has purposed, and in the understanding of His ways, according to which He will magnify His servant.

Note #2

Thus in the wilderness, it was Israel journeying, who were seeking their rest, who were to find enemies on their way, and whose faith recognised these enemies as the enemies of Jehovah; or Israel carefully surrounding the token of the presence of their God, when He gave a temporary rest unto His people.

Note #3

Expressed in these words, He has "delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand" (Psalm 78).

1 Chronicles Chapter 16

Let us now consider the import of this establishment of the ark and of the throne in Zion, as set before us in the psalm which David wrote on this

occasion. It is true that, so far as it was entrusted to man [See Note #1], the kingly power failed; but it is not, therefore, the less true that it has been placed in the house of David, according to the counsels, the gift, and the calling of God, and that all the promises connected with it-the sure mercies of David-will be fulfilled in Christ. In that which we read here (chap. 16) the throne is considered in the light of God's thoughts, and of the blessing which, according to those thoughts, is linked with it. David, having offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and having blessed the people, deals to every one, both to man and woman, a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine; for God will "abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread." Then David gives the Levites a psalm to sing praises unto Jehovah.

This Psalm is composed of a part of Psalm 105, of Psalm 96 with some alterations, of the beginning of Psalms 106, 107, 118, and 136, which is an important form of words; and of Psa 106:47-48. The following are its subjects in the order which the psalm follows. First, Psalm 105 in which the deeds of Jehovah are celebrated, as well as His marvellous works, and the judgments of His mouth. Israel, as His people and the assembly of His chosen ones, are commanded to remember these things, for He is Jehovah their God, and His judgments are in all the earth. Israel is called to remember, not Moses and the conditional promises given to the people through him, but the covenant made with Abraham unconditionally-an everlasting covenant to give the land to his seed. Israel is reminded of the way in which God preserved those heirs of promise, when they went from nation to nation. The remainder of the psalm is omitted; it speaks historically of the ways of God, with respect to the preservation of His people in Egypt, and of their deliverance thence, to be established in Canaan, that they might observe the statutes of Jehovah; and this part of the psalm would have been unsuitable here, where grace is celebrated in the establishment of the people in power after those statutes had been broken. The beginning of the psalm celebrates grace towards Israel according to the promises made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, when the judgments of God are in all the earth. This is the first thing founded upon the presence of the ark, and the establishment of the throne in Zion.

The Verses 23-33 (Ch1 16:23-33) are almost the words of Psalm 96. It is a call to the heathen to acknowledge Jehovah, whose glory should be declared among all nations. This psalm belongs to a series of psalms, which, from the first cry of the people until the universal joy of the nations, relate in order all that refers to the bringing again the Firstborn into the world. Only in Psalm 96 the words, "Say among the heathen that Jehovah reigneth," have a place which gives them a more prophetic character. Here the joy of the heavens and the earth precedes this message to the heathen, and, instead of saying "his courts," it is said "before him." The words, "He shall judge the peoples with righteousness," [See Note #2] are also omitted, as well as the second half of the last verse, which applies this judgment to the world. Apart from these alterations, which appear to me to give this psalm more of the character of a present joy, these Verses correspond with Psalm 96. The omission of the judgment of the peoples in righteousness is remarkable. It is because the subject here is joy, and the grace of deliverance in the establishment of power, with the subsequent government of the earth, and that the nations are called up to Jerusalem to present themselves there before Jehovah. This is the leading thought.

We have then in these two parts the fulfilment, in Israel's joy before Jehovah, of the covenant made with the fathers, following after His mighty works; and the call addressed to the nations to come up to the place of His glory [See Note #3]. We have next this form of words, "His mercy endureth for ever," declaring that in spite of all the faults, all the sins, and all the unfaithfulness of Israel, Jehovah's mercy has stood firm. It will be when the Lamb, the true ark of the covenant and the real David, shall be upon Mount Zion, even before He assumes the character of Solomon, that this will be fully demonstrated. Accordingly, since David, this has been sung (compare Ch1 16:41; Ch2 5:13; Ezr 3:11; Jer 33:11).

Psalm 106, which concludes the fourth book of Psalms, opens at length the proofs of this precious declaration, while the psalm we are considering, after giving the promises made to Abraham, passes over the whole history to the end (omitting the latter part of Psalm 105, from Verse 16 (Psa 105:16-45), which speaks of it, and places Israel under responsibility in Canaan), and

goes on with the first Verse of Psalm 106 (Psa 106:1), which declares that the mercy of God has continued in spite of everything.

Psalm 107 treats the same subject, but in connection with the deliverance and the return of Israel at the end of the age. Psalm 118 brings out this truth in connection with the Person of the Messiah, suffering with His people, but at last known and accepted in the day which Jehovah has made. Finally, in Psalm 136, the same doxology is sung in connection with the full blessing of Israel and of all creation; beginning with the creation itself, and celebrating the proofs of this mercy throughout all things, until the blessing of the earth, resulting in the redemption of Israel. Here we may remark, that from Psalm 132, which we have already noticed as celebrating the establishment of the ark on Mount Zion, the psalms are consecutive until Psalm 136. Only they go beyond our present subject and introduce us to the restored temple, although still speaking of Zion as the place of blessing (compare Psalms 133, 134, 135, and finally 136, of which we are speaking, and which, as a chorus, concludes the series).

Finally we have the two concluding Verses of Psalm 106, the first of which prays that God would gather Israel [See Note #4] from among the heathen, which will be the result of the throne of Jesus being set up in Zion [See Note #5], and the second of which concludes the psalm (as we find at the close of each book of Psalms) by blessing for ever Jehovah the God of Israel. This song of praise contains then every subject which the presence of Christ in Zion will give occasion to celebrate, when He shall already have appeared to establish there His power in grace, but before the effects of His presence have been felt all around.

At the close of chapter 16 we see that the king regulates everything that was to be done before the ark, and before the altar which was in the high place at Gibeon (that is to say, for the service of every day before the ark, and for the sacrifices upon the altar); and that he also appointed Levites to praise Jehovah, and to sing that "His mercy endureth for ever." It is touching to see, that the testimony to this precious faithfulness on God's part is not only found in the place where power had set the ark, but there also where the heart of the people needed it meantime, namely, at the altar, which, although the place where the people drew nigh to God, had become after all

a testimony to the fallen condition of the people, a tabernacle without the ark.

Faith, apprehending the counsels and the work of God, could see in the establishment of the ark in Zion (an act which, according to the old order, was thorough disorder), the progress of God's power and intervention towards the peaceful and glorious reign of the Son of David. The sure mercies of David were as bright to the eye of faith as the dawn of day, in that the ark of the covenant had been set up by David the king in the mountain which God had chosen for His everlasting rest. But all did not apprehend this intervention and these ways of God, so precious to those who understood them; and the condescending mercy of God stooped at Gibeon to the low estate of the people whom He loved, and He still spoke to them after His own heart there, at the altar where this people could draw near to God in an ignorance perhaps which saw no farther; but where, as far as this ignorance allowed, they were faithful to Him who had brought them out of Egypt: there God spoke to them, telling them that His mercy endured for ever. This was in fact a touching proof of it. David returns to bless his house; always a distinct thing, for David as for Solomon, from the people, and from the glory connected with them.

Note #1

Compare Psa 132:11-12, the two principles already pointed out in the thoughts on the Books of Kings.

Note #2

"Peoples" (Psa 96:10) is Ammim; habitually used in the Psalms I think for "peoples" ("people" A.V.), associated with "the people;" that is, Israel, Ch1 16:36. See however Ch1 16:26; at any rate, they are not treated as heathen. In "Judge the peoples" (Psa 96:10) "judge" is deen (as in Psa 7:8), referring to controversies and litigation. Shaphat "judge" (Psa 96:13, twice) is more general judicial authority. "Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth" comes before the heavens and earth rejoicing in Psalm 96, but after in 1 Chronicles 16.

Note #3

Psalm 100 could not have been used here, because before that Psalm Jehovah had already been celebrated as sitting between the cherubim (Psa 99:1); while the act of placing the ark in Zion was only an anticipation. It is Psalm 96, therefore, which is quoted. It is the presence of Christ on Mount Zion to fulfil the promises in power, before reigning in peace, which explains all these allusions, as well as some Psalms, which seem to speak of a return from captivity, and a rebuilding of Jerusalem, while praying at the same time for the accomplishment of this return. In some the celebration of the blessing is in spirit, and the cry for blessing the fact preceding the accomplishment of it.

Note #4

This petition proves the prophetic character of the psalm, and shews that it reaches onward to the latter times of Israel.

Note #5

See Mat 4:31(although it is there in connection with His coming from heaven), and Psalm 126.

1 Chronicles Chapter 17

But although David was to connect kingly power in Zion with the ark of the covenant, and thus to secure blessing by the power of the king whom God had chosen, yet the warrior king was not to build the Lord's house. The energy which was victorious over the enemies of God and of His people was not yet the peaceful and glorious power which would bring the people into the enjoyment of all God's blessing, when the enemy should be no more and all should yield implicit obedience to the throne of God upon the earth. Like Abraham, David was to be in his own person the depositary of the promises; but he was not himself to enjoy the result of the promises on the earth. When the people had been redeemed, their first spiritual desire was to build a habitation in which God should dwell among them (Exo 15:2) [See Note #1], and this desire was according to the mind of God (Exo 29:44-46). But if God had accompanied His people in their wanderings; if He had borne with their unfaithfulness, when He had entrusted to them His glory in the earth, which He had promised them; and if the song, "His mercy endureth for

ever," echoed around His altar in the midst of the ruin; if, for the deliverance of His people, He had set up a king after His own heart, and placed the ark (rescued from the enemy) upon Mount Zion, the place which He had chosen for His rest; nevertheless it was still true that there remained a rest for the people of God. The victory which obtained it was not this rest, neither was the grace which bestowed the victory this rest. When God should give His people full and entire rest, then the house in which He would dwell among them should be built; for God comes into the midst of His people according to their condition and their need [See Note #2].

But the holy desire to build it for the glory of God becomes the occasion of revealing to David all the counsels of God with respect to himself. Grace had chosen him when in a low estate, and had set him up to rule the people of God, who had Himself been with David wherever he went, who had cut off David's enemies, and who had exalted him. And this was not all. He had ordained a rest for His people, which should no more be disturbed, as it had been aforesaid and during all the days of the judges. Moreover God would subdue all his enemies, and would build him a house. It should no longer be saviours occasionally raised up to deliver a people from the miseries into which their unfaithfulness had plunged them; but the counsels of God on their behalf should be accomplished, and blessing established for evermore in the house and family of the king. The son of David should sit upon his throne; he should be a son unto Jehovah, and Jehovah should be his Father, and Jehovah's mercy should not be taken away from him. He should also be settled in the house, and in the kingdom of Jehovah for ever, and his throne should be established for evermore.

It will be remarked here, that all question of the responsibility of David's seed [See Note #3] is left out, and that the whole refers to the fulfilment of God's purposes in Christ, the true Son of David according to the promise. God takes the matter in hand. While His people are still deprived of rest, He is pleased to go with them from tent to tent, and desires not that they should build Him a house. At length He will Himself raise up the One who shall build up a house, and under whose reign the people, established in power for ever, shall enjoy the rest which God Himself shall have procured them. David, with overflowing heart, makes answer to Jehovah [See Note

#4], who, for His servant's sake, and according to His own heart, had done all these great things, and had revealed them to make His servant know them. Whilst acknowledging Israel's glorious privilege, in being the people of such a God-the only true God, he prays that the God of Israel will in fact be a God to Israel, and that He will fulfil all that He had spoken to him concerning his posterity.

Note #1

This translation here is more than doubtful, but Exo 29:46 is quite clear as to the purpose of God.

Note #2

When Israel was a slave, God became his Redeemer; when he dwelt in tents, God abode in one also; when in conflict, God presented Himself as Captain of Jehovah's host; when settled in peace, God establishes Himself in the house of His glory. The interval was the probation of His people on earth. God abode in the tent, and even His ark is taken. He interposes in grace for deliverance. Christ also, since we were born of woman, is born of a woman; since His people were under the law, He is born under the law; now that He will have a heavenly people, He is on high for us; when He comes in glory, we shall come with Him, and reign when He reigns, but in these last we are with Him.

Note #3

The latter part of Verse 14 in 2 Samuel 7 (Sa2 7:14) is omitted.

Note #4

It is beautiful to see, in this affecting prayer, how David's heart is full of that which God is in this matter. "There is none like thee"; and, if he speaks of the blessing upon His people, Israel is not that which the people are, but "the only nation in the earth whom God went to redeem to himself, that they might be his own people, to make himself a name of greatness and terribleness." "Let thy name be magnified for ever." This is the proper effect of faith.

1 Chronicles Chapter 18

The following commentary covers Chapters 18, 19, and 20.

In chapters 18, 19 and 20 David, already delivered from all internal conflict in Israel, triumphs over the heathen, and spreads the glory of Israel and of his reign on every side. These are the events which occasioned Psalm 18, although it has a more extended meaning (compare Ch1 18:36-45). It will also be remarked that all David's faults are passed over in silence. Faithfully recounted elsewhere, they have no place here, because it is the fulfilment of the ways and thoughts of God in the house of the elect king that is here depicted. The children of the giant fall with the Philistines before the children of Israel.

1 Chronicles Chapter 21

But prosperity exposes David to the temptations of the enemy. Head over Israel, and conqueror of all his enemies, he wishes to know the strength of Israel, which was his glory, forgetting the strength of God, who had given him all this and had multiplied Israel. This sin, always a great one and still more so in David's case, did not fail to bring chastisement from God—a chastisement however, which was the occasion of a fresh development of His grace, and of the accomplishment of His purposes. David, in his heart, knew God although for a moment he had forgotten Him, and He commits himself to Him, choosing rather to fall into the hands of God than to hope anything from man; and the pestilence is sent by God. This, by the grace of God, gives occasion for another element of David's glory—for the honour which God gave him of being the instrument to fix the spot, where the altar of God was to be the means of the daily connection between the people and Himself. Jerusalem was beloved of God. This election on His part is now manifested. The spot of ground in question was the threshing-floor of a stranger; the moment was one in which the people were suffering under the consequences of sin. But here all is grace; and God stays the angel's hand when stretched out to smite Jerusalem. Grace anticipates all movement in David's heart [See Note #1]; for it acts and has its source in the heart of God. Moved by this same grace, David on his part intercedes for the people, taking the sin on himself; and God hears his prayer, and sends His prophet to direct him in offering the atoning victim, which in fact formed the foundation of all subsequent relationship between the people and God. One

cannot but feel-defective as the type is [See Note #2], in comparison with the reality-how much this calls Him to mind who took upon Himself, and even in behalf of this very people, the sin which was not His own.

David having offered the sacrifice according to God's ordinance, God marks His acceptance of it by sending fire from heaven; and at God's command the angel sheathes his sword. Here all is evidently grace. It is not the kingly power which interposes to deliver Israel from their enemies, and gives them rest. The ark of the covenant being there through the energy of faith, out of its regular place which is now desolate in consequence of the people's sin, it is Israel's own sin [See Note #3] (for all depends upon the king) which is in question. God acts in grace, ordains and accepts the atoning sacrifice; David, in sackcloth with his elders, presenting himself before Him in intercession.

In the place where God has heard his prayer, David offers his sacrifices; and of this place it is said, "This is the house of Jehovah-Elohim, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel." In the presence of the sin, God acts in grace, and institutes, by means of sacrifice, the regular order of the religious relationship between Himself and His people who are accepted in grace, and the place of His own habitation in which they were to draw nigh unto Him [See Note #4]. It was a new order of things. The former presented no resource against the judgment of God: on the contrary, David himself feared to go to the tabernacle; it was all over with it as a means of approach to God. David's sin became the occasion of putting an end to it, by shewing the impossibility of using it in such a case, and by being thus made the occasion of founding everything upon sovereign grace.

Note #1

It is interesting to see the order unfolded here in the establishment of the relations of sovereign grace: first of all, the heart of God and His sovereign grace in election, suspending the execution of the deserved and pronounced judgment (Ch1 21:15); next, the revelation of this judgment, a revelation which produces humiliation before God and a full confession of sin before His face. David, and the elders of Israel, clothed in sackcloth, fall upon their faces, and David presents himself as the guilty one. Then, instruction comes from God, as to that which must be done to cause the

pestilence judicially and definitively to cease, namely, the sacrifice in Ornan's threshing-floor. God accepts the sacrifice, sending fire to consume it, and then He commands the angel to sheathe his sword. And sovereign grace, thus carried out in righteousness through sacrifice, becomes the means of Israel's approach to their God, and establishes the place of their access to Him. The tabernacle, a testimony to the conditions under which the people had failed, offered, as we have seen, no resource in such a case. On the contrary, it occasioned fear. He was afraid to go to Gibeon. Nothing would do but the definitive intervention of God according to His own grace (the circumstance of the sin, on the king's own part, leaving no room for any other means). The whole system and principle of the tabernacle as a legal institution is set aside, and the worship of Israel founded on grace, by sacrifice coming in where all, even the king as responsible, had failed. Such was Israel's position for him who understood it.

Note #2

And even historically quite opposed; for it is the king's own sin that has brought chastisement on the people. Christ, however, made the sin His own. Nevertheless, this shews us how everything depended now on the throne. It is not the priest who brings in the remedy. David intercedes and David offers. The fact that the king, in whom the promises were, had sinned, made sovereign grace necessary.

Note #3

This difference between Israel's deliverance from their enemies, and the sense of their own sin before God, in the last day, is found in the psalms of degrees: see Psalm 130.

Note #4

Observe too here, how sin gives occasion to the bringing out of the counsels of God, though the responsibility was also met in what did so. So the cross. Compare Tit 1:2-3, and Ti2 1:9-10; Ephesians 3; Colossians 1.

1 Chronicles Chapter 22

The following commentary covers Chapters 22 through 27.

From this chapter to Verses 28, 29 of chapter 26 all refers to the house which is to be built. We see the provision that David made of everything necessary for its construction, the order of the Levites' service who were appointed for song, of those among them who were porters, of the priests in their classes, all being ordered and arranged by David. How entirely all was dependent on the king is especially shewn in this that, without any distinctive break, the other royal appointments of his house, his administration, his officers and guard, are then continuously introduced; finally, the chief among the people, the number of whom is mentioned. As to the numbering of the people, it had not been finished because of the wrath of God. The thing of interest here is, that all is ordered and arranged by David, even for the doors of the house which was not yet built. Thus, in Christ, all is appointed before it is manifested in glory. We see too that David had it always at heart, and what immense preparations he had made. For whatever the warfare may be, the glory of God in peace among His people is always in the heart which is in unison with the Spirit of Christ, in the heart of Christ Himself.

1 Chronicles Chapter 28

It is David who places Solomon on the throne, who commands the princes to aid him, and who appoints prophecy in inspired psalms [See Note #1]. He ordains the age at which the Levites' service should commence—a different age from that ordained by Moses [See Note #2]. It is the whole order of the house of God and of the king, which is appointed under his hand; a new system which is established, founded upon grace as its principle.

Solomon only puts in execution the order and plans of divine wisdom in David. Glory is but the fruit of grace. It is the Christ who has suffered, who is the wisdom and the power of God, unto whom all the order of the house belongs. All the rest is glorious, but it is only a result. Only we have already seen that it is in peace, and by Christ, as Prince of peace, that this house must be built. It did not become the habitual manifestation of the glory of God, that there should be enemies to combat; neither was it suitable to the character of His people's joy. The character of such a state of things should be that of blessing -flowing without obstacle from God.

It is very important to observe how everything here is ruled by David. It is important, in the first place, morally. The intelligence, the right of ordering all things, the energy which grasps the whole thought of God, the fellowship with Him in His counsels, the germ and moral foundation of all these counsels, as well as the power of maintaining them, are connected with the sufferings which Christ underwent for the glory of His Father. This is true of us also in our measure. It is the humbled suffering Christ, who is morally on a level with all this glory. It is important, in the second place, as to intelligence in the ways of God; for I doubt not that Christ, at the commencement of His reign, will act in the character of David. We may also remark here, that the extent of authority which David exercised was very great and of wide bearing. The whole religious order was reconstructed. Everything, even to the age of the Levites' service, depends on the authority and regulations of David, as formerly on those of Moses. All the pattern of the temple, and of its vessels, is given him by inspiration, as that of the tabernacle, and all belonging to it had been given to Moses. He also introduced singing, and divers musical instruments, which are even called "the musical instruments of God," and which, as well as the singing, had previously formed no part of the public service. With the exception of the ark, even the various vessels were different from those of the tabernacle; and for each thing the precise weight in gold or in silver was determined by David.

Note #1

Heman himself, apparently, was inspired also. Several psalms are ascribed to him, as well as to Asaph.

Note #2

At any rate the probably probationary period of four years is not mentioned. David ordains the age by his own authority.

1 Chronicles Chapter 29

God would also associate the people with David in this willing service of the day of His power; and, even as they had been associated with him in his wars and conflicts, there are those who shall be so likewise in the liberality which he manifests towards the house of his God. They are at a great distance

from him, it is true: it is, so to say, a superfluous thing. They have nothing to do with the wisdom that arranges and prepares, but they are allowed to share in the work. This favour is granted them, and their goodwill is acceptable to God, and it is also the fruit of His grace.

David here (Ch1 29:18) again acknowledges God according to the promises made unto the fathers, and according to the memorial of God for ever; "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers"; he seeks that which will be accomplished under the new covenant, and directs the thanksgivings of the whole assembly. Sacrifices of righteousness are offered, and they eat before Jehovah with great gladness.

Solomon is made king the second time (see Ch1 23:1). The first time was when grace was fully established in the altar built on the threshing-floor of Ornan, where the son of David, as the prince of peace, was to build the temple. Solomon is introduced as the head of all that was being established, and as holding the first and supreme place in the mind of God-the one on whom all the rest depended, which could not even exist now without him. The house, the whole order of the house, and its government, all referred to Solomon; and thus his identification with David, in that both were on the throne at the same time, makes it much easier to understand the type of Christ in this. It is one person, whom His sufferings and victories place on the throne of glory and of peace. For at this moment, although the result of the glory was not yet manifested, God had given rest unto His people, that they might dwell at Jerusalem (Ch1 23:25).

David now disappears, although it is he who puts Solomon in this position. That which we see, as filling the whole scene of royal glory, is Solomon himself reigning in peace over a willing people, who can offer these sacrifices of righteousness. The son of David is seen in his own true character, and in this character alone, namely, that of Jehovah's anointed, the governor of the people; and Zadok, the faithful priest (not Abiathar), walks before the anointed one (all the counsel of God, according to Hannah's song, and the words of the man of God in 1 Samuel 2 being thus fulfilled). "And Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah"-a remarkable expression: everything is subject to him.

The attentive reader cannot fail to observe the prominent place given to the counsels of God respecting Christ the Lord, and the contrast there is between this and the history of Adonijah in Kings-a history which, by the contrast it presents with the narrative in Chronicles, so fully proves that the thought and intention of the Spirit of God in this Book was to give us in type the expression of God's purposes with regard to the true Son of David, and the position He is to occupy, and to shew what will be the character in those days of the throne at Jerusalem, when Christ shall be seated upon it. It will be the throne of Jehovah, and the royal majesty in Israel shall be such as has never yet been known. With reference to this the Book of Chronicles is full of instruction.

2 CHRONICLES

Introduction to 2 Chronicles

This Second Book of Chronicles unfolds the reign of the son of David and of the family of David. It does not commence with the faith of David at the ark, but with the tabernacle that Moses, the servant of Jehovah had set up, and the brazen altar, at which the king and the congregation worshipped. The kingly power is realised in connection with Israel, the people of God whom Moses brought out of Egypt. [See Note #1] It is the means by which the purposes of God with respect to them are accomplished; it is not yet assuredly a new covenant by a new power, but the object of blessing is Israel. If it is Boaz and Ruth who raise up the family, it is to Naomi that a son is born, that is, through sovereign grace, by a redeemer "in whom is strength": [See Note #2] one who had no title (and Israel had no more any) is introduced into the enjoyment of the promises. Israel, long known as the "pleasant one" [See Note #3] of God, is the people which receives into its bosom the son that is born. To us, they say, a son is born (Isa 9:7). At the altar which was before Jehovah in the tabernacle of the congregation Solomon recognises his position. He is to judge the people of God. Hereafter all this shall take place in power.

This book presents us also with kingly power in connection with the earth and the government of the people on the earth. Glory and riches are added to that which Solomon requests. Neither enemies nor the energy of faith is in question. The king's position is the result of the victory which that faith had obtained. He reigns, and is established in glory and in riches. He begins to build the house. Hiram acknowledges Jehovah as the Creator of heaven and earth, and the strangers who dwell in Israel are the king's servants to do his work. In the temple the cherubim have their faces towards the house, that is, outwards. [See Note #4] The attributes of God do not now look only at the covenant to maintain it in spite of everything, but they also look outwards in order to bless. It is the time of the millennium; but the veil is here found again in the temple. Whatever may be the blessing of the true

Solomon's reign, Israel and the earth have not immediate and direct access to Him who is hidden in the heavens. That is our portion, even to enter boldly now through the veil, and to find no veil in heaven: blessed be God! There is no temple there. Jehovah God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. The stability of a divine government is granted to the earth, [See Note #5] and the blessing of a God whose face is turned towards it; but those who are blessed do not behold that face, do not draw nigh unto it. There is also an altar adapted for worship in a time of such blessing. The altar and the veil are not mentioned in the Book of Kings, where the structure of the temple is the figure of things not seen, and where, as a whole, it is presented to us as the dwelling-place and manifestation of God. We are told of a golden door, opening with two leaves, before the oracle, and nothing is said about the altar.

In Chronicles the order is arranged also according to the state of things which this book sets before us, that is to say, according to the state of Christ's glorious kingdom. There is a court for the priests, and the large outer court with doors. All was arranged (Ch2 4:9) for the relationship of which we speak.

So also, as to the manifestation of the glory, nothing is said in the Book of Kings of the public acceptance of the sacrifice; but it is simply stated that when the ark had been carried into the holy place, and the priests were gone out, and the staves of the ark had been drawn out, so that the dwelling of Jehovah was definitively established there, the glory of Jehovah filled the house. It is God's habitation, a figure of the heavenly dwelling-place which awaits us, our Father's house. On the other hand, that which is set before us in the Book of Chronicles is God's connection with His people Israel in the last days, prefigured by that which happened to Solomon. It was when the trumpeters and singers lifted up their voices with one accord to praise Jehovah, saying "His mercy endureth for ever," that the house was filled with a cloud. As we have seen, when all shall be accomplished for Israel, these words will celebrate the untiring mercy of which Israel's blessing will be the proof in that day. It is the deliverance and blessing of that people which demonstrate the truth of those words.

Note #1:

But the connection is not with the ark in Zion He goes, historically, where the people are.

Note #2:

Such is the meaning of the name of Boaz.

Note #3:

Naomi means "my pleasant one."

Note #4:

the Authorised Version it is inwards. It is literally towards the house, which, generally, would mean inwards; but, as the cherubim were at the very bottom of the house, looking towards the house was really outwards.

Note #5:

This stability consists, apparently, in two things God shall establish it, and then in Him is strength. These are the two sources of the stability of Christ's kingdom. This is the meaning of the words Jachin and Boaz, the names of the pillars before the temple.

We have seen that there was a second part of grace, the acceptance of Israel as worshippers after their sin not only the ark on Mount Zion, but the sacrifice and pardon and consequent worship of Mount Moriah, the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

2 Chronicles Chapter 1

2 Chronicles 1:1

ch2 1:1

The following commentary covers Chapters 1 through 7.

Thus Solomon having prayed, and entreated Jehovah that His eyes should be open, and His ears attent to the prayers that should be offered to Him in that place (quoting David's petition in Psalm 132, and using His mercies to David as a plea), the fire comes down and consumes the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Jehovah fills the house. And now, it is not

only that the priests cannot enter, but the children of Israel behold the glory which rests upon the house; they fall upon their faces and worship. It is the public acceptance of the sacrifice which sets the people in public connection with God, and makes them confess that "Jehovah is good, and that his mercy endureth for ever" (compare Lev 9:24). Only in this last passage the acknowledgment of God's unwearied mercy was not the point.

There is also another element in the scene we are considering, and that is the public and joyful assembly of the whole people, the feast of tabernacles, the great congregation (Psa 22:25), and also the dedication of the altar. These are the two things which mark Israel's participation in the blessing, namely, the altar, and the feast of tabernacles; worship subsequent to their fall and ruin, founded on the acceptance of the sacrifice, and the realised effect of the promises, the people being no longer in distress.[See Note #1]

We find again here the musical instruments of Jehovah, which David had made to praise Jehovah, "because his mercy endureth for ever"; when David himself "praised by their ministry" (Ch2 7:6); blessed thought! for who is this David? (compare Psa 22:22). The people saw themselves blessed and happy in all the goodness of Jehovah. After this the Lord sets before Solomon the conditions under which He places him, as well as the people, for the enjoyment, or for the recovery of these blessings. He had chosen this house of prayer. If there was chastening and the people humbled themselves, there was respite: the eyes and the heart of Jehovah should be there perpetually.

Then, with respect to Solomon and the seed of David generally, on their faithfulness the blessing of the whole people was to depend. If the house of David should turn away from God, Israel should be rooted out of the land; and the house, which had been sanctified by the worship of Jehovah, should become a by-word among all nations, and a witness to the just judgment of God.

Note #1

It does not appear however that they made booths with the branches of trees. Since Joshua, this had not been done until the days of Nehemiah. At

the time which we are considering, joy and prosperity had made them a little neglectful of the word.

2 Chronicles Chapter 8

CHAPTER 8 gives us a few more details of the state of Israel a state which prefigures that of the last days. Solomon brings everything into subjection that could have hindered the full enjoyment of the promised land in its whole extent, whether on the side of Tyre or of Syria. The strangers in the land continue to pay tribute, and the children of Israel are captains and men of war. Zion is entirely sanctified, and the worship of Jehovah maintained and honored by the king. The service of the house of God, the praises, and the whole order connected therewith, were appointed according to the ordinances of David. The king's commandment was the absolute rule for everything. Edom itself was his possession; and, as far as the Red Sea, all were the king's subjects. The king of Tyre, who represents the Gentile glory of the world, supplied all that he needed to accomplish his designs.

2 Chronicles Chapter 9

But it is not only within the borders of the land that the power and glory of Solomon are known. His fame spreads among the heathen, even to distant lands; and the queen of Sheba comes to bring him her tribute of admiration, and the precious things of the Gentiles, who thus contribute to the splendor and glory of the place chosen by God, whose light had come, and upon which the glory of Jehovah had risen (in type doubtless for the moment, but according to the principle of grace, and by the power that will fully accomplish it, according to the counsels of God). It is a glory, the report of which attracts the nations, but which, when seen, surpasses all that could be said of it; and which one must be near to appreciate. It is a glory that excels all that the world has seen, a wisdom never equalled; a wisdom that attracted all the kings of the earth, who, each year, brought their offerings and their gifts to the king who sat upon the throne of Jehovah on earth.

Thus, ruling even to the farthest limits of the promised land, he causes all Israel to enjoy the abundance and the blessing, which God poured out upon His people.

But soon the picture changes.

2 Chronicles Chapter 10

The following commentary covers Chapters 10, 11, and 12.

Solomon's faults are not related here for reasons which we have already pointed out; but the history of Rehoboam shows us the immediate fall of the kingly power which God had established. The king's folly occasioned it, but it was only the fulfilment of the Lord's word by Ahijah.

The war which Rehoboam began against the revolted tribes was prevented. Rehoboam submits to the man of God's prohibition. He is blessed and fortifies himself in Judah. The Levites repair to Jerusalem as well as a great number of the faithful, who would not forsake the true worship of Jehovah to bow down before golden calves, to which His name had been attached. Thus Judah was strengthened; for, during three years, the king walked in the ways of David and Solomon. But soon he forsook the law of Jehovah, and, secure against revolted Israel, he is chastised by unexpected enemies, and all the riches amassed by Solomon fall into their hands. Nevertheless he humbled himself, and the wrath of Jehovah was turned from him.

In the history which we are about to consider we shall find the ways of God more immediate and direct with those who were in direct and avowed relationship with Him, according to His grace towards David, and in connection with the house that had been dedicated to His name. When their kings were faithful, all went on well.

2 Chronicles Chapter 13

The following commentary covers Chapters 13 through 16.

In his wars with Jeroboam, Abijah stands entirely upon this ground, and he is blessed.

Asa follows his steps; and, whether at peace, or while at war with the Ethiopians, Israel prospers in his reign. He takes away the strange gods; for we continually find them again. Energy is required to cast them out and prevent their return. Even the king's mother is deprived of her royal

position, on account of her idolatry. Nevertheless "the high places were not taken away."

But, although Asa's faithfulness continued, his trust in God failed afterwards. Jealous of the Israelites resorting to Judah, Baasha builds a city to prevent it; and Asa, instead of looking to the Lord, allies himself with Syriaan alliance which produced the desired effect, but which stirred up Gentiles against Israel. And this was not all; alliance with the world prevents our overcoming the world. Had he not done this, the Syrians would have fallen into the hands of Asa; for "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him." Solemn and precious word! Wounded in his self-love, and irritated at having thus missed so good an opportunity, Asa puts the seer who gave this testimony in prison; and he oppresses the people. He is chastened of God, and alas! he does not seek God in the chastening. Nevertheless, except in this instance, Asa continued faithful and was honored.

2 Chronicles Chapter 17

The following commentary covers Chapters 17 through 20.

Jehoshaphat, his son succeeds him, and begins his reign by walking faithfully with God. He strengthened his kingdom against Israel, an enemy more dangerous by their example than by their strength. When anything pretends to be in connection with God and to acknowledge Him, there is no safety except in judging it with a spiritual judgment which can only be formed through a just sense of God's honor-making no terms with that which pretends to be connected with Him, and treating it as an enemy. This is what Jehoshaphat did at first; and, as he did not walk in the ways of Israel, Jehovah established the kingdom in his hand. Blessed of Jehovah, he takes away the high places and the groves, and seeks with much faithfulness and zeal to instruct the people in the true knowledge of the Lord; Jehovah preserves him from war, and some of the nations even become tributary to him on account of his power.

In many respects this is a more beautiful picture than anything we have yet read in the history of the kings. But this prosperity becomes a snare to him;

and it bore most bitter fruits when his real piety was not present as a counterpoise.

The prosperity with which God had blessed him in consequence of his faithfulness made it worth while to seek alliance with him, and rendered it more difficult to attack him. Thus at ease, Jehoshaphat on his part joins affinity with Israel. His prosperity put him in a condition to do so in a manner which made the alliance honorable. The human heart, when it is not kept by God, can act generously with respect to the evil which it fears not; but this is not charity. Outwardly Jehoshaphat is faithful to Jehovah, but the wrath of Jehovah is upon him.

Nevertheless, when he had returned to his house, the king sets himself to bring back the people to the fear of Jehovah, and to cause judgment and righteousness to be executed in Israel. But war begins. He could no longer have the unmingled blessing of having to do with God alone without trial. The intervention of the enemy was now needful for his good, according to God's government, although in the trial through which he passes he may have full blessing. His piety was genuine; the trial proves it. He appeals to the relationship of God with Abraham and to His promises to Solomon, when the latter had built the house. Jehoshaphat understood also the relation in which the enemy stood to Israel, looked at in connection with God's dealings (Ch2 20:10-11). God answers him, and the king encourages the people by acknowledging the voice of the prophets, and by singing the praises of God before the blessing came singing in faith that His mercy endureth for ever. God abundantly granted his prayer. Israel, whose enemies had slain each other, had only to carry away the spoil; and God gave rest to the king, and his realm was quiet.

Still, if Jehoshaphat no longer united himself with the king of Israel to make war, he joined him in a matter of commerce. But God put a stop to his undertakings.

In spite of some faults the character of Jehoshaphat is a fine one, and refreshes the heart. But soon the sorrowful fruits of his league with Ahab ripen and bring Judah into distress. Jehoram, his son, Ahab's son-in-law, walks in the ways of the kings of Israel. The Edomites revolt, and Libnah, a

city of Judah, does the same. The king makes high places, and compels Judah to worship at them. The judgment of God is soon manifested. He whom God has raised up as a witness against the sins of the house of Ahab has foreseen their fruits in Judah; and a writing of Elijah's is brought to the king, [See Note #1] threatening him with the terrible judgments of God. Judah also is attacked by their enemies, who pillage the land, laying waste even the king's house, and slaying all his sons excepting one. This was of Jehovah. It is His government which we see here; for He rules over those who are in covenant with Him, those who are His house.

Note #1

Elijah had been taken up to heaven some time before the writing reached its destination. Being a prophecy, there is nothing which makes any difficulty in believing that this writing, like any other prophecy, was left by Elijah to be used at the suitable time. It was a function which, according to the ways of God, naturally belonged to him as a witness against the iniquity of Ahab.

2 Chronicles Chapter 21

The following commentary covers Chapters 21 through 26.

Finally, the king perishes, according to Elijah's prediction. Disaster upon disaster falls upon Judah in consequence of this connection with the house of Ahab. To connect oneself with that which claims to be of God, according to His religion, but which is not so, is intolerable to God. The only son that remained to Jehoram is slain by Jehu, as participating in the iniquity of Ahab's family; and Athaliah, who belonged to this family, takes possession of the throne, destroying all the seed royal, except one child that God in His grace took care of, who would not have the lamp of David put out at Jerusalem, although He chastened his family. The sister of Ahaziah, wife to the high priest, preserves the child, who is concealed in the house of God for six years.

Everything was in a very low state; and, to outward appearance, all was over with the house of David; but the faithfulness of God did not fail. And, although the power of the throne is absolutely destroyed, and the family of David set aside, God raises up a man of faith, in the person of the high priest,

to restore the whole. The chastisement of God was complete. The entire order of the throne was subverted by His judgment. Nothing was left but the faithfulness of God. Man was judged. He had no longer any means of recovery. But all things are at God's disposal, the heart of Jehoshaphat and the faith of Jehoiada. The latter takes the needful steps, and the king is set upon his throne; and, after all, the same thing which we have seen before again takes place: the king appoints everything concerning the re-establishment of the order in the house of God.

How often the energy of faith may, so to say, establish a kingdom, yet fail at the same time in maintaining the ordinary duty of those who have to do with the service of God! Faithful at the commencement of his reign, Joash walks nevertheless more by Jehoiada's faith than by his own; and, after the death of the high priest, he leans on the princes of Judah, and serves idols, and even puts to death the son of Jehoiada, by whom the Holy Ghost had testified against him. Joash, forsaken of God, is defeated by the Syrians. He falls into many diseases, and is at length slain by his own servants.

In this whole history we must observe that the immediate government of a God of judgment is in exercise, because those whom He judges were in close connection with Himself.

Amaziah, up to a certain point, walks with God, but in weakness and with an unsteady step. He leans upon an arm of flesh: but he hearkens to the prophet, and this saves him from being defeated. The cities of Judah, however, suffer the consequences of his false step, and are plundered by the army of Israel, which Amaziah had sent back. Lifted up by the victory that he had obtained over Edom, he takes the gods of Seir which could not deliver their own people, and bows himself down before them. He then turns a deaf ear to the prophet who rebukes him. But pride goes before confusion, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Amaziah, making war against Israel, is ignominiously defeated and made prisoner, and Jerusalem itself is laid waste.

We should remark in this part of the history the goodness of the Lord, who continually interposes by means of prophets.

Uzziah, the son of Amaziah, walks for a long time with Jehovah and prospers. The strength of Judah is increased, and all the king's undertakings are successful. "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up"; he takes upon himself the priestly function, and is smitten with leprosy by the hand of God.

We enter now on a period in which Isaiah throws much light on the state of the people. This state was partly exhibited before, in the reign of Joash, who, as soon as he hearkens to the princes, falls into idolatry. But in reading the first two chapters of Isaiah, or the prophecy of Hosea, we shall see the terrible condition of the people, the greatness of God's patience, and the manner in which iniquity and idolatry multiplied on every side, when the king was not faithful and energetic. [See Note #1]

Note #1

We find consequently, that Isaiah, after exposing the evil and the consequent judgment, immediately introduces the promises of latter-day blessing and of the Messiah. In the first chapters he sets forth the state of the people, as well as the blessing of the last days. The house of David is not judged till chapter 7, and it is there that the Messiah, the Son of the virgin, is brought in as the resource, and the means of deliverance and grace according to the counsels of God. The rest of this prophet's writings gives us the whole history of the people, according to the thoughts of God, and that of the nations, in connection with Israel, until the accomplishment, at the end of the age, of full blessing in Christ, with the judgment of Israel's sin in respect of Jehovah (Isaiah 40-48), and in respect of Christ (Isaiah 49-57).

2 Chronicles Chapter 27

The following commentary covers Chapters 27 through 31.

Jotham, the son of Uzziah, walks uprightly; and he avoids his father's fault; but the people are still corrupt. Nevertheless the faithfulness of Jotham procures him blessing and prosperity. For it is always the state of the king which is the object of God's judgment. As we have seen, the people as such had failed long before.

The reign of Ahaz forms an epoch. Entirely forsaking Jehovah, he gives himself up wholly to idolatry; and, the more he is smitten of God, the more he sins against Him. He is delivered into the hands of the Syrians, and into the hand of Pekah, the king of Israel. In the latter case, however, God interposes for the rescue at least of the captives. The Edomites, and afterwards the Philistines, invade Judah. All this distress induces Ahaz to seek help from the king of Assyria, who only brought him into still greater trouble (compare Isa 7:17; see also Hos 5:13-15).

If piety is not transmitted from father to son, grace can work in the heart and direct the steps of one who had the most wicked father. This was the case with the son of Ahaz. The way in which Hezekiah sought the glory of his God shows remarkable faith and energy. In the better days of the kingdom, true piety and the work of righteousness were manifested in Jehoshaphat; great energy of faith is now displayed in Hezekiah; and we shall find in Josiah profound reverence for the scriptures, for the book of the law.

I recall here the great principle, the effects of which the reader has to remark in the book which occupies us, namely, the government of God, which visited every act with its immediate consequences, a government which always had reference to the king's conduct. But, in spite of some awakenings and some restorations wrought by grace, the people having entirely corrupted themselves, the kingly power which alone recalled them to their duties came short of the glory of God; and at length, the oath made in Jehovah's name being broken, the measure of sin was filled up, and the judgment of Israel, and the times of the Gentiles commenced.

Hezekiah acknowledges the sinful state of Israel, and he invites the people to cleanse themselves. A true worship, affecting in its character, is re-established (Ch2 29:25-29), and the service of Jehovah's house is set in order.

But Hezekiah's zeal embraces all Israel, and he sends letters which, although the greater part laughed them to scorn, brought up many serious souls to the worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem. If everything is not re-established as a whole, yet, wherever faith is in action and a sincere heart seeks to glorify God, there is always cause for the faithful to rejoice in the dealings of God.

God pardoned their failure in the purification necessary for participation in the service of the sanctuary; the prayer for blessing came up to His holy dwelling-place and was granted.

Strengthened by this communion with Jehovah, all Israel that had been present went out and destroyed the groves and the images, not only in Judah, but also in Ephraim and Manasseh. The state of disorder in Israel gave an opportunity on God's part for the exercise of faithfulness and the manifestation of devotedness in His people. Abundance and blessing are found in Judah, and Jehovah's house is filled with proofs of His goodness brought in by grateful hearts according to the ordinances of the law; and even in the cities of the priests all is set in order according to the law, and everything prospers. [See Note #1]

Note #1

Observe here that, when God blesses and there is faithfulness, the instruments whom He employs in His service partake of the glory that is connected with the blessing. Their names are inscribed in the record of God's dealings.

2 Chronicles Chapter 32

God fully answered the king's faith; but the iniquity of the people's heart was little changed, and the ways of God in judgment began to be manifested; and in such a manner as to make it evident that, in the midst of His judgments, and at the height of the enemy's power, the faithful seed of David should be the infallible resource of His people. This is the lesson of chapter 32. This man is the peace of the people when the Assyrian enters the land. See, in Isaiah 8, the Assyrian's entrance into the land already called the land of Immanuel through the prophetic revelation of the birth of the virgin's Son revelation addressed to the unfaithful king, to Ahaz; see also, in the same chapter, the revelation of the terrible distress of the people, the law being sealed and entrusted to the remnant who would follow Christ as a prophet, until the people confess that a Son was born unto them. See also, in chapter 22 of the same prophet, the Spirit's judgment as to the moral condition of the people, on the occasion of those events which are recorded in 2 Chronicles 32. Hezekiah himself did not render again to Jehovah

according to the benefit done unto him; but his heart was lifted up. Nevertheless, as he humbled himself, he was allowed to see the peace of Jerusalem all the days of his life.

2 Chronicles Chapter 33

The following commentary covers Chapters 33 through 36.

Manasseh, his son, who gave himself up to iniquity in spite of the warnings of the prophets, brought desolation and ruin upon himself and afterwards upon Israel. Guilty of sins which God could not forget, his personal repentance in his captivity procured him personal restoration and peace through the mercy of God; and after his return to Jerusalem he acted faithfully and was jealous for the glory of God; for the time of Judah's judgment was not yet come. His son Amon followed him in his iniquity, but not in his repentance, and he dies by the hand of his own servants. We find in Josiah a tender heart, subject to the word, and a conscience that respected the mind and will of God: only at last he had too much confidence in the effect of this to secure blessing from God, without the possession of that faith which gives intelligence in His ways to understand the position of God's people. God however makes use of this confidence to take Josiah away from the evil He was preparing in the judgments which were to fall upon Judah, the knowledge of which should have made Josiah walk more humbly. At the age of sixteen he began by the grace of God to seek Jehovah; and at twenty he had acquired the moral strength necessary for acting with energy against idolatry, which he destroyed even unto Naphtali. We see here how sovereign grace came in; for both Hezekiah and Josiah were the sons of extremely wicked fathers.

Having cleansed the land from idolatry, Josiah begins to repair the temple; and there the book of the law was found. The king's conscience, and his heart also, are bowed under the authority of the word of his God. He seeks for the prophetic testimony of God with respect to the state in which he sees Israel to be, and God makes known to him by Huldah the judgment about to fall upon Israel; but tells him at the same time that his eyes shall not see the evil. It was this communication which should have made him act with less precipitation, and with a more exercised heart than he manifested

when he went up against the king of Egypt. The knowledge that their well-deserved judgment was soon to overwhelm Israel, and that there was no remedy for their sins (although Josiah himself was spared), ought to have prevented his going up against Pharaoh, when the latter did not attack him, and even warned him to forbear; but he would not hearken, and was lost through a hardihood which was not of God.

His death opened the sluices to the affliction of Judah and Jerusalem, which had been blessed through his means; for they had followed Jehovah all the days of Josiah, and had therefore been blessed; they had also mourned for his death. Jeremiah (that is to say, the Spirit of God by the prophet), in lamenting over the last king who would maintain the relations of God with His people, wept for the ruin and desolation which sin would bring upon the flock which Jehovah loved the vineyard that He had planted with the choicest vine.

However faithful Josiah had been, this had not changed the heart of the people (compare Jer 3:10). Josiah's faith was in action, and overruled this state of things; and, as we have constantly seen, blessing depended on the conduct of the king, although the undercurrent was always tending to the ruin and rejection of the people.

It remains for us to notice the passover. Everything is set in order according to the ordinances of Moses and David, and that in a remarkable manner. It appears that even the ark had been removed from its place (Ch2 35:3); but now, the ark being restored to its rest, the Levites occupy themselves diligently with their service, and even make ready for the priests, that they might keep the feast. They were all in their places according to the blessing of Israel in the rest they enjoyed under Solomon. Those who taught all Israel no longer bore the ark, but they ministered to God and to His people. The singers were there also, according to their order, so that there had not been such a passover since the days of Samuel. It was like the last glimmering of the lamp which God had lighted among His people in the house of David. It was soon extinguished in the darkness of the nation which knew not God, and those who had been His people came under the judgment expressed by the word Lo-ammi (Not-my-people); but this was only to give occasion afterwards to the manifestation of His infinite grace towards the one, and

His unchangeable faithfulness to the others. Ezekiel dates his prophecy from the year of this passover, when he says "the thirtieth year." Why so, I cannot tell. Was it the year of the jubilee? or did the passover itself form an epoch?

Little need be said of the succeeding reigns. The king of Egypt took possession of the land, and the iniquity of Jehoiakim, whom he made king in Jerusalem, was far from leading to restoration on God's part. One more powerful than the king of Egypt, a king by whom God would commence the dominion of the Gentiles, comes up against Jerusalem, and binds Jehoiakim in fetters, yet leaves him after all to end his reign and his life at Jerusalem. Three years after he carried away his son to Babylon.

Zedekiah, whom this king had made to swear by Jehovah thus acknowledging the authority of that Name over his conscience, more sinful in this respect than Nebuchadnezzar, despises his oath and the name of Jehovah; and, after an interval of fruitless resistance, in which he perseveres in spite of Jeremiah's testimony, he falls into the hands of the king of Babylon, who utterly destroys the city and the sanctuary. For both people and priests were thoroughly corrupted; they dishonored Jehovah, and despised His prophets, till there was no remedy, and the land enjoyed her sabbaths.

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

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." But in His judgments God remembers mercy; and in the counsels of His grace He had already prepared, and even proclaimed by His prophets (and that by name), an instrument to give His people some respite.

After the seventy years which Jeremiah had announced as the period of Judah's captivity, Jehovah put it into the heart of Cyrus to proclaim publicly that it was Jehovah the God of heaven, who had given him all the kingdoms of the earth, and that He had charged him to build Him a house at Jerusalem. He invites the people of God to go thither, assuring them that Jehovah their God will be with them.

Thus it is by mercy, but by a mercy which recognises that power has passed into the hands of the Gentiles that the history of Israel's downfall concludes; the downfall of a people placed in the most favorable circumstances, so that God could say to them, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" of a people that had already been pardoned once; and who, after having allowed the ark of Jehovah to fall into the enemy's hands, and after God had forsaken Shiloh, habitation, had been re-established in blessing, but re-established in vain. The long-suffering of God, the restoration He had granted them, the establishment of the house of David in grace, all was fruitless. The vineyard (for they were men) brought forth wild grapes. Its walls were broken down; it had been laid waste. Jerusalem had ceased for the present to be the throne of Jehovah, and government and power in the earth have been entrusted to the Gentiles.

EZRA

Introduction to Ezra

The events which we have been considering, at the close of Kings and Chronicles, were deeply significant. The throne of God was no longer at Jerusalem. God had fulfilled His threat of casting off the city which He had chosen. He had bestowed the throne of the earth upon the Gentiles (Dan 2:37). Not only had Israel failed under the old covenant, and rejected God (Sa1 8:7), so that God was no longer their king; but even after grace had raised up the house of David to sustain the relations of the people with God, under the rule of that house everything was entirely corrupted by sin; so that there was no more remedy, and God had written Loammi (not my people), as it were, on the forehead of a people who had forsaken Him. The counsels of God cannot fail; but such was the sad state in which the relationship between this people and God stood, if it can be said that a judgment like this allowed any relationship still to exist. So far as it depended on Israel, on man, all was lost. The consequences of this, with respect to God's dealings, were of great importance; they were nothing less than His taking His throne from the earth, casting off His people for the time as to His earthly government, and transferring power to the Gentiles. Man, in probation under the law, had failed, and he was condemned. He had been sustained in the way of grace through means which God had granted, in the family of David, for his continuance in the enjoyment of the blessings granted him, and he had failed again. Kingly power was in the hands of the Gentiles, and the people were under condemnation according to the old covenant.

Ezra Chapter 1

Ezra 1:1

eZR 1:1

But God now brings back a little remnant, that the true King might be presented to them, and causes the temple to be rebuilt in its place,

according to the promises given by the mouth of Jeremiah, and at the request of His servant Daniel. The latter, indeed, still at Babylon, had a deeper sense of the real condition of the people, than they had who were rebuilding the temple, and received also much more extensive information as to the future destiny of Israel and the intentions of God respecting it. But a due appreciation of this return from captivity also is not without importance, since it is evident that the understanding of God's dealings with respect to the restoration of Israel, and the coming amongst them upon earth of Messiah Himself is connected with this event. It was the will of God that there should be some respite. The current of His purposes, however, concerning the times of the Gentiles, and the position of His people, was unaltered. They were still in subjection to the Gentiles. [See Note #1]

It is Cyrus, king of Persia, who commands the people to return to Jerusalem, and to rebuild the temple. A type himself in some respects, of a far more glorious deliverer, he confesses Jehovah, the God of Israel, to be the true God. He is "the righteous man, raised up from the east, who treads down the princes like mortar." Called of Jehovah by name for this purpose, he favours Israel and honours Jehovah. Distinguished and blessed by the favour of the mighty God, a man whose conduct was certainly under the guidance of God, his personal character did not interfere with its being the times of the Gentiles, notwithstanding that God had put it into the heart of one of these Gentiles to favour His people. The word of God, by Jeremiah, is fulfilled. Babylon is judged, a characteristic event of all importance. But, in fact, that which still exists is a prolongation of its power. The seat of the royal authority which God bestows on man is a city which is not the city of God, which is neither the earthly Jerusalem nor the heavenly. The house of David no longer holds the sceptre entrusted to it.

It is true that the rod of the tribe of Judah is preserved, in order that "the Branch" of the root of Jesse may be presented to this tribe. But the power of the Gentiles still continues; it existed even when the Messiah was on the earth, and the Jews had to be commanded to render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's. The presentation of Jesus, the true Messiah, was but the occasion of fully demonstrating this in the cry, "We have no king but Caesar."

Note #1

The coming of Christ did not change this. The restoration of the remnant gave occasion to the presentation of Christ to the people according to the promises; but His rejection left their house desolate to see Him no more till their repentance in the last days. Meanwhile, during His lifetime on earth, not only have we, in Luke, the epoch divinely dated by the reigns of Gentile rulers, but, pressed on the point, the Lord refers to their position and baffles their hypocrisy, which would have profited by what was the fruit and wages of their own sin to put Him in an inextricable difficulty, by telling them to give to Caesar what was Caesar's, and to God what was God's. Meanwhile deeper and more blessed counsels were accomplished.

Ezra Chapter 2

Nevertheless, God still gives the people-guilty under the law-an opportunity for the exercise of faith. Let us examine the principles that characterise the energy of the Holy Ghost in the people at the time of their return. The first thing to be observed is that, having felt what it was to have to do with the Gentiles, and having experienced the power and wickedness of those whose help they had formerly sought (the unclean spirit was, in this respect, gone out of them), the children of the captivity resolve that Israel shall be an unmingled Israel, and proved to be so. They are most careful in verifying the genealogies of the people, and of the priests, in order that none but Israel should be engaged in the work. Formerly one priest succeeded another without previous examination; genealogy was not verified, and children came into their father's place in the enjoyment of the privileges which God had granted them. But Israel now, through the great grace of God, had to recover their position. This was neither the beginning of their history, nor the power suited to the beginning; it was a return, and the disorder that sin had brought in was not henceforth to be endured. They were escaping from the fruits of it, at least in part. What had any but Israel to do there? To mark out the family of God was now the essential thing. Deliverance from Babylon was their deliverance. It was this family, or a small remnant of it, which God had brought, or was bringing, out from thence. Thus, even amongst those who had come back to Judea, whoever could not produce his genealogy was set aside; and every priest with whom this was the case was put away

from the priesthood as polluted, whatever, as it appears, might be the reality of his qualification. Divine discernment might, perhaps, recognise them and their rights another day; but the people who had returned from captivity could not do so. They were a numbered and recognised people. They dwelt each in his own city. It was weakness, no priest with Urim and Thummim, but it was faithfulness.

Ezra Chapter 3

In the seventh month [See Note #1], the children of Israel gather themselves together at Jerusalem, each one going up from the place where he dwelt. The first thing which they do there, under the direction of Joshua and Zerubbabel, is to build the altar, to place themselves under the wings of the God of Israel, the sole Help and sole Protector of His people; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries. Their refuge is in God. Beautiful testimony of faith! precious effect of the state of trial and abasement they were in! Surrounded by enemies, the unwallled city is protected by the altar of her God erected by the faith of God's people; and she is in greater security than when she had her kings and her walls. Faith, strict in following the word, confides in the goodness of its God. This exactness in following the word characterised the Jews, at this time in several respects. We have seen it, Ezr 2:59-63, where some could not shew their genealogy; we find it again here, Ezr 3:2; and again in Verse 4 (Ezr 3:4), on the occasion of the feast of tabernacles. Customs, traditions, all were lost. They were very careful not to follow the ways of Babylon. What had they left except the word? A condition like this gave it its full power. All this takes place before the house is built. It was faith seeking the will of God, although far from having set everything in order. We find, then, no attempt at doing without God those things which required a discernment that they did not possess. But with touching faith these Jews exercise piety towards God, worship God, and, as we may say, set Him in their midst, rendering Him that which duty required. They acknowledged God by faith; but until the Urim and Thummim should be there, they placed no one, on God's part, with the object of giving some competency to act for Him, in a position which required the exercise of God's authority.

Having at length, brought together the materials which the king of Persia had granted them, the Jews begin to build the temple and lay its foundations. The joy of the people, generally, was great. This was natural and right. They praise Jehovah according to the ordinance of David, and sing, (how well it became them now to do so!) "His mercy endureth for ever." Nevertheless, the ancient men wept, for they had seen the former house, built according to the inspired direction of God. Alas! we understand this. He who now thinks of what the assembly [See Note #2] of God was at the first will understand the tears of these old men. This suited nearness to God. Farther off, it was right that joy, or at least the confused shout, which only proclaimed the public event, should be heard; for, in truth, God had interposed in His people's behalf. Joy was in His presence and acceptable. Tears confessed the truth, and testified a just sense of what God had been for His people, and of the blessing they had once enjoyed under His hand. Tears recognised, alas! that which the people of God had been for God; and these tears were acceptable to Him. The weeping could not be discerned from the shout of joy; this was a truthful result, natural and sad, yet becoming in the presence of God. For He rejoices in the joy of His people, and He understands their tears. It was, indeed, a true expression of the state of things.

Note #1

This was the month in which the blowing of trumpets took place—a figure of the restoration of Israel in the last days.

Note #2

See Acts 2 and 4.

Ezra Chapter 4

But, in such a case, difficulties do not arise only from the weakness of the remnant; they proceed, also, from elements with which the remnant are outwardly connected, and which, at the same time, are foreign to the relationship of God's people with Himself. In Israel's case, there was real weakness, because God—although faithful to His people according to their need—did not, in fact, come forward to establish them on the original

footing. To do so would not have been morally suitable, either with respect to the position in which the people stood with God, or with regard to the power which He had established among the Gentiles apart from Israel, or with a view to the instruction of His own people in all ages as to the government of God. Relationship with God is never despised with impunity. But besides this, in such a state of things the power of the world having gained so much ground already in the land of promise, even among the people to whom the promise belonged, difficulties arose from the fact that persons who, in consequence of the intervention of the civil powers, were within the borders of the promised land, desired to participate with the Jews in constructing the temple. They alleged, in support of their claim, that they called upon God as the Jews did, and had sacrificed unto Him since Esarhaddon had brought them into the land. This was not enmity. Why repel such a desire? The Spirit of God calls them the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin. The people of God-the assembly of God-ought to be conscious of their own peculiar privileges, and that they are the assembly of the Lord. The Lord loved Judah and Benjamin. From His grace towards this people flowed all the blessing of which they were the object; and the people were bound fully to recognise this grace. Not to recognise it was to despise it. Now this grace was the sovereign goodness of God. To admit strangers would have been insensibility to this grace as the only source of good; it would have been to lose it, and to say that they were not its objects according to the sovereign goodness of God, more than other persons of the world. But the faithfulness and intelligence of the chiefs among Israel delivered them from this snare. "We ourselves together," said they, "will build unto Jehovah the God of Israel." "Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God." In fact, it would have been to deny that He was their God, the God of Israel. This is especially the case of the assembly when called to remember her privileges after long forgetfulness and painful chastisement. If God allow it for the trial or the chastening of His people, it is possible that the work may be stopped through the practices and the malice of those who will praise the great and noble Asnapper to the powers of the earth; before whom they will appear in their true earthly character, just as they assumed the garb of piety when seeking to insinuate themselves among the remnant of Israel. The power that belonged to God's people, at

the time of their former independence, will alarm one who, not trusting in God, dreads the effect upon his own authority of the energy which the Spirit of God produces in the people of God independently of this authority, however submissive the people may be. Israel was acting here according to Cyrus's own decree; but this is of no avail. That which depends on God is absolute; that which does not depend on Him is arbitrary; but the faithful have nothing to do with all this. God may see that trial and chastening are needful to them.

Ezra Chapter 5

Whatever happens, they have to go through that which puts faith to the proof; but their path is ordered by the will of God, and their faith relies upon Him. In this case they had to wait; but God's time would come; and that, not by means of a mere decree from the Gentile king: God raises up a much more precious encouragement for them from another quarter. Although the people had been subject to the Gentiles, God was still supreme; His word is still of supreme authority to His people, whenever He condescends to speak to them. If necessary, He can dispose the hearts of kings to uphold it. In every case His people are to follow it, without seeking other motive, or other help. Haggai and Zechariah are sent of God, and prophesy among the people. These immediate communications from God were of infinite value, as His word ever is; and although they did not change the position of the people with respect to the Gentiles, they were a touching proof that God was interested in His people, and that, whatever might be their afflictions, the God of Israel was above all that had power to oppress them.

I have said that the people were obliged to wait. This was the case as soon as they received the decree that forbade their continuing to build. But many years had elapsed before this prohibition came; and it seems evident to me, from examining the prophecies which throw so much light on the contemporary history, and from comparing their dates, that it was want of faith in the remnant which was the true hindrance. There were adversaries in the land who made them afraid, and who thus prevented their building. It appears that the Jews did not dare continue. Their adversaries hired counsellors in the Persian court to frustrate the purpose of the Jews. But the first thing was that the adversaries weakened the hands of the people. It

was not until two reigns later that the prohibition was obtained; but the Jews had left off building through fear of their adversaries (compare Ezr 4:4; Ezr 4:21, and Ezr 5:1, with Hag 1:1-2; Hag 1:4; Hag 2:15). Neither was it because the king's decree was brought them that they began again to build, but because they feared Jehovah, and feared not the king's command, as seeing Him who is invisible (Hag 1:12-13). God was not any more to be feared in the reign of Darius than in that of Cyrus or of Artaxerxes; but the source of their weakness was their having forgotten God. This makes manifest the great grace of God in awakening them by the mouth of Haggai. God had until then also chastened the people.

Ezra Chapter 6

All this shews us that, in ceasing to build the temple, Israel was in fault. It appears from Haggai (Ezr 2:15) that they had made no progress at all. The terror with which the adversaries had inspired the Jews had stopped them. They had no excuse for this, since even the king's commandment was on their side. That which they lacked was faith in God. We have seen that, when there was faith they dared to build, although there was a decree against it. The effect of this faith is to give rise to a decree in their favour, and that even through the intervention of their adversaries. It is good to trust in God. Blessed be His gracious name! Under the influence of the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah the house was finished (Ezr 6:15).

Jehovah's great grace in this was a real occasion for joy. The priests are set in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, according to the law of Moses, and we find more faithfulness than in the best days of the kings (compare Ezr 6:20 with Ch2 29:34). But we hear nothing of the ordinances of David, and a still greater deficiency is seen in their celebration of the feast of dedication. They kept the passover—a proof that the redemption of the people could be remembered in the land. Happy privilege of the restored remnant! Many also had joined them, separating themselves from the filthiness of the heathen of the land. Jehovah had given them cause for joy; but fire no longer came down from heaven to testify divine acceptance of the sacrifice offered for the dedication of the house. This was indeed a negative difference, but one of deep significance. And even that which formed the subject of their joy betrayed their condition. "Jehovah had

turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel." It was great kindness and touching grace on His part. But what a change!

Ezra Chapter 7

The following commentary covers Chapters 7 and 8.

Alas! this was not the end of the history. God, in His goodness, must still watch over the unfaithfulness and the failures of His people, even when they are but a small remnant who by His grace have escaped from the ruin. He puts it into the heart of Ezra, a ready scribe in the law of Moses, to think of the remnant in Jerusalem, to seek the law of Jehovah, to teach it and cause it to be observed. Here again it is still the Gentile king who sends him for this purpose to Jerusalem. All blessing is of God, but nothing (except prophecy, in which God was sovereign, as we have already seen in the case of Samuel at the time of the people's downfall), nothing in point of authority comes immediately from God. He could not pass by unrecognised the throne which He had Himself established among the Gentiles upon the earth. And Israel was an earthly people.

The character of this intervention of God by Ezra's mission is, I think, a touching proof of His loving-kindness. It was exactly suited to the wants of the people. It was not power. That had been removed to another place. It was the knowledge of the will and the ordinances of God, - of the mind of God in the word. The king himself recognised this (Ezr 7:25). Guarded by the good hand of his God, this pious and devoted man goes up with many others to Jerusalem.

Ezra Chapter 9

The following commentary covers Chapters 9 and 10.

Alas! as soon as he can look into these things, he finds the law already broken, evil already come in. The people of Israel had not kept themselves separate from the people of the lands, and even the princes and rulers had been chief in this trespass. Ezra is confounded at this, and remains overwhelmed with grief the whole day. Can it be that the remnant, whom God had snatched, as it were, from the fire, have so soon forgotten the

hand that delivered them, and married the daughters of a strange god? Those who trembled at Jehovah's word having assembled with him, Ezra humbles himself on account of it. At the time of the evening sacrifice, he pours out the deep sorrows of his heart before the Lord. A great multitude have their hearts touched by grace. There is no prophetic answer, as so often before had happened in similar circumstances; but there is an answer from God in the hearts of the guilty. "We have sinned," said one among them; "yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing." And they set themselves heartily to the work. Israel is summoned, each one under pain of exclusion, to come up to Jerusalem, and they assembled at the time of rain, for the matter was urgent; and the congregation acknowledge it to be their duty to conform to the law. Under the hand of Ezra, and by the diligence of those who were appointed to this work, it was accomplished in two months. As for all those who had taken strange wives, they gave their hand that they would put away their wives: they confessed their sin and offered a ram for this trespass.

Once more we find that that which characterises the operation of the Spirit of God, and the intervention of God among His people, with respect to their walk and moral condition, is separation from all who are not the people of God as they were. Those of the priestly family who were unable to produce their genealogy had been excluded from the priesthood as polluted; and those among the people who were in the same case were not acknowledged. They positively refuse any participation in the work to the people of the land who wished to join them in building the temple; and, finally, with respect to their own wives, several of whom had borne them children, they have to put them away, and to separate themselves, at whatever cost, from all that was not Israel. It is this which characterises faithfulness in a position like theirs; that is, a remnant come out from Babylon, and occupied in restoring the temple and service of God, according to that which yet remained to them.

Moreover, we see that God did not fail to comfort them by His testimony-sweet and precious consolation! But the power of the Gentiles was there. That which appertained to authority and the throne at Jerusalem, and to the power of ordaining, which belonged to it, was not re-established. The public

sanction of God was not granted. Nevertheless, God blessed the remnant of His people, when they were faithful; and the most prominent thing, and that which should dwell on our hearts, is the grace which, in the midst of such ruin, and in the presence of the Gentile throne set up through Israel's sin, could still bless His people, though acknowledging the Gentile throne, which God had established in judgment upon them. Their position is clearly and touchingly stated in Ezr 9:8-9. [See Note #1] It is a solemn season, when God, in His compassion, encourages and sustains the little remnant of His people in the midst of their difficulties; and owns them, as far as possible, after the ruin which their unfaithfulness has brought upon them-such ruin that God had been constrained to say of them, Lo-ammi. It is most afflicting to see the people, after such grace as this, plunging again into fresh unfaithfulness and departure from God. But such is God, and such is man.

We must ever bear in mind that Israel was an earthly people, and their full place in blessing now [See Note #2] that of the seat of God's power in righteousness upon earth, so that their relationship to another power, now set up among the Gentiles, was peculiar. But, if this be borne in mind in the application of the contents to other circumstances, the instructions afforded by this book are extremely interesting, as exhibiting the principles of conduct in which faith is displayed in the difficulties connected with a partial restoration from a ruined state, the dependence on God by which man is sustained in the midst of these difficulties, God's own ways in respect to His servants, and the absence of all pretensions to re-establish what could not be set up in power. Besides this, we have to view the Book of Ezra as giving that peculiar display of God's mercy and ways which left the rod of Judah subsisting till Shiloh came. No Shechinah was in the temple; no Urim and Thummim with the priest. But there was a sovereign intervention of God in that mercy which endures for ever, so that occasion was given to Messiah's coming according to the promises made to the fathers. The judgment of the Gentile power of Babylon carried with it the witness of a better deliverance, but for this the full time of God's purposes was to be awaited.

Note #1

Only for 'were' in Verse 9 (Ezr 9:9), we must read 'are.'

Note #2

I say "now," because, till Samuel's time, Israel was called to be blessed in obedience under priesthood, God being their King. But after David's time in view of Christ, the nation became the seat of God's power in righteousness, so far as it enjoyed the blessing.

NEHEMIAH

Introduction to Nehemiah

The Book of Nehemiah will require but few remarks; but it is important to establish its import. It is a necessary link in the history of God's dealings, in the recital of His patience and loving-kindness towards Jerusalem, which He had chosen.

In Ezra we have seen the temple rebuilt and the authority of the law re-established among the people, who are again separated from the Gentiles, and set apart for God.

In Nehemiah we witness the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and the restoration of what may be termed the civil condition of the people, but under circumstances that definitely prove their subjection to the Gentiles.

Nehemiah Chapter 1

Nehemiah 1:1

neh 1:1

Through grace, faith had set up the altar, and the Gentiles had had nothing to do with it, except by voluntary service; but when the city is to be rebuilt, it is the governor appointed by the Gentiles who holds the prominent place, God having touched the heart of these Gentiles and disposed them to favour His people. We see in Nehemiah himself a heart touched with the affliction of his people, a precious token of the grace of God; and He who had produced this feeling disposed the king's heart to grant Nehemiah all he desired for the good of the people and of Jerusalem. We see also in Nehemiah a heart that habitually turned to God, that sought its strength in Him, and thus surmounted the greatest obstacles.

Nehemiah Chapter 2

The following commentary covers Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

The time in which Nehemiah laboured for the good of his people was not one of those brilliant phases which, if faith be there, awaken even the energy of man, imparting to it its own lustre. It was a period which required the perseverance that springs from a deep interest in the people of God, because they are His people; a perseverance which, for this very reason, pursues its object in spite of the contempt excited by the work, apparently so insignificant, but which is not the less the work of God; and which pursues it in spite of the hatred and opposition of enemies, and the faintheartedness of fellow-labourers (Neh 4:8; Neh 4:10-11); a perseverance which, giving itself up entirely to the work, baffles all the intrigues of the enemy, and avoids every snare, God taking care of those who trust in Him. It is also a beautiful feature in Nehemiah's character, that in spite of his high office he had all the detail of service so much at heart, and all that concerned the upright walk of God's people. In the midst, however, of all this faithfulness, we perceive the influence of the Gentile power controlling the whole state of things. Nehemiah's arrival and even his conduct are marked with this influence. It was not faith alone that was in action, but a protecting power also (compare Ezr 8:22; Neh 2:7-9). Nevertheless, the separation from all that was not Jewish is carefully maintained (Neh 2:20; Neh 7:65; Neh 9:2; Neh 10:30; Neh 13:1; Neh 13:3; Neh 13:29-30).

This history shews us, first of all, how, when God acts, faith stamps its own character on all who surround it. The Jews, who had so long left Jerusalem desolate, are quite disposed to recommence the work. Judah, however, is discouraged by the difficulties. This brings out the perseverance which characterises true faith when the work is of God, be it ever so poor in appearance. The whole heart is in it, because it is of God. Encouraged by Nehemiah's energy, the people are ready to work and fight at the same time. For faith always identifies God and His people in the heart. And this becomes a spring of devotedness in all concerned. Let us remark, that in times of difficulty faith does not shew itself in the magnificence of the result, but in love for God's work, however little it may be, and in the perseverance with which it is carried on through all the difficulties belonging to this state of weakness; for that with which faith is occupied, is the city of God and the work of God, and these things have always the same value, whatever may be the circumstances in which they are found.

Nehemiah Chapter 7

God blesses the labours of the faithful Nehemiah, and Jerusalem is once more encompassed by walls; a less touching condition than when the city of God was defended by the altar of God, which was a testimony to His presence and to the faith of those who erected it; but a condition that proved the faithfulness and loving-kindness of God, who, nevertheless, while outwardly re-establishing them, revoked no part of the judgment pronounced on His people and His city. He who rebuilt the walls was but the vicegerent of a foreign king; and it was the security of the people, and that which uprightness of heart required of them to acknowledge this; and it was done (Neh 9:37). Still, God blesses them. Nehemiah recurs to the numbering of the people, according to the register of their genealogies that was drawn up at their first return from captivity, an already distant period. Thus the people are again placed in their cities.

Nehemiah Chapter 8

By means of Ezra and Nehemiah, the law resumes its authority, and that at the people's own request, for God had prepared their hearts. Accordingly, God had gathered them together on the first day of the seventh month. It was really the trumpet of God, although the people were unconscious of it, that gathered them to this new moon, which shone again in grace, whatever might be the clouds that veiled its feeble light. The people's hearts were touched by the testimony of the law, and they wept. But Nehemiah and Ezra bade them rejoice, for the day was holy. Doubtless these men of God were right. Since God was restoring His people, it became them to rejoice and give thanks.

The second day, continuing the search into the holy book they found that Israel ought to keep a feast on the fifteenth day of the same month. On restoration from chastening, when the church finds itself again before God, it often happens that precepts are recollected, which had been long forgotten and lost during the apparently better days of God's people; and with the precepts, the blessing that attends their fulfilment is recovered also. Since the days of Joshua, the children of Israel had not followed these ordinances of the law. What a lesson! This feast of tabernacles was kept

with great gladness, [See Note #1] a touching expression of the interest with which God marked the return of His people; a partial return, it is true, and soon beclouded (and even the hope to which it gave rise entirely destroyed by the rejection of the Messiah, who should have been its crown), yet of great value, as the first fruits in grace of that restoration which will accompany Israel's turning of heart to Christ, as manifested by their saying, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah!" The gladness was sincere and real; but everything was imperfect. The tenth day had not its antitype. Israel's humiliation had, as yet, no connection with that death which at once filled up their iniquity, and atoned for it. Their joy was well founded. It was yet but transient.

Note #1

The feast of tabernacles was the celebration of their rest and possession of the land after passing through the wilderness. The booths marked that they had been under tents as pilgrims.

Nehemiah Chapter 9

The following commentary covers Chapters 9, 10, and 11.

On the twenty-fourth day, the people came together to humble themselves in a manner that became their position, and they separated themselves from all strangers. Beginning with the blessing promised to Abraham, they relate all the tokens of God's grace bestowed upon Israel, the frequent unfaithfulness of which they had afterwards been guilty, and there is a true expression of heartfelt repentance; they acknowledge without any disguise their condition (Neh 9:36-37), and undertake to obey the law (chap. 10), to separate themselves entirely from the people of the land, and faithfully to perform all that the service of the house of God required.

All this gives a very distinct character to their position. Acknowledging the promise made to Abraham, and the bringing in of the people to Canaan by virtue of this promise, and their subsequent failure, they place themselves again under the obligations of the law, while confessing the goodness of God who had spared them. They do not see beyond a conditional and Mosaic restoration. Neither the Messiah nor the new covenant has any place

as the foundation of their joy or of their hope. They are, and they continue to be, in bondage to the Gentiles. This was Israel's condition until, in the sovereign mercy of God, the Messiah was presented to them. The Messiah could have brought them out of their position and gathered them under His wings, but they would not. It is this position that the Book of Nehemiah definitely brought out. It is the king's commandment that provides for the maintenance of the singers. A Jew was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people (Neh 11:23-24).

Nehemiah Chapter 12

The following commentary covers Chapters 12 and 13.

We have already seen that gladness was the portion of the people; a joy which acknowledged God, for God had preserved the people and had blessed them. But the princes of the people had immediately relapsed into unfaithfulness; and during Nehemiah's absence the chambers of the temple, in which the offerings had been formerly kept, were given up to Tobiah, that subtle and persevering enemy of God's people. But at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem the joy of the people and the faithfulness of Nehemiah brought them back to the written word, and Israel separated themselves again from the mixed multitude. Tobiah's stuff is cast out of the chamber prepared for him in the temple. The observance of the Sabbath is again enforced. Those who had married strange wives, and whose children spake partly the language of strangers and partly that of the Jews, are put under the curse and sharply rebuked and chastised. The order and the cleansing, according to the law, are re-established, and this leading thought of the book, as to the people's condition, closes the narrative. That which we have said will give an idea of the great principle of this book. I will add a few more remarks in this place.

ESTHER

Introduction to Esther

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

The Book of Esther shews us the position of Israel, or, to speak more accurately, the position of the Jews, out of their own land, and looked at as under the hand of God, and as the object of His care. That He still cared for them (which this book proves to us), when they no longer held any position owned by God, and had, on their part, lost all title to His protection, is an extremely touching and important fact in the dealings of God. If, when His people are in such a state as this, God cannot reveal Himself to them-which is manifest-He yet continues to think of them. God reveals to us here, not an open interposition on His part in favour of His people, which could no longer take place, but that providential care which secured their existence and their preservation in the midst of their enemies. Those who were in danger were of the captivity of Judah (Est 2:5-6), and of those who had not returned to the land of Canaan. If this betrays a want of faith and energy on their part, and of affection for the house and city of God, we must see in it so much the greater proof of the absolute and sovereign goodness, absolute and sovereign faithfulness, of that God Himself.

We see then in this history, the secret and providential care that God takes of the Jews, when, although maintaining their position, as Jews, they have entirely fallen from all outward relation to Him, are deprived of all the rights of God's people, and are stripped of the promises, in the fulfilment of which, as offered them by the mercy of God at that time in Jerusalem, they take no

interest. Even in this condition God watches over and takes care of them—a people beloved and blessed in spite of all their unfaithfulness; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. This, when well weighed, gives this book a very touching and instructive character. It is the sovereign unflinching care of God, come what will, and shews the place which this people hold in His mind.

It has been often remarked that the name of God is not found in the Book of Esther. This is characteristic. God does not shew Himself. But, behind the power and the mistakes of that throne to which the government of the world had fallen, God holds the reins by His providence; He watches over the accomplishment of His purposes and over everything necessary to their fulfilment; and He cares for His people, whatever may be their condition or the power of their enemies. Happy people! (compare, as to Israel, Jer 31:20).

It is to be noticed that faith in the protection of God, and an acknowledgment of it, are to be found even when the dealings of God, with respect to His promises, are not owned. We are speaking of God's government, and not of salvation. Salvation is not the question here. The Gentile reigns and does according to his will, taking at his pleasure one of the daughters of Benjamin for his wife. Sad condition, indeed, for the people of God! a position contrary to all divine law, to all faithfulness under other circumstances, but here not leading even to expostulation. The people of Israel are lost here as to their own state. But God acts in His sovereignty, and makes use of this sorrowful evidence of their position to preserve them from the destruction with which they were threatened.

Nehemiah unfolds the last relationship of God with the people before the coming of the Messiah; a relationship of longsuffering, in which God does not own them as His people; a provisional and imperfect relationship. Esther teaches us that God watches in sovereignty over the dispersed Jews, and preserves them even without any outward relationship, and that, without revoking any part of the judgment passed upon them, God shelters them without displaying Himself, and consequently by hidden means.

It was this that, as a matter of history, had yet to be made known before the public interposition of God at the end, in the Person of Messiah, which prophecy alone could reveal.

This interposition appears to me to be pointed out in the circumstances of this history; vaguely, indeed, yet clearly enough for one who has traced the ways of God, as revealed in the word. We see the Gentile wife set aside on account of her disobedience, and her having failed in displaying her beauty to the world; and she is succeeded by a Jewish wife, who possesses the king's affections. We see the audacious power of Haman, the Gentile, the oppressor of the Jews, destroyed; and the Jew, the protector of Esther, Mordecai, formerly despised and disgraced, raised to glory and honour in place of the Gentile. All this, be it remembered, is in connection with the earth.

Finally, in the details of this book there is a very interesting point, namely, the providential means which God employed, the opportuneness of the moment at which everything happens—even to the king's wakefulness, shewing, in the most interesting manner, how the hidden hand of God prepares and directs everything, and how those who seek His will may rely upon Him at all times and under all circumstances, even when deliverance appears impossible, and in spite of all the machinations of the enemy and their apparent success.

The close of the book presents, historically, the great characteristic facts of the dominion of the Gentiles; but one can hardly fail to see in it typically, in the position of Mordecai, the Lord Himself as head of the Jews, in closest connection with the throne that rules over all.

The very circumstances into which this book enters are appropriate. When an acknowledged relationship subsists, the dealings of God are according to the conduct of those who stand in this relationship; but here there is no such relationship subsisting. The scene is filled, and rightly filled, with heathen circumstances and heathen manners. Israel is as lost among them, their conduct does not come forward; but their preservation, where to the eye of man heathenism is everything, and their enemies seemingly all powerful. This is all in place. Any other picture would not have been the

truth, nor given the true representation of the state of things, nor brought out into their true light the dealings of God.

It will be easily understood that this book concludes the deeply interesting series of the historical books, which, through the goodness of God, we have been considering, exhibiting-as far as there has been ability-their leading features. May the Spirit, who has enabled us to enjoy that which God has deigned to reveal in them, continue to instruct us while meditating on those books which we have still to examine!

Esther Chapter 1

Esther 1:1

est 1:1

The following commentary covers Chapters 1 through 10.

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

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JOB

Introduction to Job

The Chetubim, or Hagiographa, in which I do not now comprehend Daniel (though his book has a character distinct from the other prophets) form a very distinct and interesting part of divine revelation. None of them suppose an accomplished and known redemption, in the New Testament sense of the word, though like every blessing all is founded on it. In Job a single passage gives a particular application of the term: "I have found a ransom" (Copher). The Psalms recount we know, prophetically, the sorrows and sufferings in which it was accomplished.

But redemption by blood is known by faith, when accomplished, whether by the Jew or the Christian. Isaiah prophesies of Israel's recognition of it fully. There were also, as we know, shadows of it under the law. But the knowledge of eternal redemption is christian knowledge, or that of the Jews when they look on Him whom they pierced. Till Christ's death, the veil was unrent, the holiest unapproachable. There was knowledge more or less clear of a Redeemer-of a personal Redeemer to come; of God's favour towards those that walked with Him, and the confidence of faith in Him and in His promises. But there was no such knowledge of sin as led, God being revealed, to the consciousness of exclusion from His presence as a present state, nor of such a putting of it away as reconciled us fully and for ever to God by its efficacy, and brought us to Him.

The books we are treating of are not prophecies of God's dealings or actings, save as the Psalms express future deliverance by power and by God's judgments; but they are the divinely given expression of man's thoughts and feelings under the government of God, [See Note #1] and the explanatory revelation of God before redemption is fully known. This process has mainly gone on in Israel; and hence they are in the main the various expression of God's ways with Israel. Still, what was carried out there, under revealed conditions and prophetic communications in direct government, was what was in principle true of God's ways everywhere,

though there specially displayed (the question of man's positive righteousness being raised too there by the law, the perfect rule of life for the sons of Adam).

The Book of Job affords us the example of the relationship of a godly man outside and doubtless before Israel, and God's dealings with men for good in this world of evil; but then it runs up, I doubt not, into a clear type of Israel in result Those ways are fully displayed in that people. And it is to be remarked that, when Job practically feels the impossibility of man's being righteous with God, he complains of fear and having no daysman between them; and Elihu, who takes up this ground in God's stead, explains not redemption but chastising and government. These things God wrought oftentimes with man (chapter 33, 36).

Ecclesiastes estimates this world under the same government, in its present fallen state, and raises the question whether by any means man can find happiness and rest there, with no trace of the knowledge of redemption. Nor is there any recognised relationship with God. It is always Elohim (God), never Jehovah, fearing God and keeping His commandments being the whole duty of man as such.

The Song of Solomon affords direct relationship with the Lord, the Son of David, the ardent affections which belong to the relationship with Christ; Proverbs, a guidance through the mixed and entangled scene, and here all is on the ground of relationship with Jehovah, God (Elohim) being only once or twice mentioned in a way which does not affect this (see more fully note to page 24). But none place themselves on the ground of known redemption. They do look for redemption by power. Hence, on the contrary, Romans begins with the revelation of wrath from heaven, not government, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness where truth was, against Gentile and Jew, [See Note #2] and brings in redemption, personal justification, and righteousness-God's righteousness. The case of Gentile and Jew is fully gone into, and brought out as before God Himself, and wrath from heaven the necessary consequence; complete redemption by blood for heaven, and sovereign grace reigning through righteousness and giving us a place with the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, together with the result for Israel hereafter. All is made clear in the light as God is in the light-His eternal

redemption, and heavenly places, though finally earth will be blessed. But we are pilgrims and strangers here. This is our place by redemption itself. To the Abrahams and Davids it was so, by getting nothing of what was promised, or else persecution under the government of God upon the earth; so that under that order of things it was after all a puzzle to both, though the final inheritance of the land, the heir, and the judgment of the wicked, known by revelation, met the puzzle in their minds.

But in Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, which express men's feelings under it, this puzzle is fully manifested. Faith and confidence in God may get over it, or persevere through it; prophetic testimonies may meet it; but it is there, and this earth is the scene of the reply of God, even if their faith might be sometimes forced to rise above it, nourished by personal confidence in God. But a present fixed eternal relationship with God even our Father through redemption, in a wholly new scene into which we are brought by that precious blood, whose shedding has glorified God Himself, and reconciled us to Him, though yet in an unredeemed body,-that was unknown. Much was learned, learned as to God, and this was most precious. But the actual result for Job was more camels and sheep, and fairer daughters; in the Psalms, judgment of enemies, and deliverance through mercy that endured for ever, and an earth set free under heaven's judicial rule; in Ecclesiastes, as to the perception of the present effect of government, that man must fear God, keep His commandments, and leave it there. Present known redemption is nowhere found. And oh what a difference, an unbounded difference, this makes! "As he is, so are we in this world." He who redeemed us is gone to His Father and our Father, His God and our God. Proverbs and the Song of Solomon have, as I have said, another character, though referring to the same scene: Proverbs, not man's feelings in the scene, but God's guidance through it by the experience and wisdom of divinely instructed authority; [See Note #3] and the Song of Solomon, the carrying the heart quite out of it all, though still in it, not by known redemption, but by devoted affection to Messiah, and of Messiah to Israel, by the revelation He makes of Himself, indeed of His love to them to beget it in Israel's heart.

These exercises of heart have their place in us now, for we are in the world; but in the consciousness of accomplished redemption and the present care

of a holy Father, the perfection of whose ways, as seen in Christ, is the model of our conduct. We can take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, knowing in ourselves that we have in heaven a better and an enduring substance; and glory in tribulation, because it works its needed end, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us. This is another case, and a blessed one it is.

I think these general remarks will help us to understand the books which are now about to occupy us. I turn to the books themselves.

After what I have said, the Book of Job will not require a long examination-not that it fails in interest, but because when the general idea is once laid hold of, it is the detail which is interesting, and detail is not our present object.

In the Book of Job we have one portion of those exercises of heart which this division of the holy book supplies. These are not joyful exercises, but those of a heart which, journeying through a world in which the power of evil is found, and not being dead to the flesh, not having that divine knowledge which the gospel furnishes, not dead as to one's self with Christ nor possessing Christ in resurrection, is not capable of enjoying in peace, whatever its own conflicts may be, the fruit of God's perfect love; but which struggles with the evil or with the non-enjoyment of the only real good, even while desiring to possess it; while, by the means of these very revelations, the light of Christ is cast upon these exercises, and the sympathy and entering of His Spirit in grace into them practically is touchingly developed. What is learned in them is what we are-not committed sins; that was not Job's case, but the soul itself is put before God.

Note #1:

And these pass into what Christ's were in His humiliation and sufferings, and thus become prophecies of His sufferings, but in the form of His feelings under them, and this of infinite price to us.

Note #2:

And note here Psalm 14, which he quotes as proof of sin in the Jew, and Isaiah 59, both end in deliverance in Jerusalem by power. In Romans it is met by present justification by blood.

Note #3:

It will much help the reader as to the character of this book and Ecclesiastes to remark, that in Proverbs the name Jehovah is always employed, save in Job 25:2, where it is "Elohim," and "her God," Job 2:17. But this is not an exception: that is, it is recognised relationship with the revealed God of Israel. Whereas in Ecclesiastes Jehovah is never found. It is always Elohim, the abstract name of God without any idea of relationship: God as such in contrast with man and every creature, and man having to find out experimentally his we place and happiness as such, without special revealed relationship with God. In Job the editor, if I may so speak, or historian who gives the dialogues, always uses Jehovah; but in the body of the book Job, unless at any late once as to the government of God (Job 12:9), and Elihu constantly, use the name of Almighty, the Abrahamic name of God, or simply God. The friends generally use God, or particularly Eliphaz the Almighty, sometimes it is only, He. Zophar, I think, uses no name. The dialogue is characterised by God or Almighty.

Job Chapter 1

Job 1:1

job 1:1

The following commentary covers Chapters 1 and 2.

In Job we have man put to the test; we might say, with our present knowledge, man renewed by grace, an upright man and righteous in his ways, in order to shew whether he can stand before God in presence of the power of evil, whether he can be righteous in his own person before God. On the other hand we find the dealings of God, by which He searches the heart and gives it the consciousness of its true state before Him.

All this is so much the more instructive, from its being set before us independent of all dispensations, of all especial revelation on God's part. It is

the godly man, such as one of Noah's descendants would be, who had not lost the knowledge of the true God, when sin was again spreading in the world and idolatry was setting in; but the Judge was there to punish it. Job was encompassed with blessings and possessed real piety. Satan, the accuser of the servants of God, goes to and fro in the earth seeking occasion for evil, and presents himself before Jehovah among His mighty angels, the "Bene-Elohim": and God states the case of Job, the subject of His government in blessing, faithful in his walk.

It is carefully to be remarked here, that the spring and source of all these dealings is not Satan's accusations, but God Himself. God knew what His servant Job needed, and Himself brings forward his case and sets all in movement. If He demands of Satan if he had considered His servant Job, it is because He Himself had. Satan is but an instrument, and an ignorant though subtle instrument, to bring about God's purposes of grace. His accusations result really in nothing as against Job, save to disprove their truth by what he is allowed to do; but, for Job's good, he is left to his will up to a certain point, for the purpose of bringing Job to a knowledge of his own heart, and thus to a deeper ground of practical relationship with God. How blessed and perfect are God's ways! How vain in result the efforts of Satan against those that are His!

Satan attributes the piety of Job to God's manifest favour and to his prosperity, to the hedge He had put around him. God gives all this into the hands of Satan, who speedily excites the cupidity of Job's enemies; and they attack him and carry off all his possessions. His children perish through the effects of a storm which Satan is allowed to raise. But Job, dwelling neither on the instruments employed nor on Satan, receives this bitter cup from the hand of God without murmuring. Satan suggests again that man will, in fact, give up everything if he can preserve himself. God leaves everything to Satan except the life of His servant. Satan smites Job with a dreadful disease; but Job bows under the hand of God, fully recognising His sovereignty. Satan had exhausted his means of injuring Job, and we hear nothing more of him; but it is beautiful to see that God has hereby completely justified Job from the accusation of Satan. Job was no hypocrite. He had lost all to which Satan traced his piety, and it shone forth brighter

than ever. Satan can trace the motives which work in flesh, the evil in man's heart which he excites; but grace in God, His uncaused love, and grace in man which trusts in and leans on it, he cannot measure, nor know the power of.

Job Chapter 3

But the depths of Job's heart were not yet reached, and to do this was the purpose of God, whatever Satan's thoughts may have been. Job did not know himself, and up to this time, with all his piety, he had never been in the presence of God. How often it is the case that even throughout a long life of piety the conscience has never been really set before God! Hence peace, such peace as cannot be shaken, and real liberty, are not known as yet. There is a desire after God, there is the new nature; the attraction of His grace has been felt: nevertheless God and His love, as it really is, are not known. If Satan is foiled (the grace of God having kept Job's heart from murmuring) God has yet His own work to accomplish. That which the tempest that Satan had raised against Job failed in doing, is brought about by the sympathy of his friends. Poor heart of man! The uprightness and even the patience of Job had been manifested, and Satan had no more to say. But God alone can search out what the heart really is before Him; and the absence of all self-will, perfect agreement with the will of God, absolute submission like that of Christ, these things God alone could test, and thus lay bare the nothingness of man's heart before Him. God did this with Job; revealing at the same time that He acts in grace in these cases for the good of the soul which He loves.

If we compare the language of the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms, we shall often find the appreciation of circumstances expressed in almost identical terms; but instead of bitter complaints and reproaches addressed to God, we find the submission of a heart which acknowledges that God is perfect in all His ways. Job was upright, but he began to make this his righteousness; which evidently proves that he had never been really in the presence of God. The consequence of this was that, although he reasoned more correctly than his friends, and shewed a heart that felt really far more than they what God was, he attributed injustice to God and a desire to harass him without cause (see chap. 19; Job 23:3; Job 23:13; Job 13:15-18; Job 16:12). We find also

in chapter 29 that his heart had dwelt upon his upright and benevolent walk with complacency, commending himself, and feeding his self-love with it. "When the eye saw me it gave witness to me." God was bringing him to say, "Now mine eye seeth Thee and I abhor myself." It is with these chapters (29, 30, 31), which express his good opinion of himself, that Job ends his discourse; he had told his whole heart out. He was self-satisfied: the grace of God had wrought and in a lovely way in him; but the present effect through the treacherousness of the human heart, and not being in God's presence which detects it, was to make him lovely in his own eyes. If (chap. 9) he confesses man's iniquity (for who can deny it; and especially what converted men?), it is in bitterness of spirit, because it is useless to attempt being just with such a God. Chapter 6, as well as the whole of his discourse, proves that, whether it was the pride of his heart which could not bear to be found in such a state by those who had known his greatness, a state which pride would have borne in stubbornness alone, or sympathy which, in weakening that had left him to the full sense of it, it was the presence and the language of his friends that was the means of bringing out all that was in his heart. We see also in chapter 30 that the pride of his heart was detected.

Job Chapter 4

The following commentary covers Chapters 4 through 31.

As to the friends of Job, they do not call for any extended remarks. They urge the doctrine that God's earthly government is a full measure and manifestation of His righteousness, and of the righteousness of man, which would correspond with it: a doctrine which proves a total ignorance of what God's righteousness is, and of His ways; as well as the absence of all real knowledge of what God is, or man as a sinner. We do not see either that the feelings of their hearts were influenced by communion with God. Their argument is a false and cold estimate of the exact justice of His government as an adequate manifestation of His relationship with man, though they say many true commonplace things which even the Spirit of God adopts as just. Although Job was not before God in his estimate of himself, he judges rightly in these respects. He shews that although God shews His disapprobation of the wicked, yet the circumstances in which they are often found overthrow the arguments of his friends. We see in Job a heart which,

although rebellious, depends upon God, and would rejoice to find Him. We see, too, that when he can extricate himself, by a few words, from his friends, who, he is quite sensible, understands nothing of his case, nor of the dealings of God, he turns to God (although he does not find Him, and although he complains that His hand is heavy upon him), as in that beautiful and touching chapter 23, and the reasonings as to divine government, chapters 24, 21. That is to say, we see one who has tasted that God is gracious, whose heart, wounded indeed and unsubdued, yet claims those qualities for God-because it knows Him-which the cold reasonings of his friends could not ascribe to Him; a heart which complains bitterly of God, but which knows that, could it once come near Him, it would find Him all that it had declared Him to be, and not such as they had declared Him to be, or were themselves-could he find Him, he would not be as they were, He would put words in his mouth; a heart which repelled indignantly the accusation of hypocrisy; for Job was conscious that he looked to God, and that he had known God and acted with reference to Him, though God thought fit to bring his sin to remembrance.

Job Chapter 32

The following commentary covers Chapters 32 through 37.

But these spiritual affections of Job did not prevent his turning this consciousness of integrity into a robe of self-righteousness which hid God from him, and even hid him from himself. He declares himself to be more righteous than God (Job 10:7-8; Job 16:14-17; Job 23:11-13; Job 27:2-6). Elihu reproves him for this, and on the other hand explains the ways of God. He shews that God visits man and chastises him, in order that when subdued and broken down-if there is one who can shew him the point of moral contact between his soul and God, in which his soul would stand in truth before Him [See Note #1] -God may act in grace and blessing, and deliver him from the evil that oppresses him. Elihu goes on to shew him that, if God chastises, it is becoming in man to set himself before God to learn wherein he has done wrong: in short, that the ways of God are right, that He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous, but if they are in affliction He shews them their transgressions, and if they return to Him in obedience when He openeth their ear to discipline, He will give them prosperity; but

that the hypocrite shall perish. The first case which Elihu brings forward (chap. 33) is God's dealings with men. He awakens their consciences to their state, and puts His bridle on the pride and self-will of man. God chastises and humbles him. The second is specially with the righteous (chap. 36), the case of positive transgression but in one righteous in God's sight, from whom He withdraws not His eyes, in whom He allowed not iniquity; but in the first case he was in the path of destruction. It was this case²] which needed the interpreter to place him in uprightness before God. Finally, he insists upon the incomprehensible power of God Almighty.

Note #1

This is a very important point. God can bless in a direct manner with the light of His grace, when the soul is brought into its true place, to what it really is in His sight. Then, whatever its state may be, He can bless it, in respect of that state, with increased light and grace. If I have got far from Him, and careless in walk, when I have the consciousness how far I am, He can fully and directly bless. But the soul must be brought into the recognition of its state, or there would be no real blessing; I should not see God in unison with it. For its sensible state did not answer to its real state in God's sight.

Note #2

In this case it may be a first conviction of sin, or the knowledge of self where self has never been really judged, as was Job's case.

Job Chapter 38

The following commentary covers Chapters 38 through 42.

Jehovah then speaks, and addressing Job, carries on the subject. He makes Job sensible of his nothingness. Job confesses himself to be vile, and declares that he will be silent before God. The Lord resumes the discourse, and Job acknowledges that he has darkened counsel by speaking of that which he understood not. But now, still more submissively, he declares openly his real condition. Formerly he had heard of God by the hearing of the ear; now his eye had seen Him, wherefore he abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes. This is the effect of having seen God, and of finding himself in His presence. The work of God was accomplished-the work of His

perfect goodness, which would not leave Job without causing him to know himself, without bringing him into God's own presence. The object of discipline was attained, and Job is surrounded with more blessings than before.

We learn two things here; first, that man cannot stand in the presence of God; and secondly, the ways of God for the instruction of the inner man. It is also a picture of God's dealings with the Jews on the earth.

The Book of Job plainly sets before us also the teaching of the Spirit, as to the place which Satan occupies in the dealings of God and His government, with respect to man on the earth. We may also remark the perfect and faithful care of God, from whom (whatever may have been the malice of Satan) all this proceeded, because He saw that Job needed it. We observe that it is God who sets the case of Job before Satan, and that the latter disappears from the scene; because here it is a question of his doings on the earth, and not of his inward temptations. Further, if God had stopped short in the outward afflictions, Job would have had fresh cause for self-complacency. Man might have judged that those afflictions were ample. But the evil of Job's heart consisted in his resting on the fruits of grace in himself, and this would have only increased the good opinion he had already entertained of himself: kind in prosperity, he would have been also patient in adversity. God therefore carries on His work, that Job may know himself.

Either the sympathy of his friends (for we can bear alone, and from God in His presence, that which we cannot bear when we have the opportunity of making our complaint before man), or the pride which is not roused while we are alone but which is wounded when others witness our misery, or perhaps the two together, upset the mind of Job; and he curses the day of his birth. The depths of his heart. are displayed. It was this that he needed.

We have thus, man standing between Satan, the accuser, and God, the question being not God's revelation of everlasting righteousness, but His ways with the soul of man in this world. The godly man comes into trouble. This has to be accounted for, the friends insisting that this world is an adequate expression of God's righteous government, and that consequently as Job had made great profession of piety he was a hypocrite. This he

stoutly denies, but his will unbroken rises up against God. God has chosen to do it, and he cannot help it. Only he is sure if he could find Him, He would put words in his mouth. He spoke well of Him though in rebellion, and thinking of his goodness as his own. Still he affirms that though there was a government, this world did not shew it as his friends said; but he is not broken down before God. Elihu comes in, the interpreter, one among a thousand (and practically how rare they are!) and he shews God's discipline with man and with the righteous, and rebukes both sides with intelligence. Then God comes in and puts Job in his place by the revelation of Himself; but owns Job's right feeling as to Him, and puts the friends in their true place, and Job is to intercede for them. Job, humbled, can be fully blessed. This knowledge of self in God's sight is of all importance; we are never humble nor distrustful of self till then.

PSALMS

Introduction to Psalms

The Book of Psalms has evidently a peculiar character. It is not the history of God's people, or of God's ways with them, nor is it the inculcation of positive doctrines or duties, nor the formal prophetic announcement of coming events. Many important events, doubtless, are alluded to in them, and they are immediately connected with various prophetic revelations (as, indeed, with precepts and all the other parts of the divine word to which I have just referred); but none of these form the true character of the book itself. The subjects too, of which the various parts of scripture I refer to treat, necessarily find their place in the thoughts expressed in the Psalms. But the Psalms do not directly treat of them.

The Psalms are almost all the expression of the sentiments produced in the hearts of God's people by the events (or I should speak more correctly if I said, prepared for them in the events), through which they pass, and indeed express the feelings, not only of the people of God, but often, as is known, those of the Lord Himself. They are the expression of the part the Spirit of God takes, as working in their hearts, in the sorrows and exercises of the saints. The Spirit works in connection with all the trials through which they pass, and the human infirmity which appears in those trials; in the midst of which it gives thoughts of faith and truth which are a provision for them in all that happens. We find in them consequently the hopes, fears, distress, confidence in God, which respectively fill the minds of the saints-sometimes the part which the Lord Himself takes personally in them, and that, occasionally, exclusive of all but Himself, the place which He has held that He might so sympathise with them. Hence a maturer spiritual judgment is required to judge rightly of the true bearing and application of the Psalms than for other parts of scripture; because we must be able to understand what dispensationally gives rise to them, and judge of the true place before God of those whose souls' wants are expressed in them; and this is so much the more difficult as the circumstances, state, and relationship with God, of

the people whose feelings they express are not those in which we find ourselves. The piety they breathe is edifying for every time; the confidence they often express in God in the midst of trial has cheered the heart of many a tried servant of God in his own. This feeling is carefully to be preserved and cherished; yet it is for that very reason so much the more important that our spiritual judgment should recognise the position to which the sentiments contained in the Psalms refer, and which gives form to the piety which is found in them. Without doing this, the full power of redemption and the force of the gospel of the grace of God is lost for our own souls; and many expressions which have shocked the christian mind, unobservant of their true bearing and application, remain obscure and even unintelligible.

The heart that places itself in the position described in the Psalms returns back to experiences which belong to a legal state, and to one under discipline for failure and trial in that state, and to the hopes of an earthly people. A legal and, for a Christian, unbelieving state is sanctioned in the mind: we rest content in a spiritual state short of the knowledge of redemption; and while we think to retain the Psalms for ourselves, we keep ourselves in a state of soul in which we are deprived of the intelligence of their true use and our own privileges, and become incapable of the real understanding of, and true delight in, the Psalms themselves; and, what is more we miss the blessed and deeply instructive apprehension of the tender and gracious sympathies of Christ in their true and divinely given application. The appropriating spirit of selfishness does not learn Christ as He is, as He is revealed, and the loss is really great. There are comforts and ministrations of grace for a soul under the law in the Psalms, because they apply to those under the law (and souls in that state have been relieved by them); but to use them in order to remain in this state, and to apply them prominently to ourselves, is, I repeat, to misapply the Psalms themselves, lose the power of what is given to us in them, and deprive ourselves of the true spiritual position in which the gospel sets us. The difference is simple and evident. Relationship with the Father is not, cannot be introduced in them, and we live out of that if we live in them, though obedience and confiding dependence be ever our right path.

I purpose in this study of the Psalms to examine the book as a whole, and each of the Psalms, so as to give a general idea of it. The most profitable manner of doing this (though the character of the Book of Psalms renders it more difficult here) will be, as I have attempted in the books we have already considered to give the meaning and object of the Spirit of God, leaving the expression of the precious piety which it contains to the heart that alone is capable of estimating it, namely, one that feeds on Jesus through the grace of the Spirit of God.

The Psalms, and the workings of the Spirit of God expressed in them, belong properly in their application and true force to the circumstances of Judah and Israel, and are altogether founded on Israel's hopes and fears: and, I add, to the circumstances of Judah and Israel in the last days, though as to the moral state of things those last days began with the rejection of Christ. The piety and confidence in God with which they are filled find an echo, no doubt, in every believing heart, but this exercise, as expressed here, is in the midst of Israel. This judgment, of which the truth is evidently demonstrated by the reading of the Psalms themselves, is sanctioned by the Apostle Paul. He says, after citing the Psalms, "Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law."

The Psalms then concern Judah and Israel, and the position in which those who belong to Judah and Israel are found. Their primary character is the expression of the working of the Spirit of Christ as to, or in, the remnant of the Jews [See Note #1] (or of Israel) in the last days. He enters into all their sorrows, giving expression to their confessions, their confidence of faith, their hopes, fears, thankfulness for deliverances obtained-in a word, to every exercise of their hearts in the circumstances in which they find themselves in the last days; so as to afford them the leading, the sanction, and the sympathy of the Spirit of Christ, and utterance to the working of that Spirit in them and even in Christ Himself. In addition to this, the Psalms present to us the place which Christ Himself when on earth took among them, in order to their having part in His sympathies, and to make their deliverance possible, and their confidence in God righteous, though they had sinned against Him. They do not as the Epistles, reason on the efficacy of His work; but in the Psalms which apply to Him, present His feeling in

accomplishing it. They intimate to us also the place He took in heaven on His rejection, and ultimately on the throne of the kingdom, but, save His present exaltation (which is only mentioned as a fact necessary to introduce, and to give the full character to Israel's ultimate deliverance), all that is revealed of the Lord in this His connection with Israel is expressed, not in narration but in the utterance of His own feelings in regard to the place He is in, as is the case with the remnant themselves. This feature it is which gives its peculiar character and interest to the Psalms.

The psalms teach us thus that Christ entered into the full depths of suffering which made Him the vessel of sympathising grace with those who had to pass through them-and that as seeing and pleading with God in respect of them. In the path of His own humiliation, He got the tongue of the learned to know how to speak a word in season to him that was weary. They were sinners, could claim no exemption, count on no favour which could deliver and restore. They must, if He had not suffered for them, have taken the actual sufferings they had to undergo in connection with the guilt which left them in them without favour. But this was not God's thought; He was minded to deliver them, and Christ steps in in grace. He takes the guilt of those that should be delivered. That was vicarious suffering as a substitute. And He places Himself in the path of perfect obedience and love in the sorrow through which they had to pass. As obedient, He entered into that sorrow so as to draw down, through the atonement, the efficacy of God's delivering favour on those who should be in it, and be the pledge, in virtue of all this, of their deliverance out of it as standing thus for them, the sustainer of their hope in it, so that they should not fail.

Still, they must pass through sorrow, according to the righteous ways of God, in respect of their folly and wickedness, and to purify them inwardly from it. Into all this sorrow Christ entered, as He also bore their sins, to be a spring of life and sustainer of faith to them in it, when the hand of oppression should be heavy without, and the sense of guilt terrible within and hence no sense of favour, but that One who had assured to them and could convey this favour had taken up their cause with God, and passed through it for them. The full efficacy indeed of His work in their deliverance, in that one Man's dying for the nation, will not be known by them till they

look on Him whom they have pierced. They are purposely left (and especially the remnant, because of their integrity; for the rest will join the idolatrous Gentiles for peace' sake) in the depth of trial, which, as ways of God in government, brings them through grace to the sense of their guilt in a broken law and a rejected and crucified Messiah, that they may truly now what each of them is, and bow before an offended Jehovah in integrity of heart, and say, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah."

But, though the deliverance and a better salvation be not to come till then, still, in virtue of the work wrought to effect it, Christ can sustain and lead on their souls to it; and that is just what is done in these Psalms. These are His language to, or rather in, their souls when they are in the trouble-sometimes the record of how He has learned it. Hence too, souls yet under the law find such personal comfort under them. Let not any soul, let me remark in passing, suppose that deep heart interest in these sorrows of Christ is lost by passing from under the law to be under grace. There is immense gain. The difference is this-instead of using them merely selfishly (though surely rightly) for my own wants and sorrows, I, when under grace, enter in adoring contemplation and joyful love into all Christ's sorrows, in the deeper competency given by His Spirit dwelling in me. I go back now in peace, as He is on high, and I trace with divinely given interest and understanding (whatever my measure) all the sorrows through which He passed when here, tracing this "path of life" in love to us across a world of sin and woe, glorifying God in it, through death itself, to the righteous glory in which He now is. Christ comforted His disciples in John 14, though not indeed as under law, but He says at the close, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go to the Father." Under law the Psalms may comfort us in profitable distress; under grace we enjoy them as loving Christ and with divine intelligence.

But to return. The great foundation which had to be laid to make sympathy possible was, that Christ did not escape where the remnant of Israel will, [See Note #2] because He must suffer the full penalty of the guilt and evil, or He could not righteously and for God's glory deliver them. Thus Christ must pass personally fully through the sorrow as He did in spirit; and besides that, make atonement for the guilt. He passed through it, save in atonement

work, near to God; and makes all the grace and favour of God towards Him, all that He found God to be for Him in sorrow, available, through the atonement, to those who should come to be in it, that they might thus have all the mind of God towards them in grace in that case to use when they found themselves in it, even though in darkness. If it be said, How can they when they have not yet learned that God is for them in the atonement? These Psalms, entering into every detail, are precisely the means of their doing so according to Isaiah 50, as already referred to. In truth, many Christians are in this state. They cling to promise, feel their sins, are comforted by hope, see the goodness of God, use the Psalms as suiting them, and do not know redemption nor peace.

The Psalms, then, belong properly to Israel, [See Note #3] and in Israel to the godly remnant. This is the first general principle, which the word itself establishes for us, as we have seen stated by Paul-What they say, they say to those under the law.

In examining the Psalms themselves, we shall find other elements of this judgment, which are very clear and positive. The Psalms distinguish (Psalm 73) and commence by distinguishing (Psalm 1) the man who is faithful and godly, according to the law, from the rest of the nation. "The ungodly are not so," nor shall they "stand in the congregation of the righteous." Indeed, Isaiah teaches the same truth doctrinally just as strongly. [See Note #4] Their characteristic subject is the true believing remnant, the righteous in Israel (Psa 16:3 and many others). It is, therefore, the portion and hope of Israel which are in view in them. In Psalm 1 this is definitely and distinctly presented. But it is the hope of a remnant, whose portion is from the commencement distinguished in the most marked way from that of the wicked.

Again, it is evident (and it is the second general principle I would notice), that it is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of prophecy, which speaks. That is to say, it is the Spirit of Christ interesting Himself in the condition of the faithful remnant of Israel. This Spirit speaks of things to come as if they were present, as is always the case with the prophets. But this does not make it the less true that it is a spirit of prophecy which speaks of the future, and which in this respect often resumes its natural character. But if the Spirit of

Christ is interested in the remnant of Israel, Christ's own sufferings must be announced, which were the complete proof of that interest, and without which it would have been unavailing. And we find, in fact, the most touching expressions of the sufferings of Christ, not historically, but just as He felt then, expressed as by His own lips at the moment He endured them. [See Note #5] It is always the Spirit [See Note #6] of Christ that speaks, as taking part Himself in the affliction and grief of His people, whether it is by His Spirit in them or Himself for them, as the sole means in presence of the just judgment of God, of delivering a beloved though guilty people. Hence we see the beautiful fitness of the language of the Psalms in a point I shall touch upon farther on. In the Psalms which speak properly of atonement Christ is alone, and thus His work is secured. In those which speak of sufferings not atoning in their nature, even though they go on up to death, parts may be found personally applicable to Christ, because He did personally and individually go through them, but in other parts of the same Psalms the saints also are brought in because they will have a share in them, and thus His personal sufferings are presented to us, but His sympathy too is secured.

Another principle connects itself with this, which gives the third great characteristic of the Psalms. The sins of the people would morally hinder the remnant's having confidence in God in their distress. Yet God alone can deliver them, and to Him they must look in integrity of heart.

We find both these points brought out: the distresses are laid before God, seeking for deliverance; and integrity is pleaded and the sins confessed at the very same time. Christ, having come into their sorrows, as we have seen, and made atonement, can lead them in spite of their sins and about their sins, to God. They do not indeed know at first perhaps the full forgiveness, but they go in the sense of grace as led by Christ's Spirit, (and how many souls are practically in this state!) [See Note #7] in expressions provided in these very Psalms, to the God of deliverances, confessing their sins also. They "take with them words and return to the Lord." Forgiveness also is presented to them. The Spirit of Christ being livingly in them (that is, as a principle of life), and fixing the purpose of their heart, they can, through confessing their sin, plead unfeignedly their integrity and fidelity to God. But

the thought of mercy everywhere precedes that of righteousness as their ground of hope. In substance, all this is true of every renewed soul who has not yet found liberty, the liberty obtained by known redemption. The Psalms, unless certain praises at the close of the book and the end of some others, are never the expression of this liberty: and even when the expression of it is found, it is that of earthly deliverance or forgiveness.

In sum, then, the Psalms are the expression of the Spirit of Christ, either in the Jewish remnant (or in that of all Israel), or in His own Person as suffering for them, in view of the counsels of God with respect to His elect earthly people. And since these counsels are to be accomplished more particularly in the latter days, it is the expression of the Spirit of Christ in this remnant in the midst of the events which will take place in those days, when God begins to deal again with His earthly people. The moral sufferings connected with those events have been more or less verified in the history of Christ on the earth; and whether in His life, or, yet more, in His death, He is linked with the interests and with the fate of this remnant. In Christ's history, at the time of His baptism by John, He already identified Himself with those that formed this remnant; not with the impenitent multitude of Israel, but with the first movement of the Spirit of God in these "excellent of the earth," which led them to recognise the truth of God in the mouth of John, and to submit to it. Now it is in this remnant that the promises made to Israel will be accomplished; so that, while only a remnant, their affections and hopes are those of the nation. On the cross, Jesus remained the only true faithful one before God in Israel—the personal foundation of the whole remnant that was to be delivered, as well as the accomplisher of that work on which their deliverance could be founded.

There are some further general observations on a point to which I have already alluded, which, while in a great measure they are drawn from the Psalms themselves, yet, through the light the Gospels also cast on it, may aid us in seeing the spirit of the whole book, and entering into the purport of many psalms in detail. I mean the sufferings of Christ. We have seen in general already that the book brings before us the remnant, its sorrows, hopes, and deliverance, and Christ's association with them in all these. He has entered into their sorrows, will be their deliverer, and has wrought the

atonement which lays the foundation of their deliverance, as it does of the deliverance of any living soul-but He died for that nation. Of course His own perfection shines out in this; but here we are to look for its connection with Israel and the earth, though His personal exaltation to heaven be mentioned, from which their final deliverance flows. We are not, however, to look for the mystery of the assembly, which at this time was hid in God, nor for Christ viewed in His associations with the assembly. The Psalms furnish most exquisitely all the earthly experiences of Christ and His people which the Spirit of Christ would bring before us. We must look to the New Testament (as in Philippians, for example, and elsewhere) to find the heavenly ones of those He has redeemed.

Now Christ passed through every kind of moral suffering the human heart can go through, was tempted in all points like as we are, sin apart. Nor can anything be more fruitful in its place (for it must not be too long dwelt on in itself, and entirely separated from the divine side of His character, or it becomes profitless or hurtful, because really fleshly sentiment), than to have the heart engaged in contemplating the sorrows of the blessed Redeemer. Never were any like His. But the Psalms will bring them before us, and I refrain from entering on them here. In these introductory remarks, I can only shortly refer to the principles on which, and the positions in which, He suffered. There are, I think, three. He suffered from man for righteousness and love, for the testimony He bore in that which was good, in which He bore testimony to and revealed, God: He suffered from God for sin. These two distinct characters of suffering are very simple and plain to every believer's mind. The third kind of suffering supposes somewhat more attention to scripture. It is said of Jehovah's ways with Israel, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them." This was (as to the last part, yet will be) most especially fulfilled in Christ, Jehovah come as man in the midst of Israel. But the sufferings of Israel, at least of the remnant of the Jewish portion of the people, take a peculiar character at the close. They are under the oppression of Gentile power, in the midst of utter iniquity in Israel, yet are characterised by integrity of heart (indeed, this is what makes them the remnant), but conscious of, for that very reason, and suffering under, the present general consequences of sin under the government of God and the power of Satan and death. The

deliverance which frees them from it not being yet come, the weight of these things is on their spirits. Into this sorrow Christ has also fully entered.

During His whole life, up even to death itself, He suffered from man for righteousness' sake (see, in connection with this Psalm 11 and others). Besides this, on the cross He suffered for sin, drank the cup of wrath for sin, the cup His Father had given Him to drink. But besides these two kinds of suffering He bore in His soul, at the close of His life (we may say from after the paschal supper), all the distress and affliction under which the Jews will come through the government of God-not condemnation, but still the consequence of sin. No doubt He had anticipated, and, so far felt it, as in John 12 the coming cross; but now He entered into it. It was, as to the point we are now on, as He said, apostate Israel's hour then and the power of darkness. But He was still looking to His Father in the sense of faithfulness. Nor was He yet forsaken of God. He could still look to man's watching with Him. What could watching do when divine wrath was upon Him? But the distinctive character of these kinds of suffering is clearly seen if we, as taught of God, weigh the psalms which speak of them respectively. Thus we shall see that, when He suffers from man, He looks, as speaking by His Spirit in and for Israel, for vengeance on man. Others too are then often seen to suffer with Him. When He suffers from God, He is wholly alone, and the consequences are unmingled blessing and grace. As to suffering from man, we can have the privilege of so suffering, having the fellowship of His sufferings. In suffering from God as under wrath, He did so that we might never have the least drop whatever of that cup; it would have been our everlasting ruin. In the sufferings He underwent under Satan's power, and darkness, and death, when not yet actually drinking the cup of wrath, besides what was due to the majesty of God in view of this see Heb 2:10), He suffered to sympathise with the Jews in their afflictions, which they come into through their integrity and yet in their sins. Every awakened soul under the law will find comfort in this. All these sufferings are entered into in the Psalms as to Christ and as to Israel. But the Jews passed into utter ruin, and loss of all the promises (save sovereign grace), and the remnant into their place of trial and sorrow as such, by the rejection of Messiah.

It is to be remembered that, though all three principles of suffering are essentially different, and all very clear and important in their character, at the close of Christ's life all coalesced and united in the sorrows of His last hours—save that I doubt not, in coming out of Gethsemane, the pressure of Satan's power on His spirit had been gone through and was over, but on the cross He suffered from man for righteousness, and from God for sin only. I am persuaded that this last, when fully on His soul, was too deep to leave it possible for the other or anything else to be much felt.

Having made these general observations, which appeared to me necessary to understand the book, we will now examine, with the Lord's help, its contents; and may He indeed guide both myself and my reader in doing it! If it does depict Christ's sufferings and His interest in His people on earth, it behoves us to search into it reverently, yet with child-like confidence, and to wait—as indeed we ever should—upon His teaching, that we may be led and taught in our search. That which speaks of what He felt should be touched with confiding love, but with holy reverence.

It is generally known that the Psalms are divided into five books, the first of which ends with Psalm 41; the second, with Psalm 72; the third, with Psalm 89; the fourth, with Psalm 106; and the fifth, with Psalm 150. Each of these books is distinguished, I doubt not, by an especial subject. Our examination of the Psalms contained in each will give the fullest insight into the character of the several books; but it may be well to give here a general notion of their contents.

The subject of the first book is the state of the Jewish remnant before they have been driven out of Jerusalem, and hence of Christ Himself in connection with this remnant. We have more indeed of the personal history of Christ in the first than in all the rest. This will be readily understood, as He was thus going in and out with the remnant, while yet associated with Jerusalem. I use Jewish here in contradistinction with Israel or the whole nation.

In the second book, the remnant are viewed as cast out of Jerusalem (Christ, of course, taking this place with them and giving its true place of hope to the remnant in this condition) The introduction of Christ, however,

restores them, in the view of prophecy, to their position in relationship with Jehovah as a people before God (Psalms 45, 46). Previously, when cast out, they speak of God (Elohim) rather than Jehovah, for they have lost covenant blessings; but by this they learn to know Him much better. I doubt not, the history of Christ's life afforded occasion to His entering into the practical personal sense of thus condition of the people, though, of course, less historically His place in general. In Psalm 51 the remnant own the nation's (more precisely the Jews') guilt in rejecting Him. [See Note #8]

In the third book we have the deliverance and restoration of Israel as a nation, and God's ways towards them as such (Jerusalem, at the close, being the centre of His blessing and government). The dreadful effect of their being under the law, and the centring of all mercies in Christ are brought out in Psalms 88 and 89, closing with the cry for the accomplishing of the latter. Electing grace in royalty for deliverance, when all was lost, is presented in Psalm 87.

In the fourth, we have Jehovah at all times the dwelling place of Israel. Israel is delivered by the coming of Jehovah. It may, in its main contents, be characterised as the bringing in the Only-begotten into the world. Jehovah having been always Israel's dwelling-place, they look for His deliverance. For this the Abrahamic and millennial names of God, Almighty and Most High, are introduced. And where is He to be found? Messiah says, "I seek them in Jehovah, the God of Israel." There He is indeed found. Thus there will be judgment on the wicked, and the righteous delivered. The full divine nature of Messiah, once cut off, is brought in to lay the ground for His having a part in the latter-day blessings, though once cut off. He is the unchangeable living Jehovah, the Creator. Then comes blessing on Israel, creation, judgment of the heathen, that Israel might enjoy the promises. But it is the same mercy which has so often spared them.

The last book is more general, a kind of moral on all, the close being triumphant praise.

Having spoken of the details of their restoration, through difficulties and dangers, and God's title to the whole land, the wickedness of the antichristian tool of the enemy, the exaltation of Messiah to Jehovah's right

hand till His enemies are made His footstool, and the earthly people made willing in the day of His power—we have then a rehearsal of God's ways, a commentary on the whole condition of Israel and what they have passed through, and the principles on which they stand before God, the law being written in their hearts.

Then the closing praises.

As this rapid sketch will have shewn (and the details I shall now enter on will shew more clearly still), there is far more order in the Psalms than is generally supposed by those who take them up as each an isolated ode to serve as the expression of individual piety. They are not connected, it is true, in one continuous discourse or history, as other parts of scripture may be; but they express in a regular and orderly way distinct parts of the same subject; that is, as we have seen, the state of the remnant of the Jews or Israel in the latter day, their feelings, and Messiah's association with them. These topics are treated in the most orderly way. The Spirit of God, who has superintended the structure, as He has inspired the contents of the whole scripture, has stamped the unequivocal traces of His hand on this especial part of it. Who collected these divine songs, the work of diverse authors, and written at different epochs, I do not pretend to say. This the learning of divines may discuss; but the result cannot, I think, leave a doubt on the mind of any one who enters into their purport as to whose power wrought in it.

I have already noticed generally the subject of each of the five books. The distinction of subject I found in them had led me to divide the whole Book of Psalms in the same way, before my attention had been drawn to the well-known fact of its being so divided in the Hebrew Bible. But this principle of order is carried out also in the details of each of the books. This order in the first book, and the contents of the psalms which compose it, are now to occupy us. It is, perhaps, the most complete in the general and characteristic view it gives of the subjects treated of in the Psalms, and so far the most interesting. The others naturally pursue more the details which carry out the general idea thus given.

It will be remarked that the following principle runs through it, and indeed, more or less, the others when it is applicable some great truth or historical

fact is brought forward as to Christ or the remnant, or both, and then a series of psalms follows, expressing the feelings and sentiments of the remnant in connection with that truth or fact.

Note #1:

This so distinctly characterises the Psalms that there are very few indeed even of those which are prophetic of Christ, where the remnant is not found. In the second book they are not, because that element is distinctly presented as the primary subject in the first: the connection being moral through His entering into their sorrows in grace, this is easily understood. And it is necessary to remember this, to account for various passages in which they come in, though partly applicable to, or used by; Christ.

Note #2:

It is in the point of death that the sufferings of Christ, whether for righteousness' sake, and that which He underwent to be able to sympathise with them when they suffer under the government of God, on the one hand, or atonement on the other-the latter prefigured in the burnt and sin-offering (compare Hebrews. 9), the former the expression and testing of perfectness in the meat-offering-meet. Christ suffered onward up to death. Then He also made atonement for sin. Some of the remnant may suffer unto death, as faithful under the trials of this government; but then, like Christ, they will obtain a better resurrection Of course, the atoning part is exclusively His.

Note #3:

I here use Israel as contrasted with the Assembly and Gentiles We shall see Judah distinguished from Israel when we enter into details

Note #4:

Compare Isa 48:22; Isa 57:21.

Note #5:

Hence the intimacy of feeling and peculiar interest of the Psalms. They are the beating of the heart of Him, the history of whose circumstances, the embodying of whose life, in relationship with God and man, whose external

presentation, in a word, and all God's ways in respect of it, are found in the rest of scripture.

Note #6:

Compare Pe1 1:11.

Note #7:

The state of the prodigal till he met his Father-the state of every soul, where the God who is light and love has been revealed in Christ; but redemption-work, and acceptance in Him are not known-there is confidence, but not peace.

Note #8:

I think it will be found that the first two books are somewhat distinguishable from the last three. The first two are more Christ personally among the Jews; the last three, more national and historical. And so Psalm 72, the last part of the first two books, closes with the Solomon reign.

Psalms Chapter 1

Psalms 1:1

psa 1:1

BOOK 1 - Psalms 1-41

The first book may be in general thus divided into distinct parts. The first eight psalms form a whole, an introductory whole to the entire collection of Psalms. This series may be subdivided into the first two, which, in a more particular manner, lay the basis of all that is taught or expressed in Psalms 3-7? and, finally, Psalm 8. The character of these I shall enter on immediately. At present I proceed with the order of the book. Psalms 9, 10 form the basis of the psalms which follow to the end of 15. They give, not the great principles which are at the foundation of all Israel's latter-day history, but the historical condition of the remnant in the latter day. Psalms 11-15 unfold the various thoughts and feelings which that condition, and the circumstances in which the pious remnant find themselves, give rise to. Psalms 16-24 present to us Messiah formally entering into the circumstances

of the pious remnant, the testimonies of God, the sufferings of Messiah, and the final manifestation of His glory when He is owned as Jehovah on His return. The remnant are found in this series as in Psalms 17, 20, and 23; but the main subject spoken of in them, with the exception of Psalm 19, which gives the testimony of creation and the law, is Messiah. Psalms 25-39 present to us the various feelings of the remnant under these circumstances. The whole book closes and is complete with the true source of the Messiah's intervention in the counsels and plans of God, the place He took in humiliation, and the blessing which belonged to him who could with divine intelligence discern and enter into His humbled condition, and that of the righteous remnant who were associated with Him (for so indeed they were, and this is what the Psalms especially bring out).

It is extremely important that, on the one hand, some psalms should personally bring before us the Messiah; but it is also important that the moral traits which form the beauty and excellency of His character in God's sight, and the attractive object which God delights to bless, should be brought before us also, that, on the one hand, we may delight in them, and, on the other, the indissoluble moral connection between Christ and the remnant may be brought into view. This connection of moral character and its display in Christ is very distinctly brought before us in the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. There blessing is pronounced on those who exhibit certain moral traits and qualities. These characterize the remnant; yet, if they be carefully looked into, they will be found to be morally a description of Christ Himself. Hence it is that we find Him and the remnant so mixed up together in many psalms, while some, as I have said, present distinctively the great foundation of blessing in Himself. We may apprehend also thus the difference of the associations of Christ with the remnant of Israel and those of the assembly with Him. Those of the assembly begin when redemption is accomplished, and Christ is already exalted on high. By the Spirit sent down from heaven the saints are united to Christ there; and their experiences as Christians flow from their position as united to Christ consequent on accomplished redemption, and then in conflict with the world.

Previous to the knowledge of redemption, and for that very reason, saints may now pass through experiences analogous to, and in principle the same as, those of the Psalms, and find, in consequence, great comfort from them; but their own place, as Christians, is in union with Christ. [See Note #1] The Lord's associations with the remnant are different. They pass through their trials before the knowledge of redemption or its application in power to them. Their experiences are not the fruit of union [See Note #2] with Christ. Christ has trod the same path, in grace towards them; not that they were united to Him, for He was alone; but He was afflicted in their affliction and oppression by the world. Death was before Him; the fruits of the penal government of God on them, manifested in the state in which Israel then was, He has entered into in grace, as we have seen. Suffering under wicked Israel, and oppressing Gentiles, as the remnant will in that day, He thus, by His Spirit prophetically, associates Himself with them in all their sorrows, and gives a voice by His Spirit to them on their way up to the discovery of redemption.

This makes the tone and purport of the Psalms very plain The "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" was on the cross when atoning work, the fruit of grace, was going on. Judgment on Israel was then suspended, and the Holy Ghost blessedly took this cry up by the mouth of Peter in Act 3:17, where the return of Jesus to them (as the children of the prophets, and the people in whom the blessing of the nations was to be) was proposed on their repentance. This grace was then of no effect; but in the last days all the fruit of that cross and that cry on earth will be made good on earth, when they have repented and looked on Him whom they have pierced. But this demand (as its final accomplishment will be also) was founded on atoning work, accomplished with God alone, which was based on grace and will bring grace; and not in connection with His sufferings from men, which bring judgment on men, His adversaries.

The Psalms constantly present to us this consequence of the wickedness of men against Christ, and the wish of the remnant that it may arrive. Such a wish will never be found expressed by Christ in the Gospels. He pronounces prophetic woes on others for hindering those that were entering in; but this is love to these souls. No call for judgment is found. In the Psalms, on the

other hand, no such passage as "Father forgive them" is found; though the fruit of grace, after His own deliverance from the horns of the unicorns, is most strikingly unfolded. The gospel was the good news of the visitation of the world and of Israel in love by the Son of God. The incarnation was Christ entering alone into this path of love towards all. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. Nought else was, nought else could be, revealed and unfolded then. It was what He was personally in the world. But the remnant of God's people are to go through these sorrows. The only possible means of their deliverance was the destruction of their enemies. We shall go up from the midst of our sorrows to meet the Lord in the air; we have no need to wish our enemies destroyed in order to our deliverance; we have in the gospel to do with grace, with a heavenly Christ that is not passing through sorrows, and with glory.

The remnant of Israel therefore call for this execution of judgment on their enemies. They have to do, not with that heavenly, sovereign, abounding grace which gives us a place with Christ clean out of the world (not of it, as He was not of it who was loved before the world was founded), but with the government of this world. Objects, no doubt, of grace themselves (and of mere grace, for they have rejected the promises in Christ presented to them in the truth of God, and have been concluded in unbelief that they might be the objects of mercy), still, they are the nation in whom the government of this world centers and in respect of whom it is displayed. Hence they await judgment, and the display of the righteous exercise of that government, and the cutting off of the oppressor and the wicked. Hence Christ (who has entered into, and will in spirit enter into, their sorrows, but was Himself cut off instead of seeing His enemies cut off, accomplishing a better and more glorious work) did not then ask for the world, but for those that were His, and that they might be with Him where He was. John 17 marks the formal contrast of the two systems. He would not call down fire from heaven would not execute righteous judgment. It is intimated indeed in the Sermon on the Mount that He was in the way with Israel (as in John, that the world had not known Him). Still, the Christian path is to do well, suffer for it, and take it patiently, as He did.

Hence, while passing through the sufferings, He could only prophetically be associated with the desires and aspirations after judgment which will have their righteous place when the time of public divine government of this world and judgment is come. Hence already in Psalm 2 this is the place we find Him set in. All the psalms are constructed in view of that. Thus the remnant in suffering, calling for judgment, reach back to Him who, though He never sought judgment for Himself, did suffer and will seek judgment for them and execute it Himself the center of that center of earthly government divine. He is seen by the prophetic Spirit in the same circumstances and the cry for judgment is heard. But it will be found that, wherever this is the case, as we have remarked, the remnant, other men, are found besides the Lord Himself.

In principle, any suffering Jew might so speak; only, as Christ suffered above all, the terms used in the Psalms, where the demands for vengeance occur, sometimes rise up to circumstances which have been literally true in Him in His sorrow on earth. But the point of departure of the feeling, and of the whole of what is said, is any godly Jew whatever in the last days. Into that Christ has entered. The proper or exclusive personal application to Himself is only true when it is proved by the circumstances and the terms of the passage. The point of moral departure is always the remnant and their state. He is merely associated with them in the mind of the prophetic Spirit; though, as to the facts, He entered into deeper sorrow than they all. Hence the immense importance of first of an seeing the position and necessary thoughts of the remnant in the Psalms.

Christ is merely associated with them and their position in grace; though He must be the center, and pre-eminent, wherever He is found. There is no possibility of understanding the Psalms at all otherwise. All interpretation is false which does not take this principle or truth as its point of departure. When we get into a prophetic and governmental order, even in the New Testament, we at once find the same demands of vengeance. It is judgment, and not grace. The souls under the altar in the Revelation desire that their blood may be avenged; and the holy apostles and prophets are called to rejoice over the destruction of Babylon.

This important principle then is to be laid down, that, in every psalm in which the godly remnant can have a part, that is, where the Person of Christ is not the direct subject (we have seen there are some, as Psalms 2, 102, and others, which speak personally of Christ), the whole is not to be applied to Christ, nor the psalm itself, in general, primarily. It belongs to the condition of the remnant, and speaks of it; and the principle of God's dealings with them through Christ is often given as the great example of the sorrow of the suffering godly. And hence, in the circumstances it refers to, it may rise up to such as literally depict those through which Christ has passed, so as to show the way in which Christ has entered into their circumstances. This last may be evidently the most important part of the psalm. But this does not change the principle. There may be psalms where the remnant are introduced collaterally as objects of blessing in result, but where a particular part may be evidently applicable to Christ, who only procures that result.

Psalm 22 has a distinct and peculiar character, because there Christ, while speaking of sufferings common in kind, though not in degree, to Him and the remnant, yet, as in them already, passes into that in which He was entirely alone. Indeed, the bringing these out in contrast is the very subject of the psalm. The godly have been, the remnant will be, in suffering. But the godly were delivered when they cried, so will the remnant; but Christ, perfect in the fullest sorrow, was not. So that Christ is really alone here; though, in order to show the contrast of this suffering with others in which saints could be, and had been, this last character of suffering is mentioned. The fact already mentioned (that, in the psalms expressive of the godly man's suffering from men, there is always the call for vengeance on the part of the speaker, and that in Christ's life as the Gospels give it to us, that is, according to truth as personally come into the world, and standing as a witness alone in the world He never does so, but the contrary when on the cross, and in His life-time forbids it, reproaching the disciples with not knowing what manner of spirit they were of) evidently has the most important influence on our judgment, how far and in what way we find the living historical Christ in the Psalms as a direct object.

To turn now to details.

The attentive reader will remark that, in the order of which I have spoken of the psalms of the first book, a principle I have referred to is fully exemplified: that is, that standard psalms with some great principle or fact come first, and then a series expressive of the thoughts and feelings of the remnant produced by these. Thus Psalms 1, 2 are followed by Psalms 3-7, which depict the state of things as felt by the Psalmist connected with Psalms 1, 2, Christ being rejected (closing with the result in Psalm 8); [See Note #3] then Psalms 9, 10, the state of facts in the latter days; Psalms 11-15, the various feelings of the remnant connected with them. Next, Psalms 16-24 Christ and the whole testimony of God, and Christ on the cross or atonement, having been set before us, the feelings consequent on this are depicted from Psalms 25-39. Sins are acknowledged for the first time in Psalm 25. Trials and deliverance had been spoken of before; but sins could not be confessed but in view of, and as building on, the foundation of atonement, when God really taught. So it will be indeed historically with Israel in the last days; though that is not entered on here.

I will now pursue in detail what the Lord may graciously afford me on the psalms of the first book. I have already said that the first two psalms lay the ground of the whole collection They show the moral character and position of the remnant; and the counsels of God as to Christ King in Zion; the law and Christ, the two great grounds of God's dealing with Israel. Psalm 1 is the description of the godly remnant, and the blessing that accompanies their godliness according to the government of God. This blessing, save in the heart-comfort and peacefulness of an upright mind, has never been accomplished; but it is given in the same manner as the portion of the meek when Christ presents the kingdom (Matthew 5). They shall inherit the earth; but the kingdom was not, has not yet been, set up in power. [See Note #4] (This is the subject of Psalm 2). Hence the Lord in Matthew speaks of suffering for righteousness sake. The kingdom of heaven is the portion of those who do; and if suffering for His name's sake, then heaven itself comes in, and their reward there is great. [See Note #5]

Note #1

Hence it is too that in the Romans we find experiences, because the soul is brought through the process which brings it into liberty; while in the

Ephesians we find no experiences, because man is seen first dead in sins; and then united to Christ exalted to God's right hand. The Epistle to the Philippians gives us, almost exclusively, proper Christian experience.

Note #2

Union belongs to the assembly's position alone, and is by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body. He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. Union in scripture is not attributed simply to life. (Compare Joh 14:20.)

Note #3

Psalms 1, 2, while it is the great result, is a mighty change in the position of Christ according to the counsels of God, which forms the basis of all that follows. It is referred to in John 1, in contrast with what Nathaniel says, which refers to Psalm 2. It is found in Luke 9 and parallel passages, and quoted in Ephesians 1, 1 Corinthians 15, and unfolded in Hebrews 2. In the close also of John's Gospel, we have the three characters noticed on which these psalms are founded. God vindicates in testimony His rejected Son. He raises Lazarus, and the Son of God is glorified thereby. He rides into Jerusalem as king of Israel. Then the Greeks come up, and He says, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified; but thus, to take this place in God's purpose, He must suffer and die. In chapter 13 consequently He begins His heavenly place. Psalms 1, 2 are in fact an introduction to the whole book. For His glory as Son of man, though prophesied of here when entered into is another sphere of glory. Still He is owned as such, as He ever called Himself such down here.

Note #4

But they are viewed as in the last days with the judgment at hand.

Note #5

1 Peter makes the same distinction, chapter Pe1 3:14; Pe1 4:14.

The following commentary covers Psalms 1 and 2.

In Psalm 1, however, we have simply the godly remnant on the earth. I say remnant, for the subject of the psalm is spoken of as characterized by individual faithfulness. The ungodly, sinners, and scornful, are around him. The law is his delight. He is a godly Jew, keeping apart from the ungodly, and is blessed, and prospers. Such is the principle of the psalm. But to make it good the earthly judgment must come in. There the ungodly shall not stand, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous then left free from the pressure of those who cared not for God. The psalm gives us the general character of the godly man, and the result under the judicial government of God.

Another element is then brought in. Jehovah knows the way of the righteous the way of the ungodly shall perish. It is a judgment on one side, and a moral approbation before that judgment come on the other, which is connected with the covenant-relationship of Jehovah with Israel. We have seen that Christ was on earth this godly man, and took His place among the faithful remnant, these excellent of the earth was perfect in that place. So far this psalm takes Him in; but that is not yet directly spoken of. Its subject is the character of the godly, and the result under the government of God, Jehovah, in the midst of His people. It is not yet suffering because of this. That is a circumstance which will come out in its time. It is the character of the godly man in presence of the wicked, and the result measured by the abiding principles of God's government. Jehovah knows the righteous others shall positively perish. Psalm 1 is the moral character of the remnant, their position in the midst of the ungodly, and the general government of God, and the connection of Jehovah and the righteous.

Besides this, remark that the psalm places both in presence of a proximate judgment, by which the wicked are driven away like chaff, and the righteous form the congregation; that is, it refers definitely to the remnant in the last days. The principles of this psalm, the character of the persons spoken of in it, and their position, are clear enough, and important as laying one great part of the basis of the whole superstructure of the Psalms God's government, and the trials of the remnant which seemed to deny the government here spoken of, which is only to be made good in judgment when the mystery of God shall be finished. We are on the ground of Israel's

place and of God's government according to the law, but the righteous distinguished from the wicked, and blessing, not the portion of all Israel as a whole, but of the righteous who will form the congregation when judgment is executed. Blessing is on the righteous, but these shall be the people when the ungodly shall be driven away as chaff. It is just the doctrine of the end of Isaiah (see Isa 48:22; Isa 57:20; Isaiah 65; Isaiah 66). Only in the last passage the judgment reaches the nations also.

A godly remnant of the people, delighting in the law, and the judgment of God, resulting in the congregation of the righteous, according to the true character of Jehovah, the wicked being driven away such are the first truths presented to us, the moral government of God on the earth made good by judgment in Israel. [See Note #1] Hence the last days are clearly in view.

The next great element of the condition of Israel and the government of God, is Messiah the counsels of God concerning His Anointed. Here the heathen are brought in, and form the principal subject of the psalm; and again we find ourselves in the last days, when Christ's rights will be made good against the kings of the earth and all opposers. But Israel is again here the center and sphere of the accomplishment of these counsels of God. The Anointed is to be King in Zion. The adversaries are the great ones of the nations, the evil reaching alas! to the heads of Israel who, as we shall find, "shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes" "an ungodly nation" (Psalm 43) and as Peter also himself has taught us in applying this psalm.

I have said that the counsels of God as to Messiah are the element here introduced to us of the ways of God treated of in the Psalms. But the psalm opens with the rising up of the nations to cast off His authority, and Jehovah's who establishes it, the apostate Jews, as we have seen, being engaged in this great rising alas! against God. The nations rage, the peoples imagine a vain thing the kings of the earth, and the rulers would break the bands of Jehovah and His Anointed together. But this rising only brings in wrath and displeasure, against which all resistance will be vain. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh, Adonai [See Note #2] has them in derision; Jehovah, in spite of all, has set His King upon His holy hill of Zion. Such is the sure counsel of God made good by His power. Man's presumption in resistance only brings his ruin.

But more is then brought out. This King, who is He? Jehovah has said to Him, "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee." It is One who begotten on what can be called "today," that is, begotten in time is owned Son by Jehovah. It is not then here the blessed and most precious truth of eternal sonship with the Father, though it is not to be dissociated from it, as if it could be without it, but One who the Anointed Man, and that holy thing born into this world with the title, by His birth there also, of Son of God is owned such of Jehovah. Thus, Paul tells us, this raising up Jesus (not raising up again) is the accomplishing the promises made to the fathers, quoting the psalm in confirmation. He quotes another passage for His resurrection and incorruptibility. Thus we have Christ born into the earth, owned Son of God by Jehovah.

But large counsels flow from this title. He has only to ask of Jehovah, and the heathen are given Him for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. He will rule them with a rod of iron and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel break with resistless power, ruling in judgment all that impiously and impotently rise up against His throne. But this execution of judgment is not yet accomplished. The psalm itself invites the kings and judges to submission and humbly owning the Son, lest they perish if His wrath be kindled but a little. He is Himself to be trusted; and who can claim this but Jehovah?

This summons to the kings of the earth is founded, remark, on the establishing the title of Christ to royal judgment and power on the earth. But is Christ set King in Zion? He was cast out of it and hung upon the cross for better blessing and higher glory, even that He had with the Father before the world was, yet cast out of Zion, to which He presented Himself as king. And as to the heathen and the earthly inheritance, He has not yet asked for it; when He does, in the Father's time, He will surely give it, and so His foes be His footstool. He declares (John 17) that He did not ask about it, but about those given Him out of it. The kings of the earth reign on, many bearing His name to be found yet in rebellion when He shall take to Him His great power, and the nations be angry, and His wrath come. No rod of iron has yet touched them the potter's vessel, broken as nothing, is not now their image. The Lord is not yet awakened to despise it. They reign by God's

authority. But there is no king yet in Zion. Christ has been rejected. Meanwhile we know He is Adonai in the heavens.

We have now the great elements of latter-day history, a Jewish remnant awaiting judgment, the wicked being still there, the heathen raging against Jehovah and His Anointed, He that sits in heaven laughing at their profitless rage, Jehovah setting Christ surely king in Zion, yea, upon His asking, giving Him all the nations for His inheritance (the submission of all to be enforced by resistless judgment). No sorrows here, not even as to the remnant in Psalm 1; but the counsels and decrees of God, and power such as none can resist. In a certain sense the kings of the earth did stand up and the rulers take counsel together, and as to earthly power and scenes succeeded. Christ was rejected and did not resist.

Where then is the remnant viewed in the Jewish scene of this world's history? What place have they? The great principles on which they stand are unfolded in the Psalms 3-7. It will be easily seen now how the first two psalms form the basis of the whole book, though the great body of its contents are the consequences of their non-fulfillment in the time to which those contents apply. Indeed in this the structure of the book resembles that of a great multitude of psalms the thesis stated in the first or few first verses, and then the circumstances, often quite the opposite, through which the saint passes to arrive at what is expressed at the beginning of the psalm. The five following psalms then unfold to us, in general and in principle, the condition of the remnant and the thoughts and feelings produced by the Spirit of Christ in them, in the state of things consequent in Israel upon His personal rejection. The circumstances in which they find themselves are not historically alluded to till Psalms 9 and 10. Hence these psalms give the working of the Spirit of Christ in them in the suited moral fruits, so as to display the state of the godly remnant, the holy seed that is in Judah when all is ruined. The principles of their state, the elements of feeling unfolded in it, are brought before us. There is not the strong expression which flows from the pressure of circumstances; but each moral phase is exhibited, the different feelings to be produced by the Spirit of Christ in relationship to God.

Note #1

More specifically in the Jews. The remnant of the Jews are spared and pass through the tribulation when two-thirds are cut off in the land (Zechariah 13). The judgment of the ten tribes is outside the land, and the rebels do not enter into it (Ezekiel 20). Israel is the general term of promise as applied to the nation.

Note #2

The Lord, but not the word LORD which represents generally Jehovah in the English version; but that which gives the Lord as an official relative title.

Psalms Chapter 3

The first, Psalm 3, gives the condition in general in contrast with Psalm 2, and the support and confidence of faith in it. The troublers of the godly man are multiplied, haughty, and triumphing over him as having no help in God; but Jehovah is his shield. He lies down in peace, and by faith sees his enemies smitten and their power destroyed. Salvation belongs to Jehovah, and His blessing is upon His people. Here again, remark, we find the latter days; and, though surrounded by his enemies, the godly man rests in peace and prophetically sees their destruction, and blessing on Israel. It expresses confidence in God in the midst of hostile numbers, and without resource. Christ has surely entered fully into this; but the place of the psalm is in the latter days, after proof of the non accomplishment of Psalm 2, at His first presenting Himself as Messiah to Israel.

Psalms Chapter 4

Psalm 4 differs in this respect from Psalm 3, of which we shall see other examples, that it is not simple confidence, but appeals to righteousness against the sons of men, who turn all the glory that belongs to the people of Jehovah, and especially to their king, into shame; but Jehovah has chosen the godly. The light of Jehovah's countenance is his resource. In Psa 3:4, and Psa 4:1, the experienced mercy of Jehovah is referred to.

Psalms Chapter 5

In Psalm 5 the cry of the godly is presented, and the character of God, as necessarily responding to that of the godly, is appealed to as necessitating

His hearing him and judging the wicked. If the godly love godliness, surely Jehovah does; if the godly abhor wickedness, surely He does. It answers to the "righteous Father" of the Lord in John 17: only there the answer was heaven; here, earth the necessary consequence of the difference of Christ's position on earth and that of the remnant.

Psalms Chapter 6

In Psalm 6 the remnant take another ground. They are oppressed, their soul vexed, the extremity of distress presses on their spirit, and their conscience not being cleared gives the fear that Jehovah might be against them in anger, and they look that Jehovah should not rebuke them in anger nor chasten in hot displeasure, which they had as a nation deserved but which the redeemed heart deprecates. But they look to be saved through mercy and saved from death, and call on the wicked to depart, for Jehovah has heard.

Psalms Chapter 7

Psalm 7 appeals to Jehovah, on the ground of the righteous and more than righteous dealing of the godly with their enemies, that Jehovah may arise and awake to the judgment He has commanded, and that thus, by the deliverance of the remnant by judgment, the congregation of the various nations of the earth would compass Him about. He would then judge the peoples, thus distinctly bringing out the future judgment. Another point is brought out here. The Lord judges the righteous man. If a man turn not, but go on in his wickedness, His wrath will follow him.

In all this we have the Spirit of Christ as it associates itself with the Jewish remnant, and in certain respects Christ Himself called to mind; that is, as passing through the circumstances which enabled Him to enter into theirs with truth (for we have seen that the effect on His soul personally was never what it is in the remnant). It is not His history, but His sympathy with them. There are two principles which connect Christ on earth and the remnant in the latter days: He takes them in grace into His place as on earth, [See Note #1] and He enters into theirs. As to the nature and principles of their life, the righteous have the sentiments of the Spirit of Christ as it would work in their state. Their appeals are the expression of this. And God allows their claims

(though they have not clear intelligence respecting this), furnishing in the Psalms expressions to them. It is a need and a desire too which the life that is in them legitimates to His heart who can take account of the ground Christ has laid for blessing, which makes Him righteous in forbearance, though the righteousness, as to the Jews, be not yet manifested. Their knowledge of what Jehovah is as respects integrity and oppression what He has ever been makes them look for a deliverance which seems impossible. [See Note #2]

There is another expression to note here "how long?" It expresses the expectation of faith. God cannot reject His people for ever: how long will He deal with them as if He did, and take no notice of oppression? Hence in one place He says, There is none that knoweth how long. As a whole, then, these psalms are a general exhibition of the state of the remnant of the Jews before God in the latter day, and the principles on which their souls stand as godly not as yet the strong outpouring of their feelings under the trial of circumstances. Is Christ then absent from them all? Surely not, or the Psalms were not here. Christ entered in sympathy into their condition, forms the faith of their hearts in it by His Spirit, is thus fully found in their low estate in the best way. His own personal feelings when on earth they do not express, [See Note #3] though He has learnt by His own sorrows in like circumstances blessed truth to have a word in season for him that is weary.

Note #1

See Mat 17:24-27, already when here below. This may seem in a measure anticipation: still, He revealed the Father's name to them.

Note #2

Lev 9:22-24 strikingly shows this. The acceptance of the sacrifice by God was not manifested till Moses and Aaron had come out after going in (Lev 9:24) Christ as priest and king. Then the people worship, but Aaron blessed from the offering before. We know by the Holy Ghost come out that the offering has been accepted, while the priest is yet within the veil. And hence the full value of divine righteousness.

Note #3

I do not mean by this that none of the psalms do. We know this is not so, as Psalm 22 notably shows; nor that no sentence is found in psalms which are not wholly of Him which does express feelings He had. I have referred to several in the course of these notes and stated the principle of their application already; but I here speak of the psalms I am treating of (Psalms 3-7).

Psalms Chapter 8

We have now come to Psalm 8 which closes this unfolding of the condition of the remnant, and the counsels of God as to the rejected Anointed of Jehovah. What is said is still by the mouth of the now delivered remnant. "O Jehovah, our Lord!" In vain have the heathen risen up against Him! "How excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." It is not now a king in Zion though surely that will be true; but a glory set above the heavens. It is not now merely the people of the great King blessed; but wherever the children of men dwell, Jehovah's name, Israel's Lord, is great. Is it now as setting the Christ on His holy hill of Zion? No, it is in setting the Son of man, not merely over the children of men, but over everything His hand has created in all places of His dominion. He is set over all the works of His hand; none are excepted. He only is excepted who put all things under Him. And who is this Son of man? It is one made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned now with glory and honor, and set (which the Epistle to the Hebrews, (Hebrews 2), shows us is not yet accomplished) over all the works of God's hands. [See Note #1] He could not be rejected as Christ (even if that title was afterwards to be made good by Him who laughs from heaven at the impotent rage of the kings of the earth) without His having a yet more glorious place destined to Him in the counsels of God the being gloriously crowned in heaven, and set over all things. Son of God and (Son of David) King in Zion was His title on earth. [See Note #2]

But His first rejection in this character throws Him out into this wider glory He had faithfully acquired too, what belonged by divine committal to the Son of man. Hence we see in the Gospels the Lord charging His disciples to say no more that He was the Christ (for He was now virtually rejected by Israel), because the Son of man must suffer and be rejected, delivered to the

Gentiles, die, and rise again (Luke 9). This was grace to Israel therefore; but to man, to man in Christ. Still Israel's Lord, Jehovah, was thus excellent in all the earth. This is that with which the psalm closes, as the proper result in the mouth of the remnant, though it was brought about by, and dependent on, a much higher glory. God, in the presence of the rage and ill-will of His enemies, and to silence the oppressors and the pride of the enemy, and of the relentless pitiless persecutors of His saints and people, has chosen the weakest things of the earth to perfect praise.

We have had an example of this a little anticipative example of this in the reception of the rejected Christ riding into Jerusalem. It shall be fully accomplished in the last day. Then He had witness given to Him, as Son of God in raising Lazarus, as Son of David in thus riding into Jerusalem, as Son of man when the Greeks came up. But then He must die to have this last glory (John 11, 12). In the last days all shall not thus fail on earth. It shall be accomplished in power. Meanwhile He is crowned with glory and honor in a better place. The psalm has an elevated and enlarged energy, as is suited to the great deliverance celebrated. Creation makes man so little in himself. What is he when we consider this vast and shining universe? But glance at Christ, and you see all its glories grow dim before the excellency of Him under whose feet all is put. Yea, they are lighted up again by that glory. Man is indeed great and above all in Him, the Son of man set over all things.

It is not the place here to enlarge on the use of this psalm in the New Testament; but it makes its use and import very clear. In 1 Corinthians 15 we see that it is accomplished in resurrection. In Hebrews 2 we see that the subjection of all things is in the world to come that they are not yet put under Christ's feet, but that He is crowned already with glory and honor. Ephesians 1 shows that the church is united to Him in this place of glory, but that does not at all enter into the scope of the psalm. It was part of the mystery hid from ages and generations.

Before passing on, I would briefly review the ground we have gone over in these introductory psalms. First, the remnant in the latter day is set before us; then the counsels of God as to Messiah, but the kings of the earth and the rulers setting themselves against Jehovah, and His Anointed. Yet He will be set king in Zion. Then Psalm 3 to Psalm 7 present the great principles on

which the remnant will have to walk under the circumstances in which they find themselves, Christ being rejected. They do not afford us the deep expressions of feeling which the extent of distress brings out, but only the sentiments produced by grace in their position, so far as they are needed to give a voice to the feeling of grace and faith in it: Psalm 3 to Psalm 5 confidence; Psalms 6, 7, bowing of heart under distress; Psalm 3, simple confidence; Psalm 4, appeal to the God of righteousness, and the path of the righteous marked out; Psalm 5, he cries to Jehovah, because He discerns between the evil and the good, and the wicked thus must be removed, and Jehovah bless the righteous that trust in Him; Psalm 6, mercy is appealed to, as, distressed in spirit, he entreats Jehovah not to rebuke him in anger, and Jehovah has heard him in his distress to save him from death; Psalm 7, he appeals against his persecutors, contrasting their conduct and his own towards them, but Jehovah judges His people.

These are the great elements of relationship between Jehovah and the remnant of His people in that day. How precious it will be for the remnant to have their faith sustained and given words to, above their fears, by these gracious witnesses of the Spirit of Christ, to guide them, and justify their best hopes, and calm their justest fears! It is not difficult, I think, to understand why Christ could not personally have the feelings and desires here expressed, and yet animate by His Spirit prophetically these same desires in the remnant, and enter into all their circumstances in sympathy. He came from heaven, and never lost the spirit that breathed there, though He was in the circumstances which earth brought upon Him; but that spirit is love. He was above evil in the power of love, and the consciousness of divine feelings which the Son of man who is in heaven would have, though He passed through every sorrow which the Son of man on earth could be subject to. He went through all the distress that sin and man's relentless enmity and the insensibility even of His disciples [See Note #3] could bring upon Him; but, while only the more sensible of it and feeling it the more deeply because He was perfect, He was above all the evil in love in the personal perfection of good. The remnant will not be so. They will be sustained of God, yet not only in the midst of evil, but under it, pressed by it, by the sense of guilt, by fear of wrath not merely the deep sense of wrath, but a personally sifting dread of it. There is no deliverance for them without

the destruction of their enemies; and they desire it. These are Jehovah's enemies too, and their desire is right (see Psa 6:5; Psa 6:7 Psa 6:10).

This Christ, as we have said, did not. He was above all this enmity in heavenly love and through known communion with His Father, whose will He had peacefully to do in known approval: until, in the end, He entered into that dark valley, where, for our sakes and Israel's, He was indeed to meet wrath, but there His converse was with God. As to His human enemies, He only says, "If ye seek me, let these go their way," and all were prostrate before Him, and it is His to tell them in peace, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." Hence Himself, love divine, passing through every sorrow that Israel or we may have to pass through, He did so personally in love. All was felt, but He was above the evil in love to men, being in perfect communion with heaven and its loving favor. In this He is a pattern for Christians, not for Israel. But He really went through all that the remnant can ever go through, yet was free enough from any power over Him to feel for others in it. This He does perfectly, and prophetically inspires the expressions of faith to those who, not knowing yet heavenly love and deliverance, are pressed under it; and gives utterance, by the prophetic Spirit towards God (as the Spirit would in such), to the sense of their oppression of heart which circumstances give occasion to, when divine favor and deliverance are not known.

No one can enter into another's sorrows under this oppression so well as one who knows the cause of it, and what that produces in respect of relationship with God, but is not in it. Christ has been in all their affliction, and felt it, but not felt, as to others, what those who are under it, and necessarily and rightly occupied with themselves, feel. He felt for His oppressors with heavenly love. His sympathy, being perfect, has, by the prophetic Spirit, entered into all the remnant's circumstances and feelings, and given divinely-furnished expression to them. The heart may rise up and say, It is an easy thing to give it by the prophetic Spirit if He is not really in it. I answer, He was in every part of the affliction to the full, and infinitely more than the remnant ever will be, having suffered, withal, that which they never will because He has. But does His having a better feeling in that into which He entered hinder His having perfect sympathy with them? It enables Him to

have it, as regards all the distress, which came from Satan, and from God when it was not merely a question of feeling for those from whom the distress came, when He was suffering Himself He went through all in the same way (only much more deeply) than they; and, as to a part and the deepest part of it, took on Himself what they never will have.

When the remnant are in the same sorrows, not knowing divine favor, He will minister to them, and through these psalms, all the feelings which God can look upon with approbation and listen to. He will conduct their souls through them. How often in trial when we hardly dare to express what we feel (for fear of offending God, in the uncertainties of a cloudy faith) does a text which utters our sorrows in a way which, being in the word, must be right, assuage the heart and give confidence in looking up to God! So will it be then.

Note #1

The littleness of man compared with the creation on high, gives occasion to the revelation of God's counsels in man.

Note #2

Compare Joh 1:49-51.

Note #3

Not once did they understand what He said to them.

Psalms Chapter 9

The following commentary covers Psalms 9 and 10.

In Psalms 9 and 10 we enter historically on the circumstances of the remnant in the last days in the land. The great principles having been laid down (the remnant Messiah trial in the midst of Israel through His rejection a path He had learnt in person glory in the Son of man), we get in these a preface as regards the circumstances, a laying of them down, that the scene of the exercises, the state of things which gives rise to these, and the deliverance wrought by the judgment of God, may be plainly before us.

We may remark here, in confirmation of previously expressed judgments, that the righteous man, Messiah, according to the counsels of God, but rejected (with the consequent sorrows of the remnant into which He thus enters), and in result glorified as Son of man, and set over all the works of God's hands, having been brought before us in the first eight psalms, we find ourselves at once (when entering on the historical detail of circumstances) in the last days, the righteous remnant being under the oppression of the wicked and the heathen. Messiah, in Spirit, in the oppressed remnant, owns the righteousness of Jehovah, in judgment, sitting on the throne judging right.

Remark the great difference here, in passing, between the celebration of the righteousness of God, sitting in the throne, judging right, and vindicating the righteous man from the oppressor, and Christ on the cross, who was not vindicated on the earth, but declares Himself forsaken of God (His enemies, outwardly, having all their will against Him), and then righteousness being established in a heavenly way, God's righteousness in setting Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." As regards this righteousness, He was taken completely out of the world, so that the disciples as in flesh, as was the case with the Jews saw Him no more. He had glorified God, and was glorified in God, as God has been in Him. The righteousness which judged the oppressor, though executed by God who alone is really righteous and has power, had its sphere and measure in earthly government, and in discerning the righteous and the wicked among men, the oppressed and the oppressor. It was connected with the righteous government of God. The clear apprehension of this difference is a key to the whole frame of thought in the Psalms.

Another point, it may be useful to remark, is this. In the English translation several words are translated people: Am [See Note #1] in the singular, people, or Ammi [See Note #2] my people (Israel): Goim [See Note #3] heathens or nations, that is, those outside, who are in contrast with Israel as the people of God. Israel is so designated to mark its guilt, Psa 43:1. Leummim [See Note #4] the peoples and nations in general on the earth, the various races of mankind; 'Ammim peoples in the plural, I think the

nations viewed in connection with Israel restored and taken into relationship with Jehovah.

To turn now to the psalms before us: Psalm 9 presents to us Jehovah, the Most High (the names of God which connect themselves with the Jews, and the millennial accomplishment of the promises made to Abraham), delivering the people by judgment from the oppression of the heathen, and destroying the wicked. The delivered Jew celebrates this goodness which has maintained the right and cause of the righteous. The Spirit of Christ speaks fully in this, as having taken up their interests. It is really His right. If the Jew has any, it is through Him. If they say it, He has put the words in their mouth. Indeed, if Christ had not entered into their sorrow, and given them these words, they could not have said, My right.

Let us consider this (as to circumstances) first leading psalm with somewhat more detail. The humble and oppressed one praises God with his whole heart, under the double name of Jehovah and Most High. [See Note #5] The turning back of his enemies is not merely a human victory. They fall and perish before the presence of Jehovah Elohim. But this was to maintain the right and cause of the godly one really the right and cause of Christ, who had thus thrown Himself into their portion in gracious sympathy. In Verse 6 (Psa 9:6) a very important principle is brought out for faith at all times, then to be verified in fact. The efforts of the enemy here are for time. He can destroy, if God allow, present prosperity. The Lord endures for ever. We have only to do His will by the way. He has always His way at the end. That will which we do by the way, perhaps in sorrow and suffering then, will surely reign at the end of the way. Destructions were now to come to a perpetual end the cities and their memory had been destroyed. Jehovah endures for ever.

We have heard of the patience of Job that was by the way; we have seen the end of the Lord that is the ground for faith. It walks with Him who certainly has the end at His command. He shall endure for ever has prepared His throne for judgment. He will judge the world universal in righteousness, and minister judgment to the peoples in uprightness. This was the public character of Jehovah. But there was a private part of His character, so to speak, the making of which however also public, is the great subject of the

psalm; and indeed with that first public one, the great subject of all the psalms. Both are known only to faith, but are celebrated beforehand. This second part is this: Jehovah is a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. The result is confidence in Jehovah at all times on the part of those who know His name. The intervention of Jehovah in that day in favor of those that seek Him will make good this name everywhere.

Another point is brought out also. Jehovah dwells in Zion as thus revealing Himself. His doings, what He does for the display of His name through judgment in favor of the remnant, are to be declared among the peoples [See Note #6] another word than that often used, and signifying, I apprehend, the peoples that He owns that they may be able thus to trust in Him. He is returned thus to Zion at the close. Verses 13-14, (Psa 9:13-14), are the cry of the remnant, and on the ground of mercy, that their hearts may praise Jehovah in Zion, as well as because of His judgments; Verse 15 (Psa 9:15) celebrates the judgment; and the moral, so to speak, is told in Verse 16 (Psa 9:16). Jehovah is known by the judgment which He executes. The way in which this psalm serves as a preface for understanding the scope of the book, and its application to the last days, is evident. Once seized, it largely helps in the intelligence of the whole book. In Verse 17 (Psa 9:17) the wicked, [See Note #7] be they who they may, Jew as well as Gentile, and indeed particularly the Jew, and all the nations who forget God, [See Note #8] are shown to be rejected and judged, and to have their place in Hades by judgment. And in this God remembers the needy, for the destruction of the wicked is their deliverance. Hence for this, for Jehovah to arise, is the cry of the remnant. This feature explains certain expressions in the psalms to which I have before alluded the demand for judgment. Compare the characters of the judged ones in Romans 1-2. Only there the wrath is from heaven, not governmental on earth from Zion; and a greater moral development will be found, as was to be expected, and not the external judgment of nations. [See Note #9]

The body of Psalm 10 depicts the state of things in the last days, until Jehovah arises to judgment, and more especially the character of the wicked, for he is known by his character, and is especially to be found in the Jew. Compare Isaiah 40-48 and 49-58: in the one passage, the question

being particularly idolatry and Babylon; in the second, the rejection of Messiah (the two capital sins which bring the Jews to judgment Jehovah, and His Anointed). The wicked in his pride acts upon that which is seen; as the righteous by faith on the character of Jehovah, faith in Him. The wicked boasts himself in his heart's desire, and blesses him (counts him happy, that is) whom Jehovah abhors. He pursues his plans without conscience, seeking to destroy the humble by craft, and reckons that God has forgotten him. How well Christ could help them here! The humble cry under the oppression. Why does Jehovah stand afar off, and hide Himself in the time of trouble?

They were far indeed from being where Christ was, yet the shadow, so to speak, of that sorrow was passing over them, but they could hope in God. So in Verse 12 (Psa 10:12). They call upon God to lift up His hand not forget the humble: why should the wicked contemn God? Jehovah has seen it and will requite; the poor committed himself to Him. Verse 16 to the end (Psa 10:16-18) celebrates Jehovah's coming in reply, and its results. Jehovah is King for ever; the heathen are perished out of His land. There is the public judgment; now the secret of the Lord. Jehovah has heard the desire of the humble. He prepared their heart, and then hearkened; and that hearing will be in judging, in being Judge for the fatherless and the oppressed, so that the man of the earth, he who had his strength and hope there, should no more oppress.

One or two remarks are required on both psalms. There are two parties, and in a certain sense three, besides the poor humbled remnant who wait upon God: the heathen (Goim), strangers to Israel, who oppress them, enemies of God; and the wicked, then more especially among the Jews, as we have seen. I have said three, because the wicked are spoken of in a double way. In general, indeed exclusively so in Psalm 10 and each time it is used in Psalm 9, except Verse 17 (Psa 9:17), it is in the singular. In Verse 17 (Psa 9:17) it is plural, to show that all of them will be cast down into Sheol. In the singular it is, I judge, characteristic; yet I doubt not, there will be one special wicked one The Lawless One, Th2 2:8; the Antichrist, but known here certainly by his character, not by a distinct prophecy of his person. The lawlessness is manifested, but not The Lawless One, and it is not confined to one. The analogy of this, with the circumstances in which Christ was in His rejection

on earth, is very plain, as is the case with all the forms of wickedness. The very Trinity is imitated in mischief in the Apocalypse. There is the city of corruption, as the bride of Christ; and so on.

Up to this, save as the Messiah of God's counsels was brought out in Psalm 2, the righteous man was given characteristically, and here it was necessary to characterize the whole party opposed to Jehovah and His Christ, though one may be the concentrated expression of this character. The remnant were to judge by this character morally. Next, remark, these wicked ones are judged with the heathen; they all come together under the same judgment. The wicked shall be turned into "Sheol," and all the heathen who forget God. So Verse 5 (Psa 9:5): "Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked." Psalm 9 is, as we have seen, the general view of Jehovah's intervention in judgment. In Psalm 10 we have particularly the position of the sorrow and trial of the remnant within. Hence we find the wicked (man), not the heathen until on the execution of judgment they are found too to have perished out of Jehovah's land, so as to identify the judgment with the general statements of Psalm 9. How completely this all answers to the history we have of the latter days, I need not say.

Note #1

Psa 3:6.

Note #2

Psa 3:8 (here "thy people," the same practically).

Note #3

Psa 2:8. The Hebrew references are to the Verses in Hebrew.

Note #4

Psa 7:7-8.

Note #5

These names are not without importance. One is the abiding name of God in Israel, His memorial for ever; the other, the millennial name of God

introduced by the judgments spoken of in the psalm. Compare Psalm 91 and Gen 14:19-20.

Note #6

Ammim, (Psa 9:11). Leummim, (Psa 9:9).

Note #7

Here in the plural. The difference is sometimes important, because, as Paul says, there is that wicked one.

Note #8

Had not liked to retain God in their knowledge.

Note #9

In Revelation 4 are found the characters of the seraphim as well as of the cherubim, as prefacing, I believe, the judgments there, as characterized as being according to the holy nature of God as well as governmental. It is true the application of Isaiah 6, where alone the seraphim are found, is to a governmental judgment, because grace preserved a remnant. But the incompatibility of Jehovah and uncleanness with man in himself is what the prophet sees.

Psalms Chapter 11

What the righteous remnant are to do when the power of evil is thus dominant in Emmanuel's land, Psalm 11 treats of. Psalms 11-15, as I have already remarked, give the thoughts and feelings of the remnant at that time (that is, consequent on the state of things spoken of in Psalms 9, 10). I will now trace the outline of these five psalms. Psalm 11 presents to us the righteous repelling the idea of quailing, as void of resource, before the godless wickedness of those who fear not God. He trusts in Jehovah. Still the wicked, with all will, seek the destruction of those who are true of heart. And if all human resource fails all that was a ground on which hope could be built for the earth, what was the righteous to do? Jehovah is as stable as ever. He is in His holy temple has His place on earth, which faith owns, let it

be ever so desolate; and His throne is in heaven: no evil can enter there, and it rules over all.

But there is more than this. If He abide in sure repose, because Almighty and far above all evil, in heaven, He looks on the earth He governs it, for this, not the assembly's heavenly portion, is our subject here and indeed in all the Old Testament. His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men. This is a most solemn and consoling truth for those in trial. But the ways of God in government are still further revealed. The Lord tries the righteous: so the history of Job, a picture of what happens to Israel, teaches us. The present state of things is not in any way a revelation of the government of God. Faith knows God has the upper hand, and that all things work together for good to those that love Him; but immediate government, so that the present state of things should show the result of God's estimate of good and evil here below, is not in exercise. If it were so, no evil could be allowed. The righteous would flourish, and all he does prosper. But it is not so. The assembly, meanwhile, has her portion out of the world, has her place of abode where Christ has gone to prepare her one. She suffers with Him and will reign with Him. But as to all His saints, He tries them; as to the wicked, whom He abhors, upon them He will rain judgment, snares, and fire and brimstone; for the righteous Jehovah loves righteousness, His countenance beholds the upright. Here is the clear ground for faith then, when the remnant are in trial. God beholds He tries the righteous, and will in due time execute judgment. It involves this: the righteous Jehovah loves righteousness.

Psalms Chapter 12

Such is the general basis of the godly man's confidence and walk; but they are not insensible to the evil, but can present it to the Lord. This is the subject of Psalm 12, "Help, Jehovah, for the godly man ceaseth." Jehovah will cut off the proud and deceitful lips. It is the character of the wicked. He knows no check, no bridle to his will says, Who is Lord over us? But it is just for his oppression of the poor that Jehovah arises. God's word, on which these had relied, and which promised help as the necessary witness of Jehovah's character to which they looked, is a sure and well-tried word. It will bear infallibly its promised fruit. There is nothing deceitful in it. Jehovah

will keep His poor from the generation of the wicked. But the wicked have full scope when the worthless are exalted on high.

Psalms Chapter 13

In Psalm 13 the righteous is reduced to the lowest point of distress as far as evil from men goes. It is as if God had entirely and definitely forgotten him. His enemy was exalted over him, and he taking counsel in his heart; but then he cries looks to Jehovah to hear lest he should perish on the one hand, and his enemy on the other have to say he had prevailed. But he is heard, and sings to Jehovah, in whose mercy he had trusted, and who deals bountifully with him at last.

Psalms Chapter 14

In Psalm 14 the evil has reached its climax in God's sight. What is ever true of flesh is now brought up under God's eye at the time when He is going to judge. Man rises up in pride before Him: yea, He judges because flesh does so. He looks down to see if any understand or seek Him amongst men; but there are none. A remnant indeed wrought in by grace, whom He already owns as His people (Psa 14:4), are there, and these the wicked eat up as they would bread they do not call on Jehovah. It is man's full-blown pride and wickedness; but all is soon changed: God is in the congregation of the righteous. Fear falls upon the proud, who but a while ago were scorning the poor for trusting Jehovah. The seventh Verse (Psa 14:7) shows us that all this is anticipative and prophetic, and where and how it will be accomplished. It is the desire of the godly one according to the intelligence of faith. He looks for it, note, out of Zion, not content till Jehovah establishes praise there. The people, too, remark, are seen as in captivity.

Then comes the inquiry who is the person that will have a share in the blessings of that holy hill, when the Lord shall have established the seat of His righteous power in Zion?

Psalms Chapter 15

Psalm 15 gives the answer he in whom is uprightness of heart in the path of the law. Remark here, that while the godly (when all is utterly dark, and wickedness has entirely the upper hand, and the foundations of human

earthly hope, even in the things that belong to God on the earth, are destroyed, and wickedness is in the place of righteousness) look above and see God's throne immutable in heaven, and thus all in heaven and earth brought into connection; yet, as to the point they look to, it is Jehovah in His holy temple and deliverance coming out of Zion; and so it will (see Isa 66:6). The immutable throne in heaven will establish in sure power the long desolate throne upon the earth. Jehovah will be in His temple, but will reign in the Person of Christ in Zion. This is Jewish deliverance and according to just Jewish hopes.

There is one important general remark to make here the sense of full relationship with Jehovah is enjoyed. Whatever the trial, whatever the condition of the remnant, the wickedness of the people, the oppression of the Gentiles in the land, the faith of the remnant contemplates its relationship with Jehovah. And hence Jehovah is viewed as in His holy temple, though there is as yet no manifestation of His power. We have not, therefore, the remnant as yet entirely cast out, nor is the power of Antichrist here contemplated as manifested. When he sets up his power, there will be open apostasy, and the faithful will be driven out. But the wicked and the Gentile, as such, in the land, are contemplated. We learn clearly from this psalm (11) that the wicked is characteristic. It is plural, except Verse 5 (Psa 15:5) where it is in contrast with the righteous.

These psalms, passing over the driving out from Jerusalem, go on in hope to another scene the deliverance wrought by Jehovah when He is indeed returned to Jerusalem; not the destruction of Antichrist by the Lord coming from heaven, but the driving out of the Gentile oppressors by Jehovah established in Zion. Hence all Israel is brought in (Psa 14:7). And their salvation comes out of Zion. Hence these psalms, as far as they refer to Christ, look at the time in which He walked on earth before His final rejection. They do not, save Psalms 2 and 8, directly refer to Him, but to the remnant. But in His public path on earth, He did, from His baptism by John Baptist, associate Himself graciously with them; as at the close He tasted in grace their final sorrows in the close of their history.

These psalms present to us the state of the remnant while still having their place among the nations who have not yet openly broken, in apostasy, with

Jehovah, but whose wickedness is in fact showing itself, and ripening to its highest pitch. And they pass over, in faith, to the time when Jehovah, seated in Zion, delivers His people, casting all the Gentiles out of His land, all Israel being restored from their captivity. The whole latter-day scene, except the last half-week of Antichrist's power, is before us. Jehovah is still in His place, as publicly owned. It was just thus in the Lord's days. In Psa 14:5, Elohim is spoken of, because it is not relationship which is there in question, but God Himself in His nature and character. Not man, or anything human, or even Satan's power, was there; but God was in the generation of the righteous.

Psalms Chapter 16

With Psalm 16 we begin a very important series of psalms those in which the connection of Christ Himself with the remnant is brought before us by the divine Spirit. In Psalm 16, Christ takes formally His place among the remnant. It is quoted by the apostle Peter to prove His resurrection, and the principle of it is referred to in the epistle to the Hebrews to show His participation in human nature. [See Note #1] After examining many critical authorities, I adhere to the English translation of the second verse. The third leaves the sense obscure, from not changing the preposition. "But to the saints" answers to "said unto the Lord," not to "extendeth not to thee." He says to the Lord, "My goodness... to the saints,... in them is all my delight." Thus this psalm has a most important and deeply interesting place. It is Christ taking His place in grace amongst the poor remnant of Israel of the servant to tread the path of life which none as in flesh had found in this world, and that leading through death to beyond it, where there was fullness of joy. He takes the place of dependence, of trust, not of divine equality. And He who says He does not, must have had title to do so, or need not have said it. He was taking another place. He takes the place of servant, and calls Jehovah His Lord. Nor was this all. He takes a place, however alone He might be in perfection and perfect in doing it, with the saints on earth. And this He does, not merely as a fact, but with the fullest affection. His delight is in them. He joys to call them the excellent of the earth.

Note further, it is not with the heavenly saints He associates Himself, nor are those of whom He speaks here united to Him in heaven, but He associated with them. Some may go to heaven by that path of life of which He has

Himself left the track, but His association with them, and theirs with Him, is under the title of the excellent of the earth.

We may further remark, that the whole psalm breathes this spirit, and takes this place, of dependence, so precious for the poor remnant. It is not, Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days that was taking a divine place. His body was a temple; He raised it up Himself. Here He leans as man on Jehovah in both perfect. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." Let us now consider the contents of this psalm in more detailed order. We have already noticed the first verses; but the principles are of the last importance, as presenting Christ taking this place, so that I return to them.

Messiah looks as man to God to preserve Him. He takes the place of man. It is not merely a Jew already there calling on Jehovah, but a man with God. He puts His trust in Him. The principle of trust Paul alleges in Hebrews 2 as a witness that Messiah was the true man. Next, He takes the place of a servant. He says to Jehovah for now He takes His place before Him "Thou art my Adoni, my Lord." This is a definite and distinct place. He moreover takes His place, not in divine goodness towards others, but before God in a man's place. My goodness, He says, extendeth not to thee. Thus He said to the young man who came to Him, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God." But though in truth alone, looked at in His relationship to man, for all were sinners, He takes His place with the remnant, the excellent of the earth. This He did historically, when He went to the baptism of John Baptist, with those whom the Spirit led to God in the holy path of repentance. They went first there. He associates Himself with them in grace. Still, we look on to the full result in the last days even here. He will not hear of any God but Jehovah. The sorrows of those who did should be multiplied. Jehovah Himself was His portion, and He maintained Him in the sure enjoyment of that which He was to enjoy in the purpose of God, and pleasant was the place where the lines had fallen to Him. It was Jehovah's inheritance on the earth that was His portion, and this is specially in Israel. Such was His portion; but then there was His path first. Here He blesses Jehovah too. His counsel was always His guide. He walked by it. The secret of Jehovah was with Him to guide Him; and away from men, when all

was brought into the silence of His heart and its inmost feelings, His own inmost thoughts were light and guidance. It is ever so when we are in communion with God; for, though in the heart (such thoughts are always His light in it, the fruit, and the moral fruit, of the working of His Spirit) there was the positive direction and guidance of Jehovah, and those inward apprehensions of His soul, the result of divine work in it.

In Christ of course this was perfect. It is well, while judging of all by the word, not to neglect this working of the soul, as moved and taught of God. The mind of the Spirit in moral discernment, is found in it. Besides this guidance, there was positive purpose of heart. He had set Jehovah always before Him. This only direction did He follow, and because of His being near, and at His right hand, He would not be moved. It was not self-dependence, but trust in Jehovah. This was indeed the path of life, though as yet unmanifested in visible power (compare Rom 1:4).

Hence He would rejoice through all, and pass through death with unclouded hope; His flesh should rest in it; as a man He did not fear it. Jehovah, whom He trusted, would not leave His soul in Hades, nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption. Soul and body, though going respectively to the place of departed spirits and the place of corruption, would not be left in the one or see the other. Jehovah would show Him the path of life through, but beyond, death. How blessedly He did so! It led up to brighter joys than Israel's blessing, among whom He had come to sojourn. There indeed the excellent of the earth could not follow Him (Joh 13:33; Joh 13:36; Joh 21:19). He must first dry up the waters of Jordan for them, and make it the path for them also where He was gone. For that path, since it led through death, must lead, if it was indeed the path of life, to what was beyond it the presence of Him, in whose presence there is fullness of joy and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Such is the blessed issue and result of the Lord's path across this world, where He took His place among the saints, and trod, in confidence on Jehovah (into whose hands He committed His spirit), the path which, if He took us up, must lead through death, and then found the path again in resurrection, and so as man up to Him with whom is fullness of joy. The Spirit of holiness marked the life of the Son of God all through. He was

declared to be such, with power, by resurrection; but, being man, passed up into the presence of God. The holy confiding life found its perfect joy there. He is (blessed be God, and the name of that blessed One who has trod this path!) our forerunner. [See Note #2]

Let us dwell for a moment on the connection of this with other scriptures, partially referred to. It is of importance, as showing Christ's position in the midst of Israel, and the difference of their associations with Him, from those of the saints of the assembly. And besides that, we get the divinely perfect feelings of Christ Himself in this position: He is in association with the saints in Israel; only He voluntarily takes it (that is, that into which they are called out in witness of their return to God). We see (Heb 2:13) that this association is with those that are sanctified. He makes one company with that pious remnant manifested thus for God. He is not ashamed to call them brethren, having taken up their cause and consequently become man, become flesh and blood, because the children whom God had given Him partook of it.

We see that He really became man, but to identify Himself with the interests, and to secure the blessing of the saints, [See Note #3] of the remnant, of the children whom God was bringing to glory, and who are distinguished from the mass of Israel, to whom they were to be a sign (see Isa 8:18). In this passage the condition of this remnant and the expectation of better days are considered. Leaving aside the assembly which is not the subject of prophecy, the passage passes, as we often see, from Christ's personal connection with the saints in Israel to this position and portion of these saints in the last days. This is with sufficient distinctness given us in this passage of Isaiah to help us much in understanding the way in which the Spirit of God does pass from the previous history of the saints in Israel over to the last days, leaving out the assembly altogether. Christ, in spirit, contemplates these only His connection, that is, with the remnant of Israel, and so far with the nation, and thus passes over the whole history of the assembly, to Himself again in the same connection with the nation in the last days.

"Bind up the testimony," He says (Isa 8:16-17), "seal the law among my disciples, and I will wait [See Note #4] upon Jehovah, who hideth his face

from the house of Israel, and will look for him." This was when He had become the rejected sanctuary and the stumbling-stone.

It continues to the final glory, when Israel shall possess Him as the Son born to them (Isa 9:6-7). If we do not abstract the assembly, it is impossible to understand the prophecies of the Old Testament. The assembly has her heavenly portion, but Christ can consider His relationship with His earthly people separately.

To return to Psalm 16, the reader will remark the reference to idolatry (one of God's great controversies with Israel) in the fourth Verse (Psa 16:4). From Mat 12:43-45, and Isaiah 65 we learn that the Jews will fall into idolatry in the latter days. Jehovah alone is acknowledged by the prophetic Spirit of Christ. It is after this is all done away that He will rejoice, in the days that are to come, in the portion which Jehovah has given Him with the excellent of the earth. The certainty of this hope is connected with the resurrection (which is a necessary condition to its fulfillment, and which the favor of Jehovah secures to His Anointed) in all the virtue of that power which will not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. Hence the apostle refers to the sure mercies of David; that is, to the accomplishment of all God's promises to Israel, as a proof that Christ was to rise from the dead now no more to return to corruption. Nothing can be more beautiful (if it be not His death) than the expression of the Lord's feelings given us in this psalm the expression by Himself of the place He has taken, and that with the saints. Jehovah is His own portion. How truly was it so! What other had He? Yet His delight was in the saints. Do we not see it in His disciples? With the first step of spiritual life in the remnant, shown in their going to John's baptism of repentance, He identifies Himself who surely had no need of repentance. So, as a faithful man, an Israelite, He sets Jehovah always before Him. So, even in death, He rests, in confidence, on Him for resurrection, that path of life through, and in spite of, death (and which He has opened for us), and there Jehovah, God, His Father's presence, is (He knows) the fullness of joy; at His right hand pleasures for evermore. This is the highest proper joy of the mind and Spirit of Christ; not glory, but the presence of God.

Note #1

The quotation in Hebrews 2 is literally from the LXX of Isaiah 8.

Note #2

Compare as to a special aspect of this, Joh 12:23-24; and the Lord's consequent place, in chapters 11, 12, 13, as we have seen, had given testimony to His place according to Psalm 2. See note on Psalm 8.

Note #3

Thus, becoming man, and through glorifying God in His work as man, He has also title under God's gift over all flesh.

Note #4

This is the passage quoted in Hebrews 2 "I will put my trust in him."

Psalms Chapter 17

The key to Psalm 16 was in the words, "In thee do I put my trust"; to Psalm 17, "Hear the right." In Psalm 16 we have seen the blessed path and working of that spirit of confidence. It is, though the same spirit works in the remnant, essentially applicable to Christ Himself in Person. Psalm 17 doubtless applies to Him also, but not so entirely so. It is on somewhat lower ground, though one on which the Spirit of God speaks. We see distinctly that it contemplates others, though not without Christ, in Verse 11 (Psa 17:11). "They have now compassed us in our steps." Still, Christ is found here: without Him none really could say to purpose, Hear the right. It is an appeal to the judgment of Jehovah, God, coming forth to vindicate the righteousness of Him that cries to Him. The godly remnant will be, in the main, delivered from their deadly enemies. Jehovah will arise and disappoint them.

Still, some will fall, even of the wise (Dan 11:35) Christ Himself, the perfect One, though for more glorious reasons, still in sympathy with His people, did. Hence the righteousness goes higher up than the present deliverance by God's government of the godly remnant on earth, to a result true of Christ, and a comfort for the faith of all those who may fall under the oppression of the enemy. "I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake up after thy likeness." This is fully true of Christ, who

is before His Father in righteousness, and is the very image of the invisible God He in whom He is displayed in glory. But He traces the path He trod as the righteous One on earth, in the midst of evil, and where He underwent the temptations of the enemy. First, there was perfect integrity of heart, and that in the most secret thoughts of it. There was purpose not to transgress. In obedience the words of God's lips guided Him; and thus the paths of the destroyer were never an instant entered on; the words of God's lips never lead there. This the Lord showed in His temptation in the wilderness. In the paths of Jehovah He looked to Him to hold up His goings. This is a part of righteousness in man dependence. He called on God, sure that He would hear Him. This is the confidence we have. Such was His path.

He applies it then as the ground of looking for the intervention of God's power to protect Him as He does those that trust in Him from the wicked that oppressed Him. Prosperous and lifted up as they were, Jehovah was His refuge when He did not yet interfere. But He looked to His openly doing so. Remark that the perfectness of moral character gives nearness of confidence and sense of preciousness to Jehovah. Even in us God would have this. We are of more value than many sparrows the very hairs of our head counted. Here it is perfect, and He looks to be kept as the apple of the eye that which is most precious guarded by him whose it is.

After all, these prosperous oppressors were but the hand of Jehovah men of this world, who got all heart could desire from the outward providence of God. But what a lesson among Jews, whose legal portion was blessing in basket and store and children! (Compare the parables of Dives and Lazarus, and of the unjust steward). Here then the breach with this world, and a place in glory in the next, are fully contemplated. Jehovah's face in righteousness, and likeness to Him when thus woke up into another world, were well worth the portion of the men of this world. But here, mark, death and another world are contemplated, though deliverance is also (the remnant being more distinctly brought in). It is the same as we have seen in Matthew 5, where also both are contemplated. We have thus, in this first book, the Jews at the end of days, but in circumstances analogous to what Christ's life was, that is, moving as godly ones in the midst of the wicked people.

Psalms Chapter 18

The following commentary covers Psalms 18 and 19.

Psalm 18 presents to us the connection of Christ, and particularly of His (not atoning suffering that is found in Psalm 22, but His) entering into the sorrows of death, with the whole history of Israel. It is the connection of the deliverance of Israel and the final judgment executed in their behalf on the earth with the title Christ had to that intervention. No doubt the atonement was absolutely necessary to this, but it is not on that side that His sufferings are looked at here. God delights in Him and answers Him according to His uprightness, and delivers the afflicted remnant, into whose sorrows He has entered, with Him. Christ is the center, in a word, of the deliverances of Israel the cause of their deliverance from Egypt, and of their complete and final redemption by power in the latter day, and then their personal Deliverer too. He is dependent on Jehovah, is heard, and His sorrows are before us; but at the close He works in the power of Jehovah the deliverance of His people, and then is the full witness of God's mercy (chesed) to His Anointed David and His seed for evermore. Mercy here is not simply such as we would speak of to sinners, but favor and grace shown and enjoyed, so as even to be used for piety in man. It is particularly celebrated in Psalm 89, where, from these mercies centering all in Him, the term is applied to Christ in person. He is the chasid (Psa 18:19). Hence the blessings conferred on Israel at the close (and indeed on all who enjoy them) are called by the same word "the sure mercies of David," confirmed by an everlasting covenant, and indeed, as the apostle shows us, secured by the resurrection of Christ, making their connection with His sorrows of death in this psalm very plain.

This psalm presents us also with a direct scriptural proof and illustration of a most essentially important principle as to the nature of all the psalms, giving a key to their general character and form. We know from the book of Samuel that the occasion of this psalm was the celebration of David's deliverances from the hand of Saul and of all his enemies. But it is evident that the language of the psalm in no way stops short at any events in the life of David, or that in its main purport the Spirit of God contemplates even what happened to that already anointed sufferer, who was the occasion of

the psalm. The Spirit of God takes up the circumstance which has present personal interest for him whom He uses as prophet merely, as the occasion to bring out the larger and wider scene of which Christ alone can be the center, giving a meaning to the whole, in respect of which the more immediate circumstance only forms a partial, though perhaps a most interesting, link in the chain which leads up to the full display of God and His ways in the great result. So it was with all the prophets, only here more personally predictive. Sennacherib's invasion, for example, is the occasion of bringing on the scene the Assyrian of the latter days. Thus prophecies had an application of the deepest interest at the time and became the instrument of the present government of God, but were also the revelation of those ultimate events on the earth in the same peoples and nations in which the government of God would be fully and finally displayed. They are of no private interpretation. See Pe2 1:20. They formed part of the great scheme of divine government.

In the Psalms the writer and immediate occasion sometimes almost wholly disappear, are never the main object, but are not to be lost sight of in the expressions used as the utterance of personal feeling, and which are not the revelation of objective facts. In the latter case the circumstances of the writer have little application. The Psalms necessarily bring in the speaker more, though believers find that the Holy Ghost used the speaker's feeling to provide for the hearts of others, yet commanded and wrought in them, and led the writer by His power far beyond anything that the occasion would have suggested to his own mind. The feeling, in its nature suited to the event which might give rise to the psalm, was only the occasion of the Holy Ghost taking the writer up to provide a divine record to guide feelings in future days, or to reveal those of Christ as taking up the cause of His people. They may be those of the speaker too, as in simple piety was often the case; but in all cases it was the Spirit's provision for future days, or a prophecy relating to Christ Himself and the part He takes in those dealings of God with Israel, and going on, looking at the book as a whole, to the full and undisguised celebration of the results.

The psalm, as we have said, takes in the whole history of Israel, and speaks as in the time when deliverance from the pressure of hostile power is

already accomplished. But it celebrates especially Jehovah Himself the Deliverer, and still declares the speaker's dependence on Him. This is the thesis of the psalm. It then, as is the usual form of the Psalms, goes through all the circumstances which lead the soul up to what is celebrated in the first Verse or verses. Christ is seen, the sorrows of death compassing Him and floods of ungodly men besetting Him, the sorrows of Hades upon Him and the cords of death about His soul. I have no doubt the letter of this was the expression of what David had felt, as indeed Verse 50 shows (Psa 18:50). Still, as I have said, this was merely the occasion. The substance of it applies to Christ. He passes in His mind, as in Gethsemane, through the sorrows of death. This is the groundwork laid for all the rest.

The next point is dependence and entreaty. In His distress He calls upon Jehovah and cries to His God. He hears Him as in the midst of Israel, His cry comes before Him Now comes the results. Christ but represented Israel here, for we have nothing to do with the assembly here. From Verse 7-16 (Psa 18:7-16) we have the deliverance of Israel from Egypt by the mighty acts of Jehovah. But these were not all Israel's difficulties The power of his enemies was to be annulled, who were stronger than he as regards flesh. This also was accomplished, and he was brought into a wealthy place. But this introduces another principle the righteousness in which God delighted; and which, while found absolutely and perfectly only in Christ as a living man, yet characterizes the remnant of Israel in whose hearts the delight in God's law is written. This principle is brought out from the latter part of Verses 19-26 (). Christ is the foundation of this, but it is as entering into the condition and sorrows of His people. He is the Israel in spirit; and hence, while all the value of His perfectness is before God for them, the perfectness of that One whose whole life, as identified with the remnant, was well-pleasing to Him, yet we must take the place and state of the remnant, as of David himself. For, though Christ entered into this place of the remnant in His own perfectness, to give the value of that perfectness to them before God, as agreeable in His sight, yet the state of those to whom it was to be applied is that which is substantially before us in the psalm. Hence we find, "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

This is most important in judging of the literal use of the Psalms. Christ could have said, "from iniquity"; but personally, "from mine iniquity," He could not. But the Spirit of godliness (of Christ) in the remnant thus working guards them from following the flesh. They own, that if Israel goes astray (and so they did all but universally in principle), this wickedness was theirs, in themselves; but they were kept from it. Now this is truth in the inward parts just what God wants. It is the government of God which we have here distinctly brought out in its unchangeable principle (Psa 18:25-26). Now Christ, having taken up their cause, as associated with them, with these "excellent of the earth," all the value of what awakened God's delight in Him, and which, by grace, animated them, was their place of acceptance before God, though the atonement was the final ground of it. But in their case this integrity and divine inward nature were shown in keeping themselves from their natural course. But there was another part of this government, tender care of the afflicted ones, saving them and bringing down all man's pride (Psa 18:27). In darkness there would be light. To the righteous there arises light in the darkness.

Now another scene dawns on us the coming in of power in their behalf. And, as Christ had taken the sorrow at the beginning, and then we had the remnant in their own condition, yet Christ not separated from them in the way of interest and association (for it is not union here, that is the assembly's portion), so here He must take the power in Person too; just as in Mark He was engaged in the sowing and engaged in the harvest, all the intermediate time going on without His personal intervention or seeming care, though the crop was always His. God's word had stood good all through, and Jehovah Himself was a buckler to those that trusted in Him. But now He gives strength and victory to His anointed for Israel from Verse 29 to the end (Psa 18:29-50). Doubtless the language is that of David, but it is substantially the introduction of the kingdom of Christ.

A very few remarks will suffice to give the details, this general character of the latter part of the psalm being seized. The general strain is rest less victory. But in Verse 43 (Psa 18:43) there are particulars to be noted. Three classes of persons are here introduced: the people He is delivered from their strivings; the heathen He is made their head; then a people, not before

known with which He had not been in relation as in Israel, shall serve Him. That is, Messiah delivered from the strivings and revoltings of ungodly Jews; made the head of the heathen; and then a people hitherto strangers should serve Him become now a people to Him. Submission will be immediate, so evident is His glory and power now. And even where there is no sincerity, or at least no proof of it, they will at once serve, bowing down to Him. This is the introduction of what is millennial. Here Jehovah is again recognized.

We return, so to speak, to the original thesis of the psalm, having arrived with Israel, or the Jews at least, across all the difficulties of the way. I do not see the Antichrist here. The only word which might seem to speak of him is in Verse 48 (Psa 18:48) the man of violence; but I apprehend it is an enemy from without. Hence he praises among the heathen. The destruction of Antichrist would make him praise among the Jews. Here, it is to be remarked, though clothed with strength by God, Christ is seen as the dependent man, and on earth, whether suffering or victorious. We find Him (as we may have seen from the study of the details in Verses 4-6 (Psa 18:4-6), at the beginning of the psalm) in His sorrow and trial; and though David be partly in the scene, yet substantially Messiah again from Verse 32 (Psa 18:32). Between the two, it is Israel, first delivered as a nation, then in sorrow and calamity. Then the principles of God's government are stated, and the deliverance comes in. It is very interesting to see, after the Person of Messiah has been introduced, and His association with the godly remnant shown, the whole public history of Israel dependent from first to last on His interest in them, His having entered into their sorrows, afflicted in all their afflictions.

We now come (it is just the same order of thought in John 17) to the testimonies given in the world or to Israel. Psalm 19 gives us two: the creation, particularly that in the heavens, which is above man and has not been corrupted by him (this a testimony to God as such). Then the law (Psa 19:7). This is the law of Jehovah. Here, in lowliness, the godly Jew takes two views of sin. First, he cannot tell his: so much lies hidden from him. Here he desires to be cleansed. Secondly, presumptuous sins: from these he desires to be kept. Thus he would be kept from any falling away from Jehovah.

Psalms Chapter 20

In Psalm 20 we have, in the midst of sorrows and evil come in as regards the two preceding testimonies, the faithful witness, the living witness Himself. He is seen in the day of His distress, for He is come down into the midst of an ungodly people. The remnant is prophetically designated by the fact that they in heart enter into His distress, assured that Jehovah will hear His Anointed.

Conscience then characterizes the remnant, truth in the inward parts in presence of the law, and taking that law spiritually; interest of heart in Messiah, when He is the despised and rejected of men. Still we are in Israel, and the help is sought from the God of Israel, and still as dwelling amongst them, having His sanctuary there.

In Psalm 16 the Lord identified Himself with the remnant. Here they associate themselves in heart with Him thus suffering, and in His conflict here, though they may see as but the outside of it, yet be assured of His acceptance with Jehovah. They look for His offerings to be accepted, the desire of His heart and His counsels to be fulfilled, all His petitions accomplished. Their joy is in the full deliverance of this blessed but dependent One. In Verse 6 (Psa 20:6) we have the assurance of faith as to it, that from heaven itself Jehovah has heard, the mighty are fallen, the poor of the flock are raised up and maintained before Him.

In Verse 9 (Psa 20:9) Messiah takes another place. While Jehovah had delivered Him as the dependent One in the day of His distress, the remnant now look to His hearing them when they call. Jehovah is still looked to as the Savior, but Messiah the king is invoked. They now know that the Anointed is exalted. No part of scripture opens out the Person of Christ as the Psalms do, unless the first two chapters of Hebrews, which quote and serve as a key to them: here Messiah connected with the remnant in the dependent One, but exalted too as the king to be invoked of Israel. A little farther on we shall find that He is Jehovah Himself. I see no reason to alter the text according to the Septuagint, followed by others, such as the Latin. The Targum, and Syriac, and all Jewish interpretations, read as it is read in English. The other reading is, "Jehovah save the king hear us," etc. Already in Psalm 21 Jehovah and the king are associated in judgment, as indeed we

have seen they were already in Psalm 2. It is the very main point of instruction in the Psalms the mystery of the manifestation of Christ in flesh.

Psalms Chapter 21

In Psalm 21 we get the full answer to Psalm 20 and its desires, in the exaltation of Christ, throwing its light back on the true character of that psalm. The king rejoices in Jehovah's strength and exults in deliverance through it. What this is is then unfolded. The faithful longing of the remnant was that Jehovah would grant the suffering Messiah according to His own heart, that He would fulfill His petitions. Now in the exaltation of Christ they can say the Spirit says for them Thou, Jehovah, hast given Him His heart's desire, and not withholden the request of His lips. Nay, He was met by Jehovah's free and willing love towards Him, with the blessing of goodness, and was gloriously crowned by Him. But what had really passed and been done is more minutely revealed. He had asked life of Jehovah (compare Hebrews 5). He gave it Him, but it was length of days for ever and ever, the abiding eternal life of the risen glorified man. That was the answer to the cry of the suffering Messiah when death was before Him. And this is clearly seen in what follows. His glory is great in this deliverance by Jehovah's delight. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Jehovah has laid honor and majesty upon Him. He has made Him most blessed for ever and glad with Jehovah's countenance. Such was the suffering Messiah's deliverance, the divine answer to His cry, His being glorified as the suffering man. It is not the wrath of God which He is here viewed as undergoing; on the contrary, help is looked for from Jehovah when He is brought low. We have already seen the result of this judgment on His enemies. Man's enmity and devices are seen. Man's judgment follows. The king's right hand finds out all His enemies. Jehovah shall swallow them up. It is not His atoning sufferings which are seen here, but the mischievous devices of men. Hence His sufferings do not bring peace, but judgment.

We have here, then, Christ suffering and crying to Jehovah; Christ exalted as man, crowned with glory and honor; Christ executing judgment on His enemies. In the three psalms we have the witness of creation, the witness of law, and the Messiah's (the Faithful and True Witness) sufferings and exaltation the we final witness of the righteous ways of God. This must be a

revelation of all importance to the remnant in the latter day for suffering or for assured deliverance. Christ has suffered as man from men and for faithfulness; and judgment on man will be the consequence; meanwhile He is exalted on high. But He has suffered for sin from God. The facts connected with this last suffering are unfolded to us in Psalm 22 with its results also.

Psalms Chapter 22

Here the sufferings of Christ have another and deeper character. We have before us that great work which is the foundation of all the blessing developed in the other psalms, and of every blessing and eternal glory, making the interest He takes in the saints possible, because it makes it righteous, and the very way of glorifying God. This psalm, as it has been already observed to be a common principle of their structure, gives us the theme in Verse 1 (Psa 22:1). Christ had suffered from man from men alike heartless and violent: dogs had compassed Him, fat bulls of Bashan closed Him in.

But if the measure of this was extreme, and felt more and otherwise than ordinary sufferings from men because it was wholly unrighteous and for Jehovah's sake, for whose name He suffered reproach; yet others had in some measure born the suffering of violence and reproach from heartless men too, and for Jehovah's sake. If He in grace was the leader and finisher of faith, others through grace had trodden it was their granted privilege, but His willing grace some steps of that divinely marked-out path. But they trusted in Jehovah and they were delivered. Jehovah never left or forsook them. He had promised He would not. They knew in their consciences that He had never failed in one good or gracious thing He had promised.

But here was a suffering out of the reach of promise, yea, which was to lay the ground of its righteous accomplishment. It was a new scene, which none had been ever like, nor ever will be, in the history of eternity; which stands alone, The Righteous One forsaken of God. It cannot be repeated a second time; it would have lost its character and the repetition destroy or deny the witness of the first God perfectly glorified, morally glorified, about evil; He has not been, if it has to be repeated. It is once for all, complete and perfect.

The nature of God has been made good in testimony, morally, in the universe. How should that be repeated? I say again, if it had to be, neither had done it; but it is done. The divine glory is perfectly, eternally, made good. But for this in respect of good and evil that righteousness and grace, or love, where feebleness and evil are, should be made good all that God is against evil must be verified and made good. Against whom? Who should endure it? Against the sinner it were everlasting misery, nor was love then displayed; what God is, not manifested. But the Lord gives Himself for this; He who was able to bear it, and, in the lowest humiliation of those He took up, to accomplish it in their nature, He bears in His soul all that God is against evil. Tremendous moment!

It is this alone which makes us in any way apprehend what righteousness and judgment are. This is what is shown to us here. It is shown in the utterance of Christ, showing the fact and His sense of it. What it was in its depths no human heart can fathom. It is the fact which is given here, but as felt by Him. Yet we see the consciously righteous One, but the perfectly submissive One; the sense of His own nothingness as to His position, of the certain and immutable perfectness of Jehovah. He is righteous; He can say, "why?" submissive: "yet thou holy"; no working of will, calling God's ways into question; the clear and perfect state thus, which sees God's perfectness, come what will. For it was the one righteous One who had glorified God in all His ways, an exception from all God's ways in righteous grace with such. He is forsaken, cries, and is not heard. He is a worm and no man. But this could not last for ever, no more than He could be holden of death, having perfectly glorified God in going to the close of trial and awaiting His time. He who was the very delight of Jehovah all through could not be heard till all was accomplished; though more gloriously, and deservedly more gloriously, Jehovah's delight than any living righteousness, though ever so perfect, could claim to be. In that living righteousness He had glorified God about good, perfect in His obedience as man, and perfect in manifesting His Father's name of grace, declaring what God was, cost what it might. The reproaches of those that reproached God fell on Him. But now He glorified God in the place of evil as made sin. This, as we have seen, stands alone. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again." (Joh 10:17) There in the place of sin before God,

that is, as made sin, yet in that wherein obedience was absolute and perfect in entire self-devotedness to God the contrary of sin where God's righteousness found a motive for love, yet where it was made good in forsaking Him; there the foundation was laid of everlasting righteousness and everlasting blessing; there God perfectly glorified, the foundation laid for the accomplishment of all His counsels in glory. [See Note #1]

Then, when the work is complete, the moral work of glorifying God, He is heard from the horns of the unicorn. Man and all around was hidden, by a darkened heaven, from view, when all of God, and of the power, and powerlessness, of evil as against the sovereign goodness and righteousness of God, was brought to this divine issue, and God glorified about it. And all is between the soul of Him who is an offering for sin and the righteous Jehovah. And it was closed. He was perfect, had secured the glory of God, had glorified Him when He could not be heard, and was heard and it was finished. He goes down indeed into the grave, that trusty and irrefutable witness that all was closed of this great question of which death was the appointed witness, but only to rise without one element wanting that the work of propitiation and of glorifying God in respect of sin was completed, and the victory over every and the last enemy fully won. He was heard. Who could call it in question who knew that He was risen? And now what remained? Not sin; it was as regards the work to be accomplished for that purpose wholly and for ever put away as in God's sight though not in full result yet, but perfectly for those who had a part with Him. [See Note #2] Wrath for such? The cup had been drunk. Judgment against the sin, or of the sinner for it, where faith is? He had undergone it. The power of death upon the soul? It was overcome. Of Satan who wielded it? It was destroyed. But there was the full light of the Father's countenance and love, the delight of God in divine righteousness, and for us. Into this relationship Jesus now entered as established there in righteousness on the ground of what He had accomplished to glorify His Father; not merely in the everlasting delight which God had in His Person. Hence it was immutable for those who had a part with Him in this place, and for eternal blessedness in the new heavens and the new earth. The place was won for sinners in the putting away of their sin, and founded on the righteousness of God Himself. Into the full

blessedness of this name (that is, true relationship with God revealed according to it) He now entered as man. [See Note #3]

But He had His brethren those at least, with whom He associated Himself and whom He had at heart first of all after His Father's glory. He was entered into this cloudless place of delight. What remained for His heart was to declare the name which expressed it, and to know which was the being brought into it, to His brethren. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." (Heb 2:12) And this most precious witness of His love was exactly what He did after His resurrection: "Go, tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God." (Joh 20:17) Remark, He was heard from the horns of the unicorn. It was on the completing the work, or His subjection of soul to death as divine judgment, that He was heard. When the obedience unto death was complete, hearing became righteous and necessary. The resurrection was the proof to man. But He could say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," (Luk 23:46) and deliver it up to Him, and assure the thief he should be that day with Him in paradise.

I have already remarked an infinitely important characteristic of this psalm, so opposed to those which speak of Christ's suffering from man: I mean that all is grace no word of judgment. Who was to be judged, when God had been the One to inflict the suffering the hiding of whose face rather was the suffering and the men who had a part in it, believing, had their sins put away by it? It was as to them the judgment, and the judgment executed and passed. Hence what follows is the wide out-spreading of wave beyond wave of blessing and nought else. We may remark, however, that the blessing here is all on earth: so much does the Lord confine Himself to Israel and the Jews in the Psalms. And though we have seen His own resurrection, and we shall see His ascension brought in, and the path of life thus opened up to faith into the presence of God Himself, yet the heavenly place for the saints is not unfolded. We know well that the truths on which the blessing is based carry us farther; but the psalm does not speak of them.

"In the midst of the congregation will I sing to thee." The remnant then gathered is the first circle gathered into the place of praise; then millennial blessing all Israel. Those that fear Jehovah are to praise Him. Men fear Jehovah, and only fear; but this work makes those that fear praise. Those

that feared Jehovah in that day and suffered might take courage, for Christ was their warrant for deliverance and confidence (and could be, having made atonement), but for positive deliverance also; for Jehovah had not turned a deaf ear to the affliction of the afflicted, nor hid His face from him. When He cried, Jehovah heard. He had been for a time there: that had only wrought atonement. And now, heard when that was accomplished, He could assure others of deliverance also. The meek of the earth should now eat and be satisfied, and be at peace. But the blessing would not limit itself to Israel. All the ends of the world would remember themselves, and turn to Jehovah, and worship before Him; for the kingdom will then be Jehovah's. All should bow before Him. Nor was it confined to that generation: to the people that should be born those should declare that Jehovah had done this.

I cannot, in explaining the Psalms, meditate on the wonderful work on which this psalm is founded. I say founded, because the psalm speaks directly of the feelings of Christ under it, rather than of the work itself. I can only desire that this constant and exhaust less theme of the saint may have all the power on my reader's soul, as upon my own, that poor, but renewed, human beings, even by the power of the Holy Ghost, can be capable of. Our comfort as to peace is that God (as indeed His love gave it) estimates it fully; and, while He has glorified Jesus, has Himself accepted that work for our peace. My part here is to unfold, as well as I can, the structure of the psalm itself.

As to the outward sufferings the reader will remark how deep they were. But Christ alone, of all the righteous, must undergo forsaking of God; and, having often declared His confidence in, and intimacy with Jehovah, and taught His disciples to trust in Him, as ever hearing prayer, has publicly now to proclaim that He is not heard, but forsaken. What a tale it tells of what that hour was! But what is important is, as has been already remarked, that His sufferings from man bring judgment on His enemies; His forsaking of God, being expiatory, is a bearing of the judgment, and all that flows from it is unmingled grace. This work being expiatory, once He is heard from the horns of the unicorns, all is grace. A stream of grace flows out for the remnant, then for Israel, for the world, for the generation to come all from

the sure and divinely perfect work of atonement in the death of Christ. In the work, in the suffering, He was alone. Once that was finished, He takes His place in the congregation with which He surrounds Himself. Remark how perfect must Christ's knowledge of, and consequent joy be in, the name of God and Father, into the enjoyment of which He entered as man, consequent upon having put away sin, and the delight of God in Him and His work: all that God was against Him then, for Him, according to the virtue of this work, now. How well He must know what the deliverance out of His sufferings on the cross into this light is! Now this is the source of His praise. Such must be the character of ours, founded on the blessed certainty of being come out of the place of sin, death, and judgment, into the perfectness of divine favor. All that is not thus in the spirit of it is out of tune with Him who leads our praises.

Note #1

The more we study the cross, the more we shall see that every question of good and evil was brought to an issue, and the immutable basis laid for perfect blessing according to what God is in righteousness and grace and majesty too, for the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. We come by the blessed testimony that it meets all our wants; but in contemplating it at peace, we see man in absolute sin, hating and rejecting God in grace and goodness; Satan's full power the disciples fled in fear, and all the world else in his power against Christ; man in absolute goodness loving the Father and obedient, glorifying God in the very place of sin where it was needed, and at all cost; we see God in perfect righteousness against sin as nowhere else, and perfect love to the sinner. Innocence was conditional blessing. This is completed in perfectness, and its value can never change. It is everlasting righteousness. Hence the blessing of the new heavens and new earth is immutable. We have had an innocent Eden; a sinful world; and shall have, besides the reign of righteousness, new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Note #2

And this is known by the Holy Ghost sent down when He had ascended on high. The new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness will

be the full result, while it is the manifestation of the just ground of unbelieving man's final condemnation.

Note #3

Christ in His lifetime uses naturally the term Father; on the cross, at the close of the hours of darkness, "my God, my God" (in dying, Father, and so before in Gethsemane); after His resurrection, Father and God: one, in His personal relationship and the Father's delight; the other; in divine righteousness, bringing us into it.

Psalms Chapter 23

The following commentary covers Psalms 23 and 24.

Psalms 23, 24 go in a certain sense by themselves, giving the perfect confidence in the Shepherd, Jehovah, founded on the experience of what He is in all circumstances; and, secondly, the character of those who would have a part with Jacob. The two principles we have seen brought out as to Christ in Psalms 16, 17 (and shown in many others); confidence in the faithfulness of Jehovah, and the practical righteousness which characterizes those who will stand in Jehovah's holy place in the time of His millennial glory. But Jehovah Himself takes His place there as King of glory. This gives us the divine side in all its perfectness, of the principle of the path and the result in glory on earth both as to the remnant, Christ, and Jehovah with the blessed witness that on one side He took a place and part with the remnant in' their divinely-given path, and on the other with Jehovah, for He was really a man, but really Jehovah; the daysman that laid his hand upon both.

But we must examine them a little more closely. The comfort of Psalm 23 is not in what Jehovah gives, but in Himself. He does it is the natural fruit of His grace at all times and will be the result make us to lie down in green pastures, and lead us beside the waters of peace: pleasant food where there can be no drought, security in enjoying it, and guidance in divine refreshings in peace. Such is the portion given by His shepherd care; but still it is Himself as that which gives confidence and takes away care. Evil is come in: we have to feel it we in ourselves, Christ in all that was around Him; so that He could be full of sorrow and troubled we alas! more than that. The Good Shepherd

(and Christ is such for us) restores the soul, and leads us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. The blessing depends on what He is, not on what we have got. I have blessing indeed, and learn it in green pastures; but, if troubled or gone astray, He restores. And not only sorrow and evil had come in with sin, but death too. Then He comes and leads me through it and comforts me. But there are enemies to meet. I have a table spread, on which I feast in their very presence. And how comforting this is to the Christian also! Hence, as it is Jehovah Himself, and not our circumstances, the soul has to depend on, it can say "Thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over." When I have contemplated all the pains and difficulties of the way, I have Jehovah Himself more distinctly as the blessing. Hence I can count on it for ever, for He changes not. Experienced in the past, in all the effects of the power of the enemy, and knowing what He Himself has been for me in them, I can reckon on it in the future and at all times. The end of the Lord's dealings will be our dwelling with Him for ever. The blessing thus, though less apparent, is much deeper and more personal, at the close; and, as we have said, the soul rests on Jehovah known in all circumstances, not in the blessing it was natural to Him to give.

An exercised soul thus has in result a far deeper blessing than an outwardly blessed one. So the result for Israel still I more for us entis more than the green pastures, in which originally Jehovah set him. It is the deep knowledge in a tried heart of the faithfulness of Jehovah: and thus, according to the blessing of His own nature, the rest will be His rest. The green pastures were suited to sheep; but the anointed head, and the cup running over, and the house of Jehovah for ever, were what suited Him who dwelt there. Such is the result, for the remnant, of trusting Jehovah, when the green pastures are for the time, at any rate, lost. Such will follow the Lamb. For us Christ is the Shepherd. We suffer with Him, and we have yet better blessing. The Shepherd's care is there meanwhile under another form.

Psalm 24 gives, as we have seen, the other part of the condition of the remnant as to the good that is working in them what grace produced in them. Jehovah was the Shepherd by the way. At the end the earth and the fullness of it are His the world and those who dwell therein. Heaven does

not here directly enter into the scene on the road, nor at the end of it; but Jehovah has a special place, a hill more especially His own, in the earth. Who shall ascend into it? We then get their character clean hands, a pure heart. No idol-following heart, no false oath with his neighbor. Such shall be blessed. That is the generation, the real character of those who seek Jacob; for in Jacob is God's seat. They seek Jacob as the blessed people of Jehovah; but, if such ascend into the holy hill, and enter into the holy place, the crowning blessing is that Jehovah Himself enters in at the unfolded gates to dwell there. The victorious Lord Jehovah of hosts enters in. It is Christ Himself who took the place of His sheep to go before them, and has the place of Jehovah, as that which is His by right, and in which He is owned when the fullness of blessing comes in and is revealed.

This closes the development of Christ's place in connection with the remnant, first formally entered upon in Psalm 16. We have now to go through the position of the remnant on a new ground and a different footing.

Psalms Chapter 25

Christ has been introduced, not indeed yet in glory, but associating Himself with the remnant, and suffering even unto death for them. Hence their whole case can be prophetically gone into. And here for the first time we meet the confession of sins. It is not merely position that we had from Psalms 3-7; nor the sense of circumstances which Psalms 11-15 gave, founded on Psalms 9, 10; but the whole case of the remnant, as they will feel, entered into. The first word characterizes them: "Unto thee, O Jehovah, will I lift up my soul." The godly man expresses his trust in his God, and prays that he may not be ashamed, but that those may that are willfully wicked. The remnant are distinguished thus in Verse 3 (Psa 25:3). There is the desire to be shown Jehovah's ways, to be taught in His truth, for He was the God of their salvation: they always waited on Him.

Next, Verse 6 (Psa 25:6), he casts himself on what God is in mercy, as He had shown Himself, and pleads that He may not remember Israel's past sins, but himself according to His mercy. He knows Jehovah, that He is good and upright, and will therefore teach sinners in the way. His dealing with them is

according to His own nature and character where He works in grace, goodness, and uprightness. This is an all-important point. Next, we get the present character of the remnant: they are the meek of the earth; these Jehovah would guide in judgment. All Jehovah's ways were mercy towards such; and faithfulness to promises and righteousness infallibly marked them. In it we have the fullest confession by the godly man of his own sin, not merely the former sins of Israel. He looks only for mercy, his iniquity is so great, and founds his hope on Jehovah's name. This is exceedingly beautiful. Jehovah's name, as revealed in Israel, had in the previous Verses of this psalm been fully entered into; His ways of mercy and truth in Israel. The answer to this cry, in the effectual work of Christ, though testified of in the prophets, and forming in God's sight the ground-work of all, is not, I apprehend, at this time known by the godly remnant, nor till they look on Him whom they have pierced; but they have the ways of God, His promises, and the abundant declarations and invitations, yea, pleadings, of Jehovah in the prophets, that if their sins had been as scarlet, they should be as white as snow. All this revelation was Jehovah's name to them; and to this they look, something in the state, though not exactly, of the poor woman in the city that was a sinner before she received the Lord's answer of peace.

In Verses 12-14 (Psa 25:12-14) we get the prophetic answer of the Spirit in hope; in Verses 15-21 (Psa 25:15-21), the meek one. He lays his whole case before Jehovah. The great result and true application is seen in the last verse. This psalm lays the whole case of the remnant before Jehovah in the expression to Him of a heart attracted and taught by grace. It is a very full and distinct expression of their place and pleadings before Him, and according to what He is. Some very definite points are brought out: the confession of Israel's past sins, the confession of his own by him who speaks. Mercy is looked to as the only resource. Yet from so gracious a God they can count on His teaching sinners. But these sinners are the meek of the earth who are to inherit it. Integrity of heart characterizes them, and they trust in and wait for Jehovah. Compare with this the incomparable picture of the remnant in the beginning of Luke. The psalm is both beautiful and very fully characteristic.

Psalms Chapter 26

Psalm 26 is especially the pleading of integrity and trust in Jehovah. Having trusted Him, the godly would surely not slide. He invites Jehovah to search his inmost heart, as Peter did even though fallen. Here, still the goodness of Jehovah was his first motive. Then the separation of the godly from the ungodly body of the nation is fully brought out and taken as a plea that they might not have their souls gathered with the ungodly. Still, though integrity was pleaded, redemption is sought, and mercy. The end would be blessing. Their foot stood in an even place. They would, in the full assembly, bless Jehovah. This is substantially the entire separation of the godly from the nation, and the former becoming the congregation of God.

Thus in these two psalms we have the confession of sins and the pleading of integrity, both marking the real renewal of mind. Though the possibility of government in forgiveness and mercy is founded on the atonement which has been presented in Psalm 22, and is owned fully in Isaiah 53 by Israel subsequent to the period of these psalms; yet the aspect in which all is viewed by the remnant in these two psalms is the known character and government of Jehovah in Israel; and the feelings of a renewed heart are expressed in reference to that government to Jehovah's ways. His name is the key to their thoughts, and awakens their best and truest affections. It is the faith of a godly Israelite in the last days. The moral state of the remnant is especially brought out in all this part, and more especially their own with Jehovah, circumstances comparatively little; though the enemies without and the transgressors around form necessarily the occasion of those feelings in respect of deliverance and redemption. The heart of the godly one has the key to all Israel's history and Jehovah's dealings with them, because grace is looked to, and sin confessed. This it is that ever gives understanding. And so it is here. Jehovah's ways have been are perfect. He is called upon to remember His own mercies, and not the early sins of His people. The enemies of His people are presented to Him. The hope of forgiveness is founded on Jehovah's name (it is, as we have seen, connected with His government; they have not yet looked on Christ, and understood atonement); the faithful looks to be guided in the way, and Jehovah's faithfulness to him is reckoned on. His sins, sorrows, and enemies are all presented to Him with an open heart. Covenant mercies can be seen, looked to, because Jehovah is, in truth by an upright confessing sinner.

Psalms Chapter 27

In Psalm 27 we have two distinct parts, and, I apprehend, then in the last two Verses (Psa 27:21-22) the result for the mind of the saint as taught of God. The first part, Verses 1-6 (Psa 27:1-6), is the confidence of the believer, and that absolutely, whatever enemies there were. In the second part, 7-12 (Psa 27:7-12), we find the cry of distress. In the former, singleness of eye lays the ground of confidence; in the second, the call of Jehovah to seek His face. Enemies without or oppressors within (for the remnant of the Jews will find both against them), a host and war arising, awake no fear Jehovah is the light and salvation of the soul; its only desire, dwelling in the house of Jehovah to see His beauty and inquire in His temple. He had known Him casting confusion on the enemies of the faithful. He sought Him as the desire of his heart. In the time of trouble He would hide him, and the assault of foes would only be the occasion of lifting up his head above them, and then he would offer sacrifices of joy.

From the seventh Verse (Psa 27:7) things are otherwise. It is not his state, as thinking of the Lord in faith; distress is there, and he cries. Here he appeals, not to his integrity, but that Jehovah had said, Seek my face. Was He going after that to turn it away? He looks to be guided in a straight path. There is integrity, but he looks to the call of God. Finally, he looks for, and trusts for temporal deliverance in the land of the living; meanwhile he must wait on Jehovah. He would interfere at the right time; He would strengthen the heart meanwhile. It is an additional and instructive picture of the state of the faithful remnant; their abstract confidence and their ground of hope in distress when Jehovah must be waited for.

Psalms Chapter 28

Psalm 28. The godly Jew pleads, in the time of trouble come on the nation, that he may not be confounded with the wicked. If Jehovah did not appear in his behalf, so much was he in the same distress with them, death would drag him into its jaws. He looks for judgment on the wicked. They slight Jehovah. Jehovah should reward their doings. The psalm furnishes to the remnant not only the cry, but the prophetic witness that Jehovah has heard it. The heart trusts in Jehovah, had found help, and thus joy and praise. Then

Messiah is fully joined with the righteous. Jehovah is their strength, He is Messiah's. This once settled, the prophetic desire of the godly, according to the Spirit of Christ, expresses itself that Jehovah should have His people and bless His inheritance (for the faith of covenant blessing and relationship runs through all this part of the Psalms), that He should also feed them and lift them up for ever. Deliverance, blessing, feeding, and unaltered exaltation, such are the fruits looked for of Jehovah's coming in power.

In Psalms 25, 26 we have seen the great moral principles of trust in Jehovah (even when confessing sins) and integrity. In these last we have more the personal sense of condition, and way or ground of relationship with God, beautifully shown in the first part of Psalm 27 in the one desire of the heart; and in the second part, in the touching plea, You taught me to seek Thy face; my heart, in those times of divine instructions, said, I will seek it: Lord, will you turn it away now that I am in trouble, when You taught me to seek and trust it? The truth is the same, but in the first part it is the one moral desire of the heart; in the last, the exhortation of God to do it becomes a resource to the soul. Jehovah Himself is their refuge, and has taught them to look for it.

In Psalm 28 the pressure of evil is more felt, and coming judgment and the separation of the remnant looked for. This separation characterizes the whole testimony of God connected with the coming of Messiah, a circumstance which will aid us in seeing the unity of the remnant in the mind of God. Not only was it prophetically announced, as in Isaiah 65, but John the Baptist characterizes the coming of Messiah by it, their being children of Abraham being of no avail (Mat 3:9); as indeed it spiritually took place: only that He being rejected and not yet coming in power, they were then added as "the saved," Act 2:47, to the assembly. For that, however, Peter takes it up (Act 2:40). The Lord Himself receives them as His sheep (John 10). Paul rests his argument in Romans 11 upon it too.

Psalms Chapter 29

Psalm 29 summons the mighty to hear the mightier voice of Jehovah, to own Him and worship before Him according to the holy order of His house, celebrating the power of His voice in universal creation; but there is a place

of intelligent worship where His glory is understood His temple where men are to come. But this Jehovah is above the haughty raging of the surges of created strength; He sits King for ever above and in spite of all. And He, this mighty Jehovah, will give strength to His people and bless them with peace. It is a positive encouragement for the faithful; not their complaint or appeal, but a testimony for them to encourage their hearts in presence of the mighty. He that cares for them is mightier than they.

Psalms Chapter 30

In Psalm 30 we have the contrast between trust in prosperity even in that given of God and in God Himself. He has come in and lifted up the poor, and not left him to his foes. His favor is life. If angry, it is but for a little moment, and for the good of His saints: the favor is for ever. In the morning it is light, if heaviness endure for a night. He may let them down as to the grave's mouth, but only to show His power in infallible deliverance. He, the godly man, Israel themselves, as a people, had trusted in given prosperity. Now, in the depth of adversity, he has found Jehovah in deliverance. The power of evil overcome is better than good we may lose. It is security, and in the blessing and arms of Jehovah for us; for He is the deliverer. We see plainly here that it is a living people to be blessed on earth (Psa 30:3; Psa 30:9). And though there may be analogous mercies in all times, for there is a government of God as regards Christians, to apply it to the saints now would be a dangerous mistake. It speaks of temporal deliverance for peace in this world (compare Isa 64:7-8). No mountain, even if we own it to be made strong by Jehovah, is like Jehovah Himself, even if I am at the pit's mouth. It is my mountain for my heart when I think of it.

Psalms Chapter 31

Psalm 31 is a proof how Jesus could use devout and holy expressions of a psalm, and indeed pass through all in spirit, without its having a literal application to Him. Here is found the expression He used, "Into thy hand I commit my spirit," which was in the fullest sense true. But the psalm continues, "For thou hast redeemed me, O Jehovah God of truth." He added Father. Yet I doubt not that His spirit had got into the comfort of divine delight again. Still the words, "thou hast redeemed me," cannot apply. [See

Note #1] So the whole complaint of the psalm is, besides David, the complaint and confidence of the remnant connecting the two principles, trust and righteousness, and looking for guidance for Jehovah's name's sake, and deliverance when surrounded by enemies. The godly man had called on Jehovah. His name was in question. On His goodness, laid up for them that trusted in Him, he counted; and this in the midst of a life spent in sighing. Distress pressed upon him, and drank up his strength. Yet, tried for faithfulness, friends and acquaintances fled from him. Such will be the condition of the remnant. How truly Christ entered into it, I need not say. But the time of deliverance, and of all that in any time the saint should be under and pass through, were in God's hand not the enemy's, though he might rage. And in the adversities Jehovah knew his soul, for he walks in the knowledge of covenant-relationship. The presence of Jehovah was a tabernacle and a hiding-place. In the pressure of his spirit, the godly thought himself cast off; but when he cried, Jehovah heard. In all the rage around (Psa 31:13-14) he cried to Jehovah as his God. The result he now celebrates, and encourages the saints in the last two verses, and all that hope in Jehovah. Whatever sorrows they are in, Jehovah helps the faithful and judges the proud.

This, in a certain sense, closes and sums up the experimental expression by the Spirit of the state of the remnant? and fully unfolds it. In the psalm that follows, forgiveness in grace is spoken of. Then there is a clearer apprehension and more objective confidence and judgment of all around, till we come to Psalms 38, 39, which have a peculiar character of their own. Of course, deliverance is not yet come; but the sentiment expressed is become more that of favor in light than confidence out of the depths. How fully this Psalm 31 is the expression of the Spirit of Christ must be obvious to every divinely-taught reader. Yet His own relationship was different. He was Son, and commends His spirit to His Father in death, not to Jehovah to save Him from it; and, as we have seen in the preface, prays for His enemies who crucified Him, instead of demanding vengeance upon them. This demand of His Spirit in the remnant is according to His mind in that day. In Him personally it must have been otherwise; for He came in grace, and was giving His life a ransom for Israel and for many. Hence He passed through all in perfection with His Father in Gethsemane, and gives Himself up then, as

being His will, to death. Yet, as to the sorrow and trial, He went through all. And the prophetic Spirit in the Psalms expresses in the denunciatory words what will certainly be accomplished as the consequence of the wicked enmity of the Jews and heathens too at the close; and will become living demands in the mouth of the remnant, whose only and necessary deliverance these judgments will be.

Christ did ask life, and it was given in resurrection and glory, as Psalm 21 shows; but not, as we know, in His being spared here. The path of life led for Him through death in the accomplishment of redemption, though He could not be holden of it. Thus in spirit He entered into all their affliction. The literal application in the writer's mind was to his own feelings; the prophetic is to the godly remnant in the latter day. The word translated "iniquity," in Verse 10 (Psa 31:10), should, I doubt not, be "distress." But the fullness of the various motives and feelings brought together in this psalm require a further brief notice. I have already remarked how the two grounds, so frequently found, of the appeal of the saint's trust in God, and righteousness as the motive and ground of it, are both brought together here. The name's sake of Jehovah is also added here. In Verses 3-6 (Psa 31:3-6) we have His utter rejection of the followers of idolatrous vanities. In Verse 7 (Psa 31:7) Jehovah's goodness is recognized as mercy. He has known the soul of the believer in adversities a sweet thought, how dark soever all may have been. And deliverance was granted ((Psa 31:9-10)) He pleads his extreme present distress. The first eight Verses (Psa 31:1-8) are a kind of preface of general principles; now it is the pressure of his present state. He was a reproach to enemies, specially to neighbors a fear to his acquaintance; so mean, despised, and yet hated and rejected, was he. It is the portion of a divine character, of God Himself, to be both. Man neglects a despised person; but he never does God, or what is of Him. [See Note #2] They will bring Him low if He puts Himself low, or those that are His; but will fear and hate Him too. He is forgotten, yet slandered, and the active enemy plotting against his life. Thus Verses 9-13 (Psa 31:9-13) give the condition the Spirit of Christ, or Christ Himself, holds in the world.

It is a most striking picture in Verse 14 (Psa 31:14). He trusts in Jehovah. All that is to befall him is, after all, in His hand. Another motive now is pleaded.

He has called on Jehovah. It is the lying lips which should be put to silence ((Psa 31:18)). Confidence in goodness laid up for them is there, and the hiding in God's presence for the time of evil ((Psa 31:20)). Verse 21 (Psa 31:21) celebrates the faithfulness of Jehovah. Verses 23, 24 (Psa 31:23-24), encourage the saints by it. Thus, with the extremist distress, all the pleas of the faithful are beautifully brought together here. All these past psalms have been the feelings of Israel under the pressure of distress, and sought deliverance from it. And this Israel will do.

Note #1

The only possible sense it could have as to Him was the deliverance of His soul at that moment as a fact, from the curse He bore for us, in which He had perfectly glorified God as to our sins, and as made sin for us. But the Lord does not use it. But though He had as a fact yet to die, its bitterness and sting were past.

Note #2

What thief would, if hung, revile another thief hung by his side? But the condemned thief did so to Christ.

Psalms Chapter 32

Now (Psalm 32) we have what he wants still more the forgiveness of sins. The pressure of affliction turns him to God's law, but to the consciousness of having broken it. Righteousness in that sense he could not plead: forgiveness was his need, and that Jehovah should not impute the iniquity he had, and was brought to acknowledge. Long he had striven against this; but Jehovah gave him no rest. But he confesses sin, and guile is gone from his heart: impossible till then. We are hiding iniquity in it. Forgiveness in grace draws the godly man to God. In the water-floods they do not come nigh him. Jehovah is the hiding-place of the soul preserves, blesses, guides. Only they are warned to be intelligent through obedience, and not to be without understanding, so that God must guide by providential power.

Remark here that while forgiveness is celebrated (and the remnant will deeply need it), yet the great distinctive truth which separates them from

the mass of the people is kept up distinctly trust, righteousness, and integrity of heart. To the wicked there are sorrows.

In principle, such a psalm, blessed be God, has the widest application. For the remnant it is prophetic, to induce truth in the inward parts, and encourage them by goodness to that confession of sin in which alone God can bless, as is ever the case. For forgiveness and no guile go together. They will only know full acceptance when they look upon Him whom they have pierced, who comes as Jehovah to deliver. But let us lay to heart the great principle of this psalm. Full absolute forgiveness, the not imputing sin at all, is what takes guile from the heart. Else we flee from God, excuse, palliate, if we dare not justify. Where full pardon is before us, we have courage to be true in heart. Who will not declare all his debts when their discharge by another is the only thing in question? who not tell his malady for a certain cure? Grace brings truth into the heart brought to confess its transgressions. He finds all the burden of his sins gone. The humble and godly are encouraged to draw near to a God thus known. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mightest be feared." The psalm will encourage the remnant thus to true confession. When possessed, they will enter into full blessing. We thus see how it is a prophetic preparation and school for them, drawing out before them what will not all be accomplished when they are thus brought to look to Jehovah, but which they thus know will be. Hence these psalms speak of Jehovah's character, as it has been proved with the inspired composers; in principle, often in letter, with Christ, in order to draw out the confidence of the Jews in the day of distress, and to comfort every uneasy soul. Thus the celebration of complete deliverance is mixed with the cry for it, because it is prophetic and has had fulfilments.

Psalms Chapter 33

Psalm 33 has its just place after the forgiveness of the people. Before we pass on to these psalms, remark how the guilelessness of heart produced by complete forgiveness leads to that intimacy with God which gives us to be guided by His eye. We have His mind with Himself, and that in the perfectness of His own nature in which He reveals it. Forgiveness leads to full blessing.

In Psalm 33 the full result of deliverance is celebrated. The upright are called on to rejoice. Jehovah's character, His word and works, are made manifest, and the earth is now full of His goodness. He is the glorious Creator; the earth is to fear Him; all man's devices and counsels come to nothing before Him; His counsel stands. Blessed the nation whose God is Jehovah, the people He has chosen for His inheritance. It is Jehovah who has looked down on men and disposed of all; but His eye is on them that fear Him and hope in His mercy. Thus the great result of the intervention of Jehovah is brought before the faith of the remnant, chanted as if all were come. The last three Verses (Psa 33:20-22) show the confidence this produces in them.

Psalms Chapter 34

Psalm 34. The sure government of God enables faith to bless at all times. He has proved His faithfulness to them that were in distress. The psalmist, Christ in spirit, calls on the remnant to praise, for Jehovah has manifested His deliverance in his case. The eyes of Jehovah are over the righteous, and His ear open to their prayers; His face set against them that do evil, and to cut them off from the earth (Psa 34:17-19). The broken heart, the afflicted and the contrite, to such Jehovah is nigh. The righteous must look for suffering while man has his day, but Jehovah delivers him. While evil slays the wicked, Jehovah redeems the soul of His servant, and none that trust Him shall be desolate. It is the full assurance of the government of Jehovah in favor of the humble in heart. This enables to bless, not only when they are blessed (that is not faith), but at all times, for they are heard, preserved, redeemed, when they are in trouble. Christ is the great example of this. I doubt that He speaks personally, though He does in spirit in the beginning. The faith of the remnant takes His case up as an encouragement in Verse 6 (Psa 34:6). Verse 20 (Psa 34:20) was accomplished also literally in Him. It is the secret of faith alone, the test of it, to bless at all times. Peter applies this psalm to the constant principles of the government of God. This is the first psalm in which we have found the interlocutory character, which sometimes occurs (as in Psalms 91, 145), though doubtless the psalmist's experience, who again speaks in Verse 11 (Psa 34:11). Yet, I apprehend, it is Christ in spirit who opens out God's ways in this psalm. "O magnify with me." "I sought Jehovah." It is the fullest encouragement to the humble righteous.

Psalms Chapter 35

Psalm 35 is an urgent appeal for the judgment of Jehovah against relentless and insidious persecutors who seek after the soul of the righteous. Insult, craft, violence, all were used against him. They pretended to have found him out. Deliverance is sought that Jehovah may be praised in the great congregation, that is, the full assembly of restored Israel. In Verses 13-14 (Psa 35:13-14), we see the grace in which the godly (Christ Himself) dealt with these enemies. Though generally true of the godly, Christ specially comes in here in spirit.

Psalms Chapter 36

Psalm 36. We have a needed warning as to the wicked, particularly the enemies of righteousness, the instruments of Satan's power. There is no conscience to be expected; nothing that will stop them in their evil plans. The power and goodness of Jehovah are the sure refuge of those that trust in Him. In result the wicked are cast down.

Psalms Chapter 37

Psalm 37. In this interesting psalm the great point pressed on the remnant, a lesson for every soul, is waiting on Jehovah, and not having the spirit disturbed by evil; they will soon be cut down like grass. They are not to fret themselves, but trust in Jehovah and do good; to delight in Him; they will have their desires; to commit their way to Him He will justify them; to rest in Him and wait patiently for Him Jehovah will soon interfere, the wicked doers be cut off, and the meek inherit the land. The other character of the remnant is also largely unfolded the righteous man from Verse 12 onward (Psa 37:12-40). Jehovah does not forsake His saints: they are preserved. The righteous shall inherit the land. The final word is, Wait on Jehovah and keep His way. The righteous suffer, but are not forsaken; the ungodly are in great prosperity, and soon their place knows them no more. How this, as to the righteous, points to the deep character of the suffering One who was forsaken, though the perfection of righteousness! This psalm also helps to show the connection between the disciples and this remnant (see Mat 5:5) yet, to show the difference; the Son was there. They could suffer for His name: this brought in heaven (Mat 5:12). He could reveal the Father, which

He does, in that discourse. The light goes out to the world, as well as being the salt of the earth. Details of grace also are brought in, of which the latter-day remnant know nothing, because of this revelation of the Father, who acts in grace. Still, de facto, it is the same remnant.

Psalms Chapter 38

The following commentary covers Psalms 38 and 39.

Psalms 38 and 39 have, as I have said, a distinct and peculiar character. The deliverance has been sought and looked for by the upright, and forgiveness of sins granted for blessing. But in these psalms the governmental rebuking for sins lies on the remnant; there is the sense of why they suffer from the divine hand. In Psalm 6 the chastening in anger was deprecated as a part of the sorrow that might belong to their position; but here they are under full chastening for sin: the rod has reached the flock outwardly, their soul inwardly. When I say they, it is individual, but still the remnant. Friends shrank from such a case; enemies, without compassion, plot against his life. Still he is before Jehovah, and all his desire and groaning. He is true in heart with God, and owns Him is silent with man. The sorrows are, for his soul, Jehovah's; and to Jehovah he turns. This is all right (see Psa 38:13-16). He will bow under it. His enemies are busy and strong. But though Jehovah smites, he trusts Him; because the smiting is owned by the humble soul to be righteous. But he can look to deliverance from his enemies. They were glad he slipped and rejoiced over him. But he declares and owns his sin: no excuse no hiding in his soul from God. His cry is to Him for speedy help.

It is a beautiful psalm as to the state of soul; for the Spirit provides for every case the failure of the upright, which may call down severe chastening, and cause joy to the wicked. But he accepts the punishment of his iniquity, and places himself openly before God, owning his sin, but looking to Him against the wicked. However sad such a case may be, nothing more shows truth before God and confidence in Him. How confess one's sin, and look for help from God, when one has been unfaithful, He dishonored, and the enemy triumphing in it? No excuse, no attempt to hide none: he owns all, and casts himself on God. The picture of the remnant would not have been complete without this, nor the gracious instruction for every soul at every time.

The question then arises, How far does the Spirit of Christ enter into it? Fully, I believe; though of course He never could have been personally there. No doubt it arose from some deep chastening of the writer a chastening which was openly manifested. Such cases may in the full extent arise among the remnant. The principle is of universal application. Christ of course could have nothing to be chastened for; but, having the full bearing of sin before Him, and meeting in His path all the sorrow which will beset the people, He can enter, though the green tree, into the judgment which will come upon the dry. [See Note #1] He could not say what is said here, but He can perfectly sympathise with those who have to say it. He has provided the words which will express it by His Spirit in their hearts. Had He not suffered the full anger for these very iniquities which press on their consciences, and from which in its full extent as wrath they escape, it would not have been merely needed chastening in which they plead with Jehovah. Hence He can more than feel it when it has that character. And in all the sorrow of the circumstances He has born the largest part.

In Psalm 39, the godly man is still under the stroke of God; but there is more the sense of the emptiness of all flesh under the hand of God than disgrace and shame and fear. He bows before God rather than let his spirit rise and speak foolishly with his tongue. He might have retorted been fretted to do evil; but, restraint, when under the hand of God, was his fitting place. It is ever so. He refrains even from good; and sorrow is stirred up in him. In beautiful language he shows this. At last his heart bursts forth; but it is to present to God the nothingness of which the sense was thus matured. He desires to know his days. How little he is! He sees all is vanity; but he sees his own transgression and sin in the presence of One whose rebuke consumes the beauty of man as a moth. To Jehovah he looks for deliverance. His stroke is what he cares for. He trusts Him not to make him the reproach of the foolish. There is great beauty in vanity finding its level in self-annihilation, and then God trusted in to deliver from the pride of men. He has to say to our transgressions.

Here the moral history of the remnant closes, as in connection on covenant ground with Jehovah (that is, as employing His name, as connected with Him). Hence we have much of Christ personally in the psalms of this first

book. His taking the place in which He should be associated with them, according to the counsels of God, is stated in the next psalm. The understanding of this place is then shown to be the really blessed one.

Note #1

Although the dry tree be in the full sense lifeless Israel, yet, as the remnant, so long rejecters of Jesus being the Messiah, are mixed up with the nation, they go through the sorrows in heart and spirit which come upon the nation, though not its final judgment from God. For them Christ had done that; He died for the nation. But all short of that they go through, and feel in bitter sorrow and anguish, in some sort, more than before the judgment comes, because they feel the sin that is bringing it. Hence it was that Christ, who did know the cause and looked forward to the judgment which He did go through (undergoing the oppression without apparent deliverance, for His hour was come to be reckoned with the transgressors), could enter fully into their case. Though He entered into it in love, yet the righteousness which threatened Israel was before Him.

Psalms Chapter 40

The following commentary covers Psalms 40 and 41.

In Psalm 40 then Christ is seen, not only in His passage through the sorrows which beset His way, if He took up the cause of the disobedient and guilty people of His love sorrows which gave Him the tongue of the learned, and enabled Him to enter into those of the tried and spared ones in the latter days, and give a voice to their cry suited to their condition before God; but primarily the deliverance in which, having waited on Jehovah in these sorrows, Jehovah's faithfulness was proved, so that He came out from them for the encouragement of many, and then the blessed key to His whole history in His having undertaken to do the will of Jehovah, the whole Jewish system under the law being thus closed and set aside. He has been perfectly faithful to Jehovah in the face of the whole congregation of Israel, yet is in the deepest sorrow and trial. So the psalm closes, and it is important it should, because the thesis of it is complete deliverance. Hence the application of this very deliverance to the sorrows of Christ, which were

analogous to that of the remnant, is most precious for the remnant when they are in them.

But this principle is brought out in a very distinct way in the psalm, and makes it one of the most remarkable in this wonderful book. It brings out the connection of Christ with Israel in the remnant in the most striking way possible lays it down as a foundation for the whole teaching of the Psalms, though the circumstances are altered after Psalm 41. That Christ is personally spoken of in it, I need hardly say, as the apostle quotes it as His words, undertaking that blessed work by which figures and symbols were set aside, and which has perfected, as he tells us, the believer for ever. "Lo, I come" is the word of the Son's free offering of Himself to accomplish the whole will of God in His work here below according to the everlasting counsels of the Godhead. It is the blessed Lord's undertaking the work. His work was to obey; but He in perfect free voluntariness offers Himself for it in the delight of willingly undertaken obedience. In the great congregation of Israel, in pursuing His service to Jehovah, He had not shrunk (whatever reception He met with) from preaching righteousness had not refrained His lips. He had been faithful to His service at all cost; and it was Jehovah He thus proclaimed. His righteousness, His faithfulness, His salvation, His lovingkindness, and His truth, He had not refrained from declaring before the whole body of Israel. Such had been His service.

Then, all changes with this faithful One; for innumerable evils have compassed Him about. He looks for Jehovah's lovingkindness and truth, to whom He had been faithful. Nor is it all that evils had compassed Him, that men sought after His soul to destroy it. "Mine iniquities have taken hold on me." He says, "so that I am not able to look up." Of course, with Christ they were those of others of all the redeemed, and also particularly of Israel viewed as a nation. In this state He desires that those that seek Jehovah may be able to praise, to say continually, Let Jehovah be magnified; and that the others may be ashamed and confounded. He separates the godly remnant who seek Jehovah from those who, when He is faithfully and lovingly presented, are enemies to Him who manifests His name. Thus Christ closes His experience in this world, poor and needy, yet assured that Jehovah thinks upon Him.

He is not forsaken in what is presented here, but comes into that place, through a life of faithfulness, in which He was to undergo that dreadful moment. It is the cry when, so to speak, He confesses the sins before the victim is consumed or slain. He is in the deep sorrow of the position crying to Jehovah, not in the wrath shown in the time of His not being heard. The psalm depicts not that wrath, but the faithfulness of Christ in waiting for Jehovah when in the sorrow, rather than seek ease, or have twelve legions of angels, or drink the stupefying myrrh, or shrink back from suffering the will of God any more than He did from facing man when He preached it. He waited patiently for Jehovah; and He inclined unto Him and heard His cry. This was His perfection: no outlet from obedience sought, no shrinking, no turning back or aside. He waited for Jehovah's time in the path of perfect obedience, and it came. The time, as said of Joseph, came that His cause was known; it is not said here how or when. The object of the Spirit here was to show to the tried ones that One had gone before them in the path of sorrow and had been heard. We can say that it was fully in resurrection; but even on the cross the dark hour was passed, and with a loud voice He could commend His own spirit to His Father, and His mother to His beloved disciple.

But these are details history has given us, not prophecy; they would not have been available for the remnant. They want to know that they will be heard when waiting patiently for Jehovah. If killed, the answer will be for them in resurrection; if not, to have Israel's place in blessing, I doubt not with the Lamb on Mount Zion, as having gone through (however feebly or infirmly) like trials and sorrows in faithfulness to Jehovah in the great congregation. Do their iniquities alarm them? they are not left out. They do not yet know atonement, but they know that One, who could say, "Mine iniquities have taken hold of me," waited patiently, was heard and delivered. They wait, trusting the mercy of Jehovah, though peace be not yet known. Their iniquities have taken hold of them, so that they feel: how can they hope Jehovah will deliver them? There is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared. And the psalm assures them that One in like depths has been set free. When they look upon Him, they will judge their sins in the light of His having born them and they will find peace; but the foundation of peace is laid in hope for them here. A heart failing under iniquities, laying hold of it,

can look for deliverance. It has been found (and however obscure their light, and it will be), the ground of hope is laid. Compare Isa 50:10-11, which describes this very state, consequent, as to the remnant, on Christ's being justified and helped.

But this is not all. Messiah puts Himself in this association with them. "He hath put a new song in my mouth, praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in Jehovah." Blessed is the man that makes Jehovah his trust and does not trust outward prosperity nor apostatise to lying vanities. So in Verse 5 (Psa 40:5), to usward. That is, in Verse 1 (Psa 40:1), we have Christ, who has waited on Jehovah, and been heard, and brought up out of a horrible pit and miry clay. I doubt not that David's heart sung it: still it is surely Christ in prophetic purpose. But then Christ identifies Himself (though, as we have seen, distinguishing the remnant) with Israel. Praise, He says, unto our God. The effect of this is that many see it, fear, and trust in Jehovah. It acts on the remnant in the latter day, and leads them to trust in Jehovah. They can trust for deliverance too; many will. His preaching righteousness to the great congregation gathered a little flock. His deliverance as the suffering One will be blessed to many. Who hath begotten me all these? says Zion in that day. This may take in the ten tribes too; still, as a principle, a multitude will be there. It was not so at Christ's first coming. He was to be a despised and rejected One in His own history and trial.

Verse 5 (Psa 40:5). These are the thoughts of Jehovah in blessing. This leads to the great thought, the center and groundwork of it all Christ coming to do Jehovah's will. Now, we can comment, or, still better, the Spirit of God has commented for us, on the value of His doing Jehovah's will. Here we have much more the faithfulness of Christ in doing it, His being overwhelmed with iniquities taking hold of Him in His own spirit, as we see in Gethsemane, but deliverance. We must remember that the confession of sins over the head of the sacrifice was not the slaying, or casting into the fire, of the victim. So Christ's acknowledging thus, or confessing the iniquities with which He was charging Himself as His, was not His enduring the wrath, nor His being cut off out of the land of the living. Dreadful indeed it must have been to Him, as we see in the Gospels, and He saw all that was

coming upon Him by reason of it; still it was essentially different confessing the sins and bearing the wrath due to them. His confession of sins His people must (I will not say imitate, but) take up in the knowledge that those He confessed were their own; and may, till grace is fully known, do it with dreadful anguish and apprehension of the wrath to come. It is this which particularly, besides outward trials, constitutes the analogy between the Jewish remnant and the Lord. The wrath endured in atonement, we know, He endured that we never might.

In this psalm then we see Christ, according to the eternal counsels of God, come to do God's will in human nature, taking His place in the midst of the great congregation of Israel, suffering most deeply in consequence, getting into the horrible pit, but His trust is firm in Jehovah. He waited patiently for Him, and He is brought up, and a new song put into His mouth. The first three Verses (Psa 40:1-3) state the great fact: Jehovah heard and delivered out of the horrible pit. It is a lesson for all the remnant. How blessed is the man who trusts Jehovah, and does not look at the appearance of persons to turn aside after vanity! Then we get the course of events. Wonderful have been Jehovah's counsels. Christ comes to do His will as a man, delights to do it, declares Jehovah's righteousness before all. This brings Him into the greatest distress. Evils come upon Him unnumbered, and, besides that, His iniquities (those of His people) come upon Him; but patience has its perfect work, and He is perfect and complete in all the will of God; and, as the psalm shows at the beginning, He is delivered, as we well know. But, as already said, the psalm recites His faithfulness especially. Hence we see Him up to the close of the trial still under it. What He asks for is that the ungodly, being found His enemies, may be set aside; but that the poor of the flock may be able to praise, rejoice, and be glad in Jehovah.

It is beautiful to see His perfect patience in the trial, that the whole will of God may be accomplished, and seeking the joy and full blessing of the poor remnant; yet Himself taking the place of complete dependence on Jehovah, and praying for His coming in as God. Obedience and dependence are the two characteristics of the acting of the divine life in man towards God. It may be remarked here that the testimony in the congregation is closed when the innumerable evils come upon Him. The preface of the psalm

speaks of the horrible pit when He is out of it, and we know whereunto He was obedient; but His death is not spoken of here. In the body of the psalm we have, as come to do God's will, His faithfulness in life as witness, and the evils that came upon Him at the close when He had to meet the burden of the iniquity of His people. The fourth Verse (Psa 40:4) applies to the remnant the result of Christ's faithfulness for instruction and encouragement.

A few words on the expression, "opened my ears." The word is not the same as in Exodus 21. There it is attaching the ear with an awl to the door post; the man thus became a servant for ever. Nor is it the same as in Isaiah 50, where it has the signification of being so completely a servant to His Master's will that He received His commands morning by morning. Here it is "digged ears" that is, took the place of a servant). But this He did, as may be seen in Philippians 2, by becoming a man. Hence the Spirit accepts the interpretation of the LXX "a body hast thou prepared me." Compare John 13 (which answers in point of time to Exodus 21); Luk 12:37, and Co1 15:28.

Psalm 41 shows the blessedness of the man who understands this position of the poor of the flock and enters into it (compare Mat 5:3; Luk 6:20). It is spoken in the person of one of the suffering remnant doubtless with the psalmist's own experience. It is one of the psalms in which Christ takes up an expression to show how, in the close of His life, when He entered into their sorrows, He tasted fully their bitterness. Still the poor man is upheld in his integrity, and set before Jehovah's face. The apparent triumph of the wicked is short.

This closes the book. It is the experience, as a whole, of the remnant before they are driven out, or at the least of those who are not so. And the covenant name of Jehovah is used. Hence, the place of Christ is entered into, so far as He came and set Himself amongst the poor of the flock upon earth, and led the life of sorrow and integrity in the midst of evil. Of this last psalm He is not the subject, as Verse 4 (Psa 41:4) shows.

We have seen an introduction in the first eight psalms, in which the whole scene is brought before us in its principles and result in the purpose of God; then in Psalms 9, 10, the actual historical circumstances of the Jews in the

latter day. Thus, as to historical facts, their state forms the groundwork and subject of the whole book; while the way in which Christ could enter into their sorrows, and they be encouraged by His example, is fully introduced. His whole life amidst the nation is passed in review; but particularly the close, when, after declaring God's righteousness in the great congregation, He passed into the deep sufferings of the last hours of His passage on earth, going on to His being forsaken of God. Yet it was for Him surely for us, blessed be God the path of life.

Psalm 40 has this peculiar interest, that it gives us, not merely the history of Christ, His faithfulness, but His freely offering Himself to accomplish all that the Father's counsels required of Him; and then shows Him waiting in obedience till Jehovah was pleased to come in. And then He has the new song to sing. Of this intervention of God the resurrection was the grand witness; through which, as we have seen in Psalm 22, He has awakened, or rather created, it in so many other hearts. As is common, the first three Verses (Psa 40:1-3) give the thesis the rest all that led up to this: only here it is traced from His first offering Himself to do it.

The reader will remark in Psalm 41 what we have noticed as characterising the remnant the acknowledgment of sin ((Psa 41:4)), and the declaration of integrity ((Psa 41:12)). We have Christ using it as to Himself, showing, though the psalm be not of Him, how He took the place to which the spirit of the whole applies. The proud and wicked could despise and trample upon the meek and lowly, and perhaps chastened, remnant. Here it is more the false and treacherous spirit of those whom he ought to have been able to trust. Blessedness is with those who understand, the meek and lowly ones who are chastened, for they understand the Lord's ways; the meek one himself looks to the Lord when His hand is upon him. The point of the psalm is the blessedness of those who understand and enter into the position of those with whom Jehovah is dealing. This place, Christ fully took, though not chastened with sickness.

Psalms Chapter 42

BOOK 2 - Psalms 42-72

In the second book, the remnant is viewed as outside Jerusalem, and the city as given up to wickedness. This is seen throughout it. The covenant connection of the Jews with Jehovah is lost, but God is trusted. When Messiah comes in, all is changed. We have further, more distinctly, the exaltation of Christ on high as the means of their deliverance, and His rejection and sorrow when down here. It closes with the millennial reign of Messiah in peace under the figure of Solomon. The spirit of the godly man is tested by these circumstances. And, as all hope of finding good in the people is given up, the soul of the believing remnant is more entirely looking to God Himself and attached to Him. It is with this that the book opens.

The godly man had been going with the multitude to the house of God, but that is all over. He is driven away, and his cry is from Jordan the land of the Hermonites, and the hill Mizar. All God's waves are gone over him. It was terrible to see an enemy in possession of the sanctuary, and the true one of Jehovah cast out and His name blasphemed. The heathen, as stated in Joel, had come in in power, and taunted those who had trusted in Jehovah's faithfulness with the cry, "Where is thy God?" (Joe 2:17). It was, of course, a dreadful trial (so with Christ upon the cross; and with Him yet more, for He declared He was forsaken); so that what God was to them by faith was put to the test. This faith is what this psalm now expresses. The heart of the godly pants after God. It was not merely for His blessings; they were gone. The preciousness of what He Himself was, was only so much the more vividly brought out. The main distress was the cry "Where is thy God?" But if the saint is not in Jerusalem, God is the confidence of the saint. Faith says, "I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." The heart too can appeal to Him (Psa 42:9), and, under the pressure of the repeated taunt, hope in God Himself, and He will be the health of the countenance of him that trusts in Him. The reader will remark that in Verse 5 (Psa 42:5) it is the help of God's countenance: in Verse 11 (Psa 42:11) He becomes the health of the countenance of him that trusts in Him. This making God Himself to become everything by the deprivation of all blessings, and the exercise of faith in it casting the soul entirely on God Himself, is very precious.

Psalms Chapter 43

The enemy in Psalm 42 is the outward enemy and oppressor the Gentile. Though in circumstances, of course, and not in the depths of atonement, it is interesting to see the analogy in Verse 3 (Psa 43:3) with what the Lord said upon the cross. Psalm 43 is a supplementary psalm to the former: only that here the ungodly nation, the Jews, are before us, and the deceitful and unjust man, the wicked one; though the Gentile oppressor be yet there (Psa 43:2). We know they will both be there in that day. From the Jewish nation being now in the scene, the return to the holy hill and tabernacle and altar of God are more before the mind of the remnant. Verses 3-4 (Psa 43:3-4) form the groundwork of the book.

Psalms Chapter 44

Psalm 44 gives a full and vivid picture of the state of the nation, as in the conscience of the remnant. They had heard with their ears. Faith rested in the memorial of all the old mighty deliverances wrought by God, and how He had put them in possession of the land by His power, not theirs (Psa 44:1-8). In Verses 9-16 (Psa 44:9-16) their present state is recounted. They are cast off and scattered. The enemy and avenger is among them; they scattered among the heathens old of God for no price (Psa 44:17-22). Yet they have, in no wise, swerved from their integrity. On the contrary, it is for His sake they are killed all the day long, and counted as sheep for the slaughter. (Note, the moment Messiah was rejected, this began in principle: compare Rom 8:36). Verses 23-26 (Psa 44:23-26) contain the appeal to God to wake up to redeem them for His mercies' sake. Why should He forget them for ever? We have still God, not Jehovah, in this psalm; for they are outside.

Psalms Chapter 45

Psalm 45 introduces Messiah, and, as we shall see, changes everything. I know not, interesting and full of bright energy as the psalm is, that I have much to note upon it, by reason of its force being so very plain. It will be remarked that it is Messiah in judgment and taking the throne. He had already proved that He loved righteousness and hated iniquity was fit to govern. He is saluted as God. Yet His disciples (the remnant) are called His fellows (compare Zac 13:7, where He is seen in His humiliation and smitten, but owned to be Jehovah's fellow). I apprehend the queen is Jerusalem.

Tyre and others own her with presents. She is gloriously received into the chambers of the king himself. This, I apprehend, is the force of within. She is in the closest relationship with the king. The virgins her companions are, I suppose, the cities of Judah. The glory of Israel is no longer now their fathers. The presence of Messiah (the fulfiller of promise) has eclipsed the depositaries of promise of old. Instead of fathers, they have children to be made princes in all lands. The coming in of Messiah in glory and judgment, brings in the full triumph and glory, amongst the nations, of Jerusalem and the Jewish people. The psalm is full of Messiah, and exclusively, yet as man, and God is only alluded to as his God. But Messiah is God.

Psalms Chapter 46

Psalm 46. The remnant, now that Messiah has appeared in glory, can celebrate what God is in favor of His people, and with the special knowledge acquired through what He has been for them in trouble. There may be yet an assault: indeed according to prophecy I believe there will be. But as the whole effect of Messiah's coming in blessing was celebrated in Psalm 45, so here the great result in divine government. The spared remnant have Jehovah with them as the God of Israel (Psa 46:7). For here Jehovah is again introduced as a present thing. Here it is specially (and suitably, after what we have been studying, needs not to be said) as refuge and deliverance. Earth, mountains, and waters may tremble, or swell and roar: His people need not fear. God is with them. Nor is this all. He has His city on the earth, where He who is the Most High dwells, and has His tabernacles gladdened by that river which, everywhere in these descriptions, is the sign of blessing; as in the heavenly Jerusalem, and in the earthly in Ezekiel nay, in paradise, and in figures, in the believer, and in the assembly, who calls to the water of life him who thirsts. But even then the river is there. God is there the sure and best of answers to the taunting demand "Where is thy God?" She shall not be moved, but helped right early.

Verse 6 (Psa 46:6) gives in magnificent abruptness the great result. All is decided. Then they say, "Jehovah Sabaoth is with us." The God of the whole people is the refuge of this feeble remnant (Psa 46:8-9), they summon the earth to see what the works of Jehovah are, what is come of the impotent rage and violence of men; for He will be exalted among the heathen and

exalted in the earth. The place of faith is to be still and wait on Him and know that He is God, as the remnant of Jacob will with joy that Jehovah of hosts, the God of Jacob, is with them.

Psalms Chapter 47

Psalm 47 only pursues this deliverance to its bright results for Israel according to God's glory in the earth. Jehovah is now a great King over all the earth (compare Zechariah 14). He subdues the nations under Israel and Himself chooses their inheritance. This is triumphantly celebrated from Verses 5-9 (Psa 47:5-9), and the association of the princes of the peoples now owning God, with the people of the God of Abraham. He is specially Israel's (the remnant's) King, but if He is, He is King of all the earth. In these Verses God Himself is celebrated, but He is the God of Israel. It is the celebration of the earthly part of the millennial glory of God: Israel owned in the delivered remnant being the center. I apprehend Verse 9 (Psa 47:9) should be "have joined themselves to the people."

Psalms Chapter 48

Psalm 48 completes this series. Jehovah is fully established as Israel's God in Zion, now the praise of the whole earth, the city of the great King, and in whose palaces God is well known as a refuge. The kings were assembled; they found another sort of power there than they thought of, marvelled, were troubled, and hasted away. The power of the sea was broken by the east wind, and Jehovah's hand manifested there too. The psalm beautifully refers to the beginning of Psalm 44, where they had said in their distress, We have heard with our ears.... the mighty works of the fathers' days. Now they say, As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of Jehovah Sabaoth, the city of our God. They do not now say, as in Psalm 42, "I had gone with the multitude," but now cry to thee from Jordan; but in sweet and unendangered peace, "we have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple." God's name they had trusted, but now His praise was according to it. He had come in in power. It was so to the ends of the earth. He calls on Mount Zion to rejoice because of these judgments, with the joyful assurance that this God is their God for ever and ever; their life long

will He guide and bless them. It is an earthly blessing, and death, the last enemy, is not destroyed (Psa 48:11-14).

Psalms Chapter 49

Psalm 49 is a moral conclusion for all, founded on these judgments of God. Wealth, elevation, all that is exalted in man, is nothing. Man expects to endure, gives his own name to his lands, blesses himself, is praised by posterity, and spoken well of as prudent and wise, seeing he has done well to himself. They are laid in sheol like sheep. The hope of the man of the world does not last; he leaves the world he was great in; his reputation, which lives, is nought for him, deception for others. Satan's power is for this life; there is no deceiving after it. Man in honor without understanding is like the beasts that perish, but the righteous remnant trusts in God: his soul is redeemed from the power of the grave. God shall accept him. The preservation on earth, or heavenly blessing is left somewhat vague here. The immediate hope would be of preserving life; but it would meet those that might be slain with the fullest and surest hope. It is even so in Luk 21:19, "gain your souls," and in Mat 24:13. The ambiguity is preserved there too designedly.

Psalms Chapter 50

In Psalm 50 we enter on new ground God's judgment of the people. Jehovah the mighty God summons the whole earth; as in Psalm 51 we have their confession of killing Christ.

The introduction of Psalm 50 is magnificent, but requires little comment, God shining out of Zion the perfection of beauty. Only remark that the first two Verses (Psa 50:1-2) are the thesis; from Verse 3 (Psa 50:3) is the bringing it about. But heaven is called in to stand by, a witness of righteousness, and the earth; but the judgment is the special judgment of the people. In Verses 5-6 (Psa 50:5-6), He takes up and accepts and gathers the remnant, His "godly ones," who have now entered into covenant with Him by sacrifice. It is in view, I apprehend, of their seeing Christ whom they had pierced, that these words are uttered. The heavens (though in result God be seated in Zion) bring in their display of the righteousness of God; distinct in itself, note, from His judgment. This is general. It is not in itself the judgment of

God. I doubt not, He shines forth in glory therein, but in a particular manner. We can say it is the glorified saints who display this, of course with Christ Himself; yea, so fully that they shall judge the earth. It is not judgment through secondary causes: God is now judge Himself hence gathers His saints too. In Verse 7 (Psa 50:7) the people are judged. God does not want sacrifice, He wants righteousness. He will not have wickedness, nor, now, the wicked among His people. So we read in the very same way in Isaiah 48 and 57. Man fancies God is such as he himself is; but all shall be set in order before Him. This is God's judgment.

Psalms Chapter 51

Psalm 51 is the true remnant's confession. They have fully entered into the mind of God (see Psa 51:16). There is true and complete humiliation for sin before God, yet confidence in Him. He is looked to to cleanse and deliver, with the true faith of God's people. The whole sin of the heart and nature is acknowledged, and the dreadful crime of Christ's death owned (Psa 51:14). The humiliation is accepted, but with the sense of God's cleansing being perfect. He creates too a clean heart. He prays that that Spirit (which Haggai declares abode with them after all their faults, and in spite of the Babylonish captivity), might not be taken from him, nor he lose the sense of the presence of his God. Persons have found difficulty in this verse; I see not any. No good could have been wrought by the Old Testament saints without the Holy Ghost: withdrawn from them, all their joy and comfort ceased and gave place to darkness. This he prays might not be. There cannot for a moment be a doubt that the Spirit wrought in the Old Testament saints. The question is, whether He was present in the same manner, and dwelling in them, in virtue of Christ's work and glory, uniting them to a risen Head in heaven. This, of course, could not be. The work was not yet wrought, the glory not yet entered into by the man Jesus. The New Testament is clear on this point. He was not; but He must have wrought in and with the saints. He acts in everything good; the agent in all divine action in the creature, as in the creation He moved on the face of the waters, but specially in the hearts of men for any good that is there, and to be the source of joy and strength to the saints. So in the prophets and others.

An intelligent saint now could not say what is said in this psalm (Psa 51:11); he knows God will not take His Spirit from him. He might indeed perhaps in anguish say it, and with a true heart, and be heard; but not intelligently. This repentance of Israel, as so constantly taught in scripture (see Acts 3), is the path to Zion's blessing there. Will God accept their offerings? In these two psalms we have the separative judgment in Israel connected with wickedness, sin against Jehovah judgment which is real deliverance for the remnant; and now (when He has appeared) the full confession, and that even of having shed the blood of the Savior.

These two psalms complete the setting, as to circumstances, of the whole scene before us, which forms the groundwork of this book. The series of psalms now commences (as we have seen in other instances), to supply and unfold the expressions of feeling for the remnant under these circumstances. It will be found, accordingly, that it is not so much trial by being in the midst of evil, as from seeing it dominant and prevailing in the place even that belonged to Jehovah. Hence in general, they are addressed to God and the Most High, the God of promise not to Jehovah, the God of present covenant blessings, for they are out of the place of them. When otherwise, I purpose noticing it in its place. After all this is gone through up to the full inshining of hope, the position of Christ exalted on high, and once suffering in Israel as that in virtue of which He could help and deliver them, is brought out. This (with the application of it to the remnant and the employment of David's last appeal in his sorrow, as now fatigued with years, to Israel's own state at the end) ushers in the millennial reign of Christ under the figure of Solomon.

Psalms Chapter 52

In Psalm 52 we find faith as regards the power of the wicked man, who was in presence of the godly. The goodness of God endured. God would destroy the proud and deceitful man, while the righteous would abide. It reminds of Shebna not enemies from without nor even the beast, but within among themselves the Antichrist of power.

Psalms Chapter 53

In Psalm 53 we have the wicked in general, the whole mass of the people, all, save where grace had come in. It is the same as Psalm 14, but does not speak of Jehovah, but of God, for the remnant are no longer in the place of covenant relation. Hence here it is not God is in the generation of the righteous, but the utter ruin of those encamped against them the public judgment of the external enemies. Those who are in great fear are the ungodly Jews (see Isa 33:14; Isa 8:12; and Isa 10:24). In Psalm 14 they despised the poor who trusted in Jehovah. There they were outwardly together. This is not so now. God has put His enemies to shame not the proud ungodly the poor of the flock. The desire of the full salvation of Israel out of Zion as a center, not merely God's deliverance by judgment from enemies without, is then expressed. The power which comes from heaven and destroys the faithless oppressor, is a distinct thing from the establishment of the result of covenant power in Zion according to promise.

Psalms Chapter 54

Psalm 54 is the cry to God to deliver according to the value of His name, the subject of trust. The double character of the enemies is spoken of strangers, enemies from without; and oppressors, the proud within, who hunt for the life of the poor. When deliverance comes, then the name of Jehovah is introduced (Psa 54:6-7). The name of God is the revelation of what He is. This is what is trusted. Jehovah's name, that of their covenant God, will be praised when they get back into the place of association with Him.

Psalms Chapter 55

Psalm 55 is a distressing picture of wickedness in Jerusalem. The speaker is outside, but has experienced this wickedness in the treachery of his dearest friends. His resource is in God: Jehovah will save. He is looking back, I judge, at all that he had experienced in Jerusalem. Wickedness went about her walls. Wickedness, deceit, and guile were in her midst, nor departed from her streets. He would fain have fled from it all. The enemy was without, the wicked within; but they charged the godly with wickedness, and utterly hated them; but worst of all was the heartless treachery of those within, those with whom the godly had gone in company to the house of God. Still his trust was in God, for where else should he seek help?

Psalms Chapter 56

Psalm 56 expresses the sense of the bitter and relentless enmity of the wicked, but the tears of the godly are put in God's bottle. God is owned as the Most High, the title of promise but not of covenant (that of covenant is Jehovah); and here the remnant are cast out. But the word of God is a sure trusting place. It carries the truth of God as its basis to the soul, and contains all the expression of His goodness, and ways, and faithfulness, and interest also in His people. Hence there is no fear of man. The soul of the godly was delivered from death; he had escaped and fled, and now he looks to God that his feet may be kept, that he may walk before God in the light of the living. As the expression of the tried heart driven out, but so escaped, it has a most clear and distinct place.

Psalms Chapter 57

Psalm 57 looks more at the evil and the feet being kept, leaning on the word. This psalm, while crying to God in the same spirit and circumstances, and under the same title, is more the expression of confidence in God as a refuge. His wings are a covert till the evil be overpast, and full deliverance is looked for by His gloriously putting an end to the trial. God will send from heaven and deliver. Hence the end of the psalm is more triumphant than that of Psalm 56. He will praise among the peoples and various tribes of the earth, for God's mercy and truth are great. God's publicly exalting Himself above heaven and over all the earth is looked for. No help was on earth, none to be looked for; but this cast more entirely on God, and thus brought out a fuller confidence in His safeguard, and in the final display of power in deliverance. So it ever is. God would send from heaven. How this directs the remnant upwards, and links them with a heavenly deliverance. Then Jehovah is praised.

Psalms Chapter 58

Psalm 58. All righteousness was silent in Israel. The wicked were such and nought else. The godly man looks for judgment on them, for, let favor be shown to them, they will not learn uprightness. In the land of uprightness will they deal unjustly (Isa 26:9-10). They cannot, says David of the same, be taken with hand; one must be fenced with iron to touch them (2 Samuel 23).

Hence the godly looked for judgment the only possible means, by God's own testimony, of removing the evil; for patience had been fully exercised towards them, but when even God's hand was lifted up they would not see. And the vengeance of deliverance would come, and men would say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless there is a God that judgeth in the earth (see Isa 26:9). This is the meaning of these terrible judgments: they establish the government and righteous judgment of God in the earth. Grace has taken us out of the world; we are not of it, as Christ was not of it. Christ will, as to our deliverance, even from suffering, come and take us out of the evil, so that we have in no way need to seek the destruction of our enemies. But for the persecuted remnant, it is the only and promised deliverance; and not only that it establishes God's government of the earth.

Psalms Chapter 59

Psalm 59 gives more the external enemies. The same wickedness is found there, but the might of human power with it. But they also must be judged, that wickedness may be set aside. Nor was it the sin of Israel against them that brought the heathen on them (however God might chasten them for sin against Him, so that He was justified). The suffering remnant look therefore for the intervention of Jehovah to judge them. And Jehovah shall judge all the heathen. They are not destroyed, but scattered, yet practically, as power, consumed; and many, as we know, slain.

This psalm speaks of no restoration of blessing. It is judgment, and judgment going on and not yet finished. And this judgment of the proud and wicked enemies will go on. Though rising up in rage to a head of wickedness, they will be sore smitten and consumed. All the heathen are concerned in it, but I apprehend that it is especially the apostate power animated of Satan partially the king of Daniel 8 perhaps. It will be remarked here that, the moment it is in contrast with the heathen, the name of Jehovah is introduced. The personal address is still under the name of God, for the people are still outside (see Psa 59:3; Psa 59:5; Psa 59:8 for Jehovah, and Psa 59:1; Psa 59:9-10; Psa 59:17 for the personal address). Note, the result is, that God rules in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Verses 14-15 () are, I apprehend, a challenge. Let the heathen be as hungry dogs about the

city, the believer will sing of Jehovah's power. It is at the close of the tribulation.

This psalm presents another phase of the connection of Israel and Messiah, and shows how David became the fitted instrument whom God had attuned to tell Messiah's and the remnant's sufferings. "Slay them not, lest my people forget." [See Note #1] Now, this is not the language of the king, as such, but of Jehovah. The only case where "my people" is used is Sa2 22:44, or Psa 18:43, where Christ is the speaker. But when Christ is born, He is called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. Now Jesus was the personal verifying of that which was said of Jehovah. In all their affliction He was afflicted, as in Isaiah 63. It is Jehovah who gets the tongue of the learned (Isaiah 50). So that "my people," where not directly of Jehovah which is frequent, is Christ entering into the sorrows of Israel, but in the love of Jehovah to them no doubt as man (or how could He have actually suffered?) but still in the sympathies of Jehovah yet, and because He is Jehovah, perfectly entering into them. It is thus He wept over Jerusalem, saying, "How often would I have gathered thy children together!" But that was Jehovah Hence, though He can say "we," because He graciously takes a place among the children, yet, in saying "we," it brings in all His own value and excellency into the cry. "I" and "me" may often take up the case of an individual of the remnant; but in case of such an expression as "my people," we clearly get One who stands in another position not merely David. He says (like Moses) to Jehovah, "thy people" ever, and that is all right, but One who, in whatever sorrow, could say, as Jehovah, when spoken of by the Spirit, "my people," and enter into their griefs with divine sympathy, and a righteous call for divine judgment. I apprehend that, though the enemies are the heathen, yet their complete intimacy and affinity with the wicked among the Jewish people is clearly intimated here. The same thing is found in Isaiah 66. They are all melted into one system and state of wickedness.

Note #1

If the title be right, David was not yet king de facto, and the Spirit of Christ in him spoke anticipatively of the title of the anointed one; but evidently in view of another epoch. Note too here all Israel is in view of the desires of faith, though no deliverance even of the Jews be yet accomplished.

Psalms Chapter 60

In Psalm 60 the remnant acknowledge God's having cast them off. Their only hope is, that He will turn to them again. This is exactly the point of Israel's righteousness as a nation: no going for help elsewhere no spirit of rebellion. They accept the punishment of their iniquity. Still God had put His ensign among the faithful in Israel. He was their Jehovah-nissi. They now look to Him. The end of the psalm is God asserting His title to the land of promise. Victory will be to Israel through Him.

Psalms Chapter 61

Psalm 61. The main point of all these psalms is trust in God when all is against the godly One. The more all circumstances are adverse, the more God is trusted in; but Christ shines through all as taking the dependent godly one's place. Many of the psalms of this book were, it is very likely, composed when David was driven out through Absalom.

This confidence in God which calls Him to hear is expressed in Psalm 61. It is not an appeal of the godly man against enemies, but the sinking of his heart as cast out; but, when at the end of the earth and his spirit overwhelmed, he cries to God and looks for a rock higher than himself from this flood. Thus his confidence was restored. It was a known God whom he thus trusted, whatever his then sorrows. In Verse 5 (Psa 61:5) he applies it to present certainty of having been heard. The vows he had sent up Godward had reached His ear above; full blessings would rest upon him, and in those blessings he would perform them. Verse 6, (Psa 61:6), doubtless, as to the occasion of it, was David, but it looks, I apprehend, clearly to a greater than he, and the abiding life into which He entered as man; and though the godly remnant be thus driven out and their spirit overwhelmed within them, yet the fact that the King had been so would be a cheer and a security to their hearts: His song would become theirs, His having sung it a relief to them when they might have sunk in despondency. Though the being driven out is the occasion and is felt, the psalm does not refer to wickedness, but to nature, the human heart being overwhelmed.

Psalms Chapter 62

In Psalm 62 confidence is more expressed. It is not looking from an overwhelmed heart, but a free looking up, so that one is not overwhelmed. His soul waits on God, has none else indeed, but does not desire any other. There is a "how long?" as well as a waiting. God will certainly come in at the right time, and then it will be known to whom power belongs. The psalm is spoken individually and may be in the mouth of any one of the godly remnant. How long would they imagine mischief against a man? What was their object? Why have him thus in hatred, and by falsehood seek to root him out of his place the place of God's blessing, in which He had placed the godly in Israel? But this, I doubt not, has special application to Christ as the One who was indeed in this place, and against whom all their malice was directed to cast Him down from His excellency. He invites also the people (Jewish) to trust in God, to pour out their hearts before Him, and, putting Himself with them in this place, says, not only, "my refuge is in God," but He is "a refuge for us." In saying "my" He shows that He had it; but these maschilim (the wise) shall instruct the many and turn to righteousness many of them. [See Note #1] Above all did that truly understanding One do so. They were not to trust in the great and violent ones of the earth. Power belongs to God, and with Him is mercy. They may trust in Him as a God of righteousness, and walk uprightly and not be turned aside by the prosperity of the wicked; for the Lord (Adonai) will reward every man according to his works. It is the desire to cast down the poor of the flock (because the wicked after all have the consciousness that the excellency of God is with them, and specially with Christ), which draws out this psalm, which expresses the faith of the saint, and the warning to the people to trust God and not the mighty. They are exalted in the earth; but true elevation from God is with Christ, and those who thus walk, who fear God and obey the voice of His servant.

Note #1

Compare Dan 12:3 and Isa 53:11; not "justify many," but turn to righteousness, and bear, etc.

Psalms Chapter 63

If Psalm 61 has been the cry of depression, Psalm 62 the confidence and encouragement of trust in God, Psalm 63 is the longing of the soul, still as cast out and far from the sanctuary (so we can speak of heaven, for we have seen the power and glory there by faith); but having, by faith in the lovingkindness itself, praise as its portion even in the wilderness, marrow and fatness to feed upon. It is a beautiful psalm in this respect; for it knows God; praise is thus begotten in the soul and for all times. There are two points: first, a most sweet word because God's lovingkindness is better than life, his lips praise God, though life in the wilderness be sorrow; secondly, because He has been his help, therefore he will rejoice in His protection. Verse 8 (Psa 63:8) describes the practical result this soul followed hard after God, and God's right hand upheld him. There was the longing to see the power and the glory as he had seen it; the present satisfying of the soul as with marrow and fatness, and that in the silent watches of the night, when all outward excitement was hushed and the soul left to itself. Those that sought the soul of the righteous to destroy it should go down into Hades, but the king shall rejoice in God. Those that own His name should glory, but the false ones who departed from Him should be put to shame. It is again the king, and applies to Christ in a higher sense than to the remnant. For Him it was the desire to see the glory from which He was descended; for the Jew it was in the temple; for us, a Christ who has been revealed by faith to us, who have seen the glory and sanctuary into which He is entered.

There is a difference between Psalm 84 and this psalm: that is the desire to revisit the sanctuary of God; this, desire after God Himself. There the tabernacles of Jehovah, a covenant God, are amiable; here God Himself is a delight when there are no tabernacles to go to. [See Note #1]

Note #1

For Christ and for the new man, the world is a desert, without anything in it to refresh the soul. But divine favor being better than life, we can praise while we live; our soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness. The saint is not in the sanctuary, but has seen God in it. His desire is after God Himself. Christ could literally say this. "He hath seen the Father": we have seen Him in Him.

Psalms Chapter 64

Psalm 64 chiefly speaks of the unceasing crafty hatred of the enemy and cries to God: God will shoot at them suddenly. The result of this judgment will be that all shall fear and declare the work of God, for they shall wisely consider of His doing. Then (for judgment is now come) the righteous shall be glad in Jehovah, for His covenant name is now taken, the judgment having removed the power of evil. The upright in heart glory. Thus judgment introduces the millennium.

Psalms Chapter 65

The following commentary covers Psalms 65, 66 and 67.

In Psalms 65-67 we have the bright side, the bright and joyful confidence of the saint who is conscious of being heard, and who, though not yet in the blessing, counts upon it; whereas up to this it has been the sense of the power of evil, or the cry to God and waiting upon Him. Still in Psalm 65 the door of praise is not yet opened. Praise is silent in Zion; still it surely would not be silent, the vow now made would be performed. There God was the hearer of prayer if praise was yet silent, and all flesh would come to Him. But confidence is very bright here. As to the actual state of the people and the remnant (indeed, the remnant alone enter into their case) iniquities prevailed against them. Still confidence is unshaken, God would purge them away. Blessed the man that Elohim chose (for all was grace) and made to dwell in His courts. They would be satisfied with the goodness of His house. The thing was sure and gave satisfying joy. In Verse 5 (Psa 65:5) we have the judgment in favor of the remnant by which the blessing would be introduced terrible things in righteousness. God is the blesser of the earth in every place. The end of the psalm is the celebration of the earth's blessings, when God comes in in judgment in favor of His people. At the door of Zion, as yet eating the fruit of their sins outside, the plea of the remnant is, that as yet praise was silent in Zion, but it was ready; God had only to bring in the judgment and deliverance, and it would wake up; and Elohim would do this, He who was the one blesser and orderer of the whole earth.

Psalm 66 celebrates this intervention in righteousness. Men are called to see God's works, but (Psa 66:6) it is the very same God who once delivered

Israel before out of Egypt. Verse 8 (Psa 66:8) calls upon the nations brought into connection with God, to bless the God of the remnant, that is, of Israel. They had been brought through every kind of sorrow and oppression, to prove and try them as silver, but now they would go before Him and praise Him. They had cried, been righteous, were heard, and found mercy; their prayer was not turned away, nor God's mercy from them. Thus after the sorrows (seen clearly now as the way and hand of God with them), to the righteous there is arisen up light in the darkness. They can pay the vows uttered in their distress, and tell to others the blessed and sure deliverance of the Lord who cares for the righteous, and has indeed heard their cry. But it is a deliverance by terrible acts of righteousness on God's part, the display of His intervention in judgment in the government of this world. We see, as indeed in so many other psalms, how it is in the Jewish remnant, though not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him, that God displays His government of this world; as it is in them, which is the subject of the next psalm, that the blessing of the world takes place.

Psalm 67 closes this short series by looking for the blessing of the remnant, not only as the righteous and merciful answer to their cry, but as the way of spreading the knowledge of God's ways to all nations. "God be merciful to us, that thy way may be known upon earth." Thus all the peoples will praise God, and the earth be judged and governed righteously. The earth will yield her increase, God's blessing will be upon it, and He will, as the own God of the godly remnant that have trusted in Him, bless them. The result is summed up in the last verse "God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." For the repentant Jew is the way of blessing, life from the dead for the world.

Psalms Chapter 68

Psalm 68 follows on these psalms, being the celebration of the introduction of Israel into the position spoken of in them. Still it has a complete and individual character of its own. It begins with the formula employed when the camp broke up in the wilderness under the guidance of God, the pillar rising up and going before them. So it is now. God takes this place at the head of His people. It is thus introduced suddenly with great majesty. Let God arise so His enemies are scattered before Him: as wag before the fire,

the wicked perish at His presence. The righteous may be glad and rejoice before God, yea, exceedingly rejoice. He shall appear to the shame of the mighty wicked, and the righteous poor will be glorified. Thus the purport of this psalm is most clear. But the character of Him who thus interferes is further most beautifully unfolded. He is a father of the fatherless, a judge of widows. He makes the solitary to dwell in families, the rebellious in a dry land. Judgment is the true and gracious deliverance of the blessed God. And now His people can celebrate this goodness.

History is then recapitulated (Psa 68:7). Such was He when He brought forth Israel from Egypt. At Sinai the earth shook at His presence. But He refreshed the heritage of His weary people, when He had prepared of His goodness for the poor. But now present facts told that tale still more to their hearts. Adonai's word went forth. The glad tidings were chanted by Israel's daughters in a great company (Psa 68:11). Kings fled apace. What a sudden and complete deliverance it was! The quietest home-stayer divided the spoil, for it was the Lord's doing. Then Israel came out in all her beauty, though they had been lying in poverty and wretchedness. [See Note #1] In all the pretensions and striving of the nations, this is God's will. God challenges these pretensions of human power; "Why leap ye, ye high hills?" the seats of human power. Zion was God's hill, He would make it His perpetual abode. For the sake of His remnant He scattered the kings. In the midst of them He would dwell. But whence all this deliverance? The Lord had ascended on high, received gifts as man and for men; yea, even for rebellious Israel, who was now in question, that Jehovah might dwell among them.

This brings out praises to the God of their salvation; for their God was the God of salvation. Oh! how could Christ witness that? But they were still mortal men down here. The deliverance was earthly and temporal, though of saints. But He would be their guide always, even unto death. But He would destroy the wicked. What was really the occasion of all this burst of joy (of which the heart was too full to tell quietly the occasion) is now however drawn out; yet the exultation still casts its light and joy over it. Israel was set up again in power; her enemies destroyed; the beauty of her temple-order restored. The tribes would come up, the kings bring presents. God had commanded strength, and they look to His strengthening what is

wrought. The subjection of every enemy or mighty one follows. Princes would come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia stretch out her hands to God. The kingdoms of the earth are all called upon then to sing praises to Adonai. Strength is to be ascribed to God; but His excellency, that in which He is exalted, is over Israel, and, in the clouds of His dwelling-place is power, His strength watches over His people. It is the full restoration of Israel's blessing and glory, and indeed much more than restoration; and this consequent upon the exaltation of the Lord to receive gifts as man.

But, while it is the intervention of God in the power of judgment, for the blessing of the remnant and putting down human power and every haughtiness of man's will "God's arising" before His earthly people and His enemies fleeing there are some points in it, which are brought out by this, which it is well to notice. First, the use of Adonai. His name Jah is introduced (Psa 68:4 and Psa 68:18), but it is always Adonai as spoken of. It is not the covenant name of relationship, though Jah recall it, but power in exercise, Lordship divine Lordship but still Lordship. It is what Thomas owned when he saw the Lord, it would seem; not, tell my brethren "I ascend unto my Father and your Father," etc. It is God; but as the Lord manifested here in power as Psa 2:4; only there He is not redescended. Hence here we have His ascension as a past fact. It is not that God gives, but He who is Adonai has gone up and received gifts as, and in respect of, man. In His Adam (last Adam) character He has received them, having led the enemy captive (Act 2:33-36); here clearly the ascended man, though much more, and as head having received the gifts "in Man" the human head of glory He shed forth the gifts (Acts 2, Ephesians 4). But though as, and for, and in, man, yet there was also a special object added, yea, even for the rebellious, that Jah Elohim might dwell among them. Here the remnant, the Israel of our psalm, comes in. Hence the apostle does not quote it, but stops half-way at His receiving them for man.

In the following psalms we find the humiliation of this blessed One. What a contrast! Yet how far indeed from being less glorious or of feebleness of interest in the eyes of us who have learned and know who He is.

Note #1

The force of the word is much disputed; its sense, I suppose, is evident. It is used for the stables of sheep or cattle.

Psalms Chapter 69

Psalm 69. The state of soul of which this most important psalm is the expression demands the utmost attention and patient inquiry. We have all along seen the remnant of Israel before us, or Christ associated with that remnant. It is the case here. He who speaks is doubtless, first of all, David; but evidently a greater than he. The state described is this: He is in the deepest distress, sinking in deep mire, has to weigh before God the foolishness and sins which have been the occasion of it. He is in the midst of numerous and mighty enemies, who are such without a cause. Whatever sins may be dealt with, personally He has been faithful. The zeal even of God's house has eaten Him up, and He is suffering reproach for the God of Israel's sake. Hence He prays that this may not be a stumbling-block to others, seeing that One so faithful to God should find such distress and trouble. Yet He is not forsaken of God. On the contrary His prayer is to Jehovah in an acceptable time. He looks to be heard in the multitude of God's mercies and the truth of His salvation. His complaint is of His enemies; yet He sees Himself smitten of God, and among those whom He has wounded. His desire is for vengeance against men; it is not the testimony of grace.

If we look at the godly man in the remnant of Israel, all this answers perfectly. He acknowledges his sins all the sins of his nation. Yet he suffers reproach and causeless enmity for the name of the God of Israel: and the more faithful he is, the more he suffers it. Faith yet makes him know that he prays in an acceptable time (we have seen this to be the character of the last psalms) to the God of Israel. Yet he is in the deepest distress. His eyes fail while waiting for God. His care for the good of Israel, his submission to injury, only makes him their scorn. He looks for the destruction of his adversaries and persecutors, for whom no mercy is of avail (they will it not); assured that Jehovah hears the poor and despises not His prisoners. All creation is to praise Him, for God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, that they may dwell therein and have it in possession. The seed also of His servants shall inherit it; and they that love His name shall dwell therein. All

this is exactly and precisely the position and feeling of the godly remnant the maschilim.

But in Verse 21, (Psa 69:21), and indeed, though of more general application, in Verse 9, (Psa 69:9), we have what has been literally fulfilled in Christ. The use of Verse 22 (Psa 69:22) in the epistle to the Romans leads us to the same conclusion; and many other verses, though applicable to others, have their fullest application to Christ. Yet He is not speaking as forsaken of God at all. Yet, though His life is referred to, His sufferings on the cross, as we have seen, are reached in the description given of them; yet there is no trace of grace and mercy flowing from them. They are man's part in them, not God's forsaking; and judgment on man sought, not righteous grace announced. Yet withal trespasses are confessed before God, and the persecutions are of One whom God has smitten. Hence, I cannot but see in this psalm, after His righteous life, in consequence of which He suffered reproach (and which He rehearses as regards the great principles which had governed it), Christ entering in heart and spirit into the sorrow and distress of Israel, into which, as to God's government, they had brought themselves; yet not the forsaking or the rejecting that was Christ's alone as bearing and expiating sin. Still, they are smitten of God and wounded by Him; and into this Christ could enter, because He (in the highest and fullest sense, though it be not the general subject of this psalm in general) was smitten of God. The subject is the persecution by the Jews, but the persecuted One was smitten of God, and felt how terrible was the wickedness that taunted and reproached Him who had taken that bitter cup, which we too had filled by our sins. Christ was smitten of God upon the cross, and felt the reproach and dishonor then cast upon Him.

As regards the trespasses recalled to mind in Verse 5, (Psa 69:5), [See Note #1] I apprehend they are in connection with the government of God as to Israel; and that, though the fact of smiting is referred to, its expiatory power is not at all treated of in this psalm. Only judgment is sought for; that is not the fruit of expiation (compare Psalm 22). But it gives to us, for that very reason, a fuller apprehension of all the personal sufferings of Christ at that time; not that which stands wholly and entirely alone His atoning and expiatory work. Were this only revealed, it is so immensely great, it would

have eclipsed His personal sufferings as a man, as such, gone through at that time; and this it is, blessed be God, which we have in this psalm what accompanied the great act of the smiting of God.

Note #1

Further, as already remarked, in no case is the assumption of sins or their confession, on the head of the victim, the act of expiation. It is the assumption of that which had to be expiated.

Psalms Chapter 70

Psalms 70 embodies the desire of the Spirit of Christ in connection with His sufferings from man, (but expresses itself, as in the remnant in that day); that His enemies may be confounded those that say, Aha, aha, as they did when He was on the cross; that those that seek Jehovah may rejoice, and be glad and rejoice, and those who look for His deliverance say, Let God be magnified that is, enjoy that deliverance. For this, He, as on earth, is content to be poor and needy, and nothing else, to the end. Still He trusts in Jehovah; He is His help and deliverer. He is assured He will come. He asks He may not tarry. Any saint of the remnant could say it doubtless; but it is a summing up of the principle on which the Spirit of Christ speaks in them, and of His personal association with their sorrows, and thus in principle furnishes a key. It will be remarked that from Psa 69:13 the covenant name of Jehovah is introduced.

Psalms Chapter 71

Psalms 71, founded, I suppose, as much of this book, upon the flight of David on the rebellion of Absalom, presents, I apprehend, the sum of all God's ways with Israel from the commencement of their history, and the display of His faithful care, with the appeal not now to leave them at the last. Christ, I doubt not, in spirit enters into it (see Psa 71:11) as in every case, but it cannot personally apply to Him. The close of His life witnessed exactly similar trials, only faultless and deeper ones; but its application is to the old age of Israel, who will be brought up as from the depths of the earth through the faithful grace of the Holy One of Israel.

Psalms Chapter 72

Psalm 72 introduces us, not to David in suffering and conflict, but to the full reign of peace and royal blessing. It is the Son of David we have here, the source and securer of millennial blessings. I know not that this psalm requires much explanation by reason of its clearness. It is the king to whom God gives His judgments, and who is at the same time the king's Son, the Son of David, in His reign of righteousness and peace, as Solomon or Melchisedec. His kingdom has the full extent of promise, but all kings fall down before Him. Blessings of every kind accompany this reign of righteousness. The expression "prayer shall be made continually for him" shows simply, that the blessings enjoyed through Him raise the desire and request for His glory and continuance in power. While literally spoken of Solomon, I think it would point out Christ reigning as a true man upon earth. Verse 17 (Psa 72:17) shows, I think, it is not uncertainty of duration, but the effects of His rule on the hearts of all that are under it. There will be a prince of the house of David in Jerusalem, I suppose: still this, I think, looks beyond him.

This closes the Book. We have seen in it the godly ones cast out; their distress and confidence in this position; this ending in the certainty and confidence of restoration; and then Messiah's deliverance and exaltation and previous humiliation the glorious and yet humbled person being thus brought out and then the human royal rule established in Israel. This ends the dealings with the remnant in the land, looked at as apart from the rest.

Psalms Chapter 73

BOOK 3 - Psalms 73-89

In the Third Book we get out into a larger sphere than the state of the residue of the Jews in the last days, whether in Jerusalem or driven out; and hence we find much less of the personal circumstances and feelings and associations of the Lord who, in His day, walked among them. The general interests of Israel are in view, and thus Israel's history is entered into. The whole national position is before us, still distinguishing a true-hearted residue. Remark here that, save one, we have no psalms of David in this book. Asaph, sons of Korah, Ethan, are the professed authors; I know of no reason to reject the alleged authorship. It is still the state of Israel in the last

days: only that the general facts are spoken of in reference to the whole nation, not the particular details of the Jewish remnant, and of Christ as taking a place among them. It is much more Israel and general principles; there is more reference to their past history and God's dealings with them.

This the first psalm of it shows. Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are of a true heart: but the saint was perplexed at the prosperity of the wicked, and his feet almost gone. The prosperous ungodly are then described; the body of the people join them, and the Most High is scorned; whereas the godly is continually chastened, he had cleansed his hands then in vain. But in speaking thus he would offend against the generation of God's children. Man pondering on it, it was too painful. In the sanctuary of God, where His mind was revealed, all became plain. As a dream when one awakes, so all their pretensions would disappear when once God awoke. The godly man complains of his want of divine sense in these thoughts and feelings. Still, after all he was ever before God, and God's right hand upheld him; guided by His counsel in that time of darkness, when the glory shall have been revealed, he will be received (read "after the glory, thou wilt receive me": compare Zac 2:8). The result is blessed. He has none in heaven but the Lord, none on earth whom he desires beside Him: such is the effect of trial. But his flesh and heart fail: that is nature. It must be so, but God is the strength of his heart and his portion for ever. The last two Verses declare the result those far from Jehovah, and apostates, perish; but it is good for the godly to draw near to God. He has put his trust in Him when He did not show Himself, that he might declare all His works when deliverance came; for those blessed without trial afterwards will not learn this knowledge of God.

Psalms Chapter 74

Psalm 74 complains of the hostile desolation of the sanctuary, when rebuilt in the land. God's enemies, as faith here calls them, roar in the congregations. Man's ensigns, not God's, are the signs of power. All public Jewish worship was laid low. Not only this what might have been a comfort in such a time fails. There are no signs from God to meet it, no prophets, none that know how long (know, that is, by the teaching of God, when He will come in in power). Still there is here faith that God will not forsake His people, and that word, How long? if there be no answer as to it, turns into a

cry. It cannot be for ever. God's faithfulness is trusted in. Heretofore He had smitten Egypt and delivered His people through a divided sea. All power in creation was His. The enemy had reproached the name of Jehovah. Israel is still held to be, in the remnant, as God's turtledove. He is entreated to have respect to the covenant, for the dark places of the earth (or land) are full of the habitations of cruelty. The oppressed, the poor, the needy, are, as ever, presented to the eye and heart of God. We have them ever come before us as those of whom God thinks, in whom Christ delighted in the land. And so it is even as to the spirit we have to be of. He calls on God to arise and plead His own cause. The tumult of those who rose up against Him daily increased. While looked at as the poor and oppressed, it is remarkable how faith identifies the interests of the godly remnant and of God, and pleads their cause with Him. It is spoken of as from without. God is addressed: only God is reminded that His name in Israel has been blasphemed. This name recalls (Psa 74:19-20) the covenant relationship with, and tender love of Jehovah towards, His people.

Psalms Chapter 75

In Psalm 75 Messiah is introduced speaking, though the psalm commences with the remnant giving thanks to God for wondrous works already wrought. Then judgments of God introduce Messiah to the kingdom. He receives the congregation of Israel; then upright judgment will be executed. The earth is dissolved in guilt and confusion. Messiah upholds its pillars. In the following Verses He warns the wicked and despisers of God not to exalt themselves, for God is the Judge; He puts up and puts down. The wicked should drink the cup of judgment to the dregs; but the despised Messiah would exalt the God of Jacob and cut off the horns of the wicked; the horn of the righteous would be exalted.

Psalms Chapter 76

Psalm 76 is extremely simple in its application to the judgment of the kings, who come up against Jerusalem in their pride, and find, unlooked for, the Lord Himself there (compare Mic 4:11-13 and Zac 12:2; Zac 14:3-4). The judgment of God is rehearsed, and God is now celebrated as having His dwelling-place in Zion. He is the God of Jacob and known in Judah: His

judgment was heard from heaven. The long-despised Zion is more glorious than the mountains of prey, the high places of human violence. The earth feared, and was still, when God arose to judgment, and to help all the meek upon the earth.

Psalms Chapter 77

In Psalm 77 we have spiritual deliverance and restored confidence. He cried with his voice to God, and God gave ear to him. To cry with the voice is more than to have a wish. A cry is the expression of weakness, dependence, recourse had to God, the reference of the soul to God, even of uprightness of heart. In the day of trouble, it was not merely complaint, irritation, anger; but "I sought the Lord," Adonai, not Jehovah. His first thought was whether the Lord would cast off for ever (Psa 77:7-9); for here he, as often remarked in the Psalms, is going through the process which led to the statements of the first verses. [See Note #1] In Verse 10 (Psa 77:10) he judges himself in the thought, and remembered those years in which the power of Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, the Most High of the fathers, was displayed (compare the remark, Verse 5 Psa 77:5). The way of God is always and necessarily according to His own most blessed and holy nature, and understood in the secret place in which He makes known His thoughts to those in communion with Him. His way is according to that place, in which He judges His people according to His present relationship with them. (Hence the place of the interpreter, one among a thousand). The ways of God are the application of the divine principles of His holy nature, owned as placing Himself in relationship with His people, according to which principles that relationship must be maintained. That is His sanctuary. There is where He is approached. Thence He deals with His people, not merely in outward guidance, but as making good in His majesty the principles of His nature (so far as revealed) in the hidden man of the heart. [See Note #2] He deals in the holy place of His nature and majesty with us in the truth of our state our real, moral, inward state. He does not deviate from these ways, nor compromise the majesty they make good. But they (though according to His nature) are carried out in a revealed relationship. They make good His nature and majesty in it, but never infringe it. Man in relationship with Him must suit himself to it, must walk in his inward state with Him in it; but God, if He deals

according to it, purifies him for it, shows the evil, hides pride from man in order to bless him, but makes good His own majesty. Hence the heart in the evil turns back to that which formed the relationship in redemption (Psa 77:14-18).

Israel or the godly remnant is not in the enjoyment here of covenant blessings, but, when distressed, looks back by faith to a time which recalls the power of Him who cannot change. The comfort of the soul is, that God's way is in the sanctuary, according to the nature and ways of God Himself, so far as He is revealed. If I look out to judge as man, His way is in the seal cannot trace it; His footsteps are not known, for who can follow out Him who disposes of all things with a thought? We do know God's own nature and character in relation to us by faith, and can reckon on it, as to all He does, as faithful and unchangeable; but we cannot know and judge His ways in themselves. Hence the unbeliever is discontented and will blame God; the believer is happy, because he has the key to all, in what the God is whom he knows, and on whose ordering of all things he can count. It must be according to what God is. He does not order all things contrary to what He is; but He is for us and therefore orders all things for us makes all things work together for good. He leads His people like sheep. In Psalm 73 the tried one learned the end of his outward enemies, who prospered while he was chastened. Here he learns the ways of God with himself.

But this psalm is practically both interesting and instructive. The soul away from the enjoyment of divine blessing, is awakened by grace to cry to God, the sense of the loss of these blessings pressing upon it. He seeks the Lord, and this presses the trouble, as it ever does, on him; he feels where he is, his soul refused comfort; but the thought of God is a source of trouble, for if faith is awakened, conscience is too, which mingled with the loss of blessing, and the spirit overwhelmed; his soul is kept in wakeful consciousness of where he is. He thinks of bright days of old when the "candle of the Lord shone upon" him. Had God given him up, forgotten to be gracious and shut up His lovingkindness in displeasure? Can he think that God has given him up, and he one of His people! This brought God Himself into his mind. How could it be all over with him? It was his own infirmity; and he turns back to the years of the right hand of the Most High. He

remembers Jehovah's works. In reaching Jehovah with his own humbled spirit, he reached One who was for His people ever and who had wrought for them and redeemed them of old. He, their God, became the source of his thoughts, not his own state towards Him. Then His being their God made it so dreadful. Then he can think and judge rightly of His ways too. They are in the sea not to be tracked by man's foot, but in the sanctuary always according to His nature and character, and accomplishing His purposes in good.

Note #1

This, if noticed, makes many psalms easy to understand, which would otherwise be difficult; because sorrow and distress follow after the confidence, but it is really what the spirit passed through in reaching it.

Note #2

This supposes, of course, truth in the inward parts, conversion.

Psalms Chapter 78

In Psalm 78 the conduct of Israel is discussed by wisdom, historically as regards the whole people, but with very important principles brought out. There was not only a redemption of old, to which faith recurred, but a testimony given, and a law to guide Israel's ways, that they should make them known to their children. But the fathers had been a stubborn and rebellious generation. Now, the law and the testimony were given that the children might not be like their fathers; but they were, and their history is here brought out. God, therefore, chastened them; there was direct open government in respect of their ways. For all this they sinned still. At the moment of chastisement they turned to Him. Nevertheless they did but flatter Him with their mouth, their heart was not right with Him, nor they stedfast in His covenant. But He showed compassion, also forgave, remembered they were but flesh. Yet after Egyptian signs they forgot Him; brought into the land, they turned to idolatry. When God heard this, He was wroth and greatly abhorred Israel. On the ground of this government, under law and testimony and compassionate mercy, Israel was wholly given up, the tabernacle forsaken, the ark delivered into captivity and the enemies'

hand. The people also were delivered over to judgment. But Jehovah's love to His people in grace was not weakened, and the sorrow they were brought into called out that love. He awoke, as one out of sleep, and smote His enemies, and put them to a perpetual shame. But now He had interfered in grace in His own proper love to His people. It was not governmental blessing on condition of obedience, but the interference of grace, when disobedience had, on the principle of government, brought in complete judgment, in spite of compassion and mercy. Sovereign mercy now had its place. Old blessings had put Joseph as natural heir; he had the rich and double portion. God chose Judah. He chose Zion. This gave it its importance. It is the place of love in grace, when all had failed under law, even with the fullest compassionate patience. He built His sanctuary. That is not directly presented as the subject of electing goodness, but He chose David when in the humblest condition, who then fed His people.

In this most beautiful psalm we have the most important principles possible. Viewing Israel as established on the ground of government in Sinai, on law mixed with compassion, Israel had entirely failed, was abhorred, cast off. A total breach had been made; the ark of the covenant, the link between Israel and God, the place of propitiation, and His throne, given up to the enemy. But God, whose sovereign love to His people had come in in power to deliver, had chosen Judah, Zion, David, and set up a link in grace, and by deliverance after failure. Faith can go back to God's works in redemption, but not to man's conduct under law. Psalm 78 is the converse of Psalm 77. Yet in Israel all this is declared to produce that which grace will effect in the last day that value for the law in the heart which will make them teach it to their children (compare Gen 18:17-19; see Exodus 34). Mercy put Israel again under the condition of obedience. Here power delivers, after they have failed even under this, and judgment is come, God acting according to His mind of love. Pure law they never were under in fact; the tables never came into the camp (compare 2 Corinthians 3). Moses' face shone only when he had seen God, when he went up the second time accepted in grace; but for Israel, this was putting them back under law. It is grace, and law brought in after it, which is death and condemnation. This is impossible with substitution; but this place, of course, Moses could not take. "Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your souls." "Blot me out, I pray you." No,

was the answer; the soul that sins, it will I blot out. This was law and (as we see here, and as is definitely stated in 2 Corinthians 3) ruin.

Psalms Chapter 79

Psalm 79 refers, in the plainest terms, to the inroad of the heathen, especially the northern army (Joel 2 refers to a second attack, in which the cry of the psalm is answered; Isaiah speaks of both), who had laid waste Jerusalem and the temple, and shed the blood of the servants of Jehovah. There is the owning of former sins, and mercy looked to tender mercies. The plea is the plea called for in Joel 2, and referred to in previous psalms (42 and 43), "why should the heathen say Where is their God?" and it demands that He may be known by the avenging the blood of His servants. Thus His people and the sheep of His pasture would give Him thanks for ever. Jehovah's anger is seen, and so far there is faith to say How long? That is, though covenant mercies are not enjoyed by the remnant (yea, quite the contrary), yet faith looks to them, and sees Jehovah angry with His people; hence if such, and He thus in relationship with them, He cannot give them up. It is only "How long?" Yet the direct cry is to God, even here, not Jehovah. Israel is not restored to his covenant place. There he will be in known covenant relationship, and then in grace, nor will this ever be lost sight of. Here they were not, but cast out on their failure under a conditional covenant, and though faith in promises sustained them, the new covenant was not entered into; they stood outside blessing, looking backward and forward, having nothing now. This is never the Christian's state. In applying it to himself he makes himself a Jew. For while Christ is hidden on high as to them, the Holy Ghost is come down to us while He is there, and we know that He is accepted and glorified as having stood for us, and that we are in Him.

Psalms Chapter 80

In Psalm 80 it is remarkable how we are upon the ground of Israel here, their past or future historical associations, not Christ (though all depends on Him, of course) or the godly Jew in the midst of the apostate assembly. We may have Jerusalem taken, confederacies, ancient deliverances of Israel, in a word, national history or prophecy concerning national circumstances; but

all is external, not trials within so that Christ should come personally on the scene, save when He receives the congregation, though the godly in Israel are distinguished. Jehovah also is not referred to, save prospectively, when they enter into the new covenant, until the judgment of the last confederacy, which makes Jehovah known as Most High over all the earth. These psalms do not, I apprehend, exclude the Jews they are part of Israel; and then in Judah, Jehovah will be revealed: only all Israel, including Joseph, is historically brought in the nation. In this psalm God is addressed as the Shepherd of Israel, who leads Joseph like a flock, and dwells between the cherubim. This is, again, historic Israel. It is not God calling from heaven, nor coming. He is seen by faith only when He is there, having taken His place in Israel.

The psalm is a remarkable one. It sees God in Israel His throne of right there, and looks to His shining forth, stirring up His strength to help them; but still, as in Israel of old in the desert, Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh were immediately next the ark behind the tabernacle, and the sanctuary went immediately before them on the march of the camp (Numbers 10) This was Jehovah, God of hosts. Faith looks for His presence in power with His people as it was then. The touching inquiry is, How long the urgency of faith wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? This is also viewed in faith. The vine brought out of Egypt was laid waste; its hedge (as, indeed, Isaiah had threatened them) was broken down. Tears were the drink of Jehovah's people. They beseech God to look down from heaven and visit the vine, the vineyard, and the branch made strong for God Himself David's family, I suppose. Still it was God's rebuke; but further, it looks that the divine hand of power should be upon the man of that power the Son of man whom God had made strong for Himself. We can understand from this, and not merely from Daniel 7 (which merely gives a peculiar place to the Son of man), why the Lord gives Himself habitually the title of Son of man. He is the One, then, indeed rejected, but upon whom God's right hand is to be in power. To this the Lord refers, Luk 22:69 (only reading "henceforth" for "hereafter"). Come down in grace, His mission there was closed; from that hour they would only know Him in exalted judicial power. It gives large importance to the name, and taking in Psalm 8 brings the deliverance of the remnant of Israel into the wide scope of His power; for as Son of man He takes manhood up in His own

Person according to the counsels of God, only is over all the works of God's hand. He is Lord of all, but as such, and in virtue of His own work for them, effectuates this deliverance of the remnant of Israel. Thus the people of Jehovah would be kept. Such is the cry of this psalm the coming in of power from Jehovah, the God of Israel power laid upon the Son of man. The cry is occasioned by the great distress in Israel; still Jehovah is looked for, and faith sets Him in Israel. When He thus visited them, they would not go back from Him; when He quickens them out of the dust, they will call on His name (compare Psalm 2, Messiah).

Verses 3, 7, 19 (Psa 80:3; Psa 80:7; Psa 80:19) give the theme of desire: still outward deliverance is looked for. Verse 17 (Psa 80:17) demands special attention in the point of view already noticed, as showing what was in the Lord's mind when presenting the immense anomaly that this Son of man should suffer. Psalm 8, of course, gives the key, in the purposes of God, as to both humiliation and exaltation, and man's place. It was this humiliation the Lord pressed upon His disciples. Now they look for the display of divine power in Him. The assembly, and its union with Christ, and adoption individually known, are the only things I am aware of not revealed in the Old Testament; all as to Christ was. Perhaps we may add His present position as priest. Neither of these is mentioned in the titles given to Christ in the first chapter of John's Gospel, nor His being the Christ.

Psalms Chapter 81

Psalm 81, while celebrating in figure the restoration of Israel, again returns to historical ground, specially introducing Joseph, who represents the ten tribes (see Eze 37:16). Otherwise Judah, the Jews, might have claimed everything. But in the restoration (although there are special events connected with the Jews, and it was amongst them that Jesus was conversant, entering especially into their circumstances in the latter day, producing the association, so profoundly interesting, which we have been studying in the first two books) yet it is evident that in the full purposes of God the stick of Joseph must have its place and become one in the Son of man's hand, and as all Israel. Now the new moon was the symbol of the reappearance of Israel in the sun's light, hailed with joy by the people and connected with redemption in the thought of faith (see Psa 81:5 of the

psalm). Then Israel called in trouble, and God delivered him; but then another important principle comes in. God answered them when in trouble; but He proved them also. They tempted God then, doubting His care and power. He was putting them to the test by difficulties, which seemed to say there was want of care or power; and they said, Is Jehovah among us! But Jehovah answered in grace (Exodus 17). This, I apprehend, is the case referred to. But even in the second Meribah called so because Israel strove again with Jehovah, when Moses (Numbers 20) spake unadvisedly with his lips and was shut out from Canaan (for, from Sinai on, they were under legal though gracious government) Jehovah was sanctified in giving them water in a grace which was above even Moses' failure. Still, while grace and faithfulness to His promises to His people were found in the government of God (Exo 34:6-7), they were put to the test legally on the very terms of that mercy. It was a testing government though a merciful one, and so indeed in some sense is the divine government. God puts this test to them if faithful to God, no strange God among them (He was Jehovah their God, which brought them out of the land of Egypt), blessing was prepared. They had only to open their mouth wide, and He would fill it. But Israel would not hearken, and they were given up to their own hearts' lusts. Still we see God's yearning love over them and the delight He would have had in blessing them and putting aside all their enemies His righteous government would have been manifested in them (compare Mat 23:37; Luk 19:42). Oh that they had hearkened! Thus we get the ground of Israel's ruin. They were placed as redeemed from Egypt under the test of obedience and fidelity to God. They had failed. Still they would appear again, to reflect the light of Jehovah's countenance. Thus love of Jehovah for the people breaks out even in their failure.

A very important principle for every soul is brought before us here. Redemption, with conditional blessing after it, only ends in the loss of the blessing, just as creation did. It is the same thing or worse. It depends on us to secure the blessing; and now as fallen beings (instead of innocent and free ones), grace alone can keep us, and so it will be with Israel. The gracious and tender character and thoughts of God towards His people come out most beautifully in this psalm. The passages I have referred to in

the Gospels show the same tenderness, but, further, that Jesus is this very Jehovah.

Psalms Chapter 82

Psalm 82. We find God assuming the government into His own hands. He had set up authority in the earth and especially in Israel. Directed by His word in judgment and armed with His authority, the judges in Israel had born the name of God (Elohim). But none would understand or deal righteously. All the foundations of the earth were out of course. All magistrates had received power and authority of God the Jewish, His word also; but even these would not know or understand. They were men, and would die like men, and fall like one of the uncircumcised princes of this world. God who had given the authority judged among the gods He must have righteousness. This judgment the Spirit of prophecy then calls for in the understanding one. "Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations."

Psalms Chapter 83

Psalm 83 requires only to call attention to its subject. It is the last confederacy of the nations surrounding Canaan, with Assur helping them. At the close of the psalm, though the cry be to God as such (for Israel is not yet established in covenant blessing), Jehovah's name is brought in. Judgment is to be executed, that the rebellious nations may seek Jehovah's name. It is not, know the Father, nor, know there is a God; but, know Jehovah. When His judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Men will know that He whose name alone is Jehovah (He who is, and was, and is to come) is the Most High over all the earth; that is, Jehovah (the one true God), the God of Israel, is the One above all, the One supreme over the earth. It is in this name He takes possession of the earth, as Melchisedec pronounces the blessing in the name of the Most High, possessor of heaven and earth. And Nebuchadnezzar, the humbled head of the Gentiles, praises and blesses the Most High. It is His millennial name in which He takes to Him His great power and reigns, and the true Melchisedec is priest upon His throne, and the counsel of peace between both. This establishes prophetically Jehovah, the God of Israel, supreme in the earth.

His people, now restored to relationship, look for a full blessing and the name of Jehovah is again used. Up to this, save as looking back or looking forward, the cry of the people is addressed to God, the people not being in possession of covenant blessings.

Psalms Chapter 84

Psalm 84 contemplates the blessedness of going up to the courts of Jehovah, yet, in the figurative allusion to the road thither, refers to the path of tears which His people have had to tread towards their blessings. Thus it has a full moral force, and is instructive for Christians as for Jews. In Psalm 63 the people cast out were longing for God Himself, and found, in spite of all, even in the dry and thirsty land, marrow and fatness in Him. In this psalm it is the joys of His house that occupy their soul, as entering into the enjoyment of covenant blessings. Not but that the living God is longed for; but it is in His courts. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee." Brought in there, such is the blessing. They will have nought to do but praise. This is the first great theme of blessing. It is blessing, perfect and complete in its nature. It is at the end.

But there is the way. "Blessed is he whose strength is in Jehovah" in whose heart are the known ways that lead to the house. This characterizes the state of soul their strength in Jehovah their heart in the ways that lead to Him. This path of blessing is through trial; for hence is the need of strength. And the way is loved and taken, whatever it may be, that leads to Him. They pass through the vale of tears it becomes a well to them; for by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of the spirit. Besides, from on high the rain fills the pools in that thirsty land. They use their strength, no doubt. It is put to the test; but they renew it go from strength to strength, till all appear before God in Zion. They are a praying people. Dependence is exercised in confidence in grace.

The covenant name here is again introduced Jehovah of hosts God of Jacob. He is His people's shield: they seek that He should look upon His anointed. This was now the link between Jehovah and His people, not the law they had broken. They appear before God in Zion. But that is the place of royal deliverance in grace. Nor can the interests of the people and the anointed

be now separated. The blessing rested on Him, and on them because of Him. The heart's interest in the kind of blessing is then sweetly and strongly expressed, and the sum of what Jehovah is, which makes it such, is declared from the heart. He is light, protection, gives grace and glory, and withholds no good thing from them who walk uprightly. The thought of what Jehovah is makes him resume all in one conscious word. "O Jehovah of hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in thee."

It is a most beautiful returning celebration of Jehovah their covenant God with their heart, when the way, though through sorrow, is now opened to them into His known presence. Psalm 63 was joy in God in the desert, when they had nothing else the real character of one enhancing the depth and sweetness of the blessing of the other. This is joy in Him when brought, or going up, to the enjoyment of Him in the midst of what surrounds His presence. The following psalm takes up the blessing of the land, and delivered people. In those that follow after we shall find Christ Himself, as far as connected with the people, still with a view to the covenant relation subsisting between Jehovah and His people.

Psalms Chapter 85

I have long hesitated, in reading Psalm 85, whether the first part referred to external deliverance and the grace shown in it, and the following to the causing the people to enter into the enjoyment of it by the restoration of their own souls; or, as we have seen is often the case, the statement of the great result as the theme of the psalm, and then going through the sorrows of the remnant and divine workings which led to this result. There will be a restoring work in the souls of the people after their outward deliverance. Nor do I now speak of this psalm with very great certainty on this point. On the whole, I am disposed to think that they look for their enjoyment of divine favor in it, as between themselves and God, when delivered from all their enemies, and shown to be forgiven by that deliverance. Thus the first three Verses lay this ground (Psa 85:1-3), that God has been favorable to His land, and brought back the captivity of Jacob. This was the great public truth. But in Verse 4 (Psa 85:4) the restored people have need of other blessing in the reality of their own relationship with God. "Turn us, O God of our salvation." Jehovah was the God of their salvation; but they needed His

blessing in the midst of the land. They would that His people should rejoice in Him. How true this is often of the soul which knows forgiveness! It looks for Jehovah's mercy and salvation, being thus restored to Him, and listens to know what Elohim Jehovah will speak; for they reckon on mercy. He will speak peace to His people their public character and to His saints the remnant who are to enjoy it. Faith has then the certainty in every way that His salvation is nigh them that fear Him, that the glory of Jehovah may dwell in the land. The last Verses celebrate, in remarkable terms, the divine principles on which their blessings are then established. God's mercy and truth had now met. His promises, always true, had now been fulfilled by mercy. It is to be remarked that in the psalms mercy always precedes righteousness and truth. For Israel had forfeited all title to promise in rejecting the Lord had come under full guilt had no righteousness on which to lean had been concluded in unbelief, that they also might be objects of mere mercy. But then through Christ's work these promises would now be fulfilled, and mercy and truth met. But more than this. Jehovah was their righteousness, through grace; and hence that righteousness was peace for them; and that which in judgment would have been their ruin, was in grace their peace righteousness and peace kissed each other. I need hardly say how true these great principles are for any sinner for yet better and heavenly blessings; here they are applied to earthly ones. Truth shall spring out of the earth (that is, the full fruit and effect of God's truth and faithfulness shall be manifest in blessings, full blessings, on the earth). But it was not by a righteousness that man had wrought legally here below. Righteousness looked down from heaven. It was God's righteousness, Jehovah their righteousness. But this made it stable. Jehovah gives that which is good, and the land is blessed. Righteousness traces the path of blessing for Jehovah and Himself in the land His own no doubt. Still His rule shall be so characterized. A king shall reign in righteousness"no more oppression. Justice is no longer fallen in the streets, as Isa 59:14 speaks; judgment is returned to it, and the government has this character. "And the fruit of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." This last, indeed, is practical; but it is the result of righteousness having looked down from heaven, yea, of its being established on the earth (compare Psa 72:1-7, where this state is described).

Psalms Chapter 86

Psalm 86. This psalm is the meek yet confiding and confident appeal of a soul conscious of its godly feelings towards Jehovah and looking to the results of relationship with Him. We have had Jehovah since Psalm 84, which is founded on these covenant relationships in which the remnant feel themselves to be, though awaiting full blessing in the land. Still it is yet in distress, for the people are not revived nor set in their covenant blessings in the land. Holy (Psa 86:2) is pious or gracious (chasid, not kodesh, "holy"). The three requests of the psalm are, "Bow down thine ear and hear me" (Psa 86:1). The gracious attention of Jehovah is called for to give ear to the prayer of the suppliant; then to attend to the voice of his supplication (Psa 86:6); that is, he looks for his request being granted; thirdly, to be taught in the way of truth (Psa 86:11). Jehovah's mercies in the terrible conflict of the remnant are then owned; but he who thus cried, still looked for His interference in his behalf, that they that hate him may be ashamed, because Jehovah has helped and comforted him. How the state of the remnant, like Job, brings out the great conflict between the power of Satan and divine deliverance, but in which, however low he may be brought, the godly soul owns the source of all to be Jehovah, though his feet may well nigh slip in seeing the prosperity of the ungodly! It is not a psalm of complaint nor bitterness of soul, but of one who is yet poor and needy, but has tasted the comfort of Jehovah's goodness.

It is to be remarked that, save the cases noticed, Lord is Adonai, not Jehovah. This is not the same as Jehovah, that is, the covenant name of God with Israel in eternal faithfulness here Adonai, one who has taken power and is in the relationship of lordship to those who call. Hence in fact we own Christ to be in this place "our Lord Jesus Christ"; and so it will be for Jews, though, till they see Him, they will not own Him fully thus. This Adonai is Elohim. Death and human power were before the thoughts of the godly, but the comfort of a known Jehovah as a support. They had found deliverance, but it was not complete in blessing. The psalm is essentially the pious appeal to Jehovah of the returned remnant of Israel in the land; but in the main its spirit is that into which Christ fully entered, but it is not directly applicable to Him.

Psalms Chapter 87

Psalm 87 views Zion as founded of God, a city which has foundations. Men had cities, and boasted of them; but God had a city He founded in the holy mountains. Even here it was not Joseph or the richness of nature; God was its riches, its place the holy mountains, what was consecrated to Himself. In the power of the Spirit the godly is not ashamed of it (glorious things are spoken of it), nay, not in the presence of all the earth's seats of boasting. Egypt and Babylon in vain vaunted themselves; Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia, who had all had their day. The godly could talk of them without fear of comparison. It was accounted the birthplace of the man of God; the birthplace of the beloved ones of Jehovah. The Highest established her. When Jehovah made the registry of the people, He reckoned this man as born there. Joy and the celebration of His praise was found there, and all the fresh springs of Jehovah. I have little doubt that "this man" refers to Christ. Zion boasts of her heroes. The word translated "man" (Psa 87:5), refers to great men, not the poor and miserable. They are the children of the once desolate (compare Isa 49:21-22).

Psalms Chapter 88

Psalm 88 puts the remnant under the deep and dreadful sense of a broken law, and God's fierce wrath, which, in justice comes upon those who have done so. It is not now outward sorrows or oppression of enemies, but that which is far, far deeper between the soul and God. And though the judgments of God have brought him into lowliness, (and so it ever is morally with the soul when thus visited of God, for what can man then do, if he would help?) yet this was only a part of the trouble, viewing it as a full expression of God's wrath; but death and wrath are the true burden of the psalm God's terrors on the soul. Nor is there, as a present thing, any comfort, or a prospect of deliverance as from human oppression however dark for faith. The psalm closes in distress; its dealings are wholly with God; and so God must he known, till grace is known. Israel under law must come under a sense of divine wrath for a broken law; it is right it should. But remark further, it is still a God with whom they are in relationship. They have been delivered, brought back into the land, nearer to God, and hence into the sense of what their deserved position is in respect of this relationship.

This is much to be observed, and observed for ourselves too; for a God of salvation may be really known in a general way, and truly, without the conscience being searched out, and divine wrath known in, and removed from, the conscience. "O Jehovah, God of my salvation!" is the address of this psalm. This gives it its weight and true character, and makes it much more terrible. The full blessing of liberty in grace may not be known, but the relationship with the God of salvation He Himself the consciousness of having to say to Him is sufficiently known to make the privation of His favor and the sense of His wrath dreadful beyond all the one dreadful thing.

With the Jews, under the law, circumstances and government may more enter into this case, because their relationship with Jehovah is connected with them. Still Jehovah's fierce wrath is the great and terrible burden; and this terror of the Almighty, or more accurately, of Jehovah, drinking up the spirit, is the subject of this psalm the sense the remnant will have of wrath, under a broken law, in that day. Sorrow had visited them before. They had been afflicted and ready to die from youth; for such indeed had been their portion as cast off but now restored, and so far brought into connection with Jehovah, the God of their salvation, they must feel the depths of their moral position between Himself and them alonethe wrath of Jehovah that was due to them. The real recovery, the righteous bringing into blessing, could not be without this. Not that, indeed, the wrath would abide on them. Hence there is faith, hope, though no comfort, in the psalm; for it is when mercy has been shown and known, that this distress comes on them; when they have entered on the relationship by that mercy that its value, as has been said, may be felt; just like Job already blest, and then made to know himself what man was, as between him and Jehovah, when the question of acceptance, of righteousness, was raised. The wrath will not abide upon them because the true cup of it has been drunk by Christ; but they must enter into the understanding of it, as under law, for they had been under law, and pretended to righteousness under it at least, that question was not solved for them. How truly Christ entered into this in the closing epoch of His life, I need not say. It is the great fact of His history.

It is to be remarked that, even as to the direct subject of the psalm, the terrors have not been always on the sufferer. Afflicted and ready to die he

had been; [See Note #1] such had been his life; but now he felt his soul cast off, and lover and friend even, whom he previously had had, put far from him by the hand of God. So, indeed, it was with Christ. His disciples could not then continue with Him in His temptations. He bore witness to them, that till then they had; but now, sifted as wheat, desertion or denial was the part of the best of them. Such was our Savior's portion: only that, unspared and then undelivered, He indeed drank the cup which shall make the remnant escape the death they are fearing. It may press upon them as a lesson to know righteousness and deliverance, but the cup of wrath they will not drink. They are heard and set free on the earth. This psalm then is wrath under law; the next, mercy and favor in Christ, but as yet resting in promise. Actual deliverance is in the next book, by the full bringing in of Jehovah-Messiah for the world, and Israel's sabbath.

Note #1

Some, as Venema, translate, "because of my casting away or down" instead of "from my youth." Rosenmiller gives both. Compare Psalm 129.

Psalms Chapter 89

Psalm 89. We have seen that Psalm 88 puts Israel in the presence of Jehovah (when guilty of having been unfaithful to Him), under the judgment of Jehovah, with the sense of wrath, yet in faith in Jehovah Himself a place Christ most especially took, though of course for others, in particular for Israel, but not for that nation only. Psalm 89 takes the other side of Jehovah's relationship with Israel; not the nation's, Israel's, which was under law, but Jehovah's promises to David. It is not, remark here, guilt which is brought forward surely in both cases it was the ground of the state spoken of but wrath, instead of salvation. For Jehovah had been Israel's Savior, and so faith viewed Him still; yet instead of the fulfillment of promise, as made to David, there was desertion of him. There is no trace of confession of sin. Psalm 88 is complaint of death and wrath; and this (89), when mercy was to be built up for ever, shows the covenant made void and the crown profaned. Isaiah (40-58) pleads against Israel to convict them of guilt: first, against Jehovah, by having idols; secondly, by rejecting Christ (40-48, 49-58). But here the plaint is Israel's against Jehovah Himself, not unholily, I

apprehend, as blame, but as an appeal to Himself on the ground of what He had been for Israel. Jehovah is establishing these relationships here, as indeed we have seen. Israel is Israel, and in the land (Psalm 85). The heathen are there all is not restored; the last confederacy is in view, but it is against Israel. God is standing in the congregation of the mighty, judging among the gods (Psalm 82). Jehovah has been Himself recalling His former mercies (Psa 81:10-16). The ark is remembered, and God as the dweller between the cherubim, as once in the wilderness (Psalm 80). In a word, the whole book is the condition of a restored people in the land, but attacked, destroyed; the temple which exists again ruined and broken down (Psalms 74-76, 79). Not a mere Jewish remnant complaining of antichristian wickedness within, with which they were associated externally, or which had cast them out; but Israel the nation (represented by the remnant) with enemies who destroy what is dear to them, with encouraging prophecies of the result, having instruction as to sovereign grace in David when they had failed in their own faithfulness as a nation (Psalms 78, 79), which looks to God (Elohim) as such in contrast with man to the Most High, but returns to Jehovah (as His own out of Egypt) with prayer, and demand that His hand might be on the Son of man, the branch [See Note #1] made so strong for Himself (Psalm 80). The whole book, in a word, is Israel taking the ground of being a people, and actually in the land, and with a temple, entering into the relationship by faith, but subject to the destructive inroads of hostile power sthe Assyrian and allies, to whom indeed, because of success, the people return (Psa 73:10; for Isa 10:5-23 is not yet fulfilled. Compare Isaiah 18, particularly Isa 18:5-7).

Now these two last psalms of the book present the whole pressure of this state of things on the spirit of the faithful. Instead of a blessed people, it is loneliness under wrath. Yet Jehovah is the God of their salvation. The throne cast down and profaned, though immutable promises in mercy, not to be set aside by faults, had been given to David. The result is in the next book, in the manifestation of Jehovah, the bringing in the Only-begotten into the world. In all this book we are on prophetic ground with Israel; not the special condition in which the Jewish remnant will be with Antichrist, because they rejected Christ their sorrows therefore coming much more fully out when that condition is treated of. This, we have seen, is in the first

and second books. Hence, in the following books we get to the recognition of Jehovah having been their dwelling-place in all generations. It is their history which ends by the appearing of Jehovah-Messiah in glory.

A few words now on Psalm 89 in detail. Its subject is the mercies of Jehovah (His "graciousness", chasdee, towards Israel), and their unchangeableness the sure mercies. There was faith to say, "for ever," for it was grace. This gave the appeal, elsewhere noticed. How long should it be otherwise, and even apparently for ever? Jehovah was faithful. For he had said in faith, Mercy, manifested goodness, shall be built up for ever, and faithfulness was established where nothing could reach it. And so it will be, Satan being cast down. It is the very description of the millennium. He then recites the covenant originally made with David, which is the expression of mercy, and that to which Jehovah was to be faithful, the sure mercies of David. He turns then, and continues his praises of Jehovah (Psa 89:5-18), recalling the ancient deliverance from Egypt, and looking to the praise necessarily flowing from what He was, and the blessedness of the people that know the joyful sound. In His name they would rejoice all the day, in His (for we are in grace here) righteousness be exalted. He was the glory of their strength; and in His favor their horn will be exalted.

Such was the blessedness of association with Jehovah in favor. But this blessing was in the faithful mercy to David. And where was this? (Psa 89:18). Jehovah, the Holy One (kodesh) of Israel, is their King. But, then, He had spoken of, not a kodesh, but a chasid, in whom all the chasdee (the same word in the plural as chesed, "mercy"), all the mercies, were to be concentrated, and to whom the unchangeable faithfulness was to be shown the sure mercies of David. Read "of thy holy One" (chasid) in Verse 19 (Psa 89:19). Here he returns to the covenant made with David, showing it never to be altered (Psa 89:34-37). But all was different. But there was faith, founded on this promise, to say, How long, Jehovah? If He hides for ever, and His wrath burns like fire, what is man to abide it, and not go down into death? (Psa 89:48).

The former loving-kindness to David is appealed to, as in the person of David himself, but, I doubt not from Verse 50 (Psa 89:50), applicable to all the faithful. Still, the Spirit of Christ falls in here, as He did with the wrath, to

take the whole reality of the burden. He of course in that day will suffer nothing. But He has anticipated that day of suffering, that His Spirit might speak as with His voice in His people; for the reproach of the mighty ones and apostates in that day will reproach the footsteps of God's anointed. And if the faithful walk in them, they will share the reproach from the enemies of Jehovah. Such is their then position walking in His footsteps, looking for Israelitish covenant blessings, feeling wrath, yet in faith, but looking to God's promise in mercy to David (which was already pure grace, for the ark of the covenant was gone, and Israel Ichabod), and yet waiting for the answer. This is in the following book. We are here, as I have said, in prophetic times, in Isaiah's scenes with the Assyrian and a devastated temple. The wicked are there: people flock with them in prosperity. If we are in Daniel, it is chapter 8, not 7. The beast and the Antichrist are not on the scene, but the land, guilty Israel, promises not the question of a rejected Christ. This psalm closes the third Book.

Note #1

Compare the connection and remarkable contrast with John 15.

Psalms Chapter 90

BOOK 4 - Psalms 90-106

The fourth Book is not so markedly separated from the third, as the preceding three from one another; and specially the third from the first two, because the third, while prophetically announcing the blessing, describes a state of things which leaves the expectation of divine interference to bring in the blessing in full play. The first had given the great principles of the position of the Jewish remnant in connection with the history of Christ; in the second, they are viewed as outside Jerusalem; the third turns to the condition of Israel as a nation restored to their land, but not yet in the full blessing of Jehovah; the fourth, as I have said, completes this by the coming of Messiah. This connects the nation and Christ, as well as the nation and Jehovah. Thus the book is introduced with the nation's connection with Jehovah, looking to His returning and finally blessing them, that His beauty may be upon them. The second psalm of the book (91) shows Christ's connection with the nation as man in this world; the third psalm (92) gives,

in prophetic celebration, the great result, into the whole establishment of which the Psalms 93 to 100 enter; then some deeply interesting details as to Christ (Psalms 101, 102); while the general result, as displaying Jehovah's ways, is treated in the praises of Psalms 103, 104, as to Israel and the earth; Jehovah's dealings from the beginning, and Israel's ways, on the contrary, with Him, in Psalms 105, 106, which close the book.

The first psalm (90) of the book places the people that is, the godly believing part of it on the ground of faith in Jehovah, and expresses the desire of deliverance and blessing from His hand. First, the godly Israelite owns Jehovah to have been the dwelling-place of Israel for all generations, their shelter and their home; next, He was the everlasting God before the world was, and turned and returned man in a moment, as seemed to Him good: time was no time to Him. Now Israel was consumed by His anger. But this was not all. Though His power was absolute, its use was not arbitrary. It was true and holy moral government; and unfeigned confession is made, not merely of open faults, but of that holy government of God which sets secret sins in the light of His countenance (for so, blessed be God, He does). Their days were passed in this wrath. They look that the pride of their heart may be so broken, their feeble mortality remembered, that the self-sufficiency, so natural to our heart, might be done away with, and that heart applied to wisdom the fear of God. This putting of man in his place and God in His, connected with faith, as Israel's in Jehovah, is full of instruction as to the moral position suited for the remnant in that day in its principle ever true. Thus Jehovah is looked to to return for deliverance, with the word of faith how long? and, as regards His servants, that His work might appear, as the affliction came from Him; and that the beauty of Jehovah their God might be upon them, and their work established by Him. It is the true faith of relationship, but of relationship with the supreme God in His holy government upon earth. But, if so, Jehovah is the God of Israel.

Psalms Chapter 91

We have now (Psalm 91) another most important principle introduced; Messiah's taking His place with Israel, the place of trust in Jehovah, so as to afford the channel for the full blessing of the people. Three names of Elohim (God) come before us in this psalm: one that by which He was in relationship

with Abraham, the Almighty; another which Abraham through the testimony of Melchisedec may have known prophetically, the millennial title of Elohim when He takes His full title over the earth (compare Gen 14:18-20), the Most High. Both, as all the names of God, have their proper meaning: one complete power; the other absolute supremacy. The question then arises, Who is the God who has this place? Who is this supreme God over all to the earth? Who shall find His secret place to dwell in? He who has found this shall be completely protected by almighty power. Messiah (Jesus) says, I will take the God of Israel as that place, Jehovah. In Verses 3-8 (Psa 91:3-8) we have the answer. Doubtless it is true of every godly Israelite, and they are in view, but led by the Spirit of Jesus, the one perfect faithful One who took this place indeed.

In Verse 9 (Psa 91:9) I apprehend Israel speaks (that is, the Spirit personifying Israel addressing Messiah): "Because thou hast taken Jehovah, which is my refuge,... as thy habitation," almighty power shall guard thee. This continues to Verse 13 (Psa 91:13). In Verse 14 (Psa 91:14) Jehovah Himself speaks of Him as the One who has set His love upon Him. The form of the psalm is striking. The Spirit of God proposes the problem. He who finds the secret place of the supreme God (of the millennium) will have all the full blessing of Abraham's God, the Almighty. Messiah says, I take Jehovah the God of Israel. Then the answer; so it was and He (Psa 91:3-8) would enjoy the fruit of it. In Verse 9 (Psa 91:9) Israel speaks and declares by the Spirit He would have the blessings. In Verse 14 (Psa 91:14) Jehovah sets His seal on all this, and the solver of the great riddle of God will find the full blessing of Jehovah, on whom He had set His love, whose name He had known even Jehovah the God of Israel. It is a very interesting psalm in this way. But we have to remark that all is viewed on earth, the character of God in all respects. How Christ, as a present thing, relinquished the title to deliverance flowing from this, for perfect obedience, trusting His Father absolutely, belongs to deeper views of the purposes of God and of the paths of the blessed One Himself. Satan would have just used this to take Him out of the path of obedience, and into that of distrust and His own will: blessed be God, in vain, as we know. The sure mercies of David were to be in an obedient and risen One this point is treated in a psalm of unexampled beauty farther on and thus deeper blessings and higher glories brought out. But He

who went in that perfect path of submission, has not the less made good all the fruit of all that is here, for those who shall walk after Him in the place of this trust in Jehovah upon earth. This principle we see indeed, in various forms, all through the Psalms. Indeed the atonement of Christ was needed, which implied His resigning personally this blessing, in order that others might walk in that path in which He could personally walk, of course, without it. Psalm 21 gives a divine revelation as to the way in which the promise of life was fulfilled to the Lord.

Psalms Chapter 92

Psalm 92 takes up these names of God, Jehovah and Most High; only it is no longer a secret place, known only to fidelity and faith. Almighty power secured blessing and answers faith; Verses 7-8 explain how (Psa 92:7-8). What is celebrated is not the disciplinary exercise of faith, but the answer to it, showing that Jehovah (Psa 92:15) is upright, and that there is no unrighteousness in Him. Psalms 90, 91, 92 go together as an introduction to the great theme that follows, Jehovah reigns. Already power had been displayed; and the full result in the judgment of all enemies and abiding blessing is looked for now, not merely as hope, but as founded on the manifested intervention of God. It is spoken in the place which Messiah had taken in the previous psalm, identified there in spirit with Israel in the latter days, Israel restored by divine power, but not yet in the full peaceful enjoyment of divine blessing, just as we have seen in Book 3. Messiah takes therefore the lead in praises, and looks to His horn being exalted with honor (compare Psa 75:10). But Jehovah's thoughts are deeper. He sees far, even the end from the beginning, and accomplishes all His purposes and His word. This is what faith has to remember.

Psalms Chapter 93

Psalm 93 states the grand and blessed results. Jehovah reigns. Ever indeed was His throne established, but the floods had lifted up their voice. The waves of ungodly men had risen up high. Jehovah on high was mightier. Two other great principles complete this short but remarkable summary of the whole history of God and man in government. Jehovah's testimonies are very sure. Faith could count upon them, come what would; but, further,

another great truth came out as to the character of God. There could be no peace to the wicked. Holiness became His house. But I apprehend this last phrase describes the comely holiness of God's house for the now lasting period for which the earth was established.

We have now the details of the coming in of the Only begotten into the world to establish the glory and divine order in the world, introduced by the cry of the remnant in Israel.

Psalms Chapter 94

Psalm 94 gives us this cry, which is at the same time the expression of the fullest intelligence of their position, of the dealings of God, of the position of the wicked, and the result about to be produced, and, as all the psalms in this book, founded on known relationship with Jehovah. We have seen that Psalm 91 is Christ's taking this place with the people, that full blessing may come on them as thus associated with Him. Psalm 94 addresses itself to Jehovah as the God of vengeance, and demands that He should show Himself lifted up as Judge of the earth and give a reward to the proud. The "how long" is made pressing and urgent. The conduct and impiety of the wicked is stated. Verses 4-11 (Psa 94:4-11) address the unbelieving Israelites on the folly of this. Verses 12-15 (Psa 94:12-15) give a most instructive explanation of the ways of Jehovah. Blessed is the man whom Jehovah chastens and teaches out of His law. This is the position of the suffering remnant, to give him quiet from the days of evil until the pit be digged for the ungodly.

No doubt, as indeed is expressed in the Psalms, the godly had sometimes well-nigh forgotten this (Psalm 73), not always (Psa 27:5); but faith does not, and this is the true meaning of the remnant's sorrow of ours too under our Father. The heart in the midst of evil has to say to God, not only in submission, but as a cup given of Jehovah (of our Father). Hence the distraction and distress felt in meeting man's will in our will without resource is gone; and God, the will being subdued (the great hindrance), teaches the submissive heart, which is in a true position before Him. [See Note #1] For faith it was withal a settled thing that Jehovah would never cast off His people. But judgment would return to righteousness, and the

upright in heart would follow it. This is the great and all-important principle of the change which takes place in these psalms. Judgment, long separated from righteousness, now returns to it. Judgment was in Pilate, righteousness in Christ. There the opposition was perfect more or less everywhere else. Suffering for righteousness' sake and divine righteousness established in the heavens may be, and assuredly is, a yet better portion. It is Christ's as man, now glorified, but it is not the maintenance of righteousness on the earth. This will now be effectually maintained. But who shall be found to make it good? Who will take up the cause of the godly one, or stand up for the remnant against the mighty workers of iniquity? If Jehovah had not, their souls had soon gone down to silence. How true this was (as to men) of Christ, how fully He can enter into this, I need hardly say. Even when the remnant feared falling, Jehovah helped them. And in the overwhelming of thought, where all the power of evil was, Jehovah's comforts delighted his soul. In Verse 20 (Psa 94:20) a most remarkable appeal is made. Were the throne of iniquity and Jehovah's throne about to join together? If not, the days of the throne of iniquity were numbered. That wickedness was there, was now patent. But Jehovah, the defence of the godly, the Judge of the wicked, whose iniquity He would bring on themselves Jehovah would cut them off. Thus the fullest review, as I have said, of the whole position and of Jehovah's ways is remarkably given to us in this psalm.

Note #1

Christ, however deeply feeling what was before Him, was just the opposite of this struggling of will, being perfect in subjection (John 12 and Gethsemane). Peter would have resisted, but Christ took the cup as His Father's will.

Psalms Chapter 95

From Psalms 95 to 100 we have the progress of the introduction of the Only-begotten into the world most distinctly brought out; but here, all through, seen as Jehovah coming from heaven in judgment, and at length taking His place between the cherubim, and calling up the world to worship Him there. It puts the setting up of Israel in blessing by power, in contrast with their old failure when first delivered.

Psalm 95 summons Israel to come with joyful songs and thanksgiving before Jehovah (verses 3-4 (Psa 95:3-4) describing His excellency above the gods and as Creator). But Jehovah is Israel's Maker, his God also; and now they may look for rest even after so long time and continued failure. Till power comes in to judgment, while it is called today for in that great tomorrow no evil and no rebellious will be allowed they are called upon not to harden their hearts as of old in the wilderness, when God swear that they should not enter into His rest. But now, after all, grace says Today, and invites to come before His presence who is the rock of their salvation.

Psalms Chapter 96

Psalm 96 summons all the earth to come in, in the spirit of the everlasting gospel. They are to own Jehovah; the gods of the nations are mere vanity. Psalm 95 invites as of the company "Come, let us sing." Now it is said to those who are afar off, Sing unto Jehovah, and His glory is to be declared among the nations. Jehovah is Creator (Psa 96:5). His excellency is then spoken of, but He is known in the sanctuary in Israel on the earth (Psa 96:7-8). They are again summoned to own Him there, to worship Him according to the order of His house on the earth, for Jehovah reigns and the world is established, and Jehovah will judge the peoples righteously. This introduces a summons to a chorus of celebration of all this created world to rejoice before Jehovah, who comes to judge the world with righteousness and His people with truth; for Israel had the place of promise and the revelation of His ways.

Psalms Chapter 97

In Psalm 97 the coming itself is celebrated; Jehovah has taken to Him His great power and His reign. The earth and the multitude of isles are to rejoice. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, for it is the revelation of His judgments in power, not of Himself. Righteousness and judgment ever characterize His throne. The fire of judgment goes before Him and consumes His enemies. Jehovah, the Lord of the whole earth, comes forth out of His place. The heavens (for on earth there is none) in power declare His righteousness. The peoples see His glory. The effect of the judgment is then stated. Idol worship is confounded before Him, and all power and

authority, from angels downwards, are now to own Him. But another fact comes out this was joy and deliverance to Zion. The judgment of evil was her deliverance, for it was the glorious exaltation of Jehovah, her God. [See Note #1] In Verses 10-12 (Psa 97:10-12) we see the blessed objects of the deliverance the godly remnant. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. It is a very complete statement of the character of the Lord's coming to earth.

Note #1

This in Isa 30:32, where the grounded staff, that is the decreed rod, was to pass, it was with tabrets and harps.

Psalms Chapter 98

Psalm 98 is the result celebrated by Israel on earth. Jehovah has made known His salvation, and remembered His mercy and truth towards Israel. All the land (or earth) is summoned to celebrate Jehovah as king. The heavens are not summoned here, as in Psalm 96. They are already filled with His glory, and the angels have been called to worship; but the sea and its fullness, and the world and its inhabitants are to rejoice before Jehovah, who comes to judge the earth and the whole world.

Psalms Chapter 99

Psalm 99, though simple in its character, embraces some important principles. Jehovah now reigns, not only in making manifest heavenly power, but in the establishment of that power as king upon the earth. He now sits between the cherubim as heretofore in Israel. He is great in Zion and high above all peoples. I have no doubt this word people (ammim), generally translated "people" in the Authorised Version, which confounds it with Israel, is used, not as goim (Psa 98:2 and often) in opposition with Israel and the knowledge of Jehovah, but for nations not Israel, but brought into relationship with Israel, and so with Jehovah Himself. Israel is called goi (Psalm 43) when judged and rejected. Further, the King (Messiah, but still Jehovah) loves judgment, and establishes equity, executing judgment and righteousness in Jacob. Thus Jehovah, the God of Jacob, was to be exalted, and in Jerusalem.

But another touching and important principle is then brought out: Israel had utterly failed, cast off Jehovah, rejected Messiah, was judged and cast off. But Jehovah had never given up His faithfulness and grace. Hence the Spirit turns back here to recognise the saints under the old covenant who had, through grace, been faithful (the remnant was always acknowledged; in one aspect we are it still, all children of Jerusalem the desolate, and waiting under discipline and government, only a Father's). Moses and Aaron among His priests, Samuel among those who called on His name, the true prophets with no office, whatever their measure these called on Jehovah, and He heard them. The relationship of faith was there. Jehovah answered them, but governed His people, taking vengeance of their inventions. So, at the end, whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved; but how surely are their inventions punished! These are the two hinges of all God's waysgrace and the ear of goodness to the cry of the meek and needy, and government as holy and true. So with us: only we have a Father's government (still God's) after salvation and adoption. Thus new-born Israel is identified with the faithful Israel of old. The child of Ruth and Boaz is a son born to Naomi. Mara is known no more.

Psalms Chapter 100

Psalm 100 is the summons to universal worship of Jehovah with gladness and praise. Jehovah is good. Verse 5 (Psa 100:5) gives in principle the great truth so often laid down as Israel's hope His mercy endureth for ever which gave them too to say, How long? "All ye lands" is free as a translation; it is rather "all the land" (of Israel) or "all the earth." The claim of Israel to be His people and the sheep of His pasture seems to extend it to the earth. It is, however, to me very doubtful if it is not simply "all the land of Israel." This closes the remarkable series picturing the coming of Jehovah (Christ) to establish righteousness and judgment in the earth and His throne in Israel.

Psalms Chapter 101

Psalm 101 states the principles on which the King will govern His house and the land when He takes the kingdom in the name of Jehovah. Psalm 93 is the thesis, Jehovah reigns: the rage of men, the supreme authority of Jehovah, the holiness that becomes His house. Psalm 94 begins the series with the cry

of the remnant when iniquity is still on the throne. Psalm 95 Israel (the remnant) summoned in the closing day. Psalm 96 the Gentiles called, Jehovah coming to judge the earth. Psalm 97 Jehovah is on His way. Psalm 98 He has executed judgment on the earth and remembered Israel. Psalm 99 He has taken His throne on earth in Zion. Psalm 100 Israel is there as His people; but it is a call to worship Jehovah. Still a house of prayer for all the earth: for Israel, mercy, for they had sinned; truth, for God had promised, and, as said elsewhere, they had now met together. Psalm 101 when the earthly throne is taken up, it is mercy and judgment.

Psalms Chapter 102

Psalm 102 is one of the most, perhaps the most, remarkable of all the psalms, and presents Christ in a way divinely admirable. Verse 10 (Psa 102:10) gives the occasion of the cry with which the psalm begins. Christ is fully looked at as man chosen out of the people and exalted to be Messiah, and now, instead of taking the kingdom, He is rejected and cast off. [See Note #1] The time is the immediate approach of the cross, but was, we know, perhaps often, anticipated in thought, as John 12. He looks to Jehovah, who cast down Him whom He had called to the place of Messiah, but who now meets indignation and wrath. We are far, here, beyond looking at sufferings as coming from man. They did, and were felt, but men are not before Him in judgment; nor is it His expiatory work, though that which wrought it is here if we take it in its full effect on the cross the indignation and wrath. It is Himself His own being cut off as man. He is in trouble; His heart smitten like a pelican of the wilderness and an owl of the desert; His days as a shadow that declines, withered like grass. Such was Messiah, to whom all the promises were. Jehovah endured for ever. His promises were certain. He would arise, and have mercy on Zion, and the set time was come.

The whole scene, from Christ on earth to the remnant in the last days, is one. When Zion was restored, the heathen would fear the name of Jehovah. Jehovah will appear, and, when He builds up Zion, hear and answer the poor remnant, and thus declare His name in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem, when all nations would be gathered together there. But where was Messiah then? His strength had been weakened in His journey, His days shortened. He had cried to Him able to deliver, to save from death. Was Zion to be

restored and no Messiah He weakened and cut off? Then comes the wondrous and glorious answer: He was Himself the creator of the heavens and the earth. He was ever the same. His years would not fail when the created universe was rolled up like a garment. The children of His servants would continue and their seed be established before Him. The Christ, the despised and rejected Jesus, is Jehovah the Creator. The Jehovah we have heard of coming, is the Christ that came. The Ancient of days comes, and Christ is He, though Son of man. This contrast of the extreme humiliation and isolation of Christ, and His divine nature, is incomparably striking.

But it is Christ's personal sense of rejection, and that in connection with the remnant, not His bearing the judgment of sin in His soul for men. Look at the difference of the consequences in Psalm 22, though that perfect work was needed for "the nation," too, or their deliverance could not have taken place.

Note #1

Note, there is no bringing in of 'me' in connection with indignation and wrath, as in Psalm 22, though Christ realizes it in spirit. But personally He is lifted up and cast down. It is a key which opens up much in the psalms.

Psalms Chapter 103

Psalms 103-106 give us the results and the covenant in grace and in responsibility, of Israel's history.

Psalm 103 is the voice of Messiah in Israel in praise according to God's dealing with them; Psalm 104, the same in creation; Psalm 105, God's ways in grace, from Abraham up to the giving of the land (now to be possessed in peace); Psalm 106, the acknowledgment of Israel's ways from first to last, but owning Jehovah's mercy, and looking for it, for it endures for ever. Grace and favor are the one foundation on which hope can be built leading to obedience. This closes the book.

Psalms 103, 104 call for a few observations on the details. No doubt the Spirit of Christ leads these praises, for His praise shall be of Jehovah in the great congregation; but it is in the name of all Israel the psalm is spoken. They have forgiveness and mercy through the tender compassions and mercy of

Jehovah. As for man, he is as grass; and the people had been as grass and withered (Isaiah 40). But the mercy of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, the obedient ones. Thus all is ascribed to goodness, yet faithfulness, from the very nature and name of Jehovah; but to the obedient ones, the godly remnant. Now Jehovah owned them with lovingkindness and tender mercies. All their sins were utterly removed from them. Jehovah's throne was prepared in the heaven the only possible means of securing blessing. And now His kingdom ruled over all It was not only His title, but established in fact. It is Israel's praise, consequent on the intervention of Jehovah, of which the previous psalms have spoken. Mat 9:1-6 marks Jesus out as the Jehovah who now at the close healed all Israel (Psa 103:3). The more intimately we know scripture, the more simple and distinct is the truth that, though Son of man, Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

Psalms Chapter 104

Psalm 104, which celebrates Jehovah as Creator requires very few remarks. It will be noticed that it is occupied almost entirely with the earth. He is clothed with the glory of the heavens, which is described in most beautiful language; but the earth is the subject. It is looked at as existing as the abode of men, as it is, but all depended on Jehovah's sovereign will. It is not the earth which is celebrated, but Jehovah, the Creator of it. It is not paradise, but this earth, as we see it in man's hand. But the psalm looks to sinners being consumed out of it, and the wicked being no more. This gives the psalm, evidently, a peculiar character, and connects it with the introduction of the first-begotten into the world.

Psalms Chapter 105

Psalm 105 offers thanksgiving to Jehovah, and calls on the seed of Abraham and Jacob to remember Him and glory in His name. Verses 7-8 (Psa 105:7-8) give the occasion. He is Jehovah, their God. His judgments are in all the earth. And He has remembered His covenant for ever. It was to be permanent. It was commanded to a thousand generations. He had now remembered it. The psalm then recites how God had cared for the fathers, and judged Egypt for the deliverance of His people; and, in spite of bondage,

there was not a feeble person among their tribes. "He remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant, [See Note #1] and he brought forth his people with joy and his chosen with gladness, and gave them the lands of the heathen, that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws." All their subsequent failure is not touched on. For now again (Psa 105:8) He had remembered His covenant with Abraham and had delivered His people by judgments; for it is the accomplishment of promise. And the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. The following psalm will tell us Israel's ways, but only so to bring out His mercy and never-failing goodness; for this is the theme.

Note #1

The difference of a reference to the promises to Abraham, and those to Moses, the blessings of which depended on the faithfulness of the people, is a marked feature in all the renewals of mercy to the people and the faith that referred to one or the other.

Psalms Chapter 106

Psalm 106. "Hallelujah. Give thanks to Jehovah, for it is good (or He is good). His mercy endureth for ever." This last we have often seen the expression of this unfailing faithful mercy of Jehovah, which secures Israel. It then recites the character of those that are blessed; and personally looks, as in the mouth of a godly Israelite at the close, to be remembered with the favor Jehovah shows His people desiring withal to see the good of Jehovah's chosen, and rejoice in the gladness of His nation and glory with His inheritance. It is the expression of genuine piety, which then turns to confess the sinfulness of the people not they have sinned, though that is owned, as showing how Jehovah's mercy has endured; but "we have sinned with our fathers." It is the practical piety which proves, in its own confession, enduring mercy. It then goes through all the history of Israel with this view; and at the close shows that, in spite of all, Jehovah, remembering His covenant, thought on their affliction, and caused them to be pitied of the heathen, among whom they were. For this mercy he now looks, that they may triumph in the praise of Jehovah. This closes the fourth Book.

It will be remarked that, as we had seen in the third, the fourth also speaks of all Israel, and, though the humiliation of Christ is brought out and His eternal divinity contrasted with it in a remarkable way, yet it does not enter into Jewish circumstances particularly, nor the association of Christ with them, though His Spirit be in it all. In Psalm 104 Antichrist is presented to us, but it is for his destruction by the coming in of Messiah the King, as Jehovah the Judge.

Psalms Chapter 107

BOOK 5 - Psalms 107-150

In the fifth Book the people are looked at as brought back, and a general survey of God's ways taken, with a kind of divine commentary on it all, ending, as all His ways surely will, in praise.

Psalm 107 is a kind of heading or introduction to all this. It celebrates the enduring of God's mercy for ever that blessed formula of faith in the unchanging goodness of Jehovah in all ages from the display of grace in David's time. It is restored Israel's part especially to chant it. The psalm celebrates the two parts of that deliverance in which the mercy has been shown. They are redeemed from the hand of the enemy; they are gathered back from east, west, north, and south. This is the double character of the restoration of Israel deliverance in the land, and the gathering from amongst the heathen on every side. But the proper theme of the psalm is the goodness of Jehovah. The various circumstances of deliverance of every kind (and that as an answer to the cry of distress of man who has brought himself low by his folly) are gone through, with the desire that men would praise Jehovah for His goodness, His wonderful works for the children of men. Israel is he in whom it may be fully learnt. It goes on to their chastisement in the land after their return, but adds the complete ruin of the pride of men as the result. He pours contempt on princes, and sets the poor on high from affliction, giving him families like a flock. The great result of God's government is then shown: the righteous rejoice; all iniquity has its mouth stopped. Whoso is wise and will consider these ways of God will understand the lovingkindness of Jehovah. It is to be remarked how entirely the goodness of God, here rehearsed, is shown in temporal things. It does

not for that cease to be His goodness and to have its sweetness, but it gives very clearly the character of the ground on which these teachings go.

Psalms Chapter 108

Psalm 108 is a psalm of a peculiar character, being composed of the ends of two others, the earlier and the latter parts of which, the cry of deep distress, and the answer to the cry in faith and hope, have been here put together. The former part of this, the end of Psalm 57, expresses the fixed assurance of the godly heart, who can now give praise and will praise among the peoples (ammin), united now in relation with Israel and in the various races of people. But all the results of God's favor are not yet produced, and the same faith, taking up Psalm 60, leaving out the cry of distress, celebrates the going out of Him whose mercy is above the heavens, to bring into subjection all those who are yet in possession of different parts of the territory of Israel.

It may be remarked here that the general character of this, as indeed of the previous book, as far as regards the position of Israel, is that of the people being restored by God to the land and delivered, but not free yet from attack, nor in possession of all the promised land; so that there is thanksgiving and praise, for God has interfered, and the state of Israel is changed; but there remains the need of help and securing against enemies yet undestroyed, and the full blessing of God in peace. A very few psalms at the end are of unmingled praise, and only praise called for. This state of deliverance, and yet full security waited for, is expressed at the end of Psalm 107; as to final deliverance, the fact only is stated.

The connection of the two parts of this psalm is not without interest. The first part praises Jehovah for what He is as known to the heart in faith; but God in contrast with man. His mercy is great above the heavens and His truth reaches to the clouds, mercy being as ever first as the root of all. The second part begins with looking for Jehovah to rise up as God above the heavens and His glory above all the earth. He is to take His place and vindicate His name as God, that His beloved may be delivered. Verse 7 (Psa 108:7) brings out the answer of God, taking up in detail all Israel's rights as His. Thus Jehovah has war with the nations possessing their land, but it is in

Israel, and through God they will do valiantly. Hence here it is God, not Jehovah, because it is not the covenant relation, but what He, who is so, is in contrast with man whose help is vain.

Psalms Chapter 109

Psalm 109. It is certain that this psalm applies to Judas; but we shall see, in reading it, that we cannot apply all of it exclusively to him. And this is a help to us, to understand the way in which the psalms are written. There is the general condition of the saints in the latter day, and that even in a way which cannot apply to Christ personally at all, as Psa 118:10-11 passages of general application to the righteous, and others which may be, and some with prophetic purpose and exactitude, applied to Christ, and the circumstances in which He was. All this has to be before the mind, and divine teaching sought. I have said that the application of the psalm was not exclusively to Judas. The greater part of it is in the plural number. Up to Verse 5 from the outset (Psa 109:1-5), the enmity of the wicked, of the band of Jews hostile to Christ, and hostile to the godly remnant, is spoken of. Judas was a special instance of this wicked hatred against Christ. But I have no doubt of the general application of even this part, and that the judgments called for are general, and no prophetic revelation that Judas had wife and children or anything of the sort. Verse 20 (Psa 109:20) makes indeed the generalisation of the application of these deprecations certain. So we can have no doubt that the blessed Lord stood in this sorrow, but I have none the less, that it is merely as taking in grace the place of the remnant, and that the psalm applies to the remnant, who go through similar sorrows. Verses 30-31 (Psa 109:30-31) show it. Still it is most certain Christ entered fully into it and this is of the deepest interest to us nay, that His being in it gave it its true character.

Psalms Chapter 110

Psalm 110, though of the very highest interest, is in application so simple that it needs but brief comment. The despised and poor man, hated for his love, is David's Lord, and called to sit at the right hand of Jehovah. It is of deep interest to see how in Isaiah 6 Adonai is Jehovah of hosts in the fullest sense, and in this psalm, being David's Son, sits at the right hand of Jehovah,

and strikes through kings in the day of His wrath. Compare Psalm 2. All the truth, in regard to the assembly of association with Him on high is passed over, and the psalm passes from the session of Christ at God's right hand to the sending the rod of His strength out of Zion. This shows how entirely all is Jewish in these psalms. Note, further, it is the answer to His rejection on earth. It is not His coming from heaven to destroy Antichrist. What is in view is His having already taken possession of Zion, and the rod of His strength goes out thence. This answers to the whole position of this book, where we have seen the Jews restored, but the dominion of Israel or of Christ in Zion not yet made good. But the people are now willing (Amminadib) in the day of His power (see Sol 6:12). Alas! how different in the day of His humiliation! That was depicted in Psalm 109. But this is the morning of a new day, in which we have not fathers, but the children of grace. Then we have the certain oath of Jehovah for Christ sitting thus a priest on His throne on earth. This is promise and prophecy. The day too of His wrath is looked forward to. Adonai, who is at Jehovah's right hand, has a coming day of wrath already noticed, when His enemies are made His footstool. While sitting at the right hand of Jehovah, it is not so. It is then the time of mercy, the accepted time. Christ has been heard and exalted, and His work amongst men is the result of His atonement in grace. Now the time of wrath is come, in which the judgment written will be executed. I suppose in Verse 6 (Psa 110:6) it is "the head over a great country" the head of power in the earth, not Antichrist, nor even the beast. These are destroyed on His coming from heaven. Self-exalting man is brought low. Christ, who in humble dependence on His Father took the refreshment given Him according to God's will on the way, shall have His head high exalted in the earth. These psalms give the groundwork of the whole scene. What now follows is a review of the circumstances, and indeed from of old, and such as are to come, with reflections (so to speak) on them, and praise as to the result.

Psalms Chapter 111

The following commentary covers Psalms 111 through 113.

Psalms 111-113 go together as a hallelujah in reference to Jehovah's ways with Israel in their deliverance. First, Psalm 111, the works of Jehovah, glorious in themselves, He has made to be remembered by His mighty

intervention in righteousness; yet showing Him full of compassion, mindful of His covenant also. He has shown His people the power of His works, to give them the heritage of the heathen: moreover, His works last. The occasion of the praise, a knowledge of His name, is that He has sent redemption to His people. Jehovah being such, the fear of Him is the beginning of wisdom. This gives good understanding in our walk. Faith knows this. The Lord's appearing in judgment will indeed prove it to the world.

Psalm 112, on the other hand, gives the character of those who fear Jehovah, and the blessing that comes upon such when the government of God is made good. This shows how impossible it is to apply these psalms to the position of the saints now, though the exercise of faith and piety may be often in the spring of it the same. Still then, it is the deliverance of Israel which brings out Jehovah's name (Psa 112:9-10).

Psalm 113 is more general and full universal praise, but on the same occasion. It is from this time forth for evermore. It is now wide spread over all the earth; but He is Israel's God who dwells on high, yet looks down so low, but to exalt those He loves, to set them with the princes of His people, and fill the hopeless with joy in their habitation.

Psalms Chapter 114

Psalm 114 is of the highest style of poetry, but is important to us as directly connecting the ancient deliverance of Israel out of Egypt with the present deliverance of the people, and seeing the same Jehovah in both calling the earth to tremble at the presence of Jehovah. It was right in those days. At Jacob's deliverance then, the sea fled and Jordan was driven back. What was this? Was it affright before the presence of man? The earth was now to tremble before Him who appeared for the deliverance of His people then, and for their sakes turned the sea into dry land, and the flint stone into a springing well.

Psalms Chapter 115

Psalm 115 gives the true and full ground of this deliverance as seen in the heart of faith. It is not that they, but that Jehovah may be praised, specially

in His mercy, and then His faithfulness to promise. The godly one, that is, the Spirit, then refers to that cry which was the bitter grief spoken of in Joel, and referred to in Psalms 42, 43. Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God? So in the same spirit Moses "the Egyptians shall hear of it, and what wilt thou do to thy great name?" What a blessed boldness of faith! This character of sorrow shows, how it was on the cross and in those last sorrows that Christ came into this character of sorrow. For the Jews practically said this to Him then, but never could have done so before. The believing Israelite's answer is, Our God is in heaven.

He then contrasts Him with idols. And Israel, the house of Aaron, and all that fear Jehovah, are called to trust Him. This last would open the door to all Gentiles who sought Jacob's face. It then recites, what we have seen to be the ground these psalms go on, that He had been mindful of, and would bless them; yea, increase them more and more, them and their children. They were the blessed of Jehovah, the maker of heaven and earth. Heaven was His, the earth had He given to men. This marks how distinctly the earthly blessing is the scene before us, for He has not given us the earth, but the cross in it; and heaven, and what is there, as our own things. We seek the things which are above, not the things which are on the earth. So, in even almost a stronger manner, the dead do not praise Jehovah; but we (says the Spirit in them) will praise from this, the time of their final deliverance, for evermore. We say "to depart and to be with Christ is far better."

Psalms Chapter 116

Psalm 116 celebrates this deliverance when they were at the very point of death. Jehovah had heard them, and they would walk before the Lord in the land of the living. In this view it is a continual recital of the gracious mercy of Jehovah: they were brought low and He helped them. It drew out their love to Him. Such was Jehovah's character. He preserves the simple. The soul so sorely tried could return to its rest. The death of His saints was precious in His sight; and now, before all His people, in the courts of Jehovah's house, in the midst of Jerusalem, he would pay the vows made in his distress when he called on Jehovah. He would offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving. The quotation of the apostle shows how these psalms can be used as containing

holy principles of life for every saint. In spite of suffering and trial, trust in Jehovah opened the mouth of the believer. The passage does not apply to Paul, nor did he say in his haste that all men were liars, though there be something like it in "all seek their own;" but the general and important principle the apostle can adopt. The word, translated "haste," is not haste in the sense of moral defect, hastiness, but in distress rather sudden distress or alarm from the pressure of circumstances, and hence hastening away.

Psalms Chapter 117

Psalm 117 is the calling the other nations and peoples to come and praise Jehovah, who will be now King over all the earth. They join and are brought happily into this relationship, Jehovah being made known to them by His ways with Israel. Merciful kindness is here, as ever, first; and truth enduring for ever, which no failure has made to fail. This, as the last, is a hallelujah.

Psalms Chapter 118

Psalm 118 is also, though not formally so, rendering praise and thanksgiving as promised, connected with, or rather founded on, the known formula His mercy endureth for ever. The same that in Psalm 115 were called to trust in Jehovah are now called to praise Him. From Verse 5 (Psa 118:5-29) the Holy Spirit speaks in the person of delivered Israel, and speaks of this faithfulness of Jehovah, and now, He being on their side, man need not be feared; Jehovah is better than man, Jehovah better than princes. Verses 10-18 (Psa 118:10-18) unfold the circumstances and dealings through which Israel has passed. All nations had compassed them; in Jehovah's name he would destroy them. They are quenched as fire. Verse 13, (Psa 118:13), the enemy had thrust sore at them that they might fall; Jehovah helped them. The result in rejoicing and joy is chanted in Verses 14-17 (Psa 118:14-17). Another aspect of their trial is given in Verse 18 (Psa 118:18). It was withal Jehovah's chastening, and He had chastened them sore, but not given them over to death, which was the power of the enemy for them. Thus we have the full character of trial, as we have seen it even in Job: instruments, men, even all nations; next, the enemy by them, and acting on the spirit, thrusting sore at the soul; but behind it, and before it too, is God chastening, but not giving over. This is full of instruction for us in many circumstances we pass

through, where all these elements are found in what we are passing through.

Now the gates of righteousness are open before Israel. The turning to this at once, as the result of trial, is beautiful: he will go in and praise Jehovah. It is withal the gate of Jehovah, and the righteous enter into it. Israel there will praise, for Jehovah has heard him and become his salvation; but further and deeper truth comes out here. There is no restoration of Israel without Messiah, and Israel now owns Him once despised. "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. This is Jehovah's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." We see, in the expression "our eyes," who is the real speaker, and, though the voice had been one, who they are that now take part in the psalm of praise. This is the day Jehovah has made; it is His day, the blessing of His people in connection with Messiah, and His people rejoice in it. And now they cry, Hosanna to the Son of David, the Jehovah of Israel; and say, Blessed be he that comes in His name. This gives us the witness from the Lord's own teaching, who it is that speaks in the psalms, and to what time it applies; for the house was left desolate, and they were not to see Him again till they said, Blessed be he that cometh. So that it is Israel, that is, the remnant, who speak, and in the day of their repentance, under grace, when they are to see Messiah again. They bless Him that comes out of the house of Jehovah. Jehovah is the God of strength, He has given Israel light; and now worship and sacrifice are offered to Him that has delivered and blessed. Now they say, Thou art my God, and praise and exalt Him.

The psalm closes with the well-known Verse (Psa 118:29) of Israel's thankful praise: "Give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever," with which it had commenced. Thus the spiritual apprehension of God's dealings, the coming to worship Jehovah in righteousness, and the owning the despised and rejected Messiah, are all unfolded in connection with the deliverance and blessing of Israel, and the full manifestation of Jehovah's nature and character. Various Verses of this psalm are quoted at the close of the Savior's trials; no psalm indeed so often, as connecting Him with the sorrows of, and promises to, Israel.

Psalms Chapter 119

Psalm 119 is in general the law written in the heart. This gives it an important place in the series of psalms. It is found distinctly connected too with Israel's sorrows in the last days and their previous departure from God. The different divisions of the psalm show, I think, each a different phase of the exercises of heart connected with the law being written on it, though the general principle runs of course through it. I will very briefly notice the main bearing of each.

The first part presents to us naturally the great general principle. It is the third general "Blessed is the man" the return of the soul in trial and distress to the great truth of Psalm 1, where the effect is seen under the immediate government of God. Psalm 32 gives the blessedness of forgiveness; this, of the walk with God on the return of the wanderer in spite of all difficulties and contempt. We have indeed another special blessing at the end of the first book, where Christ is so fully brought in. In the last psalm of that book he is pronounced blessed who understands His position, be it in Himself or in those who walk in His footsteps; for the first psalm supposed blessedness under the government of God, making good all His will towards the just, and the reverse seemed to be true. In fact, as we know, to man's eye this wholly failed (bringing in a heavenly and divine righteousness and redemption). Hence true blessedness was shown in discerning, in understanding, the position in which that true blessed One was as rejected by men that true poor man taking Himself practically the place He describes as blessed, as we have seen in the sermon on the mount, while the great truth of the law in the heart is laid down. Yet the circumstances also come out in this first part "forsake me not utterly."

Secondly the word associates with God. Not only is one blessed who keeps it, but it is cleansing: the desire of the heart is positively fixed on it (see the connection of Jehovah and His word, Psa 119:10-11).

In the third part we find very distinctly the leaning on divine mercy in trial, connected with the law in the heart. The godly Israelite looks to Jehovah's bountiful dealing, but with a view to hearty obedience (). Verse 19 (Psa 119:19) shows his state; Verse 21, (Psa 119:21), as we have seen in all this book, Jehovah's intervention, already known in deliverance, though not in

complete blessing; Verses 22-23, (Psa 119:22-23), the contempt the poor remnant undergo. Jehovah's law had been his delight and comfort under it.

In the fourth part the trial is more inward. His soul is cleaving to the dust, but he looks to divine relief according to the word. His desire looks to the effect of that living water from God. He has been open before God as declared his own ways: so it ever is. He desires all way of evil to be removed by God from him. He has held fast by the word looks that God should not put him to shame. But he is looking for enlargement of heart, that he may run freely in God's ways. Such is the sure effect when under the discipline of God. A soul who has found delight in His will and holiness is yet looking to run in liberty. Though in the heart, the word here referred to is more of an outwardly expressed will, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, a beautiful moral expression of the remnant. With the Christian it will be more absolute and inward, more holiness than testimonies (though it may begin by them perhaps), whether in his first divine calling or under discipline. It is for him walking in the light as God is in the light not the "ordinances and commandments of Jehovah." Yet it is in principle essentially the same. To apply this psalm directly is to lower the divine standard of thought for the saint now. But the nature of the moral exercise may be most instructively used; just as subjection and confidence in trial is always right, though the forms of it in the Jew are wholly below the Christian's (compare with this Philippians, where we have Christian experience).

The fifth part looks for divine guidance and teaching in the ways and law of God; the sixth, for manifest mercies in that path, that he may have courage before adversaries and hold fast the law of God. In the seventh, having been quickened by the word, he reckons on it, for God had caused him to trust it as His; so that now he leans on all its assurances. In troubles, when there was no outward cheering of nature, it sustained his heart. This brings him to the eighth. Jehovah was thus his portion. He had sought Him, judged himself, turned his feet to Jehovah's testimonies. He reckoned on Him, and would thank Him in the secret watches of the night, when his heart was left to itself. He was the companion of those that feared Jehovah. This brightens up his thoughts, and he sees His power in mercy around. This is a beautiful picture of the working of the heart.

The ninth brings out the circumstances of the psalm. In the comfort of the last part he can look with God's eye and mind at these circumstances. These are much before our view (that is, feelings about them) in this part of the psalm. Jehovah has already dealt well with him according to His word, and he looks for divine teaching to understand the mind of God well. He had been under discipline: but before this he had gone astray, but now had got into the spirit and path of obedience. He sees the proud lying against him, and their heart fat as grease (no link in state or obedience with Jehovah); and sees how good it was to have been afflicted, that he might learn Jehovah's statutes. Nothing marks more the setting right of the soul than this the turning to Jehovah's will "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and counting all good that leads to this, and gives God's will as authority, and morally its place in the heart.

The tenth part has two main thoughts. Jehovah is his Creator has formed him. He looks to Him to guide His own poor creature as a faithful Creator. Those that fear Jehovah will be glad when they see Him, because they hope in His word. Secondly, he knows that thus in very faithfulness He has caused him to be afflicted, and now looks for mercies to come unto him, and the proud to be ashamed, and that those that fear Jehovah may turn to him. All this is linked with soundness in Jehovah's statutes.

In the eleventh the cry becomes more urgent. He is under the pressure of trial, his soul fainting for deliverance looking for Jehovah to execute judgment, for he is walking in Jehovah's precepts. And the proud persecute him wrongfully they heed not Jehovah nor His law.

But, twelfth, creation is a witness to the abiding faithfulness of God; His word is settled in heaven, where nothing can reach or shake it. But for Jehovah's law, which sustained his heart, he had perished in the pressure of affliction. In truth, how precious to have the word in such a world! We have more than commandments. But we can say, I have seen an end of all perfection. Another and more confident thought grows up out of all this exercise "I am thine."

In the thirteenth he expresses his own internal delight in Jehovah's law, and its effect in spiritual intelligence.

In the fourteenth it guides his path. Afflicted and oppressed, he looks for comfort to Him whose judgments he has taken as his path in spite of enemies and their snares.

The fifteenth gives the horror of vain thoughts, and looking to God as his hiding-place, with his rejection of evildoers. He looks to Jehovah to uphold him, that he may not be ashamed in his hope; and looks with solemn trembling on the sure judgment of the wicked.

In the sixteenth he presses more earnestly the interference of Jehovah in deliverance. The way in which the wicked have made void Jehovah's law only makes him cling the closer to it. It was time for Jehovah to work.

The following parts all bring out the effects of his strong attachment to Jehovah's law and testimonies, its value in every aspect for his heart; the trial he was in still in this path of righteousness; and how he would walk in Jehovah's ways when set free; his grief at transgressors. He looks for teaching, quickening, keeping; and recalls the everlasting character of God's testimonies; so that he held fast, though oppressed by the wicked.

The last part is more general as a closing one, though in the same spirit. It sums up, so to speak, the whole. It desires that the cry of the oppressed deliverer in the law may come up before Jehovah; asks for understanding according to His word for deliverance according to it; and assures praise when taught His statutes. His tongue will speak of His word. He has the sense of their righteousness looks for the hand of Jehovah to help, because he has chosen His precepts. Jehovah's salvation has been longed for (man not trusted in). Jehovah's law has been his delight, not his own will, nor the prosperous man's ways. He looks for life, that he may praise, and that Jehovah's judgment may help him; for the power of death and evil was before him. He owns finally his having gone astray, and looks for Jehovah as the Shepherd of Israel to seek him, for he has not forgotten His commandments. Such is the moral state of Israel in the last days when (in their land, I apprehend) the law is written in their heart, but full deliverance and final blessing are not come. The psalm is, in fact, the moral development of the hearts of those that fear God in the circumstances prophetically brought out in Psalm 118.

Psalms Chapter 120

We now come, Psalms 120-134, to the songs of degrees, which depict, I doubt not, the outward circumstances of the same period, when Israel is in the land, but the power of Gog not yet destroyed. The first of this series begins with the statement of the cry sent up by the godly in his distress to Jehovah who heard. The special charge here is deceit and falsehood. Judgment should come on it. But it is against the godly himself, not the violence and oppression done to Jerusalem, or the apostate oppression of the people. His woe is to dwell in Mesech, and among the tents of Kedar. Wrong is in their hearts; and, when the godly spoke of peace, they prepared for battle. It does not seem to me to be the oppression of Antichrist, or the beast at Jerusalem, but to apply to those who in the land found themselves where the last hostile power which had pretended to favor them, [See Note #1] and had led many to apostatise for quietness and prosperity, now showed himself as only a deceitful oppressor.

Note #1

I do not refer here to Daniel 9, but to Daniel 8.

Psalms Chapter 121

In Psalm 121 Jehovah is assuredly declared to be his protection. He who never slumbers nor sleeps He will not suffer his foot to be moved. The general intention is plain. I am not quite sure what is the force of Verse 1, (Psa 121:1), unless to identify Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth, with the hill of Zion, [See Note #1] and the city of the great King. However this may be, Jehovah (as the great security) is the subject of the psalm. This is very distinct, and His name reiterated for the purpose. He is referred to in the double character, Creator of heaven and earth, and the Keeper of Israel, especially of the godly: Jehovah would preserve him in all circumstances and for ever.

Note #1

A hill is used as a symbol of exalted strength, a high hill as the hill of Bashan. This is the Lord's hill.

Psalms Chapter 122

Psalm 122 celebrates Jerusalem. The saint is glad to go there. The tribes go there; the thrones of judgment, of the house of David, are there. His brethren and companions and the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel, their God, made his heart cling to it. It is a restoring of the associations with Jerusalem, recalling the old and establishing the new ones.

Psalms Chapter 123

The series then returns (Psalm 123) to their sorrows and resource. Blessing is not fully come; but Jehovah is looked to in the heavens, but as the God of Israel; the remnant say "our God" now. But they are filled yet with the contempt of those that are at ease and of the proud.

Psalms Chapter 124

The power of the enemy had been just now (Psalm 124) fully displayed against them the godly in the land who trusted in Jehovah. But they had escaped, but only by Jehovah being on their side, or they had been utterly swallowed up, by the last power of the enemy, I apprehend, when the apostate beast and Antichrist were gone from the scene.

Psalms Chapter 125

Psalm 125. The position of those who trust in Jehovah is celebrated, in virtue of this intervention of Jehovah, who would now protect them for ever, and they abide for ever. Peace would be on Israel. Those that turned to their crooked ways Jehovah would lead them forth with the open evildoers in judgment. The rod of wickedness would not rest upon the lot of the righteous. There would be an exclusion of the rod of wickedness (what represented the wicked as a tribe), separation from its mischief, that the righteous might not go astray. All this, I apprehend, refers to the last inroad of the final power of Gog, or the last condition of the Assyrian, perhaps to Daniel 8 (only that that gives its whole character, not merely its final one); also to the final king of the north, who comes in after the wilful king in Daniel 11.

Psalms Chapter 126

Psalm 126. The heart of the godly now finds its center in Zion, when deliverance has been learnt; for so it will be (compare Isa 29:4; Isa 29:7). How low she was brought, according to Psalm 124! (Isa 29:4. Compare Isa 17:12-14, and other passages). It was a dream so full, so unlooked-for, the joy. The very heathen now owned Jehovah's hand. But the godly look for the full blessing, and the captivity to be turned again in the fullness of possessed blessing. Still God had manifested Himself; and to the faithful, who had taken up His testimony in sorrow, and when it was shame and reproach, it was now a harvest of joy. So it ever is; for full joy only comes through sorrow: for the testimony of God is in a world of evil.

Psalms Chapter 127

These full blessings thus sought, the building the house, the keeping the city, the desired abundance of children, are all (Psalm 127) Jehovah's doing and gift, or man labors and watches in vain. The blessing is distinctly Jewish.

Psalms Chapter 128

A numerous progeny are distinctly God's gift: happy the man that has his quiver full of them (Psalm 128). The blessings spoken of are declared to be the portion of whoever fears Jehovah. It is present temporal blessing blessings out of Zion; and, the desire of the godly's heart, Jerusalem in prosperity all their days. Although the direct object be the remnant, the godly Gentile, so fearing Jehovah, owning Israel's God, would, as a principle, enjoy the blessing, and rejoice with His people.

Psalms Chapter 129

Psalm 129 recurs now with joy to the sorrows and trials through which the children of Zion have gone. But Jehovah is righteous, and has cut asunder the cords of the wicked. The haters of Zion (for Zion is here always the central thought) are withered, without resource, and without being desired.

Psalms Chapter 130

Psalm 130 takes up another subject, of the place of which we have found clear traces before the sins of Israel as between the people and God. It is not, however, now merely legal distress. Confidence in Jehovah

characterizes it, though accompanied by depth of distress and humiliation. This is the effect of the connection of the sense of sin and of mercy in the soul. Mere legal distress is more selfish in its terror, though admirable for destroying confidence in self and throwing on mercy; conviction with the sense of mercy is more the sense of wronging the God of goodness. It is a deeper work after all. Here there is forgiveness with Jehovah that He might be feared, and the soul waits on Jehovah, though it has cried out of the depths. There is desire, grace being looked to, as well as waiting for Jehovah, Verse 6, (Psa 130:6). The groundwork is stated in Verse 7, (Psa 130:7), while Verse 8 (Psa 130:8) shows confidence in the full results. Verse 4 (Psa 130:4) is the upright acknowledgment of where the need came from, grace meeting that need; Verse 7, (Psa 130:7), that which can be reckoned on in Jehovah; Verse 8, (Psa 130:8), the full counting on it for Israel, that is, redemption, not from troubles, but from iniquities.

Psalms Chapter 131

Psalm 131 briefly states the humble absence of all self-confidence, that so he has walked. Israel is now to trust in Jehovah and for ever.

Psalms Chapter 132

Psalm 132 is, in some respects, a very interesting psalm. It is the restoration of the ark of the covenant to its resting-place, and the promises of Jehovah, in answer to the supplication of His servant. It is founded on David's bringing the ark up to Zion. This, as we have seen in the historical books, has a very important place. It was grace acting by power when Israel had so completely failed that the bond of the people with God, so far as it was founded on the people's responsibility, was wholly broken, and the ark gone into captivity, and Ichabod written on all. [See Note #1] But now, in a fuller and more lasting sense, a habitation was found for the mighty God of Jacob, where the godly would worship low before His footstool. The fruit of David's body, the Messiah of Jehovah, was to sit on His throne, and that for evermore. Jehovah was entering into His rest He and the ark of His strength. Before (Num 10:35-36), if He arose it was to scatter His enemies, and then He returned to the many thousands of Israel. But now, and this is what characterizes the psalm, the enemies were scattered, and Jehovah arose to

take His rest in Israel. The sovereign election of God is seen, Verse 13 (Psa 132:13); and, then, it will be remarked, that the promise, in answer to the supplication, goes each time beyond the request (compare Verses (Psa 132:14; (Psa 132:15; (Psa 132:8; (Psa 132:16; (Psa 132:9; (Psa 132:17; (Psa 132:18; (Psa 132:10). This is of the highest interest as showing the grace of the Lord, and how His love surpasses all the hopes of His people, His interest in them.

Note #1

The three principles of government had been brought out in Israel. First, direct responsibility to God under priesthood. That had failed under Eli, and that was Ichabod. It was over with Israel on the ground of their own responsibility. Then God intervened by a prophet. That He could still do; it was a sovereign act. But that failed; so did royalty as set up by the people. Then we have royalty as power in grace, as it will be in Christ, and the lost ark brought back. This is what we have in this psalm.

Psalms Chapter 133

Psalm 133. The people are now dwelling together in unity. It is as the anointing of Aaron, which, poured on the head, gave the odours of divine favor on all, as the abundant dew of the lofty hills, but which brought, however high its source, its refreshing power where God had ordained blessing and life for evermore. [See Note #1] I see no need to seek for any mountain of a like name near Hermon, but the contrary.

Note #1

This is one of the two places where life for evermore, life eternal, is spoken of in the Old Testament; the other is Daniel 12; both as accomplished in the time of blessing to come. In the New Testament, I need not say, it is fully revealed in Christ, and he that believes in Him has everlasting life.

Psalms Chapter 134

Psalm 134 closes the series by calling on the servants of Jehovah to bless Him. Night and day should furnish praise to Him, and in the holy place holy hands be lifted up to bless. Jehovah was there, His servants there to praise Him. Jehovah, who made heaven and earth, blessed now (not simply from

heaven, but) out of Zion. It is the place of blessing Jehovah, and Jehovah blessing. I should be disposed to count the last Verse (Psa 134:3) rather the voice of Christ as the Son of David, something in the character of Melchisedec, who said, Blessed be the most high God, and blessed be Abraham of the most high God, only specially in connection with Jehovah (as Zac 6:13) blessing the godly remnant out of Zion. The last Verse (Psa 134:3) is a kind of answer to the call of the preceding ones; the Spirit of Christ in the remnant calls on Jehovah's servants to bless Him, and they from Him bless the godly one.

Psalms Chapter 135

The following commentary covers Psalms 135 and 136.

Psalms 135 and 136 celebrate Jehovah, who has delivered Israel and now dwells in Jerusalem, and give thanks to Him whose mercy has endured for ever the Creator of all things in goodness who first delivered them, and remembered them to redeem them when brought low.

Psalm 135 is a very characteristic Psalm, giving a remarkable key to the interpretation of the book, and linking it with the early statements of Jehovah as to His relationship to Israel, so as to bind together their history in one whole. The subject is Hallelujah praise the name of Jehovah. He is good: it is pleasant to do it; for He has chosen Jacob and Israel for His peculiar treasure. He is then (Psa 135:6) celebrated as the Almighty God, doing what He pleased, daily disposing of creation; then as He who executed judgment on the oppressors of Israel, and freed them, and drove out the heathen and gave them their land. Now comes His name in connection with Israel and in contrast with idols; and the two passages, in one of which He first took up Israel for ever under the name of Jehovah, and, in the other, prophetically announced their deliverance when they should have wholly and utterly failed, are cited from Exo 3:15; Deu 32:36. The first takes the name of the Lord God of their fathers, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when He sends Moses to deliver them, and declares this is His name for ever, His memorial to all generations, and then promises deliverance and bringing into the land; then He takes the name of Jehovah. The second is in the prophetic song of Moses, when he has drawn out to them their picture as apostate, their spot

not the spot of God's children, when they forsook God who made them, and provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, and Jehovah hid His face from them, and, but for the fear of man's pride, had made the remembrance of them to cease from among men. Then, when they should be helpless and hopeless in themselves, Jehovah would judge His people, and repent Himself concerning His servants, execute judgments on the heathen, and then make them rejoice with His people. So that these two Verses give the first deliverance and purpose of God, and the judgment and ways of God in the last days, to which the psalms have brought us. Thus they give a clear key to the application of the psalms themselves. Then we have (Psa 135:15-18) the present judgment of the idols spoken of in Deuteronomy 32, and to which they had fallen away. The psalm closes with the summons to those already generally specified the divers parts of Israel and all that fear Jehovah to bless Jehovah; the house of Israel, of Aaron, of Levi, and all that fear Jehovah; and this now out of Zion, even Jehovah, of whom now they could say that He dwelt in Jerusalem.

Psalm 136 may be considered as the answer to this summons. It is characterized by the formulary, as often noticed, the expression of Jehovah's unchanging goodness to Israel in spite of all: "His mercy endureth for ever." It celebrates Him as Creator, God of gods, the Deliverer of Israel, who had led them through the wilderness, as Him who by power slaying mighty kings had given them the inheritance of the land; and who, finally, remembering them in their low estate, had redeemed them from it, and now supplied every living thing with food, the God of heaven. This, in a certain sense, closes the historical psalms. We have then a kind of supplementary series: first, of their characteristic sorrows and Jehovah's ways in the latter days, and then of millennial praises. These sorrows are from Psalm 137 to Psalm 144 the latter, however, being the expectation of deliverance and blessing. Psalm 139 also has a peculiar character, as will be at once seen.

Psalms Chapter 137

Psalm 137 refers, and alone does to give the full history of Israel's sorrows to Babylon, which has only a mystic fulfillment in the latter days, but has its importance, because at that time was the closing of the period of the divine

presence in Jerusalem, and the setting up of the power of the Gentiles. But faith could not content itself in a strange land nor sing the Lord's songs there; for they were not a heavenly people hence they turn to Jerusalem, which faith never forgets. Babylon is to be destroyed and her judgment is desired; Edom's enmity not forgotten. The object of the psalm is to bring out their attachment to Zion in their captivity; there was no separation of heart from it in the strange land.

Psalms Chapter 138

Psalm 138 gives the ground of faith God's word; and now the godly turns to own it in worship; and when that word reaches the kings of the earth, they shall turn and praise Jehovah and sing in His ways. Nor is His truth all. Though so high, He has respect to the lowly; He revives, protects, and perfects all that concerns the believing righteous. "His mercy endureth for ever."

Psalms Chapter 139

Psalm 139 shows the complete exercise of heart that belongs to God's ways. Though the faithfulness of God perfects all His purposed blessing, not a thought escapes God. There is, morally speaking, no staying in His presence; but there is no getting out of His presence, nor where He sees not, though conscience might be glad to flee. But this brings in another aspect. He knows all, because also He has formed all. This connects us with the taking perfect notice of us in goodness. He cares for us, watches over every member that is formed, as He knows our every thought; if He does, He has His own too, and these are precious to us. This is just the change and working of faith. It begins necessarily by conscience under God's eye; for it brings us into His presence, and then gets at God's thoughts, who has formed us for Himself, and then unfolded boundless spheres of His own blessing and ways. God watches over him in the silence of sleep: waking, therefore, he finds himself with God.

But, further, this connection with God is a perfect breaking with the wicked: God will slay them. And he calls on them to depart from him. Therefore he looks at the wicked with horror, because of what they are to God for himself, that he may be searched throughout, that no wickedness may remain in

him. This psalm goes far in the relationship of man's spirit with God, though it looks to the external judgment of the wicked and uses language which becomes verified in the assembly figuratively, and which is so also in the resurrection. The great direct point in it is the full searching out of man's heart, as it will be then, as it must be ever. But this searching, when we are under our own responsibility, is, Whither shall I flee from Him? But when we are God's workmanship (that is, when grace and power have come in), God's thoughts become precious to us, and we can ask to be searched, known, and tried the more the better, that, emptied of self, we may be able to enjoy God. Then also we look for leading. The will is broken, as the thoughts are judged, and our desire is to be led of God. We see at the same time the character of the psalm connects it with the latter day. "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked." It looks for judgment, and has hatred and horror of the haters of God.

Psalms Chapter 140

The following commentary covers Psalms 140 through 144.

The five following psalms go over ground which we have trodden over in detail: only they apply to a restored Israel, still in conflict, and not fully blessed.

Psalm 140 looks for deliverance from the evil and violent man. Israel is in connection with Jehovah, but compassed about by the proud.

Psalm 141. Having learnt the government of Jehovah, the godly looks for his words and thoughts to be kept of Jehovah, that Jehovah may bless him. Smiting he will accept as discipline. He looks for acceptance for his prayers. And even in the judgment coming upon the proud (Israel, I apprehend), he looks to it as breaking them down so as to hear His word. It is such a psalm as David might have penned when pursued by Saul. He looks for judgment on the wicked, but that calamities may arrest some.

Psalm 142 looks to Jehovah alone as a refuge.

Psalm 143 specially for mercy and goodness, that in the midst of the persecution of the enemy, and the pressure on the godly, Jehovah would not enter into judgment with him, but show His lovingkindness. As the

servant of Jehovah, he begs; to be taught and guided. Thus these psalms are all of one in deep distress; but they look, in relationship with Jehovah (not cast out, and knowing Him only as God), for the cutting off of the enemies.

Psalm 144 blesses Jehovah as the source of strength. Its plea for the destruction of the enemies is, What is man? Why should Jehovah make account [See Note #1] of such a worm, and delay bringing in blessing by thus lingering in judgment? Deliverance is thus looked for, for the full true final blessing of Israel. Happy the people in such a case: happy the people who have Jehovah for their God! Directly, the psalm applies to David himself, who is named in it, and owns God, as subduing his (David's) people under him, as the source of royal power. I do not see that it brings in any personally in the latter day. Did it so, it would be "the prince"; for there will be a human house of David on the earth. But it is the bringing in of the people into that state of subjection under Christ, when they will be willing in the day of His power, when in the day of Jezreel they will appoint themselves one head, when the day will be great, when Jehovah will utterly scatter the power of the enemies of Israel, give them a new song, and bless them. Messiah will surely be their head; but it is prophetically spoken of by David in person. The true Beloved will be their sure head.

Note #1

Compare Psalm 8, grace's view of it, and Job's impatience (Job 7:17-18) against discipline, God's taking notice of men's ways in government.

Psalms Chapter 145

Psalm 145 goes on in thought into the millennium, after the distress is over, and the full deliverance can be celebrated. It is Christ in spirit perhaps even in person as in the midst of Israel, leading the praises of Jehovah, and awakening them amongst men. Hence, though only expressing purpose, it is a dialogue in its character. First, he expresses his own purpose of praising Jehovah, and for ever and ever. One generation should do it to another. "I will speak." One sees his heart is full of praise, and he speaks of it (Psa 145:5). "And men shall speak of the might of Jehovah's terrible acts. And I will declare thy greatness. They shall speak of the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness." Then he breaks off most

beautifully to speak of the goodness: for still out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. All Jehovah's works shall praise Him. The saints bless Him. Their subject shall be the glory of Jehovah's kingdom and His power, to make known to the mass of mankind His acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom, and that an everlasting one. Then in Verses 14-20 (Psa 145:14-20) His character is spoken of. Verse 21 (Psa 145:21) returns to the purpose of heart of the leader of praise. It is as man Christ speaks here "my God." Jehovah is looked at as King. In general, the outward acts and greatness are more in the mouth of the rest what Jehovah is in the leader's, though he does celebrate His wondrous works. Still the greatness and excellency and majesty of Jehovah are that which we see his heart full of, as Psa 145:3; Psa 145:5; Psa 145:8-10; and so, in general, His gracious ways and character (Psa 145:14-19). It is to be remarked that there is the leader who speaks in the psalm, the saints (the Jewish remnant), and the world in general, the sons of Adam. It is of the highest interest in this way; because we have Messiah fulfilling the word, "My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation." And how full in heart He is of His praises! Jehovah's kingdom is set up; the Messiah in the midst of Israel first, then the preserved saints, and then, through their leading, all the world join in His praises, for His greatness, goodness, and wonderful works.

Psalms Chapter 146

Psalm 146 introduces the full final praises: the first, the outpouring of the heart in praise to Him as the God of Jacob, celebrating what He is, and the comfort of trusting Him, the Creator, the Helper of the oppressed, the Comforter of the lowly, the Lover of the righteous, who turns the way of the wicked upside down. He shall reign for ever, even Zion's God to all generations. The character of this praise, after what we have gone through, is most simple.

Psalms Chapter 147

In Psalm 147 the saints take their place now in Jerusalem and Zion to say what He is. He is their God; He builds up Jerusalem and gathers together the outcasts of Israel, healing the broken in heart and binding up their wounds. In Verses 4-5 (Psa 147:4-5) His greatness is celebrated and His goodness and

judgment; in Verses 7-9, (Psa 147:7-9), His goodness in blessing the earth; in Verse 1, (Psa 147:1), His pleasure, not in animal strength, but in them that fear Him. In Verse 12, (Psa 147:12), the song of praise returns to celebrate His ways towards Jerusalem again; in Verses 15-18, (Psa 147:15-18), His dealings with the seasons in power; in Verses 19-20, (Psa 147:19-20), His showing His word and judgments to Jacob as He had not done to any nation. They might have seen the creative and providential power of Jacob's God, but His mind and laws were His people's.

Psalms Chapter 148

Psalm 148 calls first on heaven, and all in it, to take their part in the great Hallelujah, and praise Jehovah who had created and sustains them in their place; and then on the earth, with all in it, to join in praising Him whose name alone is excellent, and His glory above the earth and heaven, but who exalts the horn of His people, the praise of His saints (the godly ones we have seen throughout, but who now are fully Israel), a people near to Him. The great Creator whom heaven and earth must praise is the God of Israel, and Israel His people.

Psalms Chapter 149

Psalm 149 calls upon Israel to praise. The creation and Israel we have seen all through to be co-ordinate (the new creation and the assembly), and to form the sphere of the Psalms. Still it is now in the congregation of the saints. Israel's relationship is double: Jehovah has formed him for His praise; He is King in Zion. The reasons of praise are then given. Jehovah takes pleasure in His people; but we learn who have this place. He beautifies the meek with salvation. Then he can say, Let the saints be joyful in glory; but if the high praises of God are in their mouths, the sword of earthly judgment and vengeance is in their hands to execute it on the nations and peoples, to bind the mighty ones who had once oppressed them. It was the judgment written. Such honor have all His saints. The persons here in view are thus evident, as is their position: the meek in Israel now delivered, and the Lord Jesus, King in Zion, execute judgment on those who had oppressed them. Such is indeed, as said, the judgment written, and confirms the view I have taken of the last two books: only now it is complete in its statements. The

millennium itself is not described. The Psalms are the introduction to it, and by their connection of Christ, as seen in the Gospels, and the remnant of Israel, with the last days, throw the greatest light on the Gospels themselves.

Psalms Chapter 150

Psalm 150 is a general closing summons to praise Jehovah only, remark, it is now freely in His sanctuary, as well as in the firmament of His power in His sanctuary, with all the various instruments of the temple praise for His mighty acts, praise for His own excellent greatness: everything that has breath is called to praise Him. It is a loud and chorus-like termination, full of power and energy, suited to the Jewish state and temple service. Here we close this most interesting and instructive study, as to which I could hope only to give the outline of general principles, which might enable the reader to use the book; not its varied and beautiful contents in detail this would have required volumes, both on the prophetic connection of its contents, and on the exercises and feelings of faith, so far as we can apply them to saints now.

PROVERBS

Proverbs Introduction

Proverbs

pro 0:0

Introduction to Proverbs

The Book of Proverbs gives us the application of that wisdom which created the heavens and the earth to the details of life in this world of confusion and evil. This thought brings out the immensity of grace unfolded here. God deigns to apply His wisdom to the circumstances of our practical life, and to shew us, with His own intelligence, the consequences of all the ways in which man may walk. For it is often in the way of knowledge, not of precept, that the statements made in the Book of Proverbs are presented. It is a great blessing to be provided for in the labyrinth of this world, in which a false step may lead to such bitter consequences, with a book that sets forth the path of prudence and of life; and that in connection with a wisdom which comes from God.

It is well to remember that the Book of Proverbs treats of this world, and of God's government, according to which man reaps that which he has sown. This is always true, whatever may be the sovereign grace that bestows on us things beyond and infinitely above this world.

Solomon was filled with wisdom from above, but which had its exercise in this world, and its application to it; that is to say, which applied to it God's way of viewing all things, discerning the truth of all that, day by day, is developed in it. We have here the ways of God, the divine path of human conduct, the discernment of that which the heart of man produces, and of its consequences; and also-for one who is subject to the word-the means of avoiding the path of his own will and of his own foolish heart (which is unable to understand the bearing of a multitude of actions that it suggests to him), and this, not by bringing him back to moral perfection-for that is not

the object of the Proverbs; but to that wisdom and prudence which enable him to avoid many errors, and to maintain a serious walk before God, and an habitual submission to His mind. The precepts of this book establish practical happiness in this world by maintaining earthly relationships in their integrity according to God. Now it is not human prudence and sagacity that are enjoined. The fear of the Lord, [See Note #1] which is the beginning of wisdom, is the subject here.

Note #1:

I have left "Lord" here as an expression of general application, but Jehovah is always His name in Israel, and that of government, save in a few cases where Adonai (Lord, in the proper appellative use of it) is employed. But it is to be noted that Jehovah is used in Proverbs, because it is authoritatively instructive in known relationship; never in Ecclesiastes, where it is God in contrast with man, having his own experience as such on earth. "God" abstractedly is only once used in Proverbs (Pro 25:2). We have "her God" in Pro 2:17.

Proverbs Chapter 1

Proverbs 1:1

pro 1:1

The following commentary covers Chapters 1 through 9.

There are two very distinct parts in this book. The first nine chapters, which give the great general principles; and the proverbs, properly so called, or moral aphorisms or sentences, which indicate the path in which the wise man should walk. At the end of the book is a collection of such made by Hezekiah.

Let us examine the first part. The grand principle is laid down at the outset—the fear of the Lord on the one side, and on the other the madness of self-will, which despises the wisdom and instruction that restrain it. For, besides the knowledge of good and evil in respect of which the fear of the Lord will operate, there is that exercise of authority in God's created order which is a check on will (the origin of all disorder), as that confided to parents and the

like. And these are carefully insisted on, in contrast with independence, as the basis of happiness and moral order in the world. It is not simply God's authority giving precepts, nor even His statements of the consequence of actions, but the order He has set up in the relationships He has established amongst men, especially of parents, subjection to them is really owning God in His order. It is the first commandment with promise.

There are two forms in which sin, or the activity of man's will, manifests itself-violence and corruption. This was seen at the time of the deluge. The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. Satan is a liar and murderer. In man, corrupt lusts are even a more abundant source of evil. In chapter 1 violence is pointed out as the infringement of those obligations which the will of God has laid upon us. But wisdom cries aloud that her voice may be heard, proclaiming the judgment of those who despise her ways.

Chapter 2 gives us the result of subjection of heart to the words of wisdom, and an earnest search after it-the knowledge of the fear of Jehovah, and the knowledge of God Himself. He who applies himself to this shall be kept: he shall not only have no part with the wicked man, but he shall be delivered from the deceitful woman-from corruption. The judgment of the earth and the prosperity of the righteous are declared.

The latter principle being established, chapter 3 shews that it is not human sagacity or the prudence of man which imparts the wisdom here spoken of. Neither is it the ardent desire after prosperity and happiness, manifesting itself in crooked ways; but the fear of Jehovah and subjection to His word supply the one clue to guide us safely through a world of wickedness which He governs.

Chapter 4 insists on the necessity of pursuing wisdom at whatever cost; it is a path of sure reward. It warns against all association that would lead the contrary way and into ruin, adding that the heart, the lips, and the feet are to be watched.

Chapter 5 returns in detail to the corruption of heart that leads a man to forsake the wife of his youth for another. This path demoralises the whole man. But the eyes of Jehovah are upon the ways of man.

In chapter 6 wisdom will not be surety for another. It is neither slothful, nor violent, nor deceitful. The strange woman should be avoided as fire: there is no reparation for adultery. In chapter 7 the house of the strange woman is the path to the grave. To curb oneself, to be firm in resisting allurements, looking to Jehovah and hearkening to the words of the wise-such are the principles of life given in these chapters.

Chapter 8. The wisdom of God is active. It cries aloud; it invites men. Three principles distinguish it-discretion, or the right consideration of circumstances, instead of following self-will; hatred of evil, which evidences the fear of Jehovah; and detestation of arrogance and hypocrisy in man. It is by wisdom that kings and princes rule; strength, counsel, and sound wisdom, and durable riches, are found in it. Moreover Jehovah Himself has acted according to His own perfect discernment of the right relations of all things to each other; that is to say, He created them according to the perfection of His own thoughts. But this leads us farther; for Christ is the wisdom of God. He is the centre of all relations, according to the perfections of God; and is in Himself the object of God's eternal delight. The everlasting wisdom of God is revealed and unfolded in Him. But this is not the only link. If Christ was the object of God the Father's delight, as the centre and fulness of all wisdom, men have been the delight of Christ, and the habitable parts of Jehovah's earth. It is in connection with men that Christ is seen, when considered as uniting and developing in Himself every feature of the wisdom and the counsels of God. The life that was in Him was the light of men. Christ is then the object of God the Father's delight. Christ ever found His joy in God the Father, and His delight with the sons of men, [See Note #1] and in the earth inhabited by men. Here then must this wisdom be displayed. Here must the perfection of God's ways be manifested. Here must divine wisdom be a guide to the conduct of a being subject to its direction. Now it is in Christ, the wisdom of God, that this is found. Whoso hearkens to Him finds life. Observe here that, all-important as this revelation is of the display of God's wisdom in connection with men, we do not find man's new place in Christ, nor the assembly here. She is called away from this present evil age to belong to Jesus in heaven. Christ cannot actually yet rejoice in the sons of men, if we take their state into account. When He takes possession of the earth, this will be fully accomplished-this will be the millennium. Meantime

He calls on men to hear His voice. The principle of a path to be followed by hearkening to the words of wisdom is one of the greatest importance for this world, and of the most extensive bearing. There is the path of God, in which He is known. There is but one. If we do not walk in it, we shall suffer the consequences, even if really loving the Lord.

But in fact (chapter 9) wisdom has done more than this; it has formed a system, established a house of its own, upheld by the perfection of well-regulated and co-ordinate solidity. It is furnished with meat and wine; the table is spread; and, in the most public manner, wisdom invites the simple to come and partake, while pointing out to them the right way in which life is found. There is another woman; but before speaking of her, the Spirit teaches that instruction is wasted on the scorner; he will but hate his reprover. Wisdom is wise even in relation to its enemies. There is progress for the wise and the upright, but the beginning of it is the fear of Jehovah. This is its fundamental principle.

But scoffing is not the only character of evil. There is the foolish woman. This is not the activity of love which seeks the good of those who are ignorant of good. She is clamorous, sitting in the high places, at the door of her house, seeking to turn aside those who go right on their ways, and alluring those that have no understanding into the paths of deceit and sin; and they know not that her guests are the victims of death. Such are the general instructions which God's warning wisdom gives us.

Note #1

So He became a man, and the unjealous testimony of the angels on His birth is, glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good pleasure in men. Man would not have Him, and the special relationship of His risen place as man with God, "my Father and your Father, my God and your God," and that of the assembly was formed, but His delight was in that race; for the time it was not peace on earth but division, but even after the millennium the tabernacle of God will be with men, where we have both the special relationship and the general blessing.

Proverbs Chapter 10

The following commentary covers Chapters 10 through 31.

In chapter 10 begin the details which teach those who give ear how to avoid the snares into which the simple might fall, the path to be followed in many cases, and the consequences of men's actions: in short, that which characterises wisdom in detail, what may be prudence for man, divine discretion for the children of God; and also, the result of God's government, whatever appearances may be for awhile. It is well to observe, that there is no question of redemption or propitiation in this book; it proposes a walk according to the wisdom of God's government.

In the final chapter we have the character of a king according to wisdom, and that of the woman in her own house—the king who does not allow himself that which, by darkening his moral discernment through the indulgence of his lusts, would make him unfit to govern. In the woman we see the persevering and devoted industry which fills the house with riches, brings honour to its inhabitants, and removes all the cares and anxieties produced by sloth. The typical application of these two specific characters is too evident to need explanation. The example of the woman is very useful, as to the spirit of the thing, to one who labours in the assembly.

Although in this book the wisdom produced by the fear of Jehovah is only applied to this world, it is on that very account of great use to the Christian, who, in view of his heavenly privileges, might, more or less, forget the continual government of God. It is very important for the Christian to remember the fear of the Lord, and the effect of God's presence on the details of his conduct; and I repeat that which I said at the beginning, that it is great grace which deigns to apply divine wisdom to all the details of the life of man in the midst of the confusion brought in by sin. Occupied with heavenly things, the Christian is less in the way of discovering, by his own experience, the clue to the labyrinth of evil through which he is passing. God has considered this, and He has laid down this first principle, "wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil." Thus the Christian may be ignorant of evil (if a worldling were so, he would fall into it), and yet avoid it through his knowledge of good. The wisdom of God gives him the latter; the government of God provides for all the rest. Now, in the Proverbs, we have these things in principle and in detail. I have not dwelt on the figurative

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

ECCLESIASTES

Introduction to Ecclesiastes

The Book of Ecclesiastes is, up to a certain point, the converse of the Book of Proverbs. (see not to Proverbs (below)) It is the experience of a man who-retaining wisdom, that he may judge of all-makes trial of everything under the sun that could be supposed capable of rendering men happy, through the enjoyment of everything that human capacity can entertain as a means of joy. The effect of this trial was the discovery that all is vanity and vexation of spirit; that every effort to be happy in possessing the earth, in whatever way it may be, ends in nothing. There is a cankerworm at the root. The greater the capacity of enjoyment, the deeper and wider is the experience of disappointment and vexation of spirit. Pleasure does not satisfy, and even the idea of securing happiness in this world by an unusual degree of righteousness, cannot be realised. Evil is there, and the government of God in such a world as this, is not in exercise to secure happiness to man here below-a happiness drawn from the things below and resting on their stability; though as a general rule it protects those who walk with God: "Who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" [See Note #1] There is no allusion to the truth that we are dead in sins and offences. It is the result in the mind of the writer of the experience which he has gone through, and which he sets before us. As to the things around us, there is nothing better than to enjoy the things which God has given us; and finally, the fear of Jehovah is the whole of man, as the rule of his walk on earth. His own capacities do not make him happy nor the gratifying of his own will, even when he has everything at command. "For what can the man do that cometh after the king?" Man fails to secure joy; and permanent joy is not to be found for man. Consequently, if there be any joy, it is with the sense that it cannot be retained.

The moral of this book goes even farther than that of the Proverbs-on one side at least; for we must remember that it is this world that is in question (under the sun). Wisdom avails no more than folly. The difference between

them is as great as that between light and darkness. But one event happens to all men, and much reflection only makes us hate life. The heart becomes weary of research, and after all one dies like another. The world is ruined as a system, and death cuts the thread of thoughts and projects, and annihilates all connection between the most skilful workman and the fruit of his labours. What profit has been to him? There is a time for all things, and man must do each in its season, and enjoy that which God gives on his way. But God is the same in all His works, that men should fear before Him. He knows that God will judge the righteous and the wicked; but, as far as man's knowledge extends, he dies as the beast dies, and who can tell what becomes of him afterwards? There is no question here of the revelation of the world to come, but only of the conclusions drawn from experience of what takes place in this world. The knowledge of God teaches that there is a judgment; to man all is darkness beyond the present life.

Chapter 4 expresses the deep sorrow caused by the crying injustice of a sinful world, the unredressed wrongs which compose the history of our race, and which, in fact, make the history of man insupportable to one who has a sense of natural justice, and creates the desire to put an end to it. Labour and sloth alike bring their quota of distress. Nevertheless, in the midst of this quicksand in which there is no standing, we see the thought of God arise, giving a firm foundation to heart and mind.

This is in the beginning of chapter 5. He demands respect from man. The folly of the heart is indeed folly in His presence. From thence onward we find that that which takes away the vain hope of earthly happiness gives a more true joy to the heart that becomes wise, and therefore joyful, in separating itself from the world. There is therefore the grace also of patience. The self-sufficient effort to be righteous only ends in shame; to be active in evil ends in death. Finally, to strive after wisdom by the knowledge of things below is labour in vain. He has found two things: first, with respect to woman, judged by the experience of the world, he has found none good; amongst men, one in a thousand; and, in a word, that God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions apart from God.

God must be honoured, and the king also, to whom God has given authority. We see too in chapters 9 and 10, how little everything here meets the

apparent capacity of man; and, even when this capacity is real, how little it is esteemed. Nevertheless the wisdom of the upright, and the folly of the fool, have each its own consequences, and, after all, God judges. To sum up the whole, God must be remembered, and that before weakness and old age overtake us. For the manifest conclusion of all that has been said is "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man."

The chief subject, then, of this Book is the folly of all man's efforts in seeking happiness here below, and that the wisdom which judges all this only renders man still more unhappy. And then all this experience, on the part of one who possessed the highest capacity, is put in contrast with the simple principle of all true wisdom-submission and obedience to God, who knows all things, and who governs all things, because "God shall bring every work into judgment."

If we remember that this Book gives us the experience of man, and the reasonings of man, on all that happens under the sun, there is no difficulty in those passages that have the semblance of infidelity. The experience of man is necessarily infidel. He confesses his ignorance; for beyond that which is seen, experience can know nothing. But the solution of all moral problems is above and beyond that which is seen. The Book of Ecclesiastes makes this manifest. The only rule of life then is to fear the God who disposes of our life, who judges every action all the days of the life of our vanity. There is no question, in this book, of grace or of redemption, but only of the experience of this present life, and of that which God has said with respect to it-namely, His law, His commandments, and the consequent judgment-that which is decreed to man.

A Jew under the law might say these things, after having had the experience of all that God could give man to favour him in this position, and in view of the judgment of God that is connected with it.

In Proverbs we have practical moral guidance through the world; in Ecclesiastes the result of all efforts of man's will to find happiness, with all means at his disposal. But in the whole inquiry in Ecclesiastes there is no covenant relationship, no revelation. It is man with his natural faculties, and such as he is, conscious indeed he has to say to God, but seeking by his own

thoughts where happiness is to be found. Only that conscience has its part in the matter, and the fear of God is owned at the end. It is God owned indeed, but man in the world with full experience of all in it.

I have left "Lord" here as an expression of general application, but Jehovah is always His name in Israel, and that of government, save in a few cases where Adonai (Lord, in the proper appellative use of it) is employed. But it is to be noted that Jehovah is used in Proverbs, because it is authoritatively instructive in known relationship; never in Ecclesiastes, where it is God in contrast with man, having his own experience as such on earth. "God" abstractedly is only once used in Proverbs (). We have "her God" in Pro 2:17.

Note #1:

Peter's epistles, after laying the foundation of redemption and being born again, are occupied with the degree in which what was immediate (in promise) among the Jews is applicable now. The first epistle, its application to saints; the second, to the world and the wicked here below: hence he goes on to the new heavens and the new earth.

Ecclesiastes Chapter 1

Ecclesiastes 1:1

ecc 1:1

The following commentary covers Chapters 1 through 12.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is, up to a certain point, the converse of the Book of Proverbs. (see note to Proverbs below) It is the experience of a man who- retaining wisdom, that he may judge of all- makes trial of everything under the sun that could be supposed capable of rendering men happy, through the enjoyment of everything that human capacity can entertain as a means of joy. The effect of this trial was the discovery that all is vanity and vexation of spirit; that every effort to be happy in possessing the earth, in whatever way it may be, ends in nothing. There is a cankerworm at the root. The greater the capacity of enjoyment, the deeper and wider is the experience of disappointment and vexation of spirit. Pleasure does not satisfy, and even the idea of securing happiness in this world by an unusual degree of

righteousness, cannot be realised. Evil is there, and the government of God in such a world as this, is not in exercise to secure happiness to man here below—a happiness drawn from the things below and resting on their stability; though as a general rule it protects those who walk with God: "Who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" [See Note #1] There is no allusion to the truth that we are dead in sins and offences. It is the result in the mind of the writer of the experience which he has gone through, and which he sets before us. As to the things around us, there is nothing better than to enjoy the things which God has given us; and finally, the fear of Jehovah is the whole of man, as the rule of his walk on earth. His own capacities do not make him happy nor the gratifying of his own will, even when he has everything at command. "For what can the man do that cometh after the king?" Man fails to secure joy; and permanent joy is not to be found for man. Consequently, if there be any joy, it is with the sense that it cannot be retained.

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race, and which, in fact, make the history of man insupportable to one who has a sense of natural justice, and creates the desire to put an end to it. Labour and sloth alike bring their quota of distress. Nevertheless, in the midst of this quicksand in which there is no standing, we see the thought of God arise, giving a firm foundation to heart and mind.

This is in the beginning of chapter 5. He demands respect from man. The folly of the heart is indeed folly in His presence. From thence onward we find that that which takes away the vain hope of earthly happiness gives a more true joy to the heart that becomes wise, and therefore joyful, in separating itself from the world. There is therefore the grace also of patience. The self-sufficient effort to be righteous only ends in shame; to be active in evil ends in death. Finally, to strive after wisdom by the knowledge of things below is labour in vain. He has found two things: first, with respect to woman, judged by the experience of the world, he has found none good; amongst men, one in a thousand; and, in a word, that God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions apart from God. God must be honoured, and the king also, to whom God has given authority. We see too in chapters 9 and 10, how little everything here meets the apparent capacity of man; and, even when this capacity is real, how little it is esteemed. Nevertheless the wisdom of the upright, and the folly of the fool, have each its own consequences, and, after all, God judges. To sum up the whole, God must be remembered, and that before weakness and old age overtake us. For the manifest conclusion of all that has been said is "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man."

The chief subject, then, of this Book is the folly of all man's efforts in seeking happiness here below, and that the wisdom which judges all this only renders man still more unhappy. And then all this experience, on the part of one who possessed the highest capacity, is put in contrast with the simple principle of all true wisdom-submission and obedience to God, who knows all things, and who governs all things, because "God shall bring every work into judgment."

If we remember that this Book gives us the experience of man, and the reasonings of man, on all that happens under the sun, there is no difficulty in those passages that have the semblance of infidelity. The experience of man

is necessarily infidel. He confesses his ignorance; for beyond that which is seen, experience can know nothing. But the solution of all moral problems is above and beyond that which is seen. The Book of Ecclesiastes makes this manifest. The only rule of life then is to fear the God who disposes of our life, who judges every action all the days of the life of our vanity. There is no question, in this book, of grace or of redemption, but only of the experience of this present life, and of that which God has said with respect to it-namely, His law, His commandments, and the consequent judgment-that which is decreed to man. A Jew under the law might say these things, after having had the experience of all that God could give man to favour him in this position, and in view of the judgment of God that is connected with it.

In Proverbs we have practical moral guidance through the world; in Ecclesiastes the result of all efforts of man's will to find happiness, with all means at his disposal. But in the whole inquiry in Ecclesiastes there is no covenant relationship, no revelation. It is man with his natural faculties, and such as he is, conscious indeed he has to say to God, but seeking by his own thoughts where happiness is to be found. Only that conscience has its part in the matter, and the fear of God is owned at the end. It is God owned indeed, but man in the world with full experience of all in it.

[note to Proverbs]

I have left "Lord" here as an expression of general application, but Jehovah is always His name in Israel, and that of government, save in a few cases where Adonai (Lord, in the proper appellative use of it) is employed. But it is to be noted that Jehovah is used in Proverbs, because it is authoritatively instructive in known relationship; never in Ecclesiastes, where it is God in contrast with man, having his own experience as such on earth. "God" abstractedly is only once used in Proverbs (Pro 25:2). We have "her God" in Ecc 2:17.

Note #1

Peter's epistles, after laying the foundation of redemption and being born again, are occupied with the degree in which what was immediate (in promise) among the Jews is applicable now. The first epistle, its application

to saints; the second, to the world and the wicked here below: hence he goes on to the new heavens and the new earth.

SONG OF SOLOMON (CANTICLES)

Introduction to Song of Songs

This Book takes up the Jew, or at least the remnant, in quite another aspect. It tells of the affections that the King can create in their heart, and by which He draws them to Himself. However strong these affections may be. they are not developed according to the position in which christian affections, properly so called, are formed. They differ in this respect. They do not possess the profound repose and sweetness of an affection that flows from a relationship already formed, known, and fully appreciated, the bonds of which are formed and recognised, that counts upon the full and constant acknowledgment of the relationship, and that each party enjoys, as a certain thing, in the heart of the other. The desire of one who loves, and is seeking the affections of the beloved object, is not the sweet, entire, and established affection of the wife, with whom marriage has formed an indissoluble union. To the former the relationship is only in desire, the consequence of the state of heart; to the latter the state of heart is the consequence of the relationship. Now, although the marriage of the Lamb is not yet come, nevertheless, on account of the revelation which has been made to us, and of the accomplishment of our salvation, this latter character of affection is that which is proper to the assembly. Praise and glory be to God for it! We know whom we have believed. The strength and energy of desire is, however, still maintained, because glory and the marriage of the Lamb are yet future. What a position is that of the assembly! The entire confidence of the relationship on the one hand, the ardent expectation of the betrothed of the Lord on the other, whose love, however, is well known; an expectation that is linked with the glory in which He will come to receive her to Himself, to be for ever with Him.

This is not the position of the Jew. The point for him is to know that his Beloved is his. That is the question. That there is a principle in common is true. Christ loves His assembly, He loves His earthly people, He loves the soul that He draws to Himself. So that there is a moral application to ourselves

which is very precious. Nevertheless it is important that we distinguish and do not apply to the assembly that which relates to Israel. Otherwise we shall not have the right character of affection, and shall fail in that which is due to Christ.

The Song of Songs gives then the re-establishment of the relations between Christ and the remnant, in order that by exercise of heart-necessary on account of their position-they may be confirmed in the assurance of His love, and in the knowledge that all is of grace, and a grace that can never fail. Then is He fully known as Solomon. His heart becomes like the chariot of His willing people (Ammi-nadib), which carries Him away.

Sol 8:1 affords us a passage which may serve to express the state of mind treated in the book. "Oh that thou wert as my brother! when I should find thee without I would kiss thee!" Nevertheless, the Spirit of God desiring to assure the heart of the remnant of the Saviour's love, we see that the expression of the heart's desire to possess its Beloved does not cease until it has gained its object. The heart assures itself according to the operation of the Spirit of prophecy; for in fact Christ is for the remnant, and the remnant is for Him. The whole is based on this. But the heart needs to be reassured, as in a similar case we observe in other passages.

Having thus given the general idea, we shall point out some features that are developed in the course of this book, and that possess a moral import of great interest to ourselves.

Song of Solomon (Canticles) Chapter 1

Song of Solomon (Canticles) 1:1

sol 1:1

Chapter 1 presents in the most clear and simple manner the assurance of the full enjoyment of blessing; but still, though affection be there, all is more characterised by desire than by peace. And after this we find exercises of heart, that lead to a full understanding of the Beloved One's affection. There is progress in this intelligence, and that in spite of the faults and slothfulness of heart, which gives a fresh value to the affection that is in exercise. This mode of instruction is found in the Psalms, in which the first Verses

frequently give the thesis and the result, which is reached through circumstances that are afterwards detailed. Besides the peacefulness of the affection which subsists in a known relation, there is another sign of an affection in exercise when the relation is not formally established. The heart is occupied with the qualities, with the features, of the Beloved One. When, on the contrary, the object is possessed, it is with that object itself the heart is occupied. No doubt the qualities are a source of happiness; but while the position gives the enjoyment of these, it is the person who manifests them that is thought of. The grace, the kindness, or similar qualities, may attract the heart, and it is occupied with them. But, the relationship once formed, it is the person we think of, whose qualities are now, so to say, our own.

The loved one speaks much here of the qualities of her Beloved; she loves to speak of them, and to others. It may be said that the Beloved does so yet more, although He knows the relation in which He stands to her. This is true; but, as she is not yet in it, He is fain to reassure her with respect to her value in His eyes. He therefore speaks constantly of it to herself. Moreover, this is suitable to the position of man and of woman, and so much the more as it is really Christ Himself in question. Christ, in a certain sense, suffices to Himself. He needs not to go and talk to others of that which is in His heart. His love is a love of grace. But it is infinitely precious to us-when, in our utter unworthiness, we might doubt the possibility of His affection, even because it is so inestimable-and very affecting, as well as precious, to see Him manifesting His sense of her value, that her beauty is perfect in His eyes, that He has observed all her features, that one look has ravished His heart, that His dove, His undefiled, is the only one, that there is no spot in her. There is perfect grace in this reassuring testimony of the Bridegroom's part. It is the chief subject of His discourse. It is that which her heart needed.

There is much more variety in the exercises of her heart; there are even failures and sorrows arising from her faults. There is also an evident progress in her assurance. The song commences with the bride's declaration that her heart needs this testimony. She acknowledges that she is black, because of the scorching rays of the sun of affliction. She seeks shelter in the presence of her Beloved, who makes His flock to rest at noon. She would belong to Him only. She fears now to wander among the shepherds

of Israel. But if the Spirit of the Lord reminds her of those former testimonies of the law and the prophets, her heart is not silent, and the heart of the Beloved overflows in the testimony of her value in His eyes. The suitability of all this to the remnant in the last days is evident. The rest of the chapter contains testimonies of affection, which present the idea that is the thesis of the book.

Song of Solomon (Canticles) Chapter 2

The first six Verses (omitting the second) of chapter 2 (Sol 2:1; Sol 2:3-6) appear to me to be the voice of the bride. They have been differently understood, but (I think) wrongly. Observe here that Christ is the apple-tree. This will help us afterwards. Moreover the bride speaks of herself. In theory she apprehends her relationship, and speaks chiefly of herself; but there is real affection. The Bridegroom will not allow her to be disturbed [See Note #1] when she rests with full confidence in His love. His own voice, the only one to which she now hearkens, shall waken her. He Himself tells her to arise, that the winter is past-the time of mourning and sorrow. He desires also to hear her voice. Thus her heart is re-assured: her Beloved is hers. How truly all this gives the awakening of divine affections and confidence in the remnant which had so long learned what it was to have Jehovah's face hidden, and how fully the inextinguishable love of Him who wept over Jerusalem is in the blessedest way in exercise to awaken this confidence and assure the heart of the afflicted people! It is to me singularly beautiful, not instruction as to circumstances nor in connection with responsibility, but grace-Christ's (Jehovah's) own relationship with Israel.

Note #1

Read "nor awaken love till it please."

Song of Solomon (Canticles) Chapter 3

In chapter 3 we have another attitude, another state of heart. She is alone and in darkness. She seeks her Beloved, but finds Him not. There is affection, but no joy. She questions the watchmen in Jerusalem who go about the city. As soon as she passes from them, she finds Him. Again He will have her rest in His love. But all this is only prophetically and in

testimony, for the comfort of those who have not yet found Him, by shewing them what He is for them. The Spirit of prophecy then exhibits the Bridegroom coming up out of the wilderness with His bride, where (like Moses) He had been with her in spirit. The chapter confirms the application to Israel. In her solitary state she seeks the Messiah, and, after inquiring of those who watched, soon found Him her soul loved, and brought Him into the place of Israel, for to Israel the Son was born, [See Note #1] though in a new relationship. There He maintains her rest, and there, the other side of the picture, the true Solomon comes up out of the wilderness, crowned now in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the gladness of His heart, by the Israel that had rejected Him.

Note #1

So Naomi, and Revelation 12.

Song of Solomon (Canticles) Chapter 4

And now, chapter 4, He declares all that she is in His sight, although she has been in the lion's den. From thence He calls her, all fair and without spot in His eyes; His heart expressing His delight in her. It is, I judge, a fine moral perfectness of thought that the bride never speaks of the Bridegroom's perfections to Himself as if she was to approve Him; she speaks of Him fully as expressive of her own feelings and to others, but not to Him. He speaks freely and fully of her to herself as assuring her of His delight in her. When we think of Christ and our relation with Him, this is beautifully appropriate.

Song of Solomon (Canticles) Chapter 5

Chapter 5 gives us another experience. Intimacy was formed through the testimony of the Bridegroom's affection. The reassured heart, certain of His love, exhibits its slothfulness. Alas, what hearts are ours! We turn again to ourselves as soon as we are comforted by the testimony of the Lord's love. The Bridegroom's sensitive and righteous heart acts upon her word, and He retires from one who does not listen to His voice. She arises to learn her own folly, and the just delicacy, with respect to herself, of His ways whom she had slighted. How often, alas! do we act in the same manner with regard to the voice of His Spirit and the manifestations of His love! What a dreadful

loss, but, through grace, what a lesson! She is chastised by those who watch for the peace of Jerusalem. What had she to do in the streets at night, she whom the Bridegroom had sought at home? And now her very affection exposes her to reproof, the expression of its energy placing her in a position that proved she had slighted her Beloved. If we are not in the peaceful enjoyment of the love of Christ, where He meets with us in grace, the very strength of our affection and our self-condemnation causes us to exhibit this affection out of its place, in a certain sense, and bring us into connection with those who judge our position. It was right discipline for a watchman to use towards a woman who was wandering without, whatever might be the cause. Testimonies of her affection to her Beloved at home, the love of her own heart, do not concern the watchman. Affection may exist; but he has to do with order and a becoming walk. Nevertheless her affection was real and led to an ardent expression of all that her Beloved was to her—an expression addressed to others, who ought to understand her; not to the watchman, but to her own companions. But if sloth had prevented her receiving Him in the visitations of His love, her heart, now disciplined by the watchman and turned again to her Beloved, overflowing with His praises, being taught of God, knows where to find Him.

Song of Solomon (Canticles) Chapter 6

The following commentary covers Chapters 6 and 7.

And this experience makes her understand through grace another aspect of her relationship, proving a real progress in the intelligence of grace and condition of heart. It is no longer the desire that seeks possession of the object for herself, it is the consciousness that she belongs to Him. "I am my Beloved's." This is a very important progress. The soul that seeks salvation, that seeks to satisfy newly-awakened affections, exclaims, as soon as it is assured of it, "My Beloved is mine." When there has been a deeper experience of self, it recognises itself as being His. Thus, with respect to ourselves, it is not "We have found him of whom the prophets did write"; but "We are not our own, for we are bought with a price." To belong in this manner to Christ, no longer thinking of self, is the happiness of the soul. It is not that we lose the sense of the blessedness of possessing the Saviour, but the other thought, the thought of being His, occupies the first place.

Again the Beloved testifies to the preciousness of the bride in His eyes. But here also there is a difference. Before, when speaking of her, He added to the gentleness and beauty of her aspect all the graces which were seen in her, the honey that flowed from her lips, the pleasant fruits that were found in her, the sweet odours which He called on the breath of the Spirit to bring forth. He does not now repeat these things. He speaks of that which she is for Him. Having described her personal beauty, His heart dwells on what she is for Himself. "My dove, my undefiled, is but one." His affection can see no other: none can be compared with her. There are many others, but they are not the one whom He loves. The person of the Lord fills the heart that has been brought back to Him. The look and the graces of the bride are the subject of the Bridegroom's testimony. Moreover for Him there is no one but her, the only one of her mother. Thus will it be with the remnant of Israel in the last days, even as in spirit it is now with us. The reception of Christ and His union with this remnant at Jerusalem are represented in a very striking manner in that which follows. It is no longer the Beloved coming up out of the wilderness-where He had associated His people with Himself-in glory and in love. It is the bride, fair as the moon and radiant with glory, who appears on the scene, like an army with banners displayed. The Beloved had come down to look upon the ripening fruits of the valley, and to see if His vine flourished. Before He is aware, His love makes Him like the chariots of His willing people (compare Psa 110:3). He leads them in glory and triumph. He had sought the fruits of grace among them; but, having come down for this, He exalts them in glory. It is only when His people are fully established in grace that everything in them will be beauty and perfection, and that they will recognise that they belong entirely to Christ, and at the same time that they will entirely possess His affection. This last thought is the rest of their heart. This is thus expressed in the third formulary of the experience of this divine song, if I may coldly so speak, and which gives the full happiness of the bride, "I am my Beloved's, and his desire is toward me"-the consciousness of belonging to Christ and that His affections rest on us-the consciousness that we are the objects of His own affections and delight. This is most deep and perfect joy. The reader will do well to weigh these three expressions of satisfaction of heart: the possessing Christ; our belonging to Him; and this last, with the unspeakable

knowledge that His heart's delight is in us, however much-and it is surely then it will be felt-all is grace. But (to return to the text) they can now go forth with Him to enjoy all the blessings of the earth in the certainty and the communion of His love. What fruits of gratitude, what peculiar feelings, will be those which the people of Israel have kept for the Lord alone, which they could never have for any other, and which, after all, none but themselves could have towards the Lord, viewed as come on earth.

Song of Solomon (Canticles) Chapter 8

Summary to the Song of Solomon

Chapter 8 stands by itself, and appears to me to recapitulate the principles of the whole book. It returns to the foundation of that which gave rise to all these exercises. The full satisfaction of all the desires of the remnant is prophetically announced, and the path of their affections is marked out. But this picture is drawn for the encouragement of those who are not yet enjoying it, and expresses the desire for its accomplishment (giving thus the sanction of God to the ardent desire of the remnant to possess Christ, and to have full liberty of communion with Him). The reply teaches, with a clearness that is very precious, the manner of its accomplishment. The ardent affection of the loved one is manifested, and the Beloved desires that she may rest in His love, and enjoy it as long as she will without being disturbed. Afterwards she comes up out of the wilderness, leaning upon Him. And where did the Lord awaken her from her sleep? Under an apple-tree (see Sol 2:3). From Christ alone she derives her life. Thus only can Israel give birth to this living remnant, which, at Jerusalem, shall become the earthly bride of the great King, which desires to be, and shall be, as a seal upon His heart, according to the power of a love that is strong as death-that spares nothing, and yields nothing. The "little sister" appears to me to be Ephraim, which has never had the same development that Judah received through the manifestation of Christ, and through all that took place after the captivity of the ten tribes. For all the moral affections of Judah were formed on their relationship to Christ, on His rejection, and on the sentiments which this produced when the Spirit caused it to be felt (Isaiah 50-53). Ephraim has gone through none of this, but will enter into the enjoyment of its results. Judah, when perfected, will enjoy the full favour of

the Messiah; their affections having been formed for Him by all the exercises of heart which they have had with respect to Him. Christ, in His Solomon character, the glorious King, the Son of David, and after the order of Melchisedec, has a vineyard as Lord of the nations or multitudes. He has intrusted it to others, who are to make Him a suitable return. The vineyard of the bride was at her own disposal, but all its proceeds shall be for Solomon; and there shall be a portion for those that kept its fruits—a touching expression of her relationship to the King. She will have all to be His; and then there are others who shall profit by it also. The last two Verses (Sol 8:13-14) express the bride's desire that the Bridegroom may come without delay.

ISAIAH

Introduction to Isaiah

Isaiah takes the first place; and in fact he is the most complete of all the prophets, and perhaps the most rich. The whole circle of God's thoughts with respect to Israel is more given here. Other prophets are occupied with certain portions only of the history of this people.

We will give here the division of this book into subjects. There is in the beginning an appearance of confusion; nevertheless it helps to explain the moral bearing of the book.

And here what a scene presents itself to our view!-sorrowful in one aspect, yet at the same time lovely and glorious, like the first glimmerings of dawn after a long and cold night of darkness, telling of the bright day which soon will rise over a scene, the beauties of which are faintly perceived, mingled with the darkness that still obscures them-a scene that shall be vivified by the sun that will soon enlighten it. One rejoices in this partial light: it tells of the goodness, the energy, and the intentions of that God who has created all things for the accomplishment of His purposes of grace and glory. But one longs for the manifestation of the fulness of this accomplishment, when all will repose in the effects of this goodness.

Such is prophecy. It is sorrowful, because it unveils the sin, the ungrateful folly, of God's people. But it reveals the heart of One who is unwearied in love, who loves this people, who seeks their good, although He feels their sin according to His love. It is the heart of God that speaks. These two characters of prophecy throw light upon the two-fold end it has in view, and help us to understand its bearing. First of all, it addresses itself to the actual state of the people, and shews them their sin; it always therefore supposes the people to be in a fallen condition. When they peacefully enjoy the blessings of God, there is no need of displaying their condition to them. But, in the second place, during the period in which the people are still acknowledged, it speaks of present restoration on their repentance, to

encourage them to return to Jehovah; and it proclaims deliverance. And in this, the law and so the blessings connected with it, have their place as that to which they should return. Of this the last prophetic word from God (Malachi 4) is an expressive instance. But God well knew the hearts of His people, and that they would not yield to His call. To sustain the faith of the remnant, faithful amidst this unbelief, and for the instruction of His people at all times, He adds promises which will assuredly be fulfilled by the coming of Messiah. These promises are sometimes connected with the circumstances of a near and partial deliverance, sometimes with the consummation of the people's iniquity in the rejection of Christ come in humiliation. It is important to be able to distinguish between that part of a passage which refers to those circumstances which were near at hand, and that which speaks of full deliverance shewn in perspective through those circumstances. This is the difficult part of the interpretation of prophecy.

I would add that, although the subject of prophecy is not a figure, yet figures are not only largely used, but they are often intermingled with literal expressions; so that in explaining the prophetic books one cannot make an exact rule to distinguish between figure and letter. The aid of the Holy Ghost is necessary, as is always the case in the study of the sacred word, to find the true sense of the passage. What I have said is equally applicable to other parts of scripture, and in the most solemn circumstances. Psalm 22, for instance, is a continual mixture of figures, which represent the moral character of certain facts, with other facts recited in the simplicity of the letter. There is no difficulty in understanding it. "Dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me, they pierced my hands and my feet." The word dogs gives the character of those present. This way of speaking is found in all languages. For instance, it would be said, "He drew a fine picture of virtue." Drew a picture is a figure. I say this in order that a difficulty may not be made of that which belongs to the nature of human language.

I come now to the contents of this important book of prophecy. It is thus divided:-The first four chapters are apart, forming a kind of introduction. The fifth also in itself stands alone. It judges the people in view of the care that God has bestowed upon them. But we shall find this judgment resumed in

detail in verse 8 of chapter 9 (Isa 9:8). In chapter 6 we have the judgment of the people in view of the Messiah's coming glory; consequently there is a remnant acknowledged. [See Note #1] Chapter 7 formally introduces the Messiah, Immanuel, the Son of David, and the judgment upon the house of David after the flesh; so that there is an assured hope in sovereign grace, but at the same time judgment upon the last human support of the people. In chapter 8 we have the desolating Assyrian who overruns the land, but also Immanuel (previously announced in chapter 7) who finally brings his schemes to nought. Meantime there is a remnant, separate from the people, and attached to this Immanuel; [See Note #2] and the circumstances of anguish through which the apostate people must pass are alluded to, which terminate in the full blessing flowing from Immanuel's presence. This closes with verse 7 of chapter 9 (Isa 9:7); so that we have here in fact the whole history of the Jews in relationship with Christ. In verse 8 of chapter 9 (Isa 9:8) the Spirit resumes the general national history from chapter 5, interrupted by this essential episode of the introduction of Immanuel. He resumes it from the time then present, pointing out the different judgments of Jehovah, until He introduces the last instrument of these judgments—the Assyrian, the rod of Jehovah. And here the immediate deliverance is presented as an encouragement to faith, and as prefiguring the final destruction of the power that will be the rod of Jehovah in the last days. Jehovah, having smitten the desolator, presents (chapter 11) the Offspring of David, at first in His intrinsic moral character, and then in the results of His reign as to full blessing, and the presence of Jehovah established again in Zion in the midst of Israel. Thus the whole history of the people is given us in its grand features, until their establishment in blessing as the people of God, having Jehovah in their midst. Only that it is to be remarked that nothing is given of Antichrist, nor of the power of the beast, nor of the time of tribulation as such, because that is the period during which the Jews are not owned, though they be dealt with, while our prophecy speaks of the time when they are owned. It is stated in general terms that God would hide His face from the house of Jacob, and the righteous in spirit wait for Him.

From chapter 13 to the end of chapter 27 we find the judgment of the Gentiles; whether Babylon or the other nations, especially of those which were at all times in relationship with Israel; the position of Israel, not only in

the midst of them, but of all the nations in the last days (this is chapter 18); and, finally, the judgment of the whole world (chapter 24), and the full millennial blessing of Israel (chapters 25-27). From chapters 28 to 35 we have the detail of all that happens to the Jews in the last days. Each revelation closes with a testimony to the glory of God in Israel.

In chapters 36 to 39 the Spirit relates the history of a part of Hezekiah's reign. It contains three principal subjects:-the resurrection of the Son of David as from death; the destruction of the Assyrian, without his having been able to attack Jerusalem; and the captivity in Babylon. These are the three grand foundations of the whole history and state of the Jews in the last days.

From chapter 40 to the end is a very distinct part of the prophecy, in which God reveals the consolation of His people and their moral relations with Himself, and the double ground of His controversy with them, whether in view of the position in which He has placed the nation as His elect servant-the witness of Jehovah the one true God, in the presence of the Gentiles, and their idolatrous failure-or in respect to their rejection of Christ the only true elect Servant [See Note #3]who has fulfilled His will. This gives occasion to the revelation of a remnant who hearken to this true Servant, as well as to the history of the circumstances that this remnant pass through, and therefore at the same time to that of the people's condition in the last days, ending with the manifestation of Jehovah in judgment. The position of Israel with respect to the idolatrous nations gives occasion also to the introduction of Babylon, of its destruction, and the deliverance of captive Judah by Cyrus. This idolatry is one of the subjects on which Jehovah pleads with His people. The other and yet graver subject is that of the rejection of Christ. For more detail we must wait till these chapters come under examination.

Prophecy supposes that the people of God are in a bad condition, even when they are still acknowledged, and prophecy addressed to them. There is no need of addressing powerful testimony to a people who are walking happily in the ways of the Lord, nor of sustaining the faith of a tried remnant by hopes founded on the unchangeable faithfulness and the purposes of God, when all are enjoying in perfect peace the fruits of His present

goodness-attached, as a consequence, to the faithfulness of the people. The proof of this simple and easily understood principle is found in each of the prophets. It does not appear that the prophets, whose prophecies we possess in the inspired volume, wrought any miracles. [See Note #4] For the law was then in force, its authority outwardly acknowledged; there was nothing to establish; and Jehovah's authority was the basis of the public system of religion in the land according to the institutions appointed by Himself in connection with the temple. It was on practical duty that the prophets insisted. In the midst of the ten apostate tribes Elijah and Elisha wrought miracles to re-establish the authority of Jehovah. Such is the faithfulness of Jehovah, and His patience towards His people. A new object of faith requires miracles. That which is founded on the already acknowledged word, and which does not demand; the reception of it as a new object, requires none, whatever the increase of light or claim on conscience may be. The word commends itself to the conscience in those who are taught of God; and if there are new revelations, they are to the comfort of those who have received the practical testimony, and have thus recognised the authority of one who speaks on the part of God.

We will now examine the contents of the prophecy itself in a more detailed way.

Note #1:

Note here, the two great dealings of God with the conscience to convict it of sin exemplified in these two chapters. First, the state of blessing in which God had first set the person judged, and his departure from it (so man in his innocence); and second, the meeting of the Lord in glory. Are we in a state to do so?

Note #2:

This is largely brought out in the Gospel of Matthew. The passage itself is quoted in Hebrews 2. What is spoken of in Isa 8:13-18 is in fact the gospel history breaking in upon the scene. Peter quotes Isa 8:14; Paul (Romans 9) the stumbling stone; Matthew quotes Isa 9:1-2 for Christ's apparition in Galilee.

Note #3:

This term "servant" is a kind of key to this whole prophecy: first Israel, then in chapter 49 the Lord takes Israel's place, at the end the remnant. But of this more hereafter.

Note #4:

The dial of Ahaz in this prophet may be thought an exception, but Ahaz was really departed from God. It is also noteworthy that the apostles never wrought miracles for their own comfort. Trophimus have I left at Miletus sick. Epaphroditus "was sick nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but on me also."

Isaiah Chapter 1

Isaiah 1:1

isa 1:1

Isaiah 1 begins with a testimony to the sad condition of the people. They were all wounds and corruption. It was useless to chastise them any more. Their ceremonies were an abomination to Jehovah. He desired righteousness. Nevertheless the people are called to repentance, and are assured that blessing should follow repentance. Such is the position which prophecy gives them. But God knew the people who, with their princes, were wicked and corrupt; and God declares what will take place. He will execute judgment and thus cleanse the people and re-establish blessing. The two great principles are thus laid down: blessing proposed consequent upon repentance; but in fact it will be blessing brought in by judgment.

Isaiah Chapter 2

The following commentary covers Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Thus re-established, Zion, the mountain of Jehovah, will be the centre of blessing and peace to all the nations (Isa 2:1-4). This puts the invitation to the people into the prophet's mouth to come and walk in the light of Jehovah. Why has He forsaken His people? Because they have learnt the ways of the heathen. Well, the day of Jehovah shall be upon all the glory of

man, and upon all his idols. They may cease from man, for God's own people on the earth, the place of His rest, shall be judged and smitten by their God (chaps. 3, 4). But in that day shall the Branch of Jehovah be glorious, and the earth shall be blessed. He who smites binds up the wounds by introducing the Messiah, and by Him blessing the earth. The remnant will be holy when the cleansing of Jerusalem shall have been accomplished by the judgment and the fire of Jehovah. Jerusalem shall be protected and glorified by the manifestation of Jehovah's presence, like the tabernacle in the wilderness. Such is the form in which the introduction to this prophecy is presented with much force and clearness.

Isaiah Chapter 5

After this the Spirit of God begins to plead with the people, taking two distinct grounds-namely, that which God had done for His people, and the coming of Jehovah in the Person of Christ in glory. Had the people made a suitable return to the care which Jehovah had lavished upon them? Were they in a condition to receive Jehovah in their midst? Chapter 5 takes up the first question, which addresses itself to the responsibility of the people, in view of the care and the government of God. What could He have done for His vine that He had not done? It has produced Him but wild grapes. He makes known the consequences of this according to His righteous government. His hedge, the protection with which He had surrounded it, shall be taken away, and it shall be left a prey to the ravages of the heathen. God, in pleading with Israel, shews them their sins in detail. Then His hand is stretched forth against His people, and terrible judgments fall upon them. Nevertheless, "His anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." He will bring mighty strangers against them, whose progress nothing can arrest, who will carry the people into captivity. There shall be sorrow and mourning in the land, and the light of their heavens shall be darkened. In the first instance this will be Nebuchadnezzar, and even Sennacherib but still more fully will it be the nations that come against Jerusalem in the last days, and capture it, after having overrun and invaded all the land. We shall have the details of this farther on.

Isaiah Chapter 6

But it was in the counsels of God that His presence should be established in glory in the midst of His people, and this will be accomplished in Christ at the end of the age. Hence the testimony of the progress of the judgments is interrupted after the first general statement, and in chapter 6 the prophet sees this glory. Yet its first effect is judicial, and operates to blind and condemn them. The previous judgment (chap. 5) had been in respect of the breaking of the law and the despising of the word of the Holy One of Israel. But with enmity against Christ and His rejection comes judicial blindness and the separation of a remnant. That it is the glory of Christ is taught us in chapter 12 of John's Gospel. The prophet feels at once the incompatibility of the people's condition with the manifestation of this glory. Unclean lips cannot celebrate it. But a live coal from the altar cleanses his own lips, and he consecrates himself to Jehovah's message; and to that which concerns the glory of Christ. The heart of the people is made fat until there is entire desolation. Nevertheless there shall be a remnant, a holy seed, which shall be like the sap of a tree that has lost its leaves. [See Note #1]

We have then in these last chapters the judgment of the people under two aspects: first, that of God's government (in this point of view the people, being altogether guilty, are given up to the Gentiles); secondly, in view of the glory of Jehovah's presence at His coming according to His purposes of grace (for this the people were unfit). But here, as the purposes of God were in question, there is a remnant according to election in whom the glory shall be re-established. This distinction must be made when the government of God and His outward dealings are in question. In chapter 5, which speaks of the former character of judgment, there is no remnant. It is simply the public and complete judgment of the nation; for as to this all rested on their responsibility. In the Gospels this is looking for fruit; Christ might dig about it and dung it, but this was looking for fruit. Hence it is cursed and never to bear fruit. That is Israel (man) under the first covenant. In chapter 6 God acts within, in His own relationship with the people. Hence we find a remnant and the assured re-establishment of the people; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Here also we find Christ. God could not cast off His people for ever, and the prophetic faith is found which says, How long? as elsewhere it is said, There is none to say, How long? For when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on earth?

Note #1

A more exact translation throws much light on this prophecy. Nevertheless there shall still be in it a tenth, and it shall return and shall be to be consumed, as the oak and the teil tree, which being cut down have still the trunk [or the rooted stump]; thus the holy seed shall be their stock" (Isa 1:9). That is, the remnant itself will undergo Judgment and consumption at the time of their return; but there shall be a holy seed, from which life will spring as from a tree cut down.

Isaiah Chapter 7

The following commentary covers Chapters 7, 8, and 9:1-7.

But this requires further development; and it is given in a remarkable manner in the next prophecy, comprised in chapters 7, 8, 9 to the end of Verse 7 (Isa 9:1-7). Certain promises were attached to the family of David, in which-as we saw when examining the Books of Samuel-God had renewed the hopes of Israel, when the links between Himself and the people were broken by the taking of the ark, and He had forsaken His place at Shiloh. Now the house of David, the last sustainment of the people in responsibility, has also failed in faithfulness. Ahaz has forsaken Jehovah, and set up the altar of a strange god in the temple of Jehovah. In chapter 7 the Spirit of God directs the prophet to the king, and addresses him. Isaiah was to go and meet him, with Shear-jashub his son-a symbolical child whose name signifies "the remnant shall return." But the Lord seeks first, as He did with respect to the people in chapter 1, to encourage this branch of David to act in faith, and thus to glorify God. He announces to the king that the designs of Rezin and Pekah shall come to nought, and even proposes to him to ask a sign. But Ahaz is too far from the Lord to avail himself of this, though he replies with forms of piety. And again, as He had done with respect to the people, Jehovah declares that which shall happen to the family of David, and to the people under their rule. The two points of this prophetic announcement are-the gift of Immanuel, the virgin's son; and the complete desolation of the land by the Assyrian. These indeed are the keys to the whole prophecy of Isaiah. Nevertheless there shall be a remnant. Verse 16 (Isa 7:16) refers to Shear-jashub; but this prophecy goes farther. In chapter 8 the second

prophetic child announces by his name the approaching appearance of this enemy and his ravages; and then, since the people despised the promises made to the family of David and rejoiced in the flesh, Jehovah would take the thing in hand. Consequently we have the whole sequel of the people's history, of the directions given to the remnant, and of God's intervention in power for the establishment of full blessing in the Person of the Messiah.

In chapter 7, where the responsibility of the family of David is the subject, Immanuel is promised as a sign; but the success of the Assyrian is complete without any reverse. Immanuel once brought in, all is changed; the land is His. The Assyrian reaches even to the neck, because the waters of Shiloah had been despised. But Immanuel secured all. Thus the prophetic Spirit passes on to the events of the last days, of which Sennacherib was but a type. He exhibits all the designs and confederacies of the nations brought to nought because of Immanuel-God (is) with us. It is the complete deliverance of Israel in the last days (Isa 8:5-10). And as to the remnant, what course are they to follow? (Isa 8:11, and following.) They are not to be troubled by the fear of the people, nor to join them in their confederacies, but to sanctify Jehovah of hosts Himself, and give Him all His true importance in their hearts. He will be their sanctuary in the day of their trouble.

But who then is this Immanuel, this Jehovah of hosts? We well know. This brings in then the whole history of the rejection of Christ, and the position of the remnant and of the nation in consequence, and of the final intervention of the power of God. The passage is too clear to need much explanation. I will point out its principal subjects. Christ becomes personally a stumbling-stone. [See Note #1] In consequence of this the testimony of God is deposited exclusively in the hands and the hearts of His disciples, God's elect remnant. He hides His face from Jacob; but, according to the Spirit of prophecy, this remnant waits for Him and seeks Him. Meanwhile Christ and the children whom Jehovah has given Him are for signs to the two houses of Israel (compare Rom 11:1-8). Those (the nation) who reject the stone are in rebellion and anguish in Immanuel's land; they are given up to desolation. Nevertheless this distress is not like the former ravages of the Assyrian, because the Messiah, having appeared, has taken in hand the cause of His people, according to the counsels of God. The Spirit of

prophecy passes at once, as is constantly the case, from His appearance as light, to the results of the deliverance which He will accomplish in the last days (from Isa 9:2-3). For the church was a mystery hid in God, and not the subject of prophecy or promise. The yoke of the Assyrian being broken, all the brightness of the glory of the divine Person of the Messiah shines out in the blessing of His people.

These two subjects, the Messiah and the Assyrian, form the basis of all the prophecy that speaks of Israel, when this people are the recognised object of God's dealings. It may be noticed that the Assyrian appears here twice—the second time in connection with a gathering together of the nations. The first time, chapter 7, he is Jehovah's instrument for the chastisement of Israel, and he does his own will without any question of his being broken. The second time, chapter 8, he fills the land; but the assembly of the nations gathered together against Israel is broken and brought to nothing. This expectation of Jehovah's intervention (without sharing the fears of the world in the last days, or seeking that strength which the world think to find in confederation, but, on the contrary, resting absolutely on Jehovah alone) contains in principle a valuable instruction for the present day.

[Note: Isa 9:8-21 is discussed in the next chapter.]

Note #1

The beginning of Verse 17 is the passage quoted in Hebrews 2, along with Verse 18 (Isa 9:17-18), to prove the humanity of the Lord and His connection with the remnant.

Isaiah Chapter 10

The following commentary covers Chapters 9:8-21, 10, 11, and 12.

In Isa 9:8 the Spirit, having given the great leading facts as to Messiah, Immanuel, resumes the general history of Israel without any special introduction of the Messiah till towards the end. This prophecy closes with chapter 12. Although the pride of Ephraim is mentioned, yet Jacob or Israel is looked at as a whole. The different phases of chastisement or of distress are in Verses 8-12 (Isa 9:8-12), 13-17 (Isa 9:13-17), 18-21 (Isa 9:18-21), and Isa 10:1-4. The Assyrian then re-appears, as being properly the rod of Jehovah; and it is

announced, that when God shall have accomplished all that He had determined with respect to Zion (an accomplishment not here revealed), He will break the rod that He has used, and then the remnant shall seek Jehovah, and shall "stay upon" Him. This is the final act of the great drama of God's dealings with respect to Israel. There is a consumption decreed of God for the land. But when at length the Assyrian lifts up his hand, Jehovah comes in and smites him. And the indignation of Jehovah, and His anger against Israel, which till now had never been turned away, will come to an end in the destruction of this rod that magnified itself against the Lord who used it. Verse 25 (Isa 10:25) is in contrast with Isa 9:12; Isa 9:17; Isa 9:21, and Isa 10:4. Sennacherib was a type of this. But it is a prophecy of the destruction of the Assyrian in the last days, when the indignation against Israel shall cease.

Consequently we have, in chapters 11, 12, the Messiah and His reign, the source of the millennial blessing of the people of God. The first Verses of chapter 11 (Isa 11:1-5) give His character; afterwards it is the effect of His reign.

Isaiah Chapter 13

The following commentary covers Chapters 13 and 14.

With chapter 12 one division of the whole book closes. That which commences with chapter 13 continues to the end of chapter 27, which describes the same millennial condition, but in a more extended sphere, because the world-of which these latter chapters speak-is brought in; while chapters 5-12 were in especial connection with Israel.

The chapters we are now considering connect events that were then at hand with the end of the age. It is only by thoroughly apprehending this that we can understand them. The reason of this is simple: the nations are looked at in reference to Israel. But time is not reckoned, with respect to Israel, from the Babylonish captivity until the last days. The introduction of the Messiah as a stone of stumbling, with which the special epoch of seventy weeks is noticed in Daniel, has been already considered. But this passage in the prophet of the times of the Gentiles shews only more distinctly that time is not reckoned afterwards to the close. Seventy weeks

go to the full restoration of Israel. The immense gap, which has now lasted more than 1800 years, is in no way taken into account. [See Note #1]

In the eyes of the prophet, Babylon, or more correctly its head, besides the idolatrous corruption, represents the imperial throne of the world in contrast with the throne of God at Jerusalem. [See Note #2] Babylon will be overthrown, and God will again bless Israel. This will be the judgment of this present age-of the world. It is represented here in that destruction of Babylon which was at hand. But this judgment will not be completed until, the times of the Gentiles being ended, Israel shall be delivered. The character of the king of Babylon is described here in very remarkable language (Isa 14:12-13). It is the spirit of Babylon, and still more especially in its last representative at the close, to which this prophecy in its full accomplishment refers. It was so even in Nebuchadnezzar himself-nay, even when they built the tower of Babel. The destruction of the Assyrian then takes place in the earth; [See Note #3] and, although the house of David had had its sceptre broken, Philistia shall be judged and subdued, and Jehovah will found Zion, and the poor of His people will trust in Him. This destruction of Babylon, and of the Assyrian after Babylon, necessary to the understanding of the whole scene, is a kind of scene apart, complete in chapters 13, 14. But in Israel's territory, or in connection with this people, some nations still remain; and God must dispose of these in order that Israel may enjoy the full blessing and the result of the promises. Babylon, being an immense system, which takes the place of the throne of David, is seen as a whole. The nations, whose judgments are here related (although there is allusion to events nearer the time of the prophecy), are looked at as in the last days, when God resumes His throne of judgment in order to re-establish His people. Thus Nebuchadnezzar had taken Tyre and subdued Egypt. The Assyrian had overthrown Damascus and led Ephraim captive. And these were events comparatively near at hand. But, as a whole, the events spoken of here are owned in the last days. Even in the preceding chapter the destruction of the Assyrian is placed after the fall of the king of Babylon. Yet historically the Assyrian had been subdued by Babylon; and the overthrow of Sennacherib had taken place many years before that epoch. But prophecy always looks to the accomplishment of God's purposes. Here there are

generally no details with respect to the instruments employed by God. They are found elsewhere.

Note #1

The seventy weeks, or 490 years, include the great gap which has already lasted more than 1800 years-these coming in between the end of the 483rd and the end of the 490th-only that Christians know that half the 70th week was really fulfilled in Christ's ministry; therefore we get a half week in Daniel 7 and in the Revelation.

Note #2

Besides the fact of the captivity of God's people, Babylon has a very important position with respect to God's dealings. Until Nebuchadnezzar received power, the government of God, while centred in Israel (with respect to whom He had set the bounds of the peoples), took cognizance of the nations as dispersed at Babel. He allowed them indeed to follow their own ways; but before Him every nation had an individual existence. The throne once taken from Jerusalem, from whence God governed the world with a view to His chosen people, the world is given up to the dominion of a single throne, which stands therefore before God as holding the sceptre of it. Three other powers followed in succession, the last of which was in existence when Christ came, but the time of its judgment was not yet come. These four empires form the times of the Gentiles. God will resume His government, and again judge the nations in view of Israel; and Babylon, or the one universal empire, will be set aside in its rebel and apostate condition. But, while it lasts, the empire has its own peculiar and absolute position before God. Jerusalem, punished for its idolatry by the Babylonish captivity (subjection to idols) and the transfer of the throne from Jerusalem to the Gentiles, is so far owned in the remnant under the Gentiles that God in the prophetic books takes account of it, though not as then His people, till the second grand sin was perpetrated, the rejection of Christ. But this even was in the prophet when they were in captivity. Still they were partially preserved to present Christ the Lord to them, after that set aside till sovereign grace comes on them in the last week, for faith the latter half. Time begins to count again when that is come.

Note #3

A proof that the prophecy relates to the last days, for of old the Assyrian fell before Babylon, being conquered by it. It is to be remarked that the Assyrian, not the beast nor Antichrist, is the subject of this prophecy. Under the Assyrian Judah was not "Lo-ammi," nor is he in this prophecy. In Babylon Judah was captive, and "Lo-ammi" written on the people. Hence we must not look for the beast. The Assyrian is the main enemy here.

Isaiah Chapter 15

The following commentary covers Chapters 15, 16, 17, and 18.

In chapters 15 and 16 Moab is judged. They are warned that the throne of David shall be established, and the oppressor consumed out of the land. In chapter 17 we have the invasion of armies from the north, the assembled nations. Damascus is overthrown. Israel shall be but as a few berries on the outmost branches. Nevertheless they shall look to their Maker, and the gathered nations shall perish before the manifested power of God. The outline of this last invasion of Israel gives rise to a brief but very clear prophecy of their condition in the last days, and which is contained in chapter 18. They shall be restored by means of some powerful nation, outside the limits [See Note #1] of their then national relationships; but Jehovah stands apart from His own relationship with them, though ordering all things. Then, when Israel shall begin to bud as a vine in the land, they shall be given up as a prey to the nations. Nevertheless in that time they shall be brought as an offering to Jehovah, and shall themselves bring an offering too.

Note #1

The rivers of Cush, Nile and Euphrates.

Isaiah Chapter 19

The following commentary covers Chapters 19 through 23.

In chapters 19 and 20 Egypt shall be smitten in that day; but Jehovah will heal it. Egypt, Assyria, and Israel shall together be blessed of Jehovah. Chapter 20 teaches us that it will be Assyria that leads Egypt captive

(compare Daniel 11 at the end). It will be observed here, that, in general, from chapter 13 to 17 there is deliverance. The sceptre of the wicked is broken (Isa 14:5). The throne of David will be established in mercy (Isa 16:5). The Assyrian is destroyed -the Philistines subdued-Zion founded by Jehovah-Damascus reduced. The latter event introduces the evils of the last days. Only, as we have remarked, the gathering of the nations is for their destruction (Mic 4:11-13). Chapter 18, resuming the subject of chapter 17, shews us Israel as they are to be in their land in the last days-oppressed by the Gentiles, but in result brought back to God.

The chapters following 18 do not, like the previous ones, tell of Israel's deliverance. but of the invasion and overrunning of the nations before mentioned-the overflowing scourge. Egypt is overrun as well as Ethiopia, in which Israel had trusted. Babylon is overcome-Dumah and Kedar destroyed-Jerusalem is ravaged-Tyre falls. In short it is a universal overthrow, the central scene of which is the land of Canaan, but in which the whole world is included (Isa 24:4). Even the powers of heaven are overturned, as well as the kings of the earth upon the earth, giving place to the establishment of Zion, the mountain of Jehovah, as the centre of power and blessing, the power of the serpent, the dragon that is in the sea, being annihilated.

After this outline attention must be given to some details. It will be observed that Babylon and Jerusalem fall (chaps. 21, 22), one after the other, Jerusalem the last. Now it is quite evident that this connection of events is yet future. That which is said of Babylon and Jerusalem may have found its occasion in the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, and partly in the condition of Jerusalem when threatened by Sennacherib. But there was neither the connection nor the order of events noted in this prophecy. But Babylon is named in a manner that gives no clue whatever to its condition. The "desert of the sea" is a singular term to describe a city. But a dreadful invasion is before the prophet's eyes, and Babylon falls. It comes like a whirlwind of the south, and the power of Babylon is at an end-we are not told in what manner. Jerusalem, the valley of vision, is ravaged. The Persians and the Medes, who were the invaders of the preceding chapter re-appear here as attacking Jerusalem. There is no fighting outside; but, the city being taken, its inhabitants are bound or slain within it. Besides the prophetic revelations,

this chapter contains also moral instruction of the deepest importance In the first place all the wisdom of man is insufficient to ward off evil, if not accompanied by the power of God. When the city of God is in question, this wisdom, exercised in forgetfulness of the God who built and founded the city of His holiness, is an unpardonable sin (Isa 22:11). Again, that which is related here was, historically speaking, done by Hezekiah, of whom it is said he prospered in all his works. Outward blessing attended his labours; but, at the same time, the condition of the people, even with respect to these labours, was such that God could not pardon it. This is often the case: outward faith in doing the work of God, blessed by Him, corruption as to state of heart in the thing, which God will assuredly judge, and forgetfulness of God Himself and of their belonging to Him. This is when the people of God lean upon human means. We see also here one who held a settled office, according to man, in the government of the house of David, set aside with shame, and one chosen of God taking his place all glory being given to him (a remarkable prefiguration of the setting aside of the false Christ, and the establishment of the true, in the last days). This prophecy gives room to suppose that the nations will attack Jerusalem when the Babylon of history is a desert. That which is Babylon in those days shall fall. Nevertheless Jerusalem, the object of the prophecies, shall be taken, its government changed; the usurper must yield his place to the chosen One of God.

The burden of Tyre shews us all the pride of human glory stained, and all the honourable of the earth brought into contempt. The occasion is the capture of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, but the prophecy goes farther-even to the days when her merchandise shall be holiness to Jehovah (chap. 23).

Isaiah Chapter 24

Chapter 24 sets before us the overturning of everything in the earth. The land of Israel is first in view. But there all the elements of all the systems of this world will be gathered together and judged. We have already remarked that this extends to the judicial overthrow of the power of wickedness in the heavenlies, as well as of the kings of the earth upon the earth: the succeeding chapters shew us with what intent. Without it the evil would not be set aside and put a stop to. Hence when Christ rides into Jerusalem in Luke it is said, "peace in heaven." For till the power of evil is set aside thus,

any blessing established on the earth is soon corrupted and fades. Before examining them, let us retrace the objects of the judgments we have spoken of; let us retrace them in their moral order. We have Babylon, the power of organised corruption, where the people of God are captive; the public open enemy of God and His people-the Assyrian; the inward enemy-the Philistine; then Moab, the pride of man. Damascus is that which has been the enemy of God's people, but allied with the apostate part of that people against the faithful part. From all these the people are delivered. Afterwards we find, under judgment, Egypt, or the world in its state of nature, the wisdom of which is lost in confusion; Babylon, now desert in the midst of the nations; Dumah, the liberty, the independence, of man; Jerusalem, the professing people; Tyre, the glory of the world; and, finally, all that is on the earth, and, to sum up all power, spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.

Isaiah Chapter 25

The following commentary covers Chapters 25 and 26.

Chapters 25 and 26 take the form of a song, in which the effect of God's intervention is celebrated. Let us observe its principal subjects. God is faithful. He accomplishes His purposes. He has brought the city of human pride to nought through His power. All the strong organisation of man's pride is destroyed. God has been the strength of the poor among His people in the day of their distress, and the power of the enemy has been brought low. He will execute justice in Zion for all people. He will take away the veil that is upon their heart. The resurrection of the faithful will have taken place. I say "the faithful," for it is death swallowed up in victory. Moreover, 1 Corinthians 15:54 applies it thus. The rebuke of His people (Israel) shall be entirely taken away. The remnant (Isa 25:9-12) celebrate their deliverance; they had waited for God, and the power of Jehovah shall be displayed on their behalf. Moab, their haughty neighbour, shall be subdued. [See Note #1]

In chapter 26 the remnant sing in praise of the character of this deliverance. They have a strong city, but its bulwarks are the salvation of God. The strength of man has no place here; it is the foot of the poor that treads down the lofty city. It is the judgment that the righteous God executes

Himself. The remnant had waited for Him in the way of His judgments. The long-suffering of grace was in vain; it is only when the judgments of God are in the earth [See Note #2] that the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Even when the hand of Jehovah was lifted up to strike, they did not see. But they shall see, in spite of themselves, and they shall be ashamed. The fire of Jehovah's jealousy shall devour them; they shall not rise. But Israel shall be raised, as from the dead, by the power of Jehovah.

Note #1

Note, you have here all the results then of this judgment of God and what is connected with it. The saints are raised, the power of evil cast down from the heavens, the rebuke of Israel taken away, and the veil of the covering taken off the face of all peoples.

Note #2

I apprehend "the earth" is a more contracted sphere than "the world," the distinction especially lying in this, that it is the sphere in which the revealed ways and government of God have been brought before men. When this has been the case with the whole world, it becomes the earth. The word "earth" is used for the land of Israel and for the earth in the sense explained, and for the whole earth as a scene ordered of God. Hence, when the scene with which God has already dealt is judged, then it is that the wide world at large will learn righteousness; not, though it ought to have been carried there, while the present system of grace prevails.

Isaiah Chapter 27

Finally, Jehovah invites His people to hide themselves a little moment, while He comes out of His place to execute vengeance (chap. 27). The power of Satan in this world and among men shall be destroyed, Israel preserved and watered as the vine of Jehovah. He had smitten Israel, but only in measure. Nevertheless the people shall be fully judged, and then Jehovah will gather His dispersed, one by one. In the succeeding chapters we have the details of that which will happen to Israel in their own land, when invaded by the Gentiles in the last days, of which we have had but the general picture and

results. We shall find a complete and glorious deliverance of the remnant amidst the most terrible judgments.

Isaiah Chapter 28

Chapter 28 sets before us the first elements of these final scenes in the history of this wonderful people. The scourge comes from the north. Ephraim is invaded as by an overflowing torrent, by a tempest of hail that smites and destroys; he is trodden under foot. But in that day Jehovah shall be for a crown of glory to the residue of His people. The people morally besotted, do not hear. And this is the judicial sentence of Jehovah who turns to Jerusalem in pronouncing it. There they had made a covenant with death and the powers of darkness, [See Note #1] that they might escape the overflowing torrent. But the covenant shall be disannulled, the scourge shall overtake them; they shall be trodden down, and smitten by this terrible rod. We have then this revelation, that when Ephraim shall be invaded by this terrible scourge, the princes of Jerusalem will seek to preserve themselves from it by making a covenant with the power of evil. But it shall come to nought. The waters shall overflow and sweep away the refuge of lies. Jerusalem, as well as Ephraim, undergoes the consequences of the assault of the enemy. But the Messiah is the elect corner-stone, the sure foundation for the remnant; he that believes in Him shall not be confounded. Thus Ephraim is invaded and Jerusalem taken. There is a consumption determined [See Note #2] by Jehovah upon the whole earth.

Note #1

They insolently say they have made a covenant with the power of evil, so that, when the scourge came, it would not come nigh them. Impossible to conceive a more open defiance of God and His judgments. Historically they will have done it in uniting with the man of sin, the Antichrist, whose coming is after the power of Satan; but here it is said in defiance of God.

Note #2

This expression is used elsewhere also, as in Daniel, as a kind of technical formula for the Lord's dealings in the last day-the finishing of the work and

cutting it short in righteousness. He judges completely, fills it up, but cuts it short for the sparing of the remnant, the elect.

Isaiah Chapter 29

Jerusalem is reduced to the last extremity. But this time Jehovah appears for her deliverance, and the multitude of her enemies disappear as a dream of the night. Everything is dark and gloomy as to the people; all is morally overturned, and soon God will overturn everything by His power, and change the forest into Carmel (that is, a fruitful field). Henceforth Jacob shall no more be weak and feeble. The meek shall be blessed, the deaf shall hear the word. The terrible one and the blasphemer shall be consumed before Jehovah. There are two parts then in this history, two attacks. The first succeeds against Ephraim and against Jerusalem. The second does not succeed. Jerusalem is brought very low, but Jehovah appears and she is delivered. The spirit of scorn and unbelief was marked in chapter 28; the spirit of blindness in chapter 29.

Isaiah Chapter 30

The effect of this unbelief is manifested in chapter 30. The people put their trust in man, according to the wisdom of man. They look to Egypt for help, but in vain. This contempt of Jehovah, accompanied by an absolute refusal to hearken to His word, which called on the people to trust quietly in Him, added yet more to their iniquity. God allows the evil, therefore, to go on to the full; but it is in order to give them free course to His grace. Verse 18 (Isa 30:18) is a marvellous testimony to the ways of Jehovah. He allowed the chastisement to be fully accomplished, that nothing might be left for Him but perfect grace. Grace and glory will abound, when Jehovah shall bind up the breach of His people and heal their wound. At the end of the chapter we have the intervention of Jehovah against this last instrument of His chastisements-the rod of chapter 10. The Assyrian is destroyed, and in the place where the rod should fall on him, there shall be only songs of triumph. But Tophet, the fire of Jehovah, was prepared for another also-"for the king." He who shall have assumed that title in Israel shall be consumed also by the indignation of Jehovah.

Isaiah Chapter 31

The folly of trusting in an arm of flesh is again pointed out, but only while dwelling on the true means of deliverance. Jehovah at Jerusalem would be in the midst of the nations as a lion among the shepherds, and would defend Jerusalem as birds hovering over it. His presence should overthrow the Assyrian, and cause him to flee; for the fire of Jehovah shall be in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem.

Isaiah Chapter 32

Then, in chapter 32, the Messiah should reign in righteousness and set everything morally in order. Zion would in fact be a wilderness until the Spirit was poured out from on high, and then it should become a Carmel; and that which before had passed for a Carmel should be counted comparatively but a wilderness. Righteousness should be established everywhere, and peace, the fruit of righteousness, when the hail should come down upon the lofty ones who bear no fruit; and the city, the organisation of human pride, should be utterly abased. The last Verse (Isa 32:20) appears to me to speak of the blessedness of full earthly peace.

Isaiah Chapter 33

The following commentary covers Chapters 33 and 34.

Chapters 33, 34 announce the last two great acts of judgment. At the moment when God establishes Himself in Zion, and fills it with righteousness, a final and powerful enemy (whom I believe to be the same as the Gog of Ezekiel), who had come up to spoil the land, appears on the scene. But there are those who wait upon Jehovah, and He arises, and the enemy is put to flight. They gather the spoil of those who thought to despoil Israel. In Verses 14, 15 (Isa 33:14-15), the faithful remnant are distinguished. The Messiah appears in His beauty; and, all being at peace after the destruction of this enemy, the most distant parts of the land are open to the inhabitants of Zion, which is established in safety for ever. Chapter 34 reveals the terrible judgments which will fall upon the other nations in Edom (compare chap. 63). [See Note #1] Here it is those who have oppressed Zion, and the vengeance that God takes on oppressors. Idumea is itself the particular object of this; but all the enemies of Israel, who were associated

with Edom, the armies of the nations assembled against Jerusalem, will perish by the judgment of Jehovah in the land of Edom.

Note #1

Compare also Psalm 83 and Obadiah.

Isaiah Chapter 35

Chapter 35 gives a picture of the blessing that succeeds the judgment, the blessing even of the wilderness, which depends on that of Israel. The redeemed of Jehovah shall go up with joy in full security to Zion, and all mourning shall pass away for ever.

Isaiah Chapter 36

The following commentary covers Chapters 36, 37, 38, and 39.

Chapters 36-39 relate the history of the invasion of Sennacherib, its result, and the sickness unto death of Hezekiah, which preceded it: an instruction for the remnant as to the manner in which the Lord should be waited on (this deliverance being, as to the substance of it, a figure of that which will take place with respect to the Assyrian in the last days). The sickness of Hezekiah furnishes us with a type of the Son of David as raised from the dead-the power of Christ, which shall be perfected in a nation raised also-morally-from the dead, all their sins being pardoned. It is the outward and inward deliverance of Israel: resurrection (as to its practical power); and deliverance from the Assyrian. Meanwhile, as a present thing, the captivity in Babylon is announced.

Previously to this, we have rather had the outward history of Israel; but now we have their moral or inward history, in their place of testimony against idolatry, and in their relationship with Christ, and the separation of a remnant. See the next note further on.

Isaiah Chapter 40

The first part of that which might be called the second book of Isaiah extends from chapter 40 to the end of chapter 48. The Messiah is, comparatively speaking, but little introduced here. It is rather the great

question between Jehovah and idols, answered first by the success of Cyrus and the capture of Babylon. For, though their glory cannot be separated, there is Jehovah and His anointed. This is evidently connected in grace with the deliverance of Israel, God's witness on the earth, unworthy, as the nation was, to be so. At the same time these ways of God shewed that there was no peace at all for the wicked in Israel. This great truth is repeated twice over, being applied to the two great controversies which God had with Israel. We will point out some details to make all this evident. The first eight Verses of chapter 40 (Isa 40:1-8) express in a very remarkable manner the principles on which God acts: the grace flowing from His own heart, when His chastisements had been fully inflicted. God would comfort His people; and He speaks to the heart of Jerusalem, by telling her that her warfare is accomplished. The herald proclaims the coming of Jehovah. And here it is the fact, as deliverance: His rejection is not mentioned. It is spoken of later in chapters 51, 53. But with respect to the people, what must the prophet say? "All flesh is grass." If all flesh is to see the glory of Jehovah, if He pleads in vengeance with all flesh, this is where the testimony must begin. All flesh is grass: Jehovah bloweth upon it. Is it thus with the Gentiles only? No; "the people is grass." Comfort must begin with this. The grass withereth; who, then, can be trusted in? God has spoken. "The word of our God" (says the faith of the remnant-says the Spirit of prophecy) "shall stand for ever." Then comes the prophetic testimony to the blessedness of ransomed Zion, who proclaims to the cities of Judah the presence of Jehovah-the Saviour, whose tender care is then described in a touching manner. The glory of His divine Majesty is contrasted with idols to Verse 26 (Isa 40:26). He then challenges Israel for their unbelief. He who is Jehovah fainteth not, neither is weary. The depths of His wisdom are unsearchable; but they that wait on Him renew their strength, and shall not grow weary.

Isaiah Chapter 41

The following commentary covers Chapters 41, 42, and 43.

Chapter 41 begins the historical details which prove this. Who raised up Cyrus to overthrow idolatry? But in the midst of the havoc he made of it, Israel is the elect servant of God, the seed of Abraham [See Note #1] (this title of "servant" is a key to the rest of the book). He is not to fear: God will

uphold him; and they that strive with him shall perish. God will hearken to His poor, and minister to their need. The besotted idolaters of the nations know nothing of what God is about to do in judgment and for the deliverance of His people. But although Cyrus is Jehovah's instrument for inflicting judgment and for delivering His people, this is but a passing and partial thing. Above all this there is a servant of God, His elect, who will appear in humility and without pretension, but who shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth; and the isles of the Gentiles shall receive His law (chap. 42). This testimony was needful, and secures the blessing of Israel by the unfailing purpose and grace of God; but nothing more is said of the Messiah in this part of the prophecy. The result of bringing in the work of the Messiah is the glory of Jehovah, who alone in fact shall be glorified, and that unto the ends of the earth. In the manifestation of this glory He who had for a long time held His peace, will deliver His blind and deaf people Israel, who had not understood His ways. He will magnify His law. But why then are the people robbed and spoiled? Jehovah had given them up because of their disobedience. But now He delivers and saves them (chap. 43). He created them for His glory. The blind have eyes; the deaf, ears; they are witnesses that Jehovah alone is God. The judgments on Babylon-the commencement and the figure of the final judgments [See Note #2] -prove this. Jehovah had formed this people for Himself, and the people had grown weary of their God; and, as it were, had made Him to serve with their sins. But now He pardons it all for His own glory. Glorious and striking testimony of Him who, in grace to the sinner when the sin becomes unbearable, puts away the sin instead of the sinner! This is what God has done through Christ.

Note #1

It will be remarked that, though there is the fullest discovery of Israel's sin, yet these chapters are the expression of grace and sovereign goodness, and a remnant preserved; not the responsibility of the nation and judgment.

Note #2

That is, earthly judgments.

Isaiah Chapter 44

The following commentary covers Chapters 44 and 45.

Jehovah now reasons with His people whom He had formed from the womb, encourages them, promises them His Spirit. Their children shall spring up as willows by the water-courses. They shall be witnesses for Him, Jehovah, the King of Israel, and their Redeemer. He shews Israel the folly of idolatry, reminds him that he is Jehovah's servant, and that He will not forget them, and assures them of the entire pardon of all their sins: even Jehovah, who is the disposer of all things, and who calls Cyrus by name to rebuild Jerusalem. Chapter 45 enlarges upon the same subjects, dwelling on the deliverance of Israel as an everlasting deliverance, the result of which shall never be overthrown.

Isaiah Chapter 46

The following commentary covers Chapters 46, 47, and 48.

In chapters 46, 47, the application is made to Babylon and to her idols, but still as pleading for Israel as beloved of God; for governmental judgment is always the deliverance of the beloved righteous. Babylon with all her pride and all her idols must come down and sit in the dust. In chapter 48 Jehovah at length pleads with Israel. He specifies Israel, the name of relationship with Himself, Jehovah, which those He is pleading with bear and claim, while noting that they were descended from Judah—in a word, the Jews, who had the place of Israel and called upon the name of the God of Israel; but He declares their wickedness and obstinacy. He had told them many things long before, and had made new revelations to them, that they might know that Jehovah is God. But they hearkened not; they did not understand.

Nevertheless for the glory of His name Jehovah would not cut them off; but would refine them as silver. He reminds them in an affecting manner of the blessing they would have enjoyed had they kept His commandments.

Nevertheless it is even now declared unto them that Jehovah has redeemed His people. But as for the wicked, there is no peace unto them. This continual pleading against idolatry, whilst giving instruction for that day, seems to prove that, up to the end, the question of Israel's either testifying against idolatry or being defiled with it themselves will have a principal place. For the government of the world it is a primary question. The god of

this world governs by means of idols; Jehovah, by His own name. Israel ought to have been the witness of this. They will be unfaithful to it in the last days. This is the reason why there is so much testimony here on the subject.

Isaiah Chapter 49

The Messiah is brought in, for it is He who delivers. But it is a question apart, so to say. The subject of Christ, and of the people's guilt with respect to Him, begins with chapter 49, which, with the following to the end of chapter 57, forms a whole; and, if one may venture to say so, Christ takes the place of Israel as the true servant of God. As He declared. "I am the true vine." [See Note #1] This makes an apparent difficulty, but gives the true sense of chapter 49. Israel is the vessel of the glory of God on the earth, and the Spirit of prophecy in Israel calls on the isles of the Gentiles to hearken, as being thus chosen of Jehovah. "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified" (Isa 49:3). Then Christ, by this same prophetic Spirit, says, "then have I laboured in vain." For we know that Israel rejected Him. Verse 5 (Isa 49:5) is the answer. He shall be glorious. It would be a light thing to restore the remnant of Israel. He shall be the salvation of Jehovah unto the ends of the earth. Here we find a principle that is applicable to the work of Christ, even in the days of the gospel. But for the fulfilment of the counsels of God the succeeding Verses carry us on to the millennium. Verse 7 (Isa 49:7), Christ is exalted. Verse 8 (Isa 49:8), He is given for a covenant of the people (Israel) to secure the blessing of the land of Canaan, and the long desolate inheritance, and then the deliverance of the captives. At length God has comforted His people. Zion, apparently forsaken, must confess that Jehovah's faithfulness is greater than of a mother to her sucking child. Her destroyers are gone, her children flock in crowds to her and replenish her waste places, which regorge with an unlooked-for multitude before the eyes of the astonished mother, long time desolate. Kings shall be her nursing fathers, and shall bow down to her. And although she has been the captive of the mighty, she shall be delivered, and her oppressors trodden under foot. And all flesh shall know that Jehovah is her Saviour. This is the result in grace of the introduction of the true Servant.

Note #1

So, I doubt not, in Matthew, "I have called my Son out of Egypt." Christ replaces the first Adam before God, though blessing in that new position many of his children. He takes the place of Israel also, though blessing the remnant and making it the nation.

Isaiah Chapter 50

Chapter 50 enters into the detail of the judgment which God brings upon Israel, and the true cause of their rejection. [See Note #1] Nothing can be more touching, more wonderful, than the manner in which the Person and the first coming of the Lord are presented in this remarkable chapter, which requires not interpretation but devout study. Jehovah, who disposes of the heavens and the earth at His pleasure, has learnt how to speak a word in season to the weary and heavy-laden, taking the place Himself of lowliness and humiliation. Men-sad and dreadful truth!-seized the opportunity to insult and put Him to shame. They would none of Him. The heart pauses before such a truth, and judges itself. But soon also, thank God, it melts before that love which took occasion to introduce man into God's own perfection (and that of man in the divine counsels) and to adapt itself, at the same time, to all his need-to make him feel that it had experienced all his misery. But, whatever the sorrows and trials attendant on such a service the Man, Christ, trusted in God throughout, and turned not away back.

Here then is prophetically the cause of Israel's, or more specifically Judah's rejection;-when Jehovah came, there was no man. But, at the same time, with the help of the New Testament, we find the Christian's place in the most clear and striking manner. It is the place of Christ Himself. That which Christ says here the apostle adopts, and puts it into the mouth of the believer [See Note #2] (Rom 8:33-34). He is identified with Jesus in His position before God. God (thus judges faith) acknowledges Him whom the people have rejected and by so doing have, as it were, forced God to give them a bill of divorcement. Next, this is what distinguishes the remnant-a new and important principle-they hearken to the voice of the servant, the Messiah, to the prophetic word. We have seen the church hidden in the Person of Christ Himself; here it is the faithful remnant of Israel in the latter day that are specified (Isa 50:10). The rest who seek resources in themselves, in man and in flesh, shall lie down in sorrow.

Note #1

It is affecting to remark how in both pleadings, as to idolatry, and as to the rejection of Christ, the love and faithfulness of Jehovah and its consequences are introduced before the pleadings of the Spirit of God with the people for their failure in these very points; the resulting blessing before the human evil, God before man. It was so in the counsels of God before the world: the full declaration of the blessing comes afterwards.

Note #2

These Verses in Romans 8 should be divided thus. "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, etc.; who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" In His love He has gone through everything that could make us imagine it possible. They have become the proofs of His love. Moreover it is the love of God: creation cannot separate us from His. I add a brief synoptical view of all these chapters, to aid in seizing them as a whole. Chapters 40-48 treat the question of idolatry between God and Israel; 49-57 that of Christ. Chapter 49 gives an orderly view of the purposes and ways of God as to Israel and the Messiah. God will be glorified in Israel (Isa 50:1-3). Then Christ has laboured in vain; yet His work is with God. First, He will be glorified in the eyes of Jehovah. Secondly, It is a light thing, the restoration of the preserved of Israel. He is salvation to the ends of the earth. Thirdly, Heard in an acceptable time, He is set as a covenant of the people. Zion is restored. In chapter 50 Israel is divorced, because when Jehovah came, there was no man. He had come as man in humiliation in order to perfect sympathy with man in sorrow. Given up to shame, God justifies Him (Isa 50:5-9). This, that is, Christ's justification, is the church's, as we have seen; in Verses 10, 11 (Isa 50:10-11) we have the Jewish remnant of the church. Chapter 50 gives us Christ's sufferings from man; in 53 it is atonement. Chapter 49 gives the glory resulting from Christ's taking the place of Israel, the fruit of His labour; chapter 50 the consequence of His rejection by Israel, yet in grace as to the yet unrevealed church and the remnant which is positively spoken of; chapter 49 has more to do with the government of God.

Isaiah Chapter 51

The following commentary covers Chapters 51 and 52.

The application is found in chapters 51 and 52 to the end of Verse 12 (Isa 52:1-12), and that to the remnant of Israel. In Isa 51:13 a fresh division of the prophecy begins. The remnant in the last days are exhorted to have confidence. Those who follow after righteousness are a little flock; but God had called Abraham alone, and had blessed and increased him; He can do the same for the remnant. Compare Eze 33:24, where we see in what manner carnal confidence, walking in unrighteousness, can imitate, to its own ruin, divine faith. Jehovah will comfort Zion. Isa 51:4 is the second exhortation. The remnant are acknowledged as Jehovah's nation. His righteousness was near; salvation and deliverance were already gone forth from Him, and should be for ever. In Isa 51:7 there is a further step. They are a people who know righteousness, who have the law in their heart; they are not to fear men who should be devoured by the judgments of God. But His righteousness and His salvation should be everlasting. The remnant, thus set in their place, are revealed by the Spirit of prophecy as owned of Jehovah. The same Spirit speaks by the mouth of the remnant (Isa 51:9), to implore His intervention in power, and to claim the perfect lovingkindness of Jehovah, and the assured salvation of His redeemed ones, as well as the re-establishment of Zion in everlasting joy. The remnant thus encouraged, the Spirit turns to Zion, and even as "Awake! awake!" had been addressed to the arm of Jehovah, so is it now to Zion herself, oppressed and trodden under foot of strangers. As if to say it was Zion that had need to awake, not the Lord, for the salvation was there. The cup shall now be given to those that afflicted her again. "Awake! awake!" is once more addressed to her, that she may stand up and clothe herself in strength and glory. For Jehovah has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of Israel's God. This threefold repetition of "hearken" (Isa 51:1; Isa 51:4 and Isa 51:7), followed by the threefold repetition, "Awake! awake!" is extremely beautiful. The Verses 11, 12 of chapter 52 (Isa 52:11-12) shew that in those days Israel will be captive among apostate Gentiles, as in the days of Babylon. Isa 52:13 is closely connected with that which precedes. It is Christ's position in those times of glory and of deliverance wrought by Jehovah. Nevertheless it may be considered separately, and as beginning a new subject, because it forms a whole with

respect to the Lord Jesus Himself. Christ shall be very highly exalted in those days. But what had His position been? On this subject the Spirit of prophecy enlarges. The kings shall be astonished at His glory-His whose visage had been so marred, more than any man.

Isaiah Chapter 53

Chapter 53. Israel's unbelief is declared. The structure of this most interesting chapter is as follows. As we have seen, in the Psalms and elsewhere, the full repentance of Israel comes after their deliverance. That is, when (as judged of Jehovah) their chastening is over, the glorious manifestation of Christ as their deliverer produces the deep sense of their sin in having rejected Him. This is Psalm 130. It is the affliction of the day of atonement. This chapter (53) expresses it. After Verse 1 (Isa 53:1) the Spirit speaks by the mouth of the escaped remnant of Israel. They confess their sin in having despised Him. Nevertheless there is faith now in the efficacy of His work (Isa 53:5). Verse 1 (Isa 53:1) shews that the testimony of Christ, addressed to faith, had been rejected. They believe when they see Him. I need not comment on this chapter, which is engraved on every true Christian's heart. We, by the work of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, have anticipated, and more than anticipated, their faith in the value of that work which is here spoken of; and their sin, which, as far as the nation was concerned in it, they here acknowledge. They had esteemed Him smitten, rejected of God, but the meaning of this is now seen. In Verse 11 (Isa 53:11), it is my belief that the two parts of Christ's work are distinguished. By His knowledge He shall bring many to righteousness, or instruct many in righteousness, and He shall bear their iniquities.

Isaiah Chapter 54

Chapter 54 gives the result of these events to Jerusalem in those days. Jerusalem is looked at as barren and desolate, after having rejected Him who came to be her husband; but now, through that grace which has made Jehovah to be her righteousness, she is called to enlarge the place of her tent, and spread forth the curtains of her habitation. That grace indeed reckons all gathered during her desolation as her children. Christ being owned as the son born to her, all came in under Him (see Psa 87:5-6). For a

little while God has treated her as a rejected wife, but has now comforted her with everlasting mercies.

Isaiah Chapter 55

The following commentary covers Chapters 55, 56, and 57.

Chapters 55, 56, 57 are exhortations given in view of these things. Chapter 55 is full free grace, which consequently embraces the Gentiles. For this reason it can be applied as a principle to the gospel. Its accomplishment will be in the time of blessings to the earth through the Lord's presence.

Chapter 56 gives the moral character that is necessary to enjoy the blessing, which is no longer according to the narrow legal principles of former days. His house shall in fact be a house of prayer for all those whose hearts are truly turned unto the God of Israel; and they shall be joyful in it. Chapter 57 denounces (we may say, on the same principle) those even in Israel who morally walk contrary to the will of God. The righteous might perish. But it would only be taking them from the evil to come. But whether it were Israel or not, there would be no peace for the wicked. These three chapters then give the moral instruction that belongs to those days. The faithful shall be blessed, and the meek, be they who they may; the wicked shall be judged, whether of Israel or not. Thus closes, as I have said, with chapter 57 the second subdivision of this part of the prophecy.

Isaiah Chapter 58

The following commentary covers Chapters 58 and 59.

But these moral considerations rouse the indignation of the Spirit at the condition of Israel in the days of the prophecy-their sin and their hypocrisy in pretending to serve Jehovah; and in chapters 58, 59 He denounces their trust in outward forms, and places blessing on condition of obedience. It was not that the arm of Jehovah was shortened, or His ear grown heavy; but the iniquity of the people hindered blessing and would bring judgment upon them. Yet, when all had failed and there was no one to maintain righteousness, Jehovah Himself would intervene in His sovereignty and might. He would crush His enemies and judge the isles; so that His name should be feared throughout the whole earth. The Redeemer should come

to Zion and to those that turn from transgression in Jacob. Blessing should then be permanent, and the presence of the Holy Spirit abide with the seed of Jacob for ever.

Isaiah Chapter 60

Chapter 60 gives us the condition and the glory of Jerusalem in that time of blessing: all of the people thus spared would be righteous.

Isaiah Chapter 61

The following commentary covers Chapters 61 and 62.

As chapters 50-53 presented Christ in His sufferings, chapter 61 exhibits Him in the full grace of His Person concerned in the blessing of Israel. The three preceding chapters had revealed the judgment and the intervention of Jehovah, at the same time pointing out the Redeemer. We have seen the same principle in the structure of the prophecy from chapter 40 to the end of chapter 48, as in the last series. Then in chapter 49 the Messiah is specially introduced. So He is here from the beginning of chapter 61 to Verse 6 of chapter 63. But there is a progress necessarily accompanying the introduction, in the last series of chapters, of the Person of Christ as the principal subject of Jehovah's pleadings. We see that it is Jehovah Himself who is Christ, and Christ who is Jehovah. "Wherefore, when I came," is the inquiry, "was there no man?" Hence also there is the difference between the moral sins of Israel against Jehovah, and the rejection of Himself in the Person of the Messiah, which we have seen so clearly pointed out in chapter 50. So also with respect to the repentance of the Jews. In the former chapters the law is written in their hearts; they turn away from iniquity, they trust in Jehovah; they hearken to the Spirit of prophecy, to the servant of Jehovah; they are delivered. But when they shall see their Redeemer in glory, then it is that the true repentance, the deep affliction, shall take place at the sight of Him whom they have despised and rejected, and who in His grace has borne their iniquities. Chapters 61, 62 appear to me too plain to need much remark. The manner in which the Lord stopped in the middle of Verse 2 (Isa 61:2) will be observed, the time for the fulfilment of the last part of the Verse not being yet come. But He could set before them that which applied to His own Person in grace.

Isaiah Chapter 63

Isa 63:1-6. We find again here the terrible judgment of chapter 34 executed by Jehovah (or rather having been already executed, for He returns from it). The result is the peace and blessing which we have just seen described in chapter 62.

From Verse 7 of chapter 63 (Isa 63:7) we have the reasoning of the Spirit of prophecy in the mouth of the remnant, or perhaps that of the prophet, putting himself in that position. And in chapters 65, 66 we find Jehovah's answer. Nothing can be more affecting than the way in which the Spirit lends Himself to the expression of all the feelings of a faithful Israelite's heart; or rather in which He gives a form to the sentiments of an afflicted but trusting heart, recalling past kindnesses, overwhelmed by the present distress, acknowledging the hardheartedness and rebellion of which they had been guilty, but appealing to the unchangeable faithfulness of God's love against the judicial blinding and hardening which the people are under. If Abraham acknowledged them not, God was their Father. Where was His strength, His tenderness. His mercies? Were they restrained? Faith recognises through all things the link between the people and God; it acknowledges that God prepares for those that wait on Him things beyond man's conception [See Note #1] -that He meets those who walk uprightly; and it confesses that the state of Israel is quite different-that they are sinners, not even seeking His face. But the affliction of His people, the disastrous condition into which sin had brought them, is to faith a plea with God. Whatever had happened, the people were to faith as the clay, and Jehovah the potter. They were His people; their cities, the cities of Jehovah. The house in which their fathers had worshipped was burnt up, and all was laid waste.

Note #1

The difference between this and gospel knowledge as made by Paul (1 Corinthians 2) is striking, often quoted for just the contrary. These things, he says, have not entered into man's heart, but God has revealed them unto us (Christians) by His Spirit; so at the end of the chapter, "but we have the mind of Christ.

Isaiah Chapter 64

The following commentary covers Chapters 64 and 65.

The next two chapters give us a full revelation of the dealings of God in answer to this appeal. First of all, God, through His grace, had been sought after by others. He had made Himself known to those who were not called by His name. The infinite and sovereign grace of God had sought out the poor Gentiles. At the same time, with infinite patience, He had stretched forth His hands to a people who would not have Him -to a people who provoked Him continually in the grossest manner. And now He declares His mind. The people that forsook Him shall be judged; He will number them with the sword; they shall bow down to the slaughter. But there shall be an elect remnant in grace-the servants of Jehovah, who shall be spared and blessed (Isa 64:11-12; Isa 65:8-9; Isa 65:13; Isa 65:15). Jehovah would then introduce an entirely new order of things, in which the truth of His promises should be acknowledged, and the former things should be quite forgotten-new heavens and a new earth, not as yet with respect to the physical change, but the moral order of which should be entirely new. It should not be only a new order of things on the earth, which the power of evil in the heavens might spoil, as in former days; the state of the heavens themselves should be new. We learn elsewhere that Satan will have been cast out, and his power there gone for ever. [See Note #1] Indeed, this would have been the occasion of the last terrible trials in Jerusalem. But now Jerusalem should be blessed in the earth, and her people should enjoy the gifts of Jehovah in as long a life as that of men before the flood. A man of a hundred years old should be a child; and if any one should die at that age, he must be looked upon as cut off by the curse of God. God would always grant the prayers of His people. Peace should be established, and there should be no evil in all His holy mountain. This is the millennial state of the Jews.

Note #1

Hence, when the Lord enters into Jerusalem as Jehovah Messiah, it is said (Luk 19:38) "peace in heaven."

Isaiah Chapter 66

Chapter 66 speaks of the judgment that introduces it, and consequently gives us more historical details. The temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem (Isa 66:6), but Jehovah does not own it, man alone being concerned in its building; neither does He acknowledge the sacrifices offered in it. He looks to the meek and contrite spirit. There were some who mocked at the hopes of these, and said mockingly, "Let Jehovah display his glory"; but He will appear to their confusion, and for the blessing of those who waited for Him. Zion shall suddenly be as the mother of a people, blessed in Jehovah and comforted. The remnant is thus distinguished in these two chapters in the most explicit manner.

Let us retrace here the use of the word servant. First of all it was Israel; then Christ Himself, the only true Servant amidst this people; afterwards the remnant who hearkened to His words as the Servant, or Spirit of prophecy. For the Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. The latter are called servants here: they shall be comforted in Jerusalem, as one whom his mother comforteth; and the hand of Jehovah shall be known toward His servants, and His indignation toward His enemies. For He shall come and execute judgment against all flesh. Salvation has been made known to all flesh. And now Jehovah shall plead in judgment with all flesh. The unbelieving and idolatrous Israelites shall be there, confounded with the nations, all of whom God will assemble, who shall come and see His glory. He will execute judgment on the multitude by fire and by His sword. But there shall be some who through grace will escape. God will send these to the distant nations who have never seen His glory nor heard His fame. There is no question here of the election by grace for heaven. They will declare (not that grace, but) the glory which they have seen; and the nations will bring back the dispersed of Israel, as an offering to Jehovah in His holy mountain. And the seed of Jacob, and the priests whom Jehovah shall choose, shall be as the new heavens and the new earth before Jehovah, and all flesh shall come to worship before Him. Those who have been the objects of Jehovah's judgments, who have transgressed against Him, especially it seems to me the apostate Jews, shall be an abiding testimony of Jehovah's terrible judgment. For if the full blessing of His presence shall shine upon His people, it is the principle of judgment that brought it in and that maintains it.

There remains a general remark to be made here. The sinful condition thus judged existed in the days of the prophet. The patience of God bore with it, but the principle that brought in judgment was there (witness chap. 6). Until the rejection of Christ, and in a certain sense until the reception of Antichrist coming in his own name, the evil is not fully consummated, nor the final judgment executed. But already in Ahaz the occasion had been given for pronouncing it. Thus, the occasion being in this manner given, the whole condition of Israel, the grace that received the Gentiles, the nothingness of forms and ceremonies-in a word, all the great moral principles of truth are laid down in this part of the prophecy; and we see Stephen, Paul, the Lord Himself, making use of passages that speak of these principles, applying them to the times in which they lived: the Lord, to the hardened state of the people; Stephen, to the unprofitableness of an already judged system; Paul, to the Jews' state of condemnation, and to the manifestation of grace to the Gentiles. What remains is the accomplishment of the great result, in which these things shall be demonstrated to the world by the judgment and the sovereign blessing of God.

As to the coming of Jesus in humiliation, we have seen it as clearly revealed as His coming in glory. In short, all the ways of God in the government of His people, with respect to their conduct under the law, to the promises made to the house of David, and at last to their treatment of Christ-Jehovah in humiliation amongst His people-the government, I repeat, and the ways of God towards Israel in all these respects, are developed in the clearest and most wonderful manner in the course of this prophecy. But the judgment pronounced now by the prophet the patience of God suspended nearly 800 years. It was only accomplished when they rejected Christ.

JEREMIAH

Introduction to Jeremaih

The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah has a different character from that of Isaiah. It does not contain the same development of the counsels of God respecting this earth that Isaiah does. It is we, that we are told many things in it concerning the nations; but it is principally composed of testimony addressed immediately to the conscience of the people, on the subject of their moral condition at the time the prophet speaks, and with an eye to the judgment with which they were threatened. Judah had forsaken Jehovah; for their repentance under Josiah was but a fair appearance, and under the kings that succeeded him their degradation was complete. The prophet's heart was overwhelmed with grief, because of his love for the people; at the same time that he was filled with a deep sense of their relationship with the Lord. The sense of this produced a continual conflict in his soul between the thought of the value of the people as the people of God, and a holy jealousy for the glory of God and His rights over His people-rights which they were trampling under foot. This was an incurable wound to his heart. He had pleaded for the people, he had stood in the breach for them before Jehovah; but he saw that it was all in vain: the people rejected God and the testimony that He sent them. God Himself would no longer hearken to prayer made for Israel. Jeremiah prophesies under this impression: a sorrowful task, indeed, and one which made the prophet truly a man of sorrow. And although he could always say that, if the people repented, they would be received in grace, he well knew that the people had even no thought of repenting. Two things sustained him in this painful service: (for what could be more painful than to announce judgment for their iniquities, to a people beloved of God?) first of all, the energy of the Spirit of God, which filled his heart and compelled him to announce the judgment of God, in spite of contradiction and persecution; and then the revelation of the people's final blessing according to the unchangeable counsels of God. After this brief notice of the spirit of the Book of Jeremiah, the proofs and details

of which we shall find in going through his prophecies, let us now examine these in succession.

It is well known that the order of the prophecies in the Septuagint is different from that in the Hebrew Bible. But I see no reason for not receiving the latter. There is no doubt that it does not preserve the chronological order. The names of the kings [See Note #1] in the successive chapters clearly prove this. But it appears to me that, where there is chronological confusion, the subjects are classed, and that according to the mind of the Spirit.

The first twenty-four chapters have rather a different character from those that follow. To the end of chapter 24 it is a reasoning, a moral pleading with the people. In chapter 25 there is a formal prophecy of judgment on divers nations by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. And afterwards we find prophecies much more distinct from each other, and connected with historical details.

Chapters 30-33 contain promises of assured blessing for the last days. From chapter 39 it is the history of that which followed the taking of Jerusalem, and the judgment of Egypt and Babylon.

We will now state the different distinct prophecies; chapter 1, chapters 2-6, chapters 7-10, chapters 11-13, chapters 14, 15, chapters 16, 17, chapters 18-20, chapters 21-24, chapter 25, chapter 26, chapter 27 (Jer 27:1, read Zedekiah instead of "Jehoiakim"), chapter 28, chapter 29, chapters 30, 31, chapter 32, chapter 33 (this last, however, is connected with the preceding one), chapter 34, chapter 35, chapter 36, chapters 37, 38, chapter 39, chapters 40-44, chapter 45, chapter 46, chapter 47, chapter 48, chapter 49, Jer 49:1-6, Jer 49:7-22, Jer 49:23-27, Jer 49:28, Jer 49:29, Jer 49:30-33, ; chapters 50, 51. Chapter 52 was not written by Jeremiah.

]There can be nothing more striking in the way of deep affliction than that of the prophet. He is distressed; his heart is broken. One sees too that God has made choice of a naturally feeble heart, easily cast down and discouraged (even while filling it with His own strength), in order that the anguish, the complaints, the distress of soul, the indignation of a weak heart that resents oppression while unable to throw it off or overcome it, being all poured out before Him, should bear testimony against the people whose

inveterate wickedness called for His vengeance. The affliction of Christ, whose Spirit wrought that of Jeremiah, was infinitely deeper; but His perfect communion with His Father caused all the anguish, that in Jeremiah's case broke out into complaints, to be in secret between Jesus and His Father. It is very rarely expressed in the Gospels. He is entirely for others in grace. [See Note #2] In the Psalms we see more of His feelings. In Jeremiah's case, it was proper that the anguish of the faithful remnant should be expressed before God. The absolute perfection of the Lord Jesus, and the calmness which, through the presence of God, accompanies His perfection in all His ways, allowed of no complaint, whatever might be the inward anguish of His heart. He thanks in the same hour that He can justly upbraid. Sympathy for others became the position of Jesus. We see that our precious Lord never failed in this.

But it was equally becoming that the outpouring of heart of the faithful, who needed this sympathy, should be expressed by the Holy Ghost. It is not that there was no weakness in the heart that poured itself out; but if the Spirit lays it open, it is evident that He must express it as it is; otherwise it were useless and false. Consequently Jeremiah enters much more personally into his prophecies than any other prophet. [See Note #3] He represents the people in their true position before God-such as God could recognise, as being before Him in this character-in order to see whether, receiving from God that which applied to this position, and expressing the sentiments inspired by such a position, it was possible to reach the conscience and win the heart of the people; always remembering that these sentiments were expressed according to the Spirit, and accompanied by the most direct and positive prophecies of that which God would bring upon the people. It is to be observed also, that a great part of that which was written was not addressed in the first instance to the people, but to God. This position of Jeremiah's, as the representative before God of the true interests of the people, or of the remnant, causes him to be looked at sometimes as though he were Jerusalem itself, and, at other times, as a remnant separated from it and set apart for God.

But these points will be better understood by examining the passages which bring them into notice. The period during which Jeremiah prophesied was of

considerable length, and embraced the whole time of Israel's decline, from the year after that in which Josiah began to cleanse Jerusalem and all the land, until the final destruction of Jerusalem by the army of the Chaldeans; and even a little while after in Egypt, a period of more than forty years—a period throughout of distress and anguish. For although Josiah was a godly king, the reformation of the people was only an outward one, as we shall see. So that the anguish of one who saw with God was so much the greater on account of this appearance of piety. "And Jehovah was not turned away from his fierce anger, because of the sins of Manasseh." Nevertheless the prophet distinguishes between the two periods, that is, the reign of Josiah, and that of his successors.

Excepting in chapters 21-24 there are no dates for the first twenty-four chapters. It is probable that they were mostly given under Josiah's reign. They contain moral arguments, the expression of the prophet's sorrow of heart, and solemn warnings of the coming invasion from the north. The four chapters I have specified have no chronological order, and are probably composed of prophecies given at different periods. They contain the judgment of the different branches of the house of David successively, as well as that of the false prophets who deceived the people. They end by declaring the fate of the captives in Babylon, and of those that remained with Zedekiah in Jerusalem—the two very different from each other.

Note #1:

In chapter 27 "Jehoiakim" should be "Zedekiah" (Jer 27:12 and Jer 28:1)

Note #2:

Compare Matthew 26 where this is brought out in the most striking way. It is very precious to see both this perfect result in Christ and at the same time all that He felt in His heart as man, both as sensible to circumstances without and so deeply exercised within. Perfect exercises within produce perfect quietness in walk without, for in both God is fully brought in. If we avoid the full dealing with the matter with God, the heart cannot act for Him as if all were disposed of: and that is peace in action. Yet how precious to see the reality of Christ's human nature in all the intimate exercises of His spirit.

Note #3:

There is something analogous in Jonah. But there the circumstances of the prophet are an episode, and are not connected with the testimony he bore, unless by the single principle of grace.

Jeremiah Chapter 1

Jeremiah 1:1

jer 1:1

In chapter 1 the prophet is established in his office, to which he had been appointed by Jehovah, even before his birth, that he should carry His word unto the nations. But Jeremiah's fears are immediately manifested. The Lord encourages him by the assurance of His presence. He puts His words into his mouth, and appoints him as prophet over the nations to root out and to plant. Two visions are shewn him, which contain the summary of the prophetic charge communicated to him, and announce that Jerusalem shall soon be stricken by the kingdoms of the north. Under these circumstances Jeremiah is set before a rebellious people, who will strive against him. Nevertheless he must declare everything; and as the Lord had before encouraged the prophet, He now adds to the encouragement, in order to enforce it, a threat in case of disobedience; namely, that, if through fear he drew back from his commission, the Lord would become a greater cause of fear, and would break him to pieces before those of whom he was afraid. But if he fulfilled his appointed task, Jehovah would be with him. Jer 1:6-8; Jer 1:17-18, shew the great fearfulness of the prophet's spirit, which needed to be thus strengthened by Jehovah.

Jeremiah Chapter 2

Chapter 2 contains a most touching appeal to the people at Jerusalem. It requires no explanation, but deserves the heart's serious attention. It testifies in the most striking manner to the kindness and tender love of the Lord. Only that we have here only the comparison of what they had originally been as planted by the Lord, and His ways of love, not any reference to the coming of the Lord. Christ is not in view nor the counsels of God as in Isaiah, though we shall find it further on; but their responsibility

under God's touching ways of grace with them is much more fully brought out, and final blessing is spoken of in the following chapter.

Jeremiah Chapter 3

Chapter 3 has the same character; indeed it is the continuation of the same address; but it contains details of Israel's and Judah's behaviour, and proclaims the restoration of Israel by sovereign goodness, and the blessing of the last days on their return to God. Remark only that, before the pleading with Israel for their folly, what the Lord first notices is that there was no seeking Himself, no longing after Him: no people nor priests said, "Where is Jehovah?" For judgment being executed on Israel, God can allow His heart to flow out in the testimony of grace. This necessarily gives a place also to Judah, as the two are to be united. The end of the chapter enlarges, in a very affecting manner, on the spirit that grace will produce in Israel when they are brought back, and on the manner in which the Lord will receive them. In Verses 23-25 (Jer 3:23-25) the prophet confesses the people's condition at the time in which he spoke. It is in this chapter that we have the solemn revelation, that as far as the people were concerned, the reformation under Josiah was but hypocrisy. These two chapters form a kind of general introduction, shewing the ways and judgment of Israel and Judah, and their restoration by grace. The first chapter had been the appointment of Jeremiah to the prophet's office.

Jeremiah Chapter 4

The following commentary covers Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Chapter 4 resumes the subject of chapters 2, 3, and, applying it at that time to the people, tells them that, if they return, it must be unto the Lord Himself-that neither forms nor half-measures would be of any use. After Verse 4 (Jer 4:4) the prophet announces the certain judgment of God, which should come from the north, and fall upon Jerusalem in destruction.

In chapter 5 the sin and iniquity are shewn to be universal: rich and poor, all are alike. And "Shall not I visit for these things? saith Jehovah." Nevertheless He will not destroy entirely. The source of evil, or, at least, that which maintains it, is pointed out. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests

bear rule by their means. Chapter 6 continues the testimony, but gives also the position of Jeremiah in the midst of all this evil. In Jer 6:11-26 the judgment is plainly announced. The conduct of the false prophets is again marked. In both these chapters the coming of Nebuchadnezzar in judgment is evidently declared.

Jeremiah Chapter 7

The following commentary covers Chapters 7, 8, and 9.

Chapter 7 begins a new prophecy, contemplating especially the temple, which, instead of being a protection (as the people, without conscience, would have it), was become a further demonstration of their iniquity. They were to remember Shiloh; for the house of God should likewise be overthrown. Judah should be cast off, as Ephraim had been, and God would hear no intercession for His people. He required obedience and not sacrifice, and if the people came into His house while they were practising idolatry, they did but defile it. But Israel had less understanding than the birds of the heaven, which at least knew their appointed times, while Israel knew not the judgment of Jehovah (chap. 8). From Verse 18 to Verse 2 of chapter 9 the prophet lays open the depth of his grief. From Verse 3 of chapter 9 (Jer 9:3) he proclaims judgment—a judgment which shall also visit the nations around. And in view of these judgments he exhorts every man not to glory in man, but in the knowledge of Jehovah (Jer 9:23-24).

Jeremiah Chapter 10

In chapter 10 the idols and the vanities of the nations are put in contrast with Jehovah. In Verses 19-25 (Jer 10:19-25) we have the affliction of the prophet, speaking of the desolation of Jerusalem as though he were himself the desolate city, and praying to God that His dealings might be only chastisement, and not excision. The reader will do well to observe that the repetition of God's pleadings with Israel (although these pleadings, while varied in their character, need little remark to make them understood) is the most touching proof of the kindness of God, who multiplies His appeals to a rebellious and perverse people, "rising up early," as He expresses it, to protest unto them.

Jeremiah Chapter 11

The following commentary covers Chapters 11 and 12.

Chapter 11 suggests some observations. God addresses Himself again to Israel on the ground of their responsibility, reminding them of the call to obedience, which had been addressed to them ever since their coming out of Egypt. God was about to bring on the people the evil with which He had threatened them. Jeremiah is not to intercede for them. Nevertheless He still calls Israel His "beloved"; but, being corrupted, what had she to do in His house? Whatever she might have been to Him, judgment was coming. At the end of the chapter Jeremiah takes the place of the faithful remnant who have the testimony of God. His position continually reminds us of the Psalms. We see the working of the Spirit of Christ often clearly expressed, but sometimes, it appears to me, in expressions more mingled with Jeremiah's personal position, and thereby less deep and less akin to the sentiments of Christ, although the same in principle with the Psalms. Jeremiah, on account of his faithfulness and his testimony, was exposed to the machinations of the wicked. Jehovah reveals these things to him; and, according to the righteousness which characterises the condition of the remnant, he calls for the vengeance of God. [See Note #1] This will be the means of deliverance for the remnant. He announces the judgment of these wicked men by the word of Jehovah. In Psalm 83 the same principles will be found, and the same wickedness in God's enemies; only there, these enemies are Gentiles, and the range of thought is wider. Israel and the knowledge of Jehovah are the object of the prayer in that Psalm. Compare also chapter 9 and Psalm 64. Here there is more intercession on Jeremiah's part; the psalm speaks of judgment. Compare also Psa 69:6-7, and Jer 15:15. The words of the psalm being from the mouth of Christ Himself, the request is for others and infinitely more touching. This comparison of passages will help in understanding the relationship between the position of Jeremiah and that of the remnant described in the Psalms. We may also compare Psalm 73 with the beginning of chapter 12. This last chapter forms a part of the same prophecy as the preceding one. Jeremiah pleads with God on the subject of these judgments, but in a humble and submissive manner, which God accepts by making him feel (a painful necessity) the evil of the people

more deeply. At the same time He sustains the prophet's faith by the personal interest He manifests in him. God makes him understand that He has forsaken His inheritance: the state of things was therefore no longer to be wondered at. At the same time He reveals His purposes of blessing to His people, and even to the nations among whom they will be dispersed, [See Note #2] if these nations would learn the ways of Jehovah.

Note #1

Righteousness characterises the saint as well as love, and has its place where there are adversaries to that love and to the blessing of the loved people. It is the Spirit of prophecy, not the gospel, no doubt because prophecy is connected with the government of God, not with His present dealings in sovereign grace. Hence in the Revelation vengeance is called for by the saints.

Note #2

We see at the same time the unchangeable love of God for His people, and the bond of His faithfulness which cannot be broken. He calls the nations, that surround the inheritance He had given to His people, His neighbours. We see also the setting aside of all that national system of which He had made Israel the centre, and which falls when Israel, the keystone of the arch, is taken away (Jer 12:14). Afterwards, these nations are re-established, as well as Israel, and blessed if they acknowledge the God of Israel. The Lord Christ will re-unite the two things-the universal headship of man, and the union of nations round Israel as a centre-in His Person. He will be the one Man to whom the whole dominion is given; and Israel, as well as the various nations with their kings, shall be re-established, each in his own land and his own heritage (as before the time of Nebuchadnezzar), with the exception of Edom, Damascus, Hazor, and Babylon herself; that is to say, those nations which occupy Israel's territory, and Babylon which had absorbed and taken the place of all the others, and which must disappear by the judgment of God to give them their place again. (Compare chapter 46 and the following chapters.)

Jeremiah Chapter 13

Chapter 13, bringing to mind how God had bound Israel to His heart, announces the terrible judgment with which the people shall, as it were, be drunken; and, on the ground of this judgment, calls them to repentance. He relates their hopeless evil, and the unfeigned grief of the prophet at their obstinacy. Compare Luk 19:41. This zeal for Jehovah's glory against the evil and the people who dishonoured Him, and touching affection to them as Jehovah's people, is everywhere a striking mark of the working of the Spirit of Christ. Compare Moses (Exo 32:27-28; Exo 32:31, and sequel); so Paul (Romans 9; Th1 2:15-16): only here, under grace, there is no call for judgment; so even Christ Himself (compare Mat 23:31-37).

Jeremiah Chapter 14

Chapter 14 refers to a famine which took place in the land. The desolation of Jerusalem by the sword and by famine is again declared. But observe here the touching intercession of Jer 14:7-9; and again in Jer 14:17-22, the deep affliction of the Spirit of Christ which expresses itself in the prophet's mouth. "For in all their affliction he was afflicted." Observe also another element of their condition, pointed out by the Apostle Peter, and by the Lord Himself, with reference to the last days-namely, false prophets.

Jeremiah Chapter 15

The beginning of chapter 15 is an answer to the close of chapter 14; but the instruction and the principles it contains are very remarkable. Jehovah declares that if Moses and Samuel (whose love for Israel, and faith in intercession for them, were unequalled among all the servants of God who had stood before Him on their behalf)-if these two beloved leaders of the people were there, yet God would not accept Israel. Who should have pity on them? Jehovah Himself forsakes them. From Verse 20 (Jer 15:20) we find the true position of the remnant in such a case: a most touching instruction for ourselves

Poor Jeremiah complains of his lot, among a people whose sorrows he bore on his heart, while at the same time enduring their causeless hatred. We see in Verses 11-13 (Jer 15:11-13), that he represents the people before God, but yet that the faithful remnant are separated from the mass of the wicked. From Verse 15 they present themselves in this separated position to God,

bearing at the same time all the pain of the nation's wound, even while asking vengeance on the wicked, the adversaries of the truth. In reply, precise directions are given for the walk of one who is faithful in such a position. The word of God, eaten and digested in the heart, is the source of this position (Jer 15:16). Instead of sharing the spirit of the enemies and the mockers, who rejoiced in the abominable and hypocritical state of those who bore the name of God's people, the effect of the word in the heart was no doubt to separate from this condition of the people, but to isolate the godly one, as though he were himself the object of God's indignation, as being himself the people. The word, which revealed the relationship between God and the people, and shewed them their privileges and their duties, caused the faithful to judge the state of the people, and to feel all the consequences of this state as the judgment of Jehovah—a judgment so much the more terrible to his heart from his feeling how close a band of affection and blessing from God was the normal condition of the people. "Thou hast filled me with indignation" (Jer 15:17-18) is the prophet's language.

In Verses 19-21 (Jer 15:19-21) the precise instructions of God with respect to this condition are given. God also addresses Jeremiah as though he were the people whom he thus represented in spirit before Him, and, at the same time, according to his individual faith. He says, first of all, "If thou return, then I will bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me." This open door—open till man shuts it—is always in the ways of God, although He well knows that man will not profit by it.

Is this all that is to be done while it is called to-day and the door is open, to call on the rebellious people to return? No: there is something else for the faithful to do: and this is the second leading principle: "If thou separate the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." In the midst of the ruin caused by the rebellion of God's people, this is the especial work of one who is faithful, who is imbued with the word. The desire of his soul being the reproduction of this word, and of the affections of God revealed in it, can he reject the people in a mass as wicked? That cannot be. Can he accept them in a condition of rebellion, which is so much the worse because they belong to God? This he cannot do either. He must learn to do that which God does—

take account of all that is good, and, if it is too late to preserve everything, never condemn that which is of God. The penetrating eye of God never loses sight of this. The affections of the prophet are fixed upon it also.

But God has His own thoughts, and He acts according to His own will; He lays hold of that which is precious, owns it, and separates it from that which is vile. This is not precisely the judgment of God respecting evil; but when the judgment is imminent on account of the evil, the energy of the Spirit and the power of the word lead us to attach ourselves to the good, to discern it, to separate it from the evil, before the judgment comes. If Satan can, he will mingle them together. Those who know how to separate them shall be as the mouth of God. God will do it in judgment by smiting the evil: in the faithful the Spirit of God does it by separating the precious from the vile.

The third principle is, that, when once separated from the path of the rebellious by this spiritual intelligence, there must not be a moment's thought of returning to them. "Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them." Finally, in this position, Jehovah will make the faithful like a wall of brass. The rebels, who boast of being called the people of God, fight against His faithful servant, but shall not prevail, because Jehovah is with him. Deliverance is promised to Jeremiah. All this, while having its immediate application to the prophet, is most valuable instruction for us in the principle which it contains, to direct us in similar times. Patience is required, but the path is clearly marked out. There is always an open door on God's part; the separation of the precious from the vile makes us like the mouth of God; a positive refusal, when thus placed, to return to the unfaithful: such are the principles that God has here established. The word received in the heart is their source. At the same time the effect is very far from contempt of the fallen people; on the contrary, the heart of the faithful takes upon itself all the grief of the position in which the people of God, or those who publicly stand as such, are found.

Jeremiah Chapter 16

In chapter 16 Jehovah teaches Jeremiah to avoid all family relationships with this people, and to cease from all testimonies of interest in what was going on among them. For He Himself had entirely broken off with them, and

would cause all His testimonies to cease among them, and would drive them out of the land. But, after all, through the greatness of the evil which He would bring upon them, He would cause their deliverance out of Egypt to be forgotten in their yet greater deliverance from this evil. For at length God will pardon and comfort His people But before this He will recompense their iniquity. Afterwards the Gentiles themselves shall come and acknowledge the true God, the God of Israel.

Jeremiah Chapter 17

The great thing, amidst all that was going on, was to trust in Jehovah. He who, failing in this, made flesh his arm, should not see when good came. Meantime the fire of God's anger was kindled and should not be quenched. How could a wicked and deceitful heart be trusted? The Lord searches it, to give every one according to his ways. The prophet, in the name of the people, casts himself upon Jehovah; and, on account of the wickedness of the adversaries who mocked at God's testimonies, he appeals to God. He had not desired the woeful day which He announced; neither was it by his own choice that he forsook the peaceful duties he owed the people to follow God in this testimony. He entreats God, whose terrible judgments were to scatter the people, not to be a terror unto him. God was all his hope in the day of evil. What a picture of the condition of the remnant in the last days; and, at all times, of the portion of one who is faithful when the people of God will not hearken to his testimony! Nevertheless, it being still called To-day, God in His longsuffering opens the door of repentance to the people and to their king, if they have ears to hear.

Jeremiah Chapter 18

In chapter 18 this principle is fully demonstrated before the people (Jer 18:1-10). But the people in despair as to God, in the midst of their boldness in evil and in contempt of His marvellous patience, give themselves up to the iniquity by which Satan deprives them of their hope in God. God announces His judgment by the prophet, whose testimony provokes the expression of the confidence felt by a hardened conscience in the certainty and immutability of its privileges, and of the blessings attached to the ordinances with which God had endowed His people, and to which He had

outwardly attached these blessings, which maintained their relationship with Him. What a dreadful picture of blindness! Ecclesiastical influence is always greatest at the moment when the conscience is hardened against the testimony of God; because unbelief, which trembles after all, shelters itself behind the presumed stability of that which God had set up, and makes a wall of its apostate forms against the God whom they hide, attributing to these ordinances the stability of God Himself. Conscience says too much to allow the unbeliever any hope of standing well with God, even when God opens His heart to him. "There is no hope," he says; "I will continue to do evil; moreover the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise; nor," he adds (the false prophets having the ear of the people), "the word from the prophet." The warning which this chapter contains appears to me very solemn. I can scarcely imagine a more terrible picture of the professing people's condition. The prophet asks for judgment upon them. This is in the spirit of the remnant trodden down by the wickedness of the Lord's enemies.

Jeremiah Chapter 19

The following commentary covers Chapters 19 and 20.

Chapters 19 and 20 shew us the judgment of Jerusalem announced in terms that require little explanation; and we have in chapter 20 a sample of the opposition of the priests, and of Jeremiah's sufferings. But this does not prevent Jeremiah's denouncing the priest himself, and repeating that which he had said of Jerusalem. Nevertheless we see the effect of these sufferings on his heart. He was compelled, as it were, by the Lord to bear this testimony. He has not (and it is the same with the remnant) the willing spirit that rejoices in tribulation by the power of the Holy Ghost. He was the subject of constant mockery. They watched for his halting, so that he would gladly have been silent; but the word of Jehovah was like fire in his bones. Alas! we understand all this—the deep iniquity of the men who are called the people of God; the way in which the feeble heart recoils before this iniquity, that has neither heart nor conscience; and how on these occasions the word is too strong in us to be shut up in our heart. Nevertheless with all this fear he had also the consciousness that Jehovah was with him, and he again asks for vengeance (which, in fact, is deliverance, and the only deliverance of

those who have the testimony of Christ in such a position). This deliverance is celebrated in Verse 13 (Jer 20:13); but in Verses 14-18 (Jer 20:14-18), we see to what a point personal grief may drive those who are subjected to such a trial as this. See the same thing in Job—a picture of the same condition, that is to say, of a soul tried by all the malice of Satan, without the full knowledge of grace, in the sense of its own nothingness, and in the forgetfulness of self. This will be precisely the state of the remnant in the last days. Christ is the model of perfection in what answered to these circumstances of trial, the reality of which He thoroughly experienced and felt, when He had yet to undergo for others what laid the foundation of grace for them.

Jeremiah Chapter 21

The following commentary covers Chapters 21, 22, and 23.

On the occasion of Zedekiah's request to Jeremiah to know if the Lord would interfere in favour of the people against Nebuchadnezzar, the Spirit of God has brought the testimonies together that were given with respect to all the members of David's family who presided, so to say, at the ruin of Jerusalem—Jehoahaz (Jer 22:10), Jehoiakim (Jer 22:13-19), Jeconiah (Jer 22:20-30). The judgment of Zedekiah had been pronounced (chap. 21); and after having declared, as we have seen, that the door was always open to repentance, and that blessing always attended a godly walk (Jer 21:12; Jer 22:1-5), judgment is again pronounced, and a sentence from God upon the different kings. Finally (chap. 23) the expression of Jehovah's indignation against these evil pastors gives rise to the declaration that He will raise up a Shepherd after His own heart, namely, the true Son of David, the Messiah. The just indignation and the judgment of God are expressed in the strongest terms.

Jeremiah Chapter 24

Two things attract our attention in chapter 24. First, submission to the judgment of God when He executes it is the proof of intelligence in His word-of real spirituality. Want of faith leans, not on the stability of the promises, but, under pretext of the promises, on that of the ordinances and of the men who enjoy them. Those who submit to this judgment of God upon the unfaithfulness of man (a judgment which leads to the enjoyment

of these promises, and operates to the setting aside of ordinances, the stability of which God had not guaranteed; but in connection with which man would, if faithful, have enjoyed the promises)-those, I repeat, who submit to this judgment, shall enjoy the full and entire effect of these promises, to which it is impossible that God should be unfaithful. The second thing to be remarked is that, when God would encourage the faith of those who submit to His judgment (being led by this submission to a holy conviction that man has deserved it), God stops at nothing short of the full and entire accomplishment of the promises, which depend on His faithfulness, whatever may have been the unfaithfulness of man-an accomplishment which can and shall be enjoyed solely by means of a work of God in man, that will bring him into a condition suitable to this accomplishment (see Jer 24:6-7). The position of the people at the time of Jeremiah's prophecies furnished an evident opportunity for the development of these two principles; for the people and the house of David had entirely failed in their faithfulness to God. It is very afflicting, and very humbling, when we are obliged to confess that God's enemies are in the right. The only comfort is that God is in the right (Eze 14:22-23), and that in the end He cannot fail to accomplish His gracious promises.

Jeremiah Chapter 25

Chapter 25 closes, so to say, this part of the prophecy with a general summary of God's judgments on the earth, giving it into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. The immediate application to events already accomplished does not offer much difficulty, but we shall find a good deal, if we would bring in also an allusion to the last days. Israel, to whom the door had always been held open, is first judged. The chapter begins by announcing the judgment of God upon Jerusalem, because she had refused to hear the call to repentance which had been addressed to her during twenty-three years. And here let us notice the hardness of the people's heart, stubborn in evil, and refusing to bow the neck to God's testimony, in spite of all the pains God took, if we may so speak, to warn them. And indeed it is His own language: "Jehovah hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but ye have not hearkened" (Ch2 36:15). Jehovah had always set before the people a full and abiding

blessing, if they repented; but they would not. The prophet announces that Jehovah will bring all the families of the north under Nebuchadnezzar, against Jerusalem, and against the adjoining nations, all of whom should assuredly drink the cup of judgment that the Lord had mingled for them. Jerusalem shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years; and after that the king of Babylon himself should be judged and punished, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah against all the nations. For, having begun with Jerusalem, it should be a universal judgment. That which should immediately happen was the judgment of the nations around Palestine, and afterwards that of Babylon, which was the instrument of their judgment. But the fact that the city called by the name of Jehovah was to be laid waste implied the judgment of all the nations. Consequently, in the symbolical action of the prophecy, all the nations connected with Israel, all those of the world as then known, are forced to drink the cup. But this is expressed in terms that include the nations of the whole earth. The historical application of Verse 26 (Jer 25:26) does not go farther than that which happened by means of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Sheshach, who should drink subsequently to the others. But a principle of universal judgment is comprised in this. The universal evil is developed (Jer 25:29-38). The only question that can be raised is whether, in this ulterior destruction of all the kingdoms of the earth, the expression "King of Sheshach" has any application to one who shall possess the same territory, or if it is merely Nebuchadnezzar. I doubt its going farther. [See Note #1] The picture of universal judgment ends the first division of the prophecy. That which follows gives details and particular cases. [See Note #2]

Note #1

In either case the judgment does not appear to me to go farther than the oppression of the nations by the king of the Gentiles, who is raised up in place of the throne of God in Jerusalem, and his own destruction at the end of his wicked career.

Note #2

The destruction of Babylon had a peculiar importance; first, because it was substituted by God Himself in place of His throne at Jerusalem; secondly,

because it was the only Gentile power directly set up by Him, though all power be from Him. The others replaced Babylon providentially. Hence, at the destruction of Babylon, Jerusalem is restored (however partially it shews the principle), and the power which judges Babylon is the setter up of God's people again in the holy city. Babylon-its setting up, its rule, and its destruction-involved the whole of the direct dealings of God with the Gentiles, and with His people in power. All the rest came in merely as a prolonging by the bye.

Jeremiah Chapter 26

Chapter 26 begins this series of details with a prophecy of the commencement of Jehoiakim's reign. The people are warned, as being already in sin, that if they repent, they shall escape. We have constantly seen this character attached to the prophecies of Jeremiah, as though God said, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice." Circumstances rendered this appeal urgent, for in fact, if Israel did not repent, the house of Jehovah was to be like Shiloh. We find that of which God had warned the prophet. They strive against him; but, as Jehovah had promised, they gain no advantage over him. We see that it is the ecclesiastical party that excite the people against the testimony which God bears to them by the mouth of the prophet. But God turns the heart of the princes and of the people towards him. There were some also who regarded the ways of Jehovah. Their intelligence did not go far, but sufficiently so for deliverance; they feared God. We may remark here, that conscience laid hold of the word of God in its immediate application. No doubt the evil would go on increasing, and, when ripe, the judgment would be accomplished (for God does not strike before iniquity has come to its height), and then the prophecy would be fulfilled. But conscience, under the influence of the word, takes knowledge of principles which are judged by it, even when all is not yet ripe for judgment; and as yet consequently the judgment is not executed (Jer 26:18-19).

Jeremiah Chapter 27

The following commentary covers Chapters 27 and 28.

Chapters 27 and 28 go together. Their chief subject is the submission to the head of the Gentiles, which God requires of the Jews. But before dwelling

on this, I would call attention to the care which God bestows on His people, warning them again at each new phase of their career towards judgment. We remember that Zedekiah brought down this judgment by rebelling against the king of Babylon. At the beginning of his reign the Lord sent His word by Jeremiah to warn all the kings around, as well as Zedekiah, that they must submit. If they submitted, they should dwell in their land in peace; if not, they should be driven out and perish. Let us now observe the place which, as Creator of the earth, of man and beast, God gives to the king of Babylon. God has given the nations, and even the beasts of the field, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar for a certain time. God establishes the central and universal power, and the nation that refuses to submit to it would be in rebellion against Himself, and should be consumed. Compare Dan 2:38, which adds the fowls of the heaven to his dominion. All on earth was subjected to this king of the earth-the imperial head taken from among the Gentiles. It was a government appointed of God, who had forsaken Jerusalem, and would no longer protect her unless she submitted to this government. It appears that the kings of the surrounding countries were plotting with Zedekiah to throw off the yoke of the king of Babylon, and that the mission of their ambassadors was the occasion on which this prophecy was given, God declaring that He would have all submit to this yoke, for it was He Himself that imposed it.

This fact-that God has committed power in this world to a man-is very remarkable. In the case of Israel man had been tried on the ground of obedience to God, and had not been able to possess the blessing that should have resulted from it. Now God abandons this direct government of the world (while still the sovereign Lord above); and, casting off Israel whom He had chosen out from the nations, grouping the latter around the elect people and His own throne in Israel, He subjects the world to one head, and committing power unto man, He places him under a new trial, to prove whether he will own the God who gave him power, and make those happy who are subjected to him, when he can do whatever he will in this world. do not enter here into the details of the history of this trial: they belong to the Book of Daniel. We know that man failed in it. Senseless and presumptuous, he ravaged the world and oppressed the people of God, trod down His sanctuary, and prepared for himself a judgment so much the

more terrible that Satan will induce him to resist it, and will aid him in his rebellion. Nebuchadnezzar alone answers in all points to that which we have just said. He is the head of gold. God had committed immediately to him the government of the world. Cyrus had personally a more peculiar place, and one more honourable in some respects. But as an empire, the Persians only took the place of one that already existed; and the sources and character of power continually deteriorated, in proportion as their distance from God and His gift increased.

False prophets as well as false teachers oppose the truth in this very point on which God tries His people. They can use all other parts of truth in order to deceive, and appear to have increased faith in them. It is manifest that the secret of the Lord is never with them. But whatever appearances may be, they neither stop nor turn away God from the path He takes. Yet the true prophet's position is a painful one. He may seem for the time to be reduced to silence; for the popular falsehood possesses the hearts of the people. Jeremiah had to go away. Nevertheless in the combat between truth and error God often intervenes by a striking testimony, and so it was here. The function of the prophet, with respect to the government of the world and of the people's walk, is always a testimony to the judgment which hangs over unfaithfulness.

Jeremiah Chapter 29

On the other hand the prophet comforts those who, by the judgment of God, were subjected to the yoke which He had imposed upon them. The Jews in Babylon should dwell in peace, quietly seeking the welfare of the city in which they were captives. The time of deliverance should come. The spirit of rebellion should be punished. Finally, having insisted on the people's submission to the judgment, God reveals His own thoughts of grace. This submission was necessary, because of Israel's sin; for God must maintain His own character, and not identify Himself with the ways of a rebellious people. But He must needs manifest Himself as He is in His grace. The execution of the judgment, and Israel's ruined condition, brought the truth and beauty of the grace of God into yet greater prominence.

Jeremiah Chapter 30

The day of Jacob's trouble: promised deliverance and sure judgment

Some details of the circumstances that accompany its exercise deserve our attention, as well as the character which God displays in it, and the extent of its effects. In chapter 30 God commands Jeremiah to write in a book all the words of the judgment which he had heard, for God would restore the people. Now this deliverance found Israel at the height of the distress. This is the first thing presented to the prophet. No day could be compared to this day of Jacob's trouble. It is the day spoken of in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. But in this extremity God comes to the help of His people, who shall be delivered. And now, God having executed His judgment and acted according to His own counsels in grace, this deliverance shall in consequence be full and complete. Israel shall serve Jehovah their God and David their king. The ruin (Jer 30:12) was complete, incurable: no remedy could heal it. It is God who had smitten His people for the multitude of their sins. Nevertheless He was with them to save them; and consequently all the nations who had availed themselves of God's anger to devour Israel should be themselves devoured. Zion should be rebuilt on her own foundation, joy and peace should be in her dwellings, the governors of the people should be of her children. Israel should be the people of Jehovah, and Jehovah should be their God. Finally a principle which we have seen clearly explained is here announced, namely, that judgment should fall upon the wicked; that this judgment went forth to smite the people of God first, because they were wicked and must bear the consequence. But wherever the wicked might be, this judgment should reach them. Wheresoever the carcase might be, there should the eagles be gathered together.

Jeremiah Chapter 31

The following commentary covers Chapters 31 and 32.

But it would not be Judah only, to whom the prophecies of Jeremiah were addressed, that should be restored—all the families of Israel should enjoy this blessing. Jehovah should be their God, they should be His people. A few words will suffice to fix the reader's attention on this beautiful prophecy. All the tribes are there, but all in renewed relationship with Zion. It is a deliverance wrought by the Lord, and it is therefore complete. Its enjoyment

is not hindered by weakness. It is a deliverance that melts the heart and produces tears and supplications, but which removes all cause for tears, excepting grace. They shall sorrow no more; their soul shall be as a watered garden; they shall be satisfied with goodness from Jehovah. Ephraim has repented, and God will cause him to feel that He has never forgotten him. The Lord has always remembered His erring child; Judah shall be the habitation of justice and the mountain of holiness. This shall be through a new covenant-not that which was made when they came out of Egypt. The law shall be written in their heart; they shall all know Jehovah; and none of their sins shall be remembered any more. If God should overthrow the ordinances of creation, then, saith He, shall Israel be cast off for all that they have done. Finally the Lord declares in detail the restoration of Jerusalem. I would add that in Jer 31:22 I see only weakness. Israel, feeble as a woman, shall possess and overcome all strength-seeing that strength manifests itself in that which is very weakness.

These two chapters give in general the prophetic testimony to Israel's restoration. Chapter 32 applies it to the circumstances of the Jews besieged in Jerusalem; taking occasion, from the ruin that evidently threatened them by the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, to announce the infallible counsels of God in grace towards them. Jeremiah had declared that the city should be taken, and Zedekiah led captive. But Jehovah had caused him to buy a field, in proof that the people should assuredly return. He points out the iniquity of the people and of the city from the beginning; but now that, in despair through sin, their ruin appeared to them inevitable, Jehovah declares not only a return from captivity, but the full efficacy of His grace. He would give oneness of heart to the people, that they may serve Him for ever. Their relationship to God as His people should be fully established according to the power of an everlasting covenant. Jehovah will rejoice in doing them good. He would plant them in the land with His whole heart, and His whole soul. It was He who had brought all this evil in judgment, and it was He who would bring all the good which He had promised.

Jeremiah Chapter 33

Chapter 33 repeats with ample and rich abundance the testimony to these blessings, and dwells particularly on the presence of the Messiah; it

announces that the branch of righteousness shall grow up unto David, executing judgment and righteousness in the land. Judah shall be saved and Jerusalem shall dwell safely. Her name shall be "Jehovah our Righteousness." David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel (not merely Judah), nor the tribe of Levi a priest. The Lord's covenant with the heavens and the earth shall fail, before this covenant with David shall be broken. However deeply sunk in despair the people might be, the Lord would never cast off Jacob, or His servant David, but would cause their captivity to return and would have mercy on them. The reader will remark how complete this revelation of deliverance is in its objects: first Judah, who was then particularly in question, then all Israel, then the land, then Messiah and the priesthood. Although, as a comfort to those in Babylon, the captive Jews are encouraged with a sure hope on their repentance (chap. 29); yet in general Judah is joined with Israel in the same deliverance. It is looked at as a whole. Indeed, after chapter 29, save Jer 31:23-24, where Ephraim had been already distinguished, and Jer 33:7; Jer 33:10; Jer 33:16, in present grace because of the siege, Israel is always put before Judah when both are named, and God glories in the name of the God of Israel. We do not get in Jeremiah the rejection of Messiah. His subject is present sins, and future purposes in which Messiah comes in. With this chapter the second part of the book closes, that is, the revelation of the full effect of God's grace towards ruined Israel, a result which should be according to His purposes of love, and perfect according to His counsels.

Jeremiah Chapter 34

On the occasion of renewed iniquity the prophet announces the certain ruin of the people. Nevertheless Zedekiah, though carried captive to Babylon, should die there in peace. [See Note #1] In the succeeding chapters we have some details of the obstinate rebellion which led to the destruction of Jerusalem and of all Judah.

Note #1

God's ways in this are remarkable. He had broken the oath of Jehovah, and he is judged as profane. It was mainly through the influence of others (for

he was disposed to listen to Jeremiah), and therefore mercy is extended to him.

Jeremiah Chapter 35

The obedience of the Rechabites is set forth in order to shew out more clearly the sin of Judah-disobedient in spite of the remonstrances and the patience of God. God does not forget the obedience that glorifies His name. The family of the Rechabites shall never fail.

Jeremiah Chapter 36

Chapter 36 furnishes us with another example of the obstinacy with which the kings of Judah despised the call and the testimony of God. Jeremiah was shut up; but God can never fail in means to address His testimony to man, whatever efforts they may make to escape it. Baruch is employed to write the prophecies of Jeremiah, and to read them, first to the people, then to the princes, and at last to the king himself. But the latter, hardened in his evil ways, destroys the roll. Jeremiah, by God's direction, causes the same words to be written again; and others also, for he neglects no means to reach and lay hold afresh of the people's conscience. But all was useless.

Jeremiah Chapter 37

The following commentary covers Chapters 37 and 38.

Chapter 37 gives us Zedekiah in the same state of disobedience. A show of religion is kept up, and, having a moment of respite which excites some hope, the king seeks an answer from the Lord by His prophet. But the favourable circumstances, through which it might appear that the wicked may escape from judgment, do not alter the certainty of the word. Jeremiah sought to avail himself of the opportunity to avoid the judgment which was coming upon the rebellious city; but this only serves to manifest the hatred of the heart to God's testimony; and the princes of the people-accusing Jeremiah of favouring the enemy, because he proclaimed the judgment that should fall on the people by their means-put him in prison. Zedekiah manifests some conscience by releasing him. In general there is more conscience in Zedekiah personally than in some others of the last kings of Judah (see Jer 37:21, and chaps. 21; Jer 38:10; Jer 38:14; Jer 38:16). On this

account, perhaps, were those few words of favour and mercy addressed to him in Jer 34:5. But he was too weak to allow his conscience to lead him in the path of obedience (compare Jer 38:2-12). This last chapter gives us the history of his weakness. Nevertheless in the midst of all this scene of misery and iniquity we find some rare examples of righteous men; and, however terrible His judgment may be, God remembers them; for His judgment is terrible because He is righteous. Ebed-melech, who delivered Jeremiah, is spared. Baruch also preserves his life; and even Zedekiah, as we have seen, is comforted by some words of encouragement, although he must undergo the consequences of his faults. The ways of God are always perfect, and if His judgments are like an overwhelming torrent as to man, still everything, even to the smallest detail, is directed by His hand; and the righteous are spared. The prison even becomes a place of safety for Jeremiah, and Jehovah deigns not only to spare Ebed-melech, but to send him a direct testimony of His favour by the mouth of Jeremiah, that he may understand the goodness of God in whom he had trusted.

Jeremiah Chapter 39

The following commentary covers Chapters 39 through 44.

After this, chapter 39 and the following chapters give us the history of the confusion and iniquity that reigned among the remnant who were not carried captive to Babylon, in order that they should be scattered, and that all should fully bear the judgment which God had pronounced. Nevertheless, if at this last hour this remnant had submitted to the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, peace should have reigned in the land, and these few that remained should have possessed it. But some revolt, and the others fear the consequences of their folly. There is no idea of trusting in Jehovah. They consult Jeremiah, but refuse to obey the word of the Lord from his mouth. They take refuge in Egypt to escape Nebuchadnezzar, but only to fall under the sword which would have spared them in Judea, had they remained there in subjection to the king. In Egypt they give themselves up to idolatry, that the wrath of God might come upon them to the end. Nevertheless God would spare even a little remnant of these, but Pharaoh-hophra, in whom they trusted, should be given up into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, as Zedekiah had been.

Jeremiah Chapter 45

The following commentary covers Chapters 45 through 51.

Chapter 45 gives us the prophecy with respect to Baruch, already mentioned. Chapter 46 and following chapters contain the prophecies against the Gentiles around Judea, and against Babylon herself. We shall find these special elements in the prophecies that refer to the nations-the judgments are not those of the last days, as in Isaiah, but (according to the general character of the book) refer to the destruction of the different nations, in order to make way for the dominion of one sole empire. It is thus that, in the case of Judea, the judgment is even now executed.

But there is a difference with respect to the restoration of those nations in the last days. Egypt, Elam, Moab, Ammon, are restored in the last days; Edom, Damascus. Philistia, Hazor, are not. The reason of this is easily seen. Egypt and Elam form no part of the land of Israel. God in His goodness will have compassion on those countries; they shall be inhabited and blessed under His government. When the people of Israel entered Canaan, Ammon and Moab were to be spared. They were not Canaanites under the curse; and however deplorable their origin might be yet, being related to the family of Israel, their land was preserved to them, although to the tenth generation they could not be admitted into the congregation of Israel (Deu 23:3). And when God shall put an end to the dominion given to Nebuchadnezzar, and to the empire of the Gentiles, these nations shall again enter into the countries that were allotted them. But, although Edom had been spared, and were even to be received amongst Israel in their third generation, yet as their hatred to Israel had been unbounded, they should be totally destroyed in the judgment of that day. Compare Obadiah throughout, especially in Verse 18. Their land should form a part of Israel's territory, and was, in fact, a part of it, although they themselves were spared at the beginning as the brethren of Israel, but only, alas! to abuse this favour; so that the judgment would be more terrible upon them than upon the rest. Damascus, Hazor, and Philistia were a part of the land of Israel, properly so called. These nations disappear as distinct nations, as to their territory. At the close of the judgment on Egypt, God sends words of encouragement to Israel. Israel had leant on Pharaoh when

Nebuchadnezzar had attacked Jerusalem. The Egyptian power appeared to be the only one capable of balancing that of Babylon. But God had ordained the fall of Egypt, who would willingly have taken the chief place. This was, however, appointed for Babylon. The country from which they were brought out (the world, considered as man in his natural independent character, organising in his own strength) would like to prevail over idolatrous corruption and Babylonish principles; but these were to be in force until the time appointed by God, when God will judge them. Now Israel having leant upon Egypt, would apparently fall with Egypt; but God watched over them, and they were to return from their captivity and dwell in peace. The ways of God in government are well worthy of attention here. God would judge the nations; He would chastise Israel in measure. His people should not be condemned with the world. Grace abused brings down the most terrible judgments; thus it was with Edom.

Babylon yet remains. But, in Jeremiah, all the judgments are contemplated in connection with the setting aside of the independent nations, and the establishment of the one empire of the Gentiles-the chief subject of this prophecy; consequently the prophet is specially occupied with the historical fate of the empire, as established by God in the prophet's own days. It is Babylon and the land of the Chaldeans which are the subject of his prophecy. It is the judgment of this empire, to avenge the oppression of Israel by Nebuchadnezzar, who had broken his bones (Jer 50:17).

Nevertheless, the deliverance of Israel, at the time of the destruction of Babylon, is given as a pledge and foretaste of their complete and final deliverance (Jer 50:4-19-20; Jer 50:34; see also Jer 51:19-21). For the destruction of Babylon was the judgment of that which God had Himself established as the Gentile empire. This is the reason why, even historically, her judgment was accompanied by the deliverance of Israel and the destruction of idolatry, by a man raised up to execute the righteousness of God. It has not been at all the same thing with the other empires, although, no doubt, they were also set up by the providence of God. But in their case it was not the immediate establishment of the empire on God's part, placing man in it under responsibility. Man, thus placed, had completely failed. He has tyrannised over God's people, established a compulsory idolatry, and corrupted the world by its means. Looked at as having the dominion of the

world, which had been committed to him, he has been judged, and Babylon is fallen. It is important thoroughly to apprehend this truth with respect to this first empire. In principle the deliverance of Israel results from it, whatever the subsequent dealings of God may have been. See also the character of this judgment, Jer 50:28; Jer 50:33-34. The next chapter furnishes us also with important principles in connection with this destruction of Babylon.

Jer 51:6 reveals the unchangeable faithfulness of God to Israel, in spite of the people's sins. It was the time of the Lord's vengeance. When the time that God indicated should have arrived—a time to be known only by those whose spiritual discernment would enable them to apply the prophecy, the elements of which were given clearly enough in these two chapters (especially in the assaults of the nations), then those who had ears to hear were to leave the city. Moreover the fall of Babylon was a judgment pronounced upon idolatry. The portion of Jacob-Jehovah might chastise His people, but He was not like the vanities of the Gentiles. After having chastised them, He would bring forth His righteousness in contrast with the Gentiles, who oppressed them, and would, finally, use them as His weapons of war. From Verse 25 (Jer 51:25) we see that it is the Babylon of those days which is in question. From Verse 29 (Jer 51:29) the historical circumstances that are related give us a very especial proof of this.

Jeremiah Chapter 52

The last chapter forms no part of the book of Jeremiah, properly so called. We find in it events relative to the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple. After the remarks we have made, that which is said in it of Babylon will be easily understood.

I recapitulate here the principles of this book on account of their importance. The empire of Babylon, in consequence of the unfaithfulness of the house of David, was established by God Himself, and entrusted with the government of the world. But Babylon not only oppressed Israel, but set up idolatry, and corrupted the world. He who should have been a worshipper of the true God, and an instrument of His power, established, as far as he could, the influence of the enemy. God has judged him. The empire which

God Himself established has been entirely overthrown. This judgment was executed against the pride of man, and against idolatry. At the same time it was the deliverance of Israel. This last consideration gave rise to a declaration on God's part of what Israel was to Him, and what it shall be in the last days. But the subject treated of is the Babylon of that day. Since then God has permitted other powers to exist, governing the world with universal dominion, until the final accomplishment of all His purposes. These empires have subsisted according to His will, have been raised up or cast down as He saw good. But neither of them has held precisely the same place as Babylon. None of them have been formally established in the place of Israel, nor has the destruction of any of them been the occasion of Israel's restoration. The word of prophecy assures us that at the end of the days, the judgment of the last empire will have this effect. The judgment of Babylon has, in a manner, foreshadowed it; as its moral character commenced the sad history of these monarchies, and served as a model to them in many respects as to the evil that should be developed until the end. But to understand the fundamental principles of this history, and the dealings of God, the place which this first empire held in these dealings must be clearly and distinctly kept in mind. Besides the immense fact of the substitution of empire in man's hand, for the immediate exercise of God's government on the earth, the diligent testimony which God sent, and the warnings to king after king, to people and to priests, is very striking in this book, the patience of God's love and interest.



LAMENTATIONS

Introduction to Lamentations

The Lamentations of Jeremiah—a touching expression of the interest which God feels in the afflictions which His people undergo on account of their sins—will not require much explanation as to the general meaning of the book. A few remarks may be useful, to shew the true character of this book, and its connection with the dealings of God, as revealed to us elsewhere. The first interesting point—to which I have already alluded—is that the affliction of His people does not escape the eye of God. He is afflicted in their affliction: His Spirit takes knowledge of it; and, acting in the heart of those whose mouth He uses, gives expression to the feelings He has produced there. Thus Christ wept over the hard-heartedness of Jerusalem, and invited its inhabitants to do so likewise. And here also His Spirit not only reproves and reveals things to come; He gives a form to the grief of those who love what God loves, and furnishes the expression of it Himself.

Lamentations Chapter 1

Lamentations 1:1

lam 1:1

There is nothing more affecting than the sentiments produced in the heart by the conviction that the subject of affliction is beloved of God, that He loves that which He is obliged to smite, and is obliged to smite that which He loves. The prophet, while laying open the affliction of Jerusalem, acknowledges that the sin of the people had caused it. Could that diminish the sorrow of his heart? If on the one hand it was a consolation, on the other it humbled and made him hide his face. The pride of the enemy, and their joy in seeing the affliction of the beloved of God, give occasion to sue for compassion on behalf of the afflicted, and judgment on the malice of the enemy. At the end of chapter 1, after full confession that it was Judah's sin that had brought the evil upon them, and that Jehovah was righteous, the

people call on the eye of Jehovah to look on their sorrow, and judge those by whose wickedness they were punished.

Lamentations Chapter 2

The second chapter is a very deep and touching appeal. The desolation of Jerusalem is looked at as Jehovah's own work, on what was His own, and not as that of the enemy. Never had there been such sorrow. Not only had He polluted the kingdom and its princes, and had been as an enemy against Jerusalem, and all that was goodly in it, but He had cast down His altar, abhorred His sanctuary. He no longer respected what He had Himself set up. Only we must remember that it was when the relationships of Jehovah with His people depended, however long God's patience, on the faithfulness of the people's obedience to Jehovah, on the old covenant. But this consideration gives room for appealing to Himself. Still it is a solemn thing when Jehovah is forced to reject that which He acknowledges to be His own. But it must be so if the association of His name is only a means of falsifying the testimony of what He is (Lam 2:6-7). And this brings before us the amazingly important principle contained in the ministry of Jeremiah, not merely the substitution of Babylon and the Gentile empire for Jerusalem and God's government in Israel, but the setting this last aside in itself, the ground of God's relationship with man where it subsisted, as that which could not subsist when put to the test.

Lamentations Chapter 3

In chapter 3 we find the language of faith, of sorrowing faith, of the Spirit of Christ in the remnant, on the occasion of the judgment of Jerusalem in which God had dwelt. Before, the prophet (or the Spirit of Christ in him) spoke in the name of Jerusalem, deploring her sufferings and confessing her sin, while appealing to Jehovah against her enemies, relating what He had done in forsaking His sanctuary, and (from Lam 2:11) expressing the depth of her affliction at the sight of the evil. But in chapter 3 he places himself in the midst of the evil to express the sentiments of the Spirit of Christ; not, it is true, in an absolute manner, according to the perfection of Christ Himself, but as acting in the heart of the prophet (as is generally the case in Jeremiah), expressing his personal distress—a distress produced by the Spirit,

but clothed in the feelings of the prophet's own heart-to bring out that which practically was going on in the heart of a faithful Israelite, the reality of that which was most elevated in that day of anguish and affliction, in which alas! there was no more hope from the people's side than from that of the enemies who attacked them, and in which the heart of the faithful suffered without hope of remedy, yet much more on account of a people who hearkened not to the voice of Jehovah, than on account of enemies raised up in judgment. What has Christ not suffered! That which His Spirit produces in the midst of human weakness, He has Himself undergone and felt in its full extent; only that He was perfect in all that His heart went through in His affliction. In chapter 3 the prophet expresses then in his own person, by the Spirit of Christ, all that he felt as sharing the affliction of Israel, and being at the same time the object of their enmity-a position remarkably analogous to that of Christ. What suffering can be like that of one who shares the suffering of God's people without being able to turn away the evil, because they refuse to hear God's message-like that of one who bears this affliction on his heart with the feeling that, if this foolish people would but have hearkened, the wrath of God should have been turned away? It was the lamentation of Christ Himself, "Oh, if thou hadst known," etc. In the main Jeremiah partook of the same feelings. But we see him more as being of the people, and participating in his own person in the consequences of the evil, seeing himself under these consequences with the people, because they had rejected his testimony. This may be said of the Lord at the close of His life, or on the cross. But we see that this sentiment, a little known in the case of Job, takes here the form of a personal prayer, complaining of personal suffering. Jeremiah suffers for the testimony, and for the rejection of the testimony. The first nineteen Verses of chapter 3 (Lam 3:1-19) contain the expression of this state. It is altogether the spirit of the remnant; and, with the exception of the sentiment I have just mentioned, it is that expressed in many of the Psalms. Into it all indeed, if we go on to the cross, [See Note #1] Christ Himself entered.

The prophet speaks as having borne in his own heart the deep grief of that which Jehovah had brought upon Jerusalem; but feeling it as one who knew God to be his God, so that he could experience what it was to be the object of the wrath of God. He suffered with Jerusalem, and he suffered for

Jerusalem. But the truth of this relation with Jehovah, while making him feel the affliction more deeply, sustained him also (Lam 3:22). He begins to feel that, after all, it is better to have to do with Jehovah, although, in another point of view, this made it all the more painful. He feels that it is good to be afflicted, and to wait upon Jehovah who smites: for He will not cast off for ever. He does not afflict willingly, but from necessity. Why complain of the chastening of sin? It were better to turn unto Jehovah. [See Note #2] He encourages Israel to do so, and while remembering the affliction of his weeping people, faith is in exercise until Jehovah shall interpose. It is well that an affliction like this should be felt; the only harm is when it is allowed to weaken confidence in the Lord.

The prophet calls to mind the affliction of Jerusalem, and, remembering the way which he had been succoured himself, he makes use of the kindness he had experienced to confirm his assurance that God would shew the same kindness to the people. But with respect to the proud and careless who reject the truth, their enmity against God, manifesting itself in their enmity against those who were the bearers of His word, he asks for the judgment of God upon them. [See Note #3] Thus relieved in spirit, and his heart filled with the sentiment that, since the evil came from Jehovah, that which gave so much depth to the sorrow was also a comfort to the heart, he can return to the affliction itself, measuring its whole extent, which the anguish of his soul prevented his apprehending till he had been able to arrive at its true source. Now he can enter into details, although with deep grief, yet with more calmness because His heart is with God. The sense of trouble and distress at the thought of God's judgment falling on those whom He loves is not sinful, although in Jeremiah's case his heart sometimes failed him.

It is right to be troubled, and, as it were, overwhelmed, at God's breaking, not perhaps the relationship, but His present connection with that which was the object of His favour, that which bore the name and the testimony of God. Christ felt this for Himself, though in Him distress went much farther: "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." Only in Christ all is perfect; and if He feels in perfection the profound distress of the object of God's love becoming the object of His judgment, a feeling of unparalleled grief, seeing it at the same time according to the

perfection of God's ways, He can say, "For this cause came I unto this hour; Father, glorify thy name!" He was Himself the necessary object of all God's affection, and consequently (if the judgment was to glorify God) the object also of a perfect judgment, that is, of a complete forsaking on God's part. That which is dreadful in this thought is, that the change of relative position was absolute and perfect in His case according to the very perfection of the relationship. He suffered the forsaking of God, instead of enjoying infinite favour which He knew.

There was something similar in the case of Jerusalem; and Jeremiah, feeling by the Spirit of Christ the preciousness of this relationship, and entering into it as sharing it, he suffers with that which was thus judged of God. Only, although moved by the Spirit of Christ, he must find the equilibrium of his thoughts, he must seek Jehovah to bring Him into the affliction, amidst all his personal grief, and the true but human workings of a heart that was shaken and cast down by the circumstances. He attached himself to Jerusalem, as resting on her position before God, and not solely and absolutely for God, and as God Himself, as did our blessed Lord. There was an object between his soul and God (an object beloved also by God), and it was not loved absolutely in God, and with the affection of God, and hence the affliction had to reach this object, he being in it and of it, reach his heart in this place-and then God draw it to Himself, so that he may look at all from Jehovah's view of it. But Christ was Himself absolutely in the place, for God's glory and the salvation of others. The judged thing from which He was infinitely far, even as man, he was to be before God. Ever perfect, He learned to the absolute fulness what it was to be this before God, and glorified God there. But this, though we know it true, none can fathom. There was in Jeremiah the right foundation, and he finds Jehovah, first of all in spite of the affliction, but soon in the affliction itself, and he recovers himself immediately, not from the affliction, but in the affliction, by the power of God. Christ can say, "How often would I have gathered," etc. This was the affection of God. Jeremiah confesses sin, and ought to confess it, as himself in the place, though a testimony of God in it. But this thought changes so far the character of the feeling (see Lam 1:19-20). Christ sought for nothing as a resource, as if self were concerned in it. His affliction was unmixed and absolute to Himself alone, more profound (for who could

share it?) but perfect as being His alone. Thus, in John 12, when it is Himself personally (for this Gospel sets the old vine aside as rejected), He cannot desire that the hour of God's forsaking should come; He ought to fear and be troubled, and He was therefore heard. But it is between God and Himself alone. No other thought comes in between-it is wholly with God. Alas! had it been possible, all was lost. But no; it is the absolute submission of the perfect man, who seeks (and seeks nothing else) that the name of God may be glorified according to God's perfection; that at all cost to Himself God's name may be glorified. Not now as God, who must necessarily maintain its glory, but as one who submits to everything, who sacrifices Himself, in order that God may glorify His name. For this cause He has been supremely glorified as man-a glorious mystery, in which the glory of God will shine forth throughout eternity.

Note #1

I add, "if we go on to the cross," because, though Christ may have felt much of it in His sorrow as He approached the cross, there are expressions which apply to Him only as suffering there. The direct proper application is to the remnant, as is the case with the Psalms, and to Jeremiah in particular.

Note #2

We have here a principle of the deepest interest, and most instructive. I will follow it out with a little more detail. The principles are in the text. Jehovah smiting His own altar and all the holy things, having been set up by Himself in the midst of His people as marking them as His and the formal link with them as their God, their destruction which broke that formal link, as far as God's own ordinances went, put an end to the connection; and this, as one of that people and living in that bond, had been the deepest distress to the true-hearted Jeremiah; but while this, because they were of God, pressed upon his heart, it led him, when he had got to the depth of the feeling, to the Jehovah whose ordinances they were; Jehovah known in his heart takes then the place of the ordinances which bound the people to Him, and his soul is drawn out in confidence to Him who was within and beyond all those links. He feels and speaks from the place of affliction, but his soul is humbled in him when personally thus in intercourse with Jehovah, and so has hope.

And this is a sure and immovable anchor of faith when God our Father is truly known (see Lam 3:22-26). He is brought quite low and subdued in spirit, but Jehovah is before his soul and known, though he must wait for Him (Lam 3:27-30), but Jehovah rises up before him. He does not afflict willingly; and now he turns in greater calmness of spirit to try his own ways (Lam 3:39-42). Yet he looks fully at all the sorrow (Lam 3:42-49). But now Jehovah is in his heart, and the "till" (Lam 3:50), the full assurance of which flows from His very nature, for personally, when at the lowest, he had called and Jehovah had drawn near to him, and pleaded the cause of his soul, and he looks for Jehovah's judgment on his relentless and causeless enemies. No doubt the call for judgment is characteristic of Jehovah's relationship with Israel. Still, there will be such on all the open enemies of the Lord.

Note #3

In all this the spirit of these passages is wonderfully in accordance with that of the Psalms, as indeed is very natural. The way in which Christ entered into it is spoken of in what is said on the Book of Psalms. Christ passed, in grace, through all exercises as to it in perfectness-Jeremiah and the remnant, that they might be perfected in their own state and feeling as to it. See what follows in the text.

Lamentations Chapter 4

Jeremiah, having now found Jehovah in the affliction, tranquilly measures its whole extent. But this is itself a consolation. For after all Jehovah who changes not is there to comfort the heart. This is chapter 4. He calls the whole to mind, and contrasts that which Jerusalem was, when under the blessing of Jehovah, with that which His anger has produced. It is no longer only the overwhelming circumstances of the present scene, but what it was before God. The Nazarites pass before his thoughts; that which Jerusalem, as the city of the great King, had been even in the eyes of her enemies; the anointed of Jehovah, under whose shadow the people might have lived (as we have already seen), although the Gentiles ruled-the anointed of Jehovah had been taken in their pits, like the prey of the hunter. But the afflicted spirit of God's servant, who bears the burden of His people, can now estimate not only the affliction that overwhelms them, but the position of

the enemies of Jerusalem, and that of the beloved city. Nay, he who would have one run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem to find a just one, now sees the enemies have slain the just in her midst (see Lam 4:13 and Jer 5:1). The cup of God's wrath shall pass through unto Edom, who was rejoicing in the ruin of the city of Jehovah; and as to Zion, she has doubtless drunk this cup to the dregs; but if she has done so, it was in order that she might drink of it no more. The punishment of her iniquity is accomplished, she shall no more be carried into captivity. All was finished for her: she had drunk the cup which she confessed she had deserved (see Lam 4:11; Lam 1:18-20). But the sin of haughty Edom should be laid bare. God would visit her iniquity.

Lamentations Chapter 5

The prophet can now present the whole affliction of the people to God, as an object of compassion and mercy. This is an onward step in the path of these deep exercises of heart. He is at peace with God; he is in His presence; it is no longer a heart struggling with inward misery. All is confessed before Jehovah who is faithful to His people, so that he can call on God to consider the affliction in order that He may remember His suffering people according to the greatness of His compassions. For Jehovah changes not (Lam 5:19-21). The sense of the affliction remains in full, but God is brought in, and everything having been recalled and judged before Him, all that had happened being cleared up to the heart, Jeremiah can rest in the proper and eternal relations between God and His beloved people; and, shutting himself into his direct relations with his God, he avails himself of His goodness, as being in those relations, to find in the affliction of the beloved people an opportunity for calling His attention to them. This is the true position of faith-that which it attains as the result of its exercises before God at the sight of the affliction of His people (an affliction so much the deeper from its being caused by sin).

Summary to Lamentations

This Book of Lamentations is remarkable because we see in it the expression of the thoughts of the Spirit of God, that is, those produced in persons under His influence, the vessels of His testimony, when God was forced to

set aside that which He had established in the world as His own. There is nothing similar in the whole circle of the revelations and of the affections of God. He says Himself, How could He treat them as Admah and Zeboim? Christ went through it in its fullest extent. But He went through it in His own perfection with God. He acted thus with regard to Jerusalem, and wept over it. But here man is found to have lost the hope of God's interposing on His people's behalf. God would not abandon a man who was one of this people, who loved them, who understood that God loved them, that they were the object of His affection. He was one of them. How could he bear the idea that God had cast them off? No doubt God would re-establish them. But in the place where God had set them, all hope was lost for ever. In the Lord's own presence it is never lost. It is in view of this that all these exercises of heart are gone through, until the heart can fully enter into the mind and affections of God Himself. Indeed this is always true.

The Spirit gives us here a picture of all these exercises. How gracious! To see the Spirit of God enter into all these details, not only of the ways of God, but of that also which passes through a heart in which the judgment of God is felt by grace, until all is set right in the presence of God Himself. Inspiration gives us, not only the perfect thoughts of God, and Christ the perfection of man before God, but also all the exercises produced in our poor hearts, when the perfect Spirit acts in them, so far as these thoughts, all mingled as they are, refer in the main to God, or are produced by Him. So truly cares He for us! He hearkens to our sighs, although much of imperfection and of that which belongs to our own heart is mixed with them. It is this that we see in the Book of Lamentations, in the Psalms, and elsewhere, and abundantly, though in another manner, in the New Testament.

EZEKIEL

Introduction to Ezekiel

In the prophecy of Ezekiel we have left the touching ground we were on in Jeremiah. He was within with the judgment hanging over the guilty city, and under the oppressive sense of the evil which brought on the ruin, bearing a testimony which, as to apparent result, was of no avail, though it maintained, in personal sorrow of heart according to human measure, the glory of God.

Ezekiel had been carried into captivity with the king Jehoiachin; at least, he was one of those made captive at that time, and he habitually dates his prophecies from that period-an important thing to remark that we may understand the revelations made to him. For himself there is no more question either of dates or of kings, of Judah or of Israel. The people of God are in captivity among the Gentiles. Israel is looked at as a whole; the interests of the whole nation are before the eye of the prophet. At the same time the capture of Jerusalem under Zedekiah had not yet taken place. This occasions the revelation of that king's iniquity, the measure of which was filled up by his rebellion. For Nebuchadnezzar attached value to the oath made in the name of Jehovah. He counted upon the respect due to that name, and Zedekiah had not respected it.

The first twenty-three chapters contain testimonies from God against Israel in general, and against Jerusalem in particular. After that the surrounding nations are judged; and then, beginning with chapter 33, the prophet resumes the subject of Israel, announcing their restoration as well as their judgment. Finally from chapter 40 to the end we have the description of the temple and of the division of the land.

Ezekiel Chapter 1

Ezekiel 1:1

eze 1:1

In chapter 1 we find a date which refers to the year of Josiah's passover, but with what intent I do not know. It has been thought that the thirty years relate to the jubilee. On this point I cannot speak with confidence. But other circumstances are very important. [Ed. note: W. Kelly has a helpful comment here: "The thirtieth year" (Eze 1:1) has greatly perplexed the learned. But it seems plain that the starting-point is the era of Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar, who became king of Babylon, B.C. 625, about the date when Hilkiah found the book of the law in the temple so pregnant with blessing to Josiah and the righteous in Judah. This last is referred to in the Chaldee paraphrase of Jonathan ben Uzziel. ("Ezekiel", in loco)]

The throne of God is not seen in Jerusalem, but unconnected with this city, and outside. It is the universal sovereign throne of God. God judges the city itself from this throne. The prophecy commences with the description of the throne. We have the attributes of God as the supporters of His throne, under the likeness of the four categories of created beings on earth, the four being united in one, at least the four heads of these categories. These symbols are nearly the same as those used by the pagan inventors of idolatry to represent their gods. Formal idolatry began with a figurative personification of the attributes of God. These attributes became their gods, men being impelled to worship them by demons who governed them by this means, so that it was these demons whom men worshipped—a worship that soon degenerated so far that they set up gods wherever there was anything to desire or to fear, or that answered to the lusts which inspired these desires or these fears (sentiments which the demon cultivated also, in order to appropriate to himself the worship due to God alone). Now these attributes belonged to the only God, the Creator, and the head of all creation; but, whatever their power and glory might be in action, they were but the supporters of the throne on which the God of truth is seated [See Note #1]. Whatever instruments He may employ, it is the mighty energy of God that manifests itself. Intelligence, strength, stability, and swiftness in judgment, and, withal, the movement of the whole course of earthly events, depended on the throne. This living energy animated the whole. The cherubic supporters of the throne, full of eyes themselves, moved by it; the wheels of God's government moved by the same spirit, and went straight forward. All was subservient to the will and purpose of Him who sat on the

throne judging right. Majesty, government, and providence, united to form the throne of His glory. But all the instruments of His glory were below the firmament; He whom they glorified was above. It is He whom the heathen knew not.

This throne of the supreme and sovereign Lord God is seen in Chaldea [See Note #2] -in the place where the prophet then was-among the Gentiles. It is no longer seen at Jerusalem in connection with the land; nor have we any law embodied, so to speak, in the throne, according to which an immediate government was exercised. Consequently the voice of God speaks to Ezekiel as to a "son of man"-a title that suited the testimony of a God who spoke outside of His people, as being no longer in their midst, but on the contrary was judging them from the throne of His sovereignty. It is Christ's own title, looked at as rejected and outside of Israel, although He never ceases to think of the blessing of the people in grace. This puts the prophet in connection with the position of Christ Himself. He would not, thus rejected, allow His disciples to announce Him as the Christ (Luke 9), for the Son of man was to suffer [See Note #3].

Note #1

Wise infidels, always petty in their conceptions because they know not God, have seen in the winged human-headed bulls and lions of Nineveh the origin of Ezekiel's vision. They betray themselves. They do not see or know Him who sat above them. I do not doubt a moment that these images represented the same thing essentially as the cherubim; but these poor pagans, misled by Satan, like these infidels in their wisdom, worshipped what was below the firmament. In Ezekiel's vision they were merely symbolic attributes, and He who was worshipped was above the firmament. It is just the difference in this respect between idolatry and the revelation of God.

Note #2

I mean merely in the limits of the empire of the Chaldeans. It was by the river Chebar, which was more to the north-west.

Note #3

This distinction is always carefully maintained, based on Psalms 2 and 8. (Compare Nathanael, John 1.)

Ezekiel Chapter 2

In testimony and example, as to his prophetic relation, the same thing happens in Ezekiel's case. God is rejected; His prophet takes this place, with the throne, to judge the whole nation, and especially Jerusalem, announcing at the same time (to faith) their re-establishment in grace. He is sent from Jehovah to a rebellious people, to say, Jehovah has spoken, whether they would hear or not. The judgment would make it known that a prophet had been among them. His first testimony is composed of lamentations, and mourning, and woe; nevertheless the communication of the word of God is always full of sweetness, looked at as a revelation from Him, and as taking place between God and man (chap. 2). Some important principles in the relations of God with Israel are developed in chapter 3.

But we have yet to notice a feature that characterises the Book of Ezekiel, comparing it with that of Jeremiah. The latter addresses himself immediately to his contemporaries (that is to say, to the people of God) in a testimony which, making its way through the bruised and wounded heart of the prophet, exhibits the marvellous patience of God, who, up to the last moment, invites His people to repentance. It is not thus with Ezekiel. He announces that which necessitates the judgment. He is sent indeed to Israel, but to Israel in a hardened condition. His mouth is shut as to the people; he is not to rebuke them. He may communicate to them certain declarations of Jehovah at a suitable time, when Jehovah opens his mouth to make them understand that there is a prophet among them; but he does not address himself directly and morally to the people, as being still the object of God's dealings. Jehovah reveals to him the iniquities that oblige Him to cast off His people, and no longer to act towards them on principles of government established by Himself, as with a people whom He acknowledged. It is, on God's part, a setting forth of Israel's conduct as the occasion of the rupture of His relations with them. At the same time certain new principles of conduct are revealed. I speak of that part of the prophecy which relates to Israel; for there are also sundry judgments upon the Gentiles, and a

description of the future state of the land, as well as of the temple—a state which the prophet was to communicate to Israel in case they should repent.

Ezekiel Chapter 3

The Lord testifies that Israel is even more hardened than any of the heathen nations. The people are "impudent and hard-hearted." It needed that Ezekiel should have his forehead made as hard as adamant to speak to them the word which he had to declare, saying, "Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." The prophet is carried away by the power of the Spirit into the midst of the captives at Tel-abib. Although the house of Israel was hardened, God distinguished a remnant; and in this manner. The prophet was to warn individuals: it was to this work he was appointed. If his word was received, he who hearkened should be spared. Ezekiel should be responsible for the fulfilment of this duty: but each one should bear the consequences of his own conduct, after he had heard the word. Thus the people are no longer judged as a whole, as was the case when all depended on the public conduct of the nation or of the king. Israel had revolted, but still he that hearkened to the word should live. God was acting in accordance with His long-suffering grace. The prophet again sees the glory of Jehovah by himself, and the Spirit announces to him that he is not to go out among the people, but that he shall be a prisoner in his house, and that God will make his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth; for they were a rebellious people, and, as a people, the warning was not to be given them. God, when He pleased, would open the mouth of the prophet, and he should speak peremptorily to the people, declaring the word of Jehovah. Let him hear that would, Jehovah would no longer plead in love, as He had done.

Ezekiel Chapter 4

Besides the general judgment that God pronounced upon the condition of Israel, Jerusalem—on whom lay all the iniquity of the people now come to its height—appears before God whom she had despised. The prophet, in representing the siege of Jerusalem, was also to point out the years of iniquity that had led to this judgment: for Israel in general, 390; for Judah, 40. It is certain that these dates do not refer to the duration of the kingdom

of Israel apart from Judah, nor to that of Judah, because the kingdom of Israel only lasted about 254 years, while that of Judah continued about 134 years after the fall of Samaria. It would appear that the longer period mentioned is reckoned from the separation of the ten tribes under Rehoboam, counting the years as those of Israel, because from that moment Israel had a separate existence, and comprised the great body of the nation; while Judah was everything during the reign of Solomon, which lasted forty years. After his reign Judah would be comprised in the general name of Israel according to Ezekiel's usual habit, although on certain occasions he distinguishes them on account of the position of Zedekiah and of God's future dealings. The reason for using this name of Israel for the whole is plain enough, namely, that the captivity had placed the whole nation in the same condition and under one common judgment, and Israel was the name of the whole people. The entire nation was now set aside, and a Gentile kingdom established. Judah is sometimes distinguished, because there was still a remnant at Jerusalem-judged indeed yet more severely than the mass, but which nevertheless existed, and which will have distinct circumstances in their history until the last days. The same thing happens in the New Testament. In the language of the apostles the twelve tribes are blended. Nevertheless, as a matter of history, the Jews-that is to say, those of Judah-are always distinct. In the main, Ezekiel prophesied under the same circumstances. Hence, in part, as we have said, his title of "son of man," given also to Daniel, as well as that of "man greatly beloved." The man of power was Nebuchadnezzar. But he who represented the race before God was an Ezekiel, as the man of desire was a Daniel, a man beloved of God. With respect to the date, it is certain that the 390 years are almost exactly the time of Israel's duration from the death of Solomon to the destruction of the temple. Some persons have wished to reckon the forty years of Judah from Josiah's passover down to the same period, supposing that the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar took place four or five years after the captivity of Zedekiah; but this was not the case-it was a month later in the same year. Jehoiachin was carried into captivity in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar (Kg2 24:12). Zedekiah reigned eleven years (Jer 52:1). In the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzar-adan burnt the house of Jehovah, and, reading from Eze 4:6, we see that it was a month

after in the same year. In taking the forty years of Judah to be the reign of Solomon, it would be saying that Israel had done nothing but sin ever since the establishment of the kingdom, for it was only in the days of Solomon that there was a peaceful reign. David founded the kingdom. The responsibility of his family began with Solomon (2 Samuel 7).

Ezekiel Chapter 5

The following commentary covers Chapters 5 and 6.

In the revelation given to Ezekiel Jerusalem is taken, and its population almost entirely destroyed. The dispersed remnant are pursued by the sword, and a portion only of this remnant is spared. There would be some even of this portion cast into the fire [See Note #1]. And this fire should reach to the whole house of Israel. That is to say, the judgment that should fall upon the remnant who do not perish in the city should represent the position of all Israel. It is thus that the prophet is constantly led to speak of the whole nation. For, as long as there was a remnant at Jerusalem, the nation had a place on the earth. But when the iniquitous rebellion of Zedekiah had led to the destruction of Jerusalem, this was no longer the case. But this judgment of Jerusalem contains very important elements for the understanding of all this part of the history of the people and of the dealings of God, "This is Jerusalem, saith the Lord Jehovah; I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries round about her." And instead of being a testimony in the midst of the nations, so that the house of Jehovah should have attracted them, or at least have placed them under responsibility by a true testimony to God who dwelt there-instead of this, her inhabitants had even gone beyond the idolatrous nations in wickedness. Therefore God would execute judgments upon her in the sight of all the nations-a just retribution for her sins. She should also be laid waste and made a reproach among the nations round about her; and (chap. 6) the judgment should not be confined to Jerusalem, it should be executed on all the high places, on all the mountains of Israel. Every city should be desolate, all their idols destroyed, and the people scattered. They should know that the Lord had not threatened them in vain with His judgments. The fire should reach those that were afar off as well as those that were in the land; and the land should be laid waste, and the worshippers of idols slain around their infamous gods. Nevertheless God

would remember mercy in the midst of judgment; He would spare a little remnant of those who were scattered, and those who should escape should loathe themselves for the abominations they had committed. Thus Jerusalem was judged as well as the mountains of Israel, which were but too notorious for their idols and their high places.

Note #1

It is thus that I understand this passage. We should imagine, from our translation, that it was some of the hairs that were cast into the fire. But in the Hebrew the pronoun is in the singular, and it is masculine as well as feminine.

Ezekiel Chapter 6

The following commentary covers Chapters 5 and 6.

In the revelation given to Ezekiel Jerusalem is taken, and its population almost entirely destroyed. The dispersed remnant are pursued by the sword, and a portion only of this remnant is spared. There would be some even of this portion cast into the fire [See Note #1]. And this fire should reach to the whole house of Israel. That is to say, the judgment that should fall upon the remnant who do not perish in the city should represent the position of all Israel. It is thus that the prophet is constantly led to speak of the whole nation. For, as long as there was a remnant at Jerusalem, the nation had a place on the earth. But when the iniquitous rebellion of Zedekiah had led to the destruction of Jerusalem, this was no longer the case. But this judgment of Jerusalem contains very important elements for the understanding of all this part of the history of the people and of the dealings of God, "This is Jerusalem, saith the Lord Jehovah; I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries round about her." And instead of being a testimony in the midst of the nations, so that the house of Jehovah should have attracted them, or at least have placed them under responsibility by a true testimony to God who dwelt there-instead of this, her inhabitants had even gone beyond the idolatrous nations in wickedness. Therefore God would execute judgments upon her in the sight of all the nations-a just retribution for her sins. She should also be laid waste and made a reproach among the nations round about her; and (chap. 6) the judgment should not be confined to

Jerusalem, it should be executed on all the high places, on all the mountains of Israel. Every city should be desolate, all their idols destroyed, and the people scattered. They should know that the Lord had not threatened them in vain with His judgments. The fire should reach those that were afar off as well as those that were in the land; and the land should be laid waste, and the worshippers of idols slain around their infamous gods. Nevertheless God would remember mercy in the midst of judgment; He would spare a little remnant of those who were scattered, and those who should escape should loathe themselves for the abominations they had committed. Thus Jerusalem was judged as well as the mountains of Israel, which were but too notorious for their idols and their high places.

Note #1

It is thus that I understand this passage. We should imagine, from our translation, that it was some of the hairs that were cast into the fire. But in the Hebrew the pronoun is in the singular, and it is masculine as well as feminine.

Ezekiel Chapter 7

Finally (chap. 7), the whole land of Israel is under the sentence of God, "the four corners of the land." Those who escape the general judgment mourn alone upon the mountains, having forsaken all in despair-having no power for resistance. The worst of the heathen should possess the land. And the ornament of the majesty of Jehovah, which He had established in glory, having been profaned by their abominations, should be given up into the hands of strangers to be profaned by them. The secret place of His holiness should be polluted. Mischief should come upon mischief, and there should be no remedy. Jehovah would judge the people according to their deserts. Solemn judgment was thus pronounced on the whole nation. All is desolate, and with respect to the relations of Israel with God-whether on the part of the people themselves, or by means of the house of David which was responsible for the maintenance of these relations-all was finally lost. Grace may act; but the people and the house of David had totally failed. The name of God had been blasphemed through His people, instead of being glorified. The execution of judgment is now the only testimony rendered to Him. The

judgment is complete, it has fallen on the four corners of the land, and Israel is no longer a nation. What a solemn thought it is, that judgment should be the only testimony that can be given to God! Chapter 7 closes this first prophecy, which is one of vast importance, as declaring the judgment to be fully executed upon the people of God on earth.

Ezekiel Chapter 8

Chapter 8 begins a new prophecy, which comprises several distinct revelations, and extends to the close of chapter 19 (from the eighth to the end of the eleventh being connected). Judah still existed at Jerusalem, although many of them had already been carried into captivity with Jehoiakim. It was not till five years later that the temple was destroyed. It is the state of things at Jerusalem which is judged in these chapters. The elders of Judah presented themselves before the prophet, and Jehovah took this opportunity to shew him all the enormities that would bring down judgment on the people. In the prophecy of the preceding year God, by the mouth of the prophet, had threatened Israel with the giving up of His sanctuary to the profane (Eze 7:20-22). Here Jehovah exhibits in detail the cause of this judgment. The glory of Jehovah appeared to the prophet, and he was taken in the visions of God to Jerusalem, and there in the courts and the chambers, and in the gates, he was shewn every form of hateful and defiling idolatry practised in Jehovah's own house by the elders and others of Israel. If we compare the history of Jeremiah, and the outward profession that was made—the pretension that the law should not perish from the priest, we shall understand the excessive iniquity of the Jews and their hypocrisy.

Ezekiel Chapter 9

The glory of Jehovah visits the temple. He takes His place on the side that looked towards the city, and, after having shewn the prophet the heinous sins committed there, He gives command to execute the deserved vengeance, but to spare the remnant who mourned over all these abominations. That which declares morally the state of heart of the wicked, and which made them give the loose rein to their iniquity, is that the absence of Jehovah's intervention on account of their sins, had so acted on

their belief as to make them say, "Jehovah hath forsaken the earth and Jehovah seeth not." This was obduracy of heart.

Ezekiel Chapter 10

In chapter 10 the whole city is given up to be consumed. The glory of Jehovah presides over the judgment and commands it. He stands upon the threshold of His house which He fills with His glory in judgment, as He had formerly done in blessing. The throne of Jehovah was apart. We have a renewed description of all its parts. Jehovah left His throne and stood on the threshold of the house. This is an interesting element of this judgment. The cherubim and the terrible wheels instinct with living energy and full of eyes could have accomplished all. But Jehovah leads the prophet to take personal cognisance of the various and abominable sins and idolatries by which they profaned His sanctuary. No doubt His providential government wrought in power to carry out His judgment, but it was the Jehovah of the defiled house who stood personally on its threshold to direct the judgment of the city, and personally have a mark put on the godly and secure them in the hastening judgment (Eze 9:3-4, following, and from beginning of chap. 8). This personal intervention of Jehovah, both to shew the evil well known to Him, to mark and spare the mourners, and to direct the judgment, is full of interest.

Ezekiel Chapter 11

In chapter 11 God judges the leaders of iniquity, who comforted themselves in the thought that the city was impregnable [See Note #1]. They should be brought out from the midst thereof and be judged in the border of Israel. One of these wicked men dies in the presence of the prophet, which brings out the sorrow of his heart and his intercession for Israel. In reply, God distinguishes those in Jerusalem from the captives. As to the latter, God had been a sanctuary to them wherever they were. He would restore them, and give them back the land. He would purify them, and give them a new heart. They should be His people, and He would be their God. But as for those who walked after their abominations, their ways should be visited upon them in judgment. The remnant are always distinguished, and individual conduct is the condition of blessing, save that they, the faithful, are established as the

people of God at the end. The glory of Jehovah then forsakes the city and stands upon the Mount of Olives, from which Jesus ascended, and to which He will again descend for Israel's glory. This part of the prophecy ends here.

Note #1

Jeremiah's exhortations will be remembered-to submit themselves to Nebuchadnezzar, and even to quit the city and go forth unto him.

Ezekiel Chapter 12

Chapter 12 announces the fight and the capture of Zedekiah, who would be carried to Babylon though he would not see it. All the force of Judah would be dispersed, and the land laid desolate; a small remnant of captives would declare among the heathen the abominations which had brought the judgment; and the judgment was soon to come, for God's patience with His people had led to the unbelieving comment that God would not interfere, but now the effect of His words would not be delayed.

Ezekiel Chapter 13

The following commentary covers Chapters 13 and 14.

Chapter 13 judges the prophets who deceived the people in Jerusalem by their pretended visions of peace. In chapter 14 the elders of Israel come and sit before the prophet. Here God sets distinctly before Israel the new principles on which He would govern them. These elders had put their abominations before their eyes. God Himself will judge them according to their transgressions. As a nation they were all alike. Jehovah could only say to them, "Repent ye." The prophets and the people should be punished together. Even if the most excellent of the earth should be found in a land which Jehovah judged, they would not hinder the execution of the judgment, they would only save their own lives by their righteousness. God did not own a nation (the only one He had He had now rejected); He did, the individually righteous (compare Gen. 18). Now God was bringing all His judgments upon Jerusalem. Nevertheless, a remnant should be spared; and the proofs they would give of the abominations committed in the city would comfort the prophet with respect to the judgments accomplished on it. And so it is: the judgment of God, who gives His people up to their enemies, is a

burden to the heart of one who loves the people; but when the manner in which the name of God had been dishonoured is seen, the necessity of the judgment is understood and felt.

Ezekiel Chapter 15

Chapter 15 shews that the vine-utterly useless if it bore no fruit-was fit only for fuel, and to be consumed. Thus should it be with the inhabitants of Jerusalem-a striking picture of this destruction, and of the condition of Jerusalem, which was worth nothing more.

Ezekiel Chapter 16

In reading chapter 16 it must be remembered that Jerusalem is the subject, and not Israel. Moreover, the subject treated of is not redemption, but God's dealings. He had caused to live, He had cleansed, ornamented, and anointed, that which was in misery and devoid of beauty. But Jerusalem had used all that Jehovah had given her in the service of her idols, and also to purchase the succour and the favour of the Egyptians and the Assyrians. She has had no idea of independence and of standing alone, leaning on Jehovah. She should be judged as an adulterous woman. Jehovah would bring against her those whom she had sought. Nevertheless, filled with pride, she would hear nothing of Samaria or of Sodom-names which Jehovah now uses to humble her. She was even more worthless than those whom she must own for her sisters, in spite of her pride. Jerusalem being thus justly condemned and humbled, God will yet act in full grace towards her, and will re-establish her, remembering His love and His covenant. She will never be restored on the former ground, any more than Samaria or Sodom; and the grace that will be exercised towards her shall suffice to bring them back also, namely, the sovereign grace of redemption and pardon, which is by no means the covenant of Jerusalem under the law. With Jerusalem Jehovah will also establish a special covenant, and her two sisters shall be given her for daughters. Her mouth shall be shut at the thought of all the grace of God who shall have pardoned her. The fifty-fifth Verse (Eze 16:55) is absolute and perpetual. The promise, in Verse 60 (Eze 16:60), is on entirely new ground. Samaria, Sodom, Jerusalem, go together in judgment; but sovereign grace has its own way and time, and thus all three might be and would be

restored, but Jehovah would establish His covenant with Jerusalem. The free unconditional covenant of promise would be made good to Jerusalem (Eze 16:8).

Ezekiel Chapter 17

Chapter 17 present the judgment of Zedekiah for despising the oath that Nebuchadnezzar made him take in the name of Jehovah. Israel not having been able to stand in integrity before God, Jehovah had committed the kingdom to the head of the Gentiles, whom He had raised up. This was His determinate purpose; but He had disposed the heart of Nebuchadnezzar to respect the name of Jehovah, and Judah might still have remained the centre of religious blessing, and the lamp of David might still have given light there, although the royalty had been subjected to the head of the Gentiles, until the time should come for the result of the judgment and dealings of God. The covenant between Nebuchadnezzar and Zedekiah was made on this ground, and the name of Jehovah was brought in to confirm it. It was not the Gentile who broke the covenant. Zedekiah added to his other sins that of rendering impossible the existence of a people and a kingdom that belonged to God. The name of Jehovah was more despised and trampled under foot by him than by the Gentile king. He intrigues with Egypt to escape from the dominion of Nebuchadnezzar, whom God Himself, in judgment, had set up as supreme. This filled up the measure of iniquity, and brought on the final judgment. But it left room for the sovereignty of God, who would bring down the high tree and exalt the low tree, who would dry up the green tree and make the dry tree to flourish. His grace would take the little forgotten branch of the house of David and raise it up in Israel upon the mountain of His power, where He would cause it to become a goodly cedar, bearing fruit, and sheltering all that would seek the protection of its shadow. All the powers of the earth should know the word and the works of Jehovah.

Ezekiel Chapter 18

The following commentary covers Chapters 18 and 19.

Chapter 18 contains an important principle of the dealings of God, unfolded at that period. God would judge the individual according to his own conduct;

the wicked nation was judged as such. Neither was it, in fact, judged for the iniquity of the fathers. The present iniquities of the people made the judgment which their fathers had merited suitable to their own actions. But now, with respect to His land of Israel, the principle of government laid down in Exo 34:7 was set aside, and souls belonging, as they did individually, to Jehovah, would individually bear the judgment of their own sins. God would pardon the repenting sinner. For He has no pleasure in the sinner's death. The government of Israel on earth is still the subject. Every one shall be judged according to his ways [See Note #1]. Chapter 19 describes the captivity of Jehoiakim, afterwards that of Jeconiah, and finally the complete decay of the house of David.

Note #1

It is important to remark that it is temporal judgment in death which is spoken of here. The question treated of is the allegation of Israel that they, according to the principle laid down in Exodus, were suffering for their fathers' sins. The prophet declares that this principle is not that on which God will act with them, that the soul or life of every one belonged to God, one as another, and that in judgment He would deal with each for his own sins, not the son for the father's; and then proceeds to lay down the principles on which He would deal in mercy and judgment; but the judgments are temporal judgments, and the death physical death in this world. If the wicked turned from his ways, he would live and not die-not be cut off for the sins he repented of; so of the wicked, he shall surely die, his blood shall be upon him. So the soul that sinneth, it shall die. It is not the father, nor the son because of a father's sins; the soul or person himself that sins shall die, each for his own. The emphasis is on "it."

Ezekiel Chapter 20

The following commentary covers Chapters 20 and 21.

Chapter 20 begins a new prophecy, which, with its subdivisions, continues to the end of chapter 23. It will have been remarked that the general divisions are made by years. Chapter 20 is important. The preceding chapters had spoken of the sin of Jerusalem. Here the Spirit retraces the sin, and especially the idolatry of Israel (that is to say, of the people, as a people)

from the time of their sojourn in Egypt. Then already they had begun with their idolatry. For His own name's sake God had brought them up from thence, and given them His statutes and His sabbaths-the latter too in token of the covenant between God and the people. But Israel had rebelled against God in the wilderness, and even then He had thought to destroy them. But He spared them, warning at the same time their children also, who nevertheless followed their fathers' ways. Still, for His name's sake, God withdrew His hand on account of the heathen in whose sight He had brought the people up from Egypt. But in the wilderness He had already warned them that He would scatter them among the nations (Lev. 26, Deut. 32); and as they had polluted the sabbaths of Jehovah and gone after the idols of their fathers, they should be polluted in their own gifts, and be slaves to the idols they had loved, that they might be made desolate by the Lord. For, having been brought into the promised land, they had forsaken Jehovah for the high places. He would no longer be enquired of by them, but would rule over them with fury and with an outstretched arm. He had already in the wilderness threatened the people with dispersion among the heathen; and now, having brought them into the land for the glory of His great name, Israel had only dishonoured Him. He, therefore, executes the judgment with which He had threatened them. Israel, always ready to forsake Jehovah, would have profited by this to become like the heathen. But God comes in at the end in His own ways. He keeps the people separate in spite of themselves, and He will gather them out from among the nations and bring them into the wilderness, as when He led them out of Egypt, and there He will cut off the rebels, sparing a remnant, who alone shall enter the land. For it is there that Jehovah shall be worshipped by His people, when He shall have gathered them out from all the countries where they have been scattered, and Jehovah Himself shall be sanctified in Israel before the heathen. Israel shall know that He is Jehovah, when He shall have accomplished all these things according to His promises. They shall loathe themselves, and shall understand that Jehovah has wrought for the glory of His name, and not according to their wicked ways. This is the general judgment of the nation, and in fact of the ten tribes as distinct from Judah. They, as a body, were not guilty of the rejection of the blessed Lord. They had been long scattered for their rebellion against Jehovah. They will be

brought back, but passed as a flock under the rod of the covenant, the rebels purged out, and only the spared remnant enter the land. They will not thus be in the special tribulation of the last half week, nor under Antichrist. They are dealt with in the national government of God. Judah will of course be in Verse 40 (Eze 20:40), but the object is to shew it is not simply Judah, the Jews as we say. Israel in the land, the whole people will enjoy the blessings once promised. But this brings out some important principles. Though the original promises are referred to and exist for the full blessing, yet the dealings of Jehovah begin with the land of Egypt. Next there is an accumulation of sin. The Lord's sparing mercy, when it only made them go on in greater oblivion of His goodness, only aggravated and accumulated the evil, as the Lord speaks, from Abel to Zacharias. Thus the people are judged in view of their conduct, from the time of their departure from Egypt; their idolatrous spirit was manifested even in Egypt itself (compare Amo 5:25-26; Acts 7). Jehovah had indeed spared the people for the glory of His name, but the sin was still there. Israel as a nation is therefore scattered, and then placed anew under the rod of the covenant, and God distinguishes the remnant, and acts for the sure accomplishment in sovereign grace of that of which the people were incapable as placed under their own responsibility. Israel, as a whole, as a nation, is distinguished from Judah, which continues in a particular position. With regard to the nation, as such, the rebels are cut off and do not enter the land. In the land two-thirds are cut off at the end (Zac 13:8-9). But in this latter case, it is the Jews who were guilty of the rejection and death of Jesus who are judged. Here it is the dealings of God with the nation-guilty from the time of Egypt; there it is the chastisement of the enemies and murderers of Christ. Grace is shewn in both cases to the remnant.

From Verse 45 (Eze 20:45) it is another prophecy, which contains the application of the threats in the preceding prophecy to the circumstances through which it will be fulfilled, by the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, as unfolded in chapter 21. Jehovah had unsheathed and sharpened His sword to return it no more to its sheath: it was prepared for the slaughter. The prophet sees Nebuchadnezzar at the head of the two roads to Jerusalem and to Ammon. Jerusalem would treat that which he was doing as a false divination, but she would be overtaken by the judgment of Jehovah. Their

conduct had brought their whole sinful course to mind, and the profane Zedekiah (who had filled up the iniquity by despising the oath which he had taken in Jehovah's name) should come to his end when the iniquity was judged; for he had filled up its measure. Moreover, it was now a definitive judgment, and not a chastisement which would allow the unsheathed sword to return to its scabbard, as for His name's sake they had been so often spared as we have seen rehearsed in the chapter. In fact it was a revolution in God's ways, a taking His throne from the earth and the beginning of the times of the Gentiles. Jehovah overturned everything until He should come, to whom in right it all belonged, and to whom the kingdom should be given; that is to say, until Christ. Ammon likewise should be destroyed.

The more these prophecies of Ezekiel and Jeremiah are considered, the more striking do they appear. First of all, they establish the very important fact with respect to the government of the world, namely, that the throne of God has been removed from the earth, and the government of the world entrusted to man under the form of an empire among the Gentiles. In the second place, the veil is also withdrawn as to the government of God in Israel. This test, to which man had been subjected, in order to see if he were capable of being blessed, has only proved the entire vanity of his nature, his rebellion, the folly of his will, so that he is radically evil. Even from Egypt, it was a spirit of rebellion, idolatry, and unbelief, which preferred anything in the world, an idol, or the Assyrian, to Jehovah the true God. Constant in their sin, neither deliverance nor judgment, neither blessing nor experience of their folly, changed the heart of the people or the propensity of their nature. The idolatry that began in Egypt, and their contempt of the word of Jehovah, were not altered by their enjoyment of the promises, but characterised this people until their rejection of Jehovah. But on God's part we see a patience that never belies itself, the most tender care, the most touching appeals, everything that could tend to bring their hearts back to Jehovah; interventions in grace, to lift them out of their misery, and bless them when in a state of faithfulness produced by this grace, through the means of such or such a king; rising up early to send them prophets, until there was no remedy. But they gave themselves up to evil; and, as shewn by Ezekiel and Stephen, the Spirit of God returns to the first manifestations of their heart, of which all that followed was but the proof and the expression.

And the judgment is executed on account of that which the people have been from the beginning.

After the full manifestation of that which the people were, God changes His plan of government, and reserves for sovereign grace the re-establishment of Israel according to His promises, which He would fulfil by His means who could maintain blessing by His power, and govern the people in peace. It is not uninteresting to recall, that that sovereign grace, which blesses Israel at last and after all, when responsible human nature has been fully tried, is-though we come to it, where real, through definite conviction of our sins and sinfulness-as to God's ways, the starting point of our path and what belongs to us. Hence the necessity of a new nature, and God's love in giving His Son, are the opening of all to us. The cross for both secures the righteousness through which grace reigns.

Ezekiel Chapter 22

The following commentary covers Chapters 22 and 23.

Chapter 22 recapitulates the sin of Jerusalem, of her prophets, her priests, and her princes. The eye of God sought for some one to stand in the gap before Him, and found none. His indignation should consume them. What force the prophecies give to those words of the Lord, "How often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" In chapter 23 Jehovah justifies Himself for judging Jerusalem by the iniquity and unfaithfulness of her walk. Her whoredom with the Gentiles brought her early course to mind. The same conduct shewed the same nature. She has ended as she began, because at heart she was the same. Samaria's lot should be hers. The latter is called a tent or tabernacle, and Jerusalem "My tabernacle in her."

Ezekiel Chapter 24

In chapter 24 definitive judgment is pronounced against Jerusalem, who was not even ashamed of her sins. The day that Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to Jerusalem, the wife of the prophet dies; and, although she was the dearest object of his affections, Ezekiel was not to mourn. Under the figure of his wife's death he is instructed to refrain his heart before the judgment of

Jehovah. The judgment once executed, the mouth of the prophet would be opened, and the word of Jehovah openly addressed to the remnant, so that Jehovah should be known to them. Jerusalem should be set as a caldron on the fire to melt and consume the whole. God had purged her, but she was not purged; and now He causes His fury to rest upon her.

Ezekiel Chapter 25

Chapter 25 has an especial character. The nations that surrounded and that were within the territory of Israel rejoiced at the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the sanctuary. Therefore God would execute judgment upon them. Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the Philistines are the objects of this prophecy. The testimony of God against Edom is yet more developed in Obadiah. Thus, by the judgment that should fall upon them, should these nations know that, although Jerusalem had not been a faithful witness, Jehovah alone is God. Chapters 24 and 25 go together. Chapter 25 anticipates (although the date is similar) the events which gave rise to the manifestations of hatred that are the occasion of the judgments pronounced. But the spirit had shewn itself in these tribes or nations from the commencement of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem. Their introduction here is easily to be understood, for these nations were to share the same fate, and are included in this judgment, because they are all upon Israel's territory. Another remarkable element (found also in other prophecies on Edom, and giving a wider meaning to the one we are considering), is, that it declares that the judgment which shall fall on Edom in the end shall be executed by the hand of Israel. Compare Oba 1:17-18 with Verse 14 of this chapter Eze 25:14.

Ezekiel Chapter 26

The following commentary covers Chapters 26, 27, and 28.

Although in a certain sense upon Israel's territory, Tyre has another character, and is the subject of a separate prophecy (chaps. 26-28), because it represents the world and its riches, in contrast with Israel as the people of God; and rejoices, not like the others from personal hatred, but because (having opposite interests) the destruction of that which restrained its career gave free course to its natural selfishness. It is worthy of remark in

these prophecies, how God lays open all the thoughts of man with respect to His people and that which they have been towards Him.

In chapter 27, Tyre is judged for its ill-will to the people and the city of God. It is overthrown as a worldly system, and all that formed its glory disappears before the breath of Jehovah.

In chapter 28 it is the prince and the king of Tyre that are judged for their pride. Verses 1-10 (Eze 28:1-10) set before us the prince of this world's glory as a man, exalting himself and seeking to present himself as a god, having acquired riches and glory by his wisdom. Verses 11-19 (Eze 28:11-19), while continuing to speak of Tyre, go, I think, much farther, and disclose, though darkly, the fall and the ways of Satan, become through our sin the prince and god of this world. The prince of Tyre represents Tyre and the spirit of Tyre. The Verses which follow (Eze 28:11-19) are much more personal. I do not doubt that, historically, Tyre itself is referred to; Verses 16-19 (Eze 28:16-19) prove it. But, I repeat, the mind of the Spirit goes much farther. The world and its kings are presented as the garden of Jehovah on account of the advantages they enjoy. (The outward government of God is in question, which till then had recognised the different nations around Israel). This however applies more especially to Tyre, which was situated in the territory of Israel, in Emmanuel's land, and which, in the person of Hiram, had been allied with Solomon, and had even helped to build the temple. Its guilt was proportionate. It is the world in relation with God, and if the prince of Tyre represents this state of things as being the world, and a world that has been highly exalted in its capabilities by this position-an exaltation of which it boasts in deifying itself, the king represents the position itself in which, under this aspect, the world has been placed, and the forsaking of which gives it the character of apostasy. It is this character which gives occasion for the declaration of the enemy's apostasy contained in these verses. He had been where the plants of God flourished [See Note #1], he had been covered with precious stones (that is to say, with all the variety of beauty and perfection, in which the light of God is reflected and transformed when manifested in, and with respect to, creation). Here the varied reflection of these perfections had been in the creature: a creature was the means of their manifestation. It was not light, properly so called. (God is light; Christ is

the light here below, and so far as He lives in us, we are light in Him). It was the effect of light acting in the creature, like a sunbeam in a prism. It is a development of its beauty, which is not its essential perfection, but which proceeds from it.

The following are the features of the king of Tyre's character, or that of the enemy of God, the prince of this world. He is the anointed cherub-he is covered with precious stones-he has been in Eden the paradise of God, upon the mountain of God-he walked in the midst of the stones of fire-he was perfect in his ways until iniquity was found in him. He is cast out of the mountain of God on account of his iniquities; his heart was lifted up because of his beauty, and he corrupted himself. Farther, we find that which, as to the creature, is most exalted; he acts in the judicial government of God according to the intelligence of God (this is the character of the anointed cherub). He is clothed with the moral beauty that variously reflects the character of God as light [See Note #2]. He is recognised among the plants of God, in which God displayed His wisdom and His power in creation, according to His good pleasure, as Creator. He had been there also where the authority of God was exercised-on the mountain of God. He walked where the moral perfections of God were displayed in their glory, a glory before which evil could not stand-"the stones of fire." His ways had been perfect. But all these advantages were the occasion of his fall, and characterised it. For the privileges we enjoy always characterise our fall. Whence have we fallen? is the question; for it is the having failed there, when we possessed it, that degrades our condition. Moreover it is not an outward temptation, as in man's case-a circumstance which did not indeed take away man's guilt, but which modified its character. "Thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty." He exalted himself against God, and he was cast out as profane from the mountain of God. His spirit, independent in security, was humbled when he was cast to the ground. His nakedness is manifested to all; his folly shall in the end be apparent to all.

The judgment of Sidon is added. And then, all hope having been taken from Israel, when the judgment of the nations is accomplished, God gathers them and causes them to dwell in their land in peace for ever.

Note #1

We may see, Eze 31:8-9; Eze 31:16, that this is a description of the kings of the earth, at least before Nebuchadnezzar, who first substituted one sole dominion given by God, for the many kings of the nations recognised by God as the result of Babel, and in the centre of which His people were placed, to make the government of God known through their means. The special relation of Tyre with Israel added something to the position of the merchant city, and gave room also for the use made here of the history of its king as a type or figure of the prince of this world.

Note #2

Observe that this takes place in the creature. In the case of Aaron, the type of Christ as priest, it exists in the absolute perfection of grace, which presents us to God according to His perfection in the light. It is afterwards seen in the glory as the foundation of the city, the bride, the Lamb's wife, in the Revelation. That is, these stones present the fruit of perfect light-what God is in His nature shining in and through the creature, in creation, grace, and glory.

Ezekiel Chapter 29

The following commentary covers Chapters 29, 30, 31, and 32.

Chapters 29-32 contain the judgment of Egypt. Egypt sought, in the self-will of man, to take the place which God had in fact given to Nebuchadnezzar. All must submit. The mighty empire of Asshur had already fallen. Pharaoh, whatever his pretensions and his ambition might be, was no better. We see this judgment of the Assyrian, the chief of all the nations as to his power, in Eze 31:10-11; where the "mighty one of the heathen" is distinctly brought out-falling before this decree of God. Pharaoh would be consoled by seeing all the great ones of the earth overthrown like himself. Already fallen like the uncircumcised (that is, like people who were not owned of God, nor consequently upheld by Him), all must give place to this new power in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. That which characterised Egypt was the pride of nature, which would follow its own will, and owned no God (Eze 29:9). Such a principle shall no longer be the confidence of God's people (Eze 29:16). Egypt should have her place, but should no longer rule. The judgment of Egypt should be the occasion of Israel's blessing. This reaches to the end. In

the destruction of the Assyrian, God had shewn that He would not allow a nation to exalt itself in this manner. The will of man in Pharaoh did not alter His judgment. In Nebuchadnezzar, as we have seen, a new principle was introduced by God Himself into the world. Observe that in Eze 32:27 Meshech and Tubal are distinguished from the rest of the nations.

This prophecy concerning Egypt has particular importance. It is composed of three distinct prophecies. The first (chaps. 29, 30) is subdivided; the second, chapter 31; the third, chapter 32. But this last extends to the end of chapter 39, and embraces several subjects in connection with the fate of Israel in the last days. Observe that Eze 29:17-21 is a prophecy of a very different date, introduced here on account of its relation to that which precedes it in the same chapter. Eze 30:20-26 is also a distinct prophecy as to its date.

Until chapter 25 we principally found moral arguments with respect to the state of Israel; from thence to the end of chapter 32 it is rather the execution of the judgment. But the prophecy that announces this execution is remarkable in more than one respect. Nebuchadnezzar is looked at as executing the judgment of God, whose servant he is for the purpose of doing so on Jerusalem, now become pre-eminently the seat of iniquity although the sanctuary of God. At the same time God sets His land free, by these very judgments from all the nations that wrongfully possessed it. He brings to nought the haughty power of man in which Israel had trusted, that is, Egypt, which shall never rise again as a ruling nation. But it was the day of all nations. The result of these judgments, whether on rebellious Jerusalem or on the nations, should be at the same time the re-establishment of Israel according to promise and by the power of God in grace. The snares which had led them into evil were taken away (see Eze 26:16-21; Eze 27:34-36). Thus, although these events have had their historical accomplishment by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the ways of God in view of the re-establishment of Israel have been manifested, as far as regards the judgments to be executed - judgment, through which all the nations, as well as Israel, who was their centre, disappear from the scene as nations. The Spirit, while recounting the execution of the judgments that were to fall on Asshur, Elam, and Meshech, gives details of those that had invaded the land or been snares to Israel. So that the prophetic recital of these very judgments contains in itself the

assured hope granted to Israel by the efficacious grace of the Lord. I cannot doubt that all this prophecy of judgment relates-in a perspective brought nigh by the energy of the Spirit-to the events of the last days, which will be the complete fulfilment of these purposes and intentions of God. In Eze 30:3, we see that it is universal [See Note #1]. I have already quoted the passages which shew that for Israel it is the deliverance from their former snares. The pretensions of man are overthrown (Eze 29:3-9), the spirit of dominion (Eze 31:10-14). The nothingness of the glory of man is shewn at the end of chapter 31, and of each judgment of chapter 32. We have already seen that the fate of Meshech is mentioned separately, perhaps in view of that which will happen to it in the last days, and which is announced farther on (Eze 39:5).

It is important to remark one point in this series of prophecies, which commences with the judgment of Jerusalem, the centre of the former system of nations. They are executed with the object of making them all know Jehovah: only in Israel's case there is, besides this, the understanding and the special verification of prophecy. See Eze 24:24-27, Israel; Eze 25:5; Eze 25:7; Eze 25:11, Ammon and Moab; Eze 25:15-17, especial vengeance on the Philistines; chapter 26, Tyre; Eze 28:22, Sidon; Eze 29:19, Egypt; as also Eze 30:26; Eze 32:15. With respect to Edom (Eze 25:14), it is only said that Edom shall know the vengeance of Jehovah by means of Israel-a further proof that in certain respects this prophecy extends to the last days. These prophecies, then, furnish us in general with the manifestation of Jehovah's power, so as to make Him known to all by the judgments which He executed; already partially realised in the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar, but to be fully accomplished by-and-by in favour of Israel. It will be remarked that, in Verse 12 of chapter 35 (Eze 35:12) when Edom is again judged, it is only said, "Thou shalt know that I Jehovah have heard all thy blasphemies." But in Verses 4, 9 (Eze 35:4; Eze 35:9), it is said of Edom, "Thou shalt know" or "Ye shall know that I am Jehovah." So that this knowledge of Jehovah is by the judgment itself, not by any resulting spiritual knowledge of Him; for, when all the earth shall rejoice, Edom shall be made desolate. It will be through judgment that all the nations shall know that Jehovah is God. But when the judgment has been executed and all the earth shall rejoice in blessing, Edom will have only judgment. Compare Obadiah. Edom

undergoes judgment by means of the mighty among the nations, but Israel himself shall strike the final blow. We may see the two means of making Jehovah known in the case of Israel (Eze 24:24-27; Eze 28:26; Eze 34:27; Eze 36:11). In the other cases it is by judgment.

We have yet to observe that in the case of Tyre, commercial glory, and in the case of Egypt, governmental pride founded on power, are absolutely judged, cast down and destroyed without remedy (Eze 26:21; Eze 27:36; Eze 31:18). Compare Eze 32:32. This has been literally fulfilled with respect to the continental Tyre, and the Egypt of the Pharaohs. We have seen a total destruction of Edom announced by Jehovah. That which characterised Edom was its implacable hatred to the people of God.

Note #1

It will be remembered that with Nebuchadnezzar God set aside the order He had previously established in the world, revealed in Deuteronomy 32 (namely, of nations and peoples arranged around Israel as a centre). He owns Israel no longer as His people. Thus order then falls of itself, and Babel of old, the place of dispersion, becomes the centre of one absorbing empire. In connection with the fact that Israel is no longer owned as a people, being judged as such, God addresses Himself to individual conscience in the midst of the nation. But this was the judgment of the nations, and the call of a remnant. And this is why the prophecy reaches in its full bearing to the final judgment of the earth, when that judgment and call are to be fully accomplished. God consequently Himself delivers and saves His people, judging between sheep and sheep, and executing wrath against all those who have trodden them under foot. The judgment of the one absorbing empire does not form part of the prophecies of Ezekiel (this is found in Daniel), save so far as every oppressor and evil shepherd is judged (chap. 34). The connection of this empire with Israel in the last days will not be immediate. It will politically favour the Jews who do not own the Lord. What I here notice forms the key of the prophecy. Ezekiel speaks from the midst of Israel captive, and does not occupy himself with Judah, owned by itself in the land under the power of the Gentiles.

Ezekiel Chapter 33

In chapter 33, in view of these judgments, which put His people on entirely new ground (for they were judged as Loammi, with the nations, and this is why the prophecy can look on to the last days, although the judgments had been but partial)-in view then of these judgments, God establishes an entirely new principle, namely, individual conduct as the ground of the dealings of God, in contrast with the consequences of national sin (Eze 33:10-11). Thus the door was still fully open to individual repentance founded on a testimony that applied individually, whatever the national judgment might be. The end to which the judgment applies is in contrast with the effect to be produced by it on the individual, and that in order to confirm the principles. Faith would not be shewn now by reckoning on the promises to Israel, or on the intervention of God in behalf of His people as in possession of His promises, for the people were judged; and the very thing that would have been faith, had it been the time of the promises, and that hereafter also will be faith, is but hardness of heart in the time of judgment (Eze 33:24). Compare Isa 51:2, a passage often entirely misapplied. The little remnant in the latter days may trust in a God who had called out one man alone and had multiplied him; but such a thought on the part of the people, when God was cutting off the multitude of them because of their iniquities, would only cause the judgment to be more keenly felt. In this way of judgment on the iniquities of which they had been nationally guilty (and not by a blessing which presumption would snatch from God), they should know that Jehovah was God.

Ezekiel Chapter 34

The end of Jeremiah has given us an account of the fulfilment of Ezekiel's words; but all these judgments give room for the intervention of God in behalf of His people by means of sovereign grace accomplished in the Messiah. Still the evil lay in the shepherds, that is, in the kings and princes of Israel, who were not true shepherds (indeed there were none true); and the flock, diseased, scattered, afflicted, and ill-treated, were a prey to their enemies. The shepherds devoured them, and neither protected nor cared for them. But Jehovah now points it out in order to say that He Himself would seek out His poor sheep, and would judge between sheep and sheep, and would deliver them from the mouth of those that devoured them [See

Note #1], and that He would feed them upon the mountains of Israel, and in fat pastures. He would raise up the true and only shepherd, David (that is, the well-beloved Messiah). Jehovah should be their God, and His servant David their prince. The covenant of peace should be re-established; full and secure blessing should be the abiding portion of the people of God, the house of Israel. There should be no more famine in their land, and the nations should no more devour them. Observe here the way in which Jehovah Himself delivers His sheep, without calling Himself their shepherd, and then raises up a plant of renown, the true David, as their shepherd.

Note #1

The thirty-third chapter having stated the great principles of God's dealings in the last days, namely, individual condition before God, chapter 34 exhibits the conduct of their leaders: Jehovah judges the latter as having misled and oppressed His people; He discerns Himself "between cattle and cattle." Then in chapter 35 Edom is judged (compare Isaiah 34). Here, in general, it is the effect, relating to all Israel ("these two countries"). In chapter 36 is the moral renewing of all Israel, that they may judge their ways; in chapter 37, the restoration of the people, as quickened by God in national resurrection; and at last (chaps. 38 and 39) the judgment of the enemies of the people thus restored in peace, or rather, of the enemy (that is, Gog). All these things are connected with the relationship between Jehovah and His people. Although He gives David as king, yet the Messiah is not named as having had relations with the people; for in fact this was only true of Judah. It is a general picture of the last days in their great results and their events, everything having its place in reference to all Israel, without giving a history of details.

Ezekiel Chapter 35

In chapter 35 God decides the controversy between Edom and Israel, and condemns Mount Seir to perpetual desolation, because of the inveterate hatred of that people to Israel; and instead of delivering up Israel to Edom in the day that He chastises His people, it is Edom that shall bear the punishment of this hatred, when the whole earth shall rejoice. When God

chastises His people, the world thinks to possess everything; whereas that chastisement is but the precursor of the world's judgment.

Ezekiel Chapter 36

Chapter 36 continues the same subject with reference to the blessing of Israel. The nations insulted Israel as a land whose ancient high places were their prey, and-as the spies had said-a land that devoured its inhabitants. God takes occasion from this to shew that He favours His people, and Jehovah declares that He will restore peace and prosperity to the land and take away their reproach. Israel had defiled the land and profaned the name of Jehovah, and Jehovah had scattered them among the heathen. And even in this His name would be profaned through their vileness, because the heathen would say, "These are the people of Jehovah, and are gone forth out of his land." But Jehovah would intervene and sanctify His great name before the heathen, by bringing His people back from among them, and cleansing them from all their filthiness; taking away the hardness of their hearts, giving them His Spirit, causing them to walk in His statutes, planting them in the land which He had given to their fathers, owning them as His people, and being Himself their God. The reproach that the land devoured its inhabitants would then be evidently without foundation. God would multiply earthly blessings to His people. Jehovah's work should be evident to all men.

It is principally to this passage (although not exclusively) that the Lord Jesus alludes in John 3, telling Nicodemus that He had spoken of earthly things, and that, as a master of Israel, he ought to have understood that this renewing of heart was necessary to the blessing of Israel in the earth. The truth of this, with regard to a Jew, ought not to surprise him, since it was a work of sovereignty in whomsoever should be born of God; and if Nicodemus did not understand the declaration of the prophets, with respect to the necessity of being born again for Israel's enjoyment of earthly things, how could he understand if Jesus spoke to him of heavenly things, for the introduction of which the death of the Son of man, His rejection by the Jews, was absolutely necessary?

We may remark that this prophet speaks of the dealings of God with respect to Israel as a nation responsible to Jehovah, and never says anything of the first coming of Christ or of Israel's responsibility with regard to Him. This took place under the dominion of the Gentiles. Here Nebuchadnezzar is but a rod in the hand of Jehovah, and the times of the Gentiles are not considered. This is the reason why we find the judgment of the nations by Nebuchadnezzar connected with the events of the last days. The rejection of Christ by the Jews is therefore not mentioned here. It is Israel before Jehovah. This remark is important in order to understand Ezekiel (see preceding note).

Ezekiel Chapter 37

Chapter 37 reveals the definitive blessing of the people as a fact, without entering into any details of the events that terminate in this blessing. The dry bones of Israel, of the nation as a whole, are gathered together by the power of God. God accomplishes this work by His Spirit, but by His Spirit acting in power on His people to produce certain effects rather than in giving spiritual life (although it is not to be doubted that those who are blessed among the Jews will be spiritually quickened). The result of this intervention of God is that the dispersed of Israel, hitherto divided into two peoples, are gathered together in the earth, reunited under one Head, as one nation. It is the resurrection of the nation, which was really dead and buried. But God opens their graves, and places them again in their land restored to life as a nation. The fact of their division before this operation of God is recognised. But the result of the operation is Israel in their unity as a people. One king should reign over them. This, under God's hand, is the result of all their iniquity, and of the devices of the enemies who had carried them into captivity. David (that is, Christ) should be their king. They should be thoroughly cleansed by God Himself. They should walk in His statutes and His judgments, and dwell for ever in their land. The sanctuary of God should be in their midst for evermore; His tabernacle, His dwelling-place, should be among them, He their God and they His people. The heathen should know that Jehovah sanctified Israel, when His sanctuary should be there for ever. It is the full national blessing of Israel from the Lord Jehovah.

Ezekiel Chapter 38

The following commentary covers Chapters 38 and 39.

Gog, not fearing Jehovah, seeks to take possession of the land. He has no thought that Jehovah is there. His pride blinds him.

It is very important to remark that Ezekiel speaks neither of the first nor the second coming of Christ, nor of the circumstances of the Jews in connection with the empire of the Gentiles. The latter only appear as instruments performing the will of God. The prophet brings Jehovah and Israel into the scene. He presents Christ indeed, but as being there already and in the character of David. Jehovah raises up for them a plant of renown. His coming is not the question. The judgments of Jehovah upon the earth make Him known to the nations and to Israel (to the latter His blessings also). The nations learn through these, a point of capital importance in God's ways, that Israel went into captivity because of their sins, and not because their God was like the idols of the heathen. But in all the ways of God thus presented, not only is the coming of Christ not mentioned, but it has even no place. It belongs to another series of thoughts and revelations of the Spirit of God-another order of events.

It is well also to observe that chapters 36 and 37, and the two following ones taken together, are not consecutive; but each of the first two by itself, and the last two, taken together as a whole, treat of distinct subjects, each subject being complete, and presenting the introduction of Israel's blessing in connection with the subject treated, and closing with the assurance that it will be final and perpetual. The subject of all these prophecies is the land, and the blessings of God upon the land of Israel. This land, which belonged to Jehovah, He would not have defiled. He drives out Israel from it in judgment; and when He has cleansed the people, He makes the nations, as well as Israel, understand His ways in this respect. He acts in full grace towards His people He makes it known that they are His people, that He will be sanctified, and that He is sanctified, in their midst.

I think, then, that Gog is the end of all the dealings of God with respect to Israel, and that God brings up this haughty power in order to manifest on earth, by a final judgment, His dealings with Israel and with the Gentiles, and

to plant His blessing, His sanctuary, and His glory in the midst of Israel (none of the people being henceforth left in exile afar from their land).

Besides the numerous Verses in which it is said, "And they shall know that I am Jehovah," the following passages may be referred to, which will shew the leading thought in those declarations and judgments of God, namely, the manifestation of His government on the earth—a government making manifest the true character of God in His rule, and securing its demonstration in the world, in spite of the unfaithfulness of His people; and that, in grace as well as in holiness, Eze 36:19-23; Eze 36:36; Eze 39:7; Eze 39:23-24; Eze 39:28. With respect to Israel, see Eze 34:30; to the enemy, Eze 35:12 and Eze 37:28.

That which I have just said of Gog supposes that all the events which relate to the coming of the Son of man are omitted in the writings of this prophet—which I believe to be the case. The Book treats only of the governmental ways of God on the earth, of Jehovah in Israel. The power designated by "Gog" is that of the north, outside of the territory of the beasts in Daniel. I doubt not that the right translation would be "Prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal," as learned men have remarked. Cush and Phut were on the Euphrates, as well as on the Nile. Persia is known. Togarmah is the north-east of Asia Minor. The audaciousness of this king causes the wrath of Jehovah to break forth.

I will add, in order to facilitate the establishment of the connection of this with other passages, that I doubt not Jesus will reign in the character of David before assuming that of Solomon. He suffered as David, driven away by the jealousy of Saul. The remnant will pass through this in principle. This is the key to the Book of Psalms. He will reign as David, Israel being blessed and accepted, but all their enemies not yet destroyed. And, finally, He will reign as Solomon, that is to say, as Prince of peace. Many passages, such as Micah 5, several chapters in Zechariah, Jer 51:20-21; Eze 25:14, speak of this time, in which Israel, already reconciled and acknowledged and at peace within, shall be the instrument for executing Jehovah's judgments without (compare Isa 11:10-14).

All, then, that related to the destruction of the empires which are the subject of Daniel's prophecies has no place in the prophecies of Ezekiel; nor that which takes place in order to put Israel again in relation with God; nor the consequences to the Jews of their rejection of Christ. These subjects will be found elsewhere, as in Daniel, Zechariah, and more generally in Isaiah. Here God makes Himself known in Israel. Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, falls upon the mountains of Israel, and Jehovah makes Himself known in the eyes of many nations (Eze 38:21-23). The judgment shall reach the land of Gog, and the isles (Eze 39:6). The name of Jehovah shall be known in Israel, and the heathen shall know that Jehovah, the Holy One, is in Israel (Eze 39:7). And, the glory of Jehovah being thus manifested in the midst of the nations, Israel from this day forth shall know that it is Jehovah Himself who is their God, and the nations shall know that it was the iniquity of Israel that brought judgment upon them, and not that Jehovah had failed either in power or in the stability of His counsels (Eze 39:22-24). In a word, Jehovah and His government should be fully known in Israel, and by means of this people in the world; and from that time God would no more hide His face from them. His Spirit should be poured out upon His people. Verses 25-29 (Eze 39:25-29) recapitulate the dealings of God towards them for the establishment of His government, and to make Himself known among them.

Ezekiel Chapter 40

The following commentary covers Chapters 40, 41, 42, and 43.

The remaining part of the prophecy is the establishment of His sanctuary in the midst of His people. The reader will perceive that we find in these last chapters a revelation of the same kind as that given to Moses for the tabernacle, and to David for the temple-only that in this case the details are preserved in the writings given to the people by inspiration, as a testimony for the time to come, and to conscience in all times. God takes an interest in His people. He will reestablish His sanctuary among men. Meantime the testimony of this has been given to the people to bring them under the responsibility which this good-will of God towards them involved. For the prophet was commanded to tell the house of Israel all that he had seen; and he did so. When the dimensions of the different parts of the house have been given, the glory of Jehovah fills the house, in the vision, as happened

historically at the dedication of the tabernacle and of the temple. Eze 43:7 proclaims that the house, which is the throne and the footstool of Jehovah, should no more be defiled by profane things. The prophet was then to declare that, if Israel renounced their unfaithfulness, Jehovah would return to dwell there. Thus the people are placed at all times under this responsibility. The prophet was to shew the house to Israel that they might repent; and, if they repented, he was to explain it to them in detail. And it is this which takes place at the end. The ordinances of the house were to be shewn them, if they humbled themselves; and in view of this the prophet announces all that was to be done for the cleansing and the consecration of the altar, in order that the regular service might be performed.

Ezekiel Chapter 44

Chapter 44 makes known the fact that Jehovah is returned to His house, and the memorial of His having done so is preserved in that the door by which He entered is to remain for ever shut. The Prince alone (for God will raise up a Prince in Israel) is to enter through it-to sit before Jehovah. We have seen that this prophet always contemplates Israel on their own ground, as an earthly people in relation with the throne of God on the earth (compare Zac 12:7-8; Zac 12:10). Finally God maintains the holiness of His house against all strangers, and even against the Levites who had forsaken it. The family of Zadok is established in the priesthood, and directions are given to keep it from all profanation.

Ezekiel Chapter 45

The following commentary covers Chapters 45 and 46.

The portion of the priests in the land is assigned them-close to that of the sanctuary. The portion of the Levites was to adjoin that of the priests, and then came the possession of the city and its suburbs. That which remained of the breadth of the land was for the Prince and for the inheritance of His children, in order that the people should no longer be oppressed. All the rest of the land was for the people. Provision is also made for the daily offerings, and for those of the Sabbath. The other appointed offerings were to be made by the Prince.

Some details require one or two remarks. The cleansing of the sanctuary commences the year. It is no longer an atonement at the end of seven months to take away the defilements that have been accumulating. The year opens with an already accomplished cleansing. Afterwards, in order that all may have communion with the sufferings of the Paschal Lamb, an offering is made on the seventh day of the month for every one that erreth, and every one that is simple (Eze 45:20). During the feast they offered seven bullocks instead of two. The character of worship will be perfect. The sense of Christ's acceptance as the burnt-offering will be perfect in that day. The feast of Pentecost is omitted—a circumstance of great significance, for this feast characterises our present position. Not that the Spirit will not be given in the world to come, when Christ shall establish His kingdom. But this gift is not that which, connecting us with a heavenly Christ and the Father in Christ's absence, characterises that period as it does the present time. For Christ will be present.

We have observed that the prophet sees everything in a point of view connected with Israel. Thus the remembrance of redemption, the passover, the basis of all, and the enjoyment of rest celebrated at the feast of the tabernacles, will characterise the position of Israel before God. The two feasts are celebrated in the recognition of the full value of the burnt offering presented to God. Another circumstance which distinguishes the worship of this millennial day is, that the two feasts which are types of that period are marked out in the worship—the Sabbath, and the new moon, rest and re-establishment, Israel appearing anew in the world. The inner gate on the side of the east was open on that day, and the Prince worshipped at the very threshold of the gate and the people before the gate (chap. 46). The other days it was shut. They stood thus before Jehovah in the consciousness of the rest which God had given to Israel and of His grace in again manifesting His people in the light. Nevertheless it still remains true that neither the people nor the Prince entered within. Those who are the most blessed on the earth in that day of blessing will never have that access into God's presence which we have, by the Spirit, through the veil. Pentecost belongs to, and links itself with, the rending of the veil; and gives us to walk in all liberty in the light, as God Himself is in the light, having entered into the holy place by the new and living way which He has consecrated for us, through

the veil, that is to say, His flesh. The Prince entered by the outer door on the side of the east, and he went out by the same door. In the solemn feasts, the people went in by the north gate and came out by the south gate, and the Prince in their midst. When he went in alone, as a voluntary worshipper, he entered and retired again by the eastern gate. These ordinances, while giving remarkable honour to the Prince, in connection with the glory of God, who gave him his place among the people, equally secured that which follows (Eze 46:16-18) of the brotherly and benevolent relations between him and the people of God, and took away all opportunities of oppression.

Ezekiel Chapter 47

The following commentary covers Chapters 47 and 48.

The last two chapters do not require any lengthened remarks. The waters that issue from the sanctuary represent the life-giving power that proceeds from the throne of God, flowing through His temple, and healing the Dead Sea, the abiding token of judgment. The waters abound in fish, the trees that grow beside them are filled with fruit, the marshes alone remain under the curse—they are "given to salt." The blessing of that day is real and abundant, but not complete. The land is divided between the tribes in a new manner, by straight lines drawn from east to west. The portion for the sanctuary and for the city, or the 25,000 square reeds, are situated next to the seventh tribe, beginning from the north. The name of the city thenceforth shall be "Jehovah is there." Compare, for the waters that flow from the temple, Joe 3:18; Zac 14:8 - passages that refer to the same period.

It appears that the two places pointed out to the fishermen as a boundary were the two extremities of the Dead Sea (we may compare Gen 14:7; Ch2 20:2; and Isa 15:8). The main features in the whole passage are the re-establishment of Israel, but on new grounds and blessing, analogous to that of paradise (an image borrowed from this prophecy in the Apocalypse) [See Note #1]; but, after all, with the reserve that this blessing did not absolutely remove all evil, as will be the case in the eternal ages.

There is a powerful and abiding source of blessing which greatly surmounts the evil, and almost effaces it; nevertheless it is not entirely taken away. Still the name of the city, of the seat of power, that which characterises it, is

"Jehovah is there"-Jehovah, that great King, the Creator of all things, and the Head of His people Israel.

Note #1

When I say "borrowed," it is not that the Spirit of God has not given us an original image in the Apocalypse: one has but to read it to be convinced of the contrary. But Old Testament imagery is constantly employed in the descriptions there given-only in such a manner as to apply it to heavenly things, a circumstance that makes it much easier to understand the book by helping us to enter into its real character through its analogy with the Old Testament.

DANIEL

Introduction to Daniel

In the Book of Ezekiel we have seen the government of God on earth fully developed in connection with Israel; whether in condemning the sin which occasioned the judgment of that people, or in their restoration under the authority of Christ, the Branch that should spring from the house of David, and who, in the book of that prophet, bears even the name of David, as the true "beloved" of God, the description of the temple, with its whole organisation, being given at the end. In this development we have found Nebuchadnezzar, the head of the Gentiles, introduced as Jehovah's servant (Dan 29:20; Dan 30:24) for the judgment of sinful Israel, who were rebellious and even apostate, worshipping false gods. God had made Israel the centre of a system of nations, peoples, and languages, that had arisen in consequence of the judgment on Babel, and existed before God independently of each other. The nation of Israel was doubtless very distinct from all that surrounded it, whether as a people to whom the true God was known, or as having in their midst the temple and the throne of God; but, whatever the contrast might be between the condition of Israel as a nation, and that of the other nations, still Israel formed a part of that system of nations before God (Deu 32:8).

In executing the judgment of God on Israel Nebuchadnezzar set aside this whole system at once, and took its place in the absolute and universal dominion which he had received from God. It is of this order of things and of its consequences-of this dominion of the head of the Gentiles, and of the Gentile kings, in the successive phases that characterised their history-that the Book of Daniel treats, bringing into notice a remnant of Israel, in the midst of this system, and subject to this dominion. The king of Judah having been given up into the hands of the head of the Gentiles, the royal seed is found in the same position. The remnant becomes the especial object of the thoughts of God revealed by His Spirit in this book.

Besides the testimony rendered to Jehovah by the fact of the faithfulness of the remnant in the midst of the idolatrous Gentiles, two important things characterise their history as developed in this book. The first is that the Spirit of prophecy and of understanding in the ways of God is found in this remnant. We have seen this raised up in Samuel, when all Israel had failed, and subsist through their whole history under the shadow of royalty. The Spirit of prophecy now again becomes the link of the people with God, and the only resting-place for their faith, amid the ruin which the just judgment of God had brought upon them. The second circumstance that characterises the dealings of God with regard to this remnant is, that, preserved by God through all the misfortunes into which the sins of the people had cast them, this remnant will assuredly share the portion which God bestows on His people according to His government and according to the faithfulness of His promises. We find these in the first and last chapters of the Book we are considering.

This Book is divided into two parts, which are easily distinguished. The first ends with chapter 6, and the second with the close of the Book, the first and last chapters having nevertheless a separate character, as an introduction and a conclusion, respectively making known the position of the remnant, to whom, as we have said, the testimony of God was confided at the beginning and at the end.

The two great divisions have also a distinct character. The first sets before us the picture of the dominion of the Gentiles, and the different positions it would assume before God according to the human pride which would be its animating principle. This picture contains historical features which plainly indicate the spirit that will animate the ruling power in its different phases; and then the judgment of God. This division is not composed of direct revelations to Daniel, except for the purpose of recalling Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It is the heads of the Gentiles that are presented. It is the external and general history of the monarchies that were to succeed each other, or the different and successive features that would characterise them, and their final judgment, and the substitution of the kingdom of Christ; and especially, the course and judgment of the one which God had Himself established, and which represents all the others, as being invested with this

character of divine appointment. The others did but inherit providentially the throne which God had committed to the first. It was a question between God and Israel that gave this monarchy its supremacy. It is the spirit of presumptuous idolatry, and of blasphemy against the God of Israel that leads to its destruction. Chapter 6 does not give the iniquity of the king, except as submitting to the influence of others. It is the princes of the people who will have none but the king acknowledged as God, and who undergo the same punishment that they sought to inflict on those who were faithful to the Lord.

The second part of the Book, which consists of communications made by God to Daniel himself, exhibits the character of the heads of the Gentiles in relation to the earth, and their conduct towards those who shall acknowledge God; and at last the establishment of the divine kingdom in the Person of the Son of man—a kingdom possessed by the saints. The details of God's dealings with His people at the end are given in the last chapter. We may also remark that chapter 7 gives essentially the history of the western power, chapter 8 that of the eastern—the two horns. Chapter 9, although especially regarding Jerusalem and the people—the moral centre of these questions, is connected on that very account with the western power that invaded them. From chapter 10 to the end of chapter 11 we are again in the east, closing in with the judgment of the nations there, and the establishment of the remnant of Israel in blessing.

Let us now examine these chapters consecutively.

Daniel Chapter 1

Daniel 1:1

dan 1:1

Chapter 1 sets before us the royalty of Judah, formerly established by God over His people in the person of David, falling under the power of Nebuchadnezzar; and the king, Jehovah's anointed, given up by Jehovah into the hands of the head of the Gentiles, on whom God now bestowed dominion. That which was announced by Isaiah (Dan 39:7) falls upon the children of the royal seed; but God watches over them and brings them into

favour with those that kept them. This was especially the case with respect to Daniel; The two characteristics of the faithful remnant in captivity are prominently marked in this chapter:-firstly, faithful to the will of God, although at a distance from His temple, they do not defile themselves among the Gentiles; secondly, their prayer being granted, understanding is given them, as we see in chapter 2 in Daniel's case, even the knowledge of that which God alone can reveal, as well as His purpose in that revelation. They alone possess this understanding, a token of divine favour and the fruit of their faithfulness through grace. This is the case with Daniel in particular, whose faith and earnest fidelity marks out the path of faith for his companions. This did not interfere with their subjection to the Gentiles, whose power was the ordinance of God for the time being. But this is a most important element: the place of true knowledge, of intelligence of the divine mind, what is called the secret of the Lord, in the days of Babylonish corruption and power, is the thorough keeping oneself undefiled by the smallest contact with what it gives, with the meat with which it would feed us.

Daniel Chapter 2

On the other hand, we see in the second chapter the mighty king of the Gentiles made the depositary of the history of the Gentiles, and of God's entire plan, as the recipient of these divine communications; yet in such a manner as to exhibit Daniel, the captive child of Israel, the faithful one who kept himself separate in Babylon as the one whom the Lord acknowledged, and who enjoyed His favour. But the details of this chapter, as a general picture of Gentile power, beginning with the dominion bestowed on Nebuchadnezzar, must be considered more attentively.

We may first observe that the Gentile kingdoms are seen as a whole. It is neither historical succession nor moral features with respect to God and man, but the kingdoms all together forming, as it were, a personage before God, the man of the earth in the eye of God-glorious and terrible in his public splendour in the eyes of men. Four imperial powers were to succeed each other, as the great head of which God had set up Nebuchadnezzar himself. There should be in certain respects a progressive deterioration; and at length the God of heaven would raise up another power that would execute

judgment on that which still existed, and cause the image to disappear from off the earth, setting up in its place a kingdom that should never be overthrown. In the progressive decline in principle and character of imperial power there would be no diminution of material strength. Iron, that breaks in pieces and crushes all things, characterises the fourth power. The peculiar excellency of the head of gold appears to me to consist in its having received authority immediately from God Himself. In fact the absolute authority of the first power was founded on the gift of the God of heaven; the others succeeded by providential principles. But God, known as supreme, bestowing authority on the head, replacing His own authority on the earth by that of the head of the Gentiles, was not the immediate source of authority to the others. Babylon was the authority established of God. And therefore we found in Ezekiel (and the same thing is seen elsewhere) that the judgment of Babylon is connected with the restoration of Israel and of the throne of God.

Observe, nevertheless, that God does not here present Himself as God of earth, but of heaven. In Israel He was God of the earth. He will be so again at the restitution of all things. Here He acts in sovereignty as God of heaven, setting up man, in a certain sense, in His place on the earth (see Dan 2:37-38). Although more limited, it is a dominion characterised by the same features as that of Adam. It differs in that men are placed under his power; it is more limited, for the sea is not included in his sovereignty, but it reaches to every place where the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven exist. Human strength is found at the end of its history; but the subsisting power is much more remote from the ancient relationship of God with the world.

The mixture of iron and of potter's clay is a change wrought in the primitive character of the imperial Roman power-another element is introduced into it; the character remains in part, but another element is added. The energetic will of man is not there in an absolute manner. It is the introduction into the imperial Roman power of an element distinct from that which constituted its imperial strength, namely, the will of man devoid of conscience-military and popular power concentrated in one individual without conscience. There are two causes here of weakness-division and the

want of coherence between the elements. The kingdom (Dan 2:41) shall be divided, and (Dan 2:42) it shall be partly strong and partly brittle. The "seed of men" is, I think, something outside of that which characterises the proper strength of the kingdom. But these two elements will never combine. It appears to me that the Barbaric or Teutonic element is probably here pointed out as added to that which originally constituted the Roman empire. The fact of a subdivision is seen in Dan 2:43. It is then announced that, in the days of these last kings, He who rules from heaven will set up a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and that shall never pass into other hands. This is properly the only kingdom that, on God's part, takes the place of the kingdom of Babylon. The God of heaven had established Nebuchadnezzar in his kingdom, and had given him power, and strength, and glory, making all men subject to him. Doubtless the three others had followed, according to the will of Him who orders all things. But it is only with respect to the kingdom of Dan 2:44, that it is once more said, "the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom." The character, and some leading features in the history, of the last four of the kingdoms are given. Nothing but the existence of the two preceding ones is stated, except the inferiority of the latter of the two to the first. So that the Spirit of God gives us the divine establishment of the first, the character of the fourth, and the divine establishment of the fifth or final kingdom.

We will now observe the manner in which this last kingdom is established; and we see that it is accomplished by means of a judicial and destructive act which reduces the image to powder, bringing about its complete dissolution, so that no traces of it are left (Dan 2:34-35). The instrument of this destruction was not formed by the wisdom or the schemes of man. It is "cut out without hands." It does not act by a moral influence that changes the character of the object on which it acts. It destroys that object by force. It is God who establishes it and gives it that force. The stone does not gradually increase in size to displace the image. Before it extends itself, it destroys the image. When it has become great-it is not merely a right given by God over men, it fills the whole earth-it is the exalted seat of a universal authority. It is on the last form of power, exhibited in the image, that the stone falls with destructive force-when the empire is divided and is partly strong and partly weak on account of the elements of which its members

are composed. We may observe, that it is not God destroying the image in another way to establish the kingdom. The kingdom which He is establishing smites the feet of the image as its first act. It is the outward and general history of that which, by God's appointment, took the place of His throne and His government in Jerusalem, and which had gradually degenerated in its public character with respect to God, and which at length comes to its end by the judgment executed by the kingdom established of God without human agency. The kingdom of Christ, which falls on the last form of the monarchy formerly established by God, destroys the whole form of its existence, and itself fills the world.

I have nothing particular to say on the four monarchies. We find Babylon, Persia, and Greece named in the book, as being already known to the Jews, and the Romans introduced by the name which their territory bore, the coasts of Chittim; so that I receive, without further question, the four great empires ordinarily recognised by every one as pointed out in this prophecy. It does not appear to me that these prophecies leave room for any doubt on the subject.

The effect of the communication, which proves that God is with the remnant who alone understand His mind, is that the haughty Gentile acknowledges the God of Israel as supreme in heaven and on earth. That which characterises the remnant here is that God reveals to them His mind.

Daniel Chapter 3

After this general picture, we have, historically, the characteristic features of these empires, marking the condition into which they fall, through their departure from God-primarily and principally Babylon. In chapter 3 we have the first characteristic feature of man invested with imperial power, but whose heart is afar from God-a distance augmented by the very possession of power. He will have a god of his own, a god dependent on the will of man; and, in this case, dependent on the depository of the imperial power. This is man's wisdom. The religious instincts of men are gratified in connection with the supreme power; and the influences of religion are exercised in binding all the members of the empire in one blended mass around the head, by the strongest bond, without any appearance of

authority. For the religious wants of man are thus connected with his own will; and his will is unconsciously subject to the centre of power. Otherwise religion, the most powerful motive of the heart, becomes a dissolvent in the empire. But the will of man cannot make a true god; and consequently Nebuchadnezzar, although he had confessed that there was none like the God of the Jews, forsakes Him and makes a god for himself. The Gentile government rejects God, the source of its power; and the true God is only acknowledged by a faithful and suffering remnant. The empire is idolatrous.

This is the first great feature that characterises the dominion of Babylon. But the faithfulness that opposes this wise system which binds the most powerful motive of the whole people to the will of their head, uniting them in worship around that which he presents to them—faithfulness like this touches the mainspring of the whole movement. The idol is not God at all; and, however powerful man may be, he cannot create a god. The man of faith, subject indeed to the king, as we have seen, because appointed of God, is not subject to the false god which the king sets up, denying the true God who gave him his authority, and who is still acknowledged by the man of faith. But power is in the king's hands; and he will have it known that his will is supreme. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are cast into the fiery furnace. But it is in the sufferings of His people that God in the end appears as God. He allows their faithfulness to be tried in the place where evil exists, that they may be with Him in the enjoyment of happiness in the place where His character and His power are fully manifested, whether on this earth, or in a yet more excellent manner in heaven.

We may observe that faith and obedience are as absolute as the will of the king. Nothing can be finer and more calm than the answer of the three believers. God is able to deliver, and He will deliver; but, happen what may, they will not forsake Him. The king in his fury defies God. "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" God allows him to take his own way. The effect of his headlong rage is that the instruments of his vengeance are destroyed by the fierce flames prepared for the faithful Hebrews. The latter are cast into the furnace, and (outwardly) the king's will is accomplished. But this is only to manifest more brightly the power and the faithfulness of God, who comes, even into the midst of the fire, to prove the interest He

takes in the fidelity of His servants. The effect, to them, of the fire is that their bands are consumed, and that they have His presence whose form is like the Son of God, even in the eyes of the king who denied His almighty power. The result is a decree forbidding the whole world to speak against the God of the Jews, the glory of that weak and captive people. Remark here that the remnant are characterised by their faithfulness and obedience. They manifest their faithfulness by refusing to have any god but their own God: no concession-it would be to deny Him. For, to acknowledge the true God, He alone must be acknowledged. Truth is but the full revelation of Him and can only recognise itself. To put itself on a level with falsehood would be saying it was not truth.

We find three principles marked out with respect to the remnant. They do not defile themselves by partaking of that which the world bestows-the king's meat. They have understanding in the mind and revelations of God. They are faithful in refusing absolutely to acknowledge any god but their own, who is the true God. The first principle is common to them all. The second is the Spirit of prophecy, of which Daniel is here the vessel. The third is the portion of every believer, although there may be no Spirit of prophecy. The nearer we are to the power of the world, the more likelihood there is of suffering if we are faithful. It must be observed that all this is connected with the position and the principles of the Jews.

Remark also that the Gentile will and power recognise God in two ways, and by different means; both being the privileges granted to the remnant. The first of these privileges is having the mind of Jehovah, the revelation of His thoughts and counsels. This leads the Gentile to own the God of Daniel as God of gods and Lord of kings. That is His position in respect of all that was exalted above the earth. He was supreme in heaven and earth. The second is that He interests Himself in the poor remnant of His people, and has power to deliver them in the tribulation into which rebellious and idolatrous (and thus apostate) power has thrown them. The result here is that He is acknowledged, and His faithful ones are delivered and exalted. The first is more general and Gentile-the Gentiles' own recognition of God; the second, the effect of deliverance for this Jewish remnant. The establishment of idolatrous unity in religion, and the pride of human power, are the

characteristics here given of Babylon. This folly, which does not know God, fills the whole course of time allotted to this power-"seven times." At the end the Gentile owns for himself and praises and blesses the Most High. This chapter then gives the Gentile power's own relationship with God, not merely his connection with the God and people of the Jews. Hence the title of God, in chapter 4, is the Most High that ruleth in the kingdom of men; in chapter 3 it was 'our God' for the heart of the faithful remnant, and 'the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,' for the world that saw the deliverance.

Daniel Chapter 4

In chapter 4 we see the manifestation of human pride; the king glories in the work of his hands, as though he had created his own greatness. This pride brings judgment. Power is reduced to the condition of the beasts that know not God, and are devoid of man's understanding. The only true privilege of man, that which ennobles him, is that he can look up to God and acknowledge Him. Without this he looks downward; he cannot suffice to himself; he is degraded. Dependence is his glory, for it sets him before God, gives him to know God; and his mind, associated with God, receives from Him its measure and its knowledge. Pride and independence separate man from God; he becomes a beast, devoid of real intelligence. Now this condition depicts that of the kingdoms of which the prophet speaks (looked at as a whole before God, and represented by the head established by God, Nebuchadnezzar). Seven times, or seven years, pass over the head of Nebuchadnezzar deprived of his reason. He had exalted himself; he had been humbled. The times of the Gentiles are characterised by the absence of all such understanding as would put governmental power in connection with God. To make idols, to build Babylon, and not to know God; such were the moral characteristics of a power that God had established in place of His own throne at Jerusalem. Such is the moral capacity of man in possession of that power which has been committed to him [See Note #1].

But the scene closes with testimony to the glory of the Most High God, the King of Heaven. Nebuchadnezzar recognises His majesty and blesses Him, now that His judgment is removed. He acknowledges Him as Him who liveth for ever, who abases and exalts whom He will, doing according to His will in

heaven and on earth, all men being but vanity before His power and majesty. Here it is not the deliverance of the faithful which produces its effect, but the judgment that fell on the Gentiles themselves, who, after the judgment, are delivered, and understanding given them with respect to Jehovah; and that in connection with the testimony committed to the Jews by the Spirit of prophecy which God had bestowed on the remnant. The king lifts up his eyes to heaven, instead of being only a beast that looks down upon the earth. He becomes intelligent and submissive, and joyfully blesses the Most High God.

We may remark this title of "Most High." It is the name given to Jehovah in the interview between Melchisedec and Abraham, in which is added thereto, "Possessor of heaven and earth." This is, in fact, the character that God will assume when He shall gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; and Christ shall be the true Melchisedec. The Gentiles shall be fully subjected to God. This will be the time of "the restitution of all things" spoken of by the prophets.

There are yet some detailed observations to be made. It is judgment, followed by deliverance, which produces this result. We may notice the force of this symbol of a great tree. It is a mighty one of the earth, capable of taking others under its protection. In this case it was one in the highest position possible for man. The fowls of the heaven had their habitation in it; that is to say, that all classes of persons sought shelter and protection in it. We learn also that God takes knowledge of the principles that guide the governments of the earth, considered as the depositaries of the power which they hold from God. Although it is not (as in Israel) His throne on the earth, God watches over all, and judges that to which He has committed authority. He does not rule immediately; but He holds responsible him to whom He has entrusted the rule, in order that he might own the authority of God as supreme in this world.

With respect to the term "watcher," I do not think that intelligence as to who it was that brought the decree of judgment goes beyond Nebuchadnezzar's religious condition. Daniel ascribes it immediately to the Most High. That angels may be its intelligent instruments, and that its administration may be in some sort committed to them, presents no

difficulty; and the epistle to the Hebrews, as well as other scriptures, teaches us that angels are thus employed. The world to come will not be thus subjected to them. We see, in Verse 27 (Dan 4:27), that Daniel sets his responsibility before Nebuchadnezzar, exhorting him to alter his conduct.

We may also remark here, that it is the "King of heaven" whom Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges. This was necessarily His place. The God of the earth had His throne at Jerusalem. But then Nebuchadnezzar would have had no place there. We never find the throne at Jerusalem in Daniel, either morally or prophetically. His prophecies always stop short of that. He is a captive among the Gentiles, faithful to God there, and taught of Him. But God cannot be to him the God of the earth [See Note #2]. It is the God of heaven, ruling everywhere and over all things, doing according to His will in heaven and on earth; but not yet reigning over the earth as the king of the earth. On the contrary, He had just renounced this; and had committed the power to Nebuchadnezzar, while He withdrew from the presence of His earthly people's iniquity to shut Himself up in His supreme and immutable power; the results of which would not be shewn till afterwards, but according to which He even then governed, although hidden from the eyes of men. The reader may perhaps expect more detail. It will be found in the communications made immediately to Daniel. But those who have laid hold of the principles we have been establishing (and the great object of these chapters is to present them) will possess elements of the greatest importance for understanding all the prophecies of this book; and without these principles the meaning of its revelations will never be clearly apprehended. It must be remembered that we are on the ground here of the Jews in captivity among the Gentiles, understanding God's dealings with them, and His judgment of their condition while the power had been left in their hands.

Note #1

David's throne had been characterised by power in obedience, the king having to write out a copy of the law and observe it; Nebuchadnezzar's throne is one of absolute power, man supreme in the exercise of his own will-the twofold way of testing man in the place of authority.

Note #2

The seed of David will not be in captivity at Babylon when God takes His place as the God of the earth.

Daniel Chapter 5

In chapter 5 the iniquity of the head of the Gentiles with respect to the God of Israel reaches the highest point, and assumes that character of insolence and contempt which is but the effort of weakness to conceal itself. In the midst of the orgies of a great feast to his lords and courtiers Belshazzar causes the vessels of the temple of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from Jerusalem, to be brought, that he and his guests might drink therein; and he praises the gods of gold and of silver and of stone. The madness of the king puts the question between the false gods and Jehovah the God of Israel. Jehovah decides the question that very night by the destruction of the king and of all his glory. The warning which God gives him is interpreted by Daniel. But, although subject to the king, Daniel does not treat him with the same respect that he had for Nebuchadnezzar.

Belshazzar had taken the place of an insolent enemy to Jehovah, and Daniel answers him according to God's revelations of his doom, and to the ostentatious manifestation which the king made of his iniquity, magnifying his own gods and insulting Jehovah. Accordingly the warning was no longer remedial and left no room for repentance. It announced judgment; and the very annunciation sufficed to destroy all the insolence of the impious king. For he had neglected the warning given him by the history of Nebuchadnezzar. This narrative gives us the last character of the iniquity of the sovereign power of the Gentiles, in opposition to the God of Israel, and the judgment which falls in consequence upon the monarchy of which Babylon was the head, and to which Babylon had given its own character. For, whatever may have been the longsuffering of God, and His dealings in other respects towards the monarchy of the Gentiles, as the power to which He committed authority in the world, all was already lost for these empires, even in the days of Babylon.

Daniel Chapter 6

Another form of iniquity appears besides that of Babylon (chap. 6). Cyrus, personally, had better thoughts; and God, from whom they came, made use of him for the temporary re-establishment of His people, in order that the Messiah should come and present Himself to them-the last trial of His beloved people. It is not Cyrus, therefore, whom we find here the instrument of the iniquity which sought to destroy Daniel-of that human will which can never endure faithfulness to God. Here it is not idolatry, nor is it insult offered to Jehovah, but the exaltation of man himself, who would shut out all idea of God, who would have no God. This is one of the features that characterise the depths of the human heart.

Man in general is well pleased with a god who will help him to satisfy his passions and his desires-a god who suits his purpose for the unity of his empire and the consolidation of his power. The religious part of man's nature is satisfied with gods of this kind, and worships them willingly, though he who establishes them imperially may do it only politically. Poor world! the true God suits neither their conscience nor their lusts. The enemy of our souls is well-pleased to cultivate in this manner the religiousness of our nature. False religion sets up gods that correspond to the desires of the natural heart, whatever they may be; but which never call into communion and never act upon the conscience. They may impose ceremonies and observances, for these suit man; but they can never bring an awakened conscience into relationship with themselves. That which man fears, and that which man desires, is the sphere of their influence. They produce nothing in the heart beyond the action of natural joys and fears. But, on the other hand, the pride of man sometimes assumes a character that changes everything in this respect. Man will himself be God and act according to his own will, and shut out a rivalship which his pride cannot endure. A superiority which cannot be disputed, if God exists, is insupportable to one who would stand alone. God must be got rid of. The enemies of the faithful avail themselves of this disposition. Cruelty is less inventive, save that its subtlety is shewn in this, that, in flattering the higher power, it does not appear to blame any except those who disobey and despise his word.

The contest being with God Himself, the question with men is decided with more carelessness and less passion as to them. Passion allies itself less with

the pride than with the will of man. Man, whatever his position, is the slave of those who pay him the tribute of their flattery. Self-will is more its own master. In this case, deceived by his vanity, the king finds himself bound by laws, apparently instituted to guard his subjects from his caprices, under colour of attributing the character of immutability to his will and to his wisdom—a character that belongs to God alone. Daniel is cast into the lions' den. God preserves him. He will do the same for the remnant of Israel at the end of the age. The judgment, which the enemies of Israel sought to bring upon those who were faithful among that people, is executed upon themselves. But the effect of this judgment extends farther than in the former cases. Nebuchadnezzar forbade any evil being spoken of the God of Israel, and He extolled the King of heaven by whom he had been humbled. But Darius commands that in every place the God of Daniel and of Israel should be acknowledged, the only living God, whose kingdom is everlasting, and who had indeed delivered the man that trusted in Him. Historically it appears that Darius had some feelings of respect for God and for Daniel's piety. It was not his God, but the God of Daniel: still he honours Him, and even calls Him the living God.

Thus we see that idolatry, impiety, the pride that exalts itself above everything, are the characteristics of the great empires which Daniel sets before us, and the causes of their judgment. The judgment results in owning the God of the Jews as the living and delivering God and the Most High that ruleth in the kingdom of men. The same features will be found in the last days. This terminates the first part of the book.

Daniel Chapter 7

We come now to the communications made to Daniel himself, which contain not merely general principles, but details relative to God's people, and the Gentiles who oppressed them—historical details, though given beforehand prophetically. The chief object of chapter 7 is the history of the fourth beast, or the last form of the Gentile empire, which commenced at Babylon—the great western power, in which was to be developed all that man in possession of power would become with respect to God and to the faithful. And with that its relation with the saints is given in the interpretation. But the introduction of this western beast is briefly given.

Four beasts come up from the sea, that is to say, from the waves of human population. These powers are not looked at here as established by God, but in their purely historical character. We have seen the empire established immediately by God in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. But here-although every existing power is established by God-they are seen in their historical aspect. The beasts come up out of the sea. The prophet first sees them all at once arising out of the agitation of the nations. This part of the vision contains characteristic features, but gives no date.

In Verse 4 (Dan 7:4) we have Babylon in power and then abased and subdued. The body of a lion with eagle's wings; that which, humanly speaking, was most noble and energetic in strength-that which hovered over the nations with the highest and most rapid flight-characterised this first energy of the human mind, when the will of God had committed to it the empire of the world. This place it loses.

The second beast devoured much, but had neither the energy nor the rapid flight of the first; it appropriated other kingdoms to itself rather than created an empire; twofold in its strength at first, it raised itself up more on one side than on the other. It is ferocious, but comparatively unwieldy; it is the Medo-Persian empire.

This chapter says but little of the third; lightness and activity characterise it, and dominion was given to it. It is the empire founded by Alexander. The fourth is the subject of a separate vision.

It will be well to remark, in passing, that the chapter is divided into three visions, followed by the interpretation given to the prophet. The first vision comprises the four beasts seen together, and the character of the first three slightly sketched. The second vision contains that of the fourth beast with much more detail. The third vision presents the appearing of one like the Son of man before the Ancient of days. They commence respectively at the first, seventh, and thirteenth verses; the interpretation occupies the remainder of the chapter from Dan 7:15.

The features of the fourth beast are clearly drawn. It is strong exceedingly; it devours and breaks in pieces, and tramples the residue under foot. It has not the same character as the preceding monarchies. It has ten horns; that is

to say, its strength was to be divided into ten distinct powers. Strength and rapacity, which spare and respect nothing, appropriating everything, or trampling it under foot without regard to conscience; such are morally the characteristics of the fourth beast. Its division into ten kingdoms distinguishes it as to its form. The uniform simplicity of the other empires will be lacking to it. But this is not all. Another very distinctive and special element attracted the particular attention of the prophet. While considering the horns, he saw another little horn come up among them: three of the first fell before it; it possessed the penetration and intelligence of man; its pretensions were very great. Such was its character. A power rises among the ten by which three of them are overthrown. This power is clear-sighted and penetrating in its intelligence. It not only possesses strength, but it has thoughts and plans besides those of ambition and government. It is a beast that works morally, that occupies itself with knowledge, and sets itself up with pretensions full of pride and daring. It has a character of intelligence, moral and systematic (in evil), and not merely the strength of a conqueror. This horn has the eyes of a man.

Afterwards the thrones are set [See Note #1], and the Ancient of days sits. It is a session of judgment, the throne of Jehovah's judgment; it is not said where, but its effect is on earth. The words of the little horn are the occasion of the execution of judgment. It is executed on the beast, which is destroyed, and its body given to the flames. With respect to the other beasts, their dominion had been taken away, but their lives prolonged; the fourth loses its life with its dominion. The scene of judgment forms a part of the vision of the fourth beast, and especially relates to it.

In Dan 7:13 there is another vision. One like the Son of man is brought to the Ancient of days, and receives the kingdom and universal dominion—the rule of Jehovah entrusted to man in the Person of Christ, and substituted for the kingdom of the beast. Observe that this is not the execution of the judgment that had been spoken of, but the reception of the earthly kingdom; for, in all this, the government of the earth is the subject.

There are two parts in the interpretation. Verses 17, 18 (Dan 7:17-18) are general; and then, with reference to the fourth beast (Dan 7:19-28), there is more of detail. The general part declares that these four beasts are four

kings, or kingdoms, that shall arise out of the earth: but that the saints of the high places shall take the kingdom, and possess it for ever. These are the two great facts brought out in this history: the earthly empire, and that of the saints of the high places (the first being composed of four kingdoms). We are then given some details with respect to the fourth of these. It will be noticed here, that, in the interpretation, an element of the highest interest is added, which was not in the vision to which the interpretation belongs; namely, that which relates to the saints. In communicating to the prophet the meaning of the vision, God could not omit them. Verse 18 (Dan 7:18) already presents them in contrast with the empires of the earth. These empires were seen to arise in the vision according to their public or external character. Here the Spirit of God tells of that which made their conduct a subject of interest even to the heart of God, who would testify this interest to the prophet. The saints are immediately brought into view, but in a suffering condition (Dan 7:21). This is the first characteristic of the little horn, when his actions are in question.

But Verses 21, 22 (Dan 7:21-22) demand a few more remarks. The little horn not only makes war with the saints, but prevails against them up to a certain time (that is, until the coming of the Ancient of days). Something more definite is given here than the fact that God will judge the audacity of man. We are no longer occupied with the public history and with general principles, but with explanations for the saints in the person of the prophet. It is the coming of the Ancient of days that puts an end to the power of the little horn over the saints.

Other important events are the result of this great change, of this intervention of God: first, judgment is given to the saints of the high places; and, second, the saints take the kingdom. Observe here the especial title "of the high places." The little horn persecutes the saints on earth, and prevails against them until the Ancient of days comes. But it is only to the saints of the high places that judgment is given. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that the saints shall judge the world?" Nevertheless we must not go beyond that which is here written. It is not said, "to the assembly"-an idea not found in these passages. It is the saints who are linked with the Most High [See Note #2] God in heaven, while the earth is in the hands of those

who do not acknowledge Him, and while His government is not exercised to preserve them from suffering, and from the malice of the wicked. This applies in principle to all times since the fall, until the Ancient of days comes. But there is a period especially characterised by this spirit of rebellion, namely, that of the power of the little horn. There is another class of persons spoken of farther on—the people of the saints of the high places. "The kingdom is given to them." But in this case the Spirit does not say, "the judgment." Thus, in Verse 22 (Dan 7:22), when the kingdom is mentioned, it is not said "the saints of the high places," but simply "the saints possessed the kingdom." We have thus the power of the little horn exercised against the saints, and prevailing against them, put an end to by the Ancient of days, the earth being the scene of that which is taking place. This event is accompanied by two other events, which result from it, and which change the whole aspect of the world. Judgment is given to the heavenly saints, and the kingdom is given to the saints. The first of these two events is confined to the heavenly saints. The second is more general, the saints on earth sharing it according to their condition, without excluding the saints in heaven according to their condition.

It will be remarked that there is no question at all here of the assembly, except in such general terms as must apply to any saints whatever on the earth who looked up higher. It is well also to observe, that it is not the saints (as has been thought) who are given into the hand of the little horn, but the forms of the Jewish religion. God may will and permit, for the good of the saints, that there should be persecution; but He never gives up His saints to their enemies. He could not do it. He cannot leave and forsake His own. In a word, whatever may be the general principles capable of application during the course of the ages, this prophecy, as an especial and definite revelation, refers, like the whole Book, to the earth, of which the assembly is not, and to the Jews, with respect to whom God exercises His government on the earth.

This, understood, throws light on the three characteristics of the little horn. He rebels against the Most High. He speaks great words against God, and against all the saints who, rising in spirit above the earth, acknowledge the Most High God in heaven, and expect deliverance at His hand; whose hearts

take refuge in Him, when the earth is given up, as it were, into the hands of the wicked. All those who thus maintain a true testimony against the man who arrogates to himself every prerogative on earth, and will have nothing to do with heaven, are persecuted by him. At length, the Jews having re-established their regular feasts and ordinances, his tyranny, which allows no power but his own, destroys all traces of these ordinances; which, however vain, as restored in unbelief, were nevertheless a testimony to the existence of a God of the earth. But the judgment sits to take cognizance of all this pride. The dominion of the little horn is consumed and destroyed. We may notice here that it is in fact the little horn that in the end wields the supreme power. It is his dominion which is destroyed. Afterwards the kingdom and the dominion under the whole heaven is given to "the people of the saints of the high places." It appears to me that the meaning of this expression, remarkable as it is, is yet sufficiently plain. The Most High reigns, but He reigns in connection with the system which makes it manifest that "the heavens rule" (as it is said on this subject in the case of Nebuchadnezzar). The man of the earth would reign, and he defies heaven; and, withdrawing the earth from the government of Him who dwells in heaven, he would possess it independently of God. But the judgment proves his folly, and the Most High reigns for evermore. The saints who have acknowledged Him are given the judgment and the glory, and the people who belong to them on the earth have the supremacy and reign. These are the Jews. But, definitely, it is God who reigns.

There are two words translated "Most High," the one singular and the other plural. The latter signifies "the high (places)." I do not doubt that this word gave rise to the expression "heavenly places" in the epistle to the Ephesians, which however goes much farther in the revelation there made. For here government only is the subject, and in the Ephesians it is the things that belong to the heavenly places, or that are in them. This distinction enables us to understand the difference between the assembly, or even Christians, and the saints of the high places in Daniel 7. With respect to the Christians, it is those who enjoy-in spirit at least-the blessings of the heavenly places, sitting there in Christ, and wrestling against the spiritual wickedness that is there. Here, on the contrary, it is the government which belongs of right to the heavens and to Him that reigns there which is to be recognised, in the

presence of a power that denies and sets itself up against this, choosing to own no other power than itself on the earth. The meaning of the prophecy is plain and easily understood. To recognise the right of government in the heavenly places, and to be sitting there in the enjoyment of the blessings proper to them, are two very different things. Everything has its own place in the mind of God, where perfect order reigns.

In sum we have, besides the power of the four beasts in general, the western power divided among ten, and at last the empire in the hands of the little horn, which subdues three of the ten horns, and sets itself up against God in heaven, persecutes and prevails against the saints, destroying by its persecutions those who identify themselves with the God of heaven, abolishing all the Jewish ordinances, and finally is itself destroyed. This abolition of the Jewish system continues for three years and a half, or 1260 days; which period of time belongs only to this last point. All the others are characteristic and not chronological. The government of the earth, formerly given to man in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, is not again established-as it had been at Jerusalem-in a merely earthly throne. During the interval, in the presence of the rebellion of the earthly power against the Most High, the saints have assumed a character which is the result of their looking to heaven and to Him who reigns there (God, with respect to His government of the earth, having taken the name of the God of heaven)-a very intelligible position, seeing that He had forsaken Jerusalem.

It is the saints of the high places who will take the kingdom; but after the judgment of the rebellious horn, the earthly people possess the dominion under the whole heaven, in dependence on those who are seated in heaven. So that we have three clear and important elements in the dealings of God. Firstly, the earthly throne at Jerusalem is forsaken; the Gentile throne established by the authority of God, the God of heaven; the rebellion of this Gentile power against Him that had given it authority. Secondly, the saints are distinguished by their acknowledgment of that God whom the earthly power denied; they are of the heavens, where God had now His place and His throne, being no longer on earth at Jerusalem. Thirdly, we have, then, judgment executed on the rebellious power; judgment given to these saints of the high places; the earthly people established in the kingdom under the

heavens, in connection with them. This was the dominion of the God of heaven which should not pass away. In connection with this is the character given to Him that pre-eminently receives the kingdom. It is not now the Messiah, owned as king in Zion, but ONE in the form of the Son of man; a title of far greater and more wide significance. It is the change from Psalm 2 to Psalm 8 [See Note #3]. Nor this only; for, when the events are accomplished, we find that it is the Ancient of days Himself who comes and puts an end to the power which afflicted the saints-that Christ (as the Psalms so largely shew and the gospels too) is Jehovah. We have here the great picture of man's government-coming into all its characteristic development at the end-and its setting aside by the government of God, which establishes the faithful in authority, and, above all, the Son of man Himself, and His people on the earth.

The saints of the high places would be thus those who, when the assembly, not noticed here, is gone, look up and own power there, and, if put to death by power in rebellion, have their place above. We find them again in Revelation, specially in chapter 20, and there two classes. The people of the saints are the spared remnant on earth.

Note #1

This translation is almost universally considered to be correct.

Note #2

There are four names of relationship which God has taken with men: Almighty (Gen. 17) with the patriarchs; Jehovah with Israel (Ex. 6); Father, with Christians (John 17); and Most High, in the millennium (Gen. 14) and here in Daniel. Compare Psalm 90. The name of Father makes a difference in the whole position, associating us with Christ, the Son in whom He is revealed. John's Gospel specially brings out this.

Note #3

Brought about by the rejection of the Messiah.

Daniel Chapter 8

Chapter 8 gives details of that which takes place from another side of Judea, with reference to the Jews. The two empires of Persia and Greece, or of the East, which succeeded that of Babylon under which the prophecy was given, are only introduced to point out the countries in which these events are to take place, and to bring them before us in their historical order. The Persian empire is overthrown by the king of Greece, whose empire is afterwards divided into four kingdoms, from one of which a power arises that forms the main subject of the prophecy.

In the interpretation, we find the positive declaration that the events here related happen "in the last end of the indignation." Now it is the indignation against Israel that is here meant (Dan 11:36). This time of indignation is spoken of in Isa 10:25; it ends with the destruction of the Assyrian, who (Dan 8:5) is its principal instrument. All these passages shew us, especially in studying their context, that it will be in the last days that the events of these prophecies will be fulfilled. It will be "the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be delivered out of it." The Lord Himself alludes to this period (Matt. 24) calling His disciples' attention to that which Daniel says respecting it (compare Dan 12:1-11 with the Lord's words). It appears to me that the prophecy in our chapter does not relate so absolutely to the last days as the interpretation does [See Note #1]. The thing spoken of in the prophecy is not the last end of the indignation; but the fact that a little horn arises out of one of the four kingdoms, which had succeeded Alexander. Nevertheless, the grand object of the Spirit is to reveal that which will happen at the time of the end (Dan 8:17).

Let us examine the principal feature of the little horn. The power designated by "the little horn" enlarges its territory towards the east, and towards the pleasant land, or ornament [of the earth], that is to say, as it appears to me, towards Jerusalem or Zion. This horn exalts itself against the host of heaven, and casts down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and tramples on them.

Who are the persons intended by this expression-"the host of heaven and the stars?" Let us remember, that it is the Jewish system that is before us. When once we have got hold of this, the application of the passage is not difficult. The expression applies to those who, professedly at least, surround

the throne of God, and particularly those who shine eminent among them. It is not the faithful who look towards heaven, of which chapter 7 speaks. To be the host of heaven describes a position and not a moral state (compare Dan 8:24). But this passage assumes that the Jews are again in this position before God, even although it would be but for judgment. That is to say, they are again under the eye of God as in relation with Him, as an object about which He concerns Himself, as a people still responsible for their former relationship with Him, although the Gentile power still exists. Now, if their condition does not answer to the position they reassume in His presence, they are, by the very fact of this position, the object of God's judgments. Observe here, moreover, that transgression is the thing spoken of, and not the abomination which some one sets up, and which makes desolate; and in the interpretation also, the transgression is come to its height.

This horn is, then, the instrument of chastisement on the Jews, who have returned-as to profession-into relationship with Jehovah, and into their land, assuming the character of His people, yet carrying transgression against Him to the highest point. The horn completely destroys some of them. But this is not all; he (for the word is no longer it, in agreement with the word horn-perhaps changed to designate the king in person) magnifies himself even against the Prince of the host. He carries his pretensions so far as to oppose himself to Him, to set himself against Christ in His character of Prince of Israel, against the Judge who comes, the Head of Israel, who is Jehovah Himself; for it is the Ancient of days who comes. Here, however, all is looked at in a Jewish aspect. He is the Prince of Israel. We see that it is Jehovah, because it is His sacrifice that is taken away-His sanctuary that is cast down; but He is presented as the Prince of the host [See Note #2]. The daily sacrifice is taken away from Him, not "by him." [See Note #3] The Jewish worship rendered to Jehovah is suppressed, His sanctuary cast down, and a time of distress appointed for the daily sacrifice (it is thus that I understand the verse), on account of transgression; and the little horn [See Note #4] (for here the it, agreeing with horn, is again used) casts down the truth, practises and prospers. The duration of the whole vision, with especial reference to the transgression which occasions it, and, it may be, comprising also the duration of the transgression that maketh desolate; in a word, the

whole scene of transgression, and consequent desolation (the sanctuary and the host being trodden under foot), continues for 2300 evenings and mornings.

In Verse 19 (Dan 8:19) we see that the interpretation relates to the time of the end—a very important notice for the understanding of the passage [See Note #5]. And this is what shall happen in the last end of the indignation (upon Israel) when the transgression of the Jews is at its height. A king of fierce countenance, who understands dark sentences, shall arise; a kind of teacher or rabbi, but proud, and audacious in appearance. He will be mighty, but not by his own power. He will make great havoc, will prosper and practise, destroying the mighty, or a great multitude of persons, and especially "the people of the holy ones," that is, the Jews (Dan 7:27). He is subtle, and his craftiness is successful. He will magnify himself in his heart, and will destroy many by means of a false and irreligious security. At length, he will stand up against the Prince of princes. He will then be destroyed without human intervention. That is to say that at the time of the end, when the purposes of God will be unfolded, when His indignation against Israel draws to an end, the transgression of this people being already at its height, a king shall arise in one part of the former Grecian empire, whose power will be characterised by its increase towards the east and south, and towards Jerusalem; that is, it will be established in the present Turkey in Asia—Jerusalem being the point it aims at. This power will cause much destruction, and its strength will be great; yet, properly speaking, it will not be its own strength. The king will be dependent on some other power. He will also destroy the Jewish people. But there is something more than destructive power; there is a character of wisdom resembling that of Solomon in some respects. He is very subtle, and succeeds in destroying the Jews, by lulling them into a security in which they forget Jehovah. We see him then occupying himself about the Jews, not only as a conqueror, but as a teacher, by craft and by a deceptive peace. At length he stands up against Christ in His character of the Prince of princes or kings of the earth, that is, in His character of earthly supremacy. He is destroyed by divine power, without the hand of man.

This king is distinct from the little horn of chapter 7, who rules the great western beast. He is a king of the east, who arises, not from the Roman empire, but from the former Grecian empire established in Syria, and the adjacent countries, who derives his strength from elsewhere, and not from his own resources. He will interfere (in his own way) with the religious affairs of the Jews; but it seems to me that that which is said of him is more characteristic of the desolator, whom God allows the enemy to raise up on account of the transgressions of His people, than of the one who makes a covenant with them for a time, in order to ruin and drag them afterwards into the depths of apostasy. It is one who will oppress them, having his seat of action in the east, as the little horn of chapter 7 rules in the west [See Note #6]. The desolation is brought before us on the occasion of this little horn. Verse 11 [See Note #7] (Dan 8:11) is a kind of parenthesis which relates entirely to the Prince of the host; and the two last things it mentions (namely, that the sacrifice is taken away from Him and His sanctuary cast down) are introduced in connection with the Prince of the host, as a part of the desolation of Israel, to complete its description, without, as it appears to me, pointing out who it is that does these things. They are not spoken of in the king's own history, at the end of the chapter. They form a part of the desolation of the days alluded to in Verse 11 (Dan 8:11).

Note #1

This appears to me to be the case, because events that took place under the successors of Seleucus, the first king of the north, have served as a type, or partial and anticipative fulfilment, of that which will happen in the, last days. In chapter 11 and here, there is a description of, or a strong allusion to, that which Antiochus Epiphanes did. The eleventh chapter relates it, I think, historically. The object of God in the prophecy is found in the events of the last days; and this is all that is given in the interpretation. It is well to observe, that no interpretation of a parable or obscure prophecy, either in the Old or New Testament, is simply an interpretation. It adds that which reveals by the result the meaning of the ways of God, or facts described in what is obscure, either by outward judgments which justify the spiritual judgment of His people when faith only would discern God's mind, or by some new features that give the true import of the events for the saints.

Actual judgment makes openly plain what spiritual judgment alone discerned before, and thus is an interpretation. But other circumstances may be added in order to show the mind of God in the matter. In a word, it is God who communicates to His people that which gives its true value to that which precedes, or who directs them in their thoughts as to what has been said, by the revelation of His judgments. It is this which practically confirms them in His thoughts.

Note #2

I have questioned a little whether the host of heaven may not mean the powers of the earth (the Jews only taking their place in it because they ought to be under the government of God, and are so to the spirit of prophecy). I do not reject this idea; but it appears certain that the Spirit has the Jews especially in view (see Dan 8:13). Verse 24 (Dan 8:24) might lead us to believe that He destroys others beside the Jews. Christ, exalted to the right hand of God, is the head of all power. But He is especially the head of the Jews. If any would even apply the title "Prince of princes" to this supremacy, the analogy of the word would justify the application. The connection between the host and the sanctuary in Verse 13 (

Dan 8:11) is masculine; while at the end of Verse 12 (Dan 8:12), the word, "it cast down," is feminine, agreeing with horn, which in Hebrew is a feminine noun.

Note #5

The vision speaks particularly of the Seleucidae, or Asiatic successors of Alexander; and their acts, I doubt not, particularly those of Antiochus Epiphanes, are referred to in the vision, though Verse 11 and the first half of 12 (Dan 8:11-12), as noticed, are distinct. Thus the 2300 evenings and mornings are not necessarily applicable to anything beyond the acts of the Seleucidae, and Verse 26 (Dan 8:26) confirms this. The interpretation (Dan 8:23-25) applies only to the latter days. The sanctuary is not spoken of, but the destroying the "people of the saints" (the Jews), and standing up against the Prince of princes. In Verse 26 (Dan 8:26) read, "and thou, shut up the vision," not "wherefore."

Note #6

Chapter 7 gives the power or horn of the west; chapter 8 that of the east; chapter 9 gives the state of Jerusalem under the power of the west; chapter 10, 11 the state under the powers of the east, including the wilful king.

Note #7

The first half of the twelfth, closing with the word, "transgression," forms indeed part of this parenthesis. The 2300 days refer thus to the historical times. All we have of them, in the interpretation which unfolds what is yet to come, is that the vision is true. The parenthesis is from "Yea" (Dan 8:12), connected with "he," not with "it."

Daniel Chapter 9

Chapter 9 gives us a vision concerning the people and the holy city, consequent on Daniel's confession and intercession. It is, as has been remarked, in connection with the oppression of the western power. Indeed, the details relate to oppression. The prophet had understood (not by a direct revelation, but by the study of Jeremiah's prophecy, by the use of those ordinary means that are within the reach of the spiritual man) that the captivity, the duration of which Jeremiah had announced, was near its end. The effect on Daniel's mind (true sign of a prophet of God) was to produce an ardent intercession on behalf of the desolate sanctuary, and the city which Jehovah loved. He pours out his heart in confession before God, acknowledging the sin of the people and of their kings, the hardness of their hearts, and the righteousness of God in bringing evil upon them. He pleads the mercies of God, and demands favour for Jehovah's own sake. The prophecy is God's answer to his prayer. Seventy weeks are determined upon the people of Daniel and upon his holy city. Jehovah does not yet acknowledge them definitely for His own; but He accepts the intercession of the prophet, as He had formerly done that of Moses, by saying to Daniel, "thy people and thy city." Daniel stands in the place of mediator. He has the mind of God-His words; and thus he can intercede (compare on this deeply interesting point, Gen 20:7; Jer 27:18; Joh 15:7).

At the end of these seventy weeks, separated from among the ages, the time should come, decreed of God, to finish the transgression, to seal up, that is, to make an end of sin, and to put it away; to pardon iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness; to seal up [all] vision and prophecy, and to anoint the holy of holies: this, observe, with respect to the people of Israel and to the city. It is the entire re-establishment of the people, and of the city, in grace.

This period of seventy weeks is divided into three parts-seven, sixty-two, and one. During the first part, or the seven weeks, the desolate city and its overthrown walls would be rebuilt in troublous times, or in the strait of times. After sixty-two weeks, that is, after sixty-nine altogether, the Messiah should be cut off, and should have nothing (this is the true sense of the words). He to whom the kingdom and the glory belonged, instead of receiving them, should be cut off and have nothing. But after this event the city and the sanctuary, which had been rebuilt, should be destroyed, and the end should be like a desolating flood; and there should be an ordinance, or determinate decree, of desolation until the end of the war. This is, in general, the complete history of the desolations. Sixty-nine weeks have been accomplished-after that, the Messiah is cut off; but the precise moment at which this takes place is not indicated. The course of the seventy weeks is thus entirely interrupted. The cutting off of the Messiah was not the moment of the re-establishment of the people and of the city. The result is plainly announced-a period of desolation until the end: its duration is not given. We shall find in chapter 11 the same manner of treating an analogous period. The people of a prince who was yet to come should destroy the city.

After this, the Spirit of God takes up the seventieth week, the details of which were not yet unfolded. The prince that shall come confirms a covenant with the mass of the Jews. (The form of the word many [See Note #1] indicates the mass of the people). This is the first thing that characterises the week; the Jews form an alliance with the head, at that day, of the people who had formerly overthrown their city and their sanctuary. They form an alliance with the head of the Roman Empire. This refers to the week as a whole. But, the half of the week spent [See Note #2], things assume another aspect. This head causes the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and on

account of the protection of idols, there is a desolator; and until the consummation that is determined [See Note #3], there shall be poured [judgment] upon the desolate.

That which is here announced, then, is, that seventy weeks are set apart for the history of the city and people of Daniel. During these seventy weeks, God is in relationship with Israel [See Note #4]; nevertheless, not immediately so, but in connection with the faith of the believing remnant, of a Daniel, of an intercession which, linking itself with the existence of a remnant, serves as a bond between God and the people: an intercession without which the people would be rejected. It is the same principle as that which governed the relations between God and the people by means of Moses, after the golden calf-the people being called the people of Daniel, as formerly the people of Moses. This position is remarkable, as taking place after the establishment of the authority of the Gentiles. The Jews are at Jerusalem, but the Gentiles reign, although the empire of Babylon is overthrown. In this anomalous position prophetic faith seeks the complete re-establishment of the city, the seat of government of God and of His people. It is to this that the answer of God refers. A brief but complete history is given of the period which should elapse until the judgment upon the Jews was accomplished and past.

A new element of great importance is also introduced: the Messiah should be cut off. He would have nothing of that which in right belonged to Him. The consequence of this would be the destruction of the city and of the sanctuary, desolation and war. It would be the prince of another empire, not yet in existence, who should thus destroy the city and the sanctuary. The relations between God and the people were now completely broken off for the time-even as regarded a believing remnant. The faith of Daniel was rejected in the Person of Christ as the prophet, and in the denial of Christ expressed by the declaration that they would have no king but Caesar; and the people and the city were given up to desolation.

But there remained one week yet unaccomplished with this faithless and perverse, but yet beloved, race, before their iniquity should be pardoned, and everlasting righteousness brought in, and the vision and the prophecy closed by their fulfilment. This week should be distinguished by a covenant

which the prince or leader would make with the Jewish people (with the exception of the remnant), and then by the compulsory cessation of their worship through the intervention of this prince. After that the Jews having placed themselves under the protection of idols-this unclean spirit, long driven out of the people, having again entered into them with seven others worse than himself, the desolator comes, and the final judgments are inflicted on the people-terrible judgments; but the extent of which is definitely fixed by God when their measure shall be full. Thus we find a very precise answer is given to the prophet's request; an answer which very distinctly unfolds the consequences of the connection of Daniel's people with the Gentile power. Their position is very clearly set forth, while the relationship with God, by means of the prophet's intercession, still exists.

The prophecy announces at the same time the general fact of the people's desolation after the sixty-ninth week was past, and (with a seeming lull from the favour of the beast), on to the end of the seventieth, occasioned by their rejection of the Messiah, which took place at the very time when the promise attached to the prophecy should have been on the point of fulfilment; and the rejection of whom (coming in the name of His Father) has led to the long dispersion of the Jews, which will continue until the time of their being gathered, a prey to the iniquity of the head of the Gentiles; the time, in fact, of their falling into the hands of the one who should come in his own name-a sorrowful condition developed during the last week, but to which God has set a limit; and beyond that, no malice of the enemy can reach.

Note #1

The word "many" has an article prefixed to it in the Hebrew. The same thing is the case in other parts of Daniel, to which we shall draw the reader's attention, and which clearly prove that the mass of the people are in question-"the many." The same form of phrase is found in Greek. Co2 2:6; Co2 9:2.

Note #2

We may observe that the Lord only speaks expressly of the last half-week, of the time of tribulation which follows the setting up of the idol that

maketh desolate in the holy place. Some have thought that there would be only this half-week to come, Christ having been cut off in the midst of the week. Others have thought that the seventieth week had entirely elapsed before the Lord's death, but that it is not reckoned, Jesus having been rejected, and that this week is found again at the time of the Jews' connection with the wicked one. What the passage tells us is this: first, the prince, the head that is of the Roman empire, in the latter days makes a covenant referring to one whole week; on the other hand, the Lord speaks of the last half of the week as being to take place immediately before His coming, as the time of unequalled tribulation that precedes it. If this were all, the foregoing history of the prince to come, who makes a covenant, would fall into the general history of the state of things. The question whether one or two half-weeks remain to be fulfilled, and in what way, during the manifestation of the power of evil, I reserve (as to its full development) for the book of Revelation; remarking only that Messiah is cut off after the end of 69 weeks. We know from the New Testament that His ministry lasted just half the week. Of this clearly the prince or Jews, with whom he makes alliance, would make no account. The interpretation of this passage is clear; the covenant for a week with the prince to come, as if 69 weeks alone were run out, Messiah and His cutting off being ignored, and a half-week of utter oppression because of idols, till the consummation decreed.

Note #3

This is an expression constantly used for the last judgments that shall fall upon the Jews (see Isa 10:22; Isa 28:22). The second Verse of this last chapter (Isa 28:2) compares the desolator to a flood, as in Verse 26 (Dan 9:26) of the chapter we are considering. The attentive reader will observe that these passages refer also to the events of the last days. Remark also the covenant in Isa 28:15 and Isa 28:18. Some doubts might be thrown upon the translation "the desolate"; some render it "the desolator," and "until the destruction that is decreed there shall be poured [judgment] upon the desolator," or rather, "until the destruction decreed shall be poured upon the desolator." To any one that is not very familiar with the word, this seems to end the sentence better; but it appears to me that those who are

conversant with the whole contents of the Bible and with its phraseology will allow that the reading I have given is its truer meaning. The import of the prophecy is the same in either case. The one translation says that the desolation shall continue until the end of judgment, fore-ordained by God; the other, that it shall not cease until the destruction of the desolator, which comes to the same thing. The translation I have given appears to me more exact, more in accordance with the word. Our English translation reads "desolate," giving "desolator" in the margin. But the word has not the same form as that which is translated "desolator" in other places where the meaning is certain. The previous clause I have rendered "on account of the protection of idols." The word is literally "wing"-upon, or on the account of, the wing of abominations. And we know that the word wing is habitually employed for protection.

Note #4

The power of the Gentiles existing at the same time. We know from scripture that the restoration of Jerusalem took place under the reign of the Gentiles, as well as the whole course of the sixty-nine weeks which have assuredly passed away. The seventy have all the same character in this respect. It is only at the end of the seventy that pardon is granted. Whoever may be the instrument of establishing the covenant the fourth beast will be at that time the ruling power of the Gentiles, to whom God has committed authority. It is very important, if we would understand the seventy weeks, to remark this state of things-the Jews restored, the city rebuilt, but the Gentiles still occupying the throne of the world. The seventy weeks have their course only under these conditions. It must be well understood that it is the people of Daniel who are meant, and his city, which are to be re-established in their former favour with God. The longsuffering of God still now waits. The Gentile power has already failed in faithfulness; Babylon has been overthrown; by means of intercession, the Jews provisionally restored, and the temple rebuilt. The seventy weeks had very nearly elapsed when Christ came. If the Jews, and Jerusalem in that her day, had repented, all was ready for her re-establishment in glory. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob could have been raised up, as Lazarus had been. But she knew not the day of her visitation, and the fulfilling of the seventy weeks, as well as the blessing that

should follow, had necessarily to be postponed. Through grace we know that God had yet more excellent thoughts and purposes, and that man's state was such that this could not have been, as the event proved.

Accordingly all is here announced beforehand. (Compare Isa 49:4-6.)

Daniel Chapter 10

The following commentary covers Chapters 10 and 11.

In chapter 10 we return to the East [See Note #1]. Chapters 10, 11 and 12 form but one prophecy; only chapter 11 closes the history of the Gentiles, and chapter 12, as we remarked at the beginning, is occupied with the condition of the remnant during the last period of the Gentile power, and with their deliverance (concluding thus the revelation of God's mind with respect to the remnant who are preserved in the midst of the Gentiles). Daniel, ever intent on the welfare of his people, made supplication (Dan 10:2-3; Dan 10:12) to God, with a renewed and a persevering desire to understand His dealings. After three weeks of fasting and prayer an angel is sent to him, revealing the opposition of the enemies of God's glory to the accomplishment of His purposes of favour to His people, and to the communication of these purposes for their encouragement. But if faith is exercised, God is faithful; and the perseverance of Daniel puts him morally in a condition to appreciate the communications of God, being a proof of his fitness to receive them. The angel informs him that the vision has reference to the Jews, and that it belongs to the latter days (Dan 10:14). The strength which is given him enables him to receive the communication. The kings of Persia, under whose reign he received the vision, are enumerated; and the attack on Greece by one amongst them is announced. This gives rise to an attack on Persia by Greece; and the Greek empire is established; but it is afterwards divided into four parts. Two of these four monarchies shall be more powerful than the others. They are also territorially in relation with the Jews. It is on the territory of the latter that their wars are carried on. The history of the kings of these two monarchies, thus in conflict on the territory of Israel, is given with considerable detail under the names of king of the north and king of the south. I do not enter into these details.

The history is carried on until the intervention of the Romans, the ships from the coast of Chittim [See Note #2], and the attack upon the Jews, and the temple, and the holy covenant. The king of the north allies himself with the apostate Jews; he pollutes the sanctuary, and sets up an idol; he takes away the daily sacrifice; he leads the wicked into apostasy (this is the force of the expression in Dan 10:32). But they who know God shall be strong, and shall act with energy. They who understand, being taught of God, shall instruct the many. Thus far is the succession of the first kings, and the history of the Maccabees, and of Antiochus Epiphanes. The result, on to the end, is then given in general terms-the last part of the preceding history being a type of what shall happen in the last days. The people again fall for a time under the hands of their enemies. They shall be helped a little: some shall cleave to them with flatteries. A few even of those who understand, who might have been expected to be preserved providentially by God, will also fall by violence, to try the faith of all, and purge them, until the time of the end. For this state of things is to continue until the period appointed by God. It is the condition of the Jews, especially in those days, that is, of the Seleucidae and Lagida, kings of north and south, and in general, until the last days.

Some observations on the details may here be of use to the reader. In Dan 9:27; Dan 11:33; Dan 12:3, the word translated "many" has the article in Hebrew, and signifies the mass of the people, which makes the force of these Verses much more simple. The reader will also remark, in contrast with the masses (Dan 11:33), "the Maschilim," a word found in the titles of many of the Psalms. They that understand, they that are taught of God, shall instruct the many: there will be the activity of love for the truth in these times of trial. In Dan 12:3, we have again those that understand associated with those that instruct the many in righteousness. Compare Dan 11:33. They become victims, in Dan 11:35, to violence. This last Verse reaches, as we have seen, to the end of this people's history, while under the dominion of the Gentiles. But more positive details are given with respect to the end. The king [See Note #3] is introduced-the wicked one who will exercise power in Judea at the end of the age; and will prosper until the indignation comes to an end-a period of which we have already spoken. It is a king who acts in the land of Judea; one of an impious character, and who follows his own unbridled will, exalting himself above all, forsaking the religion of his

fathers, regarding neither Christ nor any God, blaspheming the God of heaven, and establishing idolatry; but in a way of his own; "he shall cause them to rule over the many, and shall divide the land for a reward." It is rather difficult to say who these are that he will cause to rule-I apprehend his followers; but the general character of this self-willed, impious, and idolatrous king who magnifies himself above all, is sufficiently plain. We find, as the chapter goes on, that the king of the south pushes at him, and the king of the north comes against him like a whirlwind, overflows and passes over and enters into the land of delight, Judea. But Edom, Moab, and Ammon escape his power, being reserved (Isa 11:14) to be subdued by Israel itself. But he stretches out his hand over the countries and pillages them. Egypt does not escape, and they who dwell in Africa are at his feet. But, disturbed by tidings from the east and north, he sets up his tabernacles between Jerusalem [See Note #4] and the sea, and comes to his end, with none to help him. The end of the king is not given here. It is the end of the king of the north, the subject here being the nations and the land of Israel, and that which shall happen to the people of Daniel in the last days. In the land there will be the wicked and impious king, who shall be attacked by the king of the south. The king of the north then pillages all the countries round, with the exception of three, and he perishes in the land of Israel.

Note #1

It may be remarked that in both cases the revelation given to Daniel, as to his people, is in reply to his exercises of heart in intercession or fasting; the revelations in chapters 7, 8 as to the western or eastern destroying powers are not. They are given when God pleases. These were in the time of Belshazzar; the two former, after Babylon was taken The Jews were then really in a new position till Christ was rejected, and then the great forsaking came, when time does not count till they are in their own land, and God begins to deal with them again. Then, after the display of their unbelief in receiving the power of evil and in idolatry the last grand tribulation comes, and then judgment in the Person of the Lord from heaven.

Note #2

The intervention of these in favour of the young king of Egypt, whom Antiochus Epiphanes had conquered, led to his going back and raging against the Jews, profaning the temple, and forbidding Jewish worship.

Note #3

Compare Isa 30:33 (reading "for the king also") and Isa 57:9. He has the title of "the king" in the eyes of the Jews—a title which of right belongs only to Jesus, the true Messiah and King of Israel.

Note #4

This is the regular meaning of the Hebrew.

Daniel Chapter 12

Chapter 12 gives us more of Israel's own history. In the midst of all these events Michael, the archangel, stands up in behalf of the people of Daniel. There is a time of trouble, such as never has been nor will be. Nevertheless the people shall be delivered, that is to say, those who are written in the book (the remnant belonging to God). Jeremiah has already spoken to us of this period, and of the deliverance (Jer 30:7). The Lord speaks of it also in Matthew 24, drawing the attention of His disciples to the abomination of desolation here mentioned, shewing clearly that He speaks of Jerusalem, the Jews, and the last days, when the Jews shall be delivered. He also points out the way in which the faithful are to escape, while the tribulation continues. Taking these passages together makes it easy to understand them both. The second Verse (Dan 12:2) extends beyond the land of Israel, which had been the scene of the prophecy until this. But their condition is stated in a way not to own the countries of their dispersion. Many of the race of Israel arise from their long abasement, some to everlasting life, but others to everlasting shame. They that understand shall shine as the firmament. They who have instructed the many in righteousness shall shine as the stars (compare the host of heaven and stars, chap. 8). God will clothe with the brightness of His favour those who will have been faithful during this period of rebellion and distress.

After this one of God's messengers inquires of the man clothed in linen, who was upon the waters of the river, how long it should be to the end of the

wonders (that is, of the tribulation) by the intervention of God in deliverance for Israel. The answer is, three years and a half, or 1260 days; and that, when God should have put an end to the dispersion of the holy people, all these things should be finished. Daniel asks for a fuller revelation with respect to the end; but the oracle is sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be tried and purified and made white, but the wicked shall do wickedly. Alas! this must be expected. None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand-these "maschilim," whom the Spirit of God has mentioned.

Now, from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be 1290 days. But the accomplishment of 1335 [See Note #1] days has still to be waited for; there shall be full blessing to him that waits and arrives at their fulfilment. Daniel himself shall have his part in this time of glory.

It is to be observed, that Daniel never describes the period that succeeds to the times of the Gentiles. He gives the history of those monarchies, the oppressors and seducers of the Jews in the latter days, and the deliverance of the people; but there he stops. He is the prophet of the times of the Gentiles until the deliverance.

Note #1

I have thought it possible that this computation may arise from this. An intercalary month to the 1260 days, or three years and a half, and then 45 days, if the years were ecclesiastical years, would bring up to the feast of tabernacles: but I offer no judgment on it. At any rate, the statement is clear that then the sanctuary of God will be cleansed in Jerusalem.

Conclusion to Daniel

One thing may here occur to the reader as desirable for the understanding of the whole, that is, to combine the agency of those instruments, which the prophecy of Daniel presents as acting in the land of Israel during the latter days, and to identify them-if it may be done-with those that are mentioned in other prophets. But this would be to make a system of prophecy, and not to explain Daniel. The Spirit of God has not done so in this prophet, which is

our present subject. I will, therefore, only allude to some striking points. Chapter 7 gives the character of the Roman empire, especially under its last head. It is the close of the history of the Gentile power. Chapter 8 (although I have often thought that the king, who is described there, might be the instrument in Israel of the western empire) gives to the horn it speaks of a different character-as it appears to me, in carefully weighing the passage-from that which constitutes the western power [See Note #1], whether as a little horn, or exercised in some local instrument. It is an eastern power arising out of one of the four kingdoms into which Alexander's empire was broken up. His power, however, is derived from another; it is a separate power acting in Syria. In chapter 9 we find the one who acts among the Jews in Jerusalem itself, in connection with the Roman empire, be the instrument employed who he may. It may be "the king" of chapter 11 who finds himself between the kings of the south and of the north. But it is very possible that the little horn of chapter 7 acts itself. Still there is another power dependent upon it, who acts at least religiously upon the Jews, and leads them into apostasy-one who comes in his own name, and does not regard the God of his fathers.

"The king" of chapter 11 is a king in Judea, despising the religion of his fathers, and acting in that country in a way morally unbridled, re-establishing idolatry, and dividing the territory among those in favour. The kings of the south and north are Egypt and Assyria in the latter days, who attack the king who has established himself in the Holy Land. I suppose that "the king" answers to the second beast of Revelation, though in another aspect, as the first does to the little horn of chapter 7.

Note #1

We may compare Psalms 74 and 83, which confirm the idea that there will be a destruction in Jerusalem, as well as the compelled cessation of the daily sacrifice accomplished in a religious way by the prince who is to come, the Roman of chapter 9, who will be among the Jews, and who had professed himself to be their friend.

HOSEA

Introduction to Hosea

The prophet Hosea prophesied during the same period of time as Isaiah; but he is more occupied with the existing condition of the people, and especially of Israel, although he often speaks of Judah likewise. His prophecy is more simple in its character than that of Isaiah. His style on the contrary, is extremely energetic, and full of abrupt transitions. The reign of that king of Israel, which is given as a date to the prophecy, was outwardly a moment of prosperity to that portion of the land. The prophecy itself will inform us of its moral condition. The patience of God bore long with the rebellion of His people taking pity on their affliction (see 2 Kings 17), even as long as this patience could be a testimony to the real character of the God who exercised it, and did not deny holiness and righteousness, nor give a sanction to sin, so that it was still possible to bless the people, without sacrificing all true testimony (even in the eyes of the heathen) to what God is-in a word, "until there was no remedy."

Jeroboam reigned during a period which commenced some years before the reigns of Uzziah, etc., kings of Judah. Uzziah began his reign fourteen years before the end of Jeroboam's reign. He reigned fifty-two years; Jotham reigned sixteen years; Ahaz, sixteen years; Hezekiah, twenty-nine years. So that Hosea prophesied over fifty years, [See Note #1] and perhaps longer; being a witness, during those long years, to Israel's rebellion against Jehovah, his heart grieved and broken by the iniquity of a people whom he loved, and whose happiness, as being the people of Jehovah, he had at heart.

The prophecy of Hosea is divided into two parts: the revelation of God's purposes with respect to Israel; and the remonstrances which the prophet addresses to the people in the name of Jehovah. In this latter part he frequently speaks of Israel as a whole; frequently also he distinguishes between Israel or Ephraim and Judah. But I do not see that he addresses himself directly to Ephraim (that is, to the ten tribes). He speaks of Ephraim,

but not to Ephraim. Moreover, this is the general character of his prophecy—a kind of prolonged lamentation, expressing his anguish at the people's condition, while unfolding all the dealings of God towards them, except chapter 14, in which he calls Israel to such a repentance as shall take place in the last days.

Note #1:

The reign of Jotham was as to some part, possibly the most of it, coincident with that of Uzziah, who was put aside as a leper.

Hosea Chapter 1

Hosea 1:1

hos 1:1

The first three chapters compose the first part, or the revelations of God's purposes with respect to Israel. From the outset Israel is treated as being in a state of rebellion against God. The prophet was to unite himself to a corrupt woman (a prophetic type, I doubt not), whose conduct was the expression of that of the people. The son to whom she gives birth is a sign, by means of the name which the prophet is to give him, of the judgment of God on the house of Jehu, and on the kingdom of Israel, which should cease to exist. In fact, after the extinction of Jehu's family, although there were several kings, all was confusion in the kingdom of Israel—the kingdom was lost. It is evident, that, although the zeal of Jehu was energetic in extirpating idolatry, so that in His outward government God could sanction and reward it (and, as testimony, must needs do so), yet the motives that governed him were far from pure. God, therefore, while in His public government blessing Jehu, shews here, where He reveals His thoughts and His real estimate of the work, that He judges righteously and holily; and that that which man brings in of ambition, of cruelty, and even of that false zeal which is but hypocrisy, concealing the gratification of its own will under the name of zeal for Jehovah—all, in a word, which is of self, is not hidden from His eyes, and meets with its just reward, and so much the more from its being masked under the great name of Jehovah. Jezreel, formerly a witness of the execution of God's judgment on the house of Ahab, should be so now of the

ruin of all Israel. A daughter is afterwards born to the woman whom the prophet has taken. God commands the prophet to call her Lo-ruhamah (that is, "no more mercy"). Not only was judgment executed upon Israel, but apart from sovereign grace -the exercise of which was reserved for the last days-this judgment was final. There was no longer any room for the long-suffering of God towards the kingdom of Israel. Judah should yet be preserved by the power of God. A second son is named Lo-ammi (that is, "not my people"), for now Jehovah no more acknowledged the people to be His. Judah, who for a time maintained this position, although the ten tribes were lost, has at length by her unfaithfulness plunged the whole nation under the terrible judgment of being no longer the people of God, and Jehovah being no longer their God.

God, having thus briefly but clearly pronounced the judgment of the people, immediately announces, with equal clearness, His sovereign grace towards them. "Nevertheless," saith He, by the mouth of the prophet, "the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered." But this grace opens the door to others besides the Jews. "In the place where it was said, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the sons of the living God." [See Note #1] The application of this passage to the Gentiles is stated by the apostle in Rom 9:24-26; where he quotes the end of chapter 2 in our prophet, as expressing grace towards the Jews, and the Verse we are now considering towards the Gentiles: while Peter (Pe1 2:10), who speaks only to converted Jews, quotes the end of chapter 2 only. There is no doubt that the Jews will come in, according to this principle in the last days; but the Holy Ghost expresses Himself here-as He has done in a multitude of passages quoted by the apostle -so as to adapt Himself to the admission of the Gentiles, when the time, foreseen of God, should come. But here He goes farther, and announces the return of the children of Judah and of the ten tribes, reunited, and subject to one head, in the great day of the seed of God. [See Note #2] It is said, "they shall come up out of the land"; and this has been supposed to mean their return from a foreign land; but I have an idea that it is rather that they all come up as one people in their solemn feasts. Thus the judgment of a corrupt and faithless people, and grace towards the Gentiles, and afterwards towards Israel as a nation,

are very plainly announced, in words which, although but few, embrace the whole series of God's dealings.

Note #1

We may observe that it is not said, "they shall be my people" (an expression less suitable to Gentiles), but "the sons of the living God"; which is precisely the privilege bestowed by grace on those who are brought to know the Lord since the resurrection of Christ.

Note #2

This is the meaning of "Jezreel": or, more exactly, "God will sow."

Hosea Chapter 2

Chapter 2 introduces some new elements of exceeding interest; and, at the same time, a magnificent revelation of the dealings of God in grace, towards Israel. The opening words of the chapter appear to me to recognise the principle of a remnant, acknowledged by the heart of God as a people, and an object of mercy, while the nation, as a body, is rejected by the Lord. But the thought of Israel's restoration, announced in the last Verse of chapter 1 (Hos 1:11), gives the remnant its value and its place, according to the counsels of God: "God has not cast off his people whom he foreknew." Nevertheless, Jehovah says by the Holy Ghost to the prophet, not "I have married thy mother, and I will not put her away," but "Say unto your brethren, Ammi (my people), and to your sisters, Ruhamah (received in mercy)"; that is to say, to those who, acted upon by the Spirit of God, really enter in heart into the mind of the prophet-those who possess the character which made Jesus say, These are my brethren and my sisters. Such a position, in the eyes of the prophet, have the people and the beloved of God. It is thus that Peter applies Hos 2:23 to the remnant, that Paul reasons in Romans 9, and that the Lord Himself can take the name of "the true vine."

The prophet, then (he alone could do it), was to acknowledge his brothers and sisters as in relation with God, according to the whole effect of the promise, although that effect was not yet accomplished. But, in fact, with respect to God's dealings, God had to plead with the mother-with Israel, looked at as a whole. God could not own her as married to Him: He would

not be her husband. She must repent, if she would not be punished and made bare before the world. Neither would Jehovah have pity on her children, for they were born while she was going after false gods. Israel ascribed all the blessings that Jehovah had poured upon her to the favour of false gods. Therefore Jehovah had forcibly turned her back in her path. And since she knew not that it was Jehovah who filled her with this abundance, He would take it from her, and leave her naked and destitute, and visit upon her all the days of Baalim, during which Israel had served them and had forgotten Jehovah. But having brought this unfaithful woman into the wilderness, where she must learn that these false gods could not enrich her, Jehovah Himself, having allured her into it, would speak to her heart in grace. There it should be, when she had understood where her sin had brought her and was alone with Jehovah in the wilderness to which He had allured her, that He would comfort her, and give her entrance through grace into the power of those blessings which He alone could bestow.

The circumstance by which God expresses this return to grace is of touching interest. The valley of Achor should be her door of hope. There, where the judgment of God began to fall on the unfaithful people after their entrance into the land, when God acted according to the responsibility of the people—there would He now shew that grace abounded over all their sin. The joy of their first deliverance and redemption should be restored to them. It should be a recommencement of their history in grace, only it should be an assured blessing. The principle of the relationship of Israel with Jehovah should be changed. He would not be as a Master (Baal) to whom she was responsible, but as a Husband who had espoused her.. The Baalim should be entirely forgotten. He would take every kind of enemy out of their land, whether wild beast or wicked man, and He would betroth her unto Him in righteousness and in judgment, in lovingkindness, in mercies, and in faithfulness. She should know that it was Jehovah. Israel being thus betrothed in faithfulness to Jehovah, and such being the assured principles of His relationship with her, the chain of blessing between Jehovah and His people on earth should be secured and uninterrupted. Jehovah should be in connection with the heavens, the heavens with the earth, the earth should yield her blessings, and these should meet all the wants of Israel, the seed of God. And He would sow Israel unto Himself in the earth, and her name

should be Ruhamah (that is, received in mercy or grace), Ammi (that is, my people); and Israel should say, "Thou art my God." In a word, there should be an entire restoration of blessing, but on the ground of grace and of the faithfulness of God.

Hosea Chapter 3

Chapter 3 reveals another detail of the people's history during the time of their rejection, a rejection followed by their return to God. Israel should remain for a long time apart to wait for their God. They should have neither true God nor false god, neither king, nor priest, nor sacrifice; but afterwards they should return, and should seek Jehovah their God, and David their king. That is to say, all Israel should seek the true royalty originally bestowed by God, of which Christ is the fulfilment. They should bow their heart before Jehovah and His goodness in the latter days.

Hosea Chapter 4

The following commentary covers Chapters 4 and 5.

In chapter 4 we see that the prophet addresses the whole people together. In Verse 15 (Hos 4:15) he distinguishes Judah from Israel, warning the former not to follow the apostasy of the latter. He dwells upon the sins (Hos 4:2) of which the people were guilty. Israel is rejected from being a nation of priests unto Jehovah—a glory which had been promised them (Exodus 19). This introduces the judgments of the priests, properly so called, who took pleasure in the sins of the people, that they might enrich themselves with their sacrifices. The proverb, "Like people, like priest," was exemplified in them. Whoredom and wine took all sound judgment from the heart; and the people of God asked counsel of their stocks and of their staff, sacrificed in the high places, and committed whoredom there. God would give them up to the fruits of their iniquity. It is then that God exhorts Judah not to follow this course. Nevertheless, the Spirit of the Lord, in unfolding all the iniquity of Ephraim committed in His sight, shews that Judah also was guilty before Him (Hos 5:10; Hos 5:13). Priests, people, king, all are addressed as objects of the judgment; all had given themselves up to violence. Although God had rebuked them, they would not return to Him. Afterwards they should seek Him and not find Him. He would have withdrawn Himself from them.

Another sin is imputed to them both. Ephraim had perceived his weakness, the consequence of his sin, and Judah his wound; but they had gone too far from Jehovah to have recourse unto Him; they had sought help from the Assyrian. Could he deliver the sinful people from the judgment of Jehovah? Surely not. God would be to them as a lion that rends its prey; and then He would go and return to His place, until they should acknowledge their offence. In their affliction they would diligently seek Him.

Hosea Chapter 6

The following commentary covers Chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 6 calls forth a touching address from the prophet, in which he entreats the people to return to Jehovah. Faith has always this resource, because it sees the hand of God, its God, in the chastisement, and can appeal to the mercy of a well-known God. In Hos 6:4 the Spirit expresses the lovingkindness of God towards His rebellious children, and His readiness to meet the smallest movement in their heart towards good. Therefore had God sent unto them the testimony of the prophets-an extraordinary means, as we have seen, for maintaining in grace the relationship of the people with God, and that morally and in reality. In the heart and mind of God it was not a question of outward forms; the moral relationship with God had failed. He had raised up prophets, as a means of relationship with Himself, to bring back the hearts of the people. But, as Adam [See Note #1] did in the garden of Eden, they had broken the covenant on which the enjoyment of the blessings God had heaped upon them depended. They had acted treacherously towards Him. Jehovah their God was ready to raise them up from their ruin; but if He came in, His presence brought to light that iniquity which formed a moral barrier to this restoration. Thereupon the heart of the prophet overflows anew in lamentation over their iniquity. The prophecy of Hosea is important in this respect, that it furnishes us with the moral picture of the people whom God has judged, the condition of this people which made the judgment inevitable. There is nothing more affecting than this mixture, on God's part, of reproaches, of lovingkindness, of appeal, of reference to happier moments. But all was in vain. He must needs judge, and have recourse to His sovereign grace, which would bring Israel back to repentance and to Him. They encouraged the king and the princes in their

wickedness. Already the fruit of Israel's iniquity was seen in the weakness of the people; strangers also devoured them; yet, for all this they did not return to Jehovah. If at times, under the sense of their misery, they howled upon their beds, they did not cry unto God. What a picture of man under the effect of sin, who will not turn to the Lord!

Note #1

It should be read, "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant." Adam, in Hebrew, is a proper name and a generic name; but the latter generally with the article, The Adam, as in Gen 1:27. It is to this passage Paul refers in Rom 5:14.

Hosea Chapter 8

In chapter 8 it is especially the daring and continual violation of the law of their God, with which Israel is openly reproached, and which would bring judgment, with eagle swiftness, upon them. Observe here, that the devastation with which Israel is threatened reaches even to the temple of Jehovah. Israel had forsaken the Lord to make altars of their own, and Judah had leant upon an arm of flesh. We may remark here, that the prophecy presents Ephraim, as having entirely forsaken God, and as being plunged in iniquity, and under impending judgment; Judah, as being yet faithful outwardly, although at heart unfaithful too (see Hos 6:11; Hos 8:14; Hos 11:12). Judgment should fall upon them both.

Hosea Chapter 9

The following commentary covers Chapters 9, 10, and 11.

In chapter 9 we have here that touching mixture of affection and judgment which we find again and again in this prophet. Ephraim should not remain in the land which was Jehovah's, for God would not abandon His rights; whatever might be the iniquity of the people. They should go into captivity, and come no more into the house of Jehovah. The prophet and the spiritual man should no longer be a link between them and Jehovah. God would confound them by means of that which should have enlightened and guided them. The prophet should even be a snare to their soul, although formerly a watchman from God. The corruption of Ephraim was as deep as in the days

of Gibeah, the history of which is related at the end of the book of Judges; and they should be visited. God had chosen Israel from among the nations to be His delight, and they had gone after Baal-peor, even before they came into the land. If God is longsuffering, He yet takes knowledge of everything. Ephraim should now be a wanderer among the nations.

At the end of chapter 9 and in chapter 10 the Spirit reproaches Israel with their altars and their golden calves. They should be carried into captivity. Judah should also bear the yoke. The Assyrian should carry away these calves in- which Israel had trusted. After all (chapter 11) God still remembers His early love for Jacob; He puts them in mind of all His lovingkindness, His goodness, His care for them. They should not return to their former condition in Egypt; Assyria should be the place of their captivity. But, however great the sin of Israel, the heart of their God cannot forsake His people: He will not destroy them; He is God, and not man; and, finally, He will place the people, trembling now and submissive, once more in their dwellings.

Hosea Chapter 12

The Spirit presents another aspect of the relationship of Israel with God. He would punish Ephraim, and the sins of Judah should be remembered. But He reminds them, that there was a time when Jacob could wrestle with his God, and make supplication to Him, and prevail; that afterwards He found him in Bethel, and there God, even Jehovah, spake to him, and revealed to him His name, which, in fact, He had not done in Peniel. Take notice here of the way in which God enters into all the details of His moral relationship with Israel, in order that the force, the meaning, and the righteousness of the "Lo-ruhamah," which He pronounces on His people, may be understood. His love for them at first, His tender care, the manner in which He had already been requited at Baal-peor, the horrible iniquity of Gibeah now renewed, their corruption, their idolatry, their refusal to hearken, all is recounted; and finally, the way in which Jacob had formerly succeeded in turning away wrath, and how God had then revealed Himself to him. Now, the name which He had proclaimed on that occasion was His memorial for ever. Let them then return unto God, and wait on Him continually. But no; all is corruption, and Ephraim will not even confess his sin. He who had brought

them up out of Egypt would make them dwell again in tents without a country. God had constantly spoken to them by His prophets, but the iniquity was there. Israel had already been poor-a fugitive and a wanderer. And God had interposed in sovereignty by a messenger of deliverance, when there was no covenant in force on which the people could reckon to deliver them.

Hosea Chapter 13

Chapter 13 is the perpetual conflict of the affections and the judgment of God. The thought of their sin calls forth the announcement of the necessary and inevitable judgment. As soon as the judgment is pronounced, the heart of God returns to His own thoughts of grace (see ; ; ; ; and the last two of the chapter). Nothing can be finer than this intermingling of the moral necessity for judgment, the just indignation of God at such sin, pleading to induce Israel to forsake their evil ways and seek Jehovah, who would assuredly have compassion; then God's recurrence to the eternal counsels of His own grace, to secure unto the people whom He loved that of which their iniquity deprived them; and, at the same time, the touching remembrance of former relationship with His beloved people. What condescension, and what grace, on the part of their God! Well had Israel deserved the sentence, "I will no more have mercy," painful and terrible as it was, in exact proportion to all that God had shewn Himself to be for Israel. Well can the Lord Jesus say, "How often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not." The manner also in which God deduces the history of Israel's iniquity, ever since they came into the wilderness, and presents the means they had enjoyed for returning to Him; the way in which He sets forth His dealings when He had to resist the unfaithful Jacob, yet had blessed him when he wrestled in faith- He who never changes, and who was still the same for Israel; the whole behaviour of Israel being marked by God, borne in mind, and brought forward for the instruction of the people, if by any means it might be possible to spare them:-the whole of this picture, in a word, drawn by God Himself, ministers profound instruction to us, teaching us to cleave closely to Him who, however great His patience may be, takes knowledge of all our ways, and has ordained that we should reap that which we have sown.

Nothing also exhibits more fully the prolonged and marvellous patience of the love of God. It is the special object of this prophecy to set forth the moral condition of the people which led to the sentence of Lo-ruhamah, and then to that of Lo-ammi, unfolded in the summary of God's ways with the people given in chapters 1 to 3-the relationship that exists between the moral dealings of God and His unchangeable counsels-the connection between these counsels and the affections according to which God accomplishes them-the ingratitude of man in his behaviour with respect to these affections-the longsuffering which the love of God causes Him to exercise towards His ungrateful people-at last, that withdrawal on God's part which left His people a prey to their own corruption, and to the snares of the enemy. The result is, that the condition of His people obliges God to bring the Judgment upon them which their sin called for, when all the warnings of God by His messengers had been unavailing. But this gives place to the accomplishment of the counsels of God, who brings His people to repentance, after having long given them up to the fruits of their own doings, and thus enables them to enjoy the effects of His counsels.

Hosea Chapter 14

Chapter 14. It is this last work that we find in chapter 14 of the prophet. Israel, returning to Jehovah, acknowledges his iniquity, and addresses himself to the grace of his God. Thus only could he render Him acceptable worship. His heart, instructed now and cleansed, refuses the help of Asshur, whom he had sought in his unbelief, when he rejected his God who searched his ways; he will no longer lean upon an arm of flesh, nor on carnal strength, and he casts off the false gods to whom he had bowed the knee. His refuge should be with Him in whom the fatherless find mercy. God, therefore, who only waited for the return of His people (a return which He had wrought in their hearts by His grace, when the chastisement, necessary to His moral glory, and to the good of the people, was ended)-God Himself would heal their backsliding; He would love them freely. His anger was turned away from His people. His blessing and grace should be as the dew unto them. Divine fertility and beauty should again be seen in Israel, His people. I would read thus: "Ephraim [shall say] What have I to do with idols?" Jehovah says, "I have heard him and observed him." Then Ephraim, "I am like a green fir-

tree." And Jehovah answers, "From me is thy fruit found. There is repentance, which Jehovah acknowledges; and the joyful consciousness of blessing, which God causes to be felt, proceeds from Himself, who both secures and augments it. The last Verse (Hos 14:9) teaches us that which we have already endeavoured to point out, namely, that this history makes known the ways of God, which the wise-divinely taught in heart-will readily understand. "For the ways of Jehovah are right. His path of action is straight onwards, however great His mercy may be. The just, sustained and helped by the strength of God, can walk there; but the transgressors, through the very power that is present, shall fall therein. There is indeed no prophet who gives the dealings of God, as a whole, so completely as Hosea.

JOEL

Introduction to Joel

The import of the book of Joel is sufficiently plain, although a few passages may be obscure.

Joel Chapter 1

Joel 1:1

joe 1:1

The Spirit of God takes the opportunity afforded by an unparalleled scarcity, caused by the invasion of innumerable armies of insects, to rouse the attention of the people with respect to the day of Jehovah; that great and terrible day which was to come, and in which His power should be manifested in judgment-in which He, who had shewn long patience, would at length interpose to vindicate the glory of His name, and deliver it from the reproach cast thereon by the sin of His people, and to take vengeance on all that magnified itself against Him. That which is here presented to us as the rod of Jehovah is the northern army-the same that we so often find in the prophets-the Assyrian. But, in the end, it is God Himself who, after having chastised His people by means of this enemy, intervenes for his destruction, and for the judgment of all the nations gathered round Jerusalem. In examining the prophecy, the reader may observe that it distinguishes between the famine that ushered in the day of Jehovah, and that day itself. We have only to compare Joe 1:15; and Joe 2:1; Joe 2:11. The state of famine and desolation, interpreted by the Spirit of prophecy, calls on the people to present themselves before Jehovah, because the day of Jehovah was at hand.

Joel Chapter 2

Joe 2:1 sounds the alarm, because the day is near. The day is then described as the invasion of a people, the like of whom had never been seen by Israel or the land. It was, in fact, the army of Jehovah. His power was with it as His

rod. The voice of Jehovah was heard before it; the day of Jehovah announced itself as there (Joe 2:11). We find an instance here of that which is usual in prophetic teaching-some event which should act on the conscience of the people, taken up by the Spirit of prophecy, no doubt, to awaken their conscience at the very time of the event, but far more with the purpose of using it as a picture of some event in the last days of much greater moment. The judgment of God, already deserved by the people, and suspended by His longsuffering over their heads, awaits the hour in which this longsuffering will have no more effect, will become thenceforward useless, and in which the counsels of His wisdom shall have arrived at their development. The Spirit of God warns the people of this judgment: they should have given heed to it at that very time; but He describes for future days the instruments of God's vengeance, when He shall actually execute the judgment. Thus chapter 1 of Joel takes up the ravages of these insects, which, it seems, had caused a frightful scarcity, to act upon the conscience of the people at the time of the prophecy; but from the beginning of chapter 2 the prophecy throws itself into the future, and introduces a people, who, in their turn, will ravage the land of Israel in the last days. Yet, at the commencement of the chapter, it is only the alarm that is sounded; but with the announcement that the day is nigh at hand.

We are reminded here of the ordinance in Numbers 10, in Verse 9 of which (Num 10:9) it is commanded to sound an alarm, or blow loudly with the trumpets, when the enemy should be in the land, and Jehovah would remember the people. In Verse 7 (Joe 2:7), if the congregation was to be gathered together, they were to blow the trumpet, but not to sound an alarm. Thus, in Joe 2:1, an alarm is sounded in Zion. A great and strong people, who devour the earth, are in the land. There is but one thing that gives hope (and that one is in itself the most terrible thing of all)-Jehovah conducts this devouring people. It is His army. Faith takes hope from this. He who has recognised the trumpet of God, he who, awakened by the Spirit of prophecy when it sounded an alarm, and described this terrible evil beforehand (and it is the Spirit alone who does so) in its true colours, as Jehovah's doing-he, who has understood that it is God's judgment, that Jehovah is in it, can come before Jehovah according to His own ways, and plead with Jehovah according to His love for His people. This is the true

character of faith in all times. It is the especial position of the remnant in the last days.

The day of Jehovah actually impending, and its true meaning understood, through the intelligence given by the Spirit of prophecy, is a call to repentance at the moment when repentance is necessary, at the moment ordained of God for His immediate intervention on behalf of His people. These are the ways of God. He to whom the moment is known acts outwardly to force His people to take heed; and He acts in testimony to direct their hearts. It was the same thing in the days of Jesus. The testimony of God was there before the terrible judgment which soon fell upon the people. He who had ears to hear profited by it, and enjoyed the effect of God's intervention in a deliverance which He has proffered, yet better, though of another character, than that which Israel shall enjoy in the last days. "The Lord added daily to the assembly such as should be saved." Joe 2:12-14 give us the prophet's testimony, calling them to repentance, in view of the chastisements that were hanging over the people. In Verse 15 (Joe 2:15) the trumpet is sounded on God's part to gather the people together, according to Num 10:7, to plead with Him that He would turn away His wrath, to address themselves to Him, as One whose judgments were necessarily directed by Himself. Oh! how good it is to have to do with God, and to see Him in the judgment, although He is a consuming fire. It was thus David judged when he had numbered the people.

The humiliation, we perceive, was to be universal and complete, for the priests themselves are called to stand outside the sanctuary, to cry with the people unto Jehovah, appealing to His faithfulness, that the heathen might not say, "Where is their God?" as the Jews said to Jesus. Jehovah would hear His people thus humbled. He would fill their land with plenty, and they should no longer be a reproach among the heathen; the northern army, which had devoured the land like locusts, should be driven out by the way of the east, judged on account of their pride, because they magnified themselves to do great things. But it should be Jehovah who would do great things, delivering them thus from all their fears. A full and abundant blessing should be poured upon the land of Israel; the children of Zion should rejoice in Jehovah their God; the people of Jehovah should never again be

ashamed. They should receive the abundance of all the years which had failed. They should know assuredly that Jehovah was among them-He, Jehovah, their God, and not another; and they should never be ashamed. The blessing, and He who bestowed the blessing, should thus secure them from being a reproach among the nations.

But this was not all. This was temporal blessing-the re-establishment of Israel in the blessing of former days, on the ground of grace, which would prevent their losing it. But there was a new thing to be bestowed upon them. God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. The young men and the old men of the people should have visions and dreams: even on the servants and the handmaidens should this rain from heaven descend. Joe 2:30 [See Note #1] resumes the subject in another aspect, and does not follow in direct succession. Before the great and terrible day of Jehovah there should be signs and wonders in the heavens, and on earth the terror of Jehovah should be felt, and whosoever should call on the name of Jehovah should be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem should be deliverance, as Jehovah had said, and in the remnant whom Jehovah should call.

These, then, are the principal events of the last days, briefly but clearly set forth: a powerful enemy coming from the north, as the instrument of Jehovah's judgment, ravaging the whole land; judgment upon the people as an earthly people, according to their former position of temporal blessing in relationship with God; the people being called to repentance, by the Spirit of prophecy, in order that God might turn away this scourge. On their repentance God would restore temporal blessing, and drive away the northern army and destroy it. The reproach that rested on the people because of their sins should cease for ever. A double order of events is then announced, giving a precise statement with regard to the immediate relationship between God and the people; and that in two respects. First, the temporal blessing, granted to the people now restored to the favour of God, should be accompanied by a gift yet more excellent, and more expressive of His love. The Holy Spirit should be abundantly poured out; the most simple and the most humble should partake of it. But, in the second place, [See Note #2] before the coming of the great day of Jehovah He would send marvellous signs, and whosoever should call on His name should

be saved. It would be the returning in heart to Jehovah which He would own; for in that dreadful day of the wrath of God there should be deliverance in Zion, and in Jerusalem His chosen city. It is He who intervenes in judgment; He would remember mercy: there should be a remnant called by His grace. The accomplishment of all this is evidently in the last days, when the mystery of God shall be finished, and He will manifest His government in righteousness and in goodness on the earth, though the repentant remnant get the spiritual blessing in a christian way, as in like manner that of the new covenant. The whole tenor of the prophecy, I think, makes it plain that Joel does not speak of the beast and Antichrist, but of the powers of the heathen from outside the apostate system. It will be remembered that it is said in Daniel 9 that because of the protection of idols there will be a desolator. Joel thus speaks, not of him who makes a covenant with Israel, but of this desolator. Hence Jehovah roars out of Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem. The judgment is not from heaven against the beast and his armies, but from Jerusalem against the enemies and desolators of Israel.

But there is still something to be pointed out here. The Spirit of God has taken care entirely to finish His subject. In Joe 2:27 the deliverance from the northern army is complete, and temporal blessing is so bestowed that Israel may enjoy it permanently, under grace. Jehovah is there, and His people shall never be ashamed. From Verse 28 to 32 (Joe 2:28-32) is quite apart, and this for every important reasons. On the repentance of the people the Holy Spirit should be bestowed; and, before the execution of the judgment, whosoever called on the name of Jehovah should be saved. Now the rejection of the Messiah necessarily brought in judgment on the Jew (although other counsels of God were to be accomplished with respect to the assembly, outside the Jewish system); their temple has been given up to the power of the enemy, who, as the army of Jehovah was to destroy these murderers, and to burn up their city. The last days therefore are come, the end of the age, with respect to the Jews, although it is all to resume its course for a little season for the definitive judgment, when the counsels of God with regard to the assembly are fulfilled. But if judgment thus hastened, mercy could not delay in coming and anticipating it. The Holy Ghost was given, according to this promise, to the remnant who in those days

hearkened to the call of Jehovah, and it was poured out upon all flesh. Deliverance was found in Zion, although the redeemed (those who were to be saved) were translated into the assembly, the time for resuming the government of God not being yet come—the time when He to whom it was given should associate those with Himself who should have learnt to suffer with Him, that they might also be glorified together. Then the final accomplishment of all this mystery should take place—the great and terrible day of Jehovah: Christ should take His great power, and should reign. What we have been saying will explain the true importance of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the place which that destruction holds in the development of God's dealings; and the connection, with respect to His dealings on earth, between this destruction and that which took place on the day of Pentecost.

There is yet one thing to be remarked here, namely, that in view of the counsels of grace towards the Gentiles, the Spirit of God makes use of language that leaves the door open to them. The Spirit is poured out "on all flesh," and "whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved." The apostle Paul frequently employs this last expression in this sense.

It is interesting to recall here the different occasions on which the expression "all flesh" is used. It implies, as to its full accomplishment, the important fact that will take place at the end of this age, namely, that God will come out of the narrow circle of Jewish ordinances to act with regard to all mankind upon the earth. This is already true morally by means of the gospel. But it will be true as to the government of God at the end. Christ, in coming down to the earth, came into the narrow fold (although His work, as well as His personal presence, had a much wider extent), and He led His sheep out of it; and called other sheep also to form them into one flock, saved, set free, and finding pasture. The gospel afterwards was sent out into the whole world, in connection with Jerusalem or Galilee (I refer to its administration by means of the twelve), [See Note #3] and in connection with heaven by means of Paul. God will, in fact, deal at length with all flesh in His governmental power. Isa 40:5. "The glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." Here the mind of the Spirit goes forward to the last days when Christ shall be revealed. But Jehovah, who

was to bless, is come, and the divine testimony in the wilderness has been borne, even as the blood of the new covenant has been shed, although Israel, as yet, has not acknowledged it. Isa 40:6-7. "All flesh"-even the people-"is as grass." Israel has not yet learned this, but the remnant have been blessed. In Isa 66:16, God pleads "by fire and by his sword with all flesh." It is the judgment that extends to all. Here, in Joel, it is the Spirit poured out upon all flesh, to manifest the presence of God, and the blessing that rests upon all men, and is no longer confined to the Jews. We may compare the warning in Zac 2:13; the millennial song of Christ, Psa 145:21; "Let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever"; the judgment of the apostates, Isa 66:24; "They shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." See also Gen 6:12

Note #1

Verses 28, 29 (Joe 2:28-29) are a short independent prophecy, and so are the Verses from 30 to the end of the chapter Joe 2:30-32), and still more so. Verses 28, 29 (Joe 2:28-29) promise the outpouring of the Holy Spirit consequent on the repentance of the nation, which was also accompanied by temporal blessings. The repentance is the point of departure for both. So the partial fulfilment of Acts 2 was on those who repented, though the temporal blessings could not come on the nation. Thus, though there was that which was analogous in the destruction of Jerusalem already accomplished, signs and wonders will come before the great and notable day of Jehovah yet to come. The blood of the new covenant was shed and all things ready; but the nation would not repent and could not get the blessing. The remnant got the spiritual part of it with all flesh; the Jews will, all, when they say, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah." The Holy Spirit, who foresaw all this, has ordered accordingly the structure of the prophecy.

Note #2

This is an entirely distinct prophecy, which goes by itself, preceding the day of Jehovah, as indeed is clearly stated, which day ushers in the blessing previously spoken of. The order in the last days will be repentance, deliverance by the day of Jehovah, temporal blessing, the Holy Ghost.

Before the day of Jehovah signs will take place. This last stands therefore necessarily apart, as the calling on the name of Jehovah of course precedes the deliverance.

Note #3

As to this mission we have only the general statement of Mark, that they went everywhere (Mar 16:20). In Verse 15 (Joe 2:15) they are told to go into all the world. In Matthew 28 they are told in Galilee to disciple all nations-all the Gentiles-but this is another mission. As regards the passage in Mark, the reader will remark that the questioned passage, from Verse 9 (Mat 28:9), begins with Jerusalem and the ascension, as in Luke; in Verse 7 (Mat 28:7), they are told to go into Galilee, as in Matthew. These are distinct missions. In point of fact, wherever they went, the mission to the Gentiles (Gal. 2) was given up to Paul and Barnabas, who had already been on it. So far, the Matthew commission dropped. Mark's is individual, and a question of salvation; Matthew's is not. Luke's is carried out by the apostles, as the speeches shew throughout the Acts, only the Gentile part was given up to Paul.

Joel Chapter 3

In Joel 3 the Spirit develops, with more detail, the circumstances of the last days-those days, in which God would bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem. This epoch precedes the time of peace and blessing, in which the curse shall be entirely taken away. It is the judgment of the nations, a judgment necessary for the vindication of the rights of God, with respect to His oppressed people, and for the manifestation, in the sight of the nations, of that which He is in His government of the earth. The ten tribes are not here in question, nor the general restoration of Israel. Before the full blessing of His people, God must resume His immediate government of them, in the same place where He had given it up, again taking possession of the seat of that government-a seat which He had chosen Himself. There will He plead in His power with all the nations that dispute His rights, manifesting Himself in the midst of His people, and acting as dwelling with them, maintaining their rights as belonging to Himself. Israel is His inheritance. The word "Jehoshaphat" means "the judgment, or the sceptre,

of Jehovah or Jah." There, in judgment, He pleads with the nations for His people, whom they had scattered; and for His land, which they had parted. He recounts all the grievances of His people, as done to Himself. By their means the same evils should be recompensed in judgment upon the nations that inflicted them. The nations are called upon to prepare for war, they are all to assemble, they are to wake up, quitting their peaceful occupations, and come to the valley of Jehoshaphat. There Jehovah will sit to judge all the heathen round about. And if the Gentiles are to awaken all their mighty men for the day of God, God on His part will cause His mighty ones to come down (Joe 3:11).

But, however great the pride of the men of war, it was, after all, the judgment of God-the sickle of God reaping the earth. His press should be full, His vats should overflow; for the iniquity was great. In the Apocalypse the harvest is distinguished from the vintage, the first being the judgment that separates the good from the wicked and vice versa; the second, the execution of vengeance. Here it appears to me that the two together present the general idea of the execution of the judgment, although the symbol of the winepress is the more forcible. What multitudes in that day should learn the consequences of their contempt of the word of grace, and of the pride that raised them up in rebellion against Jehovah of hosts! All governmental order, its grandeur and its power, should disappear before the judgment of God.

But Jehovah Himself should resume the reins of government on earth, and cause His voice to be heard from Jerusalem. The heavens and earth should tremble at His intervention. But if this intervention was the judgment of the rebellious, He who intervened, Jehovah, would be the hope of His people-Himself the strength of the children of Israel. And thus should they know Him to be Jehovah their God; dwelling in Zion, His holy mountain. Jerusalem should be holy, strangers should no more pass through it, profaning it as their prey. Nor this alone; but there should be abundant blessing on the land of His people; wine should flow down from their mountains, and milk from their hills. The rivers of Judah should flow with waters, and a fountain should come forth of the house of Jehovah, and water the valley of Shittim (compare Ezekiel 47 and Zac 14:8). Egypt and Edom should be made

desolate; but Judah and Jerusalem should dwell in everlasting blessing, for Jehovah should have cleansed them. We perceive that it is effectual and sovereign grace.

It will be remarked also, that this prophecy does not go beyond the blessing of Judah and Jerusalem; that the scene of the judgment of the nations refers to the judgment accomplished in the land of Judea, where their armies will be assembled-accomplished to put Jehovah in possession of His throne upon earth; or rather, He takes possession of His throne by the execution of this judgment, and afterwards He bestows blessing on the people whom, in grace, He has cleansed. One devastating army is especially pointed out-that which comes from the north. It appears also that the desolation of the land, before the intervention of Jehovah, will be very great, so that the people will be a reproach among the nations; but woe unto those who should despise the people of God! If this army announces the day of Jehovah, Jehovah Himself will interpose, that it may be in truth His own; and, in interposing, He delivers the people whom He loves.

AMOS

Introduction to Amos

The prophecy of Amos is one of those that speak of the moral condition of the people, and especially of Israel, who, as we have already seen in the historical books, represents more particularly the people as such; while Judah was but as an appanage of the house of David, although containing always a remnant of the people.

This prophecy, which does not extend so far down in the history of Israel as that of Hosea, is less fervent than the latter; sin is not pursued with that consuming fire of jealousy and of moral revenge, which characterises the burning and broken style of the prophet Hosea. Nothing, doubtless, can be more decided against evil than Amos; but, although very simple, he speaks, as it were, from higher ground. In Hosea we see the anguish of heart produced by the Holy Ghost, in a man who could not endure evil in the people whom he loved as being the people of God; while in Amos there is more of the calmness of God's own judgment. There is much less detail with respect to sin. Certain prominent transgressions of a special character are pointed out, and the most complete and absolute judgment is proclaimed.

Amos Chapter 1

Amos 1:1

amo 1:1

The following commentary covers Chapters 1 and 2.

In the outset Jehovah, proclaiming His own rights from the place of His own throne, roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem. Afterwards, quite at the end, the restoration of the house of David and of Israel likewise is announced. We may remark that, before the judgment of Israel and Judah is declared, that also of the surrounding nations is pronounced; and this, on account of their hostile and cruel behaviour to the people of Israel, and on account of that also which was essentially cruel in them, and opposed even

to the sentiments of humanity; for God takes cognizance of all these things. Syria is to be carried away captive into Assyria. The means employed for the judgment of the others is not mentioned. Gaza and the Philistines, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, pass successively in review; and, finally, Judah and Israel. God enters into much more detail with respect to the sins of His people. He had indeed specified that which characterised each nation judged; but with Israel He goes into detail. We may here again remark—that which we have seen elsewhere—that these judgments of Jehovah fall upon the nations that are established on the territory promised to Abraham, and belonging, according to this gift of God, to the people of Israel. God purges His land of that which defiles it, and consequently alas! of Judah and Israel likewise; but at the same time asserting and retaining His own rights, which He will exercise in grace on Israel's behalf in the last days. We see here the folly of the hope entertained by the enemies of the people, in seeking their ruin with the idea of finding their own advantage in it. Doubtless God can chastise His people, for He must make His own character manifest; but the malice of their enemies brings His judgment upon them also.

With respect to Judah, Jehovah especially points out their contempt of the law and disobedience of His commandments. In Israel the sin specified has a character more independent of the law (the reason of which is easily understood, if we consider the condition of that people), and connected with that departure from the fear of God, which allows man to give way to the selfishness of his own heart, and to oppress those whom God regards. They sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes. They care not for the sufferings of the poor; but even at the altar—supposed, at least, to be that of Jehovah—they lie down upon garments pledged through poverty, and make merry with the fines inflicted for transgressions. Nevertheless God had brought them up out of Egypt, had destroyed their enemies to put them in possession of their lands, and had given them the tokens of an especial relationship with Himself, whether by persons set apart for Himself, or by those whom He had sent as messengers to them; but they had caused the former to defile themselves, and had commanded the latter not to prophesy in the name of Jehovah. The heart of God was crushed, as it were, by their sins; and His judgment should overtake them.

The charge of despising the poor is often repeated in this prophecy (Amo 2:7; Amo 4:1; Amo 5:11; Amo 8:6); and this in special connection with Israel.

Amos Chapter 3

After having specified each one of the nations that were found on the territory promised to Abraham, God addresses Judah and Israel together—the whole family whom He had brought up from Egypt. These only had Jehovah known of all the families of the earth; therefore would He punish them for their iniquities: a solemn but very simple principle. If we are in the place of testimony-of testimony to God—it is needful that this testimony should be in accordance with the heart and the principles of God—that it should not falsify His character—that our walk should agree with our position. And the more immediate this testimony is, the more jealous will God be with respect to His glory and our faithfulness. Judgment begins at His house. If there was evil in the city, it was that Jehovah had interfered in judgment.* Two cannot walk together except they are agreed. Two important declarations are attached to this principle. On the one hand, if God intervene and make His great and terrible voice to be heard, there is a cause: on the other hand, God would not act without warning His people. He would do nothing without revealing it to His servants the prophets. But the lion had roared: should they not tremble? Jehovah had spoken; the prophet could not be silent. This was the condition of Israel. It is this latter kingdom that, for the moment, the Spirit of God particularly addresses. There should be left but a few little fragments of them, even like the morsels of a lamb that might be taken out of the lion's mouth after he had devoured it. Finally, in speaking here of Israel, Jehovah specifies their idolatrous altars, and declares that all the glory of the people shall perish. We may again remark, here, the way in which the kingdom of Israel is taken for the whole people, although Judah is spoken of and judged in its turn (see Amo 3:9; Amo 3:12-14). [See Note #1] With the exception of the first two chapters, which go together, each chapter in Amos is a distinct prophecy.

Note #1

Though some take it as moral evil which would lead Jehovah to interfere—then shall Jehovah do nothing.

Amos Chapter 4

Chapter 4 presents the oppression of the poor, and the worship which the children of Israel rendered at will in the places they had chosen. God also would act as He saw fit. He had indeed already done so; nevertheless they had not returned unto Him. He had repeated His chastisements in the most significant manner, but in vain. Therefore He calls on Israel to prepare to meet Himself.

Amos Chapter 5

After having deplored the ruin of Israel, He contrasts the places of their false worship with Jehovah, the Creator, and exhorts them to come unto Him and live. But Israel put off the thought of the evil day. Evil had the upper hand. The wise man kept silence, for it was an evil day. Nevertheless the Spirit calls to repentance. It might be that Jehovah would have compassion on the affliction of Joseph. Yet there were those in the midst of all this iniquity who professed to desire the day of Jehovah. The prophet tells them that it should be a day of terror and of judgment, of darkness and not of light. They should fall from one disaster into another. Jehovah took no pleasure in their offerings and sacrifices; He could not bear with their solemn feasts; He desired judgment and righteousness. But the people had been the same from the beginning: it was not Himself that they worshipped in the wilderness, but their Moloch and their Remphan, which they had made to themselves; and they should be carried away captive, beyond even the land that was now the object of their dread. This last appeal of the prophet involves deeply important instruction. The evil principle which was their ruin had been amongst them from the beginning: the interposition of God's power had checked it, and had turned aside its effect; but there it was, and with the decline of faith and godliness, when human interests no longer restrained it, the same evil had reappeared. The calves of Dan and Bethel were but a renewal of the calf they made in the wilderness. The people of Israel shewed themselves in their true character, notwithstanding all the longsuffering of God; and the judgment dates from the first act that displayed what they had in their heart. Here again we see all Israel looked at morally as one, when the ten tribes are spoken of. But this is made evident in a clear and striking manner by the whole prophecy.

Amos Chapter 6

Chapter 6 dwells upon the false confidence that deceived the heads of Israel. A similar judgment to that of Calneh and Hamath might fall upon Israel. Their chief men gave themselves up to luxury, as though all were prosperity. They had no sense of the affliction of Joseph. They should be the first to go into captivity. Jehovah would give up Israel to desolation. He would abhor the excellency of Jacob. For they trusted in that which was but vanity-in their golden calf. But He whom they despised would raise up an enemy that should afflict them from Hamath to the borders of Egypt.

Amos Chapter 7

God had long waited patiently. More than once He had been on the point of giving Israel up to judgment. The intercession of the prophet, that is to say, of the Spirit of Christ which wrought in the prophets (an intercession, indeed, that owed its efficacy to His sufferings; see Psalm 18), had arrested the scourge. But now Jehovah would arise to judgment, with the measuring-line in His hand, and nothing should turn Him aside. With the house of Jehu Israel should fall. In fact this is what took place. It may be that the preceding judgments apply to the downfall of the family of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat; and to that of the family of Ahab. Israel had been raised up again after each of those events, but not so after the house of Jehu had fallen.

A prophecy like this was out of place in the king's chapel. A religion, arranged by the policy of man without the fear of God, cannot endure the testimony of truth. Bethel was the house of the kingdom. The priest reports it all to the king. Let the prophet go away to Judah. There Judah was owned, and the truth might be proclaimed; but this was not the place for such unpalatable truths. The king was the ruler in all religious matters: man was master. But Jehovah does not renounce His own rights. Amos was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. He had not this function from man, nor from the desire of his own heart. Jehovah, in His sovereign will, had appointed him, and his word was the word of Jehovah. The priest, who opposed it, should suffer the consequences of his rashness, and Israel should surely go into captivity.

Amos Chapter 8

Chapter 8 renews the declaration, that the end of Israel was come on account of their iniquity. God would no longer pass it over. The prophet announces likewise the distress the people should come into from being deprived of all guidance from Jehovah. They who trusted in the vanities that Israel had set up for themselves should fall, and never rise again.

Amos Chapter 9

Chapter 9 presents Jehovah Himself as directing the judgment in such a manner that Israel should in no wise escape it, God treating them as He would the nations that were strangers to Him, as the Philistines or the Syrians, whom, in His providence, He had brought from other lands. Nevertheless God did not forget Israel. He executed the judgment Himself, so that, while Israel should be sifted among all the nations, not one grain should be lost. The wicked who did not believe in the judgment should be overtaken by it.

In that day (that is, in the day of Jehovah's final judgment) He would not raise up the tabernacle of Jeroboams and of Jehus, although He had given them a place for a time during His longsuffering government; but (fulfilling His own purposes of grace) He would raise up the tabernacle of David His elect, and rebuild it in its glory. He would raise it entirely from its ruins, that His seed might possess the remnant of Edom and of all the heathen that are brought to know the name of Jehovah. [See Note #1] At that time Jehovah would also bring Israel back from their captivity, and re-establish them in full blessing. They should enjoy the fruits of their land. Jehovah would plant His people upon their land, and they should be no more pulled up. It was the land which He Himself had given them.

Thus we find, in the prophet Amos, the judgment of the kingdom of Israel; but this judgment applied to the whole of Israel as a nation, and their assured restoration, in connection with the re-establishment of the house of David in the last days—a re-establishment accomplished by God, which nothing should again overthrow. He would plant them, and none should pluck them up: a testimony which assuredly has never been fulfilled, and as assuredly will be; Israel shall be in their own land and never again removed. In general, then, this prophet sets before us, not great public events in the

government of God, but the ways of God with His people, in view of their moral condition; the ten tribes, or the kingdom of Israel, being looked at as representing all Israel as a responsible nation, the link of their condition at that time with their original position (when, through the grace and power of Jehovah, they had come up out of Egypt), being the golden calves of Sinai and of Bethel. The prophecy closes, as we have seen, with the re-establishment in blessing of the whole people, under the house of David, according to the sovereign grace of God who changes not. It should be, for the whole nation, the sure mercies of David.

Note #1

This passage is quoted by the apostle James in Acts 15. Here (in Amos) it is quite clear that it applies to the last days, and it has sometimes been attempted to apply it to the same period in Acts also, laying stress on the words, "After this." But I am persuaded that those who do so have not rightly apprehended the meaning of the apostle's argument. He quotes this passage for one expression alone, without dwelling on the remainder; and this is the reason, I doubt not, that he is satisfied with the translation of the Septuagint. This expression is, "All the Gentiles upon whom my name is called." The question was, whether Gentiles could be received without becoming Jews. After having affirmed this principle, he shews that the prophets agreed with his declaration. He does not speak at all of the fulfilment of the prophecy; he only shews that the prophets sanction the principle, that Gentiles should bear the name of Jehovah-"All the Gentiles upon whom my name is called." There would then be such. God knew all His works from the beginning of the world, whatever might be the time of their manifestation.

OBADIAH

Introduction to Obadiah

Edom is frequently spoken of in the prophets. This people, who, as well as Jacob, were descended from Isaac, had an inveterate hatred to the posterity of the younger son who were favoured as the people of Jehovah. Psalm 137 tells of this hatred in the seventh verse. In Psalm 83 Edom forms a part of the last confederacy against Jerusalem, the object of which was to cut off the name of Israel from the earth. Ezekiel 35 dwells upon this perpetual hatred, shewn from the first in the refusal to give them a passage through the land, and upon the desire of Edom to possess the land of Israel. Our prophet enlarges upon the details of the manifestation of this hatred, which burst forth when Jerusalem was taken. It is possible that there was something of this sort when Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar. Edom is united with Babylon in Psalm 137 as the inveterate enemy of Jerusalem.

But it is evident that the prophecy extends to other events. Jerusalem shall again be attacked by these Gentiles, who seek to satiate their hatred to the city of Jehovah, and to gratify their ambitious purposes. Edom plays a sorrowful part on this occasion, and its judgment is proportioned to its sin. The nation is entirely cut off. When the rest of the world rejoice, the desolation of Edom shall be complete. Edom had purposed to take advantage of the attack of the nations upon Jerusalem, to possess itself of the land, and had united with them to take part in the attack, by lying in wait—as was natural to a people whose habits were those of the Arab tribes—to cut off the retreat of the fugitives, laying hands, when possible, on their substance, and giving them up also to their enemies. The men of Edom knew not that the day of Jehovah was upon all the nations, and that this conduct would but bring down an especial curse on their own heads. Their judgment is thus described: God takes away their wisdom, their pride deceives them, their strength fails them, in order that they may be entirely cut off. We have seen them joining the last confederacy against Jerusalem,

and taking part in the destruction of that city. But it appears that their confederates deceive them (Oba 1:7; and Edom, thus ill-treated by former allies, become "small among the heathen" (Oba 1:1-) The nations are the first instruments of Jehovah's vengeance. But another and yet more terrible event is linked with the name of Edom, or Idumea, and is the occasion of Jehovah's judgment falling upon that people. It is in Edom that the armies of the nations will be assembled in the last days. We have the account of this in Isaiah 34 and 63. See Isa 34:5-6, the rest of the chapter displaying the judgment of desolation in the strongest possible language. Isaiah 63 shews us Jehovah Himself returning from the judgment, having trodden the winepress alone. Of the peoples there were none with Him.

Finally, Israel itself shall be an instrument in the hand of Jehovah for the judgment of Esau (Oba 1:18. The destruction in Isaiah relates especially to the armies of the nations, which, in their movements, find themselves assembled in Edom. The part which Israel takes in the judgment is on the people in general; and, I suppose, afterwards, when Christ is at their head as the Messiah (compare Oba 1:17-18); and Isa 11:14 appears to confirm this view of the passage. At all events it takes place after Israel's blessing.

That none shall be left of Edom is also declared in Oba 1:5; Oba 1:6; Oba 1:9; Oba 1:18; Jer 49:9; Jer 49:10-22; and it will be observed that there is no restoration of a remnant, as in the case of Elam and others (Jer 49:39). A part of the latter prophecy establishes the same facts as that of Obadiah, in nearly the same words. The same judgment is pronounced in Ezekiel 35, and in Isaiah 34, already quoted. We see in these chapters, as well as in Isaiah 63, that it is the controversy of Jerusalem, that Jehovah pleads with Edom (Eze 35:12; Isa 34:8; Isa 63:4). In these passages Jehovah does not forget His thoughts of love towards Zion and His people.

He closes the prophecy of Obadiah with the testimony of the effect of His call to repentance, of His unchangeable faithfulness to His promises and unwearied love. Power and might against those formidable enemies should be given to Israel, who should in peace possess the territory which their enemies had invaded. Deliverance should be on Mount Zion; from thence Mount Esau should be judged, and the kingdom should be Jehovah's. As

corrupt power had been judged in Babylon, so in Edom hatred to the people of God.

Obadiah Chapter 1

Obadiah 1:1

oba 1:1

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JONAH

Introduction to Jonah

The prophet Jonah gives us the opportunity of applying his history to many sentiments that arise in the human heart in all ages. His personal history-the history of a man who was upright in the main, but who had not courage to follow out the will of God boldly-is so intermingled with his prophecy, as to make this individual application easy and natural. Nevertheless the history of Jonah is that of one who bears testimony on the part of God, rather than that of a believer in his ordinary life. It is the history of the human heart, when the testimony of God towards the world has been committed to it, and that of the sovereign and governmental dealings of God in connection with the workings of that heart. It is on this account that we find in the history of Jonah a picture of the history of the Jews in this respect, and even in some respects of that of the Messiah; only that the latter entered into it in grace, and was always perfect in it. I shall point out the leading features which the Spirit of God has been pleased to develop in this narrative, deeply interesting as it is in this aspect.

It is evident that in this prophecy the prophetic events are but the occasion, and, as it were, the frame of the great principles that flow from them; or rather the prophetic event. For the prophecy is confined to the threat of the destruction of Nineveh in forty days: a threat whose accomplishment was averted by the repentance of that city. Jonah's history forms the chief portion of the book.

Jonah Chapter 1

Jonah 1:1

jon 1:1

Introduction to Jonah

Nineveh-which represents the world in its natural greatness, full of pride and iniquity, regardless of God and of His authority-had deserved the righteous

judgment of God. This is the occasion of all the development of God's dealings that we find in this book. Jonah is called to announce this judgment. The wretched tendency of the nature of man, to whom the testimony of God is committed, is to invest himself with the importance of the message with which he is charged. That God may so invest him in His grace we see in the history of that grace; that the man who bears the message should do so is but pride and vanity. The result with such is, that they cannot bear with the grace that God exhibits towards others, nor with any communication of His mind or nature through any other means than their own, even although it should be in grace. It is they who must do the thing themselves; it is they who must have the glory of it; and thus all their thoughts of God are limited to their own point of view-to the portion committed to them of God's message. Compare that which we have seen in the case of Moses and of Elijah, those eminent servants of God. The sense of that supremacy in God which can pardon is too much for the heart; it cannot be borne. The self-renunciation that seeks only to do the will of God, be it what it may, leaves God all His glory, and, if He glorifies Himself by shewing grace, can bless Him for it most heartily. Without this we shall like to wield the sword of His vengeance-a thing more in harmony, alas! with our natural hearts, and more adapted to increase our own importance.

"Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, as Elias did?" is the natural expression of the heart. For vengeance is the manifestation of power. Grace leaves sinful man to enjoy mercy-will not bring in power, but spares those against whom power might have been exercised. On the other hand, it is God alone who can shew grace. The threat of vengeance is connected in the mind with the man who has received authority to announce it. The message and the messenger are both feared. A pardoned man is at the time more occupied with his own joy, and with Him that pardoned, than with the messenger of pardon. Moreover, when grace is shewn, it connects itself with the alarm inspired by the threatened judgment. And if the messenger be not himself imbued with the spirit of love, he feels himself in the presence of a God who is above his thoughts; and he is afraid of Him, because he does not know Him. He fears also for his own importance, if this God should be more gracious than the narrowness of his heart would desire and the message committed to him expressed.

Such was the case with Jonah, although he feared God. He flees from the presence of Jehovah, feeling that he cannot reckon upon Him to satisfy the little exigencies of his contracted heart (compare Jon 1:3; Jon 4:2). God is felt to be above the desires of man's heart. On the other hand, the truth of God pleases us when we can invest ourselves with it for our own importance. Thus it was with Israel. Israel were the depository of God's testimony in the world, and gloried in it as clothing themselves with honour, and Israel could not bear with the exercise of grace to the Gentiles. It was by their opposition to this that the Jews filled up the measure of their iniquity to bring the wrath of God upon them (compare Isa 43:10; Th1 2:16).

Two principles, then, on which in fact the testimony of God may be rendered, are unfolded in this prophecy. First of all, man is called to render this testimony as a mark of faithfulness to God, for which he is responsible. This is the position in which we have already seen that Israel was placed. Their whole history is before us in confirmation of this thought. Blessed by God with nearness to Himself, Israel should have been a witness to the whole world of what the only true God was. But, wholly incapable of apprehending His grace towards the Gentiles (although the house of Jehovah was at all times the house of prayer for all nations), Israel failed even in maintaining their own faithfulness, and consequently therefore in that which was the only means of making the world, as such, to understand the true character of God. Instead therefore of being made a blessing to others, they only involved them in the divine judgments that were to fall upon themselves. This is the picture which Jonah sets before us in his own history at his first receiving the message of God. The same thing will take place at the end of the age. Israel, unfaithful to God amid the billows of this world, insensible through their blind unbelief to the judgment which is ready to swallow them up, will drag into the results of their own sin all the other nations; and then the intervention of God will bring the latter also to acknowledge His power and His glory.

Let us here remark, that the principle we are speaking of is always true. If those to whom God in His grace has committed a testimony, do not employ this testimony in behalf of others according to the grace that bestowed it, they will soon become unfaithful in their own walk before God. If they truly

acknowledged God, they would feel bound to make known His name, to impart this blessing to others. If they do not own His glory and His grace, they will assuredly be unable to maintain their own walk before Him. God, who is full of grace, being our only strength, it cannot be otherwise.

The first picture, then, that is set before us is that of a man called to be God's witness in the midst of a proud and corrupt world, which follows its own will, without regarding the authority or the holiness of God. But this man is not sufficiently near to God to enter into the spirit of His holy and loving ways; and therefore, knowing that He is gracious, shrinks from the task of representing such a God before the world. To invest himself with God's name for his own honour, Jonah, the Jew, would not refuse. But to bear the burden necessary to the maintenance of the testimony of such a God, so gracious, so long-suffering, as well as holy, this was too hard a thing for the proud and impatient heart of a man who desired to have his own will carried out in judgment, if the others would not obey it in holiness.

Observe, that although Jonah ought to have lifted up his voice against Nineveh, it is from the presence of Jehovah he fled, not from the carnal opposition of the city. Christ, our blessed Lord, is the only One who accomplished the task of which we speak. He is the faithful witness. We may compare Psalm 40, in which He speaks of the manner in which He undertook and accomplished it—He who dwelt in a glory that placed Him so entirely above such a position, that sovereign grace alone could bring Him down into it—a glory however which alone made Him capable of undertaking and accomplishing it, in spite of all the difficulties which the enmity of man put in His way. And great as His glory was, He accomplished the undertaken task of service as a duty in the humility of obedience, and that even unto death. See in Psa 40:1-2 how far He went, and how—sheltering Himself from nothing—He puts His trust in God. He becomes man to accomplish this task (Jon 1:6-8). He performs it faithfully (Jon 1:9-10), not concealing the truth and righteousness of Jehovah from the congregation of Israel. In Verse 11 and following Verses (Jon 1:11 ff), under the deep pressure of the position He was in from man's iniquity and His taking up the cause of His people, He commits Himself to the tender mercies of Jehovah, praying (after having rendered testimony with a perfect patience) for judgment on His enemies,

the enemies of God's testimony. For it is the time, under the Jewish economy, of judgment.

Jonah Chapter 2

We have seen that the judgments which fall upon the unfaithful witness, being at length acknowledged by himself, are the means through which the name of Jehovah becomes known and worshipped among the Gentiles. Here begins the second picture of the testimony-the complete and entire rejection of the witness considered as the depositary of the first message. He undergoes the judgment of God, and is cast out of His presence into the depths of hades.

This is the just lot of Israel, unfaithful to the testimony of God, and incapable of rendering it. Christ, in His infinite grace, came down into this place, being rejected because He was faithful. We most distinctly see the spirit of the remnant of Israel in Jonah's prayer. Verses 7-9 of chapter 2 (Jon 2:7-9) prove it most clearly. In fact the remnant of Israel, although upright by grace, are but flesh; the testimony is committed to them, and they fail. The flesh being without strength, sentence of death must pass on all that is of man. He is but vanity; and if he goes down into death, who can raise him up? Who can make a dead man the witness of God?

But, blessed be God! Christ went down into death; and, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so also the Son of man went down into the heart of the earth for the same period of time. But who could prevent His rising again? It was death here that was without strength, and not man. Death combated with One who had the power of life; and whether we consider the power of God, from whom Christ had merited resurrection, or the Person of the faithful witness Himself, it was not possible that He could be holden in the bands of Sheol. He is not only the faithful witness, but the firstborn from the dead.

Jonah Chapter 3

And now the second testimony begins. All that Israel could have been, all that belonged to man as responsible in himself, as far as testimony was concerned, has failed for ever. Christ Himself, the faithful One, has been

rejected. Israel, consequently as the vessel of God's testimony in the flesh, is set aside. It is the risen One only, who can now bear testimony; and, we may add, bear it even to Israel, who is now become the object of mercy, instead of becoming the vessel of promise and of testimony. But this makes God return, so to speak, into His own character of lovingkindness. If Israel cannot, as a righteous one, be the vessel of the testimony of righteousness (and even, as a sinner, has rejected it), God returns to His own gracious character, as a faithful Creator; from which, moreover, in the depth of His own being, He never departed, although He put man to the proof, by bringing him into relationship with Himself, under every possible advantage, to see whether he could be a witness of righteousness-of God on the earth. Jonah knew at heart that there was grace in God. Assuredly he and his nation had experienced it. But in this case, unless righteousness were apart from mercy, so that he who stood as witness of this righteousness might be honoured-unless it were vindictive, so that he as its witness might be exalted-he would have nothing to do with it. Thenceforward he became incapable of it. For, in truth, God was gracious; and such a witness of Him as Jonah would have had was impossible-would not have been true. It is on this account that grace (that is, the revelation of grace) is identified with mercy towards the Gentiles. Is He the God of the Jews only? Nay, verily, but of the Gentiles also. And the casting-off of the Jews, as Jews, becomes the reconciling of the world. The same Lord is rich unto all that call upon Him, that the Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy. [See Note #1]

This is God's controversy with Jonah at the end. He would refuse God the right of shewing mercy to His helpless creatures, and insist upon His rigorous execution of the sentence upon the Gentile world without even leaving space for repentance. God answers him, not at first by unfolding the counsels of His grace, but by appealing to the rights of His sovereign goodness, to His nature, to His own character. Nineveh has hearkened to God. Now, if God threatens, it is in order that man may turn from his iniquity and be spared. Why else should He warn the sinner? Why not leave him to ripen unwarned for judgment? But these are not the ways of God.

And we may remark here that, in the case of Nineveh, it is not faith in Jehovah, as in the case of the terrified mariners. The effect of the dreadful

troubles that will fall upon Israel in the last days, as judgment upon the unfaithful witness of Jehovah, will be to make this God of judgment known, and to cause the great name of Jehovah to be glorified in all the earth (Jon 1:14; Jon 1:16). With respect to the last days, we have seen that this is the testimony of all the prophets [See Note #2], as well as that of the Psalms. [See Note #3] Here it is simply God. The inhabitants of Nineveh believed God. It is the effect of the word of God on their conscience. They confess, and turn away from their sin. They acknowledge the judgment of God to be just and His word true; and God pardons them and does not execute His judgment. Moreover, this is in accordance with His ways as revealed by Jeremiah.

Note #1

Hence, also, we may add, it is connected with resurrection in its accomplishment. This indeed, has a deeper cause-the state of man by nature; but this was brought out, in dispensation, by the failure of the Jews in connection with Christ after the flesh.

Note #2

See Isaiah 66; Eze 36:36; Eze 37:28; Eze 39:7, Eze 39:22; Zac 2:11; ; and a multitude of other passages.

Note #3

See Psa 9:15-16; Psa 83:18; and all the Psalms at the end of the book.

Jonah Chapter 4

The God of grace has compassion on the works of His hands, when they humble themselves before Him and tremble at the hearing of His righteous judgments. But Jonah, instead of caring for them, thinks only of his own reputation as a prophet. Wretched heart of man, so unable to rise up to the goodness of God! If Jonah had been nearer to God, he would have known that this was truly the God whom he proclaimed, whom he had learnt to love by knowing Him. He would have been able to say, Now, indeed, the Ninevites know the God whose testimony I gloried in bearing, and they will be happy. But Jonah thought only of himself; and the horrid selfishness of

his heart hides from him the God of grace, faithful to His love for His helpless creatures. Jon 4:2 exhibits the spirit of Jonah in all its deformity. The grace of God is insupportable to the pride of man. His justice is all very well: man can invest himself with it for his own glory; for man loves vengeance which is allied with the power that executes it. God must proclaim His justice. He does not save in sin. He makes man know his sin, in order to reconcile him to Himself, in order that his restoration may be real—may be that of his heart and of his conscience with God. But it is to make Himself known in pardoning him.

But God is above all the wretched evil of man, and He treats even Jonah with kindness, yet making him feel, at the same time, that He will not renounce His grace, His nature, to satisfy the frowardness of man's heart. He relieves the suffering of Jonah, disappointed at the non-fulfilment of his words; and the selfishness of Jonah's heart delights in this relief. He almost forgets the vengeance he had desired, in his satisfaction at being sheltered from the burning heat of the sun. Having gone out of Nineveh, and seated himself apart that he might see what would become of this city whose repentance vexed his evil heart, he rejoiced, in the midst of his anger, at the gourd which God prepared for him. But what a testimony to the utter iniquity of the flesh! The repentance of the sinner, his return to God, irritates the heart. It is really this; for the city is spared on account of its repentance. Will God smite one who returns to Him in humiliation for his sins? He who does not know the heart of man could not understand the application of such a word as "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity." We see it here in the case of a prophet. There is the same thing—having also the same application, and the same patient grace on God's part—in the case of the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son. But if man is content with that which relieves his own distress, and is even angry in his selfishness when that which relieved him is destroyed, shall not God spare the works of His hand and have compassion on that which, in His goodness, He has created? Assuredly He will not listen to the man who would silence His kindness towards those who need it. Most touching and beautiful is the last Verse of this book (Jon 4:11), in which God displays this force, this supreme necessity, of His love; which (although the threatenings of His justice are heard, and must needs be heard and even executed if man continues in rebellion) abides in the

repose of that perfect goodness which nothing can alter, and which seizes the opportunity of displaying itself, whenever man allows Him, so to speak, to bless him-the repose of a perfection that nothing can escape, that observes everything, in order to act according to its own undisturbed nature-the repose of God Himself, essential to His perfection, on which depends all our blessing and all our peace.

It is well to remark here, that the subject of this book is not the judgment of the secrets of all hearts in the great day, but the government of God with respect to men on the earth. This is the case, moreover, with all the prophets. We may observe, also, that God reveals Himself in this book as God the Creator-Elohim. We know that even the creatures still groan under the effects of our sin; and they share also the kindness and the compassions of God. His tender mercies are over them. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him. The day will come when the curse shall be removed, and they shall enjoy the liberty of the glory of the children of God, set free from bondage and corruption. If God becomes our Father, He takes also the character of Jehovah, who will judge Israel, and who will accomplish His promises and His purposes with respect to them in spite of the whole world. He never ceases to be the Creator God. He does not lay aside one of His characters in order to assume another, any more than He confounds them together; for they reveal His nature, and what He is.

It is sweet, after all, to see Jonah's docility in the end to the voice of God, manifested by the existence of this book, in which the Spirit uses him to exhibit what is in the heart of man, as the vessel of God's testimony, and (in contrast with the prophet, who honestly confesses all his faults) the kindness of God, to which Jonah could not elevate himself, and to which he could not submit.

We may remark, that the case of Jonah is used in the New Testament in two ways, which must not be confounded together: as a testimony in the world, by the word of God-a service with which the Lord compares His own: and afterwards as in the belly of the fish-a circumstance used by the Lord as a figure of the time during which He lay in the grave. Jonah, by his preaching, was a sign to the Ninevites, even as the Lord was to the Jews, harder of hearing and of heart than those pagans who were afar from God. Jonah was

also (in that which happened to him in consequence of his refusal to bear testimony) a type of that which befell Jesus when He bore the penalty of the people's sin, and when, being raised from the dead, He became the testimony of grace, and at the same time the occasion of judgment to those who had rejected Him. We have seen in his history that Jonah is a remarkable moral figure of Israel-at least of Israel's conduct.

MICAH

Introduction to Micah

The prophecy of Micah is of the same date, and, up to a certain point, has the same character as that of Isaiah. That is to say, it treats especially of the introduction of the Messiah into the scene of the development of God's dealings towards Israel, and even speaks particularly of His presence in connection with the attack of the Assyrian. This prophecy has nevertheless its own peculiar character; it enters, like those of Hosea and Amos, into the moral condition of the people, and connects the judgment of the world at large with the condition of the Jews, as we have had it typically brought before us in Jonah. Samaria also is in part the subject of this prophecy, so that its application extends to all Israel.

Micah Chapter 1

Micah 1:1

mic 1:1

The Lord speaks in this book from His temple, and addresses all the peoples—the whole earth. That is to say, He takes His place upon His earthly throne to judge the whole earth, in testimony against all the nations. But He comes from on high, coming forth out of His place to tread upon the high places of the earth. And all that is lifted up shall be molten under Him, and all that is abased shall be as wax before the fire. And wherefore this intervention in judgment? Why does He not leave the nations still to walk in their own ways, afar from Him, in long-sufferance to their folly? It is because His own people, the witness for His name upon the earth, are in transgression against Him—have given themselves up to the service of other gods, or to iniquity. There is no longer any testimony of God in the earth, except indeed it be a false testimony; and God must therefore render it to Himself. All the sins of the nations then come into remembrance before Him, and spread themselves out before eyes that cannot endure them. He leaves His people to the consequences of their sin, so that they fall under the power of their

enemies, whose pride on this account rises to such a height that it brings down the judgment of God, who intervenes to deliver the remnant whom He loves and to take His place of righteous Ruler over all the nations.

We have already seen, more than once, that the Assyrian plays the principal part in these closing scenes of the ways of God upon the earth. We again find him here as the rod of God—a prominent subject in the prophecy of Micah.

Mic 1:6-8. The iniquity of Samaria, and her graven images are the cause of the terrible scourge, according to the just judgment of God; and the waves of this flood reach even to Judah.

It will be remarked here, that the events which took place in the days of the prophet who speaks, having the same moral character as the definitive judgment of the last days, are used to introduce the grand action of that judgment, while also as a warning to the people for the time then present. We have already seen this, more than once, in the prophets.

Shalmaneser and Sennacherib are doubtless in view here; but they are only the occasion of the prophecy, looked at in its full extent. The Assyrian comes up to the gates of Jerusalem. His progress is described in Verses 11-16 (Mic 1:11-16), as in Isaiah, only that the description is more intermingled with the causes of the judgment upon the different cities that he attacks than it is in Isaiah, who enumerates them rather as the stages of his march.

Micah Chapter 2

In chapter 2 the prophet points out the moral causes of the judgment of God—violence and shameless oppression. They formed plans of violence to gratify their covetousness, and Jehovah formed also plans of judgment upon them (Mic 2:1-5). They refused the word of testimony. It shall be taken from them accompanied by this terrible judgment, that the spirit of error and drunkenness should be prophecy for them. [See Note #1] They rose up as an enemy: their wickedness spared neither women nor children (Mic 2:8-9). Jehovah calls on all who have ears to hear, to arise and separate themselves from all this iniquity. A state of things like this could not be the rest of God's people. How could the saints of Jehovah rest amid pollution?

(Mic 2:10-11). Nevertheless Jehovah in no wise renounced His settled purpose of blessing with respect to Israel. He would gather them all together, the numerous flock of His protection. The breaker, He who would clear the way and overthrow every obstacle, should go before them. They should go forth from the place of their captivity. Their king should pass on before them, and Jehovah at their head (Mic 2:12-13).

Note #1

Mic 2:6 is exceedingly obscure. I doubt that the Authorised Version is correct. 'Take shame' is to be ashamed: The Hebrew has hardly this sense. It is literally, Prophecy (Drop) not. They prophecy. They shall not prophecy to them; it shall not depart shame (literally shames). That is, I suppose, Shame shall not depart. Mic 3:7 explains it perhaps.

Micah Chapter 3

The prophet again denounces the heads and princes of Jacob. They should cry unto Jehovah. But He would not hear them. No prophet should enlighten them with the light of His word. The seers should be confounded; there should be no answer from God (Mic 3:1-7). It was not thus with the prophet, full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah to declare unto Jacob his transgression and unto Israel his sin (Mic 3:8). This he does by again denouncing the chiefs among the people who judged for reward, and the prophets who divined for money, while they claimed the privilege of Jehovah's presence, granted indeed exclusively to this people. Nothing can be more offensive to Jehovah than that those who have the name of His people should clothe themselves with the privilege of His presence, and use this pretension to honour self and justify evil, or maintain a divine claim in spite of it. Therefore should Zion be plowed as a field, and the mountains, now ornamented with palaces, should be made like the heights of a forest (Mic 3:9-12).

Micah Chapter 4

But again the prophet, in the spirit of Isaiah, concludes his denunciations of sin, and his prophecies of judgment and desolation, by announcing the full re-establishment of blessing and glory in Zion. The Spirit repeats (there was

no room for change) the declaration of the glory of Zion in the last days, given in Isaiah 2. But, the prophecy being much less developed, it connects this declaration immediately with the events of the last days. Israel should dwell in perfect peace, consequent on God's rebuking the strong nations and judging among the peoples (Mic 4:3-4); and Jehovah is exalted amongst them. Each nation, say they, will boast of its God: but Jehovah is our God for ever and ever. Jehovah is the glory of His people. In that day Jehovah will accept the remnant of His people; He will assemble the poor, feeble, halting Jacob, and reunite that which He had scattered and afflicted. It should be the remnant of His desire; that which He had cast off should be a strong nation. Jehovah Himself would reign over them in Zion for ever.

Nevertheless, though the prophecy be less developed, the order of the events through which the people had to pass is brought out only so much the clearer by the shortness of the prophecy, which is thus a key to the more lengthened developments of Isaiah. The prophet announces that "the first dominion," the kingdom of David and Solomon, shall return to Jerusalem: and with this statement the direct announcement of the millennial state of blessedness closes. But, meanwhile, the royalty with which the glory of Jerusalem was connected had to be set aside (Mic 4:9): a double judgment on Jerusalem connected itself with this. The daughter of Jerusalem must go to Babylon, and there be delivered and redeemed from the hand of her enemies, by the power of God. She was to be their captive, far away from Zion. That is, the captivity of Jerusalem amidst the Gentile monarchies is announced. It was while in this condition deliverance would be granted to her. But another event was to characterise these last days of her history. Many nations should be assembled against her, seeking to profane her and to gaze insultingly upon her (this is the attack made upon Jerusalem when Jehovah was dealing with her in her own place); but they who came up against her knew not the thoughts of Jehovah. He had gathered them together as sheaves into the threshing-floor. The daughter of Zion should trample on them and beat them in pieces, and consecrate their spoils unto Jehovah, who in that day will magnify His name of the God of the whole earth (compare Isa 17:12-14; and Zac 14:2; Mic Zec_12:2-3; Psalm 83).

Micah Chapter 5

But there was something more definite still to be declared; the principal enemy of the last days was to be pointed out, and this in special connection with another and fatal sin of Jerusalem and her people. The Messiah and His rejection are introduced. The daughter of troops gathers herself in troops to besiege Jerusalem-the Assyrian army (see Mic 5:5). But here it is quite a different thing from the attack of Sennacherib. Judah had now plunged much deeper into sin and rebellion. The true Judge of Israel should be smitten with a rod upon the cheek. The Christ should be mocked and beaten.

Mic 5:2 describes Him in a striking manner. It was on this Verse that the scribes and chief priests rested, when they certified Herod that Christ should be born in Bethlehem. It represents Him as being born at Bethlehem, and at the same time as eternal, and as the true Ruler in Israel. The second Verse (Mic 5:2) is in parenthesis. It declares the birthplace, whence He that should rule over Israel for Jehovah should go forth; and, at the same time, it reveals the eternal glory of His Person.

Mic 5:3 is connected with Mic 5:1, and exhibits the consequences of the sin there pointed out. Israel, and more especially Judah, is given up, yet only for a season, the period of which is designated in a remarkable and instructive manner-until she which travaileth hath brought forth. Israel (exercised, travailing, long preferring to stand on the footing of Hagar rather than on that of Sarah) must pass through all the afflictions, the anguish, the judgments, the chastisements of God, necessary to lead her to the acceptance of the punishment of her iniquity; being at length by His grace thoroughly convinced of the need of that grace, and of the mercy of God, and thus brought into a condition fitted to her being the vessel of the manifestation of that Son who should be born unto her -the Naomi brought back by grace, to whom (with respect to His manifestation in this world) the King is reputed to be born. Compare Isaiah 9, where the idea is developed in connection with Israel, "to us a Son is born"; and Revelation 12, where the historical fact, and its connection with Israel in the last days, are brought together.

Another very important element of this last scene of the present age is pointed out in this verse. Israel is given up to judgment, forsaken of God, in a

certain sense, for having rejected the Christ, the Lord. But now she who travaileth has brought forth. Afterwards (and this is the element I refer to) the remnant of the brethren of this first-born Son, instead of being added to the church (Acts 2), return unto the children of Israel. The Christ is not ashamed to call them His brethren; but at this period they no longer become members of His body. Their relation is with Israel. This is the position in which they are placed before God.

He, then, who had been rejected becomes the Shepherd of Israel, and that according to the strength of Jehovah in the majesty of the name of Jehovah His God. Israel dwells in safety, for His King becomes great unto the ends of the earth. By Him the Assyrian should be overthrown, and his land laid waste by that Israel whom he had sought to overthrow.

Israel in that day possesses a double character. The remnant of Jacob is the instrument of refreshing, in the precious grace that comes from God, and waits not for the laboured and varied efforts of man. They shall be as the showers upon the grass, that tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men. But, nevertheless, Israel is also that which rises up among the nations, as a lion among the beasts of the field, from whom none can deliver. They are the instruments and testimony of the power of God. The blessing and the strength of Jehovah is with them. The prophet declares. that all the enemies of Israel shall be cut off and perish. But Jehovah will at the same time destroy out of the midst of Israel all their false human strength, their chariots, their strong cities-all that ministers to the pride of man and leads him to trust in himself. He will destroy all their idols; Israel shall no longer worship the works of their own hands; every trace of idolatry shall be taken away. At the same time vengeance and wrath, such as had not been heard of, shall be executed upon the nations.

This division of the prophecy ends here: the first at the close of chapter 2: Mic 4:9-13 giving, in general, the two evils with which judged Jerusalem had to do-Babylon and the gathering of the nations in the latter day, and her glorious deliverance; and chapter 5 the connection of Messiah both with the judgment and with the deliverance from the latter of these evils and the introduction of the blessing, of which the description had been given in Mic 4:1-8, as being the purpose of Jehovah. In that sense, Mic 4:8 closes the

second part; but from thence to the end of chapter 5 are two appendices, so to speak, which unfold the double evil which comes on Jerusalem, and the connection of the people with their deliverers in judgment first, and then deliverance.

Micah Chapter 6

After having thus declared the counsels of God in grace, the Spirit returns to His pleadings with Israel in respect of their moral condition, calling the whole earth as audience to hear His controversy; for Jehovah had a controversy with His people. In a touching appeal to their heart and conscience He asks what they could have against Him. He had redeemed them from Egypt, had led them by the hands of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; He had refused to hearken to Balak and Balaam, who had done their utmost to curse Israel. If they would but consider, they would know His faithfulness. After this He lays before them, in detail, the universal wickedness that reigned among them, contrasting their ceremonies with practical righteousness: therefore also the judgment must surely fall upon them (Mic 6:13-16). Still the man of wisdom would know it as the discipline of Jehovah, and see Jehovah's name in it—a deeply important and also precious principle. They bore the reproach of His people.

Micah Chapter 7

In chapter 7 the prophet takes the place of intercessor before God, in the name of the people—presenting to Him at once their deep misery and their iniquities [See Note #1]—speaking in their name, and identifying himself with them; or, more exactly, he takes up the reproach of the city (Mic 6:9), beginning with her grief at the state she is in, but passing on, as we see often in Jeremiah, to his own distinct prophetic office, and so marking out the position of the remnant; speaking, but with the divine mind, as in the midst of the people—having their place, but judging their conduct in it—yet with all the interest attached to the love God bore them. He seeks anxiously among the people for something suitable to their title of the people of God; he finds nothing but fraud and deceit, and lying in wait for blood, that they might do evil with both hands earnestly. Still all is said in the way of the

city's confession; so that out of this she can look, as bowing to God's hand to one who will Himself plead her cause and execute judgment for her.

We find here a striking circumstance. The Lord Jesus declares in the Gospel, that that which the prophet describes, as the height of iniquity, should be produced by the preaching of the gospel. Such is the iniquity of the heart which the light brings into activity, stirring up a hatred which is only the more exasperated by the nearness of its object.

The effect on the prophet of that which he sees around him (that which the Spirit of Christ produces, where he acts in view of the all-pervading evil) was that he looked to Jehovah and waited for the God of his salvation. He takes the position pointed out as that which Jehovah could recognise. He accepts the indignation of Jehovah, until He Himself should plead the cause of His servant. In fact Jehovah would bring him forth to the light-would shew him His righteousness. The deliverance should then be complete; and she who said to Jerusalem, "Where is thy God?" (the constant cry of the unbeliever, who rejoices in the chastisement of the people of Christ, as in the sufferings of Christ Himself, mistaking these righteous dealings of a God whom he knows not)-she who rejoiced in the abasement of those whom Jehovah loved, should be trodden down as the mire of the streets (Mic 7:7-10).

From that time they should come from Egypt, from Assyria, from the seas and the mountains, to the rebuilt city; but before this the land should be desolate. Nevertheless Jehovah would lead His people as a shepherd and plant them again in their land as at first; and God would shew forth His marvellous works, as when He brought them up from Egypt; and the nations should be confounded at all the might of Israel and should be afraid before Jehovah their God.

The last three Verses of the prophecy express the faith and the sentiments of adoration that fill the prophet's heart at the thought of the goodness of God, who pardoned the iniquities of the people and cast their sins into the depths of the sea; who delighted in mercy, and who would perform His promises to Abraham and that which He had sworn unto the fathers in days of old. Who was a God like unto Him, who manifested Himself in His ways of grace towards His beloved people, towards the feeble remnant despised of

all, but whom Jehovah in His love never forgot, in His faithfulness never forsook, in spite of all their rebellion?

Note #1

This character is one of the most touching features of the prophetic office. "If," said Jeremiah, "he be a prophet, let him make intercession to Jehovah, that that which is left may not go to Babylon." "He is a prophet," said God to Abimelech, in speaking of Abraham, "and he will pray for thee." In the Psalms also it is written, "There is no prophet left-none to say, How long?"- that is to say, none who knew how to reckon upon the faithfulness of Jehovah their God, and, knowing that it was only a chastisement, plead with Him for His people (compare Isaiah 6). The Spirit of God declares judgment indeed on God's part, but, because God loved the people, becomes a Spirit of intercession in the prophet for the people. With us the same thing is developed in a rather different, but more blessed and perfect manner. Intelligence of the will of God enters more into it: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." And all are prophets in this (Jo1 5:16).

NAHUM

Introduction to Nahum

The following commentary covers Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

If we were to examine closely the different characters of the nations who have been connected with the people of God, we should perhaps find in each a specific form of evil pretty clearly delineated. At all events it is so in the principal enemies of that people. Egypt, Babylon, Nineveh, are prominently marked by that which they morally represent. Egypt is the world in its natural condition, whence the people have come forth. Babylon is corruption in the activity of power, by which the people are enslaved. Nineveh is the haughty glory of the world, which recognises nothing but its own importance-the world, the open enemy of God's people, simply by its pride. She shall be judged like all the rest, and disappear for ever under the judgment of the Almighty. Jehovah has given a commandment against her, that no more of her name be sown. This judgment is so simple, that the prophecy which declares it requires very little explanation.

It commences with an exhibition of the character of God, in view of that which He has to bear from the pride of man. God is jealous, and Jehovah revengeth. It is a solemn thought that, however great His patience, a day is coming which will prove that He does not bear with evil. Yet it is a comforting thought; for the vengeance of God is the deliverance of the world from the oppression and misery of the yoke of the enemy and of lust, that it may flourish under the peaceful eye of its Deliverer.

No doubt, He has long allowed evil to go on. He is not impatient, as our poor hearts are. He is slow to wrath-a wrath so much the more terrible that it is the justice of One who is never impatient. He is great in power, and will not at all acquit the guilty. [See Note #1] Who can stand before His indignation, or abide the fierceness of His anger?

But this is not all: His indignation is not vague and devastating without distinction when He gives it free course. He is good; He is a stronghold in the

day of trouble. When the evil and the judgment overflow-the evil which is a judgment, and the judgment before which nothing that it reaches can stand-He is Himself the sure refuge of all that trust in Him: He Himself knows all that do so. As for the glory of the enemy, it shall be destroyed, blotted out, brought to nothing. Reckless in the midst of their pleasures, drunken and suspecting nothing, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.

In Nah 1:11 we find the one so often mentioned by the prophets-the Assyrian, who imagines evil against Jehovah. Nah 1:12, although obscure, applies, I think, to Israel. Israel, too, alas! boasting of their security and strength according to the spirit of the world, will undergo the invasion, the overflowing of the great waters, the scourge of God. But when this passes through the land (that is, of Israel), they shall be cut down [See Note #2] (compare Isa 28:18-19; Isa 14:25). But this scourge completes the judgment of God; and the deliverance of Israel, the prophet says, should now be complete and final (compare Isa 10:5; Isa 10:24-25). The yoke of the Assyrian should be broken for ever, and the proud and hostile power of the world destroyed, as the anti-christian corruption and rebellion had already been judged. The good tidings of full deliverance should be spread abroad, and Judah should keep her solemn feasts in peace.

I doubt not that the invasion of Sennacherib was the occasion of this prophecy; but most evidently it goes much beyond that event, and the judgment is final. This is another instance of that which we have so frequently observed in the prophets-a partial judgment, serving as a warning or an encouragement to the people of God, while it was only a forerunner of a future judgment, in which all the dealings of God would be summed up and manifested.

The wicked should no more pass through Judah; he should be utterly cut off.

If God permitted the total devastation and ruin of Jacob, it was because the time of judgment was come-a judgment that should not stop there. He began, no doubt, at His own house, but would He stop there? No. What, then, should be the end of the enemies of God's people, if He no longer endured evil in His own people? Let Nineveh, then, now defend herself if she

could. But no, that den of lions should be invaded, and the young lions destroyed and unable to defend themselves. See the same argument at the end of Isaiah 2 and the commencement of chapter 3. Jacob was judged; the whole family, as well as Israel, emptied and ruined; and now it was the turn of the world. However great the pride of Nineveh, she was no better than others of whose ruin she was probably herself the instrument (Assyria and Egypt had long been rivals). The strongholds of the Assyrians should be like figs that fall with the first shaking, and their people without strength should be but as women. The ruin should be entire. Fire should devour them. No doubt, this had an historical fulfilment in the fall of Nineveh; but its complete accomplishment will take place when the Assyrian shall return-I do not say with respect to this city itself, which has been destroyed, but the power that will possess the territory and inherit the pride of the land of Nimrod.

Note #1:

This is ever true, and of immense importance. God never holds the guilty for innocent. It is contrary to His nature. It would not be the truth. He may put away sin, and receive the cleansed sinner; but He cannot act as if it did not exist when it does, nor be indifferent to it while He remains Himself. He may for good chastise, and to shew His government (that is, deal with sin in this respect); or He may have it entirely put away and blotted out, according to the exigencies of His own nature and glory, which is salvation for us; and both are true. But He cannot leave it anywhere as not existing or indifferent.

Note #2:

If not, the thought is, though the Assyrians be prosperous and safe in full prosperity, yet (as Sennacherib) when they come into Judah they shall be cut down, and then (as in Isaiah 10) Israel's deliverance should be final.

HABAKKUK

Introduction to Habakkuk

How diverse and perfect is the development of the ways of God in His word! Not only does it contain the great events that establish the fact of His government, and the character of that government-not only the proofs of His fidelity to His people, and His estimate of the evil that led to judgment, but also His answer to every feeling caused by the series of events by which He chastised them, the relief which He affords to the anguish that must be felt by one who is faithful, on account of the affliction of God's beloved people, together with the profitable exercise of his faith. The perfect ways of God are unfolded on the one side, and on the other the heart is formed to the intelligence of those ways, and to the enjoyment of the full effect of the faithfulness of the God of love; while, during the expectation of this effect, confidence in God Himself is established, and the links of the heart with God are abundantly strengthened.

It is of the latter part, the development of faith and of spiritual affections amid the trial, that Habakkuk treats in his prophecy. It speaks of the exercise of the heart of one who, full of the Spirit, is attached to the people of God. Still, it is Israel that is brought before us.

Habakkuk Chapter 1

Habakkuk 1:1

hab 1:1

First of all, the prophet complains that the evil which exists among the people is insupportable. This is the natural effect of the working of the Spirit of God in a heart jealous for His glory and detesting evil. The heart of the prophet, formed in the school of the law, speaks perhaps of the evil in the spirit of the law. The Spirit of God does not bring him out of this position, which was properly that of a prophet before God, and he judges the evil in a

holy manner, according to a heart that was faithful to the blessings of Jehovah.

Thereupon Jehovah reveals to him the terrible judgment by which He will chastise the people who thus gave themselves up to evil. He would raise up against them the Chaldeans, those types of pride and energy, who, successful in all their enterprises, sought glory only in the opinion they had of themselves. Their head, forsaking the true God who had given them their strength, would worship a god of his own. [See Note #1]

But all this awakens in the prophet a different sentiment from that which he before experienced. Here was his God denied by the instrument of vengeance, and the beloved people trodden down by one more wicked than themselves. But faith knows that its God, the true God, is the one and only Lord, [See Note #2] and (already a profound consolation assuring the heart of salvation) that it is Jehovah who has established the wicked in power for the correction of His people. But shall they continue to fill their net with men, as though they were but fish?

Note #1

Sad effect of pride, which, unknown to itself, is the parent of weakness! Man cannot sustain himself; and the pride which rejects the true God must and does make one for itself, or adopts what its fathers have made, for pride cannot stand in the presence of the supreme God. Man makes a god: this, too, is pride. But he cannot do without one; and after all, the natural heart is the slave of that which it cannot do without.

Note #2

To Habakkuk of course Jehovah; to us the Father is revealed in the Son, and so one Lord, Jesus Christ.

Habakkuk Chapter 2

There the prophet stops, that God in His time may explain this; watches, like a sentinel, to receive the answer of God to the anxiety of his soul. God, in order to comfort His prophet and all His faithful people, commands him to write the answer so plainly, that he who runs may read it. He bears in mind

the affections of His people; He appreciates them, for in truth they are given, according to His own heart, by the Holy Ghost.

He will, even before the deliverance, comfort the heart that is oppressed by the feelings to which faith itself gives birth. If faith produces them, the answer to that faith will not be wanting. Deliverance would not yet come. The vision was yet for an appointed time, but deliverance on God's part would assuredly come. God, who sets value on faith, would Himself intervene. If deliverance tarried, the faithful should wait for it. It would surely come and would not tarry. To the heart of man it tarried. Patience was to have its perfect work. The patience of God had been long and perfect. The time of deliverance should not tarry one moment after the hour appointed by God in His wisdom.

God had judged the spirit of pride, whose effects had overwhelmed the heart of the prophet. The oppressor was not upright, but the portion of the just was to live by faith, and by faith he should live. A deliverance for the people, which did not, so to say, require this faith, might have been preferred. But God would have the heart thus exercised. The righteous must pass through it and learn to trust in Jehovah, to count on Him in all circumstances, to learn what He is in Himself (come what may).

Nevertheless, although God allowed His people, on account of their sins, to be crushed by injustice and oppression, the conduct of the oppressor cried unto heaven, and brought judgment on his own head. Woe unto him! for, even apart from God's relations with His people, it is He who judges the earth and delivers it from the oppressor and the wicked. His graven image shall not profit him: what can the dumb stone do for the man that set it up? But Jehovah was in His holy place, in His temple. All the earth should keep silence before Him. It should be filled with the knowledge of His glory, as the bed of the sea with the waters that cover it. The people of the world should labour as in the fire for very vanity, and this from Jehovah; for He will fill the world with the knowledge of Himself.

Habakkuk Chapter 3

This answer brings home to the heart of the prophet the solemn presence of God, and leads him to look for a revival of God's working in the midst of

the people in grace, and turns him back to God's first favour, and recalls to the prophet all the glory of Jehovah, when He appeared for His people at the beginning, when He came out of His place and overturned every obstacle in order to establish His people in blessing. At this remembrance of His power, the prophet trembles, but in the consciousness that it is the source of a perfect and assured rest in the day of trouble, when the destroyer should come up and invade the people.

He concludes his prophecy with the blessed result of all these precious lessons, namely, the expression of perfect confidence in Jehovah. He would rejoice and be glad in Him, if all the blessing should fail. Jehovah Himself was his strength, his trust, and his support, and He would set him on the high places of His blessing, giving him, as it were, hinds' feet to ascend there by His favour. There is nothing finer than this development of the thoughts of the Spirit of God, the sorrows and anxieties produced by Him, the answer of God to give understanding and strengthen faith, in order that the heart may be in full communion with Himself. It will be remarked here, that it is the idolatrous oppressor who especially appears, although the first invasion is described, for that was the immediate cause of the prophet's anguish. The Chaldeans, therefore, are distinctly named. It is that people, as we know, who reduced the people of God to captivity.

In sum, in this prophet we have (for the comfort of the faithful heart, which loves God's people because they are His, and hence is distressed by the wickedness found among them, and still more by the judgment which falls upon them) the answer of God, explaining His ways to faith, and His sure faithfulness to His promises. He knows the oppressor, but the just must live by faith.

ZEPHANIAH

Introduction to Zephaniah

Zephaniah sets before us the judgment of the Spirit of God with respect to the condition of the testimony rendered to the name of God in this world, at a moment when there was some outward restoration by means of a king who feared God.

God has granted this favour more than once to His people, even as He has endured with longsuffering their rebellion and revolt; and in both cases He would have us see the true moral condition of that which bore His name—the judgment which a spiritual heart would form, which His Spirit formed, with respect to that condition: a judgment which should be authenticated by that which God would execute upon His people and upon the Gentiles, when longsuffering should no longer be of any avail.

These two subjects constitute the two principal divisions of the prophecy: the announcement of God's purposes with respect to the judgment that He would execute, and the display of that condition which led to the judgment. This, as always, is accompanied by the revelation of His counsels in grace, and of the coming of the Messiah, in order to encourage and sustain the faith of the believing remnant of His people.

Israel having been appointed the witness for God, when the nations had given themselves up to iniquity and idolatry, the general judgment of the world could be delayed, so long as (that testimony being maintained) the true character of God was presented; for God is slow to anger. Accordingly He raised up prophets, beginning with Samuel, to remedy the wanderings and unfaithfulness of His people, when they themselves had failed. So long as this extraordinary testimony of grace, and the warnings and chastenings that accompanied it, served to maintain some glimmerings of truth and righteousness on the earth, Jehovah withheld His hand ready to destroy that which dishonoured God and oppressed man. We have seen elsewhere, in the transfer of sovereignty to the empire of the Gentiles, the introduction

of a new system, as we find in the New Testament the establishment of the assembly. I do not dwell upon it here. As to the government of the world, in view of the testimony rendered to the name of Jehovah, when Israel—who maintained this testimony amid the nations that were apostate and rebellious against God—had so failed that there was no more remedy, then those nations also had to undergo the judgment they had long deserved. They will bring this judgment upon themselves by filling up the measure of their iniquity and rebellion against God, and by manifesting hatred to God's people, in the joy with which they come forward to accomplish the chastisements which that people had deserved: for God is longsuffering unto them also. He even sends the gospel—whether that of full grace, which we enjoy, or the announcement of His coming judgments—in order that all who have ears to hear may escape these judgments. But, in principle, the definitive failure of Israel's testimony left the nations exposed to the judgment their sinful state deserved, this judgment having been suspended, because a true testimony was rendered to God. This is the reason why we have constantly found in the prophets the definitive judgment of Israel. The establishment of the Gentile empire, represented by the image and the beasts, the introduction of Christianity, the apostasy which breaks out in its bosom, bring in other objects of the judgment of God, but do not alter the judgment to be executed upon the nations apart from these objects.

The judgment of the apostasy and of the Gentile empire comes immediately from heaven, whence flowed the authority of that empire, and the blessing of those who are become apostate; and against which they are in rebellion. The judgment of the nations, as such, has Zion for its starting-point—Zion, now under the judgment, but then delivered through the judgment executed upon the beast that oppressed her (see Psalm 110). The events spoken of in Daniel, the New Testament prophecies, and, in part, Zechariah, are omitted by those of the prophets who have for their subject the proper relations of the earthly people with God in Zion; and the judgment of Jerusalem and the Jews is connected in their prophecies with that of the nations—the judgment of the latter being involved in that of the people, who no longer rendered any testimony to Jehovah, but caused His name to be blasphemed. This judgment commenced, in regard to the Jews, with Nebuchadnezzar himself. Afterwards, on the decline (at the end of the age)

of the empire which commenced originally with him as golden head, the nations, resuming their strength, use it against Israel, then connected with, and subject to, the apostate empire; a yet more terrible judgment. Thus all the nations will be gathered against Jerusalem, and filling up both the judgment of the people and their own iniquity, will occasion the intervention of the God of mercy in favour of His people, according to His promises and purposes of grace-the deliverance of Israel being accomplished in the judgment executed upon those who come up against them, and who, in coming against them, are against Jehovah and His Christ also. This will be the judgment that shall go forth from Zion, while the beast will have been destroyed by Him who came forth out of heaven.

The dates attached to the books of the prophets are connected with the different characters of this series of events. Isaiah and Micah, as well as Hosea and Amos (although the latter two less directly), are occupied with the revelation of the Son of David, the Deliverer and Defender of His people in Jerusalem. Hezekiah, raised up after the miserable reign of Ahaz gave occasion for these revelations, which taught the faithful (while unveiling the iniquity and the real condition of the people), that they must look forward and rest only in God's thoughts, who had raised up this pious king for the temporary restoration of His people, and who would grant them a complete and eternal deliverance by the true Emmanuel. Isaiah (in the first three, as well as in the last, chapters of his prophecy) dwells on the connection, of which we have spoken, between the judgment of Israel and that of the nations. Josiah did not present in the same manner the coming Redeemer. Spared the sight of the ruin of Jerusalem on account of his piety, he falls himself by the hand of strangers. The glory and peace, the hope of Jerusalem for the time being, disappear with him, and its judgment succeeds.

Zephaniah prophesied under his reign. The prophet takes no notice of the temporary piety of the people, who (see Jer. 3) at heart were not changed. He takes the general ground of Israel's condition and consequent judgment, in connection with its effect on the nations. We have seen that Nebuchadnezzar is the first who executes this judgment; although both the judgment and the prophecy that speaks of it go much farther.

Zephaniah Chapter 1

Zephaniah 1:1

zep 1:1

The prophet begins by declaring that the land should be reduced to complete desolation; afterwards, that Judah, Jerusalem, their false gods, and their priests, should be smitten by the hand of Jehovah. The idolaters, those who mingled the name of Jehovah with that of other gods, those who had turned back from Jehovah, those who had not sought Him, each one is called to hold his peace at the presence of the Lord Jehovah; for the day of Jehovah was at hand. He had prepared His sacrifice, He had invited His guests; and in the day of His sacrifice, the king, the prince, and the king's children should be visited by His hand. Violence and deceit should receive their just reward. The day of Jehovah should cause a cry to be heard from the gates of Jerusalem. He would search Jerusalem as with candles, and make manifest the folly of those who denied His intervention either for good or for evil. The prophet then declares, in general but most forcible terms, the terrors of the day of Jehovah. The whole land should be devoured by the fire of His jealousy. We have here the whole land-Jerusalem and Judah-judged in the great day of God. This division of the prophecy ends here.

Zephaniah Chapter 2

Chapter 2, while revealing the character of the nation, addresses itself to her, in order that all those at least who fear Jehovah may be hidden in the day of His anger. They are called to gather themselves together, and to seek Jehovah, before the decree of judgment should have brought forth, and His fierce anger should overtake them. Thus the remnant are distinguished; the meek who have wrought righteousness are called on to seek meekness and righteousness, in order that they may be hidden, although the testimony is addressed to the whole nation. For, after all, God remembered the counsels of His grace. His dealings in this respect are developed in a remarkable manner in the rest of the prophecy. The judgment should be upon the whole territory of Israel, occupied in many parts by strangers hostile to the people.

The effect of the consequent desolation should be (for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance) to leave the whole land free for the possession of Israel. For Jehovah would visit them, and would bring again His captives; and the remnant of His people should possess it. Jehovah would judge and famish all the gods of the earth; and all men should worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the nations. Ethiopia, Nineveh, all the mighty ones of the nations, should fall and be made desolate. This is the judgment of the nations of which we have spoken, of which Nebuchadnezzar was the first instrument, but which is here introduced in view of the last days, when the power established by God shall be in its last rebellion against Him.

Zephaniah Chapter 3

Summary to Zephaniah

Amid this judgment of the nation Jerusalem holds the chief place. In chapter 3, the Spirit of God, while laying open the iniquity which occasioned it, turns towards the remnant, and exhorts them to wait upon Jehovah, since all hope was gone. He enlightens them with respect to His dealings, and reveals to them in what manner these will result in blessing to Israel. God had been in the midst of the holy city, now polluted, but she would not draw near to Him nor obey Him. Her princes were the violent of the earth, her judges were rapacious, her prophets vain and treacherous, her priests polluted the sanctuary. Jehovah was there to shew them their sins and His judgment; but the wicked were shameless in their iniquity. Doubtless Jehovah had cut off the nations and made them desolate; but surely Israel, however chastised, would receive instruction-Jehovah would not be compelled to cut them off. But they had diligently corrupted all their doing. Because they would not hearken to Jehovah, who had shewn them such lovingkindness, who had been so near unto them, Israel, unnamed, sinks to the level of the nations, who are the objects of the just judgment of God, and the remnant is called (Zep 3:8) to wait upon Jehovah alone, who is about to execute this judgment, to await the moment (since nothing touched the hardened hearts of the people) when Jehovah should rise up to the prey. Until that moment nothing could be done. Israel would not hearken. Judgment did not belong to the remnant. And this judgment alone

could put an end to their distress. God would assemble all the nations to pour His fierce anger upon them-the solemn and universal testimony of the prophets. But then would He turn to them [See Note #1] a pure language, that they should call upon the name of Jehovah to serve Him with one consent. He would also gather together all the dispersed of Israel from the most distant lands.

Jerusalem should no longer remember her shame; her transgressions should be entirely blotted out. The proud should be taken away from among her: a humble and despised people should be in the midst of her, whose refuge should be Jehovah alone; the little remnant should do no iniquity, neither should they speak lies. They should feed and lie down in safety; none should make them afraid. Zep 3:14-17 contain a song of praise, which the Spirit indites and teaches to Zion whom He calls on to sing it with thanksgivings to Jehovah-who has put away her condemnation for ever-who is in the midst of her-who rejoices in His love towards her. All those who had grieved for the reproach of Zion, and who had sighed for her solemn assemblies, should be gathered together; her enemies should be destroyed, and her children should have praise and fame in every place where they had been despised and reproached. Israel should be a subject of praise among all the nations of the earth.

Note #1

This is a very clear testimony, when it is that the nations of the earth learn righteousness.

HAGGAI

Introduction to Haggai

The following commentary covers Chapters 1 and 2.

The last three prophets prophesied after the Babylonish captivity. God, as we have seen in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, brought back a small remnant of His people, who were re-established in Jerusalem and in the land; but the throne of God was not again set up there, neither was the royalty of the house of David reinstated in its original authority. The empire of the Gentile head had been in a certain sense judged as not having fulfilled its duty to God, who had given it its authority. But another empire, raised up among the Gentiles, had taken the place of the first; and, while under the overruling hand of God (who disposes of the hearts of all) favourable to the Jews, still held the people of God in subjection to its yoke—the yoke of those who were not in covenant with God, but still aliens to His promises. God recognised the power of the empire which He had established. Israel was therefore dependent on the favour of those who ruled over them because of their sins, and had to wait upon God to render them favourable, worshipping Him according to His merciful appointments, until the Messiah should come, who would be their Redeemer and Deliverer.

Deprived of almost everything, Israel were not deprived of the lovingkindness of their God, on which they should have reckoned, and of which they had received a striking testimony, in the return of the remnant from the lands in which they had been captive. If all else were lost, the fear of God and His law in their hearts remained to them; and godliness might now be exercised in the manner which He had prescribed (compare Deuteronomy 30).

The three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, set before us the encouragements which God gave the people, that they might be faithful in their new position; and the testimony against their unfaithfulness, called for by the decay of their piety, and the total want of reverence for Jehovah into

which the people had fallen. The temple was necessarily the centre of this imperfect and intermediate state of the people. It was there, if God allowed the re-establishment of their worship, that the hearts of the people should centre. That was the outward form in which their piety as a people should be expressed. It was thus that the return of their heart to God should be manifested. Whatever deficiencies there might be in the restored Levitical service, still, it was the house of God, to which was attached all that could be re-established, and was the centre of its exercise.

But the faith of the Jews was quickly enfeebled, and they ceased to build. There were difficulties, no doubt. It was not now as in the days of Solomon, when everything was at the disposal of the king whose power extended over all the neighbouring countries. But God had shewn His goodness towards His people by inclining the heart of the king of Persia to favour them; and Israel should have had confidence in the kindness of God, and have expected its fruits; but, full of unbelief, they were speedily discouraged.

God chastised His people, but He did so at the fitting time. He employs the means which His sovereign grace so often used in the history we have been considering. He raises up a prophet, and even two, to revive their courage and stimulate them to the work. In the dealings of God, two things aid in deciding the right time for His intervention, namely, moral considerations and God's arrangement of events. In this case God had sufficiently chastised His people, to make manifest His governmental dealings in the relations of grace, which He now established with them by means of the prophets; and He had raised up a prince who was disposed-if the people acted in faith-to acknowledge the will of God and the decrees of Cyrus.

Having thus prepared all both morally and providentially (for He makes everything work together for our good), He sends His prophets to animate their courage and their faith, so as to lead them to accomplish that which had always been their duty.

They should always have leaned directly upon God, and have gone on with the work, unless hindered by force. [See Note #1] Now, also, they are called to proceed with it, resting on God, without knowing the king's mind. Their

confidence must be in God, Himself. Moreover, without this, there would have been neither piety nor faith in their labours. The king's support had been prepared by God for the moment in which their faith should have been manifested. In fact, the difficulty did not fail to arise; but, faith being in exercise, they continued to build in spite of their enemies, being directed in their reply to these enemies by the wisdom of God, and the king gives it his sanction. A difficulty may be a real one, but it is only for the unbelief of hearts that it is an obstacle, if on the path of God's will; for faith reckons upon God, and performs that which He wills, and difficulties are as nothing before Him. Unbelief can always find excuses, and excuses too that are apparently well founded: they have only this capital defect, that they leave God out.

The subject of Haggai is the temple. God having brought back the captives, they immediately seek their own ease without seeking to rebuild the house of Jehovah. Was it then a time to rebuild their own? There was tranquillity enough for the latter-it required no faith-the world made no opposition. The prophet exhibits the practical effect of this, the sensible chastisements of God even as to their temporal interests. And why these chastisements? They neglected God in neglecting His house. In truth, if they had thought of God, His house would have been their first object.

The people, moved by the fear of Jehovah, hearkened to the words of His servant the prophet. But another difficulty stands in the way of faith; the painful inferiority of all that can be accomplished by the remnant of His people, when God brings them back from captivity. They can do nothing in comparison with the former manifestation of His glory in the midst of His people. The effect of the people's fall and of the captivity they had suffered is felt in everything. God cannot identify His glory with an authority different from His own, exercised over His people (and which must needs be so) as the result of His righteous judgment, of His government on earth. He may lift them up-may restore them, because He loves them; but it is no longer the same thing. He cannot re-establish that direct connection which brings with it the manifestation of His power and glory. That relationship had ended in the judgment. The consciousness of this inferiority tends to weaken faith.

The grace of God meets this difficulty by the testimony of the prophet. It is a very sorrowful thing to see the ruin of that which God established in blessing, and the weakness and imperfection of that which is raised upon those ruins, although even this is the fruit of His precious grace.

The prophet, without troubling himself as to the king's intentions, encourages the people by turning their thoughts to Jehovah Himself, and shewing them that, after all, Jehovah reigned, cared for them, and would have them act in view of what He was for them, and seek His glory. For, weak as they were, He would thus be in relationship with them.

Note #1:

This actually happened (see Ezra 4: 24): but it is evident that, in consequence of the spirit of unbelief working in them, its effect was to discourage them entirely, so that they made no effort to recommence their work, saying, "The time is not come that Jehovah's house should be built." It was only the testimony of the Spirit by the prophet that aroused them from their moral torpor.

ZECHARIAH

Introduction to Zechariah

Zechariah is more occupied than either of the other two post-captivity prophets with the Gentile kingdoms under whose yoke the Jews were placed, and with the establishment in its perfection of the glorious system that was to accompany the presence of the Messiah; and, on the other hand, with the rejection of that Messiah by the remnant who had returned from captivity; with the state of misery and unbelief in which the people would be left, and by which they would at length be openly characterised; and, finally, with the last attacks of the enemies of Jehovah upon Israel, and especially those directed against Jerusalem. He announces the destruction of these enemies by the judgment of God, and the glory and holiness of the people after their deliverance by the arm of Jehovah, who should thenceforth reign and be glorified in all the earth. It is the complete history of Israel, and of the Gentiles in relationship with Israel, from the captivity to the end, as far as connected with Jerusalem, the restoration of which especially occupies the prophet. For if the house was the primary object in Haggai, Jerusalem is the central point in Zechariah; although in the course of the prophecy the temple, and still more the Messiah, have the most prominent place in the scene.

The date of Zechariah's prophecy is nearly the same as that of the prophecies of Haggai. There are two in Zechariah, besides that of the introduction; in Haggai, four. The first date in Zechariah is only a month or two before the last two in Haggai, which were given on the same day. At the date of the second prophecy in Zechariah (chap. 7) the temple was not finished as a whole, but sufficiently so to serve as a place of worship, although the dedication had not yet been celebrated.

Zechariah Chapter 1

Zechariah 1:1

zac 1:1

The Spirit of God begins with an exhortation, founded on the proofs that the history of the people supplied of the manner in which the word of the prophets had taken hold of them. Jehovah's displeasure, of which these prophets had not failed to warn the people, had borne its fruit; but God was now taking knowledge of the conduct of the Gentiles, to whom He had committed the place of power, and who, being at ease themselves, did not care for the misery and ruin of God's people. But Jehovah cares for it. He is sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease, and very jealous for Jerusalem. He is returned to Jerusalem with mercies; and prosperity and abundance shall be the portion of His people. We may remark here, that the judgment of Babylon, already accomplished, was in principle the judgment executed on the oppressor among the Gentiles, the head of the empire-of the image; and that the promise of blessing extends to that which shall be the portion of Jerusalem, when the oppressor shall be finally judged.

Three empires were existing in the eye of the Spirit. And the world was at peace under the authority of the second of the four, the first of these three. A horse is the symbol of divine energy of government in the earth, and here, in the empires succeeding Nebuchadnezzar. There are here three, besides the one that stands among the myrtle trees. But they have the character of the providentially administering spirits of the empires rather than of the empires themselves. The first of the three horses is of the same colour as that of the man who stood among the myrtles (perhaps because Cyrus and the Persians had delivered and favoured the people of God, as the Lord Jesus Himself will do in the greatness of His power). Such, then, is the import of the first part of this prophecy: the judgment already accomplished displaying the virtue of Jehovah's word; God returning to Jerusalem with mercies and consolation, moved with jealousy for her, and sorely displeased with the nations that were at ease while she was in ruins.

The vision controlled the whole action of the empires of the nations, and shewed that everything was subject to the providential government of God, who inquired into all for His people's sake; and who, looking on to the end of these times of the Gentiles, announced that He was occupied with the prosperity and blessing of His chosen city. Meanwhile, remark, Judah had been restored provisionally to the privileges of its own worship, and to a

position in which it might be ready to receive the Messiah for the accomplishment of the purposes of God.

The vision at the end of the chapter embraces all the empires who shall have been in relation with Judah and Jerusalem, and have oppressed them, until their final deliverance. The horns appear to symbolise powers; and the carpenters, the instruments employed by God to break them to pieces. We observe that Israel is included in Zac 1:19, as a part of the whole it appears to me, without entering into detail. Nineveh having come under the yoke of Babylon, and Israel being subject, as it was, to the empire, all is put together.

Zechariah Chapter 2

From chapter 2 to the end of chapter 6, the Spirit presents the circumstances, the principles, and the result of the re-establishment of Jerusalem and of the house; and also the judgment of that which was wicked and corrupt. Each chapter has a distinct subject—a vision detached from the others, while forming a portion of the whole. The present responsibility, on which the blessing depended, and the sovereign grace that would assuredly accomplish all, are both set before us, each in its place.

The restoration of Jerusalem is described in chapter 2 in a very remarkable manner, which throws much light on the connection, already spoken of, between the return from the Babylonish captivity wrought by Cyrus, the servant, the righteous man from the east, and the deliverance to be granted by the manifestation of the Messiah. First of all, the full and entire restoration of Jerusalem is announced, Jehovah Himself being her safeguard, and securing prosperity and peace to her inhabitants, Himself, her glory, dwelling in the midst of her. We can easily understand what an encouragement such a promise, and such an interest on the part of Jehovah in Jerusalem, would be to them in their then state, even if the accomplishment were not then brought about.

Jehovah calls to the people, and bids them come forth from the land of the north, an expression used for Chaldea, for they had been scattered to the four winds. The Babylonish captivity was the real sentence of Lo-ammi, as the return thence (Babylon being judged) was the earnest of a better

deliverance from that which, in the last days, will represent Babylon. Zion is delivered, from her captivity in Babylon. But if, up to a certain point, this took place by means of Cyrus, it was by no means the full accomplishment of God's purposes. They were continuously, and yet are, subject to the heathen image and superscription. And, in a more special manner, the Jews will again be in subjection to that which bears the character of Babylon, and will be delivered from it; but it will be in those days when Jehovah shall manifest Himself in a glory that will admit of no resistance to His will. After the glory He will send to the nations that have spoiled Israel. The glory of Jehovah shall appear, and the enemies of His people shall be judged; for he who touches Israel, the beloved of Jehovah, shall bring judgment upon himself in that which is most dear and precious to him. The judgment of the nations shall justify the word of God to His people Israel.

The daughter of Zion should sing with joy, for Jehovah would dwell in the midst of her. Many nations should come and join themselves to Jehovah in that day, and should be His people; and He would dwell in the midst of Israel. And then the word of prophecy (the accomplishment of which had been so long suspended that it appeared like a dream of the night) should be justified to Israel by its entire fulfilment. Jehovah should inherit Judah as His portion in the holy land, and should again choose Jerusalem. Solemn period! Let all flesh then be silent; for Jehovah has risen up from His holy habitation to accomplish all the good pleasure of His will. We see, that, however great might be the encouragement for the Jews in that day, the mind of the Spirit goes on to the end of the age, and to the manifestation of the glory of Jehovah, and the blessing of Jerusalem and of the whole earth. The return from Babylon, already accomplished historically, was still future as the true deliverance of Zion. All flesh should acknowledge the coming of Jehovah. These were judgments which should take place after the glory.

Zechariah Chapter 3

But in order that Jerusalem (the centre of God's dealings in Israel) should be thus re-established in blessing, something more than the mere exercise of God's power was necessary. The people were guilty and polluted. How could they be brought into the presence of God, and clothed with glory, in such a condition? Nevertheless they must be there in order to be blessed.

Moreover this is the history of every sinner. It is this question, so important, so essential, that is solved in chapter 3. Joshua, the high priest, who represents the people (it is not a question here of interceding, but of answering for them), stands before the presence of Jehovah-before "the angel of his presence," that is to say, before God as He manifested Himself in Israel since the departure from Horeb. Satan, the adversary to the blessing of God's people, stands there to resist him. How is this to be answered? Joshua could not do it. He was clothed in filthy garments. It is Jehovah Himself who, unknown to them, undertakes the cause of His people (as He did in the case of Balaam), and employs divine authority against their adversary. Jehovah had chosen Jerusalem-had plucked the people as a brand out of the fire; and Satan desired to cast them into it again. The will of Jehovah was to save them, all guilty and polluted as they were. Nevertheless the defilement existed and was unbearable to God. But God was acting in grace; and thus acting, since He must needs remove the sin from before His eyes (for this very reason, that it is unbearable to Him), He puts away the sin and not the sinner. He makes sin to cease from before Him. He takes it away, and, clothing Joshua with new garments wrought of God, and according to His perfection, makes Him a priest before Him. This will be the position of Israel in righteousness, and in service before God-a nation of priests, clothed in the righteousness which their God has given them. We anticipate them in this in a higher and heavenly way.

Zac 3:7 puts Joshua, as the representative of the people, under responsibility for the time being. If faithful, he should have a place in the presence of Jehovah of hosts. Zac 3:8 treats him as a type of Christ, having the nation of priests associated with Himself in the blessing that shall be accomplished in the last days. The foundation-stone that was laid before the eyes of Joshua was but a feeble image of that true stone, the immovable foundation of all the blessing of Israel, of all the government of God in the earth. Jehovah Himself stamps it with its true character. It should represent the thoughts of Jehovah Himself in His government. It should have, or rather it should be, the signet of God; and the iniquity of the earth should be definitively taken away by the absolute, efficacious, and positive act of God. In this stone shall be seen also the perfect intelligency of God. The seven eyes shall be there.

I would add a few words on this expression. In 2 Chronicles 16 we find the eyes of Jehovah represented as running to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards Him. This is the faithfulness of God in taking cognisance of all things in His ways of government. In Zechariah, the eyes are found upon the stone that is laid in Zion. It is there that the seat of that government is placed which sees everything and everywhere. In Verse 10 of the next chapter (Zac 4:10) these eyes, which behold all things, which run through the whole earth, are said to rejoice when they see the plummet in the hands of Zerubbabel, that is to say, the house of Jehovah's habitation entirely finished. In this case they are not presented as established in the seat of government upon earth, but in their character of universal and active oversight, and in this providential activity, never resting until Jehovah's counsels of grace towards Jerusalem are accomplished; and then they shall rejoice. The active intelligence of providence finds its full delight there in the accomplishment of the unchangeable purpose of the will of God. Finally these eyes are again seen in Revelation 5, in the Lamb exalted to the right hand of God, who is about to take possession of His inheritance of the earth. Here it is the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth; for the government is in the hands of the Lamb, although He has not yet exercised it in the earth, of which He is about to be put in possession.

I return to our chapter. When the seat of Jehovah's perfect government shall be set up in Jerusalem, and the iniquity of the land of Israel shall be taken away, then peace shall be fully established, and each one shall rejoice in the peace of his neighbour, and each one be neighbour in heart to all. It is the Prince of Peace who reigns there. All this hangs upon the introduction of Christ the Branch. Here He is not presented as king. It is His Person which is introduced, and the effect of His intervention. Observe that the word does not say that iniquity is taken away, until the effect of the work of Christ is applied by faith in Him, a faith which, with respect to Israel, depends on sight. Their hearts will have been previously drawn to Jehovah, as were the remnant by the preaching of John the Baptist; but the peace that flows from iniquity being taken away, and the joy of complete deliverance, comes after. They will then sing, "Unto us a son is born."

Zechariah Chapter 4

After this Zechariah is, as it were, awakened by God to see all the perfect order of that which He was going to establish. Here also the present grace furnishes the occasion for the revelation of the ulterior purposes of God. The prophet sees the vessel of the light of God on earth ordained in all its perfection. The candlestick was one, but it had seven branches. It was unity in the perfection of spiritual co-ordination-perfect unity, perfect development in that unity. Each thing was in its place as a means, and the two sources of spiritual grace which fed the light, were placed one on each side to sustain the light that shone before Jehovah. These are, as it appears to me, the royalty and the priesthood of Christ, which maintain, by power and spiritual grace, the perfect light of divine order among the Jews. The work was divine, the pipes were of gold. The thing ministered was the grace of the Spirit, the oil which fed the testimony, maintained in this perfect order. But the Spirit first places Israel, at the moment of the prophecy, in a very definite position. It was not yet the time for the exercise of outward power, or for Jehovah to put forth His might, and establish His glory and His worship among His people. It was His Spirit acting in the remnant of Israel, if they would hearken, to bring them into relationship with God morally, and in a worship that He would accept, if-imperfect as it must needs be, since the nation was not re-established by the power of God, but remained still in bondage-this worship was rendered to God in Spirit and in truth, according to that which He bestowed on the people. And at the same time, outward providence was exercised to accomplish all that was necessary for the maintenance of the relationship with God, and that God's grace had established for Israel, after their fall and their deliverance from Babylon by the providential interposition of God. The seven eyes which ran to and fro throughout the earth should see with joy the house in which the restored remnant would be in relationship with God, completed by the hands of Zerubbabel. This clearly defines the position of the people, and the two orders of things set before us in this prophecy. The present condition was that of relationship with God, established in sovereignty by His Spirit, through which He could accept their worship, His Spirit being in the midst of the restored remnant, and providential power being in exercise to secure blessing, but no immediate government on God's part. Government was left

in the hands of the Gentiles. That which was prophetically in view, was the perfect order established in Jerusalem as the vessel of divine light on earth, maintained by the ministry of the two sons of oil-the royalty and the priesthood-which stood before the Lord [See Note #1] of the whole earth. The God of Israel had had His throne at Jerusalem. The God of heaven had bestowed the dominion of the whole earth on the head of the Gentiles. Now the Lord* of the whole earth would establish earthly order, according to His will, at Jerusalem; and would there maintain divine light by a royal priesthood in His presence.

Note #1

'Adon.' Zac 4:14; Zac 6:5.

Zechariah Chapter 5

Chapter 5 shews us the other side of the picture, that is to say, the judgment of the wicked in Israel in the last days. The prophet sees an immense roll filled with a curse for the wicked, for those that sin against their neighbour and against the name of Jehovah, to cut off both them and their houses. The people, as a whole also, are then put in their true position. That which called itself Jerusalem and Israel and the people of God, belonged in fact to Babylon. God, by His mighty providence, takes them up and sets them on their true base; and their house is built in the land of Shinar. Its Babylonish character is fully evidenced by its position.

Zechariah Chapter 6

In chapter 6 we are shewn the government of God in the four monarchies, but neither as immediate government on God's part nor merely that of human government. We have seen power committed to man in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, and that he had failed therein. But it was not the will of God immediately to resume the reins of government in the earth, neither to leave the earth to the wickedness and the will of man without any providential bridle, without any government. He controls them, not by acting directly, so as to maintain the testimony of His character and His ways, but by means of instruments whom He employs, the result of whose activity is according to His will. The only wise God can do this, for He knows

all things and directs all things to the accomplishment of His purposes. This is the reason that we see all sorts of things morally in disagreement with His ways in government, which yet succeed: a chaos as to the present, but the issue of which will furnish a clue, that will make manifest a wisdom even more profound and admirable than that which was displayed in His own immediate government in Israel, perfect as this was in its place. It is that universal providence, which, in its results, satisfies the moral exigencies of the nature of God; while in the intermediate course of things free scope is left to the active energies of man's will. This mediate power, exercised by means of instruments proceeding from the presence of the Most High God, is employed in connection with His rights over the whole earth. This is the character of God in the prophecy of Zechariah. It is the character also of His government for the time being, that is, during the four empires. When Christ shall reign, the government will again be immediate in His Person, and Jerusalem be its centre. I think that the judgment executed upon Babylon answers to that which is said in Zac 6:8. We know that Chaldea was always the north country to Israel. The spirits employed by God have accomplished the will of God there. The seventh Verse (Zac 6:7) appears to indicate the Roman empire, comprising everything from its first establishment to the present time, and its historical character at all times. The white horses would be the representatives of that which God has done by means of the Greek empire. The grisled and bay appear to indicate a mixture of Greek and Roman power—at least, these horses have a double character, which becomes afterwards two distinct classes (the last only having the character of universality, which goes to and fro throughout all the earth). I doubt not that all these proud instruments of His government will be found again as spheres of judgment in the last days, when God begins to assert His rights as the God of the whole earth, unless Babylon geographically may be an exception in virtue of what is said in Zac 6:8.

The full result is given in Zac 6:9-15 in which the Branch is looked at as born and growing up in the place of His earthly glory, building the temple of Jehovah, bearing the glory, ruling upon His throne, a priest upon His throne, the true Melchisedec, maintaining for the earth the enjoyment of perfect peace—the "counsel of peace" with Jehovah. This counsel of peace is maintained between Jehovah and the Branch (compare Psalms 85 and 87).

Therefore should they come from far to build in the temple of Jehovah; and the testimony of prophecy should be made good by its fulfilment.

Again we see the two elements which link the events and the dealings of God in the prophet's day, with the glorious circumstances of the last days. First, the overthrow of Babylon has already executed the judgment on the first oppressors of Jerusalem who led her captive. The whole system is thus judged in principle; as in the New Testament it is said of the adversary, "Now is the prince of this world judged." And then, the fulfilment of the promise is attached to the obedience of the remnant (Zac 6:15). This continues with respect to Israel unto the end (see Acts 3, and even Hebrews 3 and 4). But meantime the fulness of the Gentiles must come in independently of this on other grounds. At the end Israel, obedient (that is in fact, the remnant)-no longer united to the order of the assembly, but connected with the promises to Israel in the earth-will enjoy the fulfilment of these promises.

We may remark that in Zechariah (Babylon being already judged) we have neither man invested with the government, nor the moral character of the empires presented under the form of an image or that of beasts; but the government of God hidden, providential, but real, in connection with these empires. This is an element of much importance, if we would understand the whole system existing from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and the return from captivity, until the end, when Christ shall reign in righteousness. The first part of the prophecy closes with the end of chapter 6.

Zechariah Chapter 7

The following commentary covers Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10.

The prophecy, from chapter 7 to the end of the book, has for its special object the introduction of the Messiah in Israel, with the consequences of His rejection. The same principles of responsibility and blessing, which we have already seen established with respect to the remnant on their return from Babylon, are found again here. The prophecy begins by calling to mind the insincerity of their lamentations and humiliation during the seventy years' captivity, and the example set them by the hardness of the people's heart, before that sorrowful period, which led to their dispersion among all the nations, the pleasant land being made desolate. But now Jehovah's love

for Zion, His chosen city, excited His jealousy and His wrath against those who oppressed her. He was returned unto Zion, and she should be blessed as a city of truth, and the mountain of Jehovah should be His holy mountain. Jerusalem should be abundantly blessed, her streets full of inhabitants, and her old men full of days. God would bring back His people from all the countries in which they had been scattered and captive. From the day in which His people had turned to Him and laid the foundation of the temple, blessing should flow as a river, even as misery and judgment had done before. The Jews who had returned from Babylon were placed under conditions of truth and uprightness for the enjoyment of these blessings (Zac 7:16-17). Besides this, Jehovah declares, unconditionally, that their fast days should be joyful feasts, and that men should come from all nations to worship Jehovah at Jerusalem, and should take hold of the skirt of a Jew, knowing that God was with that people. Here are, then, the moral consequences of disobedience, already accomplished—insincerity and hardness of heart pointed out; present blessing introduced by grace, and bestowed on the people under the condition of a godly walk, such fulness of blessing as the presence of Jehovah in their midst would involve; and, finally, the purposes of God in grace, which, depending on Himself, should be never-failing.

But this last thought introduces many consequences and important events. The first two consequences are, that Israel should be put in possession of the whole territory which God had given them. Enemies from without would come, but Jehovah Himself would defend His house; and the result of this direct intervention would be, that no oppressor should pass through them any more. Jehovah Himself had already looked into this matter. It was a day in which the eyes of all mankind should be turned towards Jehovah, as well as those of the tribes of Israel. Compare this part of chapter 9 with Isaiah 17.

Now this immediate intervention of Jehovah, who encamps about His house (it is the defence of the city against the last attack of the Assyrians, which we have found more than once in the prophets), necessarily introduces the Messiah, in view of the events of the last days. Verse 9 (Zac 7:9) speaks of this. It presents the Messiah in His personal character as King Messiah, but in a twofold aspect. And this is the reason why, in the New Testament, that

portion only is quoted which relates to Jehovah's first coming. The King of Zion comes unto her. He is just, and brings in Himself power and salvation. This is the general idea, that which Zion needed, and which shall be accomplished in the last days. The Holy Ghost adds to this the personal character of the Lord, the spirit in which He presented Himself to Israel—lowly and riding upon an ass. We all know the fulfilment of this at His first coming.

The Messiah Himself having been thus presented, the definitive effect of His presence is announced in that which follows, as the continuation of Verse 8 (Zac 7:8), remembering who has been introduced. He will put an end to war in Israel, will establish peace among the nations, and His dominion shall be unto the ends of the earth (the land of Israel being the centre of His power). Jehovah, having delivered the people—that is, the believing remnant, who shall become the nation—by the blood of the covenant, will restore them double for all their affliction, and use them to establish His power over the isles of the Gentiles. The might of Jehovah should accompany and save them, as the flock of His people. He would pour out blessing upon the land at the prayer of the remnant of His people, who had been wandering like a flock without a shepherd, and had sought help in vain from their idols. But Jehovah had now visited His flock, the house of Judah, and out of them strength should go forth. Judah should be as His goodly horse in the battle. He would strengthen Judah and save Ephraim. Jehovah would gather them in such numbers that there would be no place for them. He would dry up the sea and the river to make a way for them, and the pride of their enemies should be brought down. They should be strong in Jehovah their God, and walk up and down in His name. To the end of chapter 10 it is the general proclamation of the blessing that should crown Judah and Ephraim, when, by the favour of Jehovah, they were restored to their land.

Zechariah Chapter 11

In connection with the judgments that should attend it, the Spirit enters into more detail with respect to the rejection of the Messiah, and the particular circumstances of the last days, in consequence of this rejection. It is the history of Israel in connection with Christ.

I think that the beginning of chapter 11 speaks of the invasion of Israel by the Gentiles. The first three Verses (Zac 11:1-3) give a picture of the general condition of the land. In Zac 11:4 Jehovah takes up the case of His devastated flock. Their Gentile possessors only made a spoil of them. Their own shepherds pitied them not. Jehovah, while giving up the nation to the fruit of their iniquity, was moved with compassion for the poor of the flock, and cares for the oppressed. It is the spirit of the life of Christ in Israel.

The two staves represent His authority, as uniting all the nations under Him, and binding Judah and Israel together-the double effect of the presence of Christ. But the shepherds of Israel are cut off; and Christ, grieved with the wicked and corrupt people, Himself abhorred by them, leaves them to themselves and to the consequences of their behaviour. As the result of this, He renounces for that time the inheritance of the nations, since it is in Israel that He is to take possession of it. But the poor of the flock have recognised in His ways the fulfilment of the word of prophecy: they have not waited for the manifestation of the Messiah's public glory in Israel, but have attached themselves to Him personally, in consequence of the proofs He gave of His mission from God. It appears to me that this comprises the apostolic work in Israel, as well as the life of Christ. The prophecy only speaks of the fact itself. Verses 12 and 13 (Zac 11:12-13) relate the price at which the nation estimated their King and their Saviour. The fulfilment of this is known to all. The prophet here performs the thing prophetically, marking that so it was to be according to the counsels of God. We see also that Christ appears here as Jehovah Himself. The connection between Zac 11:6 and Zac 11:9 brings out the same truth. The thoughts of Jehovah with respect to that which He will do find their accomplishment in the Person of Jesus. The union between Judah and Israel, of which Christ should be the bond, is also deferred. In Zac 11:15-17 the prophet is seen assuming the features of the Antichrist, to represent him in type (as previously, the actions of Judas), in order to announce that foolish shepherd who should be raised up in judgment from God, and who should himself suffer the judgment he deserved. Christ came in the name of the Father-He was not received. Another should come in his own name, and him the people would receive.

Zechariah Chapter 12

The introduction of Antichrist, a shepherd [See Note #1] in Israel, brings in also the events that crowd around Jerusalem in the last days. All the nations should be gathered round Jerusalem, but only to find it a burdensome stone that should crush them. God would judge the power of man, but would raise up His people in sovereign grace. He would destroy the nations that had come up against Jerusalem. The deliverance of the people by the power of Jehovah comes first. This is sovereign grace to the chief of sinners-the feeble but beloved Judah, who had added to all her rebellion against God, the despisal and rejection of her King and Saviour.

The grace of God takes the lead over all the resources of man. The audacity of the enemies of God's people stirs up His affection, which never diminishes; and thus, by compelling God to act, this very audacity becomes the means of proving the faithfulness of His love. Judah, guilty yet beloved Judah, is delivered-that is to say, the remnant, to whom the affliction of Israel had been a burden; but the question of her conduct towards her God still remained. Nevertheless the grace shewn in her deliverance had wrought upon her heart. The law we know was written in it, but much more. To be loved by a God against whom one has so deeply revolted melts the heart. Grace then goes farther, and presents to the people the Messiah whom they had pierced. The Rejected One is the Jehovah that delivers them. It is now no longer merely the cry of distress, that has no refuge but Jehovah. Israel, more strictly Judah, no longer a prey to the terrible anxiety which her distress occasioned, is entirely occupied with her sin felt in the presence of a crucified Saviour. It is no longer a common grief, that of a nation crushed and trodden down in its most cherished sentiments. It is now hearts melted by the sense of what they had been towards One who had given Himself up for them. Each family, isolated by its personal convictions, confesses apart the depth of its sin; while no fear of judgment or punishment comes in to impair the character and the truth of their sorrow. Their souls are restored according to the efficacy of the work of Christ. It is this which definitively brings the people into relationship with God. We have seen the same moral order in the typical history of David-first, the ark on Mount Zion, and then the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

Note #1

The worthless shepherd (Zac 12:17), I suppose, is the same. He deserts the Jews, and identifies himself with the Gentile power when the Jewish worship is put down. He is "a thing of nought," as Jer 14:14.

Zechariah Chapter 13

In chapter 13 all is cleansed. The fountain is open to the house of David, whose sin had ruined the people, without abrogating the rights or weakening the grace of God; and also to the people of Jerusalem, who were more than partners in the sins of their rulers. Here it is practical cleansing with water. Faith in Him whom they had pierced was already in their hearts. The idols and the false prophets, the two chief sources of the misery of the Jews, should be entirely taken away. No one, not even the very parents of the guilty, would tolerate these abominations and deceits. Christ is the pattern, and all shall be judged of by it. Everything takes its moral character according to the relationship of the redeemed with Him. This gives occasion to a full historical development of that which has happened to Him. How He has been pierced, and its consequences, are detailed with respect to Jerusalem, Israel, and the world.

The result of this rejection of Christ, the centre of the history of eternity, of man's connection with God, and the revelation of both-for this event is here considered in connection with the history of Israel-is the scattering of the sheep who had been gathered around the true Shepherd. Nevertheless God stretches out His hand over the little ones. The result for Judah, when the current of their history shall be resumed in the last days, is that two-thirds shall be cut off in all the land (compare Eze 20:34-38 with respect to Israel); and the third that is left shall pass through the fire, shall call upon the name of Jehovah, and shall be heard. Jehovah will abolish the name of Lo-ammi-not My people-by saying, It is My people; and they shall say, Jehovah is my God. This is the definite result of His dealings with His people; and here especially with Judah, of whom He had said Lo-ammi, and the remnant of whom He acknowledges as His people.

Zechariah Chapter 14

Chapter 14 announces the final events that shall bring in this result, as chapter 13 had especially detailed that which regarded Christ. The two subjects of chapter 12 are thus resumed in detail. We may remark here, that the effect of the staff being broken, which united Judah and Israel, is here realised. The prophet speaks only of Judah, of the people who in the land were guilty of rejecting the Messiah, and who will suffer the consequence of so doing in the land during the last days, the mass of them at that time joining themselves to Antichrist. Jerusalem, as we have said, forms the centre of the prophecy. No prophet could perish outside her borders. What a terrible thing to be outwardly near God when one is not so inwardly, and when the heart invests itself with the name of God as with a cloak of pride—as a buckler, so that His arrows no longer reach the conscience!

Nevertheless, in spite of her pride and her confederacy with evil, Jerusalem shall be taken in the last days. We have seen, when studying the other prophets, that this will be the case; and then afterwards, when again besieged, Jehovah will intervene for the destruction of these enemies. This is very distinctly announced here. The nations shall be assembled by Jehovah; the city shall be taken and the houses rifled, and half the people led captive. Jehovah will then come forth against those nations, as we read in chapter 12 (compare Isaiah 66 and Micah 4). He comes in the Person of Christ to the Mount of Olives, whence He ascended. The Mount of Olives cleaves in the midst, forming a great valley, spreading terror among the people who are there. But if Jehovah identifies Himself thus, so to speak, with the meek and lowly Jesus formerly on the earth, in order that the identity of the Saviour and Jehovah should be clearly acknowledged, it is not the less true that He will come from heaven in all His glory (as He Himself predicted, as well as the prophets beginning with Enoch). The heavenly saints will accompany Him in His public manifestation to the eyes of an astonished world. Marvellous glory for those that are His, with whom He will manifest Himself before all the wicked! For here it is Jehovah's public coming to the earth, as the righteous Judge, making war upon all that rebel against Him.

I do not see that the last-mentioned event follows that which precedes it in the chapter. There is a division in the middle of Zac 14:5. "And Jehovah my

God shall come" begins a fresh subject, introducing a grand distinct event, which affects the whole earth in a manner that characterises its future existence. The presence of Jehovah upon the Mount of Olives renews, we may say, His visible relationship with Judah. This part of the subject closes with the words, "Uzziah, king of Judah." That which follows is intimately connected with the return of Christ to the Jews, in the very spot from which He left this earth; but it looks at it from a higher point of view, and takes up the subject of the relationship of Jehovah with the whole earth, when He comes from heaven with the saints. This is another part of the subject and a very important one.

The meaning of the rather difficult passage that follows has, I think, been given, as to its general sense, by Martin in his French translation. The Hebrew is acknowledged to be obscure. It may be, perhaps, translated, "there shall not be a precious light [which] shall be withdrawn." It is "a light of preciousness and denseness"; the last word may be taken for "shall be withdrawn." It shall not be a day of mingled light and darkness, but a day appointed by Jehovah, a day characterised by His intervention and His mighty presence, and that could not be characterised by the ordinary vicissitudes of night and day; but, at the moment when the total darkness of night might be expected, there should be light. Living waters should flow from Jerusalem towards the east and towards the west, into the Dead Sea and into the Great Sea. The heat of summer should not dry up their source.

Jehovah shall be God over all the earth; there shall be but one Jehovah, and His name one. It shall be truly one universal religion, the dominion of the one Jehovah, the God of the Jews, over all the earth. The land round Jerusalem shall be entirely peopled, and Jerusalem lifted up and securely inhabited in her place. There shall be no more any destruction of the city which Jehovah has chosen. A deadly plague shall smite all those that have fought against her. They shall mutually destroy each other. Judah shall also fight against them, and their riches shall be her prey. The remnant that are spared among the nations shall come up to Jerusalem, to the feast in which the entrance of God's people into their rest is celebrated. And all shall be holiness; everything in Jerusalem shall be consecrated to Jehovah.

MALACHI

Introduction to Malachi

The following commentary covers Chapters 1 through 4.

The prophecy of Malachi deals with the people brought back from the captivity of Babylon, and is most important as shewing the moral condition of the people consequent upon their return. Its last verses evidently close the testimony of Jehovah to the people, till the coming of him who should prepare the way of Jehovah, in a word, till John the Baptist. The law and the prophets were until John, and Malachi is professedly, and from the nature of his testimony, the last. The great moral principle unfolded in the book, is the insensibility of the people to that which Jehovah was for them, and to their own iniquity with respect to Jehovah-their want of reverence for God, their despisal of Jehovah.

Alas! this insensibility had reached such a point that, when the very actions that proved their contempt were laid before their consciences, they saw no harm in them. Nevertheless this did not alter the purposes and counsels of God, although it brought judgment on those who were guilty of it (see Mal 1:2; Mal 1:6; Mal 2:14; Mal 3:7; Mal 3:13).

Malachi also distinguishes the remnant and that which characterised them, while proclaiming the punishment of the wicked, and the call of God to those who had ears to hear to bring them back to repentance-a ministry which would restore moral order in the hearts of parents and children-that relationship, from the maintenance and exercise of which, all earthly peaceful order according to God flows; and that order is what God is considering here.

At the commencement of the prophecy Jehovah sets forth His love to Israel, slighted alas! by an ungrateful people, yet proved by their election from the beginning. Even while exhibiting the sad ingratitude of the people, Jehovah adheres to His own thoughts toward them. He will bless Israel, and He will judge Edom, in spite of the pride of the latter.

The sin of Israel, and their offensive indifference in the service of their God, is shewn (Mal 1:6-10). This gives occasion to another expression of grace—the revelation of the name of Jehovah among all nations. Thus, the election of Israel, and mercy towards the Gentiles, are established amidst, and even on occasion of, the sin of the restored people. Mal 1:12-14 also display their offences against Jehovah and their contempt of His majesty. Mal 2:1-9 proclaims the fallen condition of the priests, who ought to have been the faithful depositaries of the mind and ways of God; Mal 2:10-12, their misconduct towards their brethren, and their intimate relationship with idolaters, are pointed out; Mal 2:13-16, the lightness with which they were in the habit of divorcing at their pleasure. But Jehovah was coming.

Here again we find the Lord's [See Note #1] first coming connected with the full result of the second. John the Baptist is announced as His messenger to prepare the way before Him; and then, the Angel of the covenant, whom they so earnestly desired, should come; but it would be in judgment, to purge the people and take away all their dross. Then should their offering in Jerusalem be acceptable to Jehovah, an offering in righteousness. But all the evil-doers should be judged; for God was unchangeable, both in righteousness and grace. It was this which, after all, secured the existence of Israel, happen what might. Let Israel then return unto Jehovah, and Jehovah would return unto them. But the pride of Israel is excited by this, and they say, "Wherein shall we return?" Their sins with respect to the offerings and the ordinances are then shewn. But grace again displays itself in prospect of the people's return from their practical alienation from God. They had but to return and prove the goodness of God.

In the midst of the pride of the wicked in their apparent success, the remnant are distinguished as being drawn together by their common spiritual wants and feelings, founded on the fear of Jehovah which governed them all. In their affliction they spake often one to another of these things; [See Note #2] and Jehovah hearkened and heard and wrote it down in His book. And they shall be His in the day when He maketh up His jewels. After this they should discern between the righteous and the wicked, between those that served God and those that served Him not. For the day was coming which should burn as an oven, and the proud and the wicked

should be as stubble. But to those that feared the name of Jehovah, the Sun of Righteousness should rise. It should be no longer the sorrowful night of darkness and affliction and of the enemy's dominion, but a day which God would cause to shine by the presence of His Son, by the reign of His Beloved One on the earth. The righteous would have dominion over them in the morning, for the time is a time of judgment, and the wicked would be as ashes under the soles of their feet.

It will be remarked here, that all is in connection with the authority of Jehovah and His dispensations towards Israel, and with the conduct of Israel, as a nation, towards their God. That which belongs to the first coming of Christ, and its consequences to Israel, is not brought in here. John the Baptist is presented as the forerunner of Jehovah, who without doubt is Christ Himself, but who here comes as the Angel of the covenant, coming suddenly to His temple, and trying everything in Israel by fire and by His judgment, in order that the offering of Judah may be pleasant to Jehovah as in the days of old. The transgressions here spoken of are those of the people brought back from Babylon against Jehovah. The Gentiles, and their empire, are not seen here. All takes place between Israel only and Jehovah, the God of their fathers, as in former days between the people loved of God and Jehovah who loved them. A strange god is that which Jehovah will not endure. It is Levi, with whom His covenant had been; it was the priests, whose lips should have kept the true knowledge of Jehovah.

There is even no king here spoken of; except that Jehovah, whose name is terrible among the heathen, is their king. Finally the people (Israel) are commanded to return to the law of Moses given at Horeb for all Israel.

Thus we have here Jehovah's unchangeable love for the people whom He gathered to Himself at Horeb, His controversy with them on account of their sins, the marking out of a faithful remnant, and the sending of a messenger before the execution of the judgment. Israel is looked at nationally, in their own relationship with Jehovah, as returned from captivity and awaiting the judgment of their God, who sends His messenger to forewarn them.

All was prepared to put the people morally to the proof, with respect to the accomplishment of this, at the time when John the Baptist was sent; but Israel had not ears to hear, and all was lost.

The perfect and entire fulfilment will take place at the end, after that other glorious work of God with regard to the assembly shall have been accomplished.

The longsuffering of God towards Israel had been great; for, when they had rejected His Son, He sent them-through the intercession of that same well-beloved Saviour on the cross-the message by the mouth of Peter, that, if they repented, the Christ whom they had slain would return. But their leaders were more than deaf to this grace on the part of God, and their house still remains empty and desolate.

At the time of the end, Elias-whose mission was to call back an apostate Israel who had forsaken Jehovah to own Him in truth, and that, by the sovereign grace of God, although in connection with the law, and that Mount Horeb, whither he went to lay down the burden of his prophetic office, when rendered useless by the unbelief of the people-Elias shall effectually accomplish his mission before the great and terrible day of Jehovah; in order that the curse of God may not fall upon the land of His delight in that day when He will definitively execute His judgments. It is on this account that John the Baptist is spoken of as being Elias, if Israel could receive it; for he answered to Mal 3:1, whilst, at the same time, he said he was not Elias; for in fact he did not at all fulfil Mal 4:5-6 (compare Luk 1:17; Luk 1:76).

The prophecy speaks to the conscience of those who lived at the time it was delivered (Mal 3:10); and passes on-shewing that at the end of those times Israel would be put on trial by the mission of grace-to the last days, in which God would display His unchangeable love for His people, and His righteous judgment against evil, by separating a remnant unto Himself for blessing, and by executing judgment on the rebellious.

The Gentiles are not mentioned, nor even the connection of His people with Christ, coming down as man to the earth.

We have thus in these three post-captivity prophets, three distinct subjects, but which make a whole of the three. In Haggai it is grace toward the returned remnant, God's Spirit still among them, and in connection with the house and worship of Jehovah, the temple. Its latter glory should be greater than its former. The kingdoms of the heathen should be cast down, and Zerubbabel (Christ) as a signet on Jehovah's hand. Peace would be given in Jerusalem.

Zechariah takes up two points: first the empires of the heathen and God's providential ways with Israel-the times of the Gentiles-Jerusalem is owned, but judged of God and stamped as Babylonish in its true character; but at the end the Branch, the Lord Jesus, sets crowns instead of fasting for the faithful-Babylon being already judged-and strangers should come and build in the temple of the Lord.

From chapter 7 to the end, it is the relation of Israel with Christ, and His rejection and its consequences in the last judgment of Jerusalem; but for all that Jehovah, as we have often seen, would judge definitively all the nations assembled against her. The remnant would be brought to repentance, and Jerusalem be holiness to the Lord, nor should strangers defile it.

Finally we have Malachi shewing us, the state the Jews soon got into, slighting all that was agreeable to God, and indifferent and insensible to their violating every righteous feeling; the practical separation of those that feared the Lord, and the coming of the Lord in judgment and deliverance: meanwhile their recall to the authority of the law, and the coming of Elias before the great and terrible day of the Lord, to turn their hearts in grace into the way of peace.

Note #1:

It is, note distinctly, Jehovah's.

Note #2:

See the lovely picture of this in the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel, before he begins the general subject of it. Only then the Saviour was rejected, and the remnant passed into the assembly, the deliverance of

Israel being deferred to the coming of the Lord in power. Here it is looked at as the remnant in Israel connected with that deliverance.

MATTHEW

Introduction to Matthew

Let us now consider the Gospel by Matthew. This Gospel sets Christ before us in the character of the Son of David and of Abraham, that is to say, in connection with the promises made to Israel, but presents Him withal as Emmanuel, Jehovah the Saviour, for such the Christ was. It is He who, being received, should have accomplished the promises (and hereafter He will do so) in favour of this beloved people. This Gospel is, in fact, the history of His rejection by the people, and, consequently, that of the condemnation of the people themselves, so far as their responsibility was concerned (for the counsels of God cannot fail), and the substitution of that which God was going to bring in according to His purpose.

In proportion as the character of the King and of the kingdom develops itself, and arouses the attention of the leaders of the people, they oppose it, and deprive themselves, as well as the people who follow them, of all the blessings connected with the presence of the Messiah. The Lord declares to them the consequences of this, and shews His disciples the position of the kingdom which should be set up on the earth after His rejection, and also the glories which should result from it to Himself and to His people with Him. And in His Person, and as regards His work, the foundation of the assembly also is revealed the church as built by Himself. In a word, consequent on His rejection by Israel, first, the kingdom as it exists now is revealed (Chapter 13), then the church (Chapter 16), and then, the kingdom in the glory (Chapter 17).

At length, after His resurrection, a new commission, addressed to all nations, is given to the apostles sent out by Jesus as risen. [See Note #1]

Note #1:

This was from resurrection in Galilee; not from heaven and glory, that was near Damascus.

Matthew Chapter 1

Matthew 1:1

mat 1:1

The object of the Spirit of God, in this Gospel, being to present Jehovah as fulfilling the promises made to Israel, and the prophecies that relate to the Messiah (and no one can fail to be struck with the number of references to their fulfilment), He commences with the genealogy of the Lord, starting from David and Abraham, the two stocks from which the Messianic genealogy sprang, and to which the promises had been made. The genealogy is divided into three periods, conformably to three great divisions of the history of the people: from Abraham to the establishment of royalty, in the person of David; from the establishment of royalty to the captivity; and from the captivity to Jesus.

We may observe that the Holy Ghost mentions, in this genealogy, the grievous sins committed by the persons whose names are given, magnifying the sovereign grace of God who could bestow a Saviour in connection with such sins as those of Judah, with a poor Moabitess brought in amidst His people, and with crimes like those of David.

It is the legal genealogy which is given here, that is to say, the genealogy of Joseph, of whom Christ was the rightful heir according to Jewish law. The evangelist has omitted three kings of the parentage of Ahab, in order to have the fourteen generations in each period. Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim are also omitted. The object of the genealogy is not at all affected by this circumstance. The point was to give it as recognised by the Jews, and all the kings were well known to all.

The evangelist briefly relates the facts concerning the birth of Jesus facts which are of infinite and eternal importance, not only to the Jews, who were immediately interested in them, but to ourselves facts in which God has deigned to link His own glory with our interests, with man.

Mary was betrothed to Joseph. Her posterity was consequently legally that of Joseph, as to the rights of inheritance; but the child she carried in her womb was of divine origin, conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. The

angel of Jehovah is sent, as the instrument of providence, to satisfy the tender conscience and upright heart of Joseph, by communicating to him that that which Mary had conceived was of the Holy Ghost.

We may remark here, that the angel on this occasion addresses Joseph as "son of David." The Holy Ghost thus draws our attention to the relationship of Joseph (the reputed father of Jesus) to David, Mary being called his wife. The angel gives at the same time the name of Jesus (that is, Jehovah the Saviour) to the child that should be born. He applies this name to the deliverance of Israel from the condition into which sin had plunged them. [See Note #2] All these circumstances happened, in order to fulfil that which Jehovah had said by the mouth of His prophet, "Behold a the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

Here then is that which the Spirit of God sets before us in these few verses: Jesus, the Son of David, conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost; Jehovah, the Saviour, who delivers Israel from their sins; God with them; He who accomplished those marvellous prophecies which, more or less plainly, drew the outline that the Lord Jesus alone could fill up.

Joseph, a just man, simple in heart and obedient, discerns without difficulty the revelation of the Lord, and obeys it.

These titles stamp the character of this Gospel, that is, of the way Christ is presented in it. And how wonderful this revelation of Him by whom the words and promises of Jehovah were to be fulfilled! What a groundwork of truth for the understanding of what this glorious and mysterious Person was, of whom the Old Testament had said enough to awaken the desires and to confound the minds of the people to whom He was given!

Born of a woman, born under the law, heir to all the rights of David according to the flesh, also the Son of God, Jehovah the Saviour, God with His people: who could comprehend or fathom the mystery of His nature in whom all these things were combined? His life in fact, as we shall see, displays the obedience of the perfect man, the perfections and the power of God.

The titles which we have just named, and which we read in Mat 1:20-23, are connected with His glory in the midst of Israel that is to say, the heir of David, Jesus the Saviour of His people, and Emmanuel. His birth of the Holy Ghost accomplished Psa 2:7 with regard to Him as a man born on the earth. The name of Jesus, and His conception by the power of the Holy Ghost, no doubt go beyond this relationship, but are linked also in an especial manner with His position in Israel. [See Note #3]

Note #2

It is written, "For he shall save his people," thus plainly shewing the title of Jehovah contained in the word Jesus or Jehoshua. For Israel was the people of the Lord, that is, of Jehovah.

Note #3

The wider relationship is more distinctively given in the Gospel of Luke, where His genealogy is traced up to Adam; but here the title of Son of man is specially appropriate.

Matthew Chapter 2

Thus born, thus characterised by the angel and fulfilling the prophecies that announced the presence of Emmanuel, He is formally acknowledged King of the Jews by the Gentiles, who are guided by the will of God acting on the hearts of their wise men. [See Note #4] That is to say, we find the Lord, Emmanuel, the Son of David, Jehovah the Saviour, the Son of God, born King of the Jews, recognised by the heads of the Gentiles. This is the testimony of God in Matthew's Gospel, and the character in which Jesus is there presented. Afterwards, in the presence of Jesus thus revealed, we see the leaders of the Jews in connection with a foreign king, knowing however as a system the revelations of God in His word, but wholly indifferent to Him who was their object; and this king, the fierce enemy of the Lord, the true King and Messiah, seeking to put Him to death.

The providence of God watches over the child born unto Israel, employing means that leave the responsibility of the nation its full place; and that accomplish at the same time all the intentions of God with regard to this only true remnant of Israel, this only true source of hope for the people. For,

out of Him, all would fall and suffer the consequences of being connected with the people.

Gone down into Egypt to avoid the cruel design of Herod to take away His life, He becomes the true Branch; He recommences (that is, morally) the history of Israel in His own Person, as well as (in a wider sense) the history of man as the second Adam in relation with God: only that for this His death must come in for all, no doubt, for blessing. But He was Son of God and Messiah, Son of David then. But to take His own place as Son of man He must die (see John 12). It is not only the prophecy of Hosea, "out of Egypt have I called my Son", which thus applies to this true beginning of Israel in grace (as the beloved of God), and according to His counsels (the people having entirely failed, so that without this, God must have cut them off). We have seen, in Isaiah, Israel the servant giving place to Christ the Servant, who gathers a faithful remnant (the children whom God has given Him while He hides His face from the house of Jacob), that become the nucleus of the new nation of Israel according to God. Chapter 49 of that prophet gives this transition from Israel to Christ in a striking manner. Moreover this is the basis of all the history of Israel, looked at as having failed under the law, and being re-established in grace. Christ is morally the new stock from which they spring (compare Isa 49:3; Isa 49:5). [See Note #5]

Herod being dead, God makes it known to Joseph, in a dream, commanding him to return, with the young child and its mother, into the land of Israel. We should remark, that the land is here mentioned by the name that recalls the privileges bestowed by God. It is neither Judea nor Galilee; it is "the land of Israel." But can the Son of David, in entering it, approach the throne of His fathers? No: He must take the place of a stranger among the despised of His people. Directed by God in a dream, Joseph carries Him into Galilee, whose inhabitants were objects of sovereign contempt to the Jews, as not being in habitual connection with Jerusalem and Judea, the land of David, of the kings acknowledged by God, and of the temple, and where even the dialect of the language common to both betrayed their practical separation from that part of the nation which, by the favour of God, had returned to Judea from Babylon.

Even in Galilee Joseph establishes himself in a place, the very name of which was a reproach to one who dwelt there, and a blot on his reputation.

Such was the position of the Son of God when He came into this world, and such the relationship of the Son of David with His people, when, by grace and according to the counsels of God, He stood amongst them. On the one hand, Emmanuel, Jehovah their Saviour, on the other, the Son of David; but, while taking His place among His people, associated with the poorest and most despised of the flock, sheltered in Galilee from the iniquity of a false king, who, by help of the Gentiles of the fourth monarchy, was reigning over Judea, and with whom the priests and rulers of the people were in connection; the latter, unfaithful to God and dissatisfied with men, proudly detesting a yoke which their sins had brought upon them, and which they dared not shake off, although they were not sufficiently sensible of their sins to submit to it as the just infliction of God. Thus is it that the Messiah is presented to us by this evangelist, or rather by the Holy Ghost, in connection with Israel.

Note #4

The star does not lead the wise men from their own country to Judea. It pleased God to present this testimony to Herod and to the leaders of the people. Having been directed by the word (the meaning of which was declared by the chief priests and scribes themselves, and according to which Herod sent them to Bethlehem), they again see the star which they had seen in their own country, which conducts them to the house. Their visit also took place some time after the birth of Jesus. No doubt they first saw the star at the time of His birth. Herod makes his calculations according to the moment of the star's appearance, which he had carefully ascertained from the lips of the wise men. Their journey must have occupied some time. The birth of Jesus is related in chapter 1. The first Verse of chapter 2 (Mat 2:1) should be read, "Now Jesus having been born"; it speaks of a time already past. I would also remark here that the Old Testament prophecies are quoted in three ways, which must not be confounded: "that it might be fulfilled", "so that it was fulfilled"; and, "then was fulfilled." In the first case, it is the object of the prophecy; Mat 1:22-23 is an instance. In the second, it is an accomplishment contained in the scope of the prophecy, but not the sole

and complete thought of the Holy Ghost; Mat 2:23 may serve as an example. In the third, it is simply a fact which corresponds with the quotation, which in its spirit applies to it, without being its positive object Mat 2:17, for instance, I am not aware that the first two are distinguished in our English translation. Where the sense may require it, I shall hope to point out the difference.

Note #5

In Verse 5, (Mat 2:5), Christ assumes this title of Servant. The same substitution of Christ for Israel is found in John 15. Israel had been the vine brought out of Egypt. Christ is the true Vine.

Matthew Chapter 3

We now begin His actual history. John the Baptist comes to prepare the way of Jehovah before Him, according to the prophecy of Isaiah; proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and calling on the people to repent. It is by these three things that John's ministry to Israel is characterised in this Gospel. First the Lord Jehovah Himself was coming. The Holy Ghost leaves out the words "for our God," at the end of the verse, because Jesus comes as man in humiliation, although acknowledged at the same time to be Jehovah, and Israel could not be thus owned as entitled to say "our." In the second place the kingdom of heaven [See Note #6] was at hand that new dispensation which was to take the place of the one which, properly speaking, belonged to Sinai, where the Lord had spoken on the earth. In this new dispensation "the heavens should reign." They should be the source of, and characterise, God's authority in His Christ. Thirdly, the people, instead of being blessed in their present condition, were called to repentance in view of the approach of this kingdom. John therefore takes his place in the wilderness, departing from the Jews, with whom he could not associate himself because he came in the way of righteousness (Mat 21:32). His food is that which he finds in the wilderness (even his prophetic garments bearing witness to the position which he had taken on the part of God), himself filled with the Holy Ghost.

Thus was he a prophet, for he came from God, and addressed himself to the people of God to call them to repentance, and he proclaimed the blessing of

God according to the promises of Jehovah their God; but he was more than a prophet, for he declared as an immediate thing the introduction of a new dispensation, long expected, and the advent of the Lord in Person. At the same time, although coming to Israel, he did not own the people, for they were to be judged; the threshing-floor of Jehovah was to be cleansed, the trees that did not bear good fruit to be cut down. It would be a remnant only that Jehovah would place in the new position in the kingdom that he announced, without its being yet revealed in what manner it was to be established. He proclaimed the judgment of the people.

What a fact of immeasurable greatness was the presence of the Lord God in the midst of His people, in the Person of Him who, although He was doubtless to be the fulfilment of all the promises, was necessarily, though rejected, the Judge of all the evil existing among His people!

And the more we give these passages their true application, that is to say, the more we apply them to Israel, the more we apprehend their real force. [See Note #7]

No doubt repentance is an eternal necessity to every soul that approaches God; but what a light is thrown upon this truth, when we see the intervention of the Lord Himself who calls His people to this repentance, setting aside on their refusal the whole system of their relationships with Him, and establishing a new dispensation a kingdom which only belongs to those who hear Him and causing at length His judgment to break forth against His people and the city which He had so long cherished! "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

This truth gives room for the exhibition of another and most highly important one, announced here in connection with the sovereign rights of God rather than in its consequences, but which already contained in itself all those consequences. The people from all parts, and as we learn elsewhere especially the ungodly and despised, went out to be baptised, confessing their sins. But those who, in their own eyes, held the chief place among the people, were in the eyes of the prophet who loved the people according to God, the objects of the judgment he announced. Wrath was impending.

Who had warned these scornful men to flee from it? Let them humble themselves like the rest; let them take their true place, and prove their change of heart. To boast in the privileges of their nation, or of their fathers, availed nothing before God. He required that which His very nature, His truth, demanded. Moreover He was sovereign; He was able of those stones to raise up children to Abraham. This is what His sovereign grace has done, through Christ, with regard to the Gentiles. There was reality needed. The axe was at the root of the trees, and those that did not bring forth good fruit should be cut down. This is the great moral principle which the judgment was going to put in force. The blow was not yet struck, but the axe was already at the root of the trees. John was come to bring those who received his testimony into a new position, or at least into a new state in which they were prepared for it. On their repentance he would distinguish them from the rest by baptism. But He who was coming after John He whose shoes John was not worthy to bear would thoroughly purge His floor, would separate those that were truly His, morally His, from among His people Israel (that was His floor), and would execute judgment on the rest. John on his part opened the door to repentance beforehand; afterwards should come the judgment.

Judgment was not the only work that belonged to Jesus. Two things are however attributed to Him in John's testimony He baptises with fire this is the judgment proclaimed in Verse 12, (Mat 3:12), which consumes all that is evil. But He baptises also with the Holy Ghost that Spirit which, given to, and acting in divine energy in man, quickened, redeemed, cleansed in the blood of Christ, brings him out from the influence of all that acts on the flesh, and sets him in connection and in communion with all that is revealed of God, with the glory into which He brings His creatures in the life which He imparts, destroying morally in us the power of all that is contrary to the enjoyment of these privileges.

Observe here, that the only good fruit recognised by John, as the way of escape, is the sincere confession, through grace, of sin. Those only who make this confession escape the axe. There were really no good trees excepting those which confessed that they were bad.

But what a solemn moment was this for the people beloved of God! What an event was the presence of Jehovah in the midst of the nation with whom He stood in relationship!

Observe that John the Baptist does not here present the Messiah as the Saviour come in grace, but as the Head of the kingdom, as Jehovah, who would execute judgment if the people did not repent. We shall see afterwards the position which He took in grace.

In Verse 13, (Mat 3:13), Jesus Himself, who until now has been presented as the Messiah and even as Jehovah, comes to John to be baptised with the baptism of repentance. We must remember that to come to this baptism was the only good fruit which a Jew, in his then condition, could produce. The act proved itself to be the fruit of a work of God of the effectual work of the Holy Ghost. He who repents confesses that he has previously walked afar from God; so that it is a new movement, the fruit of God's word and work in him, the sign of a new life, of the life of the Spirit in his soul. By the very fact of John's mission, there was no other fruit, no other admissible proof, of life from God, in a Jew. We are not to infer from this, that there were none in whom the Spirit already acted vitally; but, in this condition of the people and according to the call of God by His servant, that was the proof of this life of the turning of the heart to God. These were the true remnant of the people, those whom God acknowledged as such; and it was thus they were separated from the mass who were ripening for judgment. These were the true saints the excellent of the earth; although the self-abasement of repentance could be their only true place. It was there they must begin. When God brings in mercy and justice, they avail themselves thankfully of the former, confessing it to be their only resource, and they bow their heart before the latter, as the just consequence of the condition of God's people, but as applying it to themselves .

Now Jesus presents Himself in the midst of those who do this. Although truly the Lord, Jehovah, the righteous Judge of His people, He who was to purge His floor, He nevertheless takes His place among the faithful remnant who humble themselves before this judgment. He takes the place of the lowest of His people before God; as in Psalm 16 (Psa 16:1-11) He calls Jehovah His Lord, saying unto Him, "My goodness extendeth not to Thee"; and says

to the saints, and the excellent in the earth, "all my delight is in them." Perfect testimony of grace the Saviour identifying Himself, according to this grace, with the first movement of the Spirit in the hearts of His own people, humbling Himself not only in the condescension of grace towards them, but in taking His place as one of them in their true position before God; not merely to comfort their hearts by such kindness, but in order to sympathise with all their sorrows and their difficulties; in order to be the pattern, the source, and the perfect expression of every sentiment suitable to their position.

With wicked unrepentant Israel He could not associate Himself, but with the first living effect of the word and Spirit of God in the poor of the flock, He could and did in grace. He does so now. With the first right step, one really of God, Christ is found.

But there was yet more. He comes to bring those who received Him into relation with God, according to the favour which rested on perfectness like His, and on the love which, by taking up His people's cause, satisfied the heart of the Lord, and, having perfectly glorified God in all that He is, made it possible for Him to satisfy Himself with goodness. We know indeed that in order to do this, the Saviour had to lay down His life, because the condition of the Jew, as that of every man, required this sacrifice before either the one or the other could stand in relation with the God of truth. But even for this the love of Jesus did not fail. Here however He is leading them on to the enjoyment of the blessing expressed in His Person, which should be securely founded on that sacrifice-blessing which they must reach by the path of repentance, into which they entered by John's baptism; which Jesus received with them, that they might go on together towards the possession of all the good things which God has prepared for them that loved Him.

John, feeling the dignity and excellency of the Person of Him who came unto him, opposes the Lord's intention. The Holy Ghost by this brings out the true character of the Lord's action. As to Himself, it was righteousness which brought Him there, and not sin righteousness which He accomplished in love. He, as well as John the Baptist, fulfilled that which belonged to the place assigned Him by God. With what condescension He links Himself at the same time with John "It becometh us." He is the lowly and obedient

Servant. It was thus He ever behaved Himself on earth. Moreover, as to His position, grace brought Jesus there, where sin brought us, who came in by the door the Lord had opened for His sheep. In confessing sin as it is, in coming before God in the confession of (the opposite of sin morally) our sin, we find ourselves in company with Jesus. [See Note #8] Indeed it is in us the fruit of His Spirit. This was the case with the poor sinners who came out to John. Thus it was that Jesus took His place in righteousness and obedience among men, and more exactly among the repentant Jews. It is in this position of a man righteous, obedient, and fulfilling on earth, in perfect humility, the work for which He had offered Himself in grace, according to Psalm 40, giving Himself up to the accomplishment of all the will of God in complete renunciation that God His Father fully acknowledged Him, and sealed Him, declaring Him on earth to be His well-beloved Son.

Being baptised the most striking token of the place He had taken with His people the heavens are opened unto Him, and He sees the Holy Ghost descending on Him like a dove; and, lo! a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

But these circumstances demand attention.

Never were the heavens opened to the earth, nor to a man on the earth, before the beloved Son was there. [See Note #9] God had doubtless, in His longsuffering and in the way of providence, blessed all His creatures; He had also blessed His own people, according to the rules of His government on earth. Besides this, there were the elect, whom He had preserved in faithfulness. Nevertheless until now the heavens had not been opened. A testimony had been sent by God in connection with His government of the earth; but there was no object on the earth upon which the eye of God could rest with complacency, until Jesus, sinless and obedient, His beloved Son, stood there. But what is so precious to us is, that it is as soon as in grace He takes publicly this place of humiliation with Israel that is, with the faithful remnant, presenting Himself thus before God, fulfilling His will the heavens open upon an object worthy of their attention. Ever doubtless was He worthy of their adoration, even before the world was. But now He has just taken this place in the dealings of God as a man, and the heavens opened unto Jesus, the object of God's entire affection on the earth. The

Holy Ghost descends upon Him visibly. And He, a man on earth, a man taking His place with the meek of the people who repented, is acknowledged as the Son of God. He is not only anointed of God, but, as man, He is conscious of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Him the seal of the Father set upon Him. Here it is evidently not His divine nature, in the character of the Eternal Son of the Father. The seal would not even be in conformity with that character; and as to His Person it is manifested, and His consciousness of it, at twelve years old in Luke's Gospel. But while He is such, He is also a man, the Son of God on the earth, and is sealed as a man. As a man He has the consciousness of the immediate presence of the Holy Ghost with Him. This presence is in connection with the character of lowliness, meekness, and obedience, in which the Lord appeared down here. It is "like a dove" that the Holy Ghost descends upon Him; just as it was in the form of tongues of fire, that He came down upon the heads of the disciples, for their testimony in power in this world, according to the grace which addressed each and every one in his own language.

Jesus thus creates in His own position as man the place into which He introduces us by redemption (Joh 20:17). But the glory of His Person is always carefully guarded. There is no object presented to Jesus, as to Saul for instance, and, in a still more analogous case, to Stephen, who, being full of the Spirit, sees also the heavens opened, and looks up into them, and sees Jesus, the Son of man, and is transformed into His image. Jesus has come; He is Himself the object over whom the heavens open; He has no transforming object, as Stephen, or as we ourselves in the Spirit; heaven looks down at Him, the perfect object of delight. It is His relationship with His Father, already existing, which is sealed. [See Note #10] Neither does the Holy Ghost create His character (except so far as, with respect to His human nature, He was conceived in the virgin Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Ghost); He had connected Himself with the poor, in the perfection of that character, before He was sealed, and then acts according to the energy and the power of that which He received without measure in His human life here below (compare Act 10:38; Mat 12:28; Joh 3:34).

We find in the word four memorable occasions on which the heavens open. Christ is the object of each of these revelations; each has its especial

character. Here the Holy Ghost descends upon Him, and He is acknowledged the Son of God (compare Joh 1:33-34). At the end of the same chapter of John, He declares Himself to be the Son of man. There it is the angels of God who ascend and descend upon Him. He is, as Son of man, the object of their ministry. [See Note #11] At the end of Acts 7, an entirely new scene is opened. The Jews reject the last testimony that God sends them. Stephen, by whom this testimony is rendered, is filled with the Holy Ghost, and the heavens are opened to him. The earthly system was definitely closed by the rejection of the Holy Ghost's testimony to the glory of the ascended Christ. But this is not merely a testimony. The Christian is filled with the Spirit, heaven is opened to him, the glory of God is manifested to him, and the Son of man appears to him, standing at the right hand of God. This is a different thing from the heavens open over Jesus, the object of God's delight on earth. It is heaven open to the Christian himself, his object being there when rejected on earth. He sees there by the Holy Ghost the heavenly glory of God, and Jesus, the Son of man, the special object of the testimony he renders, in the glory of God. The difference is as remarkable as it is interesting to us; and it exhibits, in a most striking manner, the true position of the Christian as on earth, and the change which the rejection of Jesus by His earthly people has produced. Only, the church, the union of believers in one body with the Lord in heaven, was not yet revealed. Afterwards (Revelation 19) heaven opens, and the Lord Himself comes forth, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Thus we see Jesus, the Son of God on earth, the object of heaven's delight, sealed with the Holy Ghost; Jesus, the Son of man, the object of the ministry of heaven, angels being His servants; Jesus, on high at the right hand of God, and the believer, full of the Spirit, and suffering here for His sake, beholding the glory on high, and the Son of man in the glory; and Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, coming forth to judge and make war against the scornful men who dispute His authority and oppress the earth.

To return: the Father Himself acknowledges Jesus, the obedient man on earth, who enters as the true Shepherd by the door, as His beloved Son in whom is all His delight. Heaven is opened to Him; He sees the Holy Ghost come down to seal Him, the infallible strength and support of the perfection

of His human life; and He has the Father's own testimony to the relationship between them. No object on which His faith was to rest is presented to Him as it is to us. It is His own relation to heaven and to His Father which is sealed. His soul enjoys it through the descent of the Holy Ghost and the voice of His Father.

But this passage in Matthew requires some further notice. The blessed Lord, or rather what occurred as to Him, gives the place or model in which He sets believers, be they Jew or Gentile: only of course we are brought there by redemption. "I go to my Father and your Father, my God and your God," is His blessed word after His resurrection. But to us heaven is opened; we are sealed with the Holy Ghost; the Father owns us as sons. Only the divine dignity of Christ's Person is always carefully guarded here in humiliation, as in the transfiguration in glory. Moses and Elias are in the same glory, but disappear when Peter's haste, permitted to be expressed, would put them on a level. The nearer we are to a divine Person, the more we adore and recognise what He is.

But another very remarkable fact is found here. For the first time, when Christ takes this place among men in lowliness, the Trinity is fully revealed. No doubt the Son and Spirit are mentioned in the Old Testament. But there the unity of the Godhead is the great revealed point. Here the Son is owned in man, the Holy Ghost comes down on Him, and the Father owns Him as His Son. What a wonderful connection with man! what a place for man to be in! Through Christ's connection with Him the Godhead is revealed in its own fulness. His being a man draws it out in its display. But He was really a man, but the Man in whom the counsels of God about man were to be fulfilled.

Hence, as He has realised and displayed the place in which man is set with God in His own Person, and in the counsels of grace as to us our relationship with God, so, as we are in conflict with the enemy, He enters into that side of our position also. We have our relationship with God and our Father, and now we have to say to Satan also. He overcomes for us, and shews us how to overcome. Remark too, the relationship with God is first fully settled and brought out, and then, as in that place, the conflict with Satan begins, and so with us. But the first question was, Would the second Adam stand where

the first had failed? only, in the wilderness of this world and Satan's power instead of the blessings of God for there we had got.

Another point is to be remarked here, fully to bring out the place the Lord takes. The law and the prophets were till John. Then the new thing is announced, the kingdom of heaven. But judgment closes with God's people. The axe is at the root of the trees, the fan is in the hand of the coming One, the wheat is gathered into God's garner, the chaff burnt up. That is, there is a close of the history of God's people in judgment. We come in on the ground of being lost, anticipating the judgment; but man's history as responsible was closed. Hence it is said, "now once in the end of the world he hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." It has happened externally and literally to Israel; but it is morally true for us: only we are gathered for heaven, as in result the remnant then, and shall be in heaven. But, Christ rejected, the history of responsibility is over, and we come in in grace as already lost. Consequent on the announcement of this as imminent, Christ comes and, identifying Himself with the remnant who escape on repentance, makes this new place for man on the earth: only we could not be in it till redemption was accomplished. Still He revealed the Father's name to those He had given Him out of it.

Note #6

This expression is found only in Matthew, as specially occupied with dispensations, and the dealings of God with the Jews. "The kingdom of God" is the generic term. "The kingdom of heaven" is the kingdom of God, but the kingdom of God as specially taking this character of heavenly government; we shall find it (farther on) separated into the kingdom of our Father, and the kingdom of the Son of man.

Note #7

And we must remember that, besides the special promises to, and calling, of Israel as God's earthly people, that people were just man viewed in his responsibility to God under the fullest culture that God could give him. Up to the flood there was testimony but no dispensational dealings, or institutions of God. After it, in the new world, human government, calling and promise in Abraham, law, Messiah, God come in grace, everything God could do, and

that in perfect patience, was done, and in vain as to good in flesh; and now Israel was being set aside as in the flesh, and the flesh judged, the fig tree cursed as fruitless, and God's man, the second Adam, He in whom blessing was by redemption, introduced into the world. In the first three Gospels, as we have seen, we have Christ presented to man to be received; in John, man is set aside and Israel, and God's sovereign ways in grace and resurrection brought in.

Note #8

It is the same thing as to the sense of our nothingness. He made Himself nothing, and in the consciousness of our nothingness we find ourselves with Him, and at the same time are filled with His fulness. Even when we fall, it is not until we are brought to know ourselves as we really are that we find Jesus raising us up again.

Note #9

In the beginning of Ezekiel, it is said indeed that the heavens were opened; but this was only in vision, as the prophet himself explains. In that instance it was the manifestation of God in judgment.

Note #10

This is true also of us when we are in that relationship by grace.

Note #11

It is all a mistake to make Christ the ladder. He, as Jacob was, is the object of their service and ministry.

Matthew Chapter 4

Having thus, in grace, taken up His position as man on earth, He commences His earthly career, being led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. The righteous and holy man, the Son of God, enjoying the privileges proper to such a one, He must undergo the trial of those devices through which the first Adam fell. It is His spiritual condition which is tested. It is not now an innocent man in the enjoyment of all God's natural blessings, who is put to the proof in the midst of those blessings which

should have made him remember God. Christ, nigh to God as His beloved Son, but in the midst of trial, having the knowledge of good and evil, and as to outward circumstances come down into the midst of man's fallen state, must have His faithfulness to this position fully tried with respect to His perfect obedience. To maintain this position, He must have no other will than that of His Father, and fulfil it or suffer it, whatever might be the consequences to Himself. He must fulfil it in the midst of all the difficulties, the privations, the isolation, the desert, where Satan's power was, which might tempt Him to follow an easier path than that which should be only for the glory of His Father. He must renounce all the rights that belonged to His own Person, save as He should receive them from God, yielding them up to Him with a perfect trust.

The enemy did his utmost to induce Him to make use of His privileges, "if thou be the Son of God," for His own relief, apart from the command of God, and in avoidance of the sufferings which might accompany the performance of His will. But it was to lead Him to do His own will, not God's.

Jesus, enjoying in His own Person and relationship with God the full favour of God as Son of God, the light of His countenance, goes into the wilderness for forty days to be in conflict with the enemy. He did not go away from man, and from all intercourse with man and the things of man, in order (like Moses and Elias) to be with God. Being already fully with God, He is separate from men by the power of the Holy Ghost to be alone in His conflict with the enemy. In the case of Moses, it was man out of his natural condition to be with God. In the case of Jesus, it is so to be with the enemy: to be with God was His natural position.

The enemy tempts Him first by proposing to Him to satisfy His bodily need, and, instead of waiting on God, to employ according to His own will and on His own behalf the power with which He was endowed. But, if Israel was fed in the wilderness with manna from God, the Son of God, however great His power, would act in accordance with what Israel should have learnt by that means, namely, that "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The Man, the obedient Jew, the Son of God, waited for this word, and would do nothing without it. He was not come to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him. This is the

principle that characterises the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms. No deliverance is accepted but the intervention of Jehovah at His own good time. It is perfect patience, in order to be perfect and complete in all the will of God. There could be no sinful lust in Christ; but to be hungry was no sin, yet it was a human need, and what harm in eating when hungry? There was no will of God to do it, and that will by the word He came to do. Satan's suggestion was, "if thou be the Son of God, command"; but He had taken the place of a servant, and this was not commanding: he sought to get the Lord out of the place of perfect service and obedience, out of the place of a servant.

And note here the place the written word has, and the character of Christ's obedience. This character is not simply that the will of God is a rule; it is the one motive for action. We have a will arrested often by the word. Not so Christ. His Father's will was His motive; He acted not merely according to, but because it was, God's will. We delight to see a child who would run off to something it delights in, stop and cheerfully do its parents' will when called to do it. But Christ never obeyed thus, never sought a will of His own, but was stopped by His Father's. And we are sanctified to the obedience of Christ. Note further that the written word is that by which He lives and by which He overcomes. All depended here on Christ's victory, as all did on Adam's fall. But for Christ, one text, rightly used of course, suffices. He seeks no other: that is obedience. It suffices for Satan; he has no reply. His wiles are thus defeated.

The first principle of conquest is simple and absolute obedience, living by words out of God's mouth. The next is perfect confidence in the path of obedience.

In the second place then, the enemy sets Him on a pinnacle of the temple, to induce Him to apply to Himself the promises made to the Messiah, without abiding in the ways of God. The faithful man may assuredly reckon on the help of God while walking in His ways. The enemy would have the Son of man put God to the test (instead of reckoning on Him while walking in His ways) to see whether He might be trusted in. This would have been a want of confidence in God, not obedience; or pride, presuming on its privileges, instead of counting on God in obedience. [See Note #12] Taking His place with Israel in the condition they were in when without a king in the land,

and, quoting the directions given to them in that book to guide them in the godly path there taught, He uses for His guidance that part of the word which contains the divine injunction on this subject, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"; a passage often quoted as if it forbade excess in trusting God; whereas it means not to distrust, and try if He is faithful. They tempted God, saying, Is God indeed among us? And this Satan would have had the Lord do.

The enemy, failing to deceive that obedient heart, even by hiding himself under the use of the word of God, shows himself in his true character, tempting the Lord, thirdly, to spare Himself all the sufferings that awaited Him, by shewing Him the inheritance of the Son of man on earth, that which would be His when He had reached it through all those paths, toilsome yet necessary to the Father's glory, which the Father had marked out for Him. All should now be His, if He would acknowledge Satan by worshipping him, the god of this world. This in fact was what the kings of the earth had done for only a part of these things; how often done for some trifling vanity! but He should have the whole. But if Jesus was to inherit earthly glory (as well as all other) the object of His heart was God Himself, His Father, to glorify Him. Whatever might be the value of the gift, it was as the gift of the Giver that His heart prized it. Moreover He was in the position of tested man and a faithful Israelite; and whatever might be the trial of patience into which the sin of the people had brought Him, be the trial ever so great, He would serve none but His God alone.

But if the devil carries temptation, sin, to the utmost, and shews himself to be the adversary (Satan), the believer has the right to cast him out. If he comes as a tempter, the believer should answer him by the faithfulness of the word, which is man's perfect guide, according to the will of God. He does not need to see through everything. The word is the word of Him who does, and in following that, we walk according to a wisdom which knows everything, and in a path formed by that wisdom, and which hence involves absolute trust in God. The two first temptations were the wiles of the devil, the third, open hostility to God. If he comes as the open adversary of God, the believer has a right to have nothing to do with him. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." He knows he has met Christ, not flesh. May believers

resist if Satan would tempt them by the world, remembering it is Satan's domain in fallen man!

The believer's safeguard, morally (that is, as to the state of his heart) is a single eye. If I seek only the glory of God, that which presents no other motive than my own aggrandisement, or my own gratification, whether of body or mind, will have no hold upon me; and will shew itself in the light of the word, which guides the single eye, as contrary to the mind of God. This is not the haughtiness that rejects temptation on the ground of being good; it is obedience, humbly giving God His place, and consequently His word also. "By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer," from him that did his own will and made it his guide. If the heart seeks God alone, the most subtle snare is discovered, for the enemy never tempts us to seek God alone. But this supposes a pure heart, and that there is no self-seeking. This was displayed in Jesus.

Our safeguard against temptation is the word, used by the discernment of a perfectly pure heart, which lives in the presence of God, and learns the mind of God in His word, [See Note #13] and therefore knows its application to the circumstances presented. It is the word that preserves the soul from the wiles of the enemy.

Observe also that, consequently, it is in the spirit of simple and humble obedience that power lies; for where it exists, Satan can do nothing. God is there, and accordingly the enemy is conquered.

It appears to me that these three temptations are addressed to the Lord in the three characters, of man, of Messiah, and of Son of man.

He had no sinful desires like fallen man, but He was an hungered. The tempter would persuade Him to satisfy this need without God.

The promises in the Psalms belonged to Him as being made to the Messiah.

And all the kingdoms of the world were His as the Son of man.

He always replies as a faithful Israelite, personally responsible to God, making use of the Book of Deuteronomy, which treats of this subject (namely, the obedience of Israel, in connection with the possession of the

land, and the privileges that belonged to the people in connection with this obedience; and this, apart from the organisation which constituted them a corporate body before God). [See Note #14]

Satan departs from Him, and the angels come to exercise their ministry towards the Messiah, the Son of man victorious through obedience. What Satan would have Him try God about, He has fully. They are ministering spirits for us also.

But how profoundly interesting is it to see the blessed Lord come down, the Son of God from heaven, and take the Word made flesh His place among the poor godly ones on the earth, and, as having taken that place, owned of the Father as His Son, heaven being opened and opened to Him as man, and the Holy Ghost coming down and abiding on Him as man though without measure, and so forming the model of our place, though we were not yet in it; the whole Trinity, as I have said, being first fully revealed when He is thus associated with man; and then, we being slaves to Satan, going in this character and relationship to meet also Satan for us, to bind the strong man, and give man through Him this place also: only for us redemption was needed to bring us where He is.

John being cast into prison, the Lord departs into Galilee. This movement, which determined the scene of His ministry outside Jerusalem and Judea, had great significance with respect to the Jews. The people (so far as centred in Jerusalem, and boasting in the possession of the promises, the sacrifices, and the temple, and in being the royal tribe) lost the presence of the Messiah, the Son of David. He went away for the manifestation of His Person, for the testimony of God's intervention in Israel, to the poor and despised of the flock; for the remnant and poor of the flock are already in chapters 3-4 clearly distinguished from the heads of the people. He thus really became the true stock, instead of being a branch of that which had been planted elsewhere; although this effect was not yet fully manifested. The moment corresponds with John 4.

We may remark here, that, in John's Gospel, the Jews are always distinguished from the multitude (called the people in the Gospels). The

language, or rather the pronunciation, was entirely different. They did not speak Chaldee in Galilee.

At the same time this manifestation of the Son of David in Galilee was the fulfilment of a prophecy in Isaiah. The force of that prophecy is this: although the Roman captivity was far more terrible than the invasion of the Assyrians when they came up against the land of Israel, there was nevertheless this circumstance which altered everything, namely, the presence of the Messiah, the true Light, in the land.

We observe that the Spirit of God here passes over the whole history of Jesus until the commencement of His ministry after the death of John the Baptist. He gives Jesus His proper position in the midst of Israel Emmanuel, the Son of David, the Beloved of God, acknowledged as His Son, the faithful One in Israel, though exposed to all Satan's temptations; and then at once, afterwards, His prophetic position announced by Isaiah, and the kingdom proclaimed as at hand. [See Note #15]

Note #12

We need confidence to have courage to obey; but true confidence is found in the path of obedience. Satan could use the word in guile, but not turn Christ the Lord from it. He still uses it as the adequate divine weapon, and Satan still has no reply. To have forbidden obedience would have been to shew himself Satan. As regards the place in which the Lord was dispensationally, we may remark the Lord always quotes from Deuteronomy.

Note #13

There must be no other motive for action than the will of God, which, for man, is always to be found in the word; because, in that case, when Satan tempts us to act, as he always does, by some other motive, this motive is seen to be opposed to the word which is in the heart, and to the motive which governs the heart, and is therefore judged as being opposed to it. It is written, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." This is the reason why it is so often important, when we are in doubt, to ask ourselves by what motive we are influenced.

Note #14

A careful examination of the Pentateuch will shew that, though needed historical facts are stated, yet the contents of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers are essentially typical. The tabernacle was made according to the pattern shewn in the mount the pattern of heavenly things; and not only the ceremonial ordinances, but the historical facts, as the apostle distinctly states, happened unto them for types, and are written for our instruction. Deuteronomy gives directions for their conduct in the land; but the three books named, even where there are historical facts, are typical in their object. I do not know if one sacrifice was offered after they were instituted, unless perhaps the official ones (see Act 7:42).

Note #15

And we may remark here, that He leaves the Jews and Jerusalem, as already remarked, and His natural place, so to speak, what gave Him His name, Nazareth, and takes His prophetic place. The casting of John into prison was significant of His own rejection. John was His forerunner in it, as in his mission, of the Lord. See Mat 17:12. The testimony of Jesus is the same as that of John the Baptist.

Matthew Chapter 5

He then gathers around Him those who were definitively to follow Him in His ministry and His temptations; and, at His call, to link their portion and their lot with His, forsaking all beside.

The strong man was bound, so that Jesus could spoil his goods, and proclaim the kingdom with proofs of that power which were able to establish it.

Two things are then brought forward in the Gospel narrative. First, the power which accompanies the proclamation of the kingdom. In two or three verses, [See Note #16] without other detail, this fact is announced. The proclamation of the kingdom is attended with acts of power that excite the attention of the whole country, the whole extent of the ancient territory of Israel. Jesus appears before them invested with this power. Secondly (chapters 5-7), the character of the kingdom is announced in the sermon on

the Mount, as well as that of the persons who should have part in it (the Father's name withal being revealed). That is, the Lord had announced the coming kingdom, and with the present power of goodness, having overcome the adversary; and then shews what were the true characters according to which it would be set up, and who could enter, and how. Redemption is not spoken of in it; but the character and nature of the kingdom, and who could enter. This clearly shews the moral position which this sermon holds in the Lord's teaching.

It is evident that, in all this part of the Gospel, it is the Lord's position which is the subject of the teaching of the Spirit, and not the details of His life. Details come after, in order fully to exhibit what He was in the midst of Israel, His relations with that people, and His path in the power of the Spirit which led to the rupture between the Son of David and the people who ought to have received Him. The attention of the whole country being thus engaged by His mighty acts, the Lord sets before His disciples but in the hearing of the people the principles of His kingdom.

This discourse may be divided into the following parts: [See Note #17] The character and the portion of those who should be in the kingdom (Mat 5:1-12). Their position in the world (Mat 5:13-16). The connection between the principles of the kingdom and the law (Mat 5:17-48). [See Note #18] The spirit in which His disciples should perform good works (Mat 6:1-18). Separation from the spirit of the world and from its anxieties (Mat 6:19-34). The spirit of their relation with others (Mat 7:1-6). The confidence in God which became them (Mat 7:7-12). The energy that should characterise them, in order that they might enter into the kingdom; not however merely enter, many would seek to do that, but according to those principles which made it difficult for man, according to God the strait gate; and then, the means of discerning those who would seek to deceive them, as well as the watchfulness needed that they might not be deceived (Mat 7:13-23).

Real and practical obedience to His sayings, the true wisdom of those that hear His words (Mat 7:24-29).

There is another principle that characterises this discourse, and that is the introduction of the Father's name. Jesus puts His disciples in connection

with His Father, as their Father. He reveals to them the Father's name, in order that they may be in relation with Him, and that they may act in accordance with that which He is.

Note #16

It is striking that the whole ministry of the Lord is recounted in one Verse (Mat 5:23). All the subsequent statements are facts, having a special moral import, shewing what was passing amongst the people in grace onward to His rejection, not a proper consecutive history. It stamps the character of Matthew very clearly.

Note #17

In the text I have given a division which may assist in a practical application of the sermon on the Mount. With respect to the subjects contained in it, it might perhaps, though the difference is not very great, be still better divided thus: Mat 5:1-16 contains the complete picture of the character and position of the remnant who received His instructions their position, as it should be, according to the mind of God. This is complete in itself.

Mat 5:17-48 establish the authority of the law, which should have regulated the conduct of the faithful until the introduction of the kingdom; the law which they ought to have fulfilled, as well as the words of the prophets, in order that they (the remnant) should be placed on this new ground; and the despisal of which would exclude whoever was guilty of it from the kingdom; for Christ is speaking, not as in the kingdom, but as announcing it as near to come. But, while thus establishing the authority of the law, He takes up the two great elements of evil, treated of only in outward acts in the law, violence and corruption, and judges the evil in the heart (Mat 5:22-28), and at all cost to get rid of it and every occasion of it, thus shewing what was to be the conduct of His disciples, and their state of soul that which was to characterise them as such. The Lord then takes up certain things borne with by God in Israel, and ordered according to what they could bear. Thus was now brought into the light of a true moral estimate, divorce marriage being the divinely given basis of all human relationships and swearing or vowing, the action of man's will in relationship to God; then patience of evil, and fulness of grace, His own blessed character, and carrying with it the moral

title to what was His living place sons of their Father who was in heaven. Instead of weakening that which God required under the law, He would not only have it observed until its fulfilment, but that His disciples should be perfect even as their Father in heaven was perfect. This adds the revelation of the Father, to the moral walk and state which suited the character of sons as it was revealed in Christ.

Chapter 6. We have the motives, the object, which should govern the heart in doing good deeds, in living a religious life. Their eye should be on their Father. This is individual.

Chapter 7. This chapter is essentially occupied with the intercourse that would be suitable between His own people and others not to judge their brethren and to beware of the profane. He then exhorts them to confidence in asking their Father for what they needed, and instructs them to act towards others with the same grace that they would wish shewn to themselves. This is founded on the knowledge of the goodness of the Father. Finally, He exhorts them to the energy that will enter in at the strait gate, and choose the way of God, cost what it may (for many would like to enter into the kingdom, but not by that gate); and He warns them with respect to those who would seek to deceive them by pretending to have the word of God. It is not only our own hearts that we have to fear, and positive evil, when we would follow the Lord, but also the devices of the enemy and his agents. But their fruits will betray them.

Note #18

It is important however to remark that there is no general spiritualisation of the law, as is often stated. The two great principles of immorality amongst men are treated of (violence and corrupt lust), to which are added voluntary oaths. In these the exigencies of the law and what Christ required are contrasted.

Matthew Chapter 6

This discourse gives the principles of the kingdom, but supposes the rejection of the King, and the position into which this would bring those that were His; who consequently must look for a heavenly reward. They were to

be a divine savour where God was known and was dealing, and would be a spectacle to the whole world. Moreover, this was God's object. Their confession was to be so open that the world should refer their works to the Father. They were to act, on the one hand, according to a judgment of evil which reached the heart and motives, but also, on the other, according to the Father's character in grace to approve themselves to the Father who saw in secret, where the eye of man could not penetrate. They were to have full confidence in Him for all their need. His will was the rule according to which there was entrance into the kingdom.

We may observe that this discourse is connected with the proclamation of the kingdom as being near at hand, and that all these principles of conduct are given as characterising the kingdom, and as the conditions of entrance into it. No doubt it follows that they are suitable to those who have entered in. But the discourse is pronounced in the midst of Israel, [See Note #19] before the kingdom is set up, and as the previous state called for in order to enter, and to set forth the fundamental principles of the kingdom in connection with that people, and in moral contrast with the ideas they had formed respecting it.

In examining the beatitudes, we shall find that this portion in general gives the character of Christ Himself. They suppose two things; the coming possession of the land of Israel by the meek; and the persecution of the faithful remnant, really righteous in their ways, and who asserted the rights of the true King (heaven being set before them as their hope to sustain their hearts). [See Note #20]

This will be the position of the remnant in the last days before the introduction of the kingdom, the last being exceptional. It was so, morally, in the days of the Lord's disciples, in reference to Israel, the earthly part being delayed. In reference to heaven, the disciples are looked at as witnesses in Israel; but while the only preservative of the earth they were a testimony to the world. So that the disciples are seen as in connection with Israel, but, at the same time, as witnesses on God's part to the world (the kingdom being in view, but not yet established). The connection with the last days is evident; nevertheless their testimony then had, morally, this character. Only the establishment of the earthly kingdom has been delayed,

and the church, which is heavenly, brought in. Mat 5:25 evidently alludes to the position of Israel in the days of Christ. And in fact they remain captive, in prison, until they have received their full chastisement, and then they shall come forth.

The Lord ever speaks and acts as the obedient man, moved and guided by the Holy Ghost; but we see in the most striking manner, in this Gospel, who it is that acts thus. And it is this which gives its true moral character to the kingdom of heaven. John the Baptist might announce it as a change of dispensation, but his ministry was earthly. Christ might equally announce this same change (and the change was all-important); but in Him there was more than this. He was from heaven, the Lord who came from heaven. In speaking of the kingdom of heaven, He spoke out of the deep and divine abundance of His heart. No man had been in heaven, excepting Him who had come down from thence, the Son of man who was in heaven.

Therefore, when speaking of heaven, He spoke of that which He knew, and testified of that which He had seen. This was the case in two ways, as shewn forth in Matthew's Gospel. It was no longer an earthly government according to the law; Jehovah, the Saviour, Emmanuel, was present. Could He be otherwise than heavenly in His character, in the tone, in the essence, of His whole life?

Moreover, when He began His public ministry and was sealed by the Holy Ghost, heaven was opened to Him. He was identified with heaven as a man sealed with the Holy Ghost on earth. He was thus the continual expression of the spirit, of the reality, of heaven. There was not yet the exercise of the judicial power which would uphold this character in the face of all that opposed it. It was its manifestation in patience, notwithstanding the opposition of all around Him and the inability of His disciples to understand Him. Thus in the sermon on the Mount we find the description of that which was suitable to the kingdom of heaven, and even the assurance of reward in heaven for those who should suffer on earth for His sake. This description, as we have seen, is essentially the character of Christ Himself. It is thus that a heavenly spirit expresses itself on earth. If the Lord taught these things, it is because He loved them, because He was them and delighted in them. Being the God of heaven, filled as man with the Spirit without measure, His

heart was perfectly in unison with a heaven that He perfectly knew. Consequently therefore He concludes the character which His disciples were to assume by these words: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." All their conduct was to be in reference to their Father in heaven. The more we understand the divine glory of Jesus, the more we understand the way in which He was as man in connection with heaven, the better shall we apprehend what the kingdom of heaven was to Him with regard to that which was suitable to it. When it shall be established hereafter in power, the world will be governed according to these principles, although they are not, properly speaking, its own.

The remnant in the last days, I doubt not, finding all around them contrary to faithfulness, and seeing all Jewish hope fail before their eyes, will be forced to look upward, and will more and more acquire this character, which, if not heavenly, is at least very much conformed to Christ. [See Note #21]

Note #19

We must always remember that, while dispensationally Israel has great importance, as the centre of God's government of this world, morally Israel was just man where all the ways and dealings of God had been carried out so as to bring to light what he was. The Gentile was man left to himself as regards. God's special ways, and so unrevealed. Christ was a light, to reveal the Gentiles, Luk 2:32.

Note #20

The characters pronounced blessed may be briefly noted. They suppose evil in the world, and amongst God's people. The first is not seeking great things for self, but accepting a despised place in a scene contrary to God. Hence mourning characterises them there, and meekness, a will not lifting up itself against God, or to maintain its position or right. Then positive good in desire, for it is not yet found; hungering hence and thirsting after it, such is the inward state and activity of the mind. Then grace towards others. Then purity of heart, the absence of what would shut out God; and, what is always connected with it, peacefulness and peace-making. I think there is moral progress in the verses, one leading to the next as an effect of it. The

two last are the consequences of maintaining a good conscience and connection with Christ in a world of evil. There are two principles of suffering, as in 1 Peter, for righteousness' and Christ's sake.

Note #21

Those who are put to death will go up to heaven, as Mat 5:12 testifies, and the Apocalypse also. The others, who are thus conformed to Christ, as a suffering Jew, will be with Him on Mount Sion; they will learn the song which is sung in heaven, and will follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth (on earth). We may also remark here, that in the beatitudes there is the promise of the earth to the meek, which will be literally fulfilled in the last days. In Mat 5:12, a reward in heaven is promised to those who suffer for Christ, true for us now, and in some sort for those who shall be slain for His sake in the last days, who will have their place in heaven, although they were a part of the Jewish remnant and not the assembly. The same are found in

Matthew Chapter 7

There are two things connected with the presence of the multitude, Mat 5:1. First, the time required that the Lord should give a true idea of the character of His kingdom, since already He drew the multitude after Him. His power making itself felt, it was important to make His character known. On the other hand, this multitude who were following Jesus were a snare to His disciples; and He makes them understand what an entire contrast there was between the effect which this multitude might have upon them, and the right spirit which ought to govern them. Thus, full Himself of what was really good, He immediately brings forward that which filled His own heart. This was the true character of the remnant, who in the main resembled Christ in it. It is often thus in the Psalms.

The salt of the earth is a different thing from the light of the world. The earth, it appears to me, expresses that which already professed to have received light from God that which was in relationship with Him by virtue of the light having assumed a definite shape before Him. The disciples of Christ were the preservative principle in the earth. They were the light of the world, which did not possess that light. This was their position, whether

they would or no. It was the purpose of God that they should be the light of the world. A candle is not lighted in order to be hidden.

All this supposes the case of the possibility of the kingdom being established in the world, but the opposition of the greater part of men to its establishment. It is not a question of the sinner's redemption, but of the realisation of the character proper to a place in the kingdom of God; that which the sinner ought to seek while he is in the way with his adversary, lest he should be delivered to the judge which indeed has happened to the Jews.

At the same time the disciples are brought into relationship with the Father individually the second great principle of the discourse, the consequence of the Son being there and a yet more excellent thing is set before them than their position of testimony for the kingdom. They were to act in grace, even as their Father acted, and their prayer should be for an order of things in which all would correspond morally to the character and the will of their Father. "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come," [See Note #22] is, that all should answer to the character of the Father, that all should be the effect of His power. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is perfect obedience. Universal subjection to God in heaven and on earth will be, to a certain point, accomplished by the intervention of Christ in the millennium, and absolutely so when God shall be all in all. Meanwhile the prayer expresses daily dependence, the need of pardon, the need of being kept from the power of the enemy, the desire of not being sifted by him, as a dispensation of God, like Job or Peter, and of being preserved from evil.

This prayer also is adapted to the position of the remnant; it passes over the dispensation of the Spirit, and even that which is proper to the millennium as an earthly kingdom, in order to express the right desires, and speak of the condition and the dangers of the remnant until the Father's kingdom should come. Many of these principles are always true, for we are in the kingdom, and in spirit we ought to manifest its features; but the special and literal application is that which I have given. They are brought into relationship with the Father in the realisation of His character, which was to be displayed in them by virtue of this relationship, causing them to desire the establishment of His kingdom, to overcome the difficulties of an opposing world, to keep themselves from the snares of the enemy, and to do the

Father's will. It was Jesus who could impart this to them. He thus passes from the law, [See Note #23] recognised as coming from God, to its fulfilment, when it shall be as it were absorbed in the will of Him who gave it, or accomplished in its purposes by Him who alone could do so in any sense whatever.

Note #22

That is, the Father's. Compare Mat 13:43.

Note #23

The law is the perfect rule for a child of Adam, the rule or measure of what he ought to be, but not of the manifestation of God in grace as Christ was, who in this is our pattern a just call to love God and walk in the fulfilment of duty in relationship, but not an imitating of God, walking in love, as Christ has loved us and given Himself for us.

Matthew Chapter 8

Then, in chapter 8, the Lord begins in the midst of Israel His patient life of testimony, which closed with His rejection by the people whom God had so long preserved for Him, and for their own blessing.

He had proclaimed the kingdom, displayed His power throughout the land, and declared His character, as well as the spirit of those who should enter the kingdom.

But His miracles, [See Note #24] as well as the whole Gospel, are always characterised by His position among the Jews and God's dealings with them, till He was rejected. Jehovah, yet the man obedient to the law, foreshewing the entrance of the Gentiles into the kingdom (its establishment in mystery in the world), predicting the building of the church or assembly on the recognition of His being Son of the living God, and the kingdom in glory; and, while detecting as the effect of His presence the perversity of the people, yet bearing on His heart with perfect patience the burden of Israel. [See Note #25] It is Jehovah present in goodness, outwardly one of themselves: wondrous truth!

First of all, we find the healing of a leper. Jehovah alone, in His sovereign goodness, could heal the leper; here Jesus does so. "If thou wilt," says the leper, "thou canst." "I will," replies the Lord. But at the same time, while He shews forth in His own Person that which repels all possibility of defilement that which is above sin He shews the most perfect condescension towards the defiled one. He touches the leper, saying, "I will, be thou clean." We see the grace, the power, the undefilable holiness of Jehovah, come down in the Person of Jesus to the closest proximity to the sinner, touching him so to speak. It was indeed "the Lord that healeth thee." [See Note #26] At the same time He conceals Himself, and commands the man, who had been healed, to go to the priest according to the ordinances of the law and offer his gift. He does not go out of the place of the Jew in subjection to the law; but Jehovah was there in goodness.

But in the next case we see a Gentile, who by faith enjoys the full effect of that power which his faith ascribed to Jesus giving the Lord occasion to bring out the solemn truth, that many of these poor Gentiles should come and sit down in the kingdom of heaven with the fathers who were honoured by the Jewish nation as the first parents of the heirs of promise, while the children of the kingdom should be in outer darkness. In fact the faith of this centurion acknowledged a divine power in Jesus, which, by the glory of Him that possessed it, would (not forsake Israel, but) open the door to the Gentiles, and graft into the olive-tree of promise branches of the wild olive-tree in the place of those which should be cut off. The manner in which this should take place in the assembly was not now the question.

He does not however yet forsake Israel. He goes into Peter's house, and heals his wife's mother. He does the same to all the sick who crowd around the house at even, when the sabbath was over. They are healed, the devils are cast out, so that the prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled: "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." Jesus put Himself in heart under the weight of all the sorrows that oppressed Israel, in order to relieve and heal them. It is still Emmanuel, who feels for their misery and is afflicted in all their affliction, but who has come in with the power that shews Him capable of delivering them.

These three cases shew this character of His ministry in a clear and striking manner. He hides Himself; for, until the moment when He would shew judgment to the Gentiles, He does not lift up His voice in the streets. It is the dove that rests upon Him. These manifestations of power attract men to Him; but this does not deceive Him: He never departs in spirit from the place He has taken. He is the despised and the rejected of men; He has nowhere to lay His head. The earth had more room for the foxes and the birds than for Him, whom we have seen appear a moment before as the Lord, acknowledged at least by the necessities which He never refused to relieve. Therefore, if any man would follow Him, he must forsake all to be the companion of the Lord, who would not have come down to the earth if everything had not been in question; nor without an absolute right, although it was at the same time in a love which could only be occupied by its mission, and by the necessity that brought Him there.

The Lord on earth was everything or nothing. This, it is true, was to be felt morally in its effects, in the grace which, acting by faith, attached the believer to Him by an ineffable bond. Without this, the heart would not have been morally put to the test. But this did not make it the less true. accordingly the proofs of this were present: the winds and waves, to which in the eye of man He seemed to be exposed, obeyed His voice at once a striking reproof to the unbelief that woke Him from His sleep, and had supposed it possible for the waves to engulf Him, and with Him the counsels and the power of Him who had created the winds and waves. It is evident that this storm was permitted in order to try their faith and manifest the dignity of His Person. If the enemy was the instrument who produced it, he only succeeded in making the Lord display His glory. Such indeed is always the case as to Christ, and for us, where faith is.

Now the reality of this power, and the manner of its operation, are forcibly proved by that which follows.

The Lord disembarks in the country of the Gergesenes. There the power of the enemy shews itself in all its horrors. If man, to whom the Lord was come in grace, did not know Him, the devils knew their Judge in the Person of the Son of God. The man was possessed by them. The fear they had of torment at the judgment of the last day is applied in the man's mind to the

immediate presence of the Lord: "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" Wicked spirits act on men by the dread of their power; they have none unless they are feared. But faith only can take this fear from man. I am not speaking of the lusts on which they act, nor of the wiles of the enemy; I speak of the power of the enemy. Resist the devil and he will flee from thee. Here the devils wished to manifest the reality of this power. The Lord permits it in order to make it plain, that in this world it is not merely man that is in question whether good or bad, but that also which is stronger than man. The devils enter into the swine, which perish in the waters. Sorrowful reality plainly demonstrated that it was no question of mere disease or of sinful lusts, but of wicked spirits! However, thanks be to God, it was a question also of One who, although a man on earth, was more powerful than they. They are compelled to acknowledge this power, and they appeal to it. There is no idea of resistance. In the temptation in the wilderness Satan had been overcome. Jesus completely delivers the man whom they had oppressed with their evil power. The power of the devils was nothing before Him. He could have delivered the world from all the power of the enemy, if that only had been in question, and from all the ills of humanity. The strong man was bound, and the Lord spoiled his goods. But the presence of God, of Jehovah, troubles the world even more than the power of the enemy degrades and domineers over mind and body. The control of the enemy over the heart too peaceful, and alas! too little perceived is more mighty than his strength. This succumbs before the word of Jesus; but the will of man accepts the world as it is, governed by the influence of Satan. The whole city, who had witnessed the deliverance of the demoniac and the power of Jesus present among them, entreat Him to depart. Sad history of the world! The Lord came down with power to deliver the world man from all the power of the enemy; but they would not. Their distance from God was moral, and not merely bondage to the enemy's power. They submitted to his yoke, they had become used to it, and they would not have the presence of God.

I doubt not that that which happened to the swine is a figure of that which happened to the impious and profane Jews who rejected the Lord Jesus. Nothing can be more striking than the way in which a divine Person, Emmanuel, though a man in grace, is manifested in this chapter.

Note #24

The miracles of Christ had a peculiar character. They were not merely acts of power, but all of them of the power of God visiting this world in goodness. The power of God had been often shewn specially, from Moses, but often in judgment. But Christ's were all the deliverance of men from the evil consequences sin had brought in. There was one exception, the cursing the fig tree, but this was a judicial sentence on Israel, that is, man under the old covenant when there was great appearance but no fruit.

Note #25

I subjoin here some notes, made since this was written, as throwing, I think, light on the structure of this Gospel. Mat 5:3-11 gives the character required for entrance into the kingdom, the character which was to mark the accepted remnant, Jehovah being now in the way with the nation to judgment. Chapters 8-9 give the other side grace and goodness come in, God manifest, His character and actings, that new thing which could not be put into the old bottles still goodness in power, but rejected, the Son of man (not Messiah) who had not where to lay His head. Chapter 8 gives present intervention in temporal goodness with power. Hence, as goodness, it goes beyond Israel, as it deals in grace with what was excluded from God's camp in Israel. It includes power over all Satan's power and sickness and the elements, and that in taking the burden on Himself, but in conscious rejection. Mat 8:17-20 leads us to Isa 53:3-4, and the state of things calling for the wholly following Him, giving up all. This leads to the sad testimony that, if divine power expels Satan's, the divine presence manifest in it is insupportable to the world. The swine figure Israel thereupon. Chapter 9 furnishes the religious side of His presence in grace, forgiveness, and the testimony that Jehovah was there according to Psalm 103, but there to call sinners, not the righteous; and this was especially what could not suit the old bottles. Finally, this chapter practically, save the patience of goodness, closes the history. He came to save Israel's life. It was really death when He came: only, wherever there was faith in the midst of the surrounding crowd, there was healing. The Pharisees shew the blasphemy of the leaders: only the patience of grace still subsists, carried out towards Israel in chapter 10, but all found to be of no avail in chapter 11. The Son was revealing the

Father, and this abides and gives rest. Chapter 12 develops fully the judgment and rejection of Israel. Chapter 13 brings Christ as a sower, not seeking fruit in His vineyard, and the actual form of the kingdom of heaven.

Note #26

One who touched a leper became himself unclean, but the blessed One did come thus close to man, but removed the defilement without contracting it. The leper knew His power, but was not sure of His goodness. "I will" declared it, but with a title which God only has to.

Matthew Chapter 9

In the following chapter (chapter 9), while acting in the character and according to the power of Jehovah (as we read in Psalm 103), "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases"; it is the actual grace in itself towards and for them, in which He came, which is presented. It gives the character of His ministry, as the previous one gives the dignity of His Person and the bearing of what He was. He presents Himself to Israel as their true Redeemer and Deliverer; and, to prove His title (which unbelief already opposed) to be this blessing to Israel, and to pardon all their iniquities which raised a barrier between them and their God, He accomplishes the second part of the verse, and heals the disease. Beautiful and precious testimony of kindness to Israel, and at the same time, the demonstration of His glory who stood in the midst of His people! In the same spirit, as He had forgiven, and healed, He calls the publican and goes to his house come not to call the righteous, but sinners.

But now we enter on another portion of the instruction in this Gospel the development of the opposition of unbelievers, of the learned men and the religionists in particular; and that of the rejection of the work and Person of the Lord.

The idea, the picture of that which took place, has been already set before us in the case of the Gergesene demoniac the power of God present for the entire deliverance of His people, of the world, if they received Him power which the devils confessed to be that which should hereafter judge and cast them out, which displayed itself in blessing to all the people of the place, but

which was rejected, because they did not desire such power to dwell among them. They would not have the presence of God.

The narration of the details and the character of this rejection now commences. Observe that Mat 8:1-27 gives the manifestation of the Lord's power this power being truly that of Jehovah on the earth. From Mat 8:2; Mat 8:8, the reception this power met with in the world, and the influence which governed the world, are set forth, whether as power, or morally in the hearts of men.

We come here to the historical development of the rejection of this intervention of God upon the earth.

The multitude glorify God who had given such power to a man. Jesus accepts this place. He was man: the multitude saw Him to be man, and acknowledged the power of God, but did not know how to combine the two ideas in His Person.

The grace which contemns the pretensions of man to righteousness is now set forth.

Matthew, the publican, is called; for God looks at the heart, and grace calls the elect vessels.

The Lord declares the mind of God on this subject, and His own mission. He came to call sinners; He would have mercy. It was God in grace, and not man with his pretended righteousness counting on his merits.

He assigns two reasons which make it impossible to reconcile His course with the demands of the Pharisees. How should the disciples fast when the Bridegroom was there? When the Messiah was gone, they might well do so. Moreover it is impossible to introduce the new principles and the new power of His mission into the old Pharisaic forms.

Thus we have grace to sinners, but (grace rejected) now comes at once a higher proof that Messiah-Jehovah was there, from her bed of death, He obeys the call. As He goes, a poor woman, who had already employed every means of cure without success, is instantaneously healed by touching in faith the hem of His garment.

This history supplies us with the two great divisions of the grace that was manifested in Jesus. Christ came to awaken dead Israel; He will do this hereafter in the full sense of the word. Meanwhile, whosoever laid hold of Him by faith, in the midst of the multitude that accompanied Him, was healed, let the case be ever so hopeless. This, which took place in Israel when Jesus was there, is true in principle of us also. Grace in Jesus is a power which raises from the dead, and which heals. Thus He opened the eyes of those in Israel who owned Him to be the Son of David, and who believed in His power to meet their need. He cast out devils also, and gave speech to the dumb. But having performed these acts of power in Israel, so that the people, as to the fact, owned them with admiration, the Pharisees, the most religious part of the nation, ascribe this power to the prince of the devils. Such is the effect of the Lord's presence on the leaders of the people, jealous of His glory thus manifested among them over whom they exercised their influence. But this in no way interrupts Jesus in His career of beneficence. He can still bear testimony among the people. In spite of the Pharisees His patient kindness still finds place. He continues to preach and to heal. He has compassion on the people, who were like sheep without a shepherd, given up, morally, to their own guidance. He still sees that the harvest is plenteous and the labourers few. That is to say, He still sees every door open to address the people and He passes over the wickedness of the Pharisees.

Let us sum up what we find in the chapter, the grace developed in Israel. First, grace healing and forgiving as in Psalm 103. Then grace come to call sinners, not the righteous; the bridegroom was there, nor could grace in power be put in Jewish and Pharisaic vessels; it was new even in respect of John Baptist. He comes in reality to give life to the dead, not to heal, but whoever then touched Him by faith for there were such were healed in the way. He opens eyes to see, as Son of David, and opens the dumb mouth of him whom the devil possessed. All is rejected with blasphemy by the self-righteous Pharisees. But grace sees the multitude as yet as having no shepherd; and while the porter holds the door open, He ceases not to seek and minister to the sheep.

Matthew Chapter 10

So long as God gives Him access to the people, He continues His labour of love. Nevertheless, He was conscious of the iniquity that governed the people, although He did not seek His own glory. Having exhorted His disciples to pray that labourers might be sent into the harvest, He begins (chapter 10) to act in accordance with that desire. He calls His twelve disciples, He gives them power to cast out devils and to heal the sick, and He sends them to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. We see, in this mission, how much the ways of God with Israel form the subject of this Gospel. They were to announce to that people, and to them exclusively, the nearness of the kingdom, exercising at the same time the power they had received: a striking testimony to Him who was come, and who could not only work miracles Himself, but confer power on others to do so likewise. He gave them authority over evil spirits for this purpose. It is this which characterises the kingdom man healed of all sickness and the devil cast out Accordingly, in Hebrews 6, miracles are called "the powers of the world to come." [See Note #27]

They were also, with respect to their need, to depend entirely on Him who sent them. Emmanuel was there. If miracles were a proof to the world of their Master's power, the fact that they lacked nothing should be so to their own hearts The ordinance was abrogated during that period of their ministry which followed the departure of Jesus from this world (Luk 22:35-37). That which He here (Matthew 10) commands His disciples appertains to His presence as Messiah, as Jehovah Himself, on the earth. Therefore the reception of His messengers, or their rejection, decided the fate of those to whom they were sent. In rejecting them they rejected the Lord Emmanuel, God with His people. [See Note #28] But, in fact, He sent them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. They would need the wisdom of serpents, and were to exhibit the harmlessness of doves (rare union of virtues, found only in those who, by the Spirit of the Lord, are wise unto that which is good and simple concerning evil).

If they did not beware of men (sad testimony as to these), they would but suffer; but when scourged and brought before councils and governors and kings, all this should become a testimony unto them a divine means of presenting the gospel of the kingdom to kings and princes, without altering

its character or accommodating it to the world, or mixing up the Lord's people with its usages and its false greatness. Moreover circumstances like these made their testimony much more conspicuous than association with the great ones of the earth would have done.

And, to accomplish this, they should receive such power and guidance from the Spirit of their Father as would cause the words they spoke to be not their own words, but His who inspired them. Here, again, their relation with their Father, which so distinctly characterises the sermon on the Mount, is made the basis of their capacity for the service they had to perform. We must remember that this testimony was addressed to Israel only; only that, Israel being under the yoke of the Gentiles since the time of Nebuchadnezzar, the testimony would reach their rulers.

But this testimony would excite an opposition that should break all family ties, and awaken a hatred that would not spare the life of those who had been the most beloved. He who in spite of all this should endure to the end should be saved. Nevertheless the case was urgent. They were not to resist, but if the opposition took the form of persecution, they were to flee and preach the Gospel elsewhere, for before they had gone over the cities of Israel the Son of man should come. [See Note #29] They were to proclaim the kingdom. Jehovah, Emmanuel, was there, in the midst of His people, and the heads of the people had called the master of the house Beelzebub. This had not stopped His testimony, but it very strongly characterised the circumstances in which this testimony was to be rendered. He sent them forth, warning them of this state of things, to maintain this final testimony among His beloved people as long as possible. This took place at that time, and it is possible, if circumstances permit, to carry it on until the Son of man comes to execute judgment. Then the master of the house will have risen up to shut the door. The "to-day" of Psalm 95 will be over. Israel in possession of their cities being the object of this testimony, it is necessarily suspended when they are no longer in their land. The testimony to the future kingdom given in Israel by the apostles after the Lord's death, is an accomplishment of this mission, so far as this testimony was rendered in the land of Israel; for the kingdom might be proclaimed as to be established while Emmanuel was on the earth; or this might be by Christ's returning from heaven as

announced by Peter in Acts 3. And this might take place if Israel were in the land, even until Christ should return. Thus the testimony may be resumed in Israel, whenever they are again in their land and the requisite spiritual power is sent forth by God.

Meanwhile, the disciples were to share in Christ's own position. If they called the master of the house Beelzebub, much more they of His household. But they were not to fear It was the necessary portion of those who were for God in the midst of the people. But there was nothing hid that should not be revealed. They themselves were to hold nothing back, but were to proclaim on the housetops all that they had been taught; for everything should be brought into the light; their faithfulness to God in this respect, as well as all other things. This, while it met the secret plottings of their enemies, was itself to characterise the ways of the disciples. God, who is light, and sees in darkness as in light, would bring all out into the light, but they were to do this morally now. Therefore were they to fear nothing while performing this work, unless it were God Himself, the righteous Judge at the last day. Moreover the hairs of their heads were numbered. They were precious to their Father, who took notice of even a sparrow's death. This could not happen without Him who was their Father.

Finally, they were to be thoroughly imbued with the conviction that the Lord was not come to send peace on the earth; no, it should be division, even in the bosom of families. But Christ was to be more precious than father or mother, and even than a man's own life. He who would save his life at the expense of his testimony to Christ should lose it; he who would lose it for the sake of Christ should gain it. He also who should receive this testimony, in the person of the disciples, received Christ, and, in Christ, Him that sent Him. God, therefore, being thus acknowledged in the person of His witnesses on earth, would bestow, on whoever received the latter, a reward according to the testimony rendered. In thus acknowledging the testimony of the rejected Lord, were it only by a cup of cold water, he who gave it should not lose his reward. In an opposing world, he who believes the testimony of God, and receives (in spite of the world) the man who bears this testimony, really confesses God, as well as His servant. It is all that we can do. The rejection of Christ made Him a test, a touchstone.

Note #27

For then Satan will be bound and man delivered by the power of Christ. And there were partial deliverances of the kind.

Note #28

There is a division of the Lord's discourse at Mat 10:15. Up to that it is the then present mission. From Mat 10:16, we have more general reflections on their mission, looked at as a whole in the midst of Israel on to the end. Evidently it goes beyond their then present mission and supposes the coming of the Holy Ghost. The mission by which the church is called as such is a distinct thing. This applies only to Israel they were forbidden to go to Gentiles. This necessarily closed with the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish nation, but it is to be renewed at the end, till the Son of man be come. There was a testimony to the Gentiles only, as brought before them as judges, as Paul was, and that part of his history even on to Rome in Acts, was amidst Jews. The latter part, from Mat 10:16, has less to do with the gospel of the kingdom.

Note #29

Observe here the expression "Son of man." This is the character in which (according to Daniel 7) the Lord will come, in a power and glory much greater than that of His manifestation as Messiah, the Son of David, and which will be displayed in a much wider sphere. As the Son of man, He is the heir of all that God destines for man (see Heb 2:6-8, and Co1 15:27). He must, in consequence, seeing what man's condition is, suffer in order to possess this inheritance. He was there as the Messiah, but He must be received in His true character, Emmanuel; and the Jews must thus be tested morally. He will not have the kingdom on carnal principles. Rejected as Messiah, as Emmanuel, He postpones the period of those events which will close the ministry of His disciples with respect to Israel, unto His coming as the Son of man. Meantime God has brought out other things that had been hidden from the foundation of the world, the true glory of Jesus the Son of God, His heavenly glory as man and the church united to Him in heaven. The Judgment of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the nation, have suspended the ministry which had begun at the moment of which the evangelist here

speaks. That which has filled up the interval since then is not the subject here of the Lord's discourse, which refers solely to the ministry that had the Jews for its object. The counsels of God with respect to the church, in connection with the glory of Jesus at the right hand of God, we shall find spoken of elsewhere.

Luke will give us in more detail that which concerns the Son of man In Matthew the Holy Ghost occupies us with the rejection of Emmanuel.

Matthew Chapter 11

From that hour we find the definitive judgment of the nation, not indeed as yet openly declared (that is in chapter 12), nor by the cessation of Christ's ministry, which wrought, notwithstanding the opposition of the nation, in gathering out the remnant, and in the still more important effect of the manifestation of Emmanuel; but it is unfolded in the character of His discourses, in the positive declarations which describe the condition of the people, and in the Lord's conduct amid circumstances which gave rise to the expression of the relations in which He stood towards them.

Having sent His disciples away to preach, He continues the exercise of His own ministry. The report of the works of Christ reaches John in prison. He, in whose heart, notwithstanding his prophetic gift, there still remained something of Jewish thoughts and hopes, sends by his disciples to ask Jesus if He is the One who should come, or if they were still to look for another. [See Note #30] God allowed this question in order to put everything in its place. Christ, being the Word of God ought to be His own witness. He ought to bear testimony to Himself as well as to John, and not to receive testimony from the latter; and this He did in the presence of John's disciples He healed all the diseases of men, and preached the gospel to the poor; and John's messengers were to set before him this true testimony of what Jesus was. John was to receive it. It was by these things men were tested. Blessed was he who should not be offended at the lowly exterior of the King of Israel. God manifest in the flesh did not come to seek the pomp of royalty, although it was His due, but the deliverance of suffering men. His work revealed a character much more profoundly divine, which had a spring of action far more glorious than that which depended on the possession of the

throne of avid than a deliverance which would have set John at liberty, and put an end to the tyranny that had imprisoned him.

To undertake this ministry, to go down into the scene of its exercise, to bear the sorrows and the burdens of His people might be an occasion of stumbling to a carnal heart that was looking for the appearance of a glorious kingdom which would satisfy the pride of Israel. But was it not more truly divine more necessary to the condition of the people as seen of God? The heart of each one therefore would be thus tested, to shew whether he belonged to that repentant remnant, who discerned the ways of God, or to the proud multitude, who only sought their own glory, possessing neither a conscience exercised before God, nor a sense of their need and misery.

Having set John under the responsibility of receiving this testimony, which put all Israel to the test, and distinguished the remnant from the nation in general, the Lord then bears witness to John himself, addressing the multitude, and reminding them how they had followed the preaching of John. He shews them the exact point to which Israel had come in the ways of God. The introduction, in testimony, of the kingdom made the difference between that which preceded and that which followed. Among all that are born of women there had been none greater than John the Baptist, none who had been so near Jehovah, sent before His face, none who had rendered Him a more exact and complete testimony, who had been so separate from all evil by the power of the Spirit of God a separation proper to the fulfilment of such a mission among the people of God. Still he had not been in the kingdom: it was not yet established; and to be in the presence of Christ in His kingdom, enjoying the result of the establishment of His glory, [See Note #31] was a greater thing than all testimony to the coming of the kingdom.

Nevertheless from the time of John the Baptist there was a notable change. From that time the kingdom was announced. It was not established, but it was preached. This was a very different thing from the prophecies that spoke of the kingdom for a yet distant period, while recalling the people to the law as given by Moses. The Baptist went before the King, announcing the nearness of the kingdom, and commanding the Jews to repent that they

might enter into it; Thus the law and the prophets spake on God's part until John. The law was the rule; the prophets, maintaining the rule, strengthened the hopes and the faith of the remnant. Now, the energy of the Spirit impelled men to force their way through every difficulty and all the opposition of the leaders of the nation and of a blinded people, that they might at all costs attain the kingdom of a King rejected by the blind unbelief of those who should have received Him. It needed seeing that the King had come in humiliation, and that He had been rejected it needed this violence to enter the kingdom. The strait gate was the only entrance.

If faith could really penetrate the mind of God therein, John was the Elias who should come. He that had ears to hear, let him hear. It was in fact for those only.

Had the kingdom appeared in the glory and in the power of its Head, violence would not have been necessary; it would have been possessed as the certain effect of that power; but it was the will of God that they should morally be tested. It was thus also that they ought to have received Elias in spirit.

The result is given in the Lord's words which follow, that is, the true character of this generation, and the ways of God in relation to the Person of Jesus, manifested by His rejection itself. As a generation the threatenings of justice, and the attractions of grace were equally lost upon them. The children of wisdom, those whose consciences were taught of God, acknowledged the truth of John's testimony, as against themselves, and the grace, so necessary to the guilty, of the ways of Jesus.

John, separate from the iniquity of the nation, had, in their eyes, a devil. Jesus, kind to the most wretched, they accused of falling in with evil ways. Yet the evidence was powerful enough to have subdued the heart of a Tyre or Sodom; and the righteous rebuke of the Lord warns the perverse and unbelieving nation of a more terrible judgment than that which awaited the pride of Tyre or the corruption of Sodom.

But this was a test for the most favoured of mankind. It might have been said, Why was the message not sent to Tyre, ready to hearken? Why not to Sodom, that that city might have escaped the fire that consumed it? It is that

man must be tested in every way; that the perfect counsels of God may be developed. If Tyre or Sodom had abused the advantages which a God of creation and of providence had heaped upon them, the Jews were to manifest what was in the heart of man, when possessing all the promises and made the depositaries of all the oracles of God.

They boasted of the gift, and departed from the Giver. Their blinded heart acknowledged not and even rejected their God.

The Lord felt the contempt of His people whom He loved; but, as the obedient man on earth, He submitted to the will of His Father, who, acting in sovereignty, the Lord of heaven and earth, manifested, in the exercise of this sovereignty, divine wisdom, and the perfection of His character. Jesus accepts the will of His Father in its effects, and, thus subject, sees its perfection.

It was befitting that God should reveal to the lowly all the gifts of His grace in Jesus, this Emmanuel on earth; and that He should hide them from the pride that sought to scrutinise and to judge them. But this opens the door to the glory of God's counsels in it.

The truth was, that His Person was too glorious to be fathomed or understood by man, although His words and His works left the nation without excuse, in their refusal to come unto Him that they might know the Father.

Jesus, subject to His Father's will, although thoroughly sensible of all that was painful to His heart in its effects, sees the whole extent of the glory that should follow His rejection. All things were delivered unto Him of His Father. It is the Son who is revealed to our faith, the veil that covered His glory being taken away now that He is rejected as Messiah. No one knoweth Him but the Father. Who among the proud could fathom what He was? He who from all eternity was one with the Father, become man, surpassed, in the deep mystery of His being, all knowledge save that of the Father Himself. The impossibility of knowing Him who had emptied Himself to become man, maintained the certainty, the reality, of His divinity, which this self-renunciation might have hidden from the eyes of unbelief. The incomprehensibility of a being in a finite form revealed the infinite which

was therein. His divinity was guaranteed to faith, against the effect of His humanity on the mind of man. But if no one knew the Son, except the Father only, the Son, who is truly God, was able to reveal the Father. No man has ever seen God. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has revealed Him. No one knows the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him. Wretched ignorance that in its pride rejects Him! It was thus according to the good pleasure of the Son that this revelation was made. Distinctive attribute of divine perfection! He came for this purpose; He did it according to His own wisdom. Such was the truth of man's relations with Him, although He submitted to the painful humiliation of being rejected by His own people, as the final test of their, of man's state.

Observe also here, that this principle, this truth, with regard to Christ, opens the door to the Gentiles, to all who should be called. He reveals the Father to whomsoever He will. He always seeks the glory of His Father. He alone can reveal Him He to whom the Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, has delivered all things; The Gentiles are included in the rights conferred by this title, even every family in heaven and earth. Christ exercises these rights in grace, calling whom He will to the knowledge of the Father.

Thus we find here the perverse and faithless generation; a remnant of the nation justifying the wisdom of God as manifested in John and in Jesus in judgment and in grace; the sentence of judgment on the unbelievers; the rejection of Jesus in the character in which He had presented Himself to the nation; and His perfect submission, as man, to the will of His Father in this rejection, giving occasion for the manifestation to His soul of the glory proper to Him as Son of God a glory which no man could know, even as He alone could reveal that of the Father. So that the world who refused Him was in total ignorance, save at the good pleasure of Him who delights in revealing the Father.

We should also remark here, that the mission of the disciples to Israel who rejected Christ continues (if Israel be in the land) until He comes as the Son of man, His title of judgment and of glory as heir of all things (that is to say, until the judgment by which He takes possession of the land of Canaan, in a power that leaves no room for His enemies). This, His title of judgment and glory as heir of all things, is mentioned in John 5, Daniel 7, Psalms 8 and 80.

Observe too, that in chapter 11, the perverseness of the generation that had rejected John's testimony, and that of the Son of man come in grace and associating Himself in grace with the Jews, opens the door to the testimony of the glory of the Son of God, and to the revelation of the Father by Him in sovereign grace a grace that could make Him known as efficaciously to a poor Gentile as to a Jew. It was no longer a question of responsibility to receive, but of sovereign grace that imparted to whomsoever it would. Jesus knew man, the world, the generation which had enjoyed the greatest advantages of all that were in the world. There was no place for the foot to rest on in the miry slough of that which had departed from God. In the midst of a world of evil Jesus remained the sole revealer of the Father, the source of all good. Whom does He call? What does He bestow on those who come? Only source of blessing and revealer of the Father, He calls all those who are weary and heavy laden. Perhaps they did not know the spring of all misery, namely, separation from God, sin. He knew, and He alone could heal them. If it was the sense of sin which burdened them, so much the better. Every way the world no longer satisfied their hearts; they were miserable, and therefore the objects of the heart of Jesus. Moreover He would give them rest; He does not here explain by what means; He simply announces the fact. The love of the Father, which in grace, in the Person of the Son, sought out the wretched, would bestow rest (not merely alleviation or sympathy, but rest) on every one that came to Jesus. It was the perfect revelation of the Father's name to the heart of those that needed it; and that by the Son; peace, peace with God. They had but to come to Christ: He undertook all and gave rest. But there is a second element in rest. There is more than peace through the knowledge of the Father in Jesus. And more than that is needed; for, even when the soul is perfectly at peace with God, this world presents many causes of trouble to the heart. In these cases it is a question of submission or of self-will. Christ, in the consciousness of His rejection, in the deep sorrow caused by the unbelief of the cities in which He had wrought so many miracles, had just manifested the most entire submission to His Father, and had found therein perfect rest to His soul. To this He calls all that heard Him, all that felt the need of rest to their own souls. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me," that is to say, the yoke of entire submission to His Father's will, learning of Him how to meet the troubles of

life; for He was "meek and lowly in heart," content to be in the lowest place at the will of His God. In fact nothing can overthrow one who is there. It is the place of perfect rest to the heart.

Note #30

His sending to Jesus shews full confidence in His word as a prophet but ignorance as to His Person; and this is what is brought out here in its full light.

Note #31

This is not God's assembly; but the rights of the King as manifested in glory being established, the foundation being laid, Christians are in the kingdom and the patience of Jesus Christ, who is glorified but hidden in God. They share the destiny of the King, and will share His glory when He reigns.

Matthew Chapter 12

At length the rejection of the nation, in consequence of their contempt of the Lord, is plainly shewn, as well as the cessation of all His relations with them as such, in order to bring out on God's part an entirely different system, that is to say, the kingdom in a particular form. Thus this last chapter is the great turning-point of the whole history. Christ is a divine witness to Himself, and John Baptist has so to receive Him, as another would. He stood no longer as Messiah witnessed to, but as Son of God, but gives His full testimony to John. But the nation had rejected God manifested in warnings and grace alike: only there was a remnant. Wisdom was justified of her children. Then comes His submission to His rejection, evil as it might be, as the Father's will; but this leads Him out into the consciousness of His personal glory, the real ground of that rejection. All things were delivered to Him of His Father. None could know Him, nor any the Father unless He revealed Him. The whole world, tested by His perfection, was found lying in wickedness (though with a spared remnant), but man was universally away from God. He looked down from heaven to see, as we read, but they were all gone out of the way, none righteous, no, not one. So Jesus, as He walked on the sea, stood alone in a judged world, judged by His rejection, but now in the sovereign grace of the Father, as the Son revealing Him, and calling to

the revelation of this grace in Himself. This is just now the new position. He had tried man. The very thing that He was, hindered their receiving Him. Now he that was weary must come to Him who stood thus alone, and He would give them rest. They must learn of Him who thus had absolutely submitted, and they would have rest as to the world and everything here. So with us: where we wholly bow, we come into the conscious possession of our privileges as disowned, on the heavenly and higher ground.

The first circumstance that brought forward the question of His Person, and of His right to close the dispensation, was the disciples' plucking the ears of corn and crushing them in their hands to satisfy their hunger. For this the Pharisees rebuke them, because it was on a Sabbath day. Jesus sets before them that the king, rejected by the malice of Saul, had partaken of that which was only given to the priests. The Son of David, in a similar case, might well enjoy a similar privilege. Besides God was acting in grace. The priest also profaned the Sabbath in the service of the temple; and One greater than the temple was there. Moreover, if they had really known the mind of God, if they had been imbued with the Spirit which His word declared to be acceptable to Him "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," they would not have condemned the guiltless. In addition to this, the Son of man was Lord even of the Sabbath. Here He no longer takes the title of Messiah, but that of Son of man a name which bore witness to a new order of things, and to a more extended power. Now that which He said had great significance; for the Sabbath was the token of the covenant between Jehovah and the nation (Eze 20:12-20); and the Son of man was declaring His power over it. If that was touched, it was all over with the covenant.

The same question arises in the synagogue; and the Lord persists in acting in grace, and in doing good, shewing them that they would do the same for one of their sheep. This only excites their hatred, great as was the proof of His beneficent power. They were children of the murderer. Jesus withdraws from them, and great multitudes follow Him. He heals them, charging them not to make Him known. In all this however His doings were but the fulfilment of a prophecy which clearly traces out the Lord's position at this time. The hour would come when He should bring forth judgment unto victory. Meanwhile He retained the position of entire lowliness, in which

grace and truth could commend themselves to those who appreciated and needed them. But in the exercise of this grace, and in His testimony to the truth, He would do nothing to falsify this character, or so to attract the attention of men as to prevent His true work, or which could make it even suspected that He sought His own honour. Nevertheless the Spirit of Jehovah was upon Him as His beloved, in whom His soul delighted; and He should declare judgment to the Gentiles, and they should put their trust in His name. The application of this prophecy to Jesus at that moment is very evident. We see how guarded He was with the Jews, abstaining from the gratification of their carnal desires respecting Himself, and content to be in the background, if God His Father was glorified; and glorifying Him perfectly Himself on the earth by doing good. He was soon to be declared to the Gentiles; whether by the execution of the judgment of God, or by presenting Himself to them as the One in whom they should trust.

This passage is manifestly placed here by the Holy Ghost, in order to give the exact representation of His position, before laying open the new scenes which His rejection prepares for us.

He then casts out a devil from a man who was blind and dumb a sad condition, truly depicting that of the people with respect to God. The multitude, full of admiration, exclaim, "Is not this the Son of David?" But the religionists, on hearing it, jealous of the Lord, and hostile to the testimony of God, declare that Jesus wrought this miracle by the power of Beelzebub, thus sealing their own condition, and putting themselves under the definitive judgment of God. Jesus demonstrates the absurdity of what they had said. Satan would not destroy his own kingdom. Their own children, who had the pretension to do the same, should judge their iniquity. But if not the power of Satan (and the Pharisees admitted that the devils were really cast out), it was the finger of God, and the kingdom of God was among them.

He who had come into the strong man's house to spoil his goods had first to bind him.

The truth is that the presence of Jesus put everything to the test; everything on God's part was centred in Him. It is Emmanuel Himself who was there. He

who was not with Him was against Him. He who did not gather with Him scattered. Everything now depended on Him alone. He would bear with all unbelief as to His own Person. Grace could remove that. He could pardon all sin; but to speak against and blaspheme the Holy Ghost (that is, to acknowledge the exercise of a power, which is that of God, and to attribute it to Satan) could not be pardoned; for the Pharisees admitted that the devil was cast out, and it was only with malice, with open-eyed deliberate hatred to God, that they attributed it to Satan. And what pardon could there be for this? There was none either in the age of the law [See Note #32] or in that of the Messiah. The fate of those who thus acted was decided. This the Lord would have them understand. The fruit proved the nature of the tree. It was essentially bad. They were a generation of vipers. John had told them the same. Their words condemned them. Upon this the scribes and Pharisees asked for a sign. This was nothing but wickedness. They had had signs enough. It was only stirring up the unbelief of the rest.

This request gives the Lord occasion to pronounce the judgment of this generation.

There should be only the sign of Jonah for this evil generation. As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so should the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. But then lo! Christ was already rejected.

The Ninevites by their conduct should condemn this generation in the day of judgment, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and a greater than Jonah was here. The queen of the south likewise testified against the wickedness of this perverse generation. Her heart attracted by the report of Solomon's wisdom, had led her to him from the uttermost parts of the earth; and a greater than Solomon was here. Poor ignorant Gentiles understood the wisdom of God in His word, whether by the prophet or the king, better than His beloved people, even when the Great King and Prophet was among them.

This was then His judgment: the unclean spirit (of idolatry) which had gone out of the people, finding no rest away from Israel (alas! its true house, whereas they ought to have been the house of God), should return with

seven spirits worse than itself. They would find the house empty, swept, and garnished; and the last state should be worse than the first. What a solemn judgment of the people was this that those among whom Jehovah had walked should become the habitation of an unclean spirit, of a superabundance of unclean spirits; not merely of seven, the complete number, but together with these (who would incite them all to madness against God and those who honoured God, thus leading them to their own destruction) that other unclean spirit also, who would draw them back into the wretched idolatry from which they had escaped! Israel's judgment was pronounced.

In conclusion Jesus publicly breaks the bonds that naturally existed between Himself and the people after the flesh, acknowledging those only which were formed by the word of God, and manifested by doing the will of His Father which was in heaven. Those persons only would He acknowledge as His relations, who were formed after the pattern of the sermon on the Mount.

His actions and His words after this bear witness to the new work which He was really doing on the earth. He leaves (chapter 13) the house and sits beside the lake. He takes a new position outside, to proclaim to the multitude that which was His true work. A sower went forth to sow.

Note #32

Take notice of this expression. We see the manner in which the Holy Ghost passes on from the time then present to the Jews, which would soon end, to the time when the Messiah would set up His kingdom, their "world [age] to come." We have a position outside all this, during the suspension of the public establishment of the kingdom. The apostles even did but preach or announce it; they did not establish it. Their miracles were "the powers of the age to come" (compare Pe1 1:11-13). This, as we shall see by-and-by, is of great importance. Thus also with regard to the new covenant, of which Paul was the minister; and yet he did not establish it with Judah and Israel.

Matthew Chapter 13

The Lord was no longer seeking fruit in His vine. It had been requisite according to God's relations with Israel that He should seek this fruit; but His true service, He well knew, was to bring that which could produce fruit, and not to find any in men.

It is important to remark here, that the Lord speaks of the visible and outward effect of His work as a Sower. The only occasion here on which He expresses His judgment as to the inward cause is, when He says, "They had no root"; and even here it is a matter of fact. The doctrines respecting the divine operation needed for the production of fruit are not here spoken of. It is the Sower who is displayed, and the result of His sowing, not that which causes the seed to germinate in the earth. In each case, except the first, a certain effect is produced.

The Lord is then here presented as commencing a work which is independent of all former relation between God and men, bearing with Him the seed of the word, which He sows in the heart by His ministry. Where it abides, where it is understood, where it is neither choked nor dried up, it produces fruit to His glory, and to the happiness and profit of the man who bears it.

In Verse 11 (Mat 13:11) the Lord shews the reason why He speaks enigmatically to the multitude. A distinction is now definitely made between the remnant and the nation: the latter was under the judgment of blindness pronounced by the prophet Isaiah. Blessed were the eyes of the disciples which saw the Emmanuel, the Messiah, the object of the hopes and desires of so many prophets and righteous men. All this marks judgment, and a called and spared remnant. [See Note #33]

I would now make a few remarks on the character of the persons of whom the Lord speaks in the parable.

When the word is sown in a heart that does not understand it, when it produces no relation of intelligence, of feeling, or of conscience between the heart and God, the enemy takes it away: it does not remain in the heart. He who heard it is not the less guilty: that which was sown in his heart was adapted to every need, to the nature and to the condition of man.

The immediate reception of the word with joy, in the next case, tends rather to prove that the heart will not retain it; for it is scarcely probable in such a case that the conscience was reached. A conscience touched by the word makes a man serious; he sees himself in the presence of God, which is always a serious thing whatever may be the attraction of His grace, or the hope inspired by His goodness. If the conscience has not been reached, there is no root. The word was received for the joy it imparted; when it brings tribulation, it is given up. When the conscience has been already exercised, the gospel brings at once joy; but when not, it awakens the conscience where there is a real work. In the first case it is the answer to and meets the wants already there. In the second it creates those wants.

Every day's history is, alas! the sad and best explanation of the third class. There is no ill-will, there is barrenness.

That the word was understood is only affirmed of those who bear fruit. The true understanding of the word brings a soul into connection with God, because the word reveals God expresses what He is. If I understand it, I know Him; and the true knowledge of God (that is, of the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ) is eternal life. Now, whatever may be the degree of light, it is always God thus revealed who is made known by the word that Jesus sows. Thus, being begotten of the word, we shall produce, in diverse measures, the fruits of the life of God in this world. For the subject here is the effect, in this world, of the reception of the truth brought by Jesus (not heaven, nor that which God does in the heart to make the seed bear fruit).

This parable does not speak, as a similitude, of the kingdom, though the word sown was the word of the kingdom, but of the great elementary principle of the service of Christ in the universality of its application, and as it was realised in His own Person and service while on the earth, and after He was gone, though fuller subjects of grace might then be brought out.

In the six following parables we find similitudes of the kingdom. We must remember that it is the kingdom established during the rejection of the King, [See Note #34] and which consequently has a peculiar character. That is to say, it is characterised by the absence of the King, adding to this, in the explanation of the first parable, the effect of His return.

The first three of these six parables present the kingdom in its outward forms in the world. They are addressed to the multitude. The last three present the kingdom according to the estimate of the Holy Ghost, according to the reality of its character as seen by God the mind and counsel of God in it. They are addressed consequently to the disciples alone. The public establishment of the kingdom in the righteousness and power of God is also announced to the latter, in the explanation of the parables of the tares.

Let us consider first the exterior of the kingdom publicly announced to the multitude the outward form which the kingdom would assume.

We must remember that the King, that is, the Lord Jesus, was rejected on earth; that the Jews, in rejecting Him, had condemned themselves; that, the word of God being used to accomplish the work of Him whom the Father had sent, the Lord thus made it known that He established the kingdom, not by His power exercised in righteousness and in judgment, but by bearing testimony to the hearts of men; and that the kingdom now assumed a character connected with man's responsibility, and with the result of the word of light being sown in the earth, addressed to the hearts of men, and left as a system of truth to the faithfulness and the care of men (God, however, still holding good His sovereign right for the preservation of His children and of the truth itself). This latter part is not the subject of these parables. I have introduced it here, because it might otherwise have been supposed that everything depended absolutely on man. Had it been so, alas! all would have been lost.

The parable of the tares is the first. It gives us a general idea of the effect of these sowings as to the kingdom; or rather, the result of having for the moment committed the kingdom here below to the hands of men.

The result was that the kingdom here below no longer presented as a whole the appearance of the Lord's own work. He sows not tares. Through the carelessness and the infirmity of men, the enemy found means to sow these tares. Observe that this does not apply to the heathen or to the Jews, but to the evil done among Christians by Satan through bad doctrines, bad teachers and their adherents. The Lord Jesus sowed. Satan, while men slept, sowed also. There were judaisers, philosophers, heretics who held with both

the former on the one hand, or on the other opposed the truth of the Old Testament.

Nevertheless Christ had only sown good seed. Must the tares then be rooted out? Clearly the condition of the kingdom during the absence of Christ depends on the answer to this question; and it throws light also upon that condition. But there was still less power to bring in a remedy than there had been to prevent the evil. All must remain unremedied until the King's interposition at the time of harvest. The kingdom of heaven on earth, such as it is in the hands of men, must remain a mingled system. Heretics, false brethren, will be there, as well as the fruit of the Lord's word, testifying, in this last dealing of God with him, man's inability to maintain that which is good and pure in its pristine state. So it has ever been. [See Note #35]

At the time of harvest (a phrase that designates a certain space of time during which the events connected with the harvest will take place) "at the time of harvest" the Lord will deal first, in His providence, with the tares. I say, "in His providence," because He employs the angels. The tares shall be bound in bundles ready to be burnt.

We must observe that outward things in the world are the subject here acts which root out corruption corruption that has grown up in the midst of Christianity.

The servants are not capable of doing this. The intermingling (caused by their weakness and carelessness) is such, that in gathering out the tares they would root up the wheat also. Not only discernment, but the practical power of separation would be wanting to carry out their purpose. When once the tares are there, the servants have nothing to do with them as to their presence in this world, in Christendom. Their service is with the good. The work of purging Christendom from them was not in their province. It is a work of judgment on that which is not of God, belonging to Him who can execute it according to the perfection of a knowledge that embraces everything, and a power that nothing escapes; which, if two men are in one bed, knows how to take the one and leave the other. The execution of judgment on the wicked in this world does not belong to the servants of

Christ. [See Note #36] He will accomplish it by the angels of His power, to whom He commits the execution of this work.

After the binding of the tares He gathers the wheat into His garner. There is no binding the wheat in bundles; He takes it all to Himself. Such is the end of that which concerns the outward appearance of the kingdom here below. This is not all that the parable can teach us, but it ends the subject of which this part of the chapter speaks. During the absence of Jesus the result of His sowing will be marred, as a whole down here, by the work of the enemy. At the close He will bind all the enemy's work in bundles; that is, He will prepare them in this world for judgment. He will then take away the church. It is evident that this terminates the scene below which goes on during His absence. The judgment is not yet executed. Before speaking of it the Lord gives other pictures of the forms which the kingdom will assume during His absence.

That which had been sown as a grain of mustard-seed becomes a great tree; a symbol that represents a great power in the earth. The Assyrian, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, are set before us in the word as great trees. Such would be the form of the kingdom, which began in littleness through the word sown by the Lord, and afterwards by His disciples. That which this seed produced would gradually assume the form of a great power, making itself prominent on the earth, so that others would shelter themselves under it, as birds under the branches of a tree. This has, indeed, been the case.

We next find that it would not only be a great tree in the earth, but that the kingdom would be characterised as a system of doctrine, which would diffuse itself a profession, which would enclose all it reached within its sphere of influence. The whole of the three measures would be leavened. I need not dwell here on the fact that the word leaven is always used in a bad sense by the sacred writers; but the Holy Ghost gives us to understand that it is not the regenerative power of the word in the heart of an individual, bringing him back to God; neither is it simply a power acting by outward strength, such as Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and the other great trees of scripture. But it is a system of doctrine that should characterise the mass, pervading it throughout. It is not faith properly so called, nor is it life. It is a religion; it is Christendom. A profession of doctrine, in hearts which will bear

neither the truth nor God, connects itself always with corruption in the doctrine itself.

This parable of the leaven concludes His instructions to the multitude. All was now addressed to them in parables, for they did not receive Him their King, and He spoke of things that supposed His rejection, and an aspect of the kingdom unknown to the revelations of the Old Testament, which have in view either the kingdom in power, or a little remnant receiving, amid sufferings, the word of the Prophet-King who had been rejected.

After this parable Jesus no longer remains by the seaside with the multitude a place suited to the position in which He stood towards the people after the testimony borne at the end of chapter 12, and whither He had repaired on quitting the house. He now re-enters the house with His disciples; and there, in secluded intimacy with them, He reveals the true character the object of the kingdom of heaven, the result of that which was done in it, and the means which should be taken to cleanse everything on earth, when the outward history of the kingdom during His absence should have terminated. That is to say, we find here that which characterises the kingdom to the spiritual man, that which he understands as the true mind of God with regard to the kingdom, and the judgment which should purge out from it all that was contrary to Him the exercise of power which should render it outwardly in accordance with the heart of God.

We have seen its outward history ending with this, the wheat hidden in the garner, and the tares left in bundles on the earth ready to be burnt. The explanation of this parable resumes the history of the kingdom at that period; only it gives us to understand and distinguish the different parts of the intermixture, ascribing each part to its true author. The field is the world; [See Note #37] there the word was sown for the establishment, in this manner, of the kingdom. The good seed were the children of the kingdom; they belonged to it really according to God; they are its heirs. The Jews were no longer so, and it was no longer the privilege of natural birth. The children of the kingdom were born of the word. But among these, in order to spoil the Lord's work, the enemy introduced all sorts of people, the fruit of the doctrines which he had sown among those who were born of the truth. This is the work of Satan in the place where the doctrine of Christ had

been planted. The harvest is the end of the age. [See Note #38] The reapers are the angels. It will be remarked here that the Lord does not explain historically that which took place, but the terms used to bring in the issue when the harvest is come. The fulfilment of that which is historical in the parable is supposed; and He passes on to give the great result outside that which was the kingdom during His absence on high. The wheat (that is, the church) is in the barn, and the tares in bundles on the earth. But He takes all that constitutes these bundles, all that as evil offends God in the kingdom, and casts it into the furnace of fire, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. After this judgment the righteous shall shine forth like Himself, the true Sun of that day of glory of the age to come, in the kingdom of their Father. Christ will have received the kingdom from the Father whose children they were; and they shall shine forth in it with Him according to that character.

Thus we find for the multitude, the results on earth of the divine sowing, and the machinations of the enemy the kingdom presented under this form; afterwards the confederacies of the wicked among themselves apart from their natural order as growing in the field; and the taking away of the church. For His own disciples, the Lord explains all that was necessary to make them fully understand the language of the parable. We then find the judgment executed by the Son of man upon the wicked, who are cast into the fire; and the manifestation of the righteous in glory (these last events taking place after the Lord had risen up and put an end to the outward form of the kingdom of heaven upon earth, the wicked being gathered in companies, and the saints taken up to heaven). [See Note #39]

And now, having explained the public history and its results in judgment and in glory for the full instruction of His disciples, the Lord communicates to them the thoughts of God with respect to what was going on upon earth, while the outward and earthly events of the kingdom were being developed that which the spiritual man should discern in them. To him, to one who understood the purpose of God, the kingdom of heaven was like a treasure hidden in a field. A man finds the treasure, and buys the field in order to possess it. The field was not his object, but the treasure that was in it. Thus Christ has purchased the world. He possesses it by right. His object is the

treasure hidden in it, His own people, all the glory of the redemption connected with it; in a word, the church looked at, not in its moral and in a certain sense divine beauty, but as the special object of the desires and of the sacrifice of the Lord that which His heart had found in this world according to the counsels and the mind of God.

In this parable it is the powerful attraction of this "new thing," which induces the one who has found it to purchase the whole place, that he may obtain possession of it.

The Jews were nothing new; the world had no attraction; but this new treasure induced the One who had discovered it to sell all He had that He might gain it. In fact Christ forsook everything. He not only emptied Himself to redeem us, but He renounced all that belonged to Him as man, as the Messiah on earth, the promises, His royal rights, His life, to take possession of the world which contained in it this treasure, the people whom He loved.

In the parable of the pearl of great price we have again the same idea, but it is modified by others. A man was seeking goodly pearls. He knew what he was about. He had taste, discernment, knowledge, as to that which he sought. It was the well-known beauty of the thing that caused his research. He knows when he has found one corresponding to his ideas, that it is worth while to sell all that he may acquire it. It is worth this in the eyes of one who can estimate its value. And he buys nothing else along with it. Thus Christ has found in the church by itself a beauty and (because of this beauty) a value, which made Him give up all to obtain it. It is just so with regard to the kingdom. Considering the state of man, of the Jews even, the glory of God required that all should be given up in order to have this new thing; for there was nothing in man that He could take to Himself. Not only He was content to give up all for the possession of this new thing, but that which His heart seeks for, that which He finds nowhere else, He finds in that which God has given Him in the kingdom. He bought no other pearls. Until He found this pearl, He had no inducement to sell all that He had. As soon as He sees it, His mind is made up; He forsakes all for it. Its value decides Him, for He knows how to judge, and He seeks with discernment.

I do not say that the children of the kingdom are not actuated by the same principle. When we have learnt what it is to be a child of the kingdom, we forsake all that we may enjoy it, that we may be of the pearl of great price. But we do not buy that which is not the treasure, in order to obtain it; and we are very far from seeking goodly pearls before we have found the one of great price. In their full force these parables only apply to Christ. The intention in these parables is to bring out that which was then doing, in contrast with all that had taken place before with the Lord's relations to the Jews.

There remains yet one of the seven that of the net cast into the sea. In this parable there is no change in the persons employed, that is to say, in the parable itself. The same persons who cast the net draw it to shore, and make the separation by gathering the good fish into vessels, taking no further notice of the bad. Securing the good fish is the work of those who draw the net to shore. It is only when landed that this is done. The sorting is their work, doubtless; but they have only to do with the good fish. They know them. This is their business, the object of their fishing. Others indeed come, and are found in the net together with the good; but these are not good. No other judgment is needed. The fishermen know the good. These are not such. They leave them. This forms a part of the history of the kingdom of heaven. The judgment of the wicked is not found here. The bad are left on the shore, when the fishermen gather the good into vessels. The final destiny of either good or bad is not given here. It does not take place on the shore with respect to the good; nor as to the bad by simply leaving them there. It is subsequent to the action of the parable; and, with respect to the bad, it does not take place merely by their separation from the good with whom they had been intermingled, but by their destruction. Neither in this parable, nor in that of the tares and wheat, does the execution of judgment form part of the parable itself. There the tares are bound and left on the field, here they are cast away out of the netful.

Thus the gospel net has been cast into the sea of the nations, and has enclosed of all kinds. After this general gathering, which has filled the net, the agents of the Lord, having to do with the good, gather them together, separating them from the bad. Remark here that this is a similitude of the

kingdom. It is the character which the kingdom assumes when the gospel has assembled together a mass of good and bad. At the end, when the net has been drawn so that all kinds are enclosed in it, the good are set apart because they are precious, the others are left. The good are gathered into divers vessels. The saints are gathered, not by the angels, but by the work of those who have laboured in the name of the Lord. The distinction is not made by judgment, but by the servants occupied with the good.

The execution of the judgment is another matter. The labourers have nothing to do with that. At the end of the age, the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, not the just from among the rest as the fisherman did, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Here nothing is said of their being occupied about the just. Gathering them into vessels was not the angels' work, but that of the fishermen. The angels are in both parables occupied with the wicked. The public result had been given, whether during the period of the kingdom of heaven, or afterwards, in the parable of the tares. It is not repeated here. The work to be done with regard to the righteous when the net is full is added here. The destiny of the wicked is repeated to distinguish the work done with respect to them from that wrought by means of the fishermen, who gather the good into divers vessels. Still it is presented under another aspect; and the just are left where they were. In the parable of the tares the judgment of the wicked is declared as in this. They are cast out into weeping and gnashing of teeth, but there the general state of the kingdom is revealed, and we have the righteous shining forth as the sun the higher part of the kingdom. Here it is only what the intelligent understand, what the spiritual mind sees; the just are put into vessels. There is a separation by spiritual power before judgment, which there was not in the general public state of the kingdom, but only what providence did publicly in the field, and the good grain received above. Here the separation is by dealings with the good. This was the main point for spiritual intelligence. Public display is not the point; only judgment will be executed on the wicked, in fact; then the just will be left there. [See Note #40]

In the explanation of the second parable, it is absolute judgment in the case of the tares, destroying and consuming that which remains on the field, already collected together and separated providentially from the wheat. The angels are sent at the end, not to separate the tares from the wheat (that was done) but to cast the tares into the fire, thus cleansing the kingdom. In the explanation of the parable of the fish (Mat 13:49) the sorting itself takes place. There will be just ones on the earth, and the wicked will be separated from among them. The practical instruction of this parable is the separation of the good from the wicked, and the gathering together in companies of many of the former; this is done more than once, many others of the same being gathered elsewhere into one also. The servants of the Lord are the instruments employed in what takes place in the parable itself.

These parables contain things new and old. The doctrine of the kingdom, for instance, was a well-known doctrine. That the kingdom should take the forms described by the Lord, that it should embrace the whole world without distinction, the people of God drawing their existence not from Abraham but from the word all this was quite new. All was of God. The scribe had knowledge of the kingdom, but was entirely ignorant of the character it would assume, as the kingdom of heaven planted in this world by means of the word, on which all here depends.

The Lord resumes His work among the Jews. [See Note #41] To them He was only "the carpenter's son." They knew His family after the flesh. The kingdom of heaven was nothing in their eyes. The revelation of this kingdom was carried on elsewhere, and there the knowledge of divine things was communicated. The former saw nothing beyond those things which the natural heart could perceive. The blessing of the Lord was arrested by their unbelief: He was rejected as prophet, as well as king, by Israel.

Note #5

Compare Mar 4:33-34. It was adapted to all if they had ears to hear, but was darkness to the wilful.

Note #34

Remark here, that chapter 12 having brought before us the judgment of the Jewish people, we have now the kingdom as It is in the absence of the king, chapter 13; the assembly as built by Christ, chapter 16; and the kingdom in glory, chapter 17.

Note #35

It is a solemn thought that the first act of man has been to spoil what God has set up good. So with Adam, so with Noah, so with the law, so with the priesthood of Aaron, so with the son of David, so even Nebuchadnezzar, so the church. In Paul's days all sought their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. All is made good, better, and stable in the Messiah.

Note #36

I speak here of those who will have been His servants on earth during His absence. For angels are also His servants, as well as the saints of the age to come.

Note #37

Manifestly it was not in the church that the Lord began to sow: it did not then exist. But He distinguishes Israel here from the world, and speaks of the latter. He looked for fruit in Israel; He sows in the world, because Israel after all His culture brought forth no fruit.

Note #38

Not merely the instant that terminates it, but the acts that accomplish the purpose of God in terminating it.

Note #39

Remark too here that the kingdom of heaven is parcelled out into two parts, the kingdom of the Son of man, and the kingdom of our Father: the objects of judgment in what is subjected to Christ, and a place like His before the Father for sons.

Note #40

In all symbolical prophecies and parables, the explanation goes beyond the parable and adds facts; because the judgment executed publicly testifies of that which in the time of the parable can only be discerned spiritually. This latter may be spiritually understood. The result is, judgment will publicly declare it, so that we are always to go beyond the parable in the explanation. Judgment explains publicly what is only understood spiritually before, and brings in a new order of things (compare Dan. 7).

Note #41

The chapters which follow are striking in their character. Christ's Person as the Jehovah of Psalm 132 is brought out, but Israel sent away, the disciples left alone, while He prays on high. He returns, rejoins the disciples, and the Gadarene world owns Him. Then we have in chapter 15 the full moral description of the ground on which Israel stood actually, and ought to stand, but carried much farther out into what man's heart is; and then what God is, revealed in grace to faith, even if in a Gentile. Historically He still owns Israel, but in divine perfection, and now in human administrative power; and then (chapter 16) the church is brought in prophetically; and in chapter 17 the kingdom of glory in vision. In chapter 16 they are forbidden to say He is the Christ. This is over.

Matthew Chapter 14

Our Gospel resumes the historical course of these revelations, but in such a manner as to exhibit the spirit by which the people were animated. Herod (loving his earthly power and his own glory more than submission to the testimony of God, and more bound by a false human idea than by his conscience, although in many things he appears to have owned the power of the truth) had cut off the head of the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist; whom he had already imprisoned, in order to remove out of the sight of his wife the faithful reprover of the sin in which she lived.

Jesus is sensible of the import of this, which is reported to Him. Accomplishing in lowly service (however personally exalted above him), together with John, the testimony of God in the congregation, He felt Himself united in heart and in His work to him; for faithfulness in the midst of all evil binds hearts very closely together; and Jesus had condescended to

take a place in which faithfulness was concerned (see Psa 40:9-10). On hearing therefore of John's death He retires into a desert place. But while departing from the multitude who thus began to act openly in the rejection of the testimony of God, He does not cease to be the supplier of all their wants, and to testify thus that He who could divinely minister to all their need was amongst them. For the multitude, who felt these wants and who, if they had not faith, yet admired the power of Jesus, follow Him into the desert place; and Jesus, moved with compassion, heals all their sick. In the evening His disciples beg Him to send the multitude away that they may procure food. He refuses and bears a remarkable testimony to the presence, in His own Person, of Him who was to satisfy the poor of His people with bread (Psalm 132). Jehovah, the Lord, who established the throne of David, was there in the Person of Him who should inherit that throne. I doubt not the twelve baskets of fragments refer to the number which, in scripture, always designates the perfection of administrative power in man.

Remark also here, that the Lord expects to find His twelve disciples capable of being the instruments of His acts of blessing and power, administering according to His own power the blessings of the kingdom. "Give ye them," said He, "to eat." This applies to the blessing of the Lord's kingdom, and to the disciples of Jesus, the twelve, as being its ministers; but it is likewise an all-important principle with regard to the effect of faith in every intervention of God in grace. Faith should be able to use the power that acts in such intervention, to produce the works which are proper to that power, according to the order of the dispensation and the intelligence it has respecting it. We shall find this principle again elsewhere more fully developed.

The disciples wished to send the multitude away, not knowing how to use the power of Christ. They should have been able to avail themselves of it in Israel's behalf, according to the glory of Him who was among them.

If now the Lord demonstrated with perfect patience by His actions that He who could thus bless Israel was in the midst of His people, He does not the less bear testimony to His separation from that people in consequence of their unbelief. He makes His disciples get into a ship to cross the sea alone; and, dismissing the multitude Himself, He goes up into a mountain apart to

pray; while the ship that contained the disciples was tossing on the waves of the sea with a contrary wind: a living picture of that which has taken place. God has indeed sent forth His people to cross the stormy sea of the world alone, meeting with an opposition against which it is hard to strive. Meanwhile Jesus prays alone on high. He has sent away the Jewish people, who had surrounded Him during the period of His presence here below. The departure of the disciples, besides its general character, sets before us peculiarly the Jewish remnant. Peter individually, in coming out of the ship, goes in figure beyond the position of this remnant. He represents that faith which, forsaking the earthly accommodation of the ship, goes out to meet Jesus who has revealed Himself to it, and walks upon the sea a bold undertaking, but based on the word of Jesus, "Come." Yet remark here that this walk has no other foundation than, "If it be Thou," that is to say, Jesus Himself. There is no support, no possibility of walking, if Christ be lost sight of. All depends on Him. There is a known means in the ship; there is nothing but faith, which looks to Jesus, for walking on the water. Man, as mere man, sinks by the very fact of being there. Nothing can sustain itself except that faith which draws from Jesus the strength that is in Him, and which therefore imitates Him. But it is sweet to imitate Him; and one is then nearer to Him, more like Him. This is the true position of the church, in contrast with the remnant in their ordinary character. Jesus walks on the water as on the solid ground. He who created the elements as they are could well dispose of their qualities at His pleasure. He permits storms to arise for the trial of our faith. He walks on the stormy wave as well as on the calm. Moreover the storm makes no difference. He who sinks in the waters does so in the calm as well as in the storm, and he who can walk upon them will do so in the storm as well as in the calm that is to say, unless circumstances are looked to and so faith fail, and the Lord is forgotten. For often circumstances make us forget Him where faith ought to enable us to overcome circumstances through our walking by faith in Him who is above them all. Nevertheless, blessed be God! He who walks in His own power upon the water is there to sustain the faith and the wavering steps of the poor disciple; and at any rate that faith had brought Peter so near to Jesus that His outstretched hand could sustain him. Peter's fault was that he looked at the waves, at the storm (which, after all, had nothing to do with

it), instead of looking at Jesus, who was unchanged, and who was walking on those very waves, as his faith should have observed. Still the cry of his distress brought the power of Jesus into action, as his faith ought to have done; only it was now to his shame, instead of being in the enjoyment of communion and walking like the Lord.

Jesus having entered the ship, the wind ceases. Even so it will be when Jesus returns to the remnant of His people in this world. Then also will He be worshipped as the Son of God by all that are in the ship, with the remnant of Israel. In Gennesaret Jesus again exercises the power which shall here after drive out from the earth all the evil that Satan has brought in. For when He returns, the world will recognise Him. It is a fine picture of the result of Christ's rejection, which this Gospel has already made known to us as taking place in the midst of the Jewish nation.

Matthew Chapter 15

chapter 15 displays man and God, the moral contrast between the doctrine of Christ and that of the Jews; and thus the Jewish system is rejected morally by God. When I speak of the system, I speak of their whole moral condition, systematised by the hypocrisy that sought to conceal iniquity, while increasing it in the sight of God, before whom they presented themselves. They made use of His name in order to sink lower, under the pretence of piety, than the laws of natural conscience. It is thus that a religious system becomes the great instrument of the power of the enemy, and more especially when that, of which it still bears the name, was instituted by God. But then man is judged, for Judaism was man with God's law and God's culture.

The judgment which the Lord pronounces on this system of hypocrisy, while manifesting the consequent rejection of Israel, gives rise to instruction that goes thus much farther; and which, searching the heart of man, and judging man according to that which proceeds from it, proves the heart to be a spring of all iniquity; and thus makes it evident that all true morality has its basis in the conviction and confession of sin. For, without this, the heart is always false and flatters itself in vain. Thus also Jesus goes to the root of everything, and comes out of the special and temporary relations of the

Jewish nation, to enter on the true morality which belongs to all ages. The disciples did not observe the traditions of the elders; about these the Lord did not concern Himself. He avails Himself of the accusation, to lay it upon the conscience of their accusers, that the judgment occasioned by the rejection of the Son of God was authorised also on the ground of those relationships that already existed between God and Israel. They made the commandment of God of none effect through their traditions; and that in a most important point, and one even on which all earthly blessings depended for the children of Israel. By their own ordinances also Jesus exposes the consummate hypocrisy, the selfishness and avarice, of those who pretended to guide the people, and to form their heart to morality and to the worship of Jehovah. Isaiah had already pronounced their judgment.

Afterwards He shews the multitude that it was a question of what man was, of what proceeded from his heart, from within him; and points out the sad streams that flow from that corrupt spring. But it was the simple truth with respect to the heart of man, as known by God, which scandalised the self-righteous men of the world, which was unintelligible even to the disciples. Nothing so simple as the truth when it is known; nothing so difficult, so obscure, when a judgment is to be formed respecting it by the heart of man, who does not possess the truth; for he judges after his own thoughts, and the truth is not in them. In short, Israel, and specially religious Israel, and true morality are set in contrast: man is set in his proper responsibility, and in his real colours before God.

Jesus searches the heart; but, acting in grace, He acts according to the heart of God, and manifests it by coming out, both for the one and for the other, of the conventional terms of God's relationship with Israel. A divine Person, God, may walk in the covenant He has given, but cannot be confined to it. And the unfaithfulness of His people to it is the occasion of the revelation of Him passing out beyond that place. And note, here, the effect of traditional religion in blinding moral judgment. What clearer or plainer than that what came out of the mouth and heart defiled a man, not what he ate? But the disciples through the vile influence of Pharisaic teaching, putting outside forms for inward purity, could not understand it.

Christ now leaves the borders of Israel, and His disputes with the learned men of Jerusalem, to visit those places which were farthest off from Jewish privileges. He departs into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, the cities which He had Himself used as examples of that which was farthest from repentance; see chapter 11, where He classes them with Sodom and Gomorrah as more hardened than they. A woman comes out of these countries. She was one of the accursed race, according to the principles that distinguished Israel. She was a Canaanite. She comes to beg the interposition of Jesus on behalf of her daughter, who was possessed by a devil.

In begging this favour, she addresses Jesus by the title, which faith knew to be His connection with the Jews "Son of David." This gives rise to a full development of the Lord's position, and, at the same time, of the conditions under which man might hope to share the effect of His goodness, yea, to the revelation of God Himself.

As the Son of David, He has nothing to do with a Canaanite. He makes her no answer. The disciples desired to get rid of her by granting her request, in order to have done with her importunity. The Lord answers them, that He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This was indeed the truth. Whatever may have been the counsels of God manifested on occasion of His rejection (see Isaiah 49), He was the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to fulfil His promises made to the fathers.

The woman, in more simple and direct language, the more natural expression of her feelings, begs for the merciful interposition of Him in whose power she trusted. The Lord answers her, that it is not meet to take the children's bread and give it to dogs. We see here His true position, as come to Israel; the promises were for the children of the kingdom. The Son of David was the minister of these promises. Could He as such blot out the distinction of the people of God?

But that faith which derives strength from necessity, and which finds no resource but in the Lord Himself, accepts the humiliation of its position, and deems that with Him there is bread for the hunger of those who have no right to it. It perseveres, too, because there is a felt want, and faith in the power of Him who is come in grace.

What had the Lord done by His apparent harshness? He had brought the poor woman to the expression, to the sense, of her real place before God, that is to say, to the truth as to herself. But, then, was it the truth to say that God was less good than she believed, less rich in mercy towards the destitute, whose only hope and trust was in that mercy? This would have been to deny the character and the nature of God, of which He was the expression, the truth, and the witness, on earth; it would have been to deny Himself, and the object of His mission. He could not say, "God has not a crumb for such." He answers, in fulness of heart, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." God comes out of the narrow limits of His covenant with the Jews, to act in His sovereign goodness according to His own nature. He comes out to be God in goodness, and not merely Jehovah in Israel.

But this goodness is exercised towards one who is brought, in the presence of that goodness, to know that she has no right to it. To this point the seeming harshness of the Lord had been leading her. She received all from grace, while in herself unworthy of all. It is thus, and thus only, that every soul obtains blessing. It is not merely the sense of need the woman had that from the beginning, it was that which brought her there. It is not sufficient merely to own that the Lord Jesus can meet that need the woman came with that acknowledgment; we must be in the presence of the only source of blessing, and be brought to feel that, although we are there, we have no right to avail ourselves of it. And this is a terrible position. When it comes to this, all is grace. God can then act according to His own goodness, and He answers every desire which the heart can form for its happiness.

Thus we see Christ here as a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to fulfil the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles also might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written. At the same time this last truth makes manifest the real condition of man, and the full and perfect grace of God. On this He acts, while still faithful to His promises; and the wisdom of God is displayed in a manner that calls forth our admiration.

We see how much the introduction, in this place, of the story of the Syro-Phenician woman develops and illustrates this part of our Gospel. The beginning of the chapter shews forth the moral condition of the Jews, the

falseness of Pharisaic and sacerdotal religiousness; brings out the real state of man as man, what the heart of man was the source of; and then reveals the heart of God as manifested in Jesus. His dealings with this woman display the faithfulness of God to His promises; and the blessing finally granted exhibits the full grace of God, in connection with the manifestation of the real condition of man, acknowledged by conscience grace rising above the curse which lay upon the object of this grace rising above everything to make itself a way to the need which faith presented to it.

The Lord now departs thence and goes into Galilee, the place where He was in connection with the despised remnant of the Jews. It was neither Zion, nor the temple, nor Jerusalem, but the poor of the flock, where the people were sitting in gross darkness (Isaiah 8, 9). Thither His compassions follow this poor remnant, and are again exercised in their behalf. He renews the evidences, not only of His tender mercies, but of His presence who satisfied the poor of His people with bread. Here however it is not in the administrative power which He could bestow on His disciples, but according to His own perfection and acting from Himself. He provides for the remnant of His people. Accordingly it is the fulness of seven baskets of fragments that is gathered up. He departs also without anything else taking place.

We have seen eternal morality, and truth in the inward parts, substituted for the hypocrisy of forms, man's use of legal religion and man's heart shewn to be a source of evil and nought else, God's heart fully revealed that rises above all dispensation to shew full grace in Christ. Thus dispensations are set aside though fully owned, and man and God fully shewn out in doing so. It is a wonderful chapter as to what is everlasting in truth as to God, and as to what the revelation of God shews man to be. And this, note, gives occasion to the revelation of the assembly in the next chapter, which is not a dispensation but founded on what Christ is, Son of the living God. In chapter 12 Christ was dispensationally rejected, and the kingdom of heaven substituted in chapter 13. Here man is set aside and what he had made of law, and God acts in His own grace above all dispensations. Then come the assembly and the kingdom in glory.

Matthew Chapter 16

Chapter 16 goes farther than the revelation of the simple grace of God. Jesus reveals what was about to be formed in the counsels of that grace, where He was owned, shewing the rejection of the proud among His people, that He abhors them as they abhor Him. (Zechariah 11). Shutting their eyes (through perversity of will) to the marvellous and beneficent signs of His power, which He constantly bestowed on the poor who sought Him, the Pharisees and Sadducees struck with these manifestations, yet unbelieving in heart and will demand a sign from heaven. He rebukes them for their unbelief, shewing them that they knew how to discern the signs of the weather; yet the signs of the times were far more striking. They were the adulterous and wicked generation, and He leaves them: significant expressions of what was now passing in Israel.

He warns His forgetful disciples against the devices of these subtle adversaries to the truth, and to Him whom God had sent to reveal it. Israel is abandoned, as a nation, in the persons of their leaders. At the same time in patient grace He recalls His disciples to the remembrance of what explained His words to them.

Afterwards He questions His disciples as to what men in general said of Him. It was all matter of opinion, not of faith; that is, the uncertainty that belongs to moral indifference, to the absence of that conscious need of soul which can rest only in the truth, in the Saviour one has found. He then inquires what they themselves said of Him. Peter, to whom the Father had deigned to reveal Him, declares his faith, saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." No uncertainty, no mere opinion is here, but the powerful effect of the revelation, made by the Father Himself, of the Person of Christ, to the disciple whom He had elected for this privilege.

Here the condition of the people displays itself in a remarkable manner, not, as in the preceding chapter, with respect to the law, but with respect to Christ, who had been presented to them. We see it in contrast with the revelation of His glory to those who followed Him. We have thus three classes: first, haughty unbelieving Pharisees; next, persons conscious and owning there was divine power and authority in Christ, but indifferent; lastly, the revelation of God and divinely given faith.

In the fifteenth chapter, grace towards one who had no hope but in it, is put in contrast with disobedience to and hypocritical perversion of the law, by which the scribes and Pharisees sought to cover their disobedience with the pretence of piety.

The sixteenth chapter, judging the unbelief of the Pharisees respecting the Person of Christ, and setting aside these perverse men, brings in the revelation of His Person as the foundation of the assembly, which was to take the place of the Jews as the witness for God in the earth; and announces the counsels of God with respect to its establishment. It shews us, in adjunction to this, the administration of the kingdom, as it was now being established on the earth.

Let us consider, first, the revelation of His Person.

Peter confesses Him to be the Christ, the fulfilment of the promises made by God, and of the prophecies that announced their realisation. He was the One who should come, the Messiah whom God had promised.

Moreover, He was the Son of God. The second Psalm had declared that, in spite of the schemings of the leaders of the people, and the haughty animosity of the kings of the earth, God's King should be anointed on the hill of Zion. He was the Son, begotten of God. The kings and judges of the earth [See Note #42] are called to submit themselves to Him, lest they should be smitten with the rod of His power, when He takes the heathen for His inheritance. Thus the true believer waited for the Son of God born in due time upon this earth. Peter confessed Jesus to be the Son of God. So had Nathanael also: "Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." And, still later, Martha did the same.

Peter however, especially taught of the Father, adds to his confession a word simple, yet full of power: "Thou art the Son of the living God." Not only He who fulfils the promises, and answers to the prophecies; it is of the living God that He is the Son, of Him in whom is life and life-giving power.

He inherits that power of life in God which nothing can overcome or destroy. Who can vanquish the power of Him of this Son who came forth from "Him that liveth"? Satan has the power of death; it is he who holds

man under the dominion of this dreadful consequence of sin; and that, by the just judgment of God which constitutes its power. The expression "The gates of hades," of the invisible world, refers to this kingdom of Satan. It is then on this power, which leaves the stronghold of the enemy without strength, that the assembly is built. The life of God shall not be destroyed. The Son of the living God shall not be overcome. That; then, which God founds upon this rock of the unchangeable power of life in His Son shall not be overthrown by the kingdom of death. If man has been overcome and has fallen under the power of this kingdom, God, the living God, will not be overcome by it. It is on this that Christ builds His assembly. It is the work of Christ based on Him as Son of the living God, not of the first Adam nor based on him His work accomplished according to the power which this truth reveals. The Person of Jesus, the Son of the living God, is its strength. It is the resurrection that proved it. There He is declared to be the Son of God with power. Accordingly it is not during His life, but when raised from the dead, that He begins this work. Life was in Himself; but it is after the Father had burst the gates of hades nay, He Himself in His divine power had done so and was risen that He begins to build by the Holy Ghost as ascended on high, that which the power of death or of him who wielded it already overcome can never destroy. It is His Person that is here contemplated, and it is on His Person that all is founded. The resurrection is the proof that He is the Son of the living God, and that the gates of hades can do nothing against Him; their power is destroyed by it. Hence we see how the assembly (though formed on earth) is much more than a dispensation, the kingdom is not.

The work of the cross was needed; but it is not the question here of that which the righteous judgment of God required, or of the justification of an individual, but of that which nullified the power of the enemy. It was the Person of Him whom Peter was given to acknowledge, who lived according to the power of the life of God. It was a peculiar and direct revelation from heaven by the Father. Doubtless Christ had given proofs enough of who He was; but proofs had proved nothing to man's heart. The Father's revelation was the way of knowing who He was, and this went far beyond the hopes of a Messiah.

Here, then, the Father had directly revealed the truth of Christ's own Person, a revelation which went beyond all question of relationship with the Jews. On this foundation Christ would build His assembly. Peter, already so named by the Lord, receives a confirmation of that title on this occasion. The Father had revealed to Simon, the son of Jonas, the mystery of the Person of Jesus; and secondly, Jesus also betokens, by the name He gives him, [See Note #43] the steadfastness, the firmness, the durability, the practical strength, of His servant favoured by grace. The right of bestowing a name belongs to a superior, who can assign to the one who bears it his place and his name, in the family or the situation he is in. This right, where real, supposes discernment, intelligence, in that which is going on. Adam names the animals. Nebuchadnezzar gives new names to the captive Jews; the king of Egypt to Eliakim, whom he had placed on the throne. Jesus therefore takes this place when He says, The Father hath revealed this unto thee; and I also give you a place and a name connected with this grace. It is on that which the Father hath revealed unto thee that I am going to build My assembly, [See Note #44] against which (founded on the life that comes from God) the gates of the kingdom of death shall never prevail; and I who build, and build on this immovable foundation I give you the place of a stone (Peter) in connection with this living temple. Through the gift of God thou belongest already by nature to the building a living stone, having the knowledge of that truth which is the foundation, and which makes of every stone a part of the edifice. Peter was pre-eminently such by this confession; he was so in anticipation by the election of God. This revelation was made by the Father in sovereignty. The Lord assigns him, withal, his place, as possessing the right of administration and authority in the kingdom He was going to establish.

Thus far with respect to the assembly, now mentioned for the first time, the Jews having been rejected because of their unbelief, and man a convicted sinner.

Another subject presents itself in connection with this of the assembly that the Lord was going to build; namely, the kingdom which was going to be established. It was to have the form of the kingdom of heaven; it was so in

the counsels of God; but it was now to be set up in a peculiar manner, the King having been rejected on earth.

But, rejected as He was, the keys of the kingdom were in the Lord's hand; its authority belonged to Him. He would bestow them on Peter, who, when He was gone, should open its doors to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles. He should also exercise authority from the Lord within the kingdom; so that whatsoever he bound on earth in the name of Christ (the true King, although gone up to heaven) should be bound in heaven; and if he loosed anything on earth, his deed should be ratified in heaven. In a word, he had the power of command in the kingdom of God on earth, this kingdom having now the character of kingdom of heaven, because its King was in heaven [See Note #45] and heaven would stamp his acts with its authority. But it is heaven sanctioning his earthly acts, not his binding or loosing for heaven. The assembly connected with the character of Son of the living God and built by Christ, though formed on earth, belongs to heaven; the kingdom, though governed from heaven, belongs to earth has its place and ministration there.

These four things then are declared by the Lord in this passage: First, the revelation made by the Father to Simon; Second, the name given to this Simon by Jesus, who was going to build His assembly on the foundation revealed in that which the Father had made known to Simon; Third, the assembly built by Christ Himself, not yet complete, on the foundation of the Person of Jesus acknowledged as Son of the living God; Fourth, the keys of the kingdom that should be given to Peter, that is to say, authority in the kingdom as administering it on the part of Christ, ordering in it that which was His will, and which should be ratified in heaven. All this is connected with Simon personally, in virtue of the Father's election (who, in His wisdom, had chosen him to receive this revelation), and of Christ's authority (who had bestowed on him the name that distinguished him as personally enjoying this privilege).

The Lord having thus made known the purposes of God with regard to the future purposes to be accomplished in the assembly and in the kingdom, there was no longer room for His presentation to the Jews as Messiah. Not that He gave up the testimony, full of grace and patience towards the

people, which He had borne throughout His ministry. No; that indeed continued, but His disciples were to understand that it was no longer their work to proclaim Him to the people as the Christ. From this time also He began to teach His disciples that He must suffer and be killed and be raised again.

But, blessed and honoured as Peter was by the revelation which the Father had made to him, his heart still clung in a carnal manner to the human glory of his Master (in truth, to his own), and was still far from rising to the height of the thoughts of God. Alas! he is not the only instance of this. To be convinced of the most exalted truths, and even to enjoy them sincerely as truths, is a different thing from having the heart formed to the sentiments, and to the walk here below, which are in accordance with those truths. It is not sincerity in the enjoyment of the truth that is wanting. What is wanting is to have the flesh, self, mortified to be dead to the world. We may sincerely enjoy the truth as taught of God and yet not have the flesh mortified or the heart in a state which is according to that truth in what it involves down here. Peter (so lately honoured by the revelation of the glory of Jesus, and made in a very special manner the depository of administration in the kingdom given to the Son having a distinguished place in that which was to follow the Lord's rejection by the Jews) is now doing the adversary's work with respect to the perfect submission of Jesus to the suffering and ignominy that were to introduce this glory and characterise the kingdom. Alas! the case was plain; he savoured the things of men, and not the things of God. But the Lord, in faithfulness, rejects Peter in this matter, and teaches His disciples that the only path, the appointed and necessary path, is the cross; if any one would follow Him, that is the path He took. Moreover what would it profit a man to save his life and lose all to gain the world and lose his soul? For this was the question, [See Note #46] and not now the outward glory of the kingdom.

Having examined this chapter, as the expression of the transition from the Messianic system to the establishment of the assembly founded on the revelation of the Person of Christ, I desire also to call attention to the characters of unbelief which are developed in it, both among the Jews and

in the hearts of the disciples. It will be profitable to observe the forms of this unbelief.

First of all, it takes the grosser form of asking a sign from heaven. The Pharisees and Sadducees unite to shew their insensibility to all that the Lord had done. They require proof to their natural senses, that is, to their unbelief. They will not believe God, either in hearkening to His words or in beholding His works. God must satisfy their wilfulness, which would be neither faith nor the work of God. They had understanding for human things that were much less clearly manifested, but none for the things of God. A Saviour lost to them, as Jews on earth, should be the only sign granted them. They would have to submit, willing or not, to the judgment of the unbelief they displayed. The kingdom should be taken from them; the Lord leaves them. The sign of Jonah is connected with the subject of the whole chapter.

We next see this same inattention to the power manifested in the works of Jesus; but it is no longer the opposition of the unbelieving will; occupation of heart with present things withdraws such from the influence of the signs already given. This is weakness, not ill-will. Nevertheless they are guilty; but Jesus calls them "men of little faith," not "hypocrites," and "a wicked and adulterous generation."

We then see unbelief manifesting itself in the form of indolent opinion, which proves that the heart and conscience are not interested in a subject that ought to command them a subject that if the heart would really face its true importance, it would have no rest until it had arrived at certainty with respect to it. The soul here has no sense of need; consequently there is no discernment. When the soul feels this need, there is but one thing that can meet it; there can be no rest till it is found. The revelation of God that created this need, does not leave the soul in peace until it is assured of possessing that which awakened it. Those who are not sensible of this need can rest in probabilities, each according to his natural character, his education, his circumstances. There is enough to awaken curiosity the mind is occupied about it, and judges. Faith has wants, and, in principle intelligence as to the object which meets those wants; the soul is exercised till it finds that which it needs. The fact is that God is there.

This is Peter's case. The Father reveals His Son to him. Though weak, living faith was found in him, we see the condition of his soul when he says, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Happy the man to whom God reveals such truths as these, in whom He awakens these wants! There may be conflict, much to learn, much to mortify; but the counsel of God is there, and the life connected with it. We have seen its effect in the case of Peter. Every Christian has his own place in the temple of which Simon was so eminent a stone. Does it then follow that the heart is, practically, at the height of the revelation made to it? No; there may be, after all, the flesh not yet mortified on that side where the revelation touches our earthly position.

In fact the revelation made to Peter implied the rejection of Christ on earth necessarily led to His humiliation and death. That was the point. To substitute the revelation of the Son of God, the assembly and the heavenly kingdom, for the manifestation of the Messiah on earth what could it mean, except that Jesus was to be delivered up to the Gentiles to be crucified, and after that to rise again? But morally Peter had not attained to this. On the contrary, his carnal heart availed itself of the revelation made to him, and of that which Jesus had said to him, for self-exaltation. He saw, therefore, the personal glory without apprehending the practical moral consequences. He begins to rebuke the Lord Himself, and seeks to turn Him aside from the path of obedience and submission. The Lord, ever faithful, treats him as an adversary. Alas! how often have we enjoyed some truth, and that sincerely, and yet have failed in the practical consequences that it led to on earth! A heavenly glorified Saviour, who builds the assembly, implies the cross on earth. The flesh does not understand this. It will raise its Messiah to heaven, if you will; but to take its share of the humiliation that necessarily follows is not its idea of a glorified Messiah. The flesh must be mortified to take this place. We must have the strength of Christ by the Holy Ghost. A Christian who is not dead to the world is but a stumbling-stone to every one who seeks to follow Christ.

These are the forms of unbelief that precede a true confession of Christ, and that are found alas! in those who have sincerely confessed and known Him

(the flesh not being so mortified that the soul can walk in the height of that which it has learnt of God, and the spiritual understanding being obscured by thinking of consequences which the flesh rejects).

But if the cross was the entrance into the kingdom, the revelation of the glory would not be delayed. The Messiah being rejected by the Jews, a title more glorious and of far deeper import is unfolded: the Son of man should come in the glory of the Father (for He was the Son of God), and reward every man according to his works. There were even some standing there who should not taste of death (for of this they were speaking) till they had seen the manifestation of the glory of the kingdom that belonged to the Son of man.

We may remark here the title of "Son of God" established as the foundation; that of Messiah given up so far as concerned the testimony rendered in that day, and replaced by that of "Son of man," which He takes at the same time as that of the Son of God, and which had a glory that belonged to Him in His own right. He was to come in the glory of His Father as Son of God, and in His own kingdom as Son of man.

It is interesting to remember here the instruction given us in the beginning of the Book of Psalms. The righteous man, distinguished from the congregation of the wicked, had been presented in the first Psalm. Then, in the second, we have the rebellion of the kings of the earth and the rulers against the Lord and against His Anointed (that is, His Christ). Now upon this the decree of Jehovah is declared. Adonai, the Lord, shall mock at them from heaven. Further, Jehovah's King shall be established on Mount Zion. This is the decree: "Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son: this day [See Note #47] have I begotten thee." The kings of the earth and the judges are commanded to kiss the Son.

Now in the Psalms that follow, all this glory is darkened. The distress of the remnant, in which Christ has a part, is related. Then, in Psalm 8, He is addressed as Son of man, Heir of all the rights conferred in sovereignty upon man by the counsels of God. The name of Jehovah becomes excellent in all the earth. These Psalms do not go beyond the earthly part of these truths, excepting where it is written, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at

them"; while in Matthew 16 the connection of the Son of God with this, His coming with His angels (to say nothing of the assembly), are set before us. That is to say, we see that the Son of man will come in the glory of heaven. Not that His dwelling there is the truth declared; but that He is invested with the highest glory of heaven when He comes to set up His kingdom on earth. He comes in His kingdom. The kingdom is established on the earth; but He comes to take it with the glory of heaven. This is displayed in the following chapter, according to the promise here in Verse 28 (Mat 16:28).

In each Gospel that speaks of it, the transfiguration immediately follows the promise of not tasting death before seeing the kingdom of the Son of man. And not only so, but Peter (in his second Epistle, Pe2 1:16), when speaking of this scene, declares that it was a manifestation of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He says that the word of prophecy was confirmed to them by the view of His majesty; so that they knew that whereof they spoke, in making known to them the power and the coming of Christ, having beheld His majesty. In fact it is precisely in this sense that the Lord speaks of it here, as we have seen. It was a sample of the glory in which He would hereafter come, given to confirm the faith of His disciples in the prospect of His death which He had just announced to them.

Note #42

The study of the Psalms will have made us understand that this is the connection with the establishment of the Jewish remnant in blessing in the last days.

Note #43

The passage (Mat 16:18) should be read, "And I also say unto thee."

Note #44

It is important here to distinguish the church which Christ builds, not yet finished, but which He Himself builds, and that which is, as a manifested whole in the world, built up in responsibility by man. In Eph 2:20-21 and Pe1 2:4-5, we have this divine building growing and built up. No mention of man's work is found in either passage; it is a divine one. In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul is a wise master builder; others may build in wood, hay and stubble. The

confusion of these has been the basis of Popery and other corruptions found in what is called the church. His church, looked at in its reality, is a divine work which Christ accomplishes and which abides.

Note #45

Remark here what I have spoken of elsewhere there are no keys of or to the church or assembly. Peter had the keys of administration in the kingdom. But the idea of keys in connection with the church, or the power of the keys in the church, is a pure fallacy. There are none such at all. The church is built; men do not build with keys, and it is Christ (not Peter) who builds it. Further, the acts thus sanctioned were acts of administration down here. Heaven puts its sanction on them, but they did not relate to heaven, but to earthly administration of the kingdom. Further, it is to be remarked that what is conferred here is individual and personal. It was a name and authority conferred on Simon, son of Jonas. Some further remarks here may help us to understand more fully the bearing of these chapters. In the parable of the sower (chapter 13) the Person of the Lord is not brought forward, only that it is sowing, not reaping. In the first similitude of the kingdom He is Son of man, and the field is the world. He is quite out of Judaism. In chapter 14 we have the state of things from John's rejection, to the time the Lord is owned on His return where He had been rejected. In chapter 15 is the moral controversy, and God in grace in Himself as above evil. On this I dwell no further. But in chapter 16 we have the Person of the Son of God, the living God, and hereon the assembly, and Christ the builder; in chapter 17 the kingdom with the Son of man coming in glory. The keys (however heaven sanctioned Simon's use of them) were, as we have seen, of the kingdom of heaven (not of the assembly); and that, the parable of the tares shews, was to be corrupted and spoiled, and this irremediably. Christ builds the church, not Peter. Compare Pe1 2:4-5.

Note #46

In the Epistle of Peter we continually find these same thoughts the words, "living hope," "living stone" applied to Christ, and afterwards to Christians. And again, in accordance with our present subject, salvation through life in Christ, the Son of the living God, we find "receiving the end of our faith,

even the salvation of [our] souls." We may read all the Verses by which the apostle introduces his instructions.

Note #47

We have seen that Peter went beyond this. Christ is here seen as the Son born on the earth in time, not as the Son from eternity in the bosom of the Father. Peter, without the full revelation of this last truth, sees Him to be the Son according to the power of divine life in His own Person, upon which the assembly consequently could be built. But here we are to consider that which belongs to the kingdom.

Matthew Chapter 17

Jesus leads them up into a high mountain, and there is transfigured before them: "His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." Moses and Elias appeared also, talking with Him. I leave the subject of their discourse, which is deeply interesting, till we come to the Gospel of Luke, who adds a few other circumstances, which, in some respects, give another aspect to this scene.

Here the Lord appears in glory, and Moses and Elias with Him: the one the legislator of the Jews; the other (almost equally distinguished) the prophet who sought to bring back the ten apostate tribes to the worship of Jehovah, and who, despairing of the people, went back to Horeb, whence the law was given, and afterwards was taken up to heaven without passing through death.

These two persons, pre-eminently illustrious in the dealings of God with Israel, as the founder and the restorer of the people in connection with the law, appear in company with Jesus. Peter (struck with this apparition, rejoicing to see his Master associated with these pillars of the Jewish system, with such eminent servants of God, ignorant of the glory of the Son of man, and forgetting the revelation of the glory of His Person as the Son of God) desires to make three tabernacles, and to place the three on the same level as oracles. But the glory of God manifests itself; that is to say, the sign known in Israel as the abode (shechinah) of that glory; [See Note #48] and the voice of the Father is heard. Grace may put Moses and Elias in the

same glory as that of the Son of God, and associate them with Him; but if the folly of man, in his ignorance, would place them together as having in themselves equal authority over the heart of the believer, the Father must at once vindicate the rights of His Son. Not a moment elapses before the Father's voice proclaims the glory of the Person of His Son, His relation to Himself, that He is the object of His entire affection, in whom is all His delight. It is He whom the disciples are to hear. Moses and Elias have disappeared. Christ is there alone, as the One to be glorified, the One to teach those who hear the Father's voice. The Father Himself distinguishes Him, presents Him to the notice of the disciples, not as being worthy of their love, but as the object of His own delight. In Jesus He was Himself well pleased. Thus the Father's affections are presented as ruling ours setting before us one common object. What a position for poor creatures like us! What grace! [See Note #49]

At the same time the law, and all idea of the restoration of the law under the old covenant, were passed away; and Jesus, glorified as Son of man, and Son of the living God, remains the sole dispenser of the knowledge and the mind of God. The disciples fall on their faces, sore afraid, on hearing the voice of God. Jesus, to whom this glory and this voice were natural, encourages them, as He always did when on earth, saying, "Be not afraid." Being with Him who was the object of the Father's love, why should they fear? Their best Friend was the manifestation of God on the earth; the glory belonged to Him. Moses and Elias had disappeared, and the glory also, which the disciples were not yet able to bear; Jesus who had been thus manifested to them in the glory given Him, and in the rights of His glorious Person, in His relations with the Father-Jesus remains the same to them as they had ever known Him. But this glory was not to be the subject of their testimony until He, the Son of man, was risen from the dead the suffering Son of man. The great proof should then be given, that He was the Son of God with power. Testimony thereunto should be rendered, and He would ascend personally into that glory which had just shone forth before their eyes.

But a difficulty arises in the minds of the disciples caused by the doctrine of the scribes with regard to Elias. These had said that Elias must come before

the manifestation of the Messiah; and in fact the prophecy of Malachi authorised this expectation. Why then, ask they, say the scribes that Elias must first come? (that is to say, before the manifestation of the Messiah); whereas we have now seen that Thou art He, without the coming of Elias. Jesus confirms the words of the prophecy, adding, that Elias should restore all things. "But," continues the Lord, "I say unto you, that he is come already, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed; likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them." Then understood they that He spoke of John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elias, as the Holy Ghost had declared by Zacharias his father.

Let us say a few words on this passage. First of all, when the Lord says, "Elias truly cometh first, and shall restore all things," He does but confirm that which the scribes had spoken, according to Malachi's prophecy, as though He had said, "They are in the right." He then declares the effect of the coming of Elias: "He shall restore all things." But the Son of man was yet to come. Jesus had said to His disciples, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come." Nevertheless He had come, and was even now speaking with them. But this coming of the Son of man of which He spoke, is His coming in glory, when He shall be manifested as the Son of man in judgment according to Daniel 7. It was thus that all which had been said to the Jews should be accomplished; and in Matthew's Gospel He speaks to them in connection with this expectation. Nevertheless it was needful that Jesus should be presented to the nation and should suffer. It was needful that the nation should be tested by the presentation of the Messiah according to the promise. This was done, and as God had also foretold by the prophets, "He was rejected of men." Thus also John went before Him, according to Isaiah 40, as the voice in the wilderness, even in the spirit and power of Elias; he was rejected as the Son of man should also be. [See Note #50]

The Lord then, by these words, declares to His disciples, in connection with the scene they had just left, and with all this part of our Gospel, that the Son of man, as now presented to the Jews, was to be rejected. This same Son of man was to be manifested in glory, as they had seen for a moment on the Mount. Elias indeed was to come, as the scribes had said; but that John the

Baptist had fulfilled that office in power for this presentation of the Son of man; which (the Jews being left, as was fitting, to their own responsibility) would only end in His rejection, and in the setting aside of the nation until the days in which God would begin again to connect Himself with His people, still dear to Him, whatever their condition might be. He would then restore all things (a glorious work, which He would accomplish by bringing again His Firstborn into the world). The expression "restore all things" refers here to the Jews, and is used morally. In Acts 3 it refers to the effect of the Son of man's own presence.

The temporary presence of the Son of man was the moment in which a work was accomplished on which eternal glory depends, in which God has been fully glorified, above and beyond all dispensation and in which God and so man has been revealed, a work of which even the outward glory of the Son of man is but the fruit, so far as that depends on His work, and not on His divine Person; a work in which morally He was perfectly glorified in perfectly glorifying God. Still, with respect to the promises made to the Jews, it was but the last step in the testing to which they were subjected by grace. God well knew that they would reject His Son; but He would not hold them as definitively guilty until they had really done it. Thus in His divine wisdom (while afterwards fulfilling His unchangeable promises) He presents Jesus to them His Son, their Messiah. He gives them every necessary proof. He sends them John the Baptist in the spirit and power of Elias, as His forerunner. The Son of David is born at Bethlehem with all the signs that should have convinced them; but they were blinded by their pride and self-righteousness, and rejected it all. Nevertheless it became Jesus in grace to adapt Himself, as to His position, to the wretched condition of His people. Thus also, the Antitype of the David rejected in his day, He shared the affliction of His people. If the Gentiles oppressed them, their King must be associated with their distress, while giving every proof of what He was and seeking them in love. He rejected, all becomes pure grace. They have no longer a right to anything according to the promises, and are reduced to receive all from that grace, even as a poor Gentile would do. God will not fail in grace. Thus God has put them on the true footing of sinners, and will nevertheless fulfil His promises. This is the subject of Romans 11.

Now the Son of man who shall return will be this same Jesus who went away. The heavens will receive Him until the times of the restitution of all things of which the prophets have spoken. But he who was to be His forerunner in this temporary presence here could not be the same Elias. Accordingly John was conformed to the then manifestation of the Son of man, saving the difference that necessarily flowed from the Person of the Son of man, who could be but one, while that could not be the case with John the Baptist and Elias. But even as Jesus manifested all the power of the Messiah, all His rights to everything that belonged to that Messiah, without assuming as yet the outward glory, His time not being come (John 7), so John fulfilled morally and in power the mission of Elias to prepare the way of the Lord before Him (according to the we character of His coming, as then accomplished), and answered literally to Isaiah 40, and even to Malachi 3, the only passages applied to him. This is the reason that John said he was not Elias, and that the Lord said, "If ye can receive it, this is Elias which was for to come." Therefore also John never applied Mal 4:5-6 to himself; but he announces himself as fulfilling Isa 40:3-5, and this in each of the Gospels, whatever may be its particular character. [See Note #51]

But let us go on with our chapter. If the Lord takes up into the glory, He comes down into this world, even now in Spirit and in sympathy, and meets the crowd and Satan's power with which we have to do. While the Lord was on the Mount, a poor father had brought to the disciples his son who was a lunatic and possessed by a devil. Here is developed another character of man's unbelief, that even of the believer inability to make use of the power which is, so to say, at his disposal in the Lord. Christ, Son of God, Messiah, Son of man, had overcome the enemy, had bound the strong man and had a right to cast him out. As man, the obedient One in spite of Satan's temptations, He had overcome him in the wilderness, and had thus a right as man to dispossess him of his dominion over a man as to this world; and this He did. In casting out devils and healing the sick, He delivered man from the power of the enemy. "God," said Peter, "anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, and he went about doing good and healing all those that were oppressed by the devil." Now this power should have been used by the disciples, who ought to have known how to avail themselves by faith of that which Jesus had thus manifested on earth; but

they were not able to do it. Yet what availed it to bring this power down here, if the disciples had not faith to use it? The power was there: man might profit by it for complete deliverance from all the oppression of the enemy; but he had not faith to do so even believers had not. The presence of Christ on earth was useless, when even His own disciples knew not how to profit by it. There was more faith in the man that brought his child than in them, for felt want brought him to its remedy. All therefore come under the Lord's sentence, "O faithless and perverse generation!" He must leave them, and that which the glory had revealed above, unbelief shall realise below.

Observe here, that it is not evil in the world which puts an end to a particular intervention of God; on the contrary, it occasions the intervention in grace. It was on account of Satan's dominion over men that Christ came. He departs, because those who had received Him are incapable of using the power that He brought with Him, or that He bestows for their deliverance; they cannot profit by the very advantages then enjoyed. Faith was wanting. Nevertheless observe also this important and touching truth that, as long as such dispensation from God continues, Jesus does not fail to meet individual faith with blessing, even when His disciples cannot glorify Him by the exercise of faith. The same sentence that judges the unbelief of the disciples calls the distressed father to the enjoyment of the blessing. After all, to be able to avail ourselves of His power, we must be in communion with Him by the practical energy of faith.

He blesses then the poor father according to his need; and, full of patience, He resumes the course of instruction He was giving His disciples on the subject of His rejection and His resurrection as the Son of man. Loving the Lord, and unable to carry their ideas beyond the circumstances of the moment, they are troubled; and yet this was redemption, salvation, the glory of Christ.

Before however going farther, and teaching them that which became the disciples of a Master thus rejected and the position they were to occupy, He sets before them His divine glory, and their association with Him who had it, in the most touching manner, if they could but have understood it; and at the same time with perfect condescension and tenderness He places

Himself with them, or rather He places them in the same place with Himself, as Son of the great King of the temple and of all the earth.

Those who collected the tribute-money for the service of the temple come and ask Peter if his Master does not pay it. Ever ready to put himself forward, forgetful of the glory he had seen, and the revelation made to him by the Father, Peter, coming down to the ordinary level of his own thoughts, anxious that his Master should be esteemed a good Jew and without consulting Him, replies that He does. The Lord anticipates Peter on his coming in, and shews him His divine knowledge of that which took place at a distance from Himself. At the same time, He speaks of Peter and Himself as both children of the King of the temple (Son of God still keeping in patient goodness His lowly place as a Jew), and both therefore free from the tribute. But they should not offend. He then commands creation, (for He can do all things, as He knows all things,) and causes a fish to bring precisely the sum required, coupling anew the name of Peter with His own. He had said, "Lest we offend them"; and now, "Give unto them for me and thee." Marvellous and divine condescension! He who is the searcher of hearts, and who disposes at will of the whole creation, the Son of the sovereign Lord of the temple, puts His poor disciples into this same relationship with His heavenly Father, with the God who was worshipped in that temple. He submits to the demands that would have been rightly made on strangers, but He places His disciples in all His own privileges as Son. We see very plainly the connection between this touching expression of divine grace and the subject of these chapters. It demonstrates all the significance of the change that was taking place.

It is interesting to remark that the first epistle of Peter is founded on Matthew 16, and the second on chapter 17, which we have just been considering. [See Note #52] In chapter 16 Peter taught of the Father, confessed the Lord to be the Son of the living God; and the Lord said that on this rock He would build His church, and that he who had the power of death should not prevail against it. Thus also Peter, in his first epistle, declares that they were born again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Now it is by this resurrection that the power of the life of the living God was manifested. Afterwards he calls Christ the living

stone, in coming unto whom we, as living stones, are built up a holy temple to the Lord.

In his second epistle he recalls, in a peculiar manner, the glory of the transfiguration, as a proof of the coming and the kingdom of the Son of man. Accordingly he speaks in that epistle of the judgment of the Lord.

Note #48

Peter, taught of the Holy Ghost, calls it "the excellent glory."

Note #49

It was not in connection with the divine validity of their testimony, that Moses and Elias disappear. There could not be a stronger confirmation of it, as indeed Peter says, than this scene. But not only they were not the subjects of God's testimony as Christ was, but their testimony did not refer nor their exhortations reach to the heavenly things which were now to be revealed in association with the Son from heaven. Even John the Baptist makes this difference (Joh 3:13; Joh 3:31-34). Hence as there set forth, the Son of man must be lifted up. So here, the Lord charges the disciples not to say He was the Messiah, for the Son of man must suffer. It was the turning-point of the Lord's life and ministry, and the coming glory of the kingdom shewn to the disciples, but then He must suffer (see Joh 12:27). The Jewish history was closed in chapter 12, indeed in chapter 11, and the ground of the change laid John and He both rejected, perfect submission, then all things delivered unto Him of His Father, and He revealing the Father (compare John 13-14). But Matthew 13 apart from Judaism, He begins with what He brought, not looking for fruit in man.

Note #50

Hence also John Baptist rejects the application of Mal 4:5-6, to himself; while Isaiah 40 and Mal 3:1 are applied to him in Luk 1:76; Luk 7:27.

Note #51

See previous note.

Note #52

Both these epistles, after stating redemption by the precious blood of Christ and being born of the incorruptible seed of the word, treat of the government of God; the first, its application to His own, preserving them, the second, to the wicked and the world, going on thus to the elements melting with fervent heat, and the new heavens and the new earth.

Matthew Chapter 18

In chapter 18 the great principles proper to the new order of things are made known to the disciples. Let us search a little into these sweet and precious instructions of the Lord.

They may be looked at in two ways. They reveal the ways of God with regard to that which was to take the place of the Lord upon earth, as a testimony to grace and truth. Besides this, they depict the character which is in itself the true testimony to be rendered.

This chapter supposes Christ rejected and absent, the glory of chapter 17 not yet come. It passes over chapter 17 to connect itself with chapter 16 (except so far as the last Verses of chapter 17 give a practical testimony to His abdication of His true rights until God should vindicate them). The Lord speaks of the two subjects contained in chapter 16, the kingdom and the church.

That which would be proper for the kingdom was the meekness of a little child, which is unable to assert its own rights in the face of a world that passes it by the spirit of dependence and humility. They must become as little children. In the absence of their rejected Lord this was the spirit that became His followers. He who received a little child in the name of Jesus received Himself. On the other hand, he who put a stumbling-block in the way of one of those little ones who believed in Jesus [See Note #53] should be visited with the most terrible judgment. Alas! the world do this; but woe unto the world on that account. As to the disciples, if that which they most valued became a snare to them, they must pluck it out and cut it off must exercise the utmost carefulness in grace not to be a snare to a little one believing in Christ, and the most unrelenting severity as to themselves, in whatever might be a snare to them. Loss of what was most precious here was nothing, compared with their eternal condition in another world; for

that was in question now, and sin could have no place in God's house. Care for others, even the weakest, severity with self was the rule of the kingdom that no snare or evil might be. As to offence, full grace in forgiveness. They were not to despise these little ones; for if unable to force their own way in this world, they were the objects of the Father's special favour, as those who, in earthly courts, had the peculiar privilege of seeing the king's face. Not that there was no sin in them, but that the Father did not despise those that were far from Him. The Son of man was come to save the lost. [See Note #54] And it was not the Father's will that one of these little ones should perish. He spoke, I doubt not, of little children like those whom He took in His arms; but He inculcates on His disciples the spirit of humility and dependence on the one hand, and on the other, the spirit of the Father, which they were to imitate in order to be truly the children of the kingdom; and not to walk in the spirit of man, who seeks to maintain his place and his own importance, but to humble themselves and submit to contumely; and at the same time (and this is true glory) to imitate the Father, who considers the lowly and admits them into His presence. The Son of man was come on behalf of the worthless. This is the spirit of grace spoken of at the end of chapter 5. It is the spirit of the kingdom.

But the assembly more especially was to occupy the place of Christ on earth. With respect to offences against oneself, this same spirit of meekness became His disciple; he was to gain his brother. If the latter would hearken, the thing was to be buried in the heart of the one whom he had offended; if not, two or three more were then to be taken with him by the offended person to reach his conscience, or serve as witnesses; but if these appointed means were unavailing, it must be made known to the assembly; and if this did not produce submission, he who had done the wrong should be to him as a stranger, as a heathen and a publican was to Israel. The public discipline of the assembly is not treated of here, but the spirit in which Christians were to walk. If the offender bowed when spoken to, even seventy times seven times a day, he was to be forgiven. But though church discipline be not spoken of, we see that the assembly took the place of Israel on earth. The without and within henceforth applied to it. Heaven would ratify that which the assembly bound on earth, and the Father would grant the prayer of two or three who should agree together in making their request; for Christ

would be in the midst wherever two or three should be gathered together in or to His name. [See Note #55] Thus, for decisions, for prayers, they were as Christ on the earth, for Christ Himself was there with them. Solemn truth! immense favour, bestowed on two or three when really gathered together in His name; but which forms a subject of the deepest grief when this unity is pretended to, while the reality is not there. [See Note #56]

Another element of the character proper to the kingdom, which had been manifested in God and in Christ, is pardoning grace. In this also the children of the kingdom are to be imitators of God, and always to forgive. This refers only to wrongs done to oneself, and not to public discipline. We must pardon to the end, or rather, there must be no end; even as God has forgiven us all things. At the same time, I believe that the dispensations of God to the Jews are here described. They had not only broken the law, but they had slain the Son of God. Christ interceded for them, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." In answer to this prayer, a provisional pardon was preached by the Holy Ghost, through the mouth of Peter. But this grace too was rejected. When it was a question of shewing grace to the Gentiles, who, no doubt, owed them the hundred pence, they would not hear of it, and they are given up to punishment, [See Note #57] until the Lord can say, "They have received double for all their sins."

In a word, the spirit of the kingdom is not outward power, but lowliness; but in this condition there is nearness to the Father, and then it is easy to be meek and humble in this world. One who has tasted the favour of God will not seek greatness on earth; he is imbued with the spirit of grace, he cherishes the lowly, he pardons those who have wronged him, he is near God, and resembles Him in his ways. The same spirit of grace reigns, whether in the assembly or in its members. It alone represents Christ on the earth; and to it relate those regulations which are founded on the acceptance of a people as belonging unto God. Two or three really gathered together in the name of Jesus act with His authority, and enjoy His privileges with the Father, for Jesus Himself is there in their midst.

Note #53

The Lord here distinguishes a believing little one. In the other verses, He speaks of a little child, making its character, as such, a model of that of the Christian in this world.

Note #54

As doctrine, the sinful condition of the child, and its need of the sacrifice of Christ, are dearly expressed here. He does not say, "Seek," as to them. The employing the parable of the lost sheep is striking here.

Note #55

It is important to call to mind here, that while the Holy Ghost is personally fully recognised in Matthew, as in the birth of the Lord, and (chapter 10) as acting and speaking in the disciples in their service, as a divine Person, as it is ever from Him alone we can act rightly the coming of the Holy Ghost, in the order of divine dispensation, forms no part of the teaching of this gospel, though recognised as a fact in chapter 10. The view of Christ in Matthew closes with His resurrection, and the Jewish body are sent out from Galilee as an accepted body to the world to evangelise the Gentiles, and He declares He will be with them to the end of the age. So here He is in the midst of two or three gathered to His name. The church here is not the body by the baptism of the Holy Ghost; it is not the house where the Holy Ghost dwells on earth; but where the two or three meet to His name, there Christ is. Now I do not doubt that all good from life on, and the word of life, comes from the Spirit, but this is another thing, and the assembly here is not the body, nor the house, through the coming down of the Holy Ghost. This was a subsequent teaching and revelation, and remains blessedly true; but it is Christ in the midst of those assembled to His name Even in chapter 16 it is He builds, but that is another thing. Of course it is spiritually He is present.

Note #56

It is very striking to find here, that the only succession in the office of binding and loosing which Heaven sanctions is that of two or three assembled in Christ's name.

Note #57

This giving up, and the formal opening into the intermediate heavenly place connected with the Son of man in glory are in Acts 7, where Stephen recites their history from Abraham, the first called as root of promise, to that day.

Matthew Chapter 19

chapter 19 carries on the subject of the spirit that is suited to the kingdom of heaven, and goes deep into the principles which govern human nature, and of what was now divinely introduced. A question asked by the Pharisees for the Lord had drawn nigh to Judea gives rise to the exposition of His doctrine on marriage; and turning away from the law, given on account of the hardness of their hearts, He goes back [See Note #58] to God's institution, according to which one man and one woman were to unite together, and to be one in the sight of God. He establishes, or rather re-establishes, the true character of the indissoluble bond of marriage. I call it indissoluble, for the exception of the case of unfaithfulness, is not one; the guilty person had already broken the bond. It was no longer man and woman one flesh. At the same time, if God gave spiritual power for it, it was still better to remain unmarried.

He then renews His instruction with respect to children, while testifying His affection for them: here it appears to me rather in connection with the absence of all that binds to the world, to its distractions and its lusts, and owning what is lovely, confiding, and externally undefiled in nature; whereas, in chapter 18, it was the intrinsic character of the kingdom. After this, He shews (with reference to the introduction of the kingdom in His Person) the nature of entire devotedness and sacrifice of all things, in order to follow Him, if truly they only sought to please God. The spirit of the world was opposed at all points, both carnal passions and riches. No doubt the law of Moses restrained these passions; but it supposes them, and, in some respects, bears with them. According to the glory of the world, a child had no value. What power can it have there? It is of value in the Lord's eyes.

The law promised life to the man that kept it. The Lord makes it simple and practical in its requirements, or, rather, recalls them in their true simplicity. Riches were not forbidden by the law; that is to say, although moral obligation between man and man was maintained by the law, that which

bound the heart to the world was not judged by it. Rather was prosperity, according to the government of God, connected with obedience to it. For it supposed this world, and man alive in it, and tested him there. Christ recognises this; but the motives of the heart are tested. The law was spiritual, and, the Son of God there; we find again what we found before man tested and detected, and God revealed. All is intrinsic and eternal in its nature, for God is revealed already. Christ judges everything that has a bad effect on the heart, and acts upon its selfishness, and thus separates it from God. "Sell that thou hast," says He, "and follow me." Alas! the young man could not renounce his possessions, his ease, himself. "Hardly," says Jesus, "shall a rich man enter into the kingdom." This was manifest: it was the kingdom of God, of heaven; self and the world had no place in it. The disciples, who did not understand that there is no good in man, were astonished that one so favoured and well disposed should be still far from salvation. Who then could succeed? The whole truth then comes out. It is impossible to men. They cannot overcome the desires of the flesh. Morally, and as to his will and his affections, these desires are the man. One cannot make a negro white, or take his spots from the leopard: that which they exhibit is in their nature. But to God, blessed be His name! all things are possible.

These instructions with regard to riches give rise to Peter's question, What shall be the portion of those who have renounced everything? This brings us back to the glory in chapter 17. There would be a regeneration; the state of things should be entirely renewed under the dominion of the Son of man. At that time they should sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. They should have the first place in the administration of the earthly kingdom. Every one, however, should have his own place; for whatever any one renounced for Jesus' sake, he should receive a hundredfold and everlasting life. Nevertheless these things would not be decided by appearance here; nor by the place men held in the old system, and before men: some that were first should be last, and the last first. In fact, it was to be feared that the carnal heart of man would take this encouragement, given in the shape of reward for all his labour and all his sacrifices, in a mercenary spirit, and seek to make God his debtor; and, therefore, in the parable by which the Lord continues His discourse (chapter 20), He

establishes the principle of grace and of God's sovereignty in that which He gives, and towards those whom He calls, in a very distinct manner, and makes His gifts to those whom He brings into His vineyard depend on His grace and on His call.

Note #58

The connection is here traced between the new thing and nature, as God had originally formed it, passing over the law as something merely come between. It was a new power, because evil had come in, but it recognised God's creation, while proving the state of the heart, not yielding to its weakness. Sin has corrupted what God created good. The power of the Spirit of God, given to us through redemption, raises man and his path wholly out of the whole condition of flesh, introduces a new divine power by which he walks in this world, after the example of Christ. But with this there is the fullest sanction of what God Himself originally established. It is good, though there may be what is better. The way the law is passed over to go back to God's original institution, where spiritual power did not take the heart wholly out of the whole scene, though walking in it, is very striking. In marriage, the child, the character of the young man, what is of God and lovely in nature is recognised of the Lord. But the state of man's heart is searched out. This does not depend on character but motive, and is fully tested by Christ (there is an entire dispensational change, for riches were promised to a faithful Jew), and a rejected Christ the path to heaven everything, and the test of everything, that is of the heart of man. God made man upright with certain family relationships. Sin has wholly corrupted this old or first creation of man. The coming of the Holy Ghost has brought in a power which lifts, in the second Man, out of the old creation into the new, and gives us heavenly things only not yet as to the vessel, the body; but it cannot disown or condemn what God created in the beginning. That is impossible. In the beginning God made them. When we come to heavenly condition, all this, though not the fruits of its exercises in grace, disappears. If a man in the power of the Holy Ghost has the gift to do it, and be entirely heavenly, so much the better; but it is entirely evil to condemn or speak against the relationships which God originally created, or diminish or detract from the authority which God has connected with them. If a man can live

wholly above and out of them all, to serve Christ, it is all well; but it is rare and exceptional.

Matthew Chapter 20

We may remark that, when the Lord answers Peter, it was the consequence of having left all for Christ upon His call. The motive was Christ Himself: therefore He says, "Ye which have followed me." He speaks also of those who had done it for His name's sake. This was the motive. The reward is an encouragement, when, for His sake, we are already in the way. This is always the case when reward is spoken of in the New Testament. [See Note #59] He who was called at the eleventh hour was dependent on this call for his entrance into the work; and if, in his kindness, the master chose to give him as much as the others, they should have rejoiced at it. The first adhered to justice; they received that which was agreed upon; the last enjoyed the grace of his master. And it is to be remarked that they accept the principle of grace, of confidence in it. "Whatsoever is right I will give!" The great point in the parable is that confidence in the grace of the master of the vineyard, and grace as the ground of their action. But who understood it? A Paul might come in late, God having then called him, and be a stronger testimony to grace than the labourers who had wrought from the dawning of the gospel day.

The Lord afterwards pursues the subject with His disciples. He goes up to Jerusalem, where the Messiah ought to have been received and crowned, to be rejected and put to death, but after that to rise again; and when the sons of Zebedee come and ask him for the two first places in the kingdom, He answers that He can lead them indeed to suffering; but as to the first places in His kingdom, He could not bestow them, except (according to the Father's counsels) on those for whom the Father had prepared them. Wondrous self-renunciation! It is for the Father, for us, that He works. He disposes of nothing. He can bestow on those who will follow Him a share in His sufferings: everything else shall be given according to the counsels of the Father. But what real glory for Christ and perfection in Him, and what a privilege for us to have this motive only, and to partake in the Lord's sufferings! and what a purification of our carnal hearts is here proposed to

us, in making us act only for a suffering Christ, sharing His cross, and committing ourselves to God for recompense!

The Lord then takes occasion to explain the sentiments that become His followers, the perfection of which they had seen in Himself. In the world, authority was sought for; but the spirit of Christ was a spirit of service, leading to the choice of the lowest place, and to entire devotedness to others. Beautiful and perfect principles, the full bright perfection of which was displayed in Christ. The renunciation of all things, in order to depend confidently on the grace of Him whom we serve, the consequent readiness to take the lowest place, and thus to be the servant of all this should be the spirit of those who have part in the kingdom as now established by the rejected Lord. It is this that becomes His followers. [See Note #60]

With the end of Mat 20:28, this portion of the Gospel terminates, and the closing scenes of the blessed Saviour's life begin. At Mat 20:29, [See Note #61] begins His last presentation to Israel as the Son of David, the Lord, the true King of Israel, the Messiah. He begins His career in this respect at Jericho, the place where Joshua entered the land the place on which the curse had so long rested. He opens the blind eyes of His people who believe in Him and receive Him as the Messiah, for such He truly was, although rejected. They salute Him as Son of David, and He answers their faith by opening their eyes. They follow Him a figure of the true remnant of His people, who will wait for Him.

Note #59

Indeed, reward is in scripture always an encouragement to those who are in sorrow and suffering by having from higher motives entered into God's way. So Moses; so even Christ, whose motive in perfect love we know, yet for the joy set before Him endured the cross despising the shame. He was the Leader and Completer in the path of faith.

Note #60

Observe the way in which the sons of Zebedee and their mother come to seek the highest place, at the moment when the Lord was preparing unreservedly to take the very lowest. Alas! we see so much of the same

spirit. The effect was to bring out how absolutely He had stripped Himself of everything. These are the principles of the heavenly kingdom: perfect self-renunciation, to be contented in thorough devotedness; this is the fruit of love that seeketh not her own the yieldingness that flows from the absence of self-seeking; submission when despised; meekness and lowliness of heart. The spirit of service to others is that which love produces at the same time as the humility which is satisfied with this place. The Lord fulfilled this even unto death, giving His life as a ransom for many.

Note #61

The case of the blind man at Jericho is, in all the first three Gospels, the commencement of the final circumstances of Christ's life which led on to the cross, the general contents and teachings of each being closed. Hence He is addressed as Son of David, being the last presentation of Himself as such to them, God's testimony being given to Him as such.

Matthew Chapter 21

Afterwards (chapter 21), disposing of all that belonged to His willing people, He makes His entry into Jerusalem as King and Lord, according to the testimony of Zechariah. But although entering as King the last testimony to the beloved city, which (to their ruin) was going to reject Him He comes as a meek and lowly King. The power of God influences the heart of the multitudes, and they salute Him as King, as Son of David, making use of the language supplied by Psalm 118, [See Note #62] which celebrates the millennial sabbath brought in by the Messiah, then to be acknowledged by the people. The multitude spread their garments to prepare the way for their meek, though glorious King; they cut down branches from the trees to bear Him testimony; and He is conducted in triumph to Jerusalem, while the people cry, "Hosanna [Save now] to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" Happy for them if their hearts had been changed to retain this testimony in the Spirit. But God sovereignly disposed their hearts to bear this testimony; He could not allow His Son to be rejected without receiving it.

And now the King is going to review everything, still maintaining His position of humility and of testimony. Apparently the different classes come to judge

Him, or to perplex Him; but in fact they all present themselves before Him to receive at His hands, one after another, the judgment of God respecting them. It is a striking scene that opens before us the true Judge, the everlasting King, presenting Himself for the last time to His rebellious people with the fullest testimony to His rights and to His power; and they, coming to harass and condemn Him, led by their very malice to pass before Him one after another, laying open their real condition, to receive their judgment from His lips, without His forsaking for a moment (unless in cleansing the temple, before this scene commenced) the position of Faithful and True Witness in all meekness on the earth.

The difference between the two parts of this history is distinguishable. The first presents the Lord in His character of Messiah and Jehovah. As Lord, He commands the ass to be brought. He enters the city, according to the prophecy, as King. He cleanses the temple with authority. In answer to the priests' objection He quotes Psalm 8, which speaks of the manner in which Jehovah caused Himself to be glorified, and perfected the praises due to Him out of the mouth of babes. In the temple also He heals Israel. He then leaves them, no longer lodging in the city, which He could no longer own, but with the remnant outside. The next day, in a remarkable figure He exhibits the curse about to fall upon the nation. Israel was the fig tree of Jehovah; but it cumbered the ground. It was covered with leaves, but there was no fruit. The fig tree, condemned by the Lord, presently withers away. It is a figure of this unhappy nation, of man in the flesh with every advantage, which bore no fruit for the Husbandman.

Israel in fact possessed all the outward forms of religion, and were zealous for the law and the ordinances, but they bore no fruit unto God. So far as placed under responsibility to bring forth fruit, that is to say, under the old covenant, they will never do so. Their rejection of Jesus put an end to all hope. God will act in grace under the new covenant; but this is not the question here. The fig tree is Israel as they were, man cultivated by God, but in vain. All was over. That which He said to the disciples of the mountain's removing, while it is a great general principle, refers also, I doubt not, to that which should take place in Israel by means of their ministry. Looked at corporately on the earth as a nation, Israel should disappear, and be lost

among the Gentiles. The disciples were those whom God accepted according to their faith.

We see the Lord entering Jerusalem as a king Jehovah, the King of Israel and judgment pronounced on the nation. Then follow the details of judgment on the different classes of which it was composed. First come the chief priests and elders, who should have guided the people; they draw near to the Lord and question His authority. Thus addressing Him, they took the place of heads of the nation, and assumed to be judges, capable of pronouncing on the validity of any claims that might be made; if not, why concern themselves with Jesus?

The Lord, in His infinite wisdom, puts a question to them which tests their capability and by their own confession they were incapable. How then judge Him? [See Note #63] To tell them the foundation of His authority, was useless. It was too late now to tell them. They would have stoned Him, if He had alleged its true source. He replies, Decide on John the Baptist's mission. If they could not do this, why inquire respecting His? They cannot do it. If they acknowledged John to have been sent of God it would be acknowledging Christ. To deny it would be to lose their influence with the people. Of conscience there was no question with them. They confess their inability. Jesus then declines their competency as leaders and guardians of the faith of the people. They had judged themselves; and the Lord proceeds to set their conduct, and the Lord's dealings with them, plainly before their eyes, from Mat 21:28 to Mat 22:14.

First, while professing to do the will of God, they did it not; while the openly wicked had repented and done His will. They, seeing this, were still hardened. Again, not only had natural conscience remained untouched, whether by the testimony of John, or by the sight of repentance in others, but, although God had used every means to make them bring forth fruit worthy of His culture, He had found nothing in them but perversity and rebellion. The prophets had been rejected, and His Son would be so likewise. They desired to have His inheritance for themselves. They could not but acknowledge that in such case the consequence must necessarily be the destruction of those wicked men, and the bestowal of the vineyard on others. Jesus applies the parable to themselves, by quoting Psalm 118, which

announces that the stone rejected by the builders should become the headstone of the corner; moreover, that whosoever should fall on this stone as the nation was at that moment doing should be broken; but that on whomsoever it should fall and this would be the lot of the rebellious nation in the last days it should grind them to powder. The chief priests and the Pharisees understood that He spoke of them, but they dared not lay hands on Him, because the multitude took Him for a prophet. This is the history of Israel, as under responsibility, even till the last days. Jehovah was seeking fruit in His vineyard.

Note #62

This Psalm is peculiarly prophetic of the time of His future reception, and is often cited in connection with it.

Note #63

This throwing back on conscience is often the wisest answer, when the will is perverse.

Matthew Chapter 22

In chapter 22, their conduct with respect to the invitations of grace is presented in its turn. The parable is therefore a similitude of the kingdom of heaven. The purpose of God is to honour His Son by celebrating His marriage. First of all the Jews, already invited, are bidden to the marriage feast. They would not come. This was done during Christ's lifetime. Afterwards, all things being ready, He again sends forth messengers to induce them to come. This is the mission of the apostles to the nation, when the work of redemption had been accomplished. They either despise the message or slay the messengers. [See Note #64] The result is the destruction of those wicked men and of their city. This is the destruction that fell upon Jerusalem. On their rejection of the invitation, the destitute, the Gentiles, those who were outside, are brought in to the feast, and the wedding is furnished with guests. Another thing is now presented. It is true, that we have seen the judgment of Jerusalem in this parable, but, as it is a similitude of the kingdom, we have the judgment of that which is within the kingdom also. There must be fitness for the occasion. For a wedding feast

there must be a wedding garment. If Christ is to be glorified, everything must be according to His glory. There may be an outward entrance into the kingdom, a profession of Christianity; but he who is not clothed with that which appertains to the feast will be cast out. We must be clothed with Christ Himself. On the other hand, all is prepared nothing is required. It was not the guest's part to bring anything; the King provided all. But we must be imbued with the spirit of that which is done. If there is any thought of what was suitable to a wedding feast, the need of a wedding garment to appear in would surely be felt: if not, the honour of the King's Son has been forgotten. The heart was a stranger to it; the man himself shall become so by the judgment of the King when He takes cognizance of the guests who have come in.

Thus also grace has been shewn to Israel, and they are judged for refusing the invitation of the great King to the marriage of His Son. And then the abuse of this grace by those who appear to accept it is also judged. The bringing in of the Gentiles is declared.

Here concludes the history of the judgment of Israel in general, and of the character which the kingdom would assume.

After this (Mat 22:15, et seq.) the different classes of the Jews come forward, each in turn. First, the Pharisees and the Herodians (that is, those who favoured the authority of the Romans, and those who were opposed to it) seek to entangle Jesus in His talk. The blessed Lord answers them with that perfect wisdom that ever displayed itself in all He said and all He did. On their part, it was pure wickedness manifesting a total want of conscience. It was their own sin that had brought them under the Roman yoke a position contrary indeed to that which should have belonged to the people of God on earth. Apparently therefore Christ must either become an object of suspicion to the authorities, or renounce His claim to be the Messiah and consequently the Deliverer. Who had occasioned this dilemma? It was the fruit of their own sins. The Lord shews them that they had themselves accepted the yoke. The money bore the mark of this: let them render it then to those unto whom it belonged, and let them also which they were not doing render unto God the things that were God's. He leaves them under the yoke which they were obliged to confess they had accepted. He reminds

them of the rights of God; which they had forgotten. Such might moreover have been Israel's state according to the establishment of power in Nebuchadnezzar, as a "spreading vine of low stature."

The Sadducees come next before Him, and question Him as to the resurrection, thinking to prove its absurdity. Thus, as the condition of the nation had been exhibited in His discourse with the Pharisees, the unbelief of the Sadducees is displayed here. They thought only of the things of this world, seeking to deny the existence of another. But whatever the state of degradation and subjection into which the people had fallen, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, changed not. The promises made to the fathers remained sure, and the fathers were living to enjoy these promises hereafter. It was the word and the power of God which were in question. The Lord maintains them with power and evidence. The Sadducees were silenced.

The lawyers, struck with His reply, ask a question, which gives the Lord occasion to extract from the whole law, that which, in the sight of God, is its essence, presenting thus its perfection, and that which by whatever means it may be reached forms the happiness of those that walk in it. Grace alone rises higher.

Here their questioning ceases. All is judged, all is brought to light with respect to the position of the people, and the sects of Israel; and the Lord has laid before them the perfect thoughts of God respecting them, whether on the subject of their condition, of His promises, or of the substance of the law.

It was now the Lord's turn to propose His question in order to bring out His own position. He asks the Pharisees to reconcile the title of Son of David with that of Lord which David himself gave Him, and that in connection with the ascension of this same Christ to sit at the right hand of God until God had made all His enemies His footstool, and established His throne in Zion. Now this was the whole of Christ's position at that moment. They were unable to answer Him, and no man durst ask Him any more questions. In fact, to understand that Psalm, would have been to understand all the ways of God with respect to His Son at the time they were going to reject Him.

This necessarily closed these discourses by shewing the true position of Christ, who, although the Son of David, must ascend on high to receive the kingdom, and, while waiting for it, sit at the right hand of God according to the rights of His glorious Person David's Lord, as well as David's Son.

There is another point of interest to be remarked here. In these interviews and these discourses with the different classes of the Jews, the Lord brings out the condition of the Jews on all sides with respect to their relations with God, and then the position which He took Himself. He first shews their national position towards God, as under responsibility to Him, according to natural conscience and the privileges belonging to them. The result would be their cutting off, and the bringing in of others into the Lord's vineyard. This is Mat 21:28-46. He then exhibits their condition with regard to the grace of the kingdom, and the introduction of Gentile sinners. Here also the result is the cutting off and the destruction of the city. [See Note #65] Afterwards the Herodians and the Pharisees, the friends of the Romans and their enemies, the pretended friends of God, bring out the true position of the Jews with respect to the imperial power of the Gentiles and to God. In His interview with the Sadducees, He shews the certainty of the promises made to the fathers, and the relationship in which God stood to them in respect of life and resurrection. After this He puts the real meaning of the law before the scribes; and then the position which He took, Himself the Son of David, according to Psalm 110, which was linked with His rejection by the leaders of the nation who stood around Him.

Note #64

Contempt and violence are the two forms of the rejection of the testimony of God, and of the true witness. They hate the one and love the other, or cleave to the one and despise the other.

Note #65

Observe here, that from chapter 21:28 to the end, we have the responsibility of the nation looked at as in possession of their original privileges, according to which they ought to have borne fruit. Not having done so, another is put in their place. This was not the cause of the judgment which was, and yet is in a more terrible way to be, executed on Jerusalem, and which even then

accomplished the destruction of the city. The death of Jesus, the last of those who had been sent to look for fruit, brings judgment on His murderers (Mat 21:33-41). The destruction of Jerusalem is the consequence of the rejection of the testimony to the kingdom sent to call them in grace. In the first case, the judgment was upon the husbandmen the scribes, and chief priests, and leaders of the people. The judgment executed on account of the rejection of the testimony to the kingdom goes much farther (see Mat 22:7). Some despise the message, others ill treat the messengers; and, grace being thus rejected, the city is burned up, and its inhabitants cut off. Compare Mat 23:36, and see the historical prophecy in Luke 21. The distinction is maintained in all three gospels.

Matthew Chapter 23

Chapter 23 clearly shews how far the disciples are viewed in connection with the nation, inasmuch as they were Jews, although the Lord judges the leaders, who beguiled the people and dishonoured God by their hypocrisy. He speaks to the multitude and to His disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat." Being thus expositors of the law, they were to be obeyed in all that they said according to that law, although their own conduct was but hypocrisy. That which is important here is the position of the disciples; it is in fact the same as that of Jesus. They are in connection with all that is of God in the nation, that is to say, with the nation as the recognised people of God consequently, with the law as possessing authority from God. At the same time the Lord judges, and the disciples also were practically to judge, the walk of the nation, as publicly represented by their leaders. While still forming part of the nation, they were carefully to avoid the walk of the scribes and Pharisees. After having reproached these pastors of the nation with their hypocrisy, the Lord points out the way in which they themselves condemned the deeds of their fathers by building the sepulchres of the prophets whom they had slain. They were, then, the children of those who slew them, and God would put them to the test by sending them also prophets and wise men and scribes, and they would fill up the measure of their iniquity by putting these to death and persecuting them condemned thus out of their own mouths in order that all the righteous blood which had been shed, from Abel's to that of the prophet

Zechariah, should come upon this generation. Frightful amount of guilt, accumulated from the beginning of the enmity which sinful man, when placed under responsibility, has ever shewn to the testimony of God; and which increased daily, because the conscience became more hardened each time that it resisted this testimony! The truth was so much the more manifest from its witnesses having suffered. It was a rock, exposed to view, to be avoided in the people's path. But they persisted in their evil course, and every step in advance, every similar act, was the proof of a still increasing obduracy. The patience of God, while graciously dealing in testimony, had not been unobservant of their ways, and under this patience all had accumulated. All would be heaped upon the head of this reprobate generation.

Remark here the character given to the apostles and christian prophets. They are scribes, wise men, prophets, sent to the Jews to the ever rebellious nation. This very clearly brings out the aspect in which this chapter regards them. Even the apostles are "wise men," "scribes," sent to the Jews as such.

But the nation Jerusalem, God's beloved city is guilty and is judged. Christ, as we have seen, since the cure of the blind man near Jericho, presents Himself as Jehovah the King of Israel. How often would He have gathered the children of Jerusalem, but they would not! And now their house should be desolate, until (their hearts being converted) they should use the language of Psalm 118, and, in desire, hail His arrival who came in the name of Jehovah, looking for deliverance at His hands, and praying to Him for it in a word, until they should cry Hosanna to Him that should come. They would see Jesus no more until, humbled in heart, they should pronounce Him blessed whom they were expecting, and whom they now rejected in short, until they were prepared in heart. Peace should follow, desire precede, His appearing.

The last three Verses (Mat 23:37-39) exhibit clearly enough the position of the Jews, or of Jerusalem, as the centre of the system before God. Long since, and many times, would Jesus, Jehovah the Saviour, have gathered the children of Jerusalem together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but they would not. Their house should remain forsaken and desolate, but not for ever. After having killed the prophets, and stoned the

messengers sent unto them, they had crucified their Messiah, and rejected and slain those whom He had sent to proclaim grace unto them even after His rejection. Therefore should they see Him no more until they had repented, and the desire to see Him was produced in their hearts, so that they should be prepared to bless Him, and would bless Him in their hearts, and confess their readiness to do so. The Messiah, who was about to leave them, should be seen of them no more until repentance had turned their hearts unto Him whom they were now rejecting. Then they should see Him. The Messiah, coming in the name of Jehovah, shall be manifested to His people Israel. It is Jehovah their Saviour who should appear, and the Israel who had rejected Him should see Him as such. The people should thus return into the enjoyment of their relationship with God.

Such is the moral and prophetic picture of Israel. The disciples, as Jews, were viewed as part of the nation, though as a remnant spiritually detached from it, and witnessing in it.

Matthew Chapter 24

We have already seen that the rejection of the testimony to the kingdom in grace, is the cause of the judgment that falls upon Jerusalem and its inhabitants. Now in chapter 24 we have the position of this testimony in the midst of the people; the condition of the Gentiles, and the relation in which they stood to the testimony rendered by the disciples; after this, the condition of Jerusalem, consequent upon her rejection of the Messiah, and her contempt for the testimony; and then the universal overthrow at the end of those days: a state of things which should be ended by the appearance of the Son of man, and the gathering together of the elect of Israel from the four winds.

We must examine this remarkable passage, at once a prophecy, and instruction to the disciples for their direction in the path they must follow amid the coming events.

Jesus departs from the temple, and that for ever a solemn act, which, we may say, executed the judgment He had just pronounced. The house was now desolate. The hearts of the disciples were still bound to it by their former prepossessions. They draw His attention to the magnificent buildings

that composed it. Jesus announces to them its entire destruction. Seated apart with Him on the Mount of Olives, the disciples inquire when these things were to happen, and what would be the sign of His coming and of the end of the age. They class together the destruction of the temple, the coming of Christ, and the end of the age. We must observe, that here the end of the age is the end of the period during which Israel was subject to the law under the old covenant: a period which was to cease, giving place to the Messiah and to the new covenant. Observe also that God's government of the earth is the subject, and the judgments that should take place at Christ's coming, which would put an end to the existing age. The disciples confounded that which the Lord had said of the destruction of the temple with this period. [See Note #66] The Lord treats the subject from His own point of view (that is to say, with regard to the testimony which the disciples were to render in connection with the Jews during His absence and to the end of the age). He adds nothing as to the destruction of Jerusalem, which He had already announced. The time of His coming was purposely hidden. Moreover the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus put an end, in fact, to the position which the Lord's instructions had in view. There was no longer any cognizable testimony among the Jews. When this position shall be resumed, the applicability of the passage will also recommence. After the destruction of Jerusalem until that time the church only is in question.

The Lord's discourse is divided into three parts: 1. The general condition of the disciples and of the world during the time of the testimony, to the end of Mat 24:14; 2. The period marked out by the fact that the abomination of desolation stands in the holy place (Mat 24:15); 3. The Lord's coming and the gathering together of the elect in Israel (Mat 24:29).

The time of the disciples' testimony is characterised by false Christs and false prophets among the Jews; persecution of those who render testimony, betraying them to the Gentiles. But there is yet something more definite with regard to those days. There would be false Christs in Israel. There would be wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes. They were not to be troubled: the end would not be yet. These things were only a beginning of sorrows. They were principally outward things. There were other events which would bring them into greater trial, and test them more thoroughly

things more from within. The disciples should be delivered up, put to death, hated of all nations. The consequence of this among those who made profession would be that many would be offended; they would betray one another. False prophets would arise and deceive many, and, because iniquity abounded, the love of many should wax cold a sorrowful picture. But these things would give occasion for the exercise of a faith that had been put to the proof. He who endured to the end should be saved. This concerns the sphere of testimony in particular. That which the Lord says is not absolutely limited to the testimony in Canaan; but as it is from thence the testimony goes forth, it is all connected with that land as the centre of God's ways. But, in addition to this, the gospel of the kingdom should be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then should the end come the end of this age. Now, although heaven is the source of authority when the kingdom shall be established, Canaan and Jerusalem are its earthly centre. So that the idea of the kingdom, while extending throughout the world, turns our thoughts to the land of Israel. It is "this gospel of the kingdom" [See Note #67] which is here spoken of; it is not the proclamation of the union of the church with Christ, nor redemption in its fulness, as preached and taught by the apostles after the ascension, but the kingdom which was to be established on the earth, as John the Baptist, and as the Lord Himself, had proclaimed. The establishment of the universal authority of the ascended Christ should be preached in all the world to test their obedience, and to furnish those who had ears to hear with the object of faith.

This is the general history of that which would take place until the end of the age, without entering on the subject of the proclamation which founded the assembly properly so called. The impending destruction of Jerusalem, and the refusal of the Jews to receive the gospel, caused God to raise up a special testimony by the hands of Paul, without annulling the truth of the coming kingdom. That which follows proves that such a going forth of testimony of the kingdom will take place at the end, and that the testimony will reach all nations before the coming of that judgment which will put an end to the age.

But there will be a moment when, within a certain sphere (that is, in Jerusalem and its vicinity) a special time of suffering shall set in as regards

the testimony in Israel. In speaking of the abomination that maketh desolate, the Lord refers us to Daniel, that we may understand whereof He speaks. Now Daniel (chapter 12, where this tribulation is spoken of) brings us definitely to the last days the time when Michael shall stand up for Daniel's people, that is, the Jews, who are under the domination of the Gentiles the days in which there shall be a time of trouble, such as never had been nor ever again should be, and in which the remnant should be delivered. In the latter part of the previous chapter of that prophet, this time is called "the time of the end," and the destruction of the king of the north is prophetically declared. Now the prophet announces that 1335 days before the full blessing (blessed is he that has part therein!) the daily sacrifice should be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up; that from this moment there should be 1290 days (that is, one month more than the 1260 days spoken of in the Apocalypse, during which the woman who flees from the serpent is nourished in the wilderness; and also than the three years and a half of Daniel 7). At the end, as we find here, the judgment comes and the kingdom is given to the saints.

Thus it is proved that this passage refers to the last days and to the position of the Jews at that time. The events of the time past since the Lord uttered it confirm this thought. Neither in 1260 days, nor in 1260 years, after the days of Titus, nor in 30 days or years after, did any event take place which could be the accomplishment of these days in Daniel. The periods are gone by many years ago. Israel has not been delivered, neither has Daniel stood in his lot at the end of those days. It is equally plain that Jerusalem is in question in the passage, and its vicinity, for they that are in Judea are commanded to flee into the mountains. The disciples who shall be there at that time are to pray that their flight may not be on a sabbath day an additional testimony that it is Jews who are the subject of the prophecy; but a testimony also of the tender care which the Lord takes of those who are His, thinking even in the midst of these unparalleled events, of whether it would be wintry weather at the time of their flight.

Besides this, other circumstances prove, if further proof were needed, that it is the Jewish remnant who are in question, and not the assembly. We know that all believers are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. They

will afterwards return with Him. But here there will be false Christs on the earth, and people will say, "He is here in the wilderness," "He is there in the secret chambers." But the saints who shall be caught up and return with the Lord have nothing at all to do with false Christs on earth, since they will go up to heaven to be with Him there, before He returns to the earth; while it is easy to understand that the Jews, who are expecting earthly deliverance, should be liable to such temptations, and that they should be deceived by them unless kept by God Himself.

This part then of the prophecy applies to the last days, the last three years and a half before the judgment which will be suddenly poured out at the coming of the Son of man. The Lord will come suddenly as a flash of lightning, as an eagle to its prey, unto the spot where the object of His judgment is found. Immediately after the tribulation of those last three years and a half, the whole hierarchical system of government shall be shaken and utterly overthrown. Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. This Verse (Mat 24:30) contains the answer to the second part of the disciples' inquiry in Verse 3 (Mat 24:3). The Lord gives His disciples the warnings necessary for their guidance; but the world would see no signs, however plain they might be to those that understand. But this sign should be at the moment of the Lord's appearing. The brightness of His glory whom they had despised would shew them who it was that came; and it would be unexpected. What a terrible moment, when, instead of a Messiah who should answer to their worldly pride, the Christ whom they had despised shall appear in the heavens!

Afterwards the Son of man, thus come and manifested, would send to gather all the elect of Israel from the four corners of the earth. It is this which ends the history of the Jews, and even that of Israel, in answer to the disciples' question, and unfolds the dealings of God with respect to the testimony among the people who had rejected it, announcing the time of their deep distress, and the judgment that shall be poured out in the midst of this scene when Jesus comes, the subversion of all powers great and small being complete.

The Lord gives the history of the testimony in Israel, and that of the people themselves, from the moment of His departure until His return; but the length of time, during which there should be neither people nor temple nor city, is not specified. It is this which gives importance to the capture of Jerusalem. It is not here spoken of in direct terms the Lord does not describe it; but it put an end to that order of things to which His discourse applies, and this application is not resumed until Jerusalem and the Jews are again brought forward. The Lord announced it at the beginning. The disciples thought that His coming would take place at the same time. He answers them in such a manner that His discourse should be of use to them until the capture of Jerusalem. But when once the abomination of desolation is mentioned, we find ourselves carried on into the last days.

The disciples were to understand the signs He gave them. I have already said that the destruction of Jerusalem, by the fact itself, interrupted the application of His discourse. The Jewish nation was set aside; but Verse 34 (Mat 24:34) has a much wider sense, and one more really proper to it. Unbelieving Jews should exist, as such, until all was accomplished. Compare Deu 32:5 Deu 32:20, where this judgment on Israel is specially in view. God hides His face from them until He shall see what their end will be, for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. This has taken place. They are a distinct race of people unto this day. That generation exists in the same condition a monument of the abiding certainty of God's dealings, and of the Lord's words.

To conclude, the government of God, exercised with regard to this people, has been traced to its end. The Lord comes, and He gathers together the dispersed elect of Israel. The prophetic history continues in Mat 25:31, which is connected with Mat 24:30. And as Mat 24:31 relates the gathering together of Israel after the appearance of the Son of man, Mat 25:31 announces His dealings in judgment with the Gentiles. He will appear doubtless as the lightning with regard to the apostasy, which will be as a dead body in His sight. But when He shall come solemnly to take His earthly place in glory, that will not pass away like lightning. He shall sit upon the throne of His glory, and all nations shall be gathered before Him on His throne of judgment, and they shall be judged according to their treatment

of the messengers of the kingdom, who had gone out to preach it unto them. These messengers are the brethren (Mat 24:40); those who had received them are the sheep; those who had neglected their message are the goats. The account then which begins Mat 25:31, of the separation of sheep and goats and of its result, pictures the nations who are judged on earth according to their treatment of these messengers. It is the judgment of the living, so far at least as regards the nations a judgment as final as that of the dead. It is not Christ's judgment in battle as in Revelation 19. It is a session of His supreme tribunal in His right of government over the earth, as in Rev 20:4, I speak of the principle or rather of the character of the judgment. I do not doubt that these brethren are Jews, such as the disciples were, that is to say, those who will be in a similar position as to their testimony. The Gentiles, who had received this message, should be accepted, as though they had treated Christ in the same manner. His Father had prepared for them the enjoyment of the kingdom; and they should enter into it, being still on earth, for Christ was come down in the power of eternal life. [See Note #68]

I have, for the moment, passed over all between Mat 24:31 and Mat 25:31, because the end of this last chapter completes all that concerns the government and the judgment of the earth. But there is a class of persons whose history is given us in its great moral features intermediately between these two Verses I have just mentioned.

These are the disciples of Christ, outside the testimony borne in the midst of Israel, to whom He has committed His service, and a position in connection with Himself, during His absence. This position and this service are in connection with Christ Himself, and not in connection with Israel, wherever it may be that this service is accomplished.

There are however, before we come to these, some Verses of which I have not yet spoken, which apply more particularly to the state of things in Israel, as warning to the disciples who are there, and describe the discriminating judgment which takes place among the Jews in the last days. I speak of them here, because all this part of the discourse namely, from Mat 24:31 to Mat 25:31 is an exhortation, an address from the Lord, on the subject of their duties during His absence. I refer to Mat 24:32-44. They

speak of the continual expectation which their ignorance of the moment when the Son of man would come imposed on the disciples, and in which the disciples were intentionally left (and the judgment is the earthly one); while from Verse 45 (Mat 24:45), the Lord addresses Himself more directly, and at the same time in a more general manner, to their conduct during His absence, not in connection with Israel, but with His own His household. He had committed to them the task of supplying them with suitable food in due season. This is the responsibility of ministry in the assembly.

It is important to remark that in the first parable the state of the assembly is looked at as a whole; the parable of the virgins and that of the talents give individual responsibility. Hence the servant who is unfaithful is cut off and has his portion with hypocrites. The state of the responsible assembly depended on their waiting for Christ, or their heart saying He delays His coming. It would be on His return that judgment should be pronounced on their faithfulness during the interval Faithfulness should be approved in that day. On the other hand, practical forgetfulness of His coming would lead to licence and tyranny. It is not an intellectual system that is meant here: "the evil servant says in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming"; his will was concerned in it. The result was that the fleshly will manifested itself. It was no longer devoted service to His household, with a heart set upon the Master's approval at His return; but worldliness in conduct, and the assumption of arbitrary authority, to which the service appointed him gave occasion. He eats and drinks with the drunken, he unites himself to the world and partakes in its ways; he smites his fellow-servants at his will. Such is the effect of putting off during His absence, deliberately in heart, the Lord's return and holding the assembly to be settled down here; instead of faithful service, worldly-mindedness and tyranny. Is it not too true a picture?

What is it that has happened to those who had the place of service in the house of God? The consequences on either hand are these: the faithful servant, who from love and devotion to his Master applied himself to the welfare of His household, should be made ruler on his Master's return over all His goods; those who have been faithful in the service of the house shall be set over all things by the Lord, when He takes His place of power and acts as King. All things are given into the hands of Jesus by the Father. Those

who in humility have been faithful to His service during His absence shall be made rulers over all that is committed to Him, that is, over all things they are but the "goods" of Jesus. On the other hand, he who during the Lord's absence had set himself up as master, and followed after the spirit of the flesh and of the world to which he had united himself, should not merely have the world's portion: his Master should come quite unexpectedly, and he should receive the punishment of hypocrites. What a lesson for those who take to themselves a place of service in the assembly! Observe here, that it is not said he is drunken himself, but that he eats and drinks with those that are so. He allies himself with the world and follows its customs. This moreover is the general aspect which the kingdom will assume in that day, although the heart of the evil servant was wicked. The Bridegroom would indeed tarry; and the consequences that might be expected from the heart of man will not fail to be realised. But the effect, we then find, is to make manifest those who had [See Note #69] really the grace of Christ and those who had not.

Note #66

In fact, this position of Israel, and the testimony connected with it, were interrupted by the destruction of Jerusalem; and this is the reason why that event presents itself to the mind in connection with this prophecy, of which it is certainly not the fulfilment. The Lord is not yet come, neither the great tribulation; but the state of things to which the Lord alludes, to the end of Verse 14 (Mat 24:14), was violently and judicially interrupted, by the destruction of Jerusalem, so that in this point of view there is a connection.

Note #67

The gospel of the kingdom was confined to Israel in chapter 10 and here this, though no subject of the teaching, is the subject supposed up to Verse 14 (Mat 24:14), but there is no formal distinction made: the mission in chapter 28 is to the Gentiles; but then there is nothing of the kingdom but rather the contrary, though Christ be only risen, but all power given to Him in heaven and earth.

Note #68

There is no possible ground for applying this parable to what is called the general judgment, an expression indeed wholly unscriptural. First, there are three parties, not merely two goats, sheep, and brethren; then, it is the judgment of the Gentiles only; and, further, the ground of judgment is wholly inapplicable to the great mass even of these last. The ground of judgment is the way these brethren have been received. Now none have been sent at all to the vast majority of the Gentiles in long ages. The time of this ignorance God winked at, and another ground of judgment as to them is given in the beginning of Romans. Christians and Jews have been already treated of in chapter 24 and the previous part of chapter 25. It is just those whom the Lord finds on earth when He comes, and who will be judged according to their treatment of the messengers He has sent.

Note #69

How solemn the testimony given here to the effect of the assembly's losing the present expectation of the Lord's return! What causes the professing church to run into hierarchical oppression and worldliness, so as to be cut off in the end as hypocrites, is saying in the heart, My lord delayeth his coming giving up the present expectation. That has been the source of the ruin. The true christian position was lost as soon as they began to put off the Lord's coming; and they are treated, note, though in this state, as the responsible servant.

Matthew Chapter 25

Professors, during the Lord's absence, are here presented as virgins, who went out to meet the Bridegroom, and light Him to the house. In this passage He is not the Bridegroom of the church. No others go to meet Him for His marriage with the church in heaven. The bride does not appear in this parable. Had she been introduced, it would have been Jerusalem on earth. The assembly is not seen in these chapters as such.

It is here individual [See Note #70] responsibility during the absence of Christ. That which characterised the faithful at this period was that they came out from the world, from Judaism, from everything, even religion connected with the world, to go and meet the coming Lord. The Jewish remnant, on the contrary, wait for Him in the place where they are. If this

expectation were real, the characteristic of one governed by it would be the thought of that which was necessary for the coming One the light, the oil. Otherwise, to be the companions of professors meanwhile, and to carry lamps with them, would satisfy the heart. Nevertheless they all took a position; they go out, they leave the house to go out and meet the Bridegroom. He tarries. This also has taken place. They all fall asleep. The whole professing church has lost the thought of the Lord's return even the faithful who have the Spirit. They must also have gone in again somewhere to sleep at ease a place of rest for the flesh. But at midnight, unexpectedly, the cry is raised, "Behold, the bridegroom; go ye out to meet him." Alas! they needed the same call as at first. They must again go out to meet Him. The virgins rise, and trim their lamps. There is time enough between the midnight cry and the Bridegroom's arrival to prove the condition of each. There were some who had no oil in their vessels. Their lamps were going out. [See Note #71] The wise had oil. It was impossible for them to share it with the others. Those only who possessed it went in with the Bridegroom to take part in the marriage. He refused to acknowledge the others. What business had they there? The virgins were to give light with their lamps. They had not done it. Why should they share the feast? They had failed in that which gave this place. What title had they to be at the feast The virgins of the feast were virgins who accompanied the Bridegroom. These had not done so. They were not admitted. But even the faithful ones had forgotten the coming of Christ. They fell asleep. But, at least, they possessed the essential thing that corresponded to it. The grace of the Bridegroom causes the cry to be raised which proclaims His arrival. It awakens them: they have oil in their vessels; and the delay, which occasions the lamps of the unfaithful to go out, gives the faithful time to be ready and at their place; and forgetful as they may have been, they go in with the Bridegroom to the wedding feast [See Note #72]

We pass now from state of soul to service.

For in truth (Mat 25:14) it is as a man who had gone away from his home for the Lord dwelt in Israel and who commits his goods to his own servants, and then departs. Here, we have the principles that characterise faithful servants, or the contrary. It is not now the personal individual expectation,

and the possession of the oil, requisite for a place in the Lord's glorious train; neither is it the public and general position of those who were in the Master's service, characterised as position and as a whole, and therefore represented by a single servant; it is individual faithfulness in the service, as before in the expectation of the Bridegroom. The Master on His return will reckon with each one. Now what was their position? What was the principle that would produce faithfulness? Observe, first of all, that it is not providential gifts, earthly possessions, that are meant. These are not the "goods that Jesus committed to His servants when He went away. They were gifts which fitted them to labour in His service while He was absent. The Master was sovereign and wise. He gave differently to each, and to each according to his capacity. Each was fitted for the service in which he was employed, and the gifts needed for its fulfilment were bestowed on him. Faithfulness to perform it was the only thing in question. That which distinguished the faithful from the unfaithful was confidence in their Master. They had sufficient confidence in His well-known character, in His goodness, His love, to labour without being authorised in any other manner than by their knowledge of His personal character, and by the intelligence which that confidence and that knowledge produced. Of what use to give them sums of money, except to trade with them? Had He failed in wisdom when He bestowed these gifts? The devotedness that flowed from knowledge of their Master counted upon the love of Him whom they knew. They laboured, and they were rewarded. This is the true character, and the spring, of service in the church. It is this that the third servant lacked. He did not know his Master he did not trust in Him. He could not even do that which was consistent with his own thoughts. He waited for some authorisation which would be a security against the character his heart falsely gave his Master. Those who knew their Master's character entered into His joy.

There is this difference between the parable here and that in Luke 19, that in the latter each man receives one pound; his responsibility is the only question. And consequently he who gained ten pounds is set over ten cities. Here the sovereignty and the wisdom of God are concerned, and he who labours is guided by the knowledge he has of his Master; and the counsels of God in grace are accomplished. He who has the most receives yet more. At the same time the reward is more general. He who has gained two

talents, and he who has gained five, enter alike into the joy of the Lord whom they have served. They have known Him in His true character, they enter into His full joy. The Lord grant it unto us!

There is more than this in the second parable that of the virgins. It refers more directly and more exclusively to the heavenly character of Christians. It is not the assembly, properly so called, as a body; but the faithful have gone out to meet the Bridegroom, who was returning to the marriage. At the time of His return to execute judgment, the kingdom of heaven will assume the character of persons come out from the world, and still more from Judaism from all that, in point of religion, belongs to the flesh from all established worldly form to have to do with the coming Lord alone, and to go out to meet Him. This was the character of the faithful from the beginning, as having part in the kingdom of heaven, if they had understood the position in which they were placed by the Lord's rejection. The virgins, it is true, had gone in again; and this falsified their character; but the midnight cry brought them back into their true place. Therefore they go in with the Bridegroom, and there is no question of judging and rewarding, but of being with Him. In the first parable, and in that of Luke, the subject is His return to earth, and individual recompense the results, in the kingdom, of their conduct during the King's absence. [See Note #73] Service and its results are not the subject in the parable of the virgins. Those who have no oil do not go in at all. This is enough. The others have blessing in common; they go in with the Bridegroom to the marriage. There is no question of particular reward, nor of difference in conduct between them. It was the heart's expectation, though grace had to bring them back into it. Whatever the place of service might have been, the reward was sure. This parable applies and is limited to the heavenly portion of the kingdom as such. It is a similitude of the kingdom of heaven.

We may also remark here, that the delay of the Master is noticed in the third parable likewise "after a long time" (Mat 25:19). Their faithfulness and their constancy were thus put to the test. May the Lord give unto us to be found faithful and devoted, now in the end of the ages, that He may say unto us, "Good and faithful servants!" It is worthy of remark that in these parables those who are in service, or go out at first, are the same as those found at

the end. The Lord would not hold out the supposition of delay beyond "we who are alive and remain." [See Note #74]

Weeping and gnashing of teeth are his portion who has not known his Master, who has outraged Him by the thoughts he entertained of His character.

In Verse 31 (Mat 25:31) the prophetic history is resumed from Verse 31 of chapter 24 (Mat 24:31). There we saw the Son of man appear like a flash of lightning, and afterwards gather together the remnant of Israel from the four corners of the earth. But this is not all. If He thus appears in a manner as sudden as unexpected, He also establishes His throne of judgment and glory on the earth. If He destroys His enemies whom He finds in rebellion against Himself, He also sits upon His throne to judge all nations. This is the judgment on earth of the living. Four different parties are here found together; the Lord, the Son of man Himself the brethren the sheep and the goats. I believe the brethren here to be Jews, His disciples as Jews, whom He had employed as His messengers, to preach the kingdom during His absence. The gospel of the kingdom was to be preached as a testimony to all nations; and then the end of the age should come. At the time here spoken of, this has been done. The result should be manifested before the throne of the Son of man on earth.

He calls these messengers therefore His brethren. He had told them they should be ill-treated: they had been so. Still there were some who had received their testimony.

Now such was His affection for His faithful servants, so highly did He value them, that He judged those to whom the testimony was sent according to the manner in which they had received these messengers, whether well or ill, as though it had been done to Himself. What an encouragement for His witnesses during that time of trouble, tried as their faith should be in service! At the same time it was justice morally to those who were judged; for they had rejected the testimony by whomsoever it was rendered. We have also the result of their conduct, both the one and the other. It is the King for this is the character Christ has now taken on earth who pronounces judgment; and He calls the sheep (those who had received the messengers,

and had sympathised with them in their afflictions and persecutions) to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world; for such had been the purpose of God with respect to this earth. He had always the kingdom in view. They were the blessed of His (the King's) Father. It was not children who understood their own relation with their Father; but they were the receivers of blessing from the Father of the King of this world. Moreover they were to enter into everlasting life; for such was the power, through grace, of the word which they had received into their heart. Possessed of everlasting life, they should be blessed in a world that was blessed also.

They who had despised the testimony and those that bore it, had despised the King who sent them; they should go away into everlasting punishment.

Thus the whole effect of Christ's coming, with regard to the kingdom and to His messengers during His absence, is unfolded: with respect to the Jews, as far as Verse 31 of chapter 24 Mat 24:31; with respect to His servants during His absence, to the end of Verse 30 of chapter 25 (Mat 25:30), including the kingdom of heaven in its present condition, and the heavenly rewards that shall be given; and then, from Verse 31 to the end of chapter 25 (Mat 25:31-46), with respect to the nations who shall be blessed on the earth at His return.

Note #70

The servant in chapter 24 is collective responsibility.

Note #71

The word rather signifies torches. With them they had, or should have had, oil in vessels to feed the flame.

Note #72

And note here, the waking up is by the cry; it wakes up all. There IS enough to rouse all professors to needed activity; but the effect of this is to put them to the test, and separate them. It was not the time of getting oil or supplies of grace to those already professors; conversion is not the subject

of the parable. The question of getting oil is only I doubt now, to shew it was not the time of doing so.

Note #73

In that of the talents in Matthew, we get indeed the ruling over many things, the kingdom, but it is more full through the expression, Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord; and the blessing is conferred on all alike who were faithful in service, great or small.

Note #74

So in the churches in Revelation, He takes existing churches, though I doubt not it is a complete history of the church.

Matthew Chapter 26

The Lord had finished His discourses. He prepares (chapter 26) to suffer, and to make His last and touching adieus to His disciples, at the table of His last passover on earth, at which He instituted, the simple and precious memorial which recalls His sufferings and His love with such profound interest. This part of our Gospel requires little explanation not, assuredly, that it is of less interest, but because it needs to be felt rather than explained.

With what simplicity the Lord announces that which was to happen! (Mat 26:2). He had already arrived at Bethany, six days before the passover (Joh 12:1): there He abode, with the exception of the last supper, until He was taken captive in the garden of Gethsemane, although He visited Jerusalem, and partook of His last meal there.

We have already examined the discourses uttered during those six days, as well as His actions, such as the cleansing of the temple. That which precedes this chapter (chapter 26) is either the manifestation of His rights as Emmanuel, King of Israel, or that of the judgment of the great King with respect to the people a judgment expressed in discourses to which the people could make no answer; or, finally, the condition of His disciples during His absence. We have now His submission to the sufferings appointed Him, to the judgment about to be executed upon Him; but which

was, in truth, only the fulfilment of the counsels of God His Father, and of the work of His own love.

The picture of man's dreadful sin in the crucifixion of Jesus unfolds before our eyes. But the Lord Himself (Mat 26:1) announces it beforehand with all the calmness of One who had come for this purpose. Before the consultations of the chief priests had taken place, Jesus speaks of it as a settled thing: "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."

Afterwards, (Mat 26:3), the priests, the scribes, and the elders assemble to concert their plans for obtaining possession of His Person, and ridding themselves of Him.

In a word, first, the marvellous counsels of God, and the submission of Jesus, according to His knowledge of those counsels and of the circumstances which should accomplish them; and, afterwards, the iniquitous counsels of man, which do but fulfil those of God. Their purposed arrangement of detail not to take Him on the feast day as they dreaded the people (Mat 26:5) was not God's and fails: He was to suffer at the feast.

Judas was but the instrument of their malice in the hand of Satan; who, after all, did but arrange these things according to divine intention. They wished, but in vain, to avoid taking Him at the time of the feast, on account of the multitude, who might favour Jesus, if He appealed to them. They had done so at His entrance into Jerusalem. They supposed Jesus would do so, for wickedness always reckons on finding its own principles in others. This is why it so frequently fails in circumventing the upright they are artless. Here it was the will of God, that Jesus should suffer at the feast. But He had prepared a gracious relief to the heart of Jesus a balm to His heart more than to His body a circumstance which is used by the enemy to drive Judas to extremity and put him in connection with the chief priests.

Bethany (linked in memory with the last moments of peace and tranquillity in the Saviour's life, the place where dwelt Martha and Mary, and Lazarus the risen dead) Bethany [See Note #75] receives Jesus for the last time: the blessed but momentary retreat of a heart which, ever ready to pour itself out in love, was ever straitened in a world of sin, that did not and could not

respond to it; yet a heart which has given us, in His relations with this beloved family, the example of an affection perfect, yet human, which found sweetness in being responded to and appreciated. The nearness of the cross, where He would have to set His face as a flint, did not deprive His heart of the joy or the sweetness of this communion, while rendering it solemn and affecting. In doing the work of God He did not cease to be man. In everything He condescended to be ours. He could no longer own Jerusalem, and this sanctuary sheltered Him for a moment from the rude hand of man. Here He could display what He ever was as man. It is with reason, that the act of one who in a certain sense could appreciate what He felt [See Note #76] (whose affection instinctively entered into the rising enmity against the object she loved and was drawn out by it), and the act that expressed the estimate her heart had of His preciousness and grace should be told in all the world. This is a scene, a testimony, that brings the Lord sensibly near to us, that awakens a feeling in our hearts which sanctifies by binding them to His beloved Person.

His daily life was one continued tension of soul, in proportion to the strength of His love a life of devotedness in the midst of sin and misery. For a moment He could, and would own (in presence of the power of evil, now to have its way, and the love that clung to Him thus bowing under it, through true knowledge of Him cultivated in sitting at His feet) that devotedness to Himself, drawn out by that which His soul was in divine perfectness bowing to. He could give an intelligent voice, its true meaning, to that which divinely wrought affection silently acted on. [See Note #77]

The reader will do well carefully to study this scene of touching condescension and outpouring of heart. Jesus, Emmanuel, King and Supreme Judge, had just been causing all things to pass in judgment before Him (from chapter 21 to the end of 25). He had finished that which He had to say. His task here, in this respect, was accomplished. He now takes the place of Victim; He has only to suffer, and can allow Himself freely to enjoy the touching expressions of affection that flow from a heart devoted to Him. He could but taste the honey and pass on; but He does taste it, and did not reject an affection which His heart could and did appreciate.

Again, observe the effect of deep affection for the Lord. This affection necessarily breathes the atmosphere in which, at that moment, the spirit of the Lord is found. The woman who anointed Him was not informed of the circumstances about to happen, nor was she a prophetess. But the approach of that hour of darkness was felt by one whose heart was fixed on Jesus. [See Note #78] The different forms of evil developed themselves before Him, and displayed themselves in their true colours; and, under the influence of one master, even Satan, grouped themselves around the only object against whom it was worthwhile to array this concentration of malice, and who brought their true character out into open daylight.

But the perfectness of Jesus, which drew out the enmity, drew out the affection in her; and she (so to speak) reflected the perfectness in the affection; and as that perfectness was put in action and drawn to light by the enmity, so was her affection. Thus Christ's heart could not but meet it. Jesus, by reason of this enmity, was still more the object that occupied a heart which, doubtless led of God, instinctively apprehended what was going on. The time of testimony, and even that of the explanation of His relationship to all around Him, was over. His heart was free to enjoy the good and true and spiritual affections of which He was the object; and which, whatever might be their human form, shewed so plainly their divine origin, in that they were attached to that object on which, at this solemn moment, all the attention of heaven was centred.

Jesus Himself was conscious of His position. His thoughts were on His departure. During the exercise of His power, He hides He forgets Himself. But now oppressed, rejected, and like a lamb led to the slaughter, He feels that He is the just object of the thoughts of those who belong to Him, of all who have hearts to appreciate that which God appreciates. His heart is full of the coming events, see Mat 26:2; Mat 26:10-13; Mat 26:18; Mat 26:21.

But yet a few words more on the woman who anointed Him The effect of having the heart fixed in affection on Jesus is shewn in her in a striking manner. Occupied with Him, she is sensible of His situation. She feels what affects Him; and this causes her affection to act in accordance with the special devotedness which that situation inspires. As hatred against Him rose up to murderous intent, the spirit of devotedness to Him grows in

answer to it in her. Consequently, with the tact of devotedness, she does precisely that which was suited to His situation. The poor woman was not intelligently aware of this; yet she did the thing that was meet. Her value for the Person of Jesus, so infinitely precious to her, made her quick-sighted with respect to that which was passing in His mind. In her eyes Christ was invested with all the interest of His circumstances; and she lavishes upon Him that which expressed her affection. Fruit of this sentiment, her action met the circumstances; and, although it was but the instinct of her heart, Jesus gives it all the value which His perfect intelligence could attribute to it, embracing at once the sentiments of her heart and the coming events.

But this testimony of affection and devotedness to Christ brings out the selfishness, the want of heart, of the others. They blame the poor woman. Sad proof (to say nothing of Judas [See Note #79] how little the knowledge of that which concerns Jesus necessarily awakens suitable affection in our hearts! After this Judas goes out, and agrees with the unhappy priests to betray Jesus to them for the price of a slave.

The Lord pursues His career of love; and as He had accepted the poor woman's testimony of affection, so He now bestows on His disciples one of infinite value to our souls. Verse 16 (Mat 26:16) concludes the subject of which we have been speaking: Christ's knowledge, according to God, of that which awaited Him; the conspiracy of the priests; the affection of the poor woman, accepted by the Lord; the selfish cold-heartedness of the disciples; the treachery of Judas.

The Lord now institutes the memorial of the true passover. He sends the disciples to make arrangements for the celebration of the feast at Jerusalem. He points out Judas as the one who would deliver Him up to the Jews. It will be noticed, that it was not merely His knowledge of the one who should betray Him which the Lord here expresses He knew that when He called him; but He says, "One of you shall betray me." It was that which touched His heart: He wished it to touch theirs likewise.

He then points out that it is a Saviour slain who is to be remembered. It is no longer a question of the living Messiah: all that was over. It was no longer the remembrance of Israel's deliverance from the slavery of Egypt. Christ,

and Christ slain, began an entirely new order of things. Of Him they were now to think of Him slain on earth. He then draws their attention to the blood of the new covenant, adding that which extends it to others besides the Jews, without naming them "It is shed for many." Moreover, this blood is not, as at Sinai, only to confirm the covenant, for fidelity to which they were responsible; it was shed for the remission of sins. So that the Lord's supper presents the remembrance of Jesus slain, who, by dying, has broken with the past; has laid the foundation of the new covenant; obtained the remission of sins; and opened the door to the Gentiles. It is only in His death that the supper presents Him to us. His blood is apart from His body: He is dead. It is neither Christ living on the earth, nor Christ glorified in heaven. He is separate from His people, as to their joys on earth; but they are to expect Him as the companion of the happiness He has secured for them for He condescends to be so in better days: "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new [See Note #80] with you in my Father's kingdom." But, these links broken, who, save Jesus, could sustain the conflict? All would forsake Him. The testimonies of the word should be accomplished. It was written, "I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad."

Nevertheless He would go, to renew His relationship, as a risen Saviour, with these poor of the flock, to the same place where He had already identified Himself with them during His life. He would go before them into Galilee. This promise is very remarkable, because the Lord resumes, under a new form, His Jewish relationship with them and with the kingdom. We may here remark that, as He had judged all classes (to the end of chapter 25), He now exhibits the character of His relationship with all those among whom He maintained any. Whether it is the woman, or Judas, or the disciples, each one takes his place in connection with the Lord. This is all we find here. If Peter had natural energy enough to go a little farther, it would only be for a deeper fall in the place where the Lord alone could stand.

And now He isolates Himself to present, in supplication to His Father, the sufferings that awaited Him.

But while isolating Himself for prayer, He takes three of His disciples with Him, that in this solemn moment they may watch with Him. They were the

same three who were with Him during the transfiguration. They were to see His glory in the kingdom, and His sufferings. He goes a little way beyond them. As for them, they fall asleep, as they did on the mount of transfiguration. The scene here is described in Heb 5:7. Jesus was not yet drinking the cup, but it was before His eyes. On the cross He drank it, made sin for us, His soul feeling itself forsaken of Him. Here it is the power of Satan, using death as a terror with which to overwhelm Him. But the consideration of this subject will be more in place when we come to Luke's Gospel.

We here see His soul under the load of death by anticipation as He alone could know it, nor had it as yet lost its sting. We know who has the power of death, and death as yet had the full character of the wages of sin, and the curse, of God's judgment. But He watches and He prays. As man, subjected by His love to this assault, in the presence of the most powerful temptation to which He could be exposed, on the one hand He watches; on the other, He presents His anguish to His Father. His communion was not interrupted here, however great His distress. This distress only cast Him the more, in all submission and in all reliance, upon His Father. But if we were to be saved, if God was to be glorified in Him who had undertaken our cause, the cup must not pass away from Him. And His submission is complete.

He tenderly reminds Peter of his false confidence, [See Note #81] making him sensible of his weakness; but Peter was too full of himself to profit by it; he awakes from his sleep, but his self-confidence is not shaken. A sadder experience was needed for its cure.

The Lord therefore takes the cup, but He takes it from His Father's hand. It was His will that He should drink it. Committing Himself thus entirely to His Father, it is neither from the hand of His enemies, nor from that of Satan (though they were the instruments), that He takes it. According to the perfection with which He had subjected Himself to the will of God in this matter, committing all to Him, it is from His hand alone that He receives it. It is the Father's will. It is thus that we escape from second causes, and from the temptations of the enemy, by seeking only the will of God who directs all things. It is from Him we receive affliction and trial, if they come.

The disciples need no longer watch: the hour is come. [See Note #82] He was to be betrayed into the hands of men. This was saying enough. Judas designates Him by a kiss. Jesus goes to meet the multitude, rebuking Peter for seeking to resist with carnal weapons. Had Christ wished to escape, He could have asked for twelve legions of angels and had them; but all things must be fulfilled. [See Note #83] It was the hour of His submission to the effect of the malice of man and the power of darkness, and God's judgment against sin. He is the Lamb for the slaughter. Then all the disciples forsake Him. He surrenders Himself, setting before the crowd that came what they were doing. If no one can prove Him guilty, He will not deny the truth. He confesses the glory of His Person as Son of God, and declares that henceforth they should see the Son of man no longer in the meekness of One who would not break the bruised reed, but coming in the clouds of heaven, and sitting on the right hand of power. Having borne this testimony He is condemned on account of that which He said of Himself for the confession of the truth. The false witnesses did not succeed. The priests and the heads of Israel were guilty of His death, by virtue of their own rejection of the testimony He rendered to the truth. He was the Truth; they were under the power of the father of lies. They rejected the Messiah, the Saviour of His people. He would come to them no more, except as Judge.

They insult and outrage Him. Each one alas! takes, as we have seen, his own place Jesus, that of Victim; the others, the place of betrayal, rejection, abandonment, denial of the Lord. What a picture! What a solemn moment! Who could stand in it? Christ alone could steadily pass through it. And He passed through it as a victim. As such, He must be stripped of all, and that in the presence of God. Everything else disappeared, except the sin which led to it; and, according to grace, that also before the powerful efficacy of this act. Peter, self-confident, hesitating, detected, answering with untruth, swearing, denies his Master; and, painfully convinced of man's powerlessness against the enemy of his soul and against sin, he goes out and weeps bitterly: tears, which cannot efface his guilt, but which, while proving the existence, through grace, of uprightness of heart, bear witness to that powerlessness which uprightness of heart cannot remedy. [See Note #84]

Note #75

It was not in Martha's house that this scene took place, but that of Simon the leper: Martha served and Lazarus sat at meat. This makes the intelligent act of Mary more entirely personal.

Note #76

No instance is found of the disciples ever understanding what Jesus said to them.

Note #77

Christ meets the heart of the poor woman in the city which was a sinner, and told God's mind out there, and told it to her. He meets Mary's heart here, and justifies and satisfies her affection, and gave the divine estimate of what she did. He met Mary Magdalene's heart at the sepulchre, to whom the world was emptiness if He was not there, and tells God's mind in its highest forms of blessing. Such is the effect of attachment to Christ.

Note #78

The enmity of the chiefs of Israel was known to the disciples "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" And afterwards by Thomas a gracious testimony to the love of one who afterwards shewed his unbelief as to Jesus' resurrection "let us go that we may die with him." Mary's heart doubtless felt this enmity, and as it grew, her attachment to the Lord grew with it.

Note #79

Judas's heart was the spring of this evil, but the other disciples, not occupied with Christ, fall into the snare.

Note #80

"New" is not anew, but in an entirely new way.

Note #81

It is wonderful to see the Lord in the full agony of the anticipated cup, only as yet presenting it to His Father, not drinking the cup; yet turning to the

disciples and speaking to them in calm grace as if in Galilee, and turning back to the dreadful conflict of spirit Himself exactly for what was before His soul. In Matthew He is victim, I add, and every aggravation, with no alleviating circumstance, is here what His soul meets.

Note #82

I purpose speaking on the Lord's sufferings when studying the Gospel of Luke, where they are described more in detail; because it is as Son of man that He is there especially presented.

Note #83

Remark here in so solemn and crucial a moment, the place that the Lord gives to the scriptures: that thus it must be, for it was there (Mat 26:54). They are the word of God.

Note #84

I think it will be found, on comparing the Gospels, that the Lord was examined at Caiaphas's over night, when Peter denies Him, and that they met formally again in the morning, and, asking the blessed Lord, received from Himself the confession on which they led Him to Pilate. Over night it was only the active leaders. In the morning there was a formal assembling of the Sanhedrim.

Matthew Chapter 27

After this (chapter 27), the unhappy priests and heads of the people deliver up their Messiah to the Gentiles, as He had told His disciples. Judas, in despair under Satan's power, hangs himself, having cast the reward of his iniquity at the feet of the chief priests and elders. Satan was forced to bear witness, even by a conscience that he had betrayed, to the Lord's innocence. What a scene! Then the priests, who had made no conscience of buying His blood from Judas, scruple to put the money into the treasury of the temple, because it was the price of blood. In the presence of that which was going on, man was obliged to shew himself as he is and the power of Satan over him. Having taken counsel, they buy a burying-ground for strangers. These were profane enough in their eyes for that, provided they

themselves were not defiled with such money. Yet it was the time of God's grace to the stranger, and judgment on Israel. Moreover they established thereby a perpetual memorial of their own sin, and of the blood which has been shed. Aceldama is all that remains in this world of the circumstances of this great sacrifice. The world is a field of blood, but it speaks better things than that of Abel.

This prophecy, we know, is in the book of Zechariah. The name "Jeremiah" may have crept into the text when there was nothing more than "by the prophet"; or it might be because Jeremiah stood first in the order prescribed by the Talmudists for the books of prophecy; for which reason, very likely, also, they said, "Jeremiah, or one of the prophets," as in Mat 16:14. But this is not the place for discussion on the subject.

Their own part in the Jewish scene closes. The Lord stands before Pilate. Here the question is not whether He is the Son of God, but whether He is the King of the Jews. Although He was this, yet it was only in the character of Son of God that He would allow the Jews to receive Him. Had they received Him as the Son of God, He would have been their King. But that might not be: He must accomplish the work of atonement. Having rejected Him as Son of God, the Jews now deny Him as their King. But the Gentiles also become guilty in the person of their head in Palestine, the government of which had been committed to them. The Gentile head should have reigned in righteousness. His representative in Judea acknowledged the malice of Christ's enemies; his conscience, alarmed by his wife's dream, seeks to evade the guilt of condemning Jesus. But the true prince of this world, as regards present exercise of dominion, was Satan. Pilate, washing his hands (futile attempt to exonerate himself), delivers up the guiltless to the will of His enemies, saying, at the same time, that he finds no fault in Him. And he releases to the Jews a man guilty of sedition and murder, instead of the Prince of life. But it was again on His own confession, and that only, that He was condemned, confessing the same thing in the Gentile court as He had done in the Jewish, in each the truth, witnessing a good confession of what concerned the truth as to those before whom He was.

Barabbas, [See Note #85] the expression of the spirit of Satan who was a murderer from the beginning, and of rebellion against the authority which

Pilate was there to maintain Barabbas was loved by the Jews; and with him, the wrongful carelessness of the governor, who was powerless against evil, endeavoured to satisfy the will of the people whom he ought to have governed "All the people" make themselves guilty of the blood of Jesus in the solemn word, which remains fulfilled to this day, till sovereign grace, according to God's purpose, takes it off solemn but terrible word, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Sad and frightful ignorance which self-will has brought upon a people who rejected the light! Alas! how each one, I again say, takes his own place in the presence of this touchstone a rejected Saviour. The company of the Gentiles, the soldiers, do that in derision, with the brutality habitual to them as heathen and as executioners, which the Gentiles shall do with joyful worship, when He whom they now mocked shall be truly the King of the Jews in glory. Jesus endures it all. It was the hour of His submission to the full power of evil. patience must have its perfect work, in order that His obedience may be complete on every side. He bore it all without relief, rather than fail in obedience to His Father. What a difference between this and the conduct of the first Adam surrounded with blessings!

Every one must be the servant of sin, or of the tyranny of wickedness, at this solemn hour, in which all is put to the proof. They compel one Simon (known afterwards, it appears, among the disciples) to bear the cross of Jesus; and the Lord is led away to the place of His crucifixion. There He refuses that which might have stupefied Him. He will not shun the cup He had to drink, nor deprive Himself of His faculties in order to be insensible to that which it was the will of God He should suffer. The prophecies of the Psalms are fulfilled in His Person, by means of those who little thought what they were doing. At the same time, the Jews succeeded in becoming to the last degree contemptible. Their King was hung. They must bear the shame in spite of themselves. Whose fault was it? But, hardened and senseless, they share with a malefactor the miserable satisfaction of insulting the Son of God, their King, the Messiah, to their own ruin, and quote, so blinding is unbelief, from their own scriptures, as the expression of their own mind, that which in them is put into the mouth of the unbelieving enemies of Jehovah. Jesus felt it all; but the anguish of His trial, where after all He was a calm and faithful witness, the abyss of His sufferings, contained something far more terrible than all this malice or abandonment of man. The floods

doubtless lifted up their voices. [See Note #86] One after another the waves of wickedness dashed against Him; but the depths beneath that awaited Him, who could fathom? His heart, His soul the vessel of a divine love could alone go deeper than the bottom of that abyss which sin had opened for man, to bring up those who lay there, after He had endured its pains in His own soul. A heart that had been ever faithful was forsaken of God. Where sin had brought man, love brought the Lord, but with a nature and an apprehension in which there was no distance, no separation, so that it should be felt in all its fulness. No one but He who was in that place could fathom or feel it.

It is too a wonderful spectacle to see the one righteous man in the world declare at the end of His life He was forsaken of God. But thus it was He glorified Him as none else could have done it, and where none but He could have done it made sin, in the presence of God as such, with no veil to hide, no mercy to cover or bear it with.

The fathers, full of faith, had in their distress experienced the faithfulness of God, who answered the expectation of their hearts. But Jesus (as to the condition of His soul at that moment) cried in vain. "A worm and no man" before the eyes of men, He had to bear the forsaking of the God in whom He trusted.

Their thoughts far from His, they that surround Him did not even understand His words, but they accomplished the prophecies by their ignorance. Jesus, bearing testimony by the loudness of His voice that it was not the weight of death that oppressed Him, gives up the ghost.

The efficacy of His death is presented to us in this Gospel in a double aspect. First, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. God, who had been always hidden behind the veil, discovered Himself completely by means of the death of Jesus. The entrance into the holy place is made manifest a new and living way which God has consecrated for us through the veil. The entire Jewish system, the relations of man with God under its sway, its priesthood, all fell with the rending of the veil. Every one found himself in the presence of God without a veil between. The priests were to be always in His presence. But, by this same act, the sin, which

would have made it impossible for us to stand there, was for the believer entirely put away from before God. The holy God, and the believer, cleansed from his sins, are brought together by the death of Christ. What love was that which accomplished this!

Secondly, besides this, such was the efficacy of His death, that when His resurrection had burst the bonds that held them, many of the dead appeared in the city witnesses of His power who, having suffered death, had risen above it, and overcome it, and destroyed its power, or taken it into His own hands. Blessing was now in resurrection.

The presence therefore of God without a veil, and sinners without sin before Him, prove the efficacy of Christ's sufferings.

The resurrection of the dead, over whom the king of terrors had no more right, displayed the efficacy of the death of Christ for sinners, and the power of His resurrection. Judaism is over for those that have faith, and the power of death also. The veil is rent. The grave gives up its prey; He is Lord of the dead and of the living. [See Note #87]

There is yet another especial testimony to the mighty power of His death, to the import of that word, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me." The centurion who was on guard at the crucifixion of the Lord, seeing the earthquake and those things that were done, trembling, confesses the glory of His Person; and, stranger as he is to Israel, renders the first testimony of faith among Gentiles: "Truly this was the Son of God."

But the narrative goes on. Some poor women to whom devotedness often gives, on God's part, more courage than to men in their more responsible and busy position were standing near the cross, beholding what was done to Him they loved. [See Note #88]

But they were not the only ones who filled the place of the terrified disciples. Others and this often happens whom the world had held back, when once the depth of their affection is stirred by the question of His sufferings whom they really loved, when the moment is so painful that others are terrified, then (emboldened by the rejection of Christ) they feel that the time is arrived for decision and become fearless confessors of the

Lord. Hitherto associated with those that have crucified Him, they must now either accept that act, or declare themselves. Through grace they do the latter.

God had prepared all beforehand. His Son was to have His tomb with the rich. Joseph comes boldly to Pilate and asks for the body of Jesus. He wraps the body, which Pilate grants him, in a clean linen cloth, and lays it in his own sepulchre, which had never served to hide the corruption of man. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary [See Note #89] for they were known sat near the sepulchre, bound by all that remained to their faith of Him whom they had loved and followed with adoration during His life.

But unbelief has no faith in itself, and, fearing lest that which it denies be true, it mistrusts everything. The chief priests request Pilate to guard the sepulchre, in order to frustrate any attempt the disciples might make to found the doctrine of the resurrection on the absence of the body of Jesus from the tomb in which it had been laid. Pilate bids them secure the sepulchre themselves; so that all they did was to make themselves involuntary witnesses to the fact, and assure us of the accomplishment of the thing they dreaded. Thus Israel was guilty of this effort of futile resistance to the testimony which Jesus had rendered to His own resurrection. They were a testimony against themselves to its truth. The precautions which Pilate would not perhaps have taken they carried to the extreme, so that all mistake as to the fact of His resurrection was impossible.

The Lord's resurrection is briefly related in Matthew. The object is again, after the resurrection, to connect the ministry and service of Jesus now transferred to His disciples with the poor of the flock, the remnant of Israel. He again assembled them in Galilee, where He had constantly instructed them, and where the despised among the people dwelt afar from the pride of the Jews. This connected their work with His, in that which especially characterised it with reference to the remnant of Israel.

Note #85

Strange to say, this means son of Abba, as if Satan was mocking them with the name.

Note #86

We find in Matthew, specially collected, the dishonour done to the Lord and the insults offered Him, and with Mark the forsaking of God.

Note #87

The glory of Christ in ascension, and as Lord of all, does not come within the scope of Matthew historically.

Note #88

The part that women take in all this history is very instructive, especially to them. The activity of public service, that which may be called "work," belongs naturally to men (all that appertains to what is generally termed ministry), although women share a very precious activity in private. But there is another side of christian life which is particularly theirs; and that is personal and loving devotedness to Christ. It is a woman, who anointed the Lord while the disciples murmured; women, who were at the cross, when all except John had forsaken Him; women, who came to the sepulchre, and who were sent to announce the truth to the apostles who had gone after all to their own home; women, who ministered to the Lord's need. And indeed this goes farther. Devotedness in service is perhaps the part of man; but the instinct of affection, that which enters more intimately into Christ's position, and is thus more immediately in connection with His sentiments, in closer communion with the sufferings of His heart this is the part of woman: assuredly a happy part. The activity of service for Christ puts man a little out of this position, at least if the Christian is not watchful. Everything has however its place. I speak of that which is characteristic; for there are women who have served much, and men who have felt much. Note also here, what I believe I have remarked, that this clinging of heart to Jesus is the position where the communications of true knowledge are received. The first full gospel is announced to the poor woman that was a sinner who washed His feet, the embalming for His death to Mary, our highest position to Mary Magdalene, the communion Peter desired to John who was in His bosom. And here the women have a large share.

Note #89

That is, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and mother of James and Joses, constantly spoken of as "the other Mary." In Joh 19:25, Mary the wife of Cleophas has been taken as in apposition with His mother's sister. But this is simply a mistake. It is another person. There were four three Marys and His mother's sister.

Matthew Chapter 28

I shall examine the details of the resurrection elsewhere Here I only consider its bearing in this Gospel. The sabbath ended (Saturday evening with us chapter 28), the two Marys come to see the sepulchre. At this moment that was all they did. Verses 1-2 (Mat 28:1-2) are not consecutive, 2-4 (Mat 28:2-4) go together. When the earthquake and its attendant circumstances took place, no one was there except the soldiers. At night all was secure. The disciples knew nothing of it in the morning. When the women arrived at dawn, the angel who sat at the door of the sepulchre re-assured them with the tidings of the Lord's resurrection. The angel of the Lord had come down and opened the door of the tomb, which man had closed with every possible precaution. [See Note #90] They had in truth only guaranteed by unexceptionable witnesses the truth of the apostles' preaching, by placing the soldiers there. The women, by their visit the evening before, and in the morning when the angel spoke to them, received a full assurance to faith of the fact of His resurrection. All that is presented here is the facts. The women had been there in the evening. The intervention of the angel certified to the soldiers the true character of His coming forth from the tomb; and the visit of the women in the morning established the fact of His resurrection as an object of faith to themselves. They go and announce it to the disciples, who so far from having done that which the Jews imputed to them did not even believe the assertions of the women. Jesus Himself appears to the women who were returning from the sepulchre, having believed the words of the angel.

As I have already said, Jesus connects Himself with His former work among the poor of the flock, afar from the seat of Jewish tradition, and from the temple, and from all that linked the people with God according to the old covenant. He appoints His disciples to meet Him there, and there they find Him and recognise Him; and it is there, in this former scene of the labours of

Christ, according to Isaiah 8 and 9, that they receive their commission from Him. Hence we have not the ascension of Christ at all in this Gospel, but all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, and accordingly the commission given to His disciples extends to all nations (Gentiles). To them they were to proclaim His rights, and make disciples of them.

It was not however the name of the Lord only, nor in connection with His throne at Jerusalem. Lord of heaven and earth, His disciples were to proclaim Him throughout all nations, founding their doctrine on the confession of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. They were to teach, not the law, but the precepts of Jesus. He would be with them, with the disciples who thus confessed Him, unto the end of the age. It is this which connects all that will be accomplished until Christ sits upon the great white throne with the testimony that He Himself rendered on the earth in the midst of Israel. It is the testimony of the kingdom, and of its Head, once rejected by a people that knew Him not. It links the testimony to the nations with a remnant in Israel owning Jesus as Messiah but now risen from the dead, as He had said, but not to a Christ known as ascended on high. Nor does it present Jesus alone, nor Jehovah, as any longer the subject of testimony, but the revelation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as the holy name by which the nations were connected with God.

Note #90

But I apprehend the Lord Jesus had left the tomb before the stone was rolled away; that was for mortal eyes.

MARK

Introduction to Mark

The Gospel according to Mark has a character that differs in certain respects from all the others. Each Gospel, as we have seen, has its own character; each is occupied with the Person of the Lord in a different point of view: as a divine Person, the Son of God; as the Son of man; as the Son of David, the Messiah presented to the Jews, Emmanuel. But Mark is occupied with none of these titles. It is the Servant we find here and, in particular, His service as bearing the word the active service of Christ in the gospel. The glory of His divine Person shews itself, it is true, in a remarkable manner through His service, and, as it were, in spite of Himself, so that He avoids its consequences. But still service is the subject of the book. Doubtless, we shall find the character of His teaching developing itself (and truth consequently shaking off the Jewish forms under which it had been held), as well as the account of His death, on which all depended for the establishment of faith. But that which distinguishes this Gospel is the character of service and of Servant that is attached to the life of Jesus the work that He came to accomplish personally as living on the earth. On this account, the history of His birth is not found in Mark. It opens with the announcement of the beginning of the gospel. John the Baptist is the herald, the forerunner, of Him who brought this good news to man.

Mark Chapter 1

Mark 1:1

mar 1:1

The message is new at least in the absolute and complete character it assumes, and in its direct and immediate application. It was not the Jewish privileges which should be obtained by repenting and returning to the Lord. The Lord was coming according to His promise. To prepare His way before Him, John was preaching repentance for the remission of sins. It was this

they needed: remission of sins for the repentant was the great thing, the formal object of John's mission.

Repentance and remission of sins refer clearly to the responsibility of man, here of Israel, in his natural standing with God; and clearing that as to man's state relatively to God, morally and responsibly qualify him for the reception of purposed blessing morally in that he judges the sins in principle as God does, and responsibly by God's forgiving them all. Hence also remission is necessarily a present actual thing. There is a governmental forgiveness as well as a justifying one, but the principle is the same, and the latter is the basis of the former. Only where it is governmental it may be accompanied by various accompanying dealings of God, only the sin is no longer imputed as to present relationship with God, as in justifying, this is eternally true. In justifying forgiveness as in Romans 4, shewing by its use of Psalm 32, the common character of non-imputation it is founded on the work of Christ, and hence is absolute and unchangeable. Sin is not imputed and never can be, because the work is done and finished which puts it away out of God's sight: that eternal, absolute, and immutable in itself is the basis of all God's dealings with man in grace. Grace reigns through righteousness. Hebrews 9-10 unfolds this, where the conscience and coming to God, and that in the holiest, are concerned. So Romans 3-5, where the question is judicial, a matter of judgment, wrath, and justifying. It is the basis of blessings, not the end, great as it is in itself peace with God and reconciliation. Here it was the ground of all the blessings Israel will have by the new covenant (founded on Christ's death), but being rejected, those who believed entered into better and heavenly blessings. In Exo 32:14; Exo 33:34, we get governmental forgiveness, not justifying. In the case of David's great sin, it was pardoned when owned, the iniquity of it put away, but severe chastisement connected with it because he had given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. God's glory in righteousness had to be maintained before the world (Sa2 12:13-14).

Here it was a proposal of present forgiveness to Israel, which will be accomplished in the last days; and then, as their long rejection will have closed in governmental forgiveness, they will also through the death and

blood-shedding of Christ at least the remnant, be forgiven and justified for the enjoyment of the promises under the new covenant (compare Acts 3).

The prophets had indeed announced pardon if the people returned to the Lord; but here it was the present object of the address. The people go out in a body to avail themselves of it. Conscience at least was stirred; and whatever might be the pride of their leaders, the sense of Israel's condition was felt by the people, as soon as anything outside the routine of religion acted on the heart and conscience that is to say, when God spoke. They confess their sins. With some perhaps it was only natural conscience, that is, not a really quickening work; but at any rate it was wrought upon by the testimony of God.

But John, rigidly separate from the people, and living apart from human society, proclaims another, mightier than he, whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose: He would not merely preach repentance accepted by the baptism of water; He would bestow the Holy Ghost, power, on those who received His testimony. Here our Gospel passes on rapidly to the service of Him whom John thus declared. It only sets forth summarily that which introduces Him into this service.

The Lord takes His place among the repentant of His people, and, submitting to John's baptism, He sees heaven open to Him, and the Holy Ghost descending upon Him like a dove. The Father acknowledges Him as His Son on earth, in whom He is well pleased. He is then led by the Holy Ghost into the wilderness, where He undergoes the temptation of Satan for forty days; He is with the wild beasts, and angels exercise their ministry towards Him. Here we see His whole position the character which the Lord takes on earth all its features and relations with that which surrounded Him, gathered into these two or three verses. It has been treated of in its details in Matthew.

After this John disappears from the scene, giving place to the public ministry of Christ, of whom he was only the herald; and Christ Himself appears in the place of testimony, declaring that the time was fulfilled; that it was now no question of prophecies or of days to come; that God was going to set up His

kingdom, and that they ought to repent and receive the good news which at that very moment was proclaimed to them.

Our evangelist passes [See Note #1] rapidly on to every branch of the service of Christ. Having presented the Lord as undertaking the public ministry which called on men to receive the good news as a present thing (the time of the fulfilment of the ways of God being come), he exhibits Him as calling others to accomplish this same work in His name by following Him. His word does not fail in its effect. those whom He calls forsake all and follow Him. [See Note #2] He goes into the city to teach on the sabbath-day. His word does not consist of arguments which evidence the uncertainty of man, but comes with the authority of One who knows the truth which He proclaims authority which in fact was that of God, who can communicate truth. He speaks also as One who possesses it; and He gives proof that He does. The word, which thus presents itself to men, has power over demons. A man possessed by an evil spirit was there. The evil spirit bore testimony, in spite of himself, to Him who spake, and whose presence was insupportable to him; but the word that aroused him had power to cast him out. Jesus rebukes him commands him to hold his peace and to come out of the man; and the evil spirit, after manifesting the reality of his presence and his malice, submits, and departs from the man. Such was the power of the word of Christ. It is not surprising that the fame of this act should spread through all the country; but the Lord continues His path of service wherever work presented itself. He goes into the house of Peter, whose wife's mother lay sick of a fever. He heals her immediately; and when the sabbath was ended, they bring Him all the sick. He, ever ready to serve, (precious Lord!) heals them all.

But it was not to surround Himself with a crowd that the Lord laboured; and in the morning, long before day, He departs into the wilderness to pray. Such was the character of His service wrought in communion with His God and Father, and in dependence upon Him. He goes alone into a solitary place. The disciples find Him, and tell Him that all are seeking Him; but His heart is in His work. The general desire does not bring Him back. He goes on His way to fulfil the work which was given Him to do preaching the truth among the people; for this was the service to which He devoted Himself.

But, however devoted to this service, His heart was not made rigid by pre-occupation; He was always Himself with God. A poor leper comes to Him, acknowledging His power, but uncertain as to His will, as to the love that wielded that power. Now this dreadful disease not only shut the man himself out, but defiled every one who even touched the sufferer. But nothing stops Jesus in the service to which His love calls Him. The leper was wretched, an outcast from his fellow-creatures and from society, and excluded from Jehovah's house. But the power of God was present. The leper must be re-assured as to the good-will on which his dejected heart could not reckon. Who would care for such a wretch as he? He had faith as to the power that was in Christ; but his thoughts of himself concealed from him the extent of the love that had visited him. Jesus puts forth His hand and touches him.

The lowliest of men approaches sin, and that which was the token of sin, and dispels it; the Man, who in the might of His love touched the leper without being defiled, was the God who alone could remove the leprosy which made one afflicted with it miserable and outcast.

The Lord speaks with an authority that declares at once His love and His divinity: "I will, be thou clean." I will here was the love of which the leper doubted, the authority of God who alone has the right to say I WILL. The effect followed the expression of His will. This is the case when God speaks. And who healed leprosy except Jehovah only? Was He the One who had come down low enough to touch this defiled being that defiled every other that had to do with him? Yes, the only One; but it was God who had come down, love which had reached so low, and which, in thus doing, shewed itself mighty for every one that trusted in it. It was undefilable purity in power, and which could therefore minister in love to the vilest and delights to do so. He came to defiled man, not to be defiled by the contact, but to remove the defilement. He touched the leper in grace, but the leprosy was gone.

He hides Himself from human acclamations, and bids the man who had been healed to go and shew himself to the priests according to the law of Moses. But this submission to the law, bore testimony in fact to His being Jehovah, for Jehovah alone, under the law, sovereignly cleansed the leper. The priest

was but the witness that it had been done. This miracle being noised abroad, by attracting the multitude, sends Jesus away into the wilderness.

Note #2

It is the fact in itself which is given here, as also in Matthew. Luke's account will give occasion to enter more into detail as to the call of the disciples. From John the Baptist's days they had been more or less associated with the Lord at least these had.

Mark Chapter 2

Afterwards (chapter 2) He goes again into the city, and immediately the multitude gather together. What a living picture of the Lord's life of service! He preaches to them. This was His object and His service (see Mar 1:38). But again, in devoting Himself to the humble accomplishment of it as committed to Him, His service itself, His love for who serves like God when He deigns to do it? bring out His divine rights. He knew the real source of all these evils, and He could bring in its remedy. "Thy sins," said He to the poor paralytic man, who was brought to Him with a faith that overcame difficulties, persevering in spite of them that perseverance of faith which is fed by the sense of want, and certainty that power is to be found in Him who is sought "thy sins are forgiven thee." To the reasoning of the scribes He gives an answer that silenced every gainsayer. He exercises the power that authorised Him to pronounce the pardon of the poor sufferer. [See Note #3]

The murmuring of the scribes brought out doctrinally who was there; as the verdict of the priests, who pronounce the leper clean, put the seal of their authority upon the truth that Jehovah, the healer of Israel, was there. That which Jesus carries on is His work, His testimony. The effect is to make it manifest that Jehovah is there, and has visited His people. It is Psalm 103 which is fulfilled, with respect to the rights and the revelation of the Person of Him who wrought.

Jesus leaves the city; the people flock around Him; and again He teaches them. The call of Levi gives occasion for a new development of His ministry. He was come to call sinners, and not the righteous. After this He tells them that He could not put the new divine energy, unfolded in Himself, into the

old forms of Pharisaism. And there was another reason for it the presence of the Bridegroom. How could the children of the bridechamber fast while the Bridegroom was with them? He should be taken from them, and then would be the time to fast. He proceeds to insist on the incompatibility between the old Jewish vessels and the power of the gospel. The latter would but subvert Judaism, to which they sought to attach it. That which took place when the disciples went through the cornfields confirms this doctrine.

Ordinances lost their authority in the presence of the King ordained of God, rejected and a pilgrim on the earth. Moreover the sabbath a sign of the covenant between God and the Jews was made for man, and not man for the sabbath; therefore He, the Son of man, was Lord of the sabbath. As Son of David rejected, the ordinances lost their force, and were subordinate to Him. As Son of man possessor (in the sight of God) of all the rights which God had bestowed on man, He was Lord of the sabbath, which was made for man. In principle the old things were passed away. But this was not all. It was in fact the new things of grace and power, which did not admit of the old order of things. But the question was, whether God could act in grace, and bestow blessing, in sovereignty, on His people whether He must submit to the authority of men availing themselves of His ordinances against His goodness, or do good according to His own power and love as being above all. Was man to limit the operation of God's goodness? And this, in truth, was the new wine which the Lord brought to man.

Note #3

We must distinguish between governmental forgiveness, and absolute pardon of sins. Only, such as man is, there could not have been the former without the latter. But till Christ was rejected and had died this was not fully brought out.

Mark Chapter 3

Such was the question raised in the synagogue (chapter 3) on the occasion of the man with the withered hand. The Lord sets it publicly before their conscience; but neither heart nor conscience answered Him; and He acts in His service according to the goodness and rights of God, and heals the man. [See Note #4] The Pharisees and their enemies, the Herodians for all were

against God and united in this consult together how they might destroy Christ. Jesus departs to the sea-coast of the sea of Tiberias. There the multitude follow Him, because of all that He had done; so that He is obliged to have a boat, that He may be outside the crowd. Spirits are subject to Him, compelled to own that He is the Son of God; but He forbids them to make Him known.

Service in preaching, and in seeking souls, in devoting Himself to all, shewing Himself by His acts to be the possessor of divine power, hiding Himself from the notice of men, in order to fulfil, apart from their applause, the service He had undertaken such was His human life on earth. Love and divine power were disclosed in the service which that love impelled Him to accomplish, and in the accomplishment of which that power was exercised. But this could not be circumscribed by Judaism, however subject the Lord was to the ordinances of God given to the Jews.

But, God being thus manifested, the carnal opposition of man soon shews itself. [See Note #5] Here, then, the description of Christ's service ends, and its effect is manifested. This effect is developed in that which soon follows, with respect both to the iniquity of man and to the counsels of God. Meanwhile the Lord appoints twelve of His disciples to accompany Him, and to go forth preaching in His name. He could, not merely work miracles but, communicate to others the power to work them, and that by way of authority. He goes back into the house, and the multitude re-assemble. And here the thoughts of man display themselves at the same time as those of God. His friends search for Him as one who was beside Himself. The scribes, possessing influence as learned men, attribute to Satan a power which they could not deny. The Lord answers them by shewing that in general all sin could be pardoned; but that to acknowledge the power, and attribute it to the enemy, rather than own Him who wielded it, was taking the place not of ignorant unbelief but of adversaries, thus blaspheming against the Holy Ghost was a sin that could never be pardoned. The "strong man" was there; but Jesus was stronger than he, for He cast out the devils. Would Satan endeavour to overthrow his own house? The fact that the power of Jesus manifested itself in this manner left them without excuse. God's "strong man" was then come: Israel rejected Him; and, as regards their leaders, by

blaspheming against the Holy Ghost, they brought themselves under hopeless condemnation. The Lord therefore immediately distinguishes the remnant who received His word from all natural connection He had with Israel. His mother or His "brethren" are the disciples who stand around Him, and those who do the will of God. This really sets aside Israel at that time.

Note #5

This rapidity characterises Mark, as does the word "immediately."

Note #4

One cannot but see how the old system, based on what man ought to be for God, is being set aside for what God is for man. But, the former having been established by God, nothing but the words and works of Jesus would have justified the Jews in giving it up. As it was, it was clearly opposition and hatred to the full revelation of Him who had ordained the other.

Compare Joh 15:22; Joh 15:24.

Note #5

This is the secret of all the history of Jesus, Son of David. All the promises being in Him for the Jews, the servant of every want too and every sorrow, yet being God and God manifested in Him, man could not bear it. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God.

Mark Chapter 4

This introduces the true character and result of His own service, and all the history of the service that should be accomplished unto a far distant future; as well as the responsibility of His disciples, with regard to the share they would have in it, and the quietness of one who trusted in God while thus labouring; the storms also that should occur, that should exercise faith while Jesus apparently took no notice of them; and the just confidence of faith, as well as the power that sustained it.

The whole character of the work at that moment, and until the Lord's return, is described in this fourth chapter.

The Lord resumes in it His habitual work of instruction, but in connection with the development that had just taken place of His relationship with the Jews. He sows. Fruit He no longer sought in His vineyard. In Verse 11 (Mar 24:11) we see that the distinction between the Jews and His disciples is marked. To the latter it was given to know the mystery of the kingdom, but to those that were without all these things were done in parables. I do not repeat the remarks I made in speaking of the contents of this parable in Matthew. But that which follows in Verse 21 (Mar 24:21) belongs essentially to the Gospel by Mark. We have seen that the Lord was occupied in preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and He committed the preaching of this gospel to others also. He was a sower, and He sowed the word. That was His service, and it was theirs likewise. But is a candle lit to be hidden? Moreover nothing should be hidden. If man did not manifest the truth he had received, God would manifest all things. Let every one take heed to it.

In Verse 24 (Mar 4:24) He applies this principle to His disciples. They must take heed to what they heard, for God would act towards them according to their fidelity in the administration of the word committed to them. The love of God sent the word of grace and of the kingdom unto men. That it should reach their conscience was the object of the service committed to the disciples. Christ communicated it to them; they were to make it known to others in all its fulness. According to the measure with which they gave free course to this testimony of love (conformably to the gift they had received), so should it be measured unto them in the government of God. If they hearkened unto that which He communicated to them, they should receive more; for, as a general principle, he who made that which reached him his own should have yet more, and from him who did not truly make it his own it should be taken away.

The Lord then shews them how it should be with regard to Himself. He had sown, and, even as the seed springs up and grows without any act on the sower's part, so would Christ allow the gospel to spread in the world without interposing in any apparent way, it being the peculiar character of the kingdom that the King was not there. But, when harvest time comes, the sower has again to do with it. So should it be with Jesus: He would return to look after the harvest. He was personally engaged in the sowing

and in the harvest. In the interval, all went on apparently as if left to itself, really without the interference of the Lord in Person.

The Lord makes use of another similitude to describe the character of the kingdom. The small seed that He sowed should become a great system, highly exalted in the earth, capable of affording temporal protection to those that took shelter in it. Thus we have the work of preaching the word; the responsibility of the labourers to whom the Lord would entrust it during His absence; His own action at the beginning and at the end, at seed-time and at harvest, Himself remaining at a distance during the interval; and the formation of a great earthly power as the result of the truth which He preached, and which created a little nucleus around Himself. One part of the history of His followers was yet to be shewn. They should find most serious difficulties in their way. The enemy would raise up a storm against them. Apparently Christ took no notice of their situation. They call upon Him, and awake Him by cries, which He answers in grace. He speaks to the wind and the sea, and there is a great calm. At the same time He rebukes their unbelief. They should have counted on Him and on His divine power, and not have thought that He was going to be swallowed up by the waves. They should have remembered their own connection with Him that, by grace, they were associated with Him. What tranquillity was His! the storm does not disturb Him. Devoted to His work, He took His rest at the moment when service did not require His activity. He rested during the passage. His service only afforded Him those moments snatched by circumstances from labour. His divine tranquillity, which knew no distrust, allowed Him to sleep during the storm. It was not so with the disciples; and, forgetful of His power, unaware of the glory of Him who was with them, they think only of themselves, as though Jesus had forgotten them. One word on His part displays in Him the Lord of creation. This is the real state of the disciples when Israel is set aside. The storm arises. Jesus appears to take no heed. Now faith would have recognised that they were in the same ship with Him. That is to say, if Jesus leaves the seed He has sown to grow until the harvest, He is, none the less, in the same vessel; He shares, not the less truly, the lot of His followers, or rather they share His. The dangers are the danger He and His work are in. That is, there is really none. And how great is the foolishness of unbelief. Think of their supposing, when the Son of God is come into the

world to accomplish redemption and the settled purposes of God, that by, to man's eye, an accidental storm, He and all His work should be unexpectedly sunk in the lake! We are, blessed be His name, in the same boat with Him. If the Son of God does not sink, neither shall we.

Mark Chapter 5

But, in another sense, they are not with Him. They are called to serve, when He quits the scene of His labour. We learn this from the demoniac Legion (chapter 5), delivered from his miserable condition. Man and Israel in particular was completely under the power of the enemy. Christ, as to the work of His power, completely delivered the one in whose behalf this power was exercised. He is clothed not naked in his right mind, and sitting at the feet of Jesus to hear His words. But the people of the place are afraid, and send Jesus away what the world has done with Christ; and in the history of the herd of swine we have the picture of Israel after the remnant has been healed. They are unclean, and Satan drives them to destruction. Now, when Jesus departs, he who had personally experienced the mighty effects of His love would have liked to be with Him; but he was to go home and bear testimony to those around him of all that Jesus had done. He was to serve in the absence of Jesus. In all these narratives we see the work and the devotedness of the Servant, but at the same time the divine power of Jesus manifested in this service.

In the circumstances that follow the cure of the demoniac, we find the true position of Jesus portrayed in His work. He is called upon to heal the daughter of Jairus even as He came to heal the Jews, had that been possible. As He went toward the house of Jairus to perform this work, a poor incurable woman touches the hem of His garment with faith, and is instantly healed. This was the case with Jesus during His passage among the Jews. In the multitude that surrounded Him, some souls through grace touched Him by faith. In truth, their disease was in itself incurable; but Jesus had life in Himself according to the power of God, and faith drew out its virtue by touching Him. Such are brought to acknowledge their condition, but they are healed. Outwardly He was in the midst of all Israel faith reaped the benefit in the sense of its own need and of the glory of His Person. Now, with respect to the one who was the object of His journey, remedy was

unavailing. Jesus finds her dead, but does not miss the object of His journey. He raises her again, for He can give life. Thus too with respect to Israel. On the way, those who had faith in Jesus were healed, incurable as they were in themselves; but in fact, as to Israel, the nation was dead in trespasses and sins. Apparently this put a stop to the work of Jesus. But grace will restore life to Israel in the end. We see the perfect grace of Jesus intercepting the effect of the bad tidings brought from the ruler's house. He says to Jairus, as soon as the messenger has told him of his daughter's death, and the inutility of troubling the Master any farther, "Be not afraid, only believe." In effect, although the Lord restores life to a dead Israel in the end of the ages, nevertheless it is by faith that it takes place. The case of the poor woman, although in its direct application it does not go beyond the Jews, yet applies in principle to the healing of every Gentile who, through grace, is brought to touch Jesus by faith.

This history then gives the character of His service, the manner in which on account of man's condition it had to be accomplished.

Mark Chapter 6

In that which follows, the history (properly so called) of His service is resumed (chapter 6). Only we see Him already rejected by a blinded people, in spite of the power which He had manifested, and which bore testimony to the glory of His Person. Nevertheless He pursues His service, and sends forth His disciples in order that no effort might be wanting; but with the testimony of the judgment that awaited those who should be guilty of the rejection of His mission a rejection that was already taking place. The Lord however continues to give proof in mercy and in goodness that Jehovah, who had compassion on His people, was there; until at length He had to prepare His disciples for the certain result of His work, namely, His death by the hand of the Gentiles, to whom the chief priests would deliver Him.

To the Jews He was the carpenter, the son of Mary. Their unbelief stopped the beneficent hand of God with regard to themselves. Jesus carries on His work elsewhere, and sends forth His disciples an act which implied the possession of divine power. It was still to Israel that the mission they received from Him directed them, and they were to pronounce judgment

upon the land of Emmanuel, the land of Israel, as a polluted land, wherever their testimony should be rejected. They were to go forth resting on the mighty protection of Him who sent them, and they should lack nothing. He was sovereign Lord: all things were at His disposal. Christ can not only communicate blessings as the channel of blessing Himself, but can also confer on His disciples the power of casting out devils. The disciples fulfil their task. This passage shews forth in a remarkable manner the position and glory of Christ. He is the servant for men, the carpenter's son. In His new service, He takes no place but the filling up of that which God had given Him to do. He could do no mighty works there, because of their unbelief ever ready to serve, but shut up, straitened in the exercise of His love, where no door opened to receive its influence; and nature judging according to sight never does. Only where a need was, His love, never tired, works must work. The few sick folk profit by a love that despises none, because it never seeks itself.

But, in the following verse, He who could not work mighty works (because His service was dependent on divine conditions, on which God could found and carry on His intercourse with men, in order to reveal Himself) now gives power to others over all unclean spirits, a power which is divine. Any can work miracles, if God gives the power; but God alone can give it. They are to lack nothing, for Emmanuel was there; and to announce judgment if their message was rejected. Divine love had made Him entirely a dependent Servant; but the dependent Servant was God present in grace and righteousness.

But the effect of all these manifestations of power is, that the conscience of the king who then reigned in Israel is awakened; and the evangelist opens to us the history of the murderous opposition of the authorities in Israel to the witnesses for the truth. Herod had put John to death, in order to gratify the iniquity of a woman who pleased him iniquity that he shared with her. A dance was worth the life of the prophet of God. Such was the ruler of Israel.

The apostles return. Jesus withdraws them from the inquisitive and needy crowd, by going into a desert place; but the multitude follow Him. Jesus, rejected as He is by the land He loved, has compassion on the poor of the flock, and manifests in their behalf the power of Jehovah to bless them

according to Psalm 132. He satisfies the poor with bread. Having sent the people away, He crosses the sea on foot; and, rejoining His disciples, the wind ceases a figure, of which we have spoken when meditating on Matthew. Their work was finished. As to themselves, in spite of all His miracles, their hearts at that time were still hard, and forgot the miracles, one after the other. The Lord pursues His work of blessing. It was but to touch Him and be healed.

Mark Chapter 7

The ruling power in exercise among the Jews had shewn itself hostile to the testimony of God, and had put to death the one whom He had sent in the way of righteousness. The scribes, and those who pretended to follow righteousness, had corrupted the people by their teaching, and had broken the law of God.

They washed cups and pots, but not their hearts; and, provided that the priests religion gained by it, set aside the duties of children to their parents. But God looked at the heart, and from the heart of man proceeded every kind of impurity, iniquity, and violence. It was that which defiled the man, not having his hands unwashed. Such is the judgment on religiousness without conscience and without fear of God, and the true discernment of what the heart of man is in the sight of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

But God must also shew His own heart; and if Jesus judged that of man with the eye of God if He manifested His ways and His faithfulness to Israel; He displayed nevertheless through it all, what God was to those who felt their need of Him and came to Him in faith, owning and resting upon His pure goodness. From the land of Tyre and Sidon comes a woman of the condemned race, a Gentile and a Syrophenician. The Lord replies to her, on her request that He would heal her daughter, that the children (the Jews) must first be filled; that it was not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs: an overwhelming answer, if the sense she had of her need and of the goodness of God had not gone beyond, and set aside, every other thought. These two things made her humble of heart, and ready to own the sovereign favour of God towards the people of His choice in this

world. Had He not a right to choose a people? And she was not one of them. But that did not destroy His goodness and His love. She was but a Gentile dog, yet such was the goodness of God that He had bread even for dogs. Christ, the perfect expression of God, the manifestation of God Himself in the flesh, could not deny His goodness and His grace, could not say that faith had higher thoughts of God than were true, for He was Himself that love. The sovereignty of God was acknowledged no pretension made to any right whatsoever. The poor woman rested only upon grace. Her faith, with an intelligence given of God, laid hold of the grace which went beyond the promises made to Israel. She penetrates into the heart of the God of love, as He is revealed in Jesus, even as He penetrates into ours, and she enjoys the fruit of it. For this was brought in now: God Himself directly in presence of and connection with man, and man as he was before God not a rule or system for man to prepare himself for God.

In the next miracle, we see the Lord, by the same grace, bestowing hearing and speech upon a man who was deaf and unable even to express his thoughts. He could have received no fruit from the word, from God, and could give no praise to Him. The Lord is returned into the place where He arose as light on Israel; and here He deals with the remnant alone. He takes the man apart from the multitude. It is the same grace that takes the place of all pretensions to righteousness in man, and that manifests itself to the destitute. Its form, though exercised now in favour of the remnant of Israel, is suited to the condition of Jew or Gentile it is grace. But as to these too it is the same: He takes the man apart from the crowd, that the work of God may be wrought: the crowd of this world had no real part therein. We see Jesus here, His heart moved at the condition of man, and more especially at the state of His ever-loved Israel, of which this poor sufferer was a striking picture. He causes the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. So was it individually, and so will it be with the whole remnant of Israel in the latter days. He acts Himself, and He does all things well. The power of the enemy is destroyed, the man's deafness, his inability to use his tongue as God gave it him, are taken away by His love who acts with the power of God.

The miracle of the loaves bore witness to the presence of the God of Israel, according to His promises; this, to the grace that went beyond the limits of

these promises, on the part of God, who judged the condition of those who asserted a claim to them according to righteousness, and that of man, evil in himself; and who delivered man and blessed him in love, withdrawing him from the power of Satan, and enabling him to hear the voice of God, and to praise Him.

There are yet some remarkable features in this part of the history of Christ, which I desire to point out. They manifest the spirit in which Jesus laboured at this moment. He departs from the Jews, having shewn the emptiness and hypocrisy of their worship, and the iniquity of every human heart as a source of corruption and sin.

The Lord at this solemn moment, which displayed the rejection of Israel goes far away from the people to a place where there was no opportunity for service among them, to the borders of the stranger and Canaanite cities of Tyre and Sidon (Mar 7:24), and (His heart oppressed) would have no one know where He was. But God had been too plainly manifested in His goodness and His power, to allow Him to be hidden whenever there was need. The report of what He was had gone abroad, and the quick eye of faith discovered that which alone could meet its need. It is this that finds Jesus (when all, that had outwardly a right to the promises, are deceived by this pretension itself and by their privileges). Faith it is that knows its need, and knows that only, and that Jesus alone can meet it. That which God is to faith is manifested to the one that needs it, according to the grace and power that are in Jesus. Hidden from the Jews, He is grace to the sinner. Thus, also (Mar 7:33), when He heals the deaf man of his deafness and of the impediment in his speech, He takes him aside from the multitude, and looks up to heaven and sighs. Oppressed in His heart by the unbelief of the people, He takes the object of the exercise of His power aside, looks up to the sovereign Source of all goodness, of all help for man, and grieves at the thought of the condition in which man is found. This case then exemplifies more particularly, the remnant according to the election of grace from among the Jews, who are separated by divine grace from the mass of the nation, faith, in these few, being in exercise. The heart of Christ is far from repulsing His (earthly) people. His soul is overwhelmed by the sense of the unbelief that separates them from Him and from deliverance; nevertheless

He takes away from some the deaf heart, and looses their tongue, in order that the God of Israel may be glorified.

Thus also on the death of Lazarus, Christ grieves at the sorrow which death brings upon the heart of man. There, however, it was a public testimony.

Mark Chapter 8

We shall find in chapter 8 another example of that which we have been noticing. Jesus leads the blind man out of the town. He does not forsake Israel wherever there is faith; but He separates the one who possesses it from the mass, and brings him into connection with the power, the grace, the heaven, whence blessing flowed consequently which extended to the Gentiles. Power was not exercised in the midst of manifest unbelief. This clearly marks out the position of Christ with regard to the people. He pursues His service, but He retires to God because of Israel's unbelief: but it is to the God of all grace. There His heart found refuge till the great hour of atonement.

It is on this account, as it appears to me, that we have (chapter 8) the second miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. The Lord acts again in favour of Israel, no longer as administering Messianic power in the midst of the people (which was implied, as we have seen, in the number twelve), but in spite of His rejection by Israel, continuing to exercise His power in a divine manner and apart from man. The number seven [See Note #6] has always the force of superhuman perfection that which is complete: this however applied to what is complete in the power of evil as well as good, when it is not human and subordinate to God. Here it is divine. It is that intervention of God which is unwearied, and which is according to His own power, which it is the principal object of the repetition of the miracle to display.

Afterwards the condition both of the heads of Israel and of the remnant is displayed. The Pharisees require a sign; but no sign should be given to that generation. It was simply unbelief when abundant proofs of who He was were before them; they were the very things which had led to the demand. The Lord departs from them. But the blind and unintelligent condition of the remnant is also manifested. The Lord warns them to beware of the spirit and the teaching of the Pharisees, the false pretenders to a holy zeal for God;

and of the Herodians, the servile votaries of the spirit of the world, who, to please the emperor, set God entirely aside.

In using the word "leaven," the Lord gives the disciples occasion to shew their deficiency in spiritual intelligence. If the Jews learnt nothing from the Lord's miracles, but still asked for signs, even the disciples did not realise the divine power manifested in them. I do not doubt that this condition is set forth in the blind man of Bethsaida.

Jesus takes him by the hand and leads him out of the town, away from the multitude, and uses that which was of Himself, that which possessed the efficacy of His own Person, to perform the cure. [See Note #7] The first effect well depicts the condition of the disciples. They saw, doubtless, but in a confused manner, "men, as trees, walking." But the Lord's love is not wearied by their unbelieving dullness of intelligence; He acts according to the power of His own intention towards them, and causes them to see clearly. Afterwards away from Israel the uncertainty of unbelief is seen in juxtaposition with the certainty of faith (however obscure its intelligence may be), and Jesus, forbidding the disciples to speak of that which they certainly believed (the time was gone by for convincing Israel of Christ's rights as Messiah), announces to them that which should happen to Himself, for the accomplishment of God's purposes in grace as Son of man, after His rejection by Israel. [See Note #8] So that everything is now, as we may say, in its place. Israel does not recognise the Messiah in Jesus; consequently He no longer addresses the people in that character. His disciples believe Him to be the Messiah, and He tells them of His death and resurrection.

Now there may be (and it is a most important practical truth) true faith, without the heart being formed according to the full revelation of Christ, and without the flesh being practically crucified in proportion to the measure of knowledge one has of the object of faith. Peter acknowledged indeed, by the teaching of God, that Jesus was the Christ; but he was far from having his heart pure according to the mind of God in Christ. And when the Lord announces His rejection, humiliation and death, and that before all the world, the flesh of Peter wounded by the idea of a Master thus despised and rejected shews its energy by daring to rebuke the Lord Himself. This attempt of Satan's to discourage the disciples by the dishonour of the cross

stirs up the Lord's heart. All His affection for His disciples, and the sight of those poor sheep before whom the enemy was putting a stumbling block, bring a vehement censure upon Peter, as being the instrument of Satan and speaking on his part. Alas for us! the reason was plain he savoured the things of men, and not those of God; for the cross comprises in itself all the glory of God. Man prefers the glory of man, and thus Satan governs him. The Lord calls the people and His disciples, and explains distinctly to them that if they would follow Him, they must take part with Him, and bear their cross. For thus, in losing their life, they would save it, and the soul was worth all beside. Moreover, if any one was ashamed of Jesus and of His words, the Son of man would be ashamed of him, when He should come in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. For glory belonged to Him, whatever might be His humiliation. He then sets this before His chief disciples, in order to strengthen their faith.

Note #6

It may be remarked that seven is the highest prime, that is indivisible, number; twelve, the most divisible there is.

Note #7

Spittle, in connection with the sanctity of the Rabbis, was highly esteemed by the Jews in this respect; but here its efficacy is connected with the Person of Him who used it.

Note #8

We have nothing here of the church, nor of the keys of the kingdom These depend on what is not introduced here as a part of Peter's confession the Son of the living God. We have the glory of the kingdom coming in power, in contrast with the rejected Christ the prophet-servant in Israel.

Mark Chapter 9

In Matthew we saw the transfiguration announced in terms that related to the subject of that Gospel the rejected Christ taking His glorious position as Son of man. In each of the Gospels it is in connection with the moment when this transition is clearly set forth; but in each case with a particular

character. In Mark we have seen the humble and devoted service of Christ in proclaiming the kingdom, whatever might be the divine glory that shone through His humiliation. Accordingly the manifestation of the transition to glory is here announced as the coming of the kingdom in power. There is nothing that very particularly distinguishes the recital here from that in Matthew, excepting that the isolation of Jesus and the three disciples at this moment is more strongly marked in Verse 2 (Mar 9:2), and that the facts are related without addition. The Lord afterwards charges them to tell no one what they had seen, until after His resurrection from among the dead.

We may remark here, that it is indeed the kingdom in power that is manifested. It is not the power of the Holy Ghost bringing the sinner as a holy member of the body into connection with Christ the Head, revealing to it the heavenly glory of Christ as He is at the right hand of the Father. Christ is on earth. He is there in connection with the great witnesses of the Jewish economy (the law and prophecy), but witnesses who give place entirely to Him, while participating with Him in the glory of the kingdom. But Christ is manifested in glory on the earth the man in glory is recognised as Son of God, as He is known in the cloud. It was the glory as it shall be manifested on the earth, the glory of the kingdom, and God is still in the cloud, though revealing His glory in it. This is not our position as yet without a veil; only that the veil as to our relationship with God is rent from top to bottom, and we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Christ. But this is spiritual privilege, not public display our veil as to that, our body, is not rent; but Christ's, as the title of entrance, is. [See Note #9]

But this position of glory could not be taken by the Lord, nor the glorious reign be established, excepting in a new order of things. Christ must rise from the dead to establish it. It did not accord with His presentation as Messiah, as He then was. Therefore He commands His disciples not to make it known till after His resurrection. It would then be a powerful confirmation of the doctrine of the kingdom in glory. This manifestation of the glory confirmed the faith of the disciples at that time (as Gethsemane taught them the reality of His sufferings, and of His conflicts with the prince of darkness); and would afterwards form a subject of their testimony, and its confirmation, when Christ should have taken His new position.

We may see the character of this manifestation, and its relation to the earthly kingdom of glory of which the prophets had spoken, in Pe2 1:19. Read there, "We have the word of prophecy confirmed."

The disciples had stopped at the threshold. In fact, although their eyes were opened, they saw "men as trees walking." What, they questioned between themselves, could this "rising from among the dead" mean? Resurrection was known to them; all the sect of the Pharisees believed in it. But this power which delivered from the condition in which man and even the saints were found, implying too that others were still left in it when that power was exercised, of this they were totally ignorant. That there was a resurrection in which God would raise up all the dead at the last day, they had no doubt. But that the Son of man was the resurrection and the life the absolute triumph over death of the last Adam, the Son of God having life in Himself, manifested by His resurrection from among the dead (a deliverance that shall be accomplished in the saints also in due time), of this they understood nothing. Doubtless they received the Lord's words as true, as having authority; but His meaning was incomprehensible to them.

Now unbelief never fails to find out difficulties that justify it in its own eyes which refuse to perceive the divine proofs of the truth difficulties great enough in appearance, and which may trouble the minds of those who, through grace, are inclined to believe, or who have believed, but are still weak in the faith.

The prophets had said that Elias must first come. The scribes insisted on this. Struck with the glory that undeniably confirmed the pretensions of Christ, the disciples speak to Him of this difficulty. The conviction which the sight of the glory brought to their mind, made them confess the difficulty with regard to which they had previously been silent, not daring to bring it forward. But now the proof is strong enough to embolden them to face the difficulty.

In fact, the word spoke of it, and Jesus accepts it as the truth; Elias was to come and restore all things. And he shall indeed come before the manifestation of the glory of the Son of man; but first of all the Son of man must suffer and be rejected. This also was written, as well as the mission of

Elias. Moreover, before this manifestation of Christ, which tested the Jews as to their responsibility, God had not failed to supply them with a testimony according to the spirit and power of Elias; and they had ill-treated him as they listed. It was written that the Son of man should suffer before His glory, as truly as that Elias should come. However, as we have said, in point of testimony to the Jews, he who took morally the place of Elias had come. They had treated him as they were going to treat the Lord. Thus also John had said that he was not Elias, and he quotes Isaiah 40, which speaks of the testimony; but he never quotes Malachi 4, which relates to Elias personally. The Lord (Mat 11:10) applies Mal 3:1; but John, Isaiah.

Come down from the mountain, the people rush towards Him, astonished apparently at this mysterious absence from His disciples, and salute Him with the reverence with which His whole life had inspired them. But that which had taken place in His absence only confirmed the solemn truth that He must depart, which had just been demonstrated by a more glorious testimony. The remnant even, they who believed, knew not how to profit by the power which was now on earth. The faith of those even who believed did not realise the presence of the Messiah the power of Jehovah, the Healer of Israel: wherefore then still remain among the people and the disciples? The poor father expresses his affliction in a touching manner, in words that shew a heart brought by the sense of its need to a right condition, but very weak in faith. The miserable state of his child is related, and his heart presents a true picture of the condition of the remnant faith that required support on account of the unbelief under which it was buried. Israel was in no better condition than the poor child. But power was present, capable of all things. That was not the difficulty. Is there faith to profit by it? was the question. "If thou canst," said the afflicted father to Jesus. "If thou canst (replied the Lord) applies to thy faith; "if thou canst believe, all things are possible." The poor father, true of heart, confesses his own state with grief, and seeks, in the goodness of Christ, help for his failure. Thus the position of Israel was plainly shewn forth. Almighty power was present to heal them to deliver them from the power of Satan. It was to be done through faith, for the soul was to return to God. And there was faith in those who, touched by the testimony of His power, and moved by the grace of God, sought in Jesus the remedy for their woes and the

foundation for their hopes. Their faith was weak and wavering; but wherever it existed, Jesus acted with the sovereign power of His own grace, and of the goodness of God that finds its measure in itself. However far unbelief may have gone in those who should profit by the grace of a dispensation, wherever there is a need to meet, Jesus answers to it when He is looked to. And this is a great mercy and encouragement for us.

Nevertheless, for this power to be exercised by man himself (to which God called him), it was needful that he should draw very near to God that he to whom it was committed should accustom himself to communion with God, by withdrawing from all that connected him with the world and the flesh.

Let us here recapitulate the principles of this narrative with respect to their general application. The Lord, who was going away, to be seen no more of the world until He came in glory, finds, on coming down from the mount of transfiguration, a case of the power of Satan over man, over the Jewish people. It had continued from almost the commencement of the child's existence. The faith that recognises the intervention of God in Christ, and takes shelter in it from present evil, is weak and wavering, pre-occupied with the evil, the sight of which conceals in great measure the power that masters and takes it away. Still the sense of need is deep enough to make it have recourse to that power.

It is the unbelief which knows not how to count on the power that is present, which puts an end to the relations of Christ with man. It is not man's misery that does so it was this that brought Him down to earth. But the almighty power is present it only needs faith to profit by it. But if the heart, on account of the enemy's power, turns to Jesus, it can (thank God) bring its unbelief to Him as well as all the rest. There is love and power in Him for every kind of weakness. The people crowd around, attracted by the sight of the enemy's power. Can the Lord heal him? But can he allow the testimony of Satan's power to invade their hearts? This is the curiosity of men whose imagination is filled with the effect of the enemy's presence. But, whatever might be the unbelief of man, Christ was present, the testimony of a power that, in love to men, destroyed the effects of the power of the enemy. The people gather round Jesus sees it, and with a word casts out the enemy. He acts according to the necessity of His power, and

the purposes of the love of God. Thus the effort of the enemy occasioned the intervention of Jesus, which the weakness of the father's faith tended to arrest. Nevertheless, if we lay all our infirmity, as well as our misery, before Christ, He answers according to the fulness of His power. On the other hand, if the flesh meddles with the thoughts of faith, it hinders intelligence in the ways of God. While journeying, Christ explained His death and His new condition in resurrection. Why blame the lack of intelligence which hid all this from them, and filled their minds with ideas of earthly and Messianic glory? The secret of their want of intelligence lay here. He had told them plainly; but on the way they disputed among themselves which should have the first place in the kingdom. The thoughts of the flesh filled their heart, in regard to Jesus, with exactly the opposite of that which engaged the mind of God respecting Him. Infirmity, presented to Jesus, finds an answer in power and in sovereign grace; the flesh and its desires hide from us, even when thinking of Him, all the import of the thoughts of God. It was their own glory they were seeking in the kingdom; the cross the true path to glory was unintelligible to them.

After this the Lord resumes with His disciples the great subject before Him at this moment; and which was, in every way, that which now must be decided. He was to be rejected; and He separates Himself from the multitude, with His disciples, to instruct them on this point. Pre-occupied with His glory, with His rights as Messiah, they do not understand it. Their faith even, such as it was, blinds them to all beyond that; because, while rightly attaching itself to the Person of Christ, it connected or rather, their own hearts, in which the faith existed, connected with Christ the accomplishment of that which their flesh desired and sought in Him for themselves. How subtle is the heart! This betrays itself in their dispute for pre-eminence. Their faith is too weak to bear elucidations that contradicted their ideas (Mar 9:32). These ideas are manifested without disguise among themselves. Jesus reproves them, and gives them a little child for an example, as He had so often done before. He that would follow Christ must have a spirit quite opposite to that of the world a spirit belonging to that which was weak and despised by the pride of the world. In receiving such a one, they would receive Christ; in receiving Christ, they would receive the

Father. It was eternal things that were in question, and the spirit of a man must then be the spirit of a child.

The world was so contrary to Christ, that he who was not against Him was for Him. [See Note #10] The Son of man was to be rejected. Faith in His Person was the thing, not now individual service to Him. Alas! the disciples were still thinking of themselves: "He followeth not us." They must share His rejection; and if any one gave them a cup of cold water, God would remember it. Whatever would cause them to stumble in their walk, were it even their own right eye or hand, they would do well to cut off; for it was not the things of an earthly Messiah that were in question, but the things of eternity. And all should be tested by the perfect holiness of God, and that in judgment by one means or another. Every one should be salted with fire the good and the bad. Where there was life, the fire would only consume the flesh; for when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. If the judgment reaches the wicked (and assuredly it shall reach them), it is condemnation a fire that is not quenched. But, for the good, there was also something else: they should be salted with salt. Those who were consecrated to God, whose life was an offering to Him, should not lack the power of holy grace, which binds the soul to God and inwardly preserves it from evil. Salt is not the gentleness that pleases (which grace produces without doubt), but that energy of God within us which connects everything in us with God, and dedicates the heart to Him, binding it to Him in the sense of obligation and of desire, rejecting all in oneself that is contrary to Him (obligation that flows from grace, but which acts all the more powerfully on that account). Thus, practically, it was distinctive grace, the energy of holiness, which separates from all evil; but by setting apart for God. Salt was good: here the effect produced in the soul, the condition of the soul, is so called, as well as the grace that produces this condition. Thus they who offered themselves to God were set apart for Him; they were the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith can it be salted? It is used for seasoning other things; but if the salt needs it for itself, there is nothing left that can salt it. So would it be with Christians; if they who were of Christ did not render this testimony, where should anything be found, apart from Christians, to render it to them and produce it in them? Now this sense of obligation to God which separates

from evil, this judgment of all evil in the heart, must be in oneself. It is not a question of judging others, but of placing oneself before God, thus becoming the salt, having it in oneself. With regard to others, one must seek peace; and real separation from all evil is that which enables us to walk in peace together.

In a word, Christians were to keep themselves separate from evil and near to God in themselves; and to walk with God in peace among one another.

No instruction could be more plain, more important, more valuable. It judges, it directs, the whole christian life in a few words.

But the end of the Lord's service drew near. Having described in these principles the exigencies of eternity and the character of christian life, He brings back all the relations of God with man to their original elements, setting aside the world and its glory, and Jewish glory also, as to its immediate accomplishment, and pointing out the path of eternal life in the cross, and in the saving power of God. Nevertheless He takes the place of obedience Himself, and of service the true place of man in the midst of all this: God Himself being introduced on the other hand, in His proper character as God, in His nature and in His divine rights; the special glory that belongs to dispensations, and the relationships proper to them, being left out.

Note #9

The entrance into the cloud does not form part of the revelation here. We find it in Luke. The cloud for Israel was the place where God dwelt; it was (Matthew 17) a bright cloud.

Note #10

Some have difficulty in reconciling this with: "Forbid him not, he that is not with me is against me." But they coalesce when the main point is seen; Christ was a divine criterion of man's state, and brought things to an issue. The world was wholly, absolutely, against Him. If a man was not, there was no middle state, he was for Him. But things being brought to an issue, if a man was not for Him, he was of the world, and so against Him.

Mark Chapter 10

It is a striking principle which meets us here the relationships of nature (as God has Himself created them at the beginning) re-established in their original authority, while the heart is judged, and the cross the sole means of drawing nigh to the God who was their creative source. On earth Christ could offer nothing but the cross to those who followed Him. The glory to which the cross would lead has been shewn to some of them; but as to Himself He took the place of servant. It was the knowledge of God by Him that should form them for this glory and lead them to it; for in fact that was life eternal. All other intermediate ways had, in the hands of men, become hostile to the God who had granted them, and therefore to His manifestation in the Person of Christ.

We find then (Mar 10:1-12), the original relationship of man and wife as formed by the creative hand of God; in Verses 13-16 (Mar 10:13-16) the interest which Jesus took in young children, their place in the compassionate eye of God, the moral value of that which they represented before men. In Verse 17 (Mar 10:17) we come to the law, to the world, and to the heart of man in presence of the two. But at the same time we see that Jesus takes pleasure in that which is amiable in the creature as a creature a principle of deep interest unfolded in this chapter while still applying the touchstone morally to his heart. With respect to the law, as the natural heart can see it (that is, the outward action it requires), the young man had kept it; and with a natural sincerity, and uprightness, that Jesus could appreciate as a creature quality, and which we ought always to recognise where it exists. It is important to remember, that He who as man was perfectly separated unto God and that, because He had the thoughts of God could recognise the unchangeable obligations of the relationships established by God Himself; and also, whatever there was amiable and attractive in the creature of God as such. Having the thoughts of God being God manifest in the flesh, how could He but recognise that which was of God in His creature? And while doing this, He must establish the obligations of the relationships in which He has placed him, and exhibit the tenderness He felt for the infant representatives of the spirit which He prized. He must love the natural uprightness that may be developed in the creature. But He must judge the

true condition of man fully brought out, and the affections that rested on objects raised up by Satan, and the will that rejected and turned away from the manifestation of God that called him to forsake these vanities and follow Him, thus putting his heart morally to the proof.

Jesus exhibits the absolute perfection of God in yet another manner. The young man saw the exterior of Christ's perfection, and, trusting to the power of man to perform that which is good, and seeing its practical fulfilment in Jesus, applies to Him and, humanly speaking, with sincerity to learn, from One in whom he saw so much perfection, though viewing Him merely as a Rabbi, the rule of eternal life. This thought is expressed in his sincere and cordial salutation. He runs, he kneels, to the Teacher who, morally, stood so high in his estimation, saying, "Good Master." The human limit of his ideas of this goodness, and his confidence in the powers of man, are manifested by the words, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" The Lord, taking up the whole import of his word, replies, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God." What God has created he who knows God will respect, when it presents itself as such in its true place. But God alone is good. Man, if intelligent, will not make himself out good before God, nor dream of human goodness. This young man had at least the hope of becoming good by the law, [See Note #11] and he believed that Jesus was so as a man. But the greatest advantages which the flesh could recognise, and which answered to its nature, did but the more effectually shut the door of life and heaven to man. The flesh used the law for self-righteousness, man being not good but a sinner. And, in fact, if we have to seek for righteousness, it is because we have it not (that is to say, because we are sinners and cannot attain this righteousness in ourselves). Moreover worldly advantages, which appeared to render man more capable of doing good, bound his heart to perishing things, and strengthened selfishness, and made him attach little value to the image of God.

But the instructions of this chapter carry on still farther the subject of man's condition before God. The ideas of the flesh accompany and give their form to the heart's affections, in one who is already quickened by the Spirit of grace acting through the attraction of Christ, until the Holy Ghost Himself communicates to those affections the strength of His presence, by giving

them the glory of Christ in heaven for their object; and at the same time causing the light of that glory to shine (for the believer's heart) upon the cross, investing it with all the value of the redemption it accomplished, and of the divine grace that was its source, and producing conformity to Christ in every one that bears it with Him. Peter did not understand how any one could be saved, if such advantages as the Jews possessed in their relationship to God (and which were specially present in the case of this young man) only barred up the way to the kingdom of God. The Lord meets him upon this very ground; for man in the presence of God was now the question. As far as man was concerned, it was impossible a second profound truth with respect to his condition. Not only was there none good excepting God, but no one could be saved, according to what man was. Whatever advantages he might have as means, they would avail him nothing in his state of sin. But the Lord introduces another source of hope "with God all things are possible." The whole of this, indeed all this part of the Gospel, while it sets aside the Jewish system, does so, because, while that was founded on testing the possibility by the possession of divinely given ordinances of acquiring righteousness, and a standing before God as yet unrevealed, this revealed God and brought man and man's heart face to face, as a present thing, with Him; in grace, but still face to face as he was. The disciples, not having yet received the Holy Ghost, are still under the influence of the old system, and only see men as trees walking; and this is fully developed in this chapter. The kingdom indeed they could think of, but still with fleshly thoughts.

But the flesh, the carnal mind, enters yet farther into the career of the life of grace. Peter reminds the Lord that the disciples had forsaken all to follow Him. The Lord replies, that every one [See Note #12] who had done so should have everything that would make him happy in his social affections, as God had formed him, and all this world could give as to the real enjoyment of it and a hundredfold, together with the opposition that He Himself met with in this world; but in the world to come (Peter was not thinking of that) not some private individual advantage, but everlasting life. He went beyond the sphere of promise connected with the Messiah on earth, to enter, and to make others enter, into that which was eternal. As to individual reward, that could not be judged of according to appearances.

We have seen what the flesh was in an upright young man whom Jesus loved, and in His disciples who knew not how to take the true position of Christ. The contrast of this with the full triumph of the Holy Ghost is remarkable, as we find it in the comparison of this chapter with Philippians 3.

We have in Saul a man outwardly blameless, according to the law, like the young man in the gospel; but he has seen Christ in glory, and, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, the righteousness according to which Christ entered into the glory in which He revealed Himself to Saul. All that had been gain to him was loss for Christ. Would he have a carnal righteousness, a human righteousness, even if he could have accomplished it, when he had seen a righteousness bright with the glory of Christ? He possessed the righteousness which was of God by faith. What was that righteousness worth for which he had laboured, now that he possessed the all-perfect righteousness which God gave by faith? Not sins alone were put away: human righteousness was made worthless by it. But his eyes had been opened to this by the Holy Ghost, and by seeing Christ. The things that engaged the heart of the young man and retained him in the world which Christ forsook, and which in Him had rejected God could these things retain one who had seen Christ in the other world? They were but as dung to him. He had forsaken everything in order to possess this Christ. He considered them as utterly worthless. The Holy Ghost, in revealing Christ, had completely delivered him.

But this manifestation to the heart of Christ glorified goes yet farther. He who thus breaks with the world must follow the One whose glory he would reach; and this is to put himself under the cross. The disciples had forsaken all to follow Him. Grace had attached them to Christ that they might follow Him. The Holy Ghost had not yet linked them with His glory. He goes up to Jerusalem. They are amazed at it; and, in following Him (although He goes before them, and they have His guidance and His presence), they are afraid. Paul seeks to know the power of His resurrection: he desires to have fellowship with His sufferings, and to be conformed unto His death. Instead of amazement and fear, there is full spiritual intelligence and the desire of

conformity to that death which the disciples feared; because he found Christ morally in it, and it was the pathway to the glory he had seen.

Moreover this sight of Christ purifies the desires of the heart with respect even to the glory. John and James desire for themselves the best place in the kingdom a desire that availed itself (with a carnal and selfish object) of the intelligence of faith a half-sighted intelligence that sought the kingdom at once, and not the glory and the world to come. Paul had seen Christ: his only desire in the glory was to possess Him "that I may win Christ," and a new state conformed to it; not a good place near Him in the kingdom, but Himself. This is deliverance the effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost revealing a glorified Christ.

We may remark, that in every case the Lord brings in the cross. It was the only passage from this world of nature, to the world of glory and of eternal life. [See Note #13] To the young man He exhibits the cross; to the disciples that follow Him He exhibits the cross; to John and James, who sought a good place in the kingdom, He exhibits the cup they would have to drink in following Him. Eternal life, although received now, was, in possession and enjoyment according to God's purpose, on the other side of the cross.

Observe also, that the Lord was so perfectly, divinely, above the sin in which nature lay, that He could recognise all that was of God in nature, and shew at the same time the impossibility of any relation between God and man on the ground of what man is. Advantages were but hindrances. That which is death to the flesh must be gone through: we must have divine righteousness, and enter in spirit (hereafter in fact) into another world, in order to follow Him and to be with Him to "win Christ." Solemn lesson!

In result, God alone is good, and sin having come in it is impossible, if He be manifested, that man can be in relationship with God; but with Him all is possible. The cross is the only path to God. Christ leads to it, and we must follow Him in this path, which is that of eternal life. A child-like spirit enters into it by grace; the spirit of service and of self-renunciation walks in it. Christ walked in it, giving His life a ransom for many. This part of the Lord's instruction ends here. Lowliness of service is the place into which Christ brings us; in such He had walked. This chapter is worthy of all the attention

which the Christian through grace can devote to it. It speaks of the ground man can stand upon, how far God owns what is natural, and the disciples' path down here.

At Verse 46 (Mar 10:46) another subject begins. The Lord enters on the path of His final relationship with Israel, presenting Himself as King, Emmanuel, rather than as the prophet who was to be sent. As the Prophet, His ministry had been accomplished. He had been sent (He told His disciples) to preach. This had led Him to the cross, as we have seen. He must needs announce it as the result to those that followed Him. He now resumes His connection with Israel, but as the Son of David. He draws near to Jerusalem, from which He had departed and where He was to be rejected, and the power of God manifests itself in Him. By the way of Jericho, the city of the curse, enters the One who brings blessing at the price of the gift of Himself. The poor blind man [See Note #14] (and such indeed was the nation of itself) acknowledges Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of David. The grace of Jesus replies in power to the need of His people, that expressed itself by faith, and that persevered in, in spite of the obstacles put in its way by the multitude who did not feel this need, and who followed Jesus, attracted by the manifestation of His power, without being attached to Him by the faith of the heart. That faith has the sense of need. Jesus stands still and calls him, and before all the people manifests the divine power which responded in the midst of Israel to the faith that recognised in Jesus of Nazareth the true Son of David, the Messiah. The poor man's faith had healed him, and he followed Jesus in the way without dissimulation or fear. For the faith which then confessed Jesus to be the Christ was divine faith, although it might perhaps know nothing of the cross which He had just announced to His disciples as the result of His faithfulness and service, and in which faith must follow when genuine.

Note #11

He does not ask, What must I do to be saved? He assumed that by the law he was to get life.

Note #12

This went beyond even the disciples' connection with the Jews, and in principle admitted the Gentiles.

Note #13

From the transfiguration until His rights as Son of David are in question, it is the cross that is presented. Prophet and preacher until then, that ministry ended with the transfiguration, in which His future glory shone in this world upon the cross that was to close His service here below. But before He reached the cross, He presented Himself as King. Matthew begins with the King, but Mark is essentially the Prophet.

Note #14

I have already noticed that the blind man of Jericho is, in all the first three Gospels, the point where the history of the last dealings of Christ with the Jews and His final sufferings begin, His general ministry and service being closed.

Mark Chapter 11

In that which follows (chapter 11) Jesus presents Himself to Jerusalem as King. His reception shews the extent to which the testimony He had rendered had acted on the hearts of the simple. God ordained therefore that it should take place. There is little difference between the narrative here and in Matthew. Only the kingdom is more simply presented as such: "The kingdom of our father David."

With what dignity, as the Judge of all things, Jesus now takes knowledge of all that was being done in the temple, and goes out without saying anything! The Lord had visited His temple, as also He had entered the city riding on the ass's colt, whereon never man sat. Israel is judged in the condemned fig tree. [See Note #15] The glory of the Lord, of the house of Jehovah, is vindicated with authority an authority which He claims, and which He exercises in His own Person. The scribes and chief priests draw back before the ascendancy that His word had given Him over the people, and He goes out of the city without being molested, notwithstanding their malice. The next day He assures His disciples, who were astonished at seeing the fig tree withered away, that whatsoever they asked in faith should be accomplished;

but that they must act in grace, if they would enjoy this privilege. The scribes and priests and elders are confounded, and demand His authority. He addresses their conscience, but in such a manner as to demonstrate their incompetency to ask Him such a question, exposing at the same time their insincerity. They could not decide with respect to the baptism of John: by what right then could they subject Him to their questions respecting His own claims? They could not decide when the case was before them. On the other hand, they must either sanction His work by their reply, or lose their authority with the people by denying the baptism of John who had borne testimony to Christ. It was no longer a question of winning these men; but what an empty thing is the wisdom of man in the presence of God and His wisdom!

The change of dispensation has a more definite place in Matthew, and the sin which rejected the King. In Mark, it is more the service of Christ as the Prophet. Afterwards, as we have seen, He presents Himself as King. And, in both Gospels, we see that it is Jehovah who fills the office which He has deigned to undertake.

Consequently we find in Matthew more personal accusations, as in the parable of the two sons (Mat 21:28-32), and the detail of the change of dispensation in the parable of the marriage feast (Mat 22:1-14); neither of which is in Mark. In our Gospel, the unchangeable dignity of His Person, and the simple fact that the Prophet and King were rejected (rejection that led to Israel's judgment) are set before us by the Spirit of God. Otherwise it is the same general testimony we have reviewed in Matthew.

Mark Chapter 12

The Lord afterwards gives the substance of the whole law, as the principle of blessing between the creature and God, and that which formed the touchstone for the heart in the rejection of Christ. I say for the heart, because the trial was really there, although it was in the understanding that it appeared. Even when there were really orthodox principles (Christ being rejected), the heart that was not attached to His Person could not follow Him in the path to which His rejection led. The system of God's counsels which depended on that rejection was a difficulty. Those who were attached

to His Person followed Him, and found themselves in it, without having well understood it beforehand. Thus the Lord gives the pith of the law the whole law as essentially divine instruction and the point at which the counsels of God are transplanted into the new scene, where they will be fulfilled apart from the wickedness or ill will of man. So that in these few Verses (Mar 12:28-37), the law and the Son of David are presented, and the latter taking His place as Son of man the Lord at the right hand of God. This was the secret of all that was going on. The union of His body, the assembly, with Himself was all that remained behind. Only in Mark the Prophet recognises the moral condition, under the law, that tends towards entrance into the kingdom (Mar 12:34). This scribe had the spirit of understanding.

The picture of the condition that would bring in judgment, which we find in Matthew 23, is not given here (see Synopsis about Matthew 23). It was not His subject. Jesus, still as the Prophet; warns His disciples morally; but the judgment of Israel, for rejecting the Son of David, is not here before His eyes in the same manner (that is to say, it is not the subject of which the Holy Ghost is here speaking). The real character of the scribes' devoutness is pointed out, and the disciples are warned against them. The Lord makes them feel also what it is that, in the eyes of God, gives true value to the offerings that were brought to the temple.

Note #15

That is man under the old covenant, flesh under divine requirement, and no fruit to grow on it for ever.

Mark Chapter 13

In chapter 13 the Lord takes up much more the service of the apostles in the circumstances that would surround them, than the development of the dispensations and the ways of God with respect to the kingdom a point of view more presented in Matthew, who treats of this subject.

It will be observed, that the disciples' question takes only a general view of the subject which pre-occupied them. They ask when the judgment upon the temple and all these things shall be fulfilled. And from Verses 9-13 (Mar 13:9-13), although some circumstances found in Matthew 24 are included,

the passage relates even more to that which is said in Matthew 10. It speaks of the service which the disciples would accomplish in the midst of Israel, and in testimony against persecuting authorities, the gospel being preached in all nations before the end came. They were, as preachers, to fill the place which Jesus had occupied among the people, only that the testimony was to extend much farther. It would be in the face of all possible suffering and most trying persecutions.

But there would be a moment when this service should end. The well-known sign of the abomination that maketh desolate would point it out. They were then to flee. These would be the days of unparalleled distress, and of signs and wonders, which, if it were possible, would deceive the very elect. But they were forewarned. Everything should be shaken after that time, and the Son of man should come. Power should take the place of testimony, and the Son of man should gather together His elect (of Israel) from all parts of the earth.

It appears to me that in this Gospel, more than in any other, the Lord brings together the judgment on Jerusalem then at hand, and that which is yet to come, carrying the mind on to the latter, because He is here more occupied with the conduct of His disciples during those events. Israel, the whole system into which the Lord had come, was to be set aside provisionally, in order to bring in the assembly and the kingdom in its heavenly character, and afterwards the millennium that is, the assembly in its glory and the kingdom established in power when the legal system and Israel under the first covenant should be finally set aside. At these two periods the general position of the disciples would be the same; but the events of the latter period would be definitive and important, and the Lord speaks especially of them. Nevertheless that which was the most imminent, and which, for the present, set aside Israel and the testimony, required that a warning should be addressed to the disciples on account of their immediate danger; and they receive it accordingly.

The effort of the Jews to re-establish their system at the end, in despite of God, will but lead to open apostasy and definitive judgment. This will be the time of unequalled affliction, of which the Lord speaks. But from the time of the first destruction of Jerusalem by Titus until the coming of the Lord, the

Jews are considered as set aside and under this judgment, in what degree soever it may have been accomplished.

The disciples are commanded to watch, for they know not the hour. It is the conduct of the disciples in this respect which is here especially before the eyes of the Lord. It is of this great day, and the hour of its arrival, that the angels and even the Son, as Prophet, know not. For Jesus must sit at the right hand of God until His enemies are made His footstool, and the time of His rising up is not revealed. The Father has kept it, says Jesus, in His own power. See Acts 3, where Peter proposes to the Jews the Lord's return. They rejected his testimony; and now they wait for the full accomplishment of all that has been spoken. Meantime the servants are left to serve during the Master's absence. He commanded the porter in particular to watch. They knew not at what hour the Master would come. This applies to the disciples in their connection with Israel, but at the same time it is a general principle. The Lord addresses it to all.

Mark Chapter 14

chapter 14 resumes the thread of the history, but with the solemn circumstances that belong to the close of the Lord's life.

The scribes and Pharisees were already consulting how they might take Him by craft and put Him to death. They feared the influence of the people, who admired the works and goodness and meekness of Jesus. Therefore they wished to avoid taking Him at the time of the feast, when the multitude flocked to Jerusalem: but God had other purposes. Jesus was to be our Paschal Lamb, blessed Lord! and He offers Himself as the victim of propitiation. Now the counsels of God and the love of Christ being such, Satan was not wanting in suitable agents to perform all that he could do against the Lord. Jesus offering Himself for it, the people would soon be induced to give up, even to the Gentiles, the One who had so much attracted them; and treachery would not be wanting to throw Him without difficulty into the hands of the priests. Still God's own arrangements, which owned Him and displayed Him in His grace, should have the first place; and the supper at Bethany and the supper at Jerusalem should precede the one, the proposal, and the other, the act of Judas. For, let the wickedness of man

be what it may, God always takes the place He chooses, and never allows the enemy power to hide His ways from faith, nor leaves His people without the testimony of His love.

This portion of the history is very remarkable. God brings forward the thoughts and fears of the leaders of the people, in order that we may know them; but everything is absolutely in His own hands; and the malice of man, treachery, and the power of Satan when working in the most energetic manner (never had they been so active), only accomplish the purposes of God for the glory of Christ. Before the treachery of Judas He has the testimony of Mary's affection. God puts the seal of this affection upon Him who was to be betrayed. And, on the other hand, before being forsaken and delivered up, He can testify all His affection for His own, in the institution of the Lord's supper, and at His own last supper with them. What a beautiful testimony to the interest with which God cares for and comforts His children in the darkest moment of their distress!

Remark also, in what manner love to Christ finds, amid the darkness that gathers round His path, the light that directs its conduct, and directs it precisely to that which was suitable to the moment. Mary had no prophetic knowledge; but the imminent danger in which the Lord Christ was placed by the hatred of the Jews, stimulates her affection to perform an act which was to be made known wherever the death of Christ and His love for us should be proclaimed in the whole world. This is true intelligence true guidance in things moral. Her act becomes an occasion of darkness to Judas; it is clothed with the light of divine intelligence by the Lord's own testimony. This love for Christ discerns that which is suitable apprehends the good and the evil in a just and seasonable manner. It is a good thing to care for the poor. But at that moment the whole mind of God was centred on the sacrifice of Christ. They had always opportunity to relieve the poor, and it was right to do so. To put them in comparison with Jesus, at the moment of His sacrifice, was to put them out of their place, and to forget all that was precious to God. Judas, who cared only for money, seized the position according to his own interest. He saw, not the preciousness of Christ, but the desires of the scribes. His sagacity was of the enemy, as that of Mary was of God. Things advance: Judas arranges with them his plan to deliver up

Jesus for money. The thing in fact is settled according to his thoughts and theirs. Nevertheless it is very remarkable to see here the way in which if I may so speak God Himself governs the position. Although it is the moment when the malice of man is at its height, and when the power of Satan is exerted to the utmost, yet all is accomplished exactly at the moment, in the manner, by the instruments, chosen of God. Nothing, not the least thing, escapes Him. Nothing is accomplished but that which He wills, and as He wills, and when He wills. What consolation for us! and, in the circumstances which we are considering, what a striking testimony! The Holy Ghost has therefore reported the desire (easy to be understood) of the chief priests and scribes to avoid the occasion of the feast. Useless desire! This sacrifice was to be accomplished at that time; and it is accomplished.

But the time drew near for the last feast of the Passover that took place during the life of Jesus the one in which He was Himself to be the Lamb, and leave no memorial to faith except that of Himself and of His work. He therefore sends His disciples to prepare all that was needed to keep the feast. In the evening He sits with His disciples, to converse with them, and to testify His love for them as their companion, for the last time. But it is to tell them (for He must suffer everything) that one of them should betray Him. The heart at least of each one of the eleven answered, full of grief at the thought. [See Note #16]

So should one have done who was eating from the same dish with Him; but woe to that man! Yet neither the thought of such iniquity, nor the sorrow of His own heart, could stop the outflowing of the love of Christ. He gives them pledges of this love in the Lord's supper. It was Himself, His sacrifice, and not a temporal deliverance, that they were henceforth to remember. All was now absorbed in Him, and in Him dying on the cross. Afterwards, in giving them the cup, He lays the foundation of the new covenant in His blood (in a figure), giving it to them as participation in His death true draught of life. When they had all drunk of it, He announces to them that it is the seal of the new covenant a thing well known to the Jews, according to Jeremiah; adding that it was shed for many. Death was to come in for the establishment of the new covenant, and for the ransom of many. For this, death was necessary, and the bonds of earthly association between Jesus

and His disciples were dissolved. He would drink no more of the fruit of the vine (the token of that connection) until, in another way, He should renew this association with them in the kingdom of God. When the kingdom should be established, He would again be with them, and would renew these bonds of association (in another form, and in a more excellent way, no doubt, yet really). But now all was changing. They sing, and go out, repairing to the accustomed place in the Mount of Olives.

The connection of Jesus with His disciples here below should indeed be broken, but it would not be by His forsaking them. He strengthened, or, at least, He manifested, the sentiments of His heart, and the strength (on His part) of these bonds, in His last supper with them. But they would be offended at His position, and would forsake Him. Nevertheless the hand of God was in all this. He would smite the Shepherd. But when once raised from the dead, Jesus would resume His relationship with His disciples with the poor of the flock. He would go before them to the place where this relationship commenced, to Galilee, afar from the pride of the nation, and where the light had appeared among them according to the word of God.

Death was before Him. He must pass through it, in order that any relationship whatsoever between God and man might be established. The Shepherd should be smitten by the Lord of hosts. Death was the judgment of God: could man sustain it? There was but One who could. Peter, loving Christ too well to forsake Him in heart, enters so far into the path of death as to draw back again, thus giving a testimony all the more striking to his own inability to traverse the abyss that opened before his eyes in the Person of his disowned Master. After all, to Peter it was but the outside of what death is. The weakness that his fears occasioned made him unable to look into the abyss which sin has opened before our feet. At the moment when Jesus announces it Peter undertakes to face all that was coming. Sincere in his affection, he knew not what man was, laid bare before God, and in the presence of the power of the enemy who has death for his weapon. He had trembled already; but the sight of Jesus, which inspires affection, does not say that the flesh which prevents our glorifying Him is, in a practical sense, dead. Moreover he knew nothing of this truth. It is the death of Christ which has brought our condition out into full light, while ministering its only

remedy-death, and life in resurrection. Like the ark in Jordan, He went down into it alone, that His redeemed people might pass through dryshod. They had not passed this way before.

Jesus approaches the end of His trial a trial which only brought out His perfection and His glory, and at the same time glorified God His Father, but a trial which spared Him nothing that would have had power to stop Him, if anything could have done so, and which went on even unto death, and unto the burden of wrath of God in that death, a burden beyond all our thoughts.

He approaches the conflict and the suffering, not with the lightness of Peter who plunged into it because he was ignorant of its nature, but with full knowledge; placing Himself in the presence of His Father, where all is weighed, and where the will of Him who laid this task upon Him is clearly stated in His communion with Him; so that Jesus accomplishes it, even as God Himself looked upon it, according to the extent and the intention of His thoughts and of His nature, and in perfect obedience to His will.

Jesus goes forward alone to pray. And, morally, He passes through the whole compass of His sufferings, realising all their bitterness, in communion with His Father. Having them before His own eyes, He brings them before His Father's heart, in order that, if it were possible, this cup might pass from Him. If not, it should at least be from His Father's hand that He received it. This was the piety on account of which He was heard and His prayers ascended up on high. He is there as a man glad to have His disciples watch with Him, glad to isolate Himself and pour out His heart into the bosom of His Father, in the dependent condition of a man who prays. What a spectacle!

Peter, who would die for his Master, is not able even to watch with Him. The Lord meekly sets his inconsistency before him, acknowledging that his spirit indeed was full of goodwill, but that the flesh was worthless in conflict with the enemy and in spiritual trial.

The narrative of Mark, which passes so rapidly from one circumstance (that displays the whole moral condition of the men with whom Jesus was associated) to another, in such a manner as to place all these events in connection with each other, is as touching as the development of the details

found in the other Gospels. A moral character is imprinted on every step we take in the history, giving it as a whole an interest that nothing could surpass (excepting that which is above all things, above all thoughts) save that only One, the Person of Him who is here before us. He at least watched with His Father; for after all, dependent as He was by grace, what could man do for Him? Completely man as He was, He had to lean on One alone, and thus was the perfect man. Going away again to pray, He returns to find them again sleeping, and again presents the case to His Father, and then awakens His disciples, for the hour was come in which they could do no more for Him. Judas comes with his kiss. Jesus submits. Peter, who slept during the earnest prayer of his Master, awakes to strike when his Master yields Himself as a lamb to the slaughter. He smites one of the assistants, and cuts off his ear. Jesus reasons with those who were come to take Him, reminding them that, when He was constantly exposed, humanly speaking, to their power, they had laid no hands upon Him; but there was a very different reason for its now taking place the counsels of God and the word of God must be fulfilled. It was the faithful accomplishment of the service committed to Him. All forsake Him and flee; for who beside Himself could follow this path to the end?

One young man indeed sought to go farther; but as soon as the officers of justice laid hold of him, seizing his linen garment, he fled and left it in their hands. Apart from the power of the Holy Ghost, the farther one ventures into the path in which the power of the world and of death is found, the greater the shame with which one escapes, if God permits escape. He fled from them naked.

The witnesses fail, not in malice, but in certainty of testimony, even as force could do nothing against Him until the moment God had appointed. The confession of Christ, His faithfulness in declaring the truth in the congregation, is the means of His condemnation. Man can do nothing, although he did everything as regards his will and his guilt. The testimony of His enemies, the affection of His disciples everything fails: this is man. It is Jesus who bears witness to the truth; it is Jesus who watches with the Father Jesus who yields Himself to those who were never able to take Him until the hour came that God had appointed. Poor Peter! He went farther

than the young man in the garden; and we find him here, the flesh in the place of testimony, in the place where this testimony is to be rendered before the power of its opposer and of his instruments. Alas! he will not escape. The word of Christ shall be true, if that of Peter be false His heart faithful and full of love, if that of Peter (alas! like all ours) is unfaithful and cowardly. He confesses the truth, and Peter denies it. Nevertheless the grace of our blessed Lord does not fail him; and, touched by it, he hides his face and weeps.

The word of the prophet has now again to be fulfilled. He shall be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. There He is accused of being a king, the confession of which must assuredly cause His death. But it was the truth.

The confession that Jesus had made before the priests relates, as we have seen in other cases in this Gospel, to His connection with Israel. His service was to preach in the congregation of Israel. He had indeed presented Himself as King, as Emmanuel. He now confesses that He is to Israel the hope of the people, and which hereafter He will be. "Art thou," had the high priest said, "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" That was the title, the glorious position, of Him who was the hope of Israel, according to Psalm 2. But He adds that which He shall be (that is to say, the character He would assume, being rejected by this people, that in which He would present Himself to the rebellious people); it should be that of Psalm 8, 110, and also Daniel 7, with its results that is to say, the Son of man at the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Psalm 8 only presents Him in a general manner; it is Psalm 110 and Daniel 7 which speak of the Messiah in that particular manner, according to which Christ here announces Himself. The blasphemy which the high priest attributed to Him was only the rejection of His Person. For that which He said was written in the word.

Note #16

There is something very beautiful and touching in this inquiry Their hearts were solemnized, and Jesus' words have all the weight of a divine testimony in their hearts. They had not a thought of betraying Him, save Judas; but His word was surely true, their souls owned it, and there was distrust of themselves in presence of Christ's words. No boasting certainty that they

would not, but a bowing of heart before the solemn and terrible words of Jesus. Judas avoided the question, but afterwards, not to seem to be but as the rest, asks it, only to be personally marked out by the Lord, a sure relief to the rest (Mat 26:25).

Mark Chapter 15

Before Pilate (chapter 15), He only witnesses a good confession, a testimony to the truth where the glory of God required it, and where this testimony stood opposed to the power of the adversary. To all the rest He answers nothing. He lets them go on; and the evangelist enters into no details. To render this testimony was the last service and duty He had to perform. It is rendered. The Jews make choice of the seditious murderer Barabbas; and Pilate, hearkening to the voice of the multitude, won over by the chief priests, delivers Jesus to be crucified. The Lord submits to the insults of the soldiers, who mingle the pride and insolence of their class with the hard-heartedness of the executioner whose function they performed. Sad specimens of our nature! The Christ who came to save them was, for the moment, under their power. He used His own power, not to save Himself, but to deliver others from that of the enemy. At length they lead Him away to Golgotha to crucify Him. There they offer Him a soporific mixture, which He refuses; and they crucify Him with two thieves, one on His right hand and the other on His left, thus accomplishing (for it was all they did or could do) everything that was written concerning the Lord. It was now the Jews' and the priests' hour; they had, alas for them! the desire of their heart. And they make manifest, without knowing it, the glory and perfection of Jesus. The temple could not rise again without being thus cast down; and, as instruments, they established the fact which He had then announced. Farther, He saved others and not Himself. These are the two parts of the perfection of the death of Christ with reference to man.

But, whatever might be the thoughts of Christ and His sufferings with regard to men (those dogs, those bulls of Bashan), the work which He had to accomplish contained depths far beyond those outward things. Darkness covered the earth divine and sympathetic testimony of that which, with far deeper gloom, covered the soul of Jesus, forsaken of God for sin, but thus displaying incomparably more than at any other time, His absolute

perfection; while the darkness marked, in an external sign, His entire separation from outward things, the whole work being between Him and God alone, according to the perfectness of both. All passed between Him and His God. Little understood by others, all is between Himself and God: and crying again with a loud voice, He gives up the ghost. His service was completed. What more had He to do in a world wherein He only lived to accomplish the will of God? All was finished, and He necessarily departs. I do not speak of physical necessity, for He still retained His strength; but, morally rejected by the world, there was no longer room in it for His mercy towards it: the will of God was by Himself entirely fulfilled. He had drunk in His soul the cup of death and of judgment for sin. There was nothing left Him but the act of dying; and He expires, obedient to the end, in order to commence in another world (whether for His soul separate from the body, or in glory) a life where evil could never enter, and where the new man will be perfectly happy in the presence of God.

His service was completed. His obedience had its term in death His obedience, and therefore His life, as carried on in the midst of sinners. What would a life have meant in which there was no more obedience to be fulfilled? In dying now His obedience was perfected, and He dies. The way into the holiest is now opened the veil is rent from top to bottom. The Gentile centurion confesses, in the death of Jesus, the Person of the Son of God. Until then, the Messiah and Judaism went together. In His death Judaism rejects Him, and He is the Saviour of the world. The veil no longer conceals God. In this respect it was all Judaism could do. The manifestation of perfect grace is there for the Gentile, who acknowledged because Jesus gave up His life with a cry that proved the existence of so much strength that the Prince of life, the Son of God, was there. Pilate also is astonished that He is already dead. He only believes it when certified of its truth by the centurion. As to faith far from grace, and even from human justice he did not trouble himself at all on that point.

The death of Jesus did not tear Him from the hearts of those feeble ones who loved Him (who perhaps had not been in the conflict, but whom grace had now brought out from their retreat): those pious women who had followed Him and had often ministered to His wants, and Joseph, who,

although touched in conscience, had not followed Him, until now, strengthened at the last by the testimony of the grace and perfection of Jesus (the integrity of the counsellor finding in the circumstances, not an occasion of fear, but that which induced him to declare himself) these women and Joseph are alike occupied about the body of Jesus. This tabernacle of the Son of God is not left without those services which were due from man to Him who had just quitted it. Moreover the providence of God, as well as His operation in their hearts, had prepared for all this. The body of Jesus is laid in the tomb, and they all wait for the end of the sabbath to perform their service to it. The women had taken knowledge of the place.

Mark Chapter 16

The last chapter is divided into two parts a fact that has even given rise to questions as to the authenticity of Verses 9-20 (Mar 16:9-20). The first part of the chapter, Verses 1-8 (Mar 16:1-8), relates the end of the history in connection with the re-establishment of that which has always been before us in this Gospel the relationship of the Prophet of Israel, and of the kingdom with the people (or at least with the remnant of the chosen people). The disciples, and Peter, whom the Lord individually acknowledges in spite (yea, in grace, because) of his denial of his Master, were to go and meet Him in Galilee, as He said unto them. There the connection was re-established between Jesus in resurrection and the poor of the flock, who waited for Him (they alone being recognised as the people before God). The women say nothing to any others. The testimony of Christ risen was committed only to His disciples, to these despised Galileans. Fear was the means employed by the providence of God to prevent the women speaking of it, as they would naturally have done.

Verses 9-20 (Mar 16:9-20). This is another testimony. The disciples do not appear here as an elect remnant, but in the unbelief natural to man. The message is sent to the whole world. Mary Magdalene, formerly possessed by seven demons the absolute slave of that dreadful power is employed to communicate the knowledge of His resurrection to the companions of Jesus. Afterwards Jesus Himself appears to them, and gives them their commission. He tells them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. It is no longer specifically the gospel of the kingdom.

Whosoever throughout the world believed and joined Christ by baptism should be saved: he who believed not should be condemned. It was a question of salvation or condemnation the believer saved, he who refused the message condemned. Moreover, if any one was convinced of the truth but refused to unite with the disciples confessing the Lord, his case would be so much the worse. Therefore it is said, "he who believeth and is baptised." Signs of power should accompany believers, and they should be preserved from that of the enemy.

The first sign should be their dominion over evil spirits, the second, the proof of that grace which went beyond the narrow limits of Israel, addressing itself to all the world. They should speak divers languages.

Besides this, with respect to the power of the enemy, manifested in doing harm, the venom of serpents and poisons should have no effect upon them, and diseases should yield to their authority.

In a word, it should be the overthrowal of the power of the enemy over man, and the proclamation of grace unto all men.

Having thus given them their commission, Jesus ascends to heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the place from which thus power shall come forth to bless, and from which He will return to put the poor of the flock in possession of the kingdom. Meanwhile, the disciples occupy His place, extending their sphere of service unto the ends of the earth; and the Lord confirms their word by the signs that follow them.

CONCLUSION

It may perhaps be thought that I have dwelt little on the sufferings of Christ in that which I have written on Mark. Never will this subject be exhausted; it is as vast as the Person and the work of Christ must be. Blessed be God for it! In Luke we have more details. And I follow the order of thought which the Gospel sets before me; and it appears to me that, with regard to the crucifixion of Christ, it is the accomplishment of His service that the evangelist has in view. His great subject was the Prophet. He must needs relate His history unto the end; and we possess in a brief narrative, a very complete picture of the events that mark the end of the Lord's life of that

which He had to fulfil as the servant of His Father. I have followed this order of the Gospel.

LUKE

Introduction to Luke

The Gospel of Luke sets the Lord before us in the character of Son of man, revealing God in delivering grace among men. Hence, the present operation of grace and its effect are more referred to, and even the present time prophetically, not the substitution of other dispensations as in Matthew, but of saving heavenly grace. At first, no doubt (and just because He is to be revealed as man, and in grace to men), we find Him, in a prefatory part in which we have the most exquisite picture of the godly remnant, presented to Israel, to whom He had been promised, and in relationship with whom He came into this world; but, afterwards, this Gospel presents moral principles which apply to man, whosoever he may be, whilst yet manifesting Christ for the moment in the midst of that people. This power of God in grace is displayed in various ways in its application to the wants of men. After the transfiguration, which is recounted earlier in the narration by Luke [See Note #1] than in the other Gospels, we find the judgment of those who rejected the Lord, and the heavenly character of the grace which, because it is grace, addresses itself to the nations, to sinners, without any particular reference to the Jews, overturning the legal principles according to which the latter pretended to be, and as to their external standing were originally called at Sinai to be, in connection with God. Unconditional promises to Abraham, etc., and prophetic confirmation of them, are another thing. They will be accomplished in grace, and were to be laid hold of by faith. After this, we find that which should happen to the Jews according to the righteous government of God; and, at the end, the account of the death and resurrection of the Lord, accomplishing the work of redemption. We must observe that Luke (who morally sets aside the Jewish system, and who introduces the Son of man as the man before God, presenting Him as the One who is filled with all the fulness of God dwelling in Him bodily, as the man before God, according to His own heart, and, thus, as Mediator between God and man, and centre of a moral system much more vast than that of Messiah among the Jews) we must observe, I repeat, that Luke, who

is occupied with these new relations (ancient, in fact, as to the counsels of God), gives us the facts belonging to the Lord's connection with the Jews, owned in the pious remnant of that people, with much more development than the other evangelists, as well as the proofs of His mission to that people, in coming into the world proofs which ought to have gained their attention, and fixed it upon the child who was born to them.

In Luke, I add, that which especially characterises the narrative and gives its peculiar interest to this Gospel is, that it sets before us that which Christ is Himself. It is not His official glory, a relative position that He assumed; neither is it the revelation of His divine nature, in itself; nor His mission as the great Prophet. It is Himself, as He was, a man on the earth the Person whom I should have met every day had I lived at that time in Judea, or in Galilee.

I would add a remark as to the style of Luke, which may facilitate the study of this Gospel to the reader. He often brings a mass of facts into one short general statement, and then expatiates at length on some isolated fact, where moral principles and grace are displayed.

Note #1:

That is, as to the contents of the Gospel. In the ninth Chapter, His last journey up to Jerusalem begins; and, thence, on to the latter part of the eighteenth, where (Luk 9:31) His going up to that city is noticed, the evangelist gives mainly a series of moral instructions, and the ways of God in grace now coming in. In Verse 35 of Chapter 18, (Luk 18:35), we have the blind man of Jericho already noticed as the commencement of His last visit to Jerusalem.

Luke Chapter 1

Luke 1:1

luk 1:1

Many had undertaken to give an account of that which was historically received among Christians, as related to them by the companions of Jesus; and Luke thought it well having followed these things from the beginning,

and thus obtained exact knowledge respecting them to write methodically to Theophilus, in order that he might have the certainty of those things in which he had been instructed. It is thus that God has provided for the instruction of the whole church, in the doctrine contained in the picture of the Lord's life furnished by this man of God; who, personally moved by christian motives, was directed and inspired by the Holy Ghost for the good of all believers. [See Note #2] At Verse 5 (Luk 1:5) the evangelist begins with the first revelations of the Spirit of God respecting these events, on which the condition of God's people and that of the world entirely depended; and in which God was to glorify Himself to all eternity.

But we immediately find ourselves in the atmosphere of Jewish circumstances. The Jewish ordinances of the Old Testament, and the thoughts and expectations connected with them, are the framework in which this great and solemn event is set. Herod, king of Judea, furnishes the date; and it is a priest, righteous and blameless, belonging to one of the twenty-four classes, whom we find on the first step of our way. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron; and these two upright persons walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord (Jehovah) without blame. All was right before God, according to His law in the Jewish sense. But they did not enjoy the blessing that every Jew desired; they had no child.

Nevertheless, it was according, we may say, to the ordinary ways of God in the government of His people, to accomplish His blessing while manifesting the weakness of the instrument a weakness that took away all hope according to human principles. Such had been the history of the Sarahs, the Rebeccas, the Hannahs, and many more, of whom the word tells us for our instruction in the ways of God.

This blessing was often prayed for by the pious priest; but until now the answer had been delayed. Now, however, when, at the moment of exercising his regular ministry, Zacharias drew near to burn incense, which, according to the law, was to go up as a sweet savour before God (type of the Lord's intercession), and while the people were praying outside the holy place, the angel of the Lord appears to the priest on the right side of the altar of incense. At the sight of this glorious personage Zacharias is troubled, but the angel encourages him by declaring himself to be the bearer of good

news; announcing to him that his prayers, so long apparently addressed in vain to God, were granted. Elizabeth should bear a son, and the name by which he should be called was, "The favour of the Lord," a source of joy and gladness to Zacharias, and whose birth should be the occasion of thanksgiving to many. But this was not merely as the son of Zacharias. The child was the Lord's gift, and should be great before Him; he should be a Nazarite, and filled with the Holy Ghost, from his mother's womb: and many of the children of Israel should he turn to the Lord their God. He should go before Him in the spirit of Elias, and with the same power to re-establish moral order in Israel, even in its sources, and to bring back the disobedient to the wisdom of the just to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

The spirit of Elias was a steadfast and ardent zeal for the glory of Jehovah, and for the establishment, or re-establishment by repentance, of the relations between Israel and Jehovah. His heart clung to this link between the people and their God, according to the strength and glory of the link itself, but in the sense of their fallen condition, and according to the rights of God in connection with these relationships. The spirit of Elias although indeed the grace of God towards His people had sent him was in a certain sense a legal spirit. He asserted the rights of Jehovah in judgment. It was grace opening the door to repentance, but not the sovereign grace of salvation, though what prepared the way to it. It is in the moral force of his call to repentance that John is here compared to Elias, in bringing back Israel to Jehovah. And in fact Jesus was Jehovah.

But the faith of Zacharias in God and in His goodness did not come up to the height of his petition (alas! too common a case), and when it is granted at a moment that required the intervention of God to accomplish his desire, he is not able to walk in the steps of an Abraham or a Hannah, and he asks how this thing can now take place.

God, in His goodness, turns His servant's want of faith into an instructive chastisement for himself, and into a proof for the people that Zacharias had been visited from on high. He is dumb until the word of the Lord is fulfilled; and the signs which he makes to the people, who marvel at his staying so long in the sanctuary, explain to them the reason.

But the word of God is accomplished in blessing towards him; and Elizabeth, recognising the good hand of God upon her with a tact that belongs to her piety, goes into retirement. The grace which blessed her did not make her insensible to that which was a shame in Israel, and which, although removed, left its traces as to man in the superhuman circumstances through which it was accomplished. There was a rightmindedness in this, which became a holy woman. But that which is rightly concealed from man has all its value before God, and Elizabeth is visited in her retreat by the mother of the Lord. But here the scene changes, to introduce the Lord Himself into this marvellous history which unfolds before our eyes.

God, who had prepared all beforehand, sends now to announce the Saviour's birth to Mary. In the last place that man would have chosen for the purpose of God a place whose name in the eyes of the world, sufficed to condemn those who came from thence a maiden, unknown to all whom the world recognised, was betrothed to a poor carpenter. Her name was Mary. But everything was in confusion in Israel: the carpenter was of the house of David. The promises of God who never forgets them, and never overlooks those who are their object found here the sphere for their accomplishment. Here the power and the affections of God are directed, according to their divine energy. Whether Nazareth was small or great was of no importance, except to shew that God does not expect from man, but man from God. Gabriel is sent to Nazareth, to a virgin who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David.

The gift of John to Zacharias was an answer to his prayers God faithful in His goodness towards His people who wait upon Him.

But this is a visitation of sovereign grace. Mary, a chosen vessel for this purpose, had found grace in God's sight. She was favoured [See Note #3] by sovereign grace blessed among women. She should conceive and bring forth a son: she should call Him Jesus. He should be great, and should be called the Son of the Highest. God should give Him the throne of His father David. He should reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and His kingdom should have no end.

It will be observed here, that the subject which the Holy Ghost sets before us is the birth of the child, as He would be down here in this world, as brought forth by Mary of Him who should be born.

The instruction given by the Holy Ghost on this point is divided into two parts: first, that which the child to be born should be; secondly, the manner of His conception, and the glory which would be its result. It is not simply the divine nature of Jesus that is presented, the Word which was God, the Word made flesh; but that which was born of Mary, and the way in which it should take place. We know well that it is the same precious and divine Saviour of whom John speaks that is in question; but He is here presented to us under another aspect, which is of infinite interest to us; and we must consider Him as the Holy Ghost presents Him, as born of the virgin Mary in this world of tears.

To take first the Verses 31-33 (Luk 1:31-33).

It was a child really conceived in Mary's womb, who brought forth this child at the time which God had Himself appointed for human nature. The usual time elapsed before its birth. As yet this tells us nothing of the manner. It is the fact itself, which has an importance that can neither be measured nor exaggerated. He was really and truly man, born of a woman as we are not as to the source nor as to the manner of His conception, of which we are not yet speaking, but as to the reality of His existence as man. He was really and truly a human being. But there were other things connected with the Person of the One who should be born that are also set before us. His name should be called Jesus, that is, Jehovah the Saviour. He should be manifested in this character and with this power. He was so.

This is not connected here with the fact, "for he shall save his people from their sins," as in Matthew, where it was the manifestation to Israel of the power of Jehovah, of their God, in fulfilment of the promises made to that people. Here we see that He has a right to this name; but this divine title lies hidden under the form of a personal name; for it is the Son of man who is presented in this Gospel, whatever His divine power might be. Here we are told, "He" the One who should be born "should be great," and (born into this world) "should be called the Son of the Highest." He had been the Son

of the Father before the world was; but this child, born on earth, should be called such as He was down here the Son of the Highest: a title to which He would thoroughly prove His right by His acts, and by all that manifested what He was. A precious thought to us and full of glory, a child born of a woman legitimately bears this name, "Son of the Highest" supremely glorious for One who is in the position of a man and really was such before God.

But other things still were connected with the One that should be born. God would give Him the throne of His father David. Here again we plainly see that He is considered as born, as man, in this world. The throne of His father David belongs to Him. God will give it Him. By right of birth He is heir to the promises, to the earthly promises which, as to the kingdom appertained to the family of David; but it should be according to the counsels and the power of God. He should reign over the house of Jacob not only over Judah, and in the weakness of a transitory power and an ephemeral life, but throughout the ages; and of His kingdom there should be no end. As indeed Daniel had predicted, it should never be taken by another. It should never be transferred to another people. It should be established according to the counsels of God which are unchangeable, and His power which never fails. Until He delivered up the kingdom to God the Father, He should exercise a royalty that nothing could dispute; which He would deliver up (all things being fulfilled) to God, but the royal glory of which should never be tarnished in His hands.

Such should be the child born truly, though miraculously born as man. To those who could understand His name it was Jehovah the Saviour.

He should be King over the house of Jacob according to a power that should never decay and never fail, until blended with the eternal power of God as God.

The grand subject of the revelation is, that the child should be conceived and born; the remainder is the glory that should belong to Him, being born.

But it is the conception that Mary does not understand. God permits her to ask the angel how this should be. Her question was according to God. I do not think there was any want of faith here. Zacharias had constantly asked

for a son it was only a question of the goodness and the power of God to perform his request and was brought by the positive declaration of God to a point at which he had only to trust in it. He did not trust to the promise of God. It was only the exercise of the extraordinary power of God in the natural order of things. Mary asks, with holy confidence, since God thus favoured her, how the thing should be accomplished, outside the natural order. Of its accomplishment she has no doubt (see Verse 45 (Luk 1:45); "Blessed," said Elizabeth, "is she that believed.") She inquires how it shall be accomplished, since it must be done outside the order of nature. The angel proceeds with his commission, making known to her the answer of God to this question also. In the purposes of God, this question gave occasion (by the answer it received) to the revelation of the miraculous conception.

The birth of Him who has walked upon this earth was the thing in question His birth of the virgin Mary. He was God, He became man; but here it is the manner of His conception in becoming a man upon the earth. It is not what He was that is declared. It is He who was born, such as He was in the world, of whose miraculous conception we here read. The Holy Ghost should come upon her should act in power upon this earthen vessel, without its own will or the will of any man. God is the source of the life of the child promised to Mary, as born in this world and by His power. He is born of Mary of this woman chosen by God. The power of the Highest should overshadow her, and therefore that which should be born of her should be called the Son of God. Holy in His birth, conceived by the intervention of the power of God acting upon Mary (a power which was the divine source of His existence on the earth, as man), that which thus received its being from Mary, the fruit of her womb, should even in this sense have the title of Son of God. The holy thing which should be born of Mary should be called the Son of God. It is not here the doctrine of the eternal relationship of the Son with the Father. The Gospel of John, the Epistle to the Hebrews, that to the Colossians, establish this precious truth, and demonstrate its importance; but here it is that which was born by virtue of the miraculous conception, which on that ground is called the Son of God.

The angel announces to her the blessing bestowed on Elizabeth through the almighty power of God; and Mary bows to the will of her God the submissive

vessel of His purpose, and in her piety acknowledges a height and greatness in these purposes which only left to her, their passive instrument, her place of subjection to the will of God. This was her glory, through the favour of her God.

It was befitting that wonders should accompany, and bear a just testimony to, this marvellous intervention of God. The communication of the angel was not without fruit in the heart of Mary; and by her visit to Elizabeth, she goes to acknowledge the wonderful dealings of God. The piety of the virgin displays itself here in a touching manner. The marvellous intervention of God humbled her, instead of lifting her up. She saw God in that which had taken place, and not herself; on the contrary the greatness of these marvels brought God so near her as to hide her from herself. She yields herself to His holy will: but God has too large a place in her thoughts in this matter to leave any room for self-importance.

The visit of the mother of her Lord to Elizabeth was a natural thing to herself, for the Lord had visited the wife of Zacharias. The angel has made it known to her. She is concerned in these things of God, for God was near her heart by the grace that had visited her. Led by the Holy Ghost in heart and affection, the glory that belonged to Mary, in virtue of the grace of God who had elected her to be the mother of her Lord, is recognised by Elizabeth, speaking by the Holy Ghost. She also acknowledges the pious faith of Mary, and announces to her the fulfilment of the promise she had received (all that took place being a signal testimony given to Him who should be born in Israel and among men).

The heart of Mary is then poured out in thanksgiving. She owns God her Saviour in the grace that has filled her with joy, and her own low estate a figure of the condition of the remnant of Israel and that gave occasion to the intervention of God's greatness, with a full testimony that all was of Himself. Whatever might be the piety suitable to the instrument whom He employed, and which was found indeed in Mary, it was in proportion as she hid herself that she was great; for then God was all, and it was through her that He intervened for the manifestation of His marvellous ways. She lost her place if she made anything of herself, but in truth she did not. The grace of God preserved her, in order that His glory might be fully displayed in this

divine event. She recognises His grace, but she acknowledges that all is grace towards her.

It will be remarked here that, in the character and the application of the thoughts that fill her heart, all is Jewish. We may compare the song of Hannah, who prophetically celebrated this same intervention; and see also Verses 54-55 (Luk 1:54-55). But, observe, she goes back to the promises made to the fathers, not to Moses, and she embraces all Israel. It is the power of God, which works in the midst of weakness, when there is no resource, and all is contrary to it. Such is the moment that suits God, and, to the same end, instruments that are null, that God may be all.

It is remarkable that we are not told that Mary was full of the Holy Ghost. It appears to me that this is an honourable distinction for her. The Holy Ghost visited Elizabeth and Zacharias in an exceptional manner. But, although we cannot doubt that Mary was under the influence of the Spirit of God, it was a more inward effect, more connected with her own faith, with her piety, with the more habitual relations of her heart with God (that were formed by this faith and by this piety), and which consequently expressed itself more as her own sentiments. It is thankfulness for the grace and favour conferred on her the lowly one, and that in connection with the hopes and blessing of Israel. In all this there appears to me a very striking harmony in connection with the wondrous favour bestowed upon her. I repeat it, Mary is great inasmuch as she is nothing; but she is favoured by God in a way that is unparalleled, and all generations shall call her blessed.

But her piety, and its expression in this song, being more personal, an answer to God rather than a revelation on His part, it is clearly limited to that which was necessarily for her the sphere of this piety to Israel, to the hopes and promises given to Israel. It goes back, as we have seen, to the farthest point of God's relations with Israel and they were in grace and promise, not law but it does not go outside them.

Mary abides three months with the woman whom God had blessed, the mother of him who was to be the voice of God in the wilderness; and she returns to follow humbly her own path, that the purposes of God may be accomplished.

Nothing more beautiful of its kind than this picture of the intercourse between these pious women, unknown to the world, but the instruments of God's grace for the accomplishment of His purpose, glorious and infinite in their results. They hide themselves, moving in a scene into which nothing enters but piety and grace; but God is there, as little known to the world as were these poor women, yet preparing and accomplishing that which the angels desire to fathom in its depths. This takes place in the hill country, where these pious relatives dwelt. They hid themselves; but their hearts, visited by God and touched by His grace, responded by their mutual piety to these wondrous visits from above; and the grace of God was truly reflected in the calmness of a heart that recognised His hand and His greatness, trusting in His goodness and submitting to His will. We are favoured in being admitted into a scene, from which the world was excluded by its unbelief and alienation from God, and in which God thus acted.

But that which piety recognised in secret, through faith in the visitations of God, must at length be made public, and be fulfilled before the eyes of men. The son of Zacharias and Elizabeth is born, and Zacharias (who, obedient to the word of the angel, ceases to be dumb) announces the coming of the Branch of David, the horn of Israel's salvation, in the house of God's elect King, to accomplish all the promises made to the fathers, and all the prophecies by which God had proclaimed the future blessing of His people. The child whom God had given to Zacharias and Elizabeth should go before the face of Jehovah to prepare His ways; for the Son of David was Jehovah, who came according to the promises, and according to the word by which God had proclaimed the manifestation of His glory.

The visitation of Israel by Jehovah, celebrated by the mouth of Zacharias, embraces all the blessing of the millennium. This is connected with the presence of Jesus, who brings in His own Person all this blessing. All the promises are Yea and Amen in Him. All the prophecies encircle Him with the glory then to be realised, and make Him the source from which it springs. Abraham rejoiced to see the glorious day of Christ.

The Holy Ghost always does this, when His subject is the fulfilment of the promise in power. He goes on to the full effect which God will accomplish at the end. The difference here is, that it is no longer the announcement of joys

in a distant future, when a Christ should be born, when a child should be brought forth, to bring in their joys in days still obscured by the distance at which they were seen. The Christ is now at the door, and it is the effect of His presence that is celebrated. We know that, having been rejected, and being now absent, the accomplishment of these things is necessarily put off until He returns; but His presence will bring their fulfilment, and it is announced as being connected with that presence.

We may remark here, that this chapter confines itself within the strict limits of the promises made to Israel, that is to say, to the fathers. We have the priests, the Messiah, His forerunner, the promises made to Abraham, the covenant of promise, the oath of God. It is not the law; it is the hope of Israel founded on the promise, the covenant, the oath of God, and confirmed by the prophets which has its realisation in the birth of Jesus, of the Son of David. It is not, I again say, the law. It is Israel under blessing, not indeed yet accomplished, but Israel in the relationship of faith with God who would accomplish it. It is only God and Israel who are in question, and that which had taken place in grace between Him and His people alone.

Note #2

The union of motive and inspiration, which infidels have endeavoured to set in opposition to each other, is found in every page of the word. Moreover the two things are only incompatible to the narrow mind of those who are unacquainted with the ways of God. Cannot God impart motives, and through these motives engage a man to undertake some task, and then direct him, perfectly and absolutely, in all that he does? Even if it were a human thought (which I do not at all believe), if God approved of it, could not He watch over its execution so that the result should be entirely according to His will?.

Note #3

The expressions, "found favour" and "highly favoured" have not at all the same meaning. Personally she had found favour, so that she was not to fear: but God had sovereignly bestowed on her this grace, this immense favour, of being the mother of the Lord. In this she was the object of God's sovereign favour.

Luke Chapter 2

In the next chapter (2) the scene changes. Instead of the relations of God with Israel according to grace, we see first the pagan emperor of the world the head of Daniel's last empire exercising his power in Emmanuel's land, and over the people of God, as though God did not know them.

Nevertheless we are still in presence of the birth of the Son of David, of Emmanuel Himself; but He is outwardly under the power of the head of the beast, of a pagan empire. What a strange state of things is brought in by sin! Take special notice however that we have grace here: it is the intervention of God which makes all this manifest. Connected with it are some other circumstances which it is well to observe. When the interests and the glory of Jesus are in question, all this power which governs without the fear of God, which reigns, seeking its own glory, in the place where Christ should reign all the imperial glory is but an instrument in the hands of God for the fulfilment of His counsels. As to the public fact, we find the Roman emperor exercising despotic and pagan authority in the place where the throne of God should have been, if the sin of the people had not made it impossible.

The emperor will have all the world registered, and every one goes to his own city. The power of the world is set in motion, and that by an act which proves its supremacy over those who, as the people of God, should have been free from all but the immediate government of their God, which was their glory an act which proves the complete degradation and servitude of the people. They are slaves, in their bodies and in their possessions, to the heathen, because of their sins (see Neh 9:36-37). But this act only accomplishes the marvellous purpose of God, causing the Saviour-king to be born in the village where, according to the testimony of God, that event was to take place. And, more than that, the divine Person, who was to excite the joy and the praises of heaven, is born among men, Himself a child in this world.

The state of things in Israel and in the world, is the supremacy of the Gentiles and the absence of the throne of God. The Son of man, the Saviour, God manifested in the flesh, comes to take His place a place which grace alone could find or take in a world that knew Him not.

This registration is so much the more remarkable, in that, as soon as the purpose of God was accomplished, it was carried no farther; that is to say, not till afterwards, under the government of Cyrenius. [See Note #4] The Son of God is born in this world, but He finds no place there. The world is at home, or at least by its resources it finds a place, in the inn; it becomes a kind of measure of man's place in, and reception by, the world; the Son of God finds none, save in the manger. Is it for nothing that the Holy Ghost records this circumstance? No. There is no room for God, and that which is of God, in this world. So much the more perfect therefore is the love that brought Him down to earth. But He began in a manger and ended on the cross, and along the way had not where to lay His head. The Son of God a child, partaking in all the weakness and all the circumstances of human life, thus manifested appears in the world. [See Note #5] But if God comes into this world, and if a manger receives Him, in the nature He had taken in grace, the angels are occupied with the event on which depends the fate of the whole universe, and the accomplishment of all the counsels of God; for He has chosen weak things to confound things that are mighty. This poor infant is the object of all the counsels of God, the upholder and heir of the whole creation, the Saviour of all who shall inherit glory and eternal life.

Some poor men who were faithfully performing their toilsome labours, afar from the restless activity of an ambitious and sinful world, receive the first tidings of the Lord's presence on earth. The God of Israel did not seek for the great among His people, but had respect to the poor of the flock. Two things here present themselves. The angel who comes to the shepherds of Judea announces to them the fulfilment of the promises of God to Israel. The choir of angels celebrate in their heavenly chorus of praise all the real import of this wondrous event.

"Unto you," says the heavenly messenger who visits the poor shepherds, "is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." This was proclaiming good tidings to them and to all the people. [See Note #6] But in the birth of the Son of man, God manifest in the flesh, the accomplishment of the incarnation had far deeper importance than this. The fact that this poor infant was there, disallowed and left (humanly speaking) to its fate by the world, was (as understood by the heavenly intelligences,

the multitude of the heavenly host, whose praises resounded at the angel's message to the shepherds) "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good pleasure [of God] in men." These few words embrace such widely extended thoughts, that it is difficult to speak suitably of them in a work like this; but some remarks are necessary. First, it is deeply blessed to see that the thought of Jesus excludes all that could oppress the heart in the scene which surrounded His presence on earth. Sin, alas! was there. It was manifested by the position in which this wondrous infant was found. But if sin had placed Him there, grace had placed Him there. Grace superabounds; and in thinking of Him, blessing, grace, the mind of God respecting sin, that which God is, as manifested by the presence of Christ, absorb the mind and possess the heart, and are the heart's true relief in a world like this. We see grace alone; and sin does but magnify the fulness, the sovereignty, the perfection of that grace. God, in His glorious dealings, blots out the sin with respect to which He acts, and which He thus exhibits in all its deformity; but there is that which "much more aboundeth." Jesus, come in grace, fills the heart. It is the same thing in all the details of christian life. It is the true source of moral power, of sanctification, and of joy.

We see next, that there are three things brought out by the presence of Jesus born as a child on the earth. First, glory to God in the highest. The love of God His wisdom His power (not in creating a universe out of nothing, but in rising above the evil, and turning the effect of all the enemy's power into an occasion of shewing that this power was only impotence and folly in presence of that which may be called "the weakness of God") the fulfilment of His eternal counsels the perfection of His ways where evil had come in the manifestation of Himself amidst the evil in such a manner as to glorify Himself before the angels: in a word, God had so manifested Himself by the birth of Jesus, that the hosts of heaven, long familiar with His power, could raise their chorus, "Glory to God in the highest!" and every voice unites in sounding forth these praises. What love like this love? and God is love. What a purely divine thought, that God has become man! What supremacy of good over evil! What wisdom in drawing nigh to the heart of man and the heart of man back to Him! What fitness in addressing man! What maintenance of the holiness of God! What nearness to the heart of man, what participation in his wants, what experience of his condition! But

beyond all, God above the evil in grace, and in that grace visiting this defiled world to make Himself known as He had never yet been known!

The second effect of the presence of Him who manifested God on the earth is, that peace should be there. Rejected His name should be an occasion of strife; but the heavenly choir are occupied with the fact of His presence, and with the result, when fully produced of the consequences, wrapped up in the Person of Him who was there (looked at in their proper fruits), and they celebrate these consequences. Manifested evil should disappear; His holy rule should banish all enmity and violence. Jesus, mighty in love, should reign, and impart the character in which He had come to the whole scene that should surround Him in the world He came into, that it might be according to His heart who took delight therein (Pro 8:31). [See Note #7] See, as regards a smaller scale, Psa 85:10-11. The means of this redemption, the destruction of Satan's power, the reconciliation of man by faith, and of all things in heaven and earth with God are not here pointed out. Everything depended on the Person and presence of Him who was born. All was wrapped up in Him. The state of blessing was born in the birth of that child.

Presented to the responsibility of man, man is unable to profit by it, and all fails. His position thereby becomes only so much the worse.

But, grace and blessing being attached to the Person of Him just born, all their consequences necessarily flow forth After all it was the intervention of God accomplishing the counsel of His love, the settled purpose of His good pleasure. And, Jesus once there, the consequences could not fail: whatever interruption there might be to their fulfilment, Jesus was their surety. He was come into the world. He contained in His Person, He was the expression of, all these consequences The presence of the Son of God in the midst of sinners said to all spiritual intelligence, "Peace on the earth."

The third thing was the good pleasure [See Note #8] the affection of God in men. Nothing more simple, since Jesus was a man He had not taken hold of angels. It was a glorious testimony that the affection, the good pleasure, of God was centred in this poor race, now far from Him, but in which He was pleased to accomplish all His glorious counsels. So in John 1 the life was the light of men.

In a word, it was the power of God present in grace in the Person of the Son of God taking part in the nature, and interesting Himself in the lot, of a being who had departed from Him, and making him the sphere of the accomplishment of all His counsels, and of the manifestation of His grace and His nature to all His creatures. What a position for man! for it is indeed in man that all this is accomplished. The whole universe was to learn in man, and in what God therein was for man, that which God was in Himself, and the fruit of all His glorious counsels, as well as its complete rest in His presence, according to His nature of love. All this was implied in the birth of that child of whom the world took no notice. Natural and marvellous subject of praise to the holy inhabitants of heaven, unto whom God had made it known! It was glory to God in the highest.

Faith was in exercise in those simple Israelites to whom the angel of the Lord was sent; and they rejoiced in the blessing fulfilled before their eyes, and which verified the grace that God had shewn in announcing it to them. The word, "as it was told unto them," adds its testimony of grace to all that we enjoy by the lovingkindness of God.

The child receives the name of Jesus on the day of His circumcision, according to Jewish custom (see Luk 1:59), but according to the counsels and revelations of God, communicated by the angels of His power. Moreover everything was performed according to the law; for historically we find ourselves still in connection with Israel. He who was born of a woman was born under the law.

The condition of poverty in which Jesus was born is also shewn by the sacrifice offered for the purification of His mother.

But another point is here made prominent by the Holy Ghost, insignificant as He may apparently be who gave occasion to it.

Jesus is recognised by the godly remnant of Israel, so far as the Holy Ghost acts in them. He becomes a touchstone for every soul in Israel. The condition of the remnant taught by the Holy Ghost (that is, of those who had taken the position of the remnant) was this: They were sensible of the misery and ruin of Israel, but waited upon the God of Israel, trusting to His unchangeable faithfulness for the consolation of His people. They still said:

How long? And God was with this remnant. He had made known to those who thus trusted in His mercy the coming of the promised One, who was to be the fulfilment of this mercy to Israel.

Thus, in presence of the oppression of the Gentiles, and of the iniquity of a people who were ripening or rather ripened in evil, the remnant who trust in God do not lose that which, as we saw in the preceding chapter, belonged to Israel. In the midst of Israel's misery they had for their consolation that which promise and prophecy had declared for Israel's glory.

The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he should not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. That was the consolation, and it was great. It was contained in the Person of Jesus the Saviour, without going farther into the details of the manner or the time of the accomplishment of Israel's deliverance.

Simeon loved Israel; he could depart in peace, since God had blessed Him according to the desires of faith. The joy of faith ever dwells on the Lord and on His people, but sees, in the relationship that exists between them, all the extent of that which gives rise to this joy. Salvation, the deliverance of God, was come in Christ. It was for the revelation of the Gentiles, till then hidden in the darkness of ignorance without a revelation; and for the glory of Israel, the people of God. This indeed is the fruit of the government of God in Christ, that is to say, the millennium. But if the Spirit revealed to this pious and faithful servant of the God of Israel the future which depended on the presence of the Son of God, He revealed to him that he held the Saviour Himself in his arms; thus giving him present peace, and such a sense of the favour of God that death lost its terrors. It was not a knowledge of the work of Jesus acting on an enlightened and convicted conscience; but it was the fulfilment of the promises to Israel, the possession of the Saviour, and the proof of the favour of God, so that the peace which flowed from thence filled his soul. There were the three things: the prophecy that announced the coming of Christ, the possession of Christ, and the effect of His presence in the whole world. We are here in connection with the remnant of Israel, and consequently find nothing of the church and of purely heavenly things. The rejection comes afterwards. Here it is all that belongs to the remnant, in

the way of blessing, through the presence of Jesus. His work is not the present subject.

What a beautiful picture, and what a testimony rendered to this child, by the manner in which through the power of the Holy Ghost He filled the heart of this holy man at the close of his earthly life! Observe also what communications are made to this feeble remnant, unknown amid the darkness that covered the people. But the testimony of this holy man of God (and how sweet it is to think how many of these souls, full of grace and of communion with the Lord, have flourished in the shade, unknown to men, but well known to and beloved of God; souls who, when they appear, coming out of their retreat according to His will in testimony to Christ, bear so blessed a witness to a work of God which is carried on in spite of all that man is doing, and behind the painful and embittered scene that is unfolding on the earth!), Simeon's testimony here, was more than the expression of the deeply interesting thoughts which had filled his heart in communion between himself and God. This knowledge of Christ and of the thoughts of God respecting Him, which is developed in secret between God and the soul, gives understanding of the effect produced by the manifestation to the world of Him who is its object. The Spirit speaks of it by the mouth of Simeon. In his previous words we received the declaration of the sure fulfilment of God's counsels in the Messiah, the joy of his own heart. Now it is the effect of the presentation of Jesus, as the Messiah to Israel on the earth, which is described. Whatever may have been the power of God in Christ for blessing, He put the heart of man to the test. He should thus be, by revealing the thoughts of many hearts (for He was light), and so much the more that He was humbled in a world of pride, an occasion of falling to many, and the means of rising to many from their low and degraded condition. Mary herself, although the mother of the Messiah, should have her own soul pierced through by a sword; for her child should be rejected, the natural relationship of the Messiah to the people broken and disallowed. This contradiction of sinners against the Lord laid all hearts bare as to their desires, their hopes, and their ambition, whatever forms of piety might be assumed.

Such was the testimony rendered in Israel to the Messiah, according to the action of the Spirit of God upon the remnant, amid the bondage and misery of that people: the full accomplishment of the counsels of God towards Israel, and towards the world through Israel, for joy of heart to the faithful who had trusted in these promises, but for a test at that moment to every heart by means of a Messiah who was a sign spoken against. The counsels of God and the heart of man were revealed in Him.

Malachi had said that those who feared the Lord in the evil days, when the proud were called happy, should often speak together. This time had arrived in Israel. From Malachi to the birth of Jesus, there was but the passage of Israel from misery to pride a pride moreover that was dawning even in the days of the prophet. That which he said of the remnant was also being accomplished; they "spake together." We see that they knew each other, in this lovely picture of God's hidden people: "She spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Israel." Anna, a holy widow, who departed not from the temple, and who deeply felt the misery of Israel, had besieged the throne of God with a widowed heart, for a people to whom God was no longer a husband, who were really widowed like herself, and she now makes known to all who pondered on these things together, that the Lord had visited His temple. They had looked for redemption in Jerusalem; and now the Redeemer unknown of men was there. What a subject of joy to this poor remnant! What an answer to their faith!

But Jerusalem was not after all the place in which God visited the remnant of His people, but the seat of pride of those who said "the temple of the Lord." And Joseph and Mary, having performed all that which the law required, return with the child Jesus to take their place together with Him in the despised spot which should give Him its name, and in those regions where the despised remnant, the poor of the flock, had more their place, and where the testimony of God had announced that the light should appear.

There His early days were spent in the physical and mental growth of the true humanity which He had assumed. Simple and precious testimony! But He was not less conscious, when the time was come for speaking to men, of His real relationship to His Father. The two things are united in that which is

said at the end of the chapter. In the development of His humanity is manifested the Son of God on earth. Joseph and Mary, who (while marvelling at all that happened to Him) did not thoroughly know by faith His glory, blame the child according to the position in which He formally stood towards them. But this gives occasion to the manifestation of another character of perfection in Jesus. If He was the Son of God and had the full consciousness of it, He was also the obedient man, essentially and ever perfect and sinless an obedient child, whatever sense He also had of another relationship unconnected in itself with subjection to human parents. Consciousness of the one did not injure His perfection in the other. His being the Son of God secured His perfection as a man and a child on the earth.

But there is another important thing to remark here; it is, that this position had nothing to do with His being anointed with the Holy Ghost. He fulfilled, no doubt, the public ministry which He afterwards entered on according to the power and the perfection of that anointing; but His relationship to His Father belonged to His Person itself. The bond existed between Him and His Father. He was fully conscious of it, whatever might be the means or the form of its public manifestation, and of the power of His ministry. He was all that a child ought to be; but it was the Son of God who was so. His relationship to His Father was as well known to Him, as His obedience to Joseph and to His mother was beautiful, becoming, and perfect.

Here we close this touching and divine history of the birth and early days of the divine Saviour, the Son of man. It is impossible to have anything more profoundly interesting. Henceforward it is in His ministry, in His public life, that we shall find Him, rejected of men, but accomplishing the counsels and the work of God; separate from all, in order to do this in the power of the Holy Ghost, given to Him without measure, to fulfil that course with which nothing can be compared, with respect to which it would be lowering the truth to call it interesting. It is the centre and the means, including His death, His offering Himself without spot to God and the only possible means of all relationship between our souls and God; the perfection of the manifestation of His grace, and the foundation of all relationship between any creature and Himself.

Note #4

I have no doubt that the only right translation of this passage is, "The census itself was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria." The Holy Ghost notes this circumstance to shew that, when once the purpose of God was accomplished, the decree was not historically carried out till afterwards. A great deal of learning has been spent on what I believe to be simple and clear in the text.

Note #5

That is to say, as an infant. He did not appear, like the first Adam, coming out, in His perfection, from the hand of God. He is born of a woman, the Son of man, which Adam was not.

Note #6

"All the people" (not, as in the Authorised Version, "all people").

Note #7

This quotation leads to a glorious apprehension, both of what was then doing, and of our blessing. The special interest of God is in the sons of men; wisdom (Christ is the wisdom of God) daily Jehovah's delight, rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth, before creation, so that it was counsel, and His delight in the sons of men. His incarnation is the full proof of this. In Matthew we have our Lord, when He takes His place with the remnant as this is, fully revealed, and it is in the Son's taking this place as man and being anointed of the Holy Ghost, that the whole Trinity is fully revealed. This is a wonderful unfolding of God's ways.

Note #8

This is the same word as when it is said of Christ, "In whom I am well pleased." It is beautiful to see the unjealous celebration, by these holy beings, of the advancement of another race to this exalted place by the incarnation of the Word. It was God's glory, and that sufficed them. This is very beautiful.

Luke Chapter 3

In chapter 3 we find the exercise of the ministry of the word towards Israel, and that for the introduction of the Lord into this world. It is not the promises to Israel and the privileges secured to them by God, nor the birth of that child who was heir to all the promises; the empire, itself a testimony to Israel's captivity, being an instrument for the accomplishment of the word respecting the Lord. The years are here reckoned according to the reign of the Gentiles. Judea is a province in the hands of the Gentile empire, and the other parts of Canaan are divided under different chiefs, subordinate to the empire.

The Jewish system continues nevertheless; and the high priests were there to note the years of their subjection to the Gentiles by their names, and at the same time to preserve the order, the doctrine, and the ceremonies of the Jews, as far as could be done in their circumstances at that period.

Now the word of God is ever sure, and it is when the relationships of God with His people fail on the side of their faithfulness, that God in sovereignty maintains His relationship by means of communications through a prophet. His sovereign word maintains it when there are no other means.

But in this case Jehovah's message to His people had a peculiar character; for Israel was already ruined, having forsaken the Lord. The goodness of God had still left the people outwardly in their land; but the throne of the world was transferred to the Gentiles. Israel was now called to repent, to be forgiven, and to take a new place through the coming of the Messiah.

The testimony of God is therefore not in connection with His ordinances at Jerusalem, although the righteous submit to them. Nor does the prophet call them back to faithfulness on the ground on which they were. It is His voice in the wilderness, making His paths straight, in order that He may come, as from without, to those who repented and prepared themselves for His coming. Moreover, since it was the Jehovah Himself who came, His glory should not be confined within the narrow limits of Israel. All flesh should see the salvation wrought by God. The condition of the nation itself was that out of which God called them to come by repentance, proclaiming the wrath that was about to fall upon a rebellious people. Besides, if God came, He would have realities, the true fruits of righteousness, and not the mere

name of a people. And He came in His sovereign power, which was able to raise up out of nothing that which He would have before Him. God comes. He would have righteousness as to man's responsibility, because He is righteous. He could raise up a seed unto Abraham by His divine power, and that from the very stones, if He saw fit. It is the presence, the coming of God Himself, that here characterises everything.

Now, the axe was already at the root of the trees, and each was to be judged according to its fruits. It was in vain to plead that they were Jews; if they enjoyed that privilege, where were its fruits? But God did not accept any according to man's estimate of righteousness and privilege, nor the proud judgment the self-righteous might form of others. He addressed Himself to the conscience of all.

Accordingly the publicans, objects of hatred to the Jews, as instruments of the fiscal oppression of the Gentiles; and the soldiers, who executed the arbitrary mandates of the kings, imposed on the people by the Roman will, or that of heathen governors, were exhorted to act in accordance with that which the true fear of God would produce, in contrast with the iniquity habitually practised in accordance with the will of man; the multitude were exhorted to practical charity, while the people, considered as a people, were treated as a generation of vipers, on whom the wrath of God was coming. Grace dealt with them in warning of judgment, but judgment was at the door.

Thus, from Luk 3:3-14, we have these two things: in Luk 3:3-6, the position of John towards the people as such, in the thought that God Himself would soon appear; in Luk 3:6-14, his address to the conscience of individuals; Luk 3:7-9 teaching them that the formal privileges of the people would afford no shelter in the presence of the holy and righteous God, and that to take refuge in national privilege was only to bring wrath upon themselves for the nation was under judgment and exposed to the wrath of God. In Verse 10 (Luk 3:10) he comes to details. In Luk 3:15-17, the question as to the Messiah is solved.

The great subject however of this passage the great truth which the testimony of John displayed before the eyes of the people was that God

Himself was coming. Man was to repent. Privileges, granted meanwhile as means of blessing, could not be pleaded against the nature and the righteousness of Him who was coming, nor destroy the power by which He could create a people after His own heart. Nevertheless the door of repentance was open according to His faithfulness towards a people whom He loved.

But there was a special work for the Messiah according to the counsels, the wisdom, and the grace of God He baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire. That is to say, He brought in the power and the judgment which dispelled evil, whether in holiness and blessing, or in destruction.

He baptises with the Holy Ghost. This is not merely a renewal of desires, but power, in grace, in the midst of evil.

He baptises with fire. This is judgment that consumes the evil.

This judgment is thus applied to Israel, His threshing-floor. He would gather His wheat in safety elsewhere; the chaff should be burnt up in judgment.

But at length John is put in prison by the regal head of the people. Not that this event took place historically at that moment; but the Spirit of God would set forth morally the end of his testimony, in order to commence the life of Jesus, the Son of man, but born the Son of God in this world.

It is with Verse 21 (Luk 3:21) that this history begins, and in a manner both wonderful and full of grace. God, by John the Baptist, had called His people to repentance; and those on whom His word produced its effect came to be baptised by John. It was the first sign of life and of obedience. Jesus, perfect in life and in obedience, come down in grace for the remnant of His people, goes thither, taking His place with them, and is baptised with the baptism of John as they were. Touching and marvellous testimony! He does not love at a distance, nor merely in bestowing pardon; He comes by grace into the very place where the sin of His people had brought them, according to the sense of that sin which the converting and quickening power of their God had wrought in them. He leads His people there by grace, but He accompanies them when they go. He takes His place with them in all the difficulties of the way, and goes with them to meet all the obstacles that present themselves;

and truly, as identifying Himself with the poor remnant, those excellent of the earth, in whom was all His delight, calling Jehovah His Lord; and making Himself of no reputation, not saying that His goodness extended to God, not taking His eternal place with God, but the place of humiliation; and, for that very reason, of perfection in the position to which He had humbled Himself, but a perfection that recognised the existence of sin, because in fact there was sin, and it behoved the remnant to be sensible of it in returning to God. To be sensible of it was the beginning of good. Hence He can go with them. But in Christ, however humble grace might be, His taking that path with them was grace that wrought in righteousness; for in Him it was love and obedience, and the path by which He glorified His Father. He went in by the door.

Jesus therefore, in taking this place of humiliation which the state of the beloved people required, and to which grace brought Him, found Himself in the place of the fulfilment of righteousness, and of all the good pleasure of the Father, of which He thus became the object, as in this place.

The Father could acknowledge Him, as the One who satisfied His heart in the place where sin and, at the same time, the objects of His grace, were found, that He might give free course to His grace. The cross was the full accomplishment of this. We shall say a word on the difference when speaking of the temptation of the Lord; but it is the same principle as to Christ's loving will and obedience. Christ was here with the remnant, instead of being substituted for them and put in their place to atone for sin; but the object of the Father's delight had, in grace, taken His place with the people, viewed as confessing their sins [See Note #9] before God, and presenting themselves to God as concerned in them, while by this really morally out of them, and renewed in heart to confess them, without which the Lord could not have been with them, except as a witness to preach grace to them prophetically.

Jesus having taken this position, and praying appearing as the godly man, dependent on God and lifting up His heart to God, thus also the expression of perfection in that position heaven opens to Him. By baptism He took His place with the remnant; in praying being there He exhibited perfection in His own relationship with God. Dependence, and the heart going up to God, as

the first thing and as the expression, so to say, of its existence, is the perfection of man here below; and, in this case, of man in such circumstances as these. Here then heaven can open. And observe, it was not heaven opening to seek some one afar from God, nor grace opening the heart to a certain feeling; but it was the grace and perfection of Jesus which caused heaven to open. As it is said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life." Thus also it is the positive perfection of Jesus [See Note #10] that is the reason of heaven's opening. Remark also here that, when once this principle of reconciliation is brought in, heaven and earth are not so far from each other. It is true that, till after the death of Christ, this intimacy must be centred in the Person of Jesus and realised by Him alone, but that comprised all the rest. Proximity was established, although the grain of wheat had to remain alone, until it should "fall into the ground and die." Nevertheless the angels, as we have seen, could say, "Peace on earth, the good pleasure [of God] in men." And we see the angels with the shepherds, and the heavenly host in the sight and hearing of earth praising God for that which had taken place; and here, heaven open upon man, and the Holy Ghost descending visibly upon Him.

Let us examine the import of this last case. Christ has taken His place with the remnant in their weak and humble condition, but in it fulfilling righteousness. The entire favour of the Father rests upon Him, and the Holy Ghost comes down to seal and anoint Him with His presence and His power. Son of God, man on earth, heaven is open to Him, and all the affection of heaven is centred upon Him, and upon Him associated with His own. [See Note #11] The first step which these humbled souls take in the path of grace and of life finds Jesus there with them, and, He being there, the favour and delight of the Father, and the presence of the Holy Ghost. And let us always remember that it is upon Him as man while Son of God.

Such is the position of man accepted before God. Jesus is its measure, its expression. It has these two things the Father's delight, and the power and seal of the Holy Ghost; and that in this world, and known by him who enjoys it. There is now this difference, already noticed, that we look by the Holy Ghost into heaven where Jesus is, but we take His place down here.

Let us contemplate man thus in Christ heaven open the power of the Holy Ghost upon Him and in Him the testimony of the Father, and the relationship of the Son with the Father.

It will be remarked that the genealogy of Christ is here traced, not to Abraham and David, that He should be the heir of the promises after the flesh, but to Adam; in order to exhibit the true Son of God a man on earth, where the first Adam lost his title, such as it was. The last Adam, the Son of God, was there, accepted of the Father, and preparing to take upon Himself the difficulties into which the sin and fall of the first Adam had brought those of his race who drew nigh to God under the influence of His grace.

The enemy was through sin in possession of the first Adam; and Jesus must gain the victory over Satan, if He would deliver those who are under his power. He must bind the strong man. To conquer him practically is the second part of the christian life. Joy in God, conflict with the enemy, make up the life of the redeemed, sealed with the Holy Ghost and walking by His power. In both these things the believer is with Jesus, and Jesus with him.

Note #9

He took it in and with the godly remnant, in the act which distinguished them from the unrepentant, but was the right place of the people, the first act of spiritual life. The remnant with John is the true Jew taking his true place with God. This Christ goes with them in.

Note #10

Remark here, Christ has no object in heaven to fix His attention on, as Stephen; He is the object of heaven. So He was to Stephen by the Holy Ghost, when heaven was open to the saint. His Person is always clearly evident, even when He puts His people in the same place with Himself or connects Himself with them. See on this Matthew.

Note #11

I do not speak here of the union of the church with Christ in heaven, but His taking His place with the remnant, who come to God through grace, led by the efficacy of His word, and by the power of the Spirit This is the reason I

apprehend that we find all the people baptised, and then Jesus comes and is associated with them.

Luke Chapter 4

The unknown Son of God on earth, Jesus, is led (chapter 4) into the wilderness by the Holy Ghost, with whom He had been sealed, to undergo the temptation of the enemy, beneath which Adam fell. But Jesus endured this temptation in the circumstances in which we stand, not those in which Adam stood; that is to say, He felt it in all the difficulties of the life of faith, tempted in all points like as we are, sin excepted. Take notice here that it is no question of bondage to sin, but of conflict. When it is a question of bondage, it is a question of deliverance, not of conflict. It was in Canaan that Israel fought. They were delivered out of Egypt; they did not fight there.

In Luke the temptations are arranged according to their moral order: first, that which bodily need required; second, the world; third, spiritual subtlety. In each the Lord maintains the position of obedience and of dependence, giving God and His communications to man His word their true place. Simple principle, which shelters us in every attack, but which, by its very simplicity, is perfection! Nevertheless let us remember that this is the case; for raising ourselves to marvellous heights is not the thing required of us, but the following that which applies to our human condition as the normal rule for its guidance. It is obedience, dependence doing nothing except as God wills it, and reliance on Him. This walk supposes the word. But the word is the expression of the will, the goodness, and the authority of God, applicable to all the circumstances of man as he is. It shews that God interests Himself in all that regards him: why then should man act of himself without looking to God and to His word? Alas! speaking of men in general, they are self-willed. To submit and be dependent is precisely that which they will not. They have too much enmity to God to trust in Him. It was this, therefore, which distinguished the Lord. The power to work a miracle God could bestow on whom He would. But an obedient man, who had no will to do anything with respect to which the will of God was not expressed, a man who lived by the word, a man who lived in complete dependence upon God and had a perfect trust, which required no other proof of God's faithfulness than His word, no other means of certainty that He would intervene than His promise of so

doing, and who waited for that intervention in the path of His will here was something more than power. This was the perfection of man, in the place where man stood (not simply innocence, for innocence has no need of trusting God in the midst of difficulties, and sorrows, and questions raised by sin, and the knowledge of good and evil), and a perfection which sheltered one who possessed it from every attack Satan could make upon him; for what could he do to one who never went beyond the will of God, and to whom that will was the only motive for action? Moreover, the power of the Spirit of God was there Accordingly we find that simple obedience directed by the word is the only weapon employed by Jesus. This obedience requires dependence on God, and trust in God, in order to accomplish it.

He lives by the word: this is dependence. He will not tempt (that is, put God to the test) to see if He is faithful: this is trust.

He acts when God wills, and because He wills, and does that which God wills. All the rest He leaves with God. This is obedience; and, remark, not obedience as submission to God's will where there was an adverse one, but where God's will was the one motive for action. We are sanctified to the obedience of Christ.

Satan is overcome and powerless before this last Adam, who acts according to the power of the Spirit, in the place where man is found, by the means which God has given to man, and in the circumstances in which Satan exercises his power. Sin there was none, or it would have been to yield, not to conquer. It was shut out by obedience. But Satan is overcome in the circumstances of temptation in which man is found. Bodily need, which would have become lust if self-will had entered into it, instead of dependence on the will of God; the world and all its glory, which, so far as it is the object of man's covetousness, is in fact the kingdom of Satan (and it was on that ground that Satan tried to bring Jesus, and shewed himself to be Satan in so doing); and, lastly, self-exaltation in a religious way through the things which God has given us these were the points of the enemy's attack. But there was no self-seeking in Jesus.

We have found, then, in these things which we have been looking at, a man filled with the Holy Ghost, and born of the Holy Ghost on earth, perfectly

well-pleasing to God and the object of His affection, His beloved Son, in the position of dependence; and a man, the conqueror of Satan amid those temptations by which he usually gains advantage over man conqueror in the power of the Holy Ghost, and by making use of the word, as dependent, obedient, and trusting in God in the ordinary circumstances of man. In the first position, Jesus stood with the remnant; in the second, alone as in Gethsemane and on the cross. Nevertheless, it was for us; and, accepted as Jesus, we have in a certain sense the enemy to overcome. But it is a conquered enemy whom we resist in the strength of the Holy Ghost, who is given unto us in virtue of redemption. If we resist him, he flees; for he has met his conqueror. The flesh does not resist him. He finds Christ in us. Resistance in the flesh does not lead to victory.

Jesus conquered the strong man and then spoiled his goods; but it was in temptation, obedience, having no will but that of God, dependence, the use of the word, abiding in subjection to God, that Jesus gained the victory over him. In all this the first Adam failed. After Christ's victory, we also as servants of Christ gain actual victories, or rather the fruits of the victory already gained in the presence of God.

The Lord has now taken His place, so to speak, for the work of the last Adam the man in whom is the Spirit without measure, the Son of God in this world by His birth. He has taken it as the seed of the woman (nevertheless, conceived of the Holy Ghost); He has taken it as the Son of God perfectly well-pleasing to God in His Person as man here below; and He has taken it as the conqueror of Satan. Owned to be the Son of God, and sealed with the Holy Ghost by the Father, heaven being open to Him as man, His genealogy is, however, traced up to Adam; and, the descendant of Adam, without sin, full of the Holy Ghost, He conquers Satan (as the obedient man, having no motive but the will of God), and sets Himself to accomplish the work which God His Father committed to Him in this world, and that as man, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

He returns, in the power of the Spirit, into Galilee, [See Note #12] and His fame spreads through all the region round about.

He presents Himself in this character: "The Spirit of Jehovah is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, ... to preach the acceptable year of Jehovah." Here He stops. That which follows in the prophet, respecting the deliverance of Israel by the judgment which avenges them of their enemies, is omitted by the Lord.

Now Jesus does not announce promises, but their fulfilment in grace by His own presence. The Spirit is upon this man, full of grace; and the God of grace in Him manifests His goodness. The time of deliverance is come; the vessel of His favour to Israel is there in their midst.

The examination of the prophecy renders this testimony so much the more remarkable, that the Spirit, having declared the sin of the people and their judgment, in the chapters that precede these words, speaks (when introducing the Christ, the Anointed) only of grace and blessing to Israel: if there is vengeance, it should be executed upon their enemies for the deliverance of Israel.

But here it is grace in His Person, this man, the Son of God, full of the Holy Ghost, in order to proclaim the mercy of a God who is faithful to His promises, and to comfort and lift up the bruised and the poor in spirit. Blessing was there, presenting itself before them. They could not misunderstand it, but they do not recognise the Son of God. "Is not this Joseph's son?" We have here the whole history of Christ the perfect manifestation of grace in the midst of Israel, His land, and His people; and they knew Him not. No prophet is accepted in his own country.

But this rejection opened the way to a grace which went beyond the limits that a rebellious people would set to it. The woman of Sarepta, and Naaman, were testimonies of this grace.

Wrath fills the heart of those who reject grace. Unbelieving, and incapable of discerning the blessing that had visited them, they will not have it go elsewhere. The pride which rendered them unable to appreciate grace would not hear of its communication to others.

They seek to destroy Jesus, but He goes on His way. Here is the whole history of Jesus among the people traced beforehand.

He went His way; and the Spirit preserves to us the acts and the cures which characterise His ministry in the aspect of the efficacy of grace, and of its extension to others besides Israel.

Power was in Him whose grace was rejected. Acknowledged by devils, if not by Israel, He expels them by a word. He heals the sick. All the power of the enemy, all the sad outward effects of sin, disappear before Him. He heals, He withdraws; and when entreated to remain (the effect of His works that procured Him that honour from the people which He did not seek), He goes away to labour elsewhere in the testimony committed to Him. He seeks to accomplish His work, and not to be honoured.

He preaches everywhere among the people. He casts out the enemy, He removes sufferings, and proclaims the goodness of God to the poor.

Note #12

And here note, as anointed with the Holy Ghost and led by Him He goes to be tempted, and returns in the power of it. None was lost, and this power was as much shewn in the apparently negative result of overcoming, as in the miraculous manifestation of power afterwards on men.

Luke Chapter 5

Man, He was come for men. He will associate others (chapter 5) with Himself in this glorious work. He has a right to do it. If He is in grace a servant, He is so according to the full power of the Holy Ghost. He works a miracle well adapted to strike those whom He would call, and which made them feel that everything was at His disposal, that all depended on Him, that where man could do nothing He could do everything. Peter, stricken in conscience by the presence of the Lord, confesses his unworthiness, but drawn by grace goes to Christ. Grace raises him up, and appoints him to speak of itself to others to fish for men. Already it was not a preacher of righteousness among the people of God, but one who drew into His net those that were afar off. He attracted to Himself as the manifestation on earth of the power and the character of God. It was grace which was there.

He was there with the will and the power to heal that which was a figure of sin, and incurable but by the intervention of God. But God had intervened; and in grace He can say, and says, to one who acknowledged His power but doubted His will, "I will, be thou clean." [See Note #13] Yet He submitted to Jewish ordinances as one obedient to the law. Jesus prayed, as a man dependent on God. This was His perfection as a man born under the law. Moreover, He must needs acknowledge the ordinances of God, not yet abrogated by His rejection. But this obedience as man became a testimony; for the power of Jehovah alone could heal leprosy, and He had healed it, and the priests were to acknowledge that which had been done.

But He brings pardon as well as cleansing. He gives a proof of this by removing all infirmity, and imparting strength to one who had none. This was not the doctrine that God could pardon. They believed that. But God had intervened, and pardon was present. They would no longer have to wait for the last day, nor for a day of judgment, to know their condition. A Nathan would not be required to come and proclaim it on the part of a God who was in heaven while His people were on earth. Pardon was come, in the Person of the Son of man come down to earth. In all this, Jesus gave proofs of the power and the rights of Jehovah. In this instance it was the fulfilment of Psa 103:3; but, at the same time, He gives these proofs as accomplished by the power of the Holy Ghost, without measure in man, in His own Person the true Son of God. The Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins: in fact, Jehovah was come, a man on earth. The Son of man was there before their eyes, in grace, to exercise this power a proof that God had visited them.

In both these instances [See Note #14] the Lord, while displaying a power fitted to extend, and that was to extend, beyond this sphere, displays it in connection with Israel. The cleansing was a proof of the power of Jehovah in the midst of Israel, and the pardon was in connection with His government in Israel, and therefore proved itself by the perfect cure of the sick man, according to the psalm already quoted. [See Note #15] No doubt, these rights were not limited to Israel, but at that moment they were exercised in connection with this nation. He cleansed, in grace, that which Jehovah alone could cleanse. He pardoned that which Jehovah alone could

pardon, taking away all the consequence of their sin. It was, in this sense, a governmental pardon; the power of Jehovah present, fully to restore and re-establish Israel wherever, at least, faith could profit by it. Afterwards, we shall find pardon for peace of soul.

The call of Levi, and that which follows, shews that not only was this power of grace to extend beyond Israel, but that the old vessel was not able to bear it. It must form a vessel for itself.

We may also remark here, on the other hand, that faith is characterised by perseverance. In the consciousness of the evil, an evil without remedy, and in the assurance that One able to heal is there, it does not allow itself to be discouraged does not put off the relief of its need. Now, the power of God was there to meet this need.

This terminates that part of the narrative which reveals, in a positive way, divine power, visiting the earth in grace, in the Person of the Son of man, and exercised in Israel, in the condition in which it found them.

That which follows characterises its exercise in contrast with Judaism. But that which we have already examined is divided into two parts, having distinct characters which deserve to be noticed. First, from Luk 4:31-41, it is the power of the Lord manifesting itself on His part, as triumphing (without any particular connection with the mind of the individual) over all the power of the enemy, whether in sickness or in possession. The power of the enemy is there: Jesus casts it out, and heals those who are suffering from it. But, secondly, His occupation is to preach. And the kingdom was not only the manifestation of a power which casts out all that of the enemy, but of a power which brought souls also into connection with God. We see this in Luk 5:1-26. Here their condition before God, sin, and faith, are in question in a word, all that belonged to their relationship with God.

Here, consequently, we see the authority of the word of Christ upon the heart, the manifestation of His glory (He is owned as Lord), conviction of sin, just jealousy for His glory, in the sense of His holiness which should keep itself inviolate; the soul taking God's part against itself, because it loves holiness and respects the glory of God, even while feeling the attraction of His grace; so that, owing to this, everything is forgotten fish, nets, boat,

danger: "one thing" already possesses the soul. The Lord's answer then dispels all fear, and He associates the freed soul with Himself in the grace which He had exercised towards it, and in the work which He wrought in behalf of men. It was already delivered morally from all that was around it; now, in the full enjoyment of grace, it is set free by the power of grace, and wholly given to Jesus. The Lord perfect manifestation of God in creating new affections by this revelation of God, separates the heart from all that bound it to this world, to the order of the old man, in order to set it apart for Himself for God. He surrounds Himself with all that is delivered, becoming its centre; and, indeed, delivers by being so.

He then cleanses the leper, which none but Jehovah could do. Still He does not come out of His position under the law; and, however great His fame, He maintains His place of perfect dependence as man before God. The leper, the unclean, may return to God.

He next forgives. The guilty one is no longer so before God; he is pardoned. At the same time he receives strength. Nevertheless it is still the Son of man who is there. In both cases faith seeks the Lord, bringing its need before Him.

The Lord now exhibits the character of this grace in connection with its objects. Being supreme, being of God, it acts in virtue of its rights. Human circumstances do not hinder it. It adapts itself by its very nature to human need, and not to human privileges. It is not subject to ordinances, [See Note #16] and does not come in through them. The power of God by the Spirit was there, and acted for itself, and produced its own effects, setting aside that which was old that to which man was attached, [See Note #17] and to which the power of the Spirit could not be confined. The scribes and Pharisees would not have the Lord associate with the wicked and disreputable. God seeks those who need Him sinners in grace.

When they ask why His disciples do not observe the customs and the ordinances of John and the Pharisees, by which they guided the legal piety of their disciples, it is that the new thing could not be subjected to the forms that belonged to that which was old, and which could not sustain the strength and energy of that which came from God. The old were the forms

of man after the flesh; the new, the energy of God, according to the Holy Ghost. Moreover it was not the time for a piety that took the form of self-mortification. What else could man do? But the Bridegroom was there.

Nevertheless, man would prefer that which was old, because it was man, and not the energy of God.

Note #13

If a man touched a leper, he was unclean. But here grace works, and Jesus undefilable touches the leper (God in grace, undefilable, but a man touching the defiled thing to cleanse it).

Note #14

The call of Peter is more general in this respect, that it is connected with the Person of Christ. Nevertheless, although he was a fisher of men (a word used evidently in contrast with the fishes he was occupied with), he exercised his ministry more particularly with regard to Israel. But it was power in the Person of Christ that governed his heart; so that it was fundamentally, the new thing, but as yet in its connection with Israel, while extending beyond them. It is at the end of chapter 7 and in chapter 8 that we enter on ground beyond the narrow limits of Israel.

Note #15

Compare Job 33:36 and Jam 5:14-15 the first outside dispensations, and James under Christianity. In Israel, it is the Lord Himself in sovereign grace.

Note #16

Christ, born under the law, was subject to them; but that is a different thing. Here it is a divine power acting in grace.

Note #17

But here also the Lord, in giving the reasons why the disciples did not follow the ordinances, and the institutions, of John and of the Pharisees, connects them with the two principles already pointed out His position in the midst of Israel, and the power of grace which went beyond its limits. The Messiah, Jehovah Himself, was among them, in this grace (in spite of their failure

under the law, in spite of their subjection to the Gentiles) according to which Jehovah named Himself "I am the Lord that healeth thee." At least, He was there in the supremacy of grace for faith. Those therefore who owned Him as the Messiah, the husband of Israel, could they fast while He was with them? He would leave them: without doubt that would be their time to fast. Moreover, secondly, it is always impossible. He could not adapt the new cloth of Christianity to the old garment of Judaism, in its nature incapable of receiving its energy, or adapting itself to grace, worn out withal as a dispensation by sin, and under which Israel was, in judgment, made subject to the Gentiles. Besides, the power of the Spirit of God in grace could not be restricted to the ordinances of the law. It would destroy them by its very strength. The call of Levi violated, and most openly, all the prejudices of the Jews. Their own fellow-countrymen were the instruments of their masters' extortion, and reminded them in the most painful manner of their subjection to the Gentiles. But the Lord was there in grace to seek sinners. That which the Holy Ghost sets before us is the presence of the Lord, and the rights which are necessarily attached to His Person and to His sovereign grace, which had come into Israel, but necessarily went beyond its limits (setting aside, consequently, the legal system which could not receive the new thing). This is the key to all these narratives. Thus, also, in that which follows respecting the sabbath, the one case shews the supremacy which His glorious Person gave Him over that which was the sign of the covenant itself; and the other, that the goodness of God cannot abdicate its rights and its nature. He would do good even on a sabbath-day.

Luke Chapter 6

The circumstances related in Luk 6:1-10 have reference to the same truth, and in an important aspect. The sabbath was the sign of the covenant between Israel and God rest after finished works. The Pharisees blame the disciples of Christ, because they rub out the ears of corn in their hands. Now a rejected David had overleapt the barrier of the law when his need required it. For when God's Anointed was rejected and cast out, everything became in a manner common. The Son of man (Son of David, rejected like the son of Jesse, the elect and anointed king) was Lord of the sabbath; God, who established this ordinance, was above the ordinances He had established,

and present in grace the obligation of man yielded to the sovereignty of God; and the Son of man was there with the rights and the power of God. Marvellous fact! Moreover the power of God present in grace did not allow misery to exist, because it was the day of grace. But this was setting aside Judaism. That was the obligation of man to God, Christ was the manifestation of God in grace to men. [See Note #18]

Availing Himself of the rights of supreme goodness, and displaying a power that authorised His pretension to assert those rights, He heals, in a full synagogue, the man with the withered hand. They are filled with madness at this manifestation of power, which overflows and carries away the dykes of their pride and self-righteousness. We may observe that all these circumstances are gathered together with an order and mutual connection that are perfect. [See Note #19] The Lord had shewn that this grace which had visited Israel according to all that could be expected from the Lord Almighty, faithful to His promises could, nevertheless, not be confined to the narrow limits of that people, nor be adapted to the ordinances of the law; that men desired the old things, but that the power of God acted according to its own nature. He had shewn that the most sacred, the most obligatory, sign of the old covenant, must bow to His title superior to all ordinance, and give place to the rights of His divine love which was in action. But the old thing was thus judged, and passing away. He had shewn Himself in everything in the calling of Peter especially to be the new centre, around which all that sought God and blessing must gather; for He was the living manifestation of God and of blessing in men. Thus God was manifested, the old order of things was worn out and unable to contain this grace, and the remnant were separated around the Lord from a world that saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. He now acted on this basis; and if faith sought Him in Israel, this power of grace manifested God in a new way. God surrounds Himself with men, as the centre of blessing in Christ as man. But He is love, and in the activity of that love He seeks the lost. None but one, and one who was God and revealed Him, could surround Himself with His followers. No prophet ever did (see John 1). None could send out with the authority and power of a divine message but God. Christ had been sent; He now sends. The name of "apostle" (sent), for He so names them, contains this deep and marvellous truth God is acting in grace. He surrounds Himself

with blessed ones. He seeks miserable sinners. If Christ, the we centre of grace and happiness, surrounds Himself with followers, yet He sends also His chosen ones to bear testimony of the love which He came to manifest. God has manifested Himself in man. In man He seeks sinners. Man has part in the most immediate display of the divine nature in both ways. He is with Christ as man; and he is sent by Christ. Christ Himself does this as man. It is man full of the Holy Ghost. Thus we see Him again manifested in dependence on His Father before choosing the apostles; He retired to pray, He passes the night in prayer.

And now He goes beyond the manifestation of Himself, as personally full of the Holy Ghost to bring in the knowledge of God among men. He becomes the centre, around which all must come who sought God, and a source of mission for the accomplishment of His love the centre of the manifestation of divine power in grace. And, therefore, He called around Him the remnant who should be saved. His position, in every respect, is summed up in that which is said after He came down from the mountain. He comes down with the apostles from His communion with God. In the plain [See Note #20] He is surrounded by the company of His disciples, and then by a great multitude, drawn together by His word and works. There was the attraction of the word of God, and He healed the diseases of men, and cast out the power of Satan. This power dwelt in His Person; the virtue that went out of Him gave these outward testimonies to the power of God present in grace. The attention of the people was drawn to Him by these means. Nevertheless we have seen that the old things, to which the multitude were attached, were passing away He surrounded Himself with hearts faithful to God, the called of His grace. Here therefore He does not, as in Matthew, announce strictly the character of the kingdom, to shew that of the dispensation which was at hand, saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, etc.;" but, distinguishing the remnant, by their attachment to Himself, He declares to the disciples who followed Him that they were these blessed ones. They were poor and despised, but they were blessed. They should have the kingdom. This is important, because it separates the remnant, and puts them in relationship with Himself to receive the blessing. He describes, in a remarkable manner, the character of those who were thus blessed of God.

The Lord's discourse is divided into several branches.

Verses 20-26 (Luk 6:20-26). The contrast between the remnant, manifested as His disciples, and the multitude who were satisfied with the world, adding a warning to those who stood in the place of disciples, and in that gained the favour of the world. Woe be to such! Remark also here, that it is not a question of persecution for righteousness' sake, as in Matthew, but only for His name's sake. All was marked by attachment to His Person.

Verses 27-36 (Luk 6:27-36). The character of God their Father in the manifestation of grace in Christ, which they were to imitate. He reveals, note, the Father's name and puts them in the place of children.

Verses 37, 38 (Luk 6:37-38). This character particularly developed in the position of Christ, as He was on earth at that time, Christ fulfilling His service on earth. This implied government and recompense on God's part, as was the case with regard to Christ Himself.

Verse 39 (Luk 6:39). The condition of the leaders in Israel, and the connection between them and the multitude.

Verse 40 (Luk 6:40). That of the disciples in relation to Christ.

Verses 41-42 (Luk 6:41-25). The way to attain it, and to see clearly in the midst of evil, is to put evil away from oneself.

Afterwards, in general, its own fruit characterised every tree. Coming around Christ to hear Him was not the question, but that He should be so precious to their hearts that they would put aside every obstacle and practically obey Him.

Let us sum up these things which we have been considering. He acts in a power which dispels evil, because He finds it there, and He is good; and God alone is good. He reaches the conscience, and calls souls to Himself. He acts in connection with the hope of Israel and the power of God to cleanse, pardon and give them strength. But it is a grace which we all need; and the goodness of God, the energy of His love, did not confine itself to that people. Its exercise did not agree with the forms on which the Jews lived (or, rather, could not live); and the new wine must be put into new bottles.

The question of the sabbath settled the question of the introduction of this power; the sign of the covenant gave way to it: He who exercised it was Lord of the sabbath. The lovingkindness of the God of the sabbath was not stayed, as if having His hands tied by that which He had established in connection with the covenant. Jesus then assembles the vessels of His grace and power, according to the will of God, around Himself. They were the blessed ones, the heirs of the kingdom. The Lord describes their character. It was not the indifference and pride that arose from ignorance of God, justly alienated from Israel, who had sinned against Him, and despised the glorious manifestation of His grace in Christ. They share the distress and pain which such a condition of God's people must cause in those who had the mind of God. Hated, proscribed, put to shame for the sake of the Son of man, who had come to bear their sorrows, it was their glory. They should share His glory when the nature of God was glorified in doing all things according to His own will. They would not be put to shame in heaven; they should have their reward there, not in Israel. "In like manner had their fathers done unto the prophets." Woe unto those that were at ease in Zion, during the sinful condition of Israel, and their rejection and ill-treatment of their Messiah! It is the contrast between the character of the true remnant and that of the proud among the people.

We then find the conduct that is suitable to the former conduct which, to express it in one word, comprises in its essential elements, the character of God in grace, as manifested in Jesus on the earth. But Jesus had His own character of service as the Son of man; the application of this to their particular circumstances is added in Verses 37, 38 (Luk 6:37-38). In 39 (Luk 6:39) the leaders of Israel are set before us, and in Verse 40 (Luk 6:40) the portion of the disciples. Rejected like Himself, they should have His portion; but, assuming that they followed Him perfectly, they should have it in blessing, in grace, in character, in position also. What a favour! [See Note #21] Moreover, the judgment of self, and not of one's brother, was the means of attaining clear moral sight. The tree good, the fruit would be good. Self-judgment applies to the trees. This is always true. In self-judgment, it is not only the fruit that is corrected; it is oneself. And the tree is known by its fruit not only by good fruit, but by its own. The Christian bears the fruit of

the nature of Christ. Also it is the heart itself, and real practical obedience, that are in question.

Here then the great principles of the new life, in its full practical development in Christ, are set before us. It is the new thing morally, the savour and character of the new wine the remnant made like unto Christ whom they followed, unto Christ the new centre of the movement of the Spirit of God, and of the calling of His grace. Christ has come out of the walled court of Judaism, in the power of a new life and by the authority of the Most High, who had brought blessing into this enclosure, which it was unable to acknowledge. He had come out from it, according to the principles of the life itself which He announced; historically, He was still in it.

Note #18

This is an important point. A part in the rest of God is the distinctive privilege of saints of God's people. Man had it not at the fall, still God's rest remained the special portion of His people. He did not get it under the law. But every distinct institution under the law is accompanied by an enforcement of the sabbath, the formal expression of the rest of the first Adam, and this Israel will enjoy at the end of this world's history. Till then, as the Lord said so blessedly, My Father worketh hitherto and I work. For us, the day of rest is not the seventh day, the end of this world's week; but the first day, the day after the sabbath, the beginning of a new week, a new creation, the day of Christ's resurrection, the commencement of a new state for man, for the accomplishment of which all creation round us waits, only we are before God in Spirit as Christ is. Hence the Sabbath, the seventh day, the rest of the first creation on human and legal ground, is always treated with rejection in the New Testament, though not set aside till judgment came, but as an ordinance it died with Christ in the grave, where He passed it only it was made for man as a mercy. The Lord's day is our day, and precious external earnest of the heavenly rest.

Note #19

I may remark here that, where chronological order is followed in Luke, it is the same as in Mark and that of the events, not as in Matthew put together to bring out the object of the Gospel; only he occasionally introduces a

circumstance which may have happened at another time illustrative of the subject historically related. But in chapter 9 Luke arrives at the last journey up to Jerusalem (Luk 9:51), and, from this on, a series of moral instruction follows to Luk 18:31, chiefly, if not all, during the period of this journey, but which for the most part has little to say to dates.

Note #20

Properly 'a level place' on the mountain. (topou pedinou)

Note #21

This however does not speak of nature intrinsically, for in Christ was no sin. Nor has the word used for "perfect" that sense. It is one completely thoroughly instructed, formed completely by the teaching of his master He will be like him, as his master, in all in which he was formed by him. Christ was the perfection; we grow up unto Him in all things unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (see Col 1:28).

Luke Chapter 7

Hence, after this, we find the Spirit acting in the heart of a Gentile (chapter 7). That heart manifested more faith than any among the children of Israel. Humble in heart, and loving the people of God, as such, for the sake of God, whose people they were, and thus raised in his affections above their practical wretched state, he can see in Jesus One who had authority over everything, even as he himself had over his soldiers and servants. He knew nothing of the Messiah, but he recognised in Jesus [See Note #22] the power of God. This was not mere idea; it was faith. There was no such faith in Israel.

The Lord then acts with a power which was to be the source of that which is new for man. He raises the dead. This was indeed going beyond the pale of the ordinances of the law. He has compassion on the affliction and misery of man. Death was a burden to him: Jesus delivers him from it. It was not only cleansing a leprous Israelite, nor pardoning and healing believers among His people; He restores life to one who had lost it. Israel, no doubt, will profit by it; but the power necessary to the accomplishment of this work is that which makes all things new wherever it may be.

The change of which we speak, and which these two examples so strikingly illustrate, is brought out in treating of the connection between Christ and John the Baptist, who sends to learn from the Lord's own mouth who He is. John had heard of His miracles, and sends his disciples to learn who it was that wrought them. Naturally the Messiah, in the exercise of His power, would have delivered him from prison. Was He the Messiah? or was John to wait for another? He had faith enough to depend on the answer of One who wrought these miracles; but, shut up in prison, his mind desired something more positive. This circumstance, brought about by God, gives rise to an explanation respecting the relative position of John and Jesus. The Lord does not here receive testimony from John. John was to receive Christ upon the testimony He gave of Himself; and that as having taken a position which would offend those who judged according to Jewish and carnal ideas a position which required faith in a divine testimony, and, consequently, surrounded itself with those whom a moral change had enabled to appreciate this testimony. The Lord, in reply to John's messengers, works miracles which prove the power of God present in grace and service rendered to the poor; and declares that blessed is he who is not offended at the humble position He had taken in order to accomplish it. But He gives testimony to John, if He will receive none from him. He had attracted the attention of the people, and with reason; he was more than a prophet he had prepared the way of the Lord Himself. Nevertheless, if he prepared the way, the immense and complete change to be made was not itself accomplished. John's ministry, by its very nature, put him outside the effect of this change. He went before it to announce the One who would accomplish it, whose presence would bring in its power on the earth. The least therefore in the kingdom was greater than he.

The people, who had received with humility the word sent by John the Baptist, bore testimony in their heart to the ways and the wisdom of God. Those who trusted in themselves rejected the counsels of God accomplished in Christ. The Lord, on this, declares plainly what their condition is. They rejected alike the warnings and the grace of God. The children of wisdom (those in whom the wisdom of God wrought) acknowledged and gave glory to it in its ways. This is the history of the reception both of John and of Jesus. The wisdom of man denounced the ways of God. The righteous

severity of His testimony against evil, against the condition of His people, shewed to man's eyes the influence of a devil. The perfection of His grace, condescending to poor sinners, and presenting itself to them where they were, was the wallowing in sin and the making oneself known by one's associates. Proud self-righteousness could bear neither. The wisdom of God would be owned by those who were taught by it, and by those alone.

Thereupon these ways of God towards the most wretched sinners, and their effect, in contrast with this pharisaic spirit, are shewn, in the history of the woman who was a sinner in the Pharisee's house; and a pardon is revealed, not with reference to the government of God in the earth on behalf of His people (a government with which the healing of an Israelite under God's discipline was connected), but an absolute pardon, involving peace to the soul, is granted to the most miserable of sinners. It was not here merely the question of a prophet. The Pharisee's self-righteousness could not discern even that.

We have a soul that loves God, and much, because God is love a soul that has learnt this with regard to, and by means of, its own sins, though not yet knowing forgiveness, in seeing Jesus. This is grace. Nothing more touching than the way in which the Lord shews the presence of those qualities which made this woman now truly excellent qualities connected with the discernment of His Person by faith. In her were found divine understanding of the Person of Christ, not reasoned out indeed in doctrine but felt in its effect in her heart, deep sense of her own sin, humility, love for that which was good, devotedness to Him who was good. Everything shewed a heart in which reigned sentiments proper to relationship with God sentiments that flowed from His presence revealed in the heart, because He had made Himself known to it. This, however, is not the place to dwell upon them; but it is important to remark that which has great moral value, when what a free pardon really is is to be set forth, that the exercise of grace on God's part creates (when received into the heart) sentiments corresponding to itself, and which nothing else can produce; and that these sentiments are in connection with that grace, and with the sense of sin it produces. It gives a deep consciousness of sin, but it is in connection with the sense of God's goodness; and the two feelings increase in mutual proportion. The new

thing, sovereign grace, can alone produce these qualities, which answer to the nature of God Himself, whose true character the heart has apprehended, and with whom it is in communion; and that, while judging sin as it deserves in the presence of such a God.

It will be observed, that this is connected with the knowledge of Christ Himself, who is the manifestation of this character; the true source by grace of the feeling of this broken heart; and also that the knowledge of her pardon comes afterward. [See Note #23]

It is grace it is Jesus Himself His Person that attracts this woman and produces the moral effect. She goes away in peace when she understands the extent of grace in the pardon which He pronounces. And the pardon itself has its force in her mind, in that Jesus was everything to her. If He forgave, she was satisfied. Without accounting for it to herself, it was God revealed to her heart; it was not self-approval, nor the judgment others might form of the change wrought in her. Grace had so taken possession of her heart grace personified in Jesus God was so manifested to her, that His approval in grace, His forgiveness, carried everything else with it. If He was satisfied, so was she. She had all in attaching this importance to Christ. Grace delights to bless, and the soul that attaches importance enough to Christ is content with the blessing it bestows. How striking is the firmness with which grace asserts itself, and does not fear to withstand the judgment of man who despises it! It takes unhesitatingly the part of the poor sinner whom it has touched. Man's judgment only proves that he neither knows nor appreciates God in the most perfect manifestation of His nature. To man, with all his wisdom, it is but a poor preacher, who deceives himself in passing for a prophet, and to whom it is not worth while to give a little water for his feet. To the believer it is perfect and divine love, it is perfect peace if he has faith in Christ. Its fruits are not yet before man; they are before God, if Christ is appreciated. And he who appreciates Him thinks neither of himself nor of his fruits (except of the bad), but of the One who was the testimony of grace to his heart when he was nothing but a sinner.

This is the new thing grace, and even its fruits in their perfection: the heart of God manifested in grace, and the heart of man a sinner responding to it

by grace, having apprehended, or rather having been apprehended by, the perfect manifestation of that grace in Christ.

Note #22

We have seen this to be precisely the subject of the Holy Ghost in our Gospel.

Note #22

To explain the expression, "Her sins are forgiven, for she loved much," we must distinguish between grace revealed in the Person of Jesus, and the pardon He announced to those whom the grace had reached. The Lord is able to make this pardon known. He reveals it to the poor woman. But it was that which she had seen in Jesus Himself, which, by grace, melted her heart and produced the love she had to Him the seeing what He was for sinners like herself. She thinks only of Him: He has taken possession of her heart so as to shut out other influences. Hearing that He is there, she goes into the house of this proud man, without thinking of anything but the fact that Jesus is there. His presence answered, or prevented, every question. She saw what He was for a sinner, and that the most wretched and disgraced found a resource in Him; she felt her sins in the way that this perfect grace, which opens the heart and wins confidence, causes them to be felt; and she loved much. Grace in Christ had produced its effect. She loved because of His love. This is the reason that the Lord says, "Her sins are forgiven, because she loved much." It was not that her love was meritorious for this, but that God revealed the glorious fact that the sins be they ever so numerous and abominable of one whose heart was turned to God were fully pardoned. There are many whose hearts are turned to God, and who love Jesus, that do not know this. Jesus pronounces on their case with authority sends them away in peace. It is a revelation and answer to the wants and affections produced in the heart made penitent by grace revealed in the Person of Christ. If God manifests Himself in this world, and with such love, He must needs set aside in the heart every other consideration. And thus, without being aware of it, this poor woman was the only one who acted suitably in those circumstances; for she appreciated the all-importance of the One who was there. A Saviour-God being present, of what importance

was Simon and his house? Jesus caused all else to be forgotten. Let us remember this. The beginning of man's fall was loss of confidence in God, by the seducing suggestion of Satan that God had kept back what would make man like God. Confidence in God lost, man seeks, in the exercise of his own will, to make himself happy: lusts, sin, transgression follow. Christ is God in infinite love, winning back the confidence of man's heart to God. Removal of guilt, and power to live to God, are another thing, and found in their own place through Christ, as pardon comes in its place here. But the poor woman, through grace, had felt that there was one heart she could trust, if none else; but that was God's. God is light and God is love. These are the two essential names of God, and in every true case of conversion both are found. In the cross they meet; sin is brought fully into the light, but in that by which love is fully known. So in the heart light reveals sin, that is God as light does, but the light is there by perfect love. The God who shews the sins is there in perfect love to do it. Christ was this in this world. Revealing Himself, He must be both; so Christ was love in the world, but the light of it. So in the heart. The love through grace gives confidence, and thus the light is gladly let in, and in the confidence in the love, and seeing self in the light, the heart has wholly met God's heart: so with this poor woman. This is where the heart of man and God always and alone meet. The Pharisee had neither. Pitch dark, neither love nor light were there. He had God manifest in the flesh in his house and saw nothing only settled that He was not a prophet. It is a wondrous scene to see these three hearts. Man's as such resting on false human righteousness, God's, and the poor sinner's fully meeting it as God did hers. Who was the child of wisdom? for it is a commentary on that expression. And note, though Christ had said nothing of it, but bowed to the slight, yet He was not insensible to the neglect which had not met Him with the common courtesies of life. To Simon He was a poor preacher, whose pretensions he could judge, certainly not a prophet; for the poor woman, God in love, and bringing her heart into unison with His as to her sins and as to herself, for love was trusted in. Note, too, this clinging to Jesus is where true light is found: here the fruitful revelation of the gospel; to Mary Magdalene, as to the highest privilege of saints.

Luke Chapter 8

In chapter 8 the Lord explains the import and the effect of His ministry; and especially, I doubt not, its effect among the Jews.

However great the unbelief, Jesus carries on His work to the end, and the fruits of His work appear. He goes to preach the good news of the kingdom. His disciples (the fruit, and the witnesses by grace, in their measure, in the same manner as Himself, of His mighty word) accompany Him; and other fruits of this same word, witnesses also by their own deliverance from the power of the enemy, and by the affection and devotedness flowing from thence by grace a grace which acted also in them, according to the love and devotedness that attach to Jesus. Here women have a good place. [See Note #24] The work was strengthened and consolidated, and characterises itself by its effects.

The Lord explains its true nature. He did not take possession of the kingdom, He did not seek for fruit; He sowed the testimony of God in order to produce fruit. This, in a striking way, is the altogether new thing. The word was its seed. Moreover it was the disciples only who had followed and attached themselves to His Person, by grace and by virtue of the manifestation of the power and grace of God in His Person to whom it was given to understand the mysteries, the thoughts of God, revealed in Christ, of this kingdom which was not being openly established by power. Here the remnant is very clearly distinguished from the nation. To "others" it was in parables, that they might not understand. For that the Lord Himself must be received morally. Here this parable is not accompanied by others. Alone it marks out the position. The warning, which we considered in Mark, is added. Finally the light of God was not manifested in order to be hidden. Moreover everything should be made manifest. Therefore they must take heed how they heard, for, if they possessed that which they heard, they should receive more: otherwise even that should be taken from them.

The Lord puts a seal upon this testimony, namely, that the thing in question was the word, which drew to Him and to God those who were to enjoy the blessing; and that the word was the basis of all relationship with Himself, declaring, when they spoke to Him of His mother and brethren, by whom He was related to Israel after the flesh, that He acknowledged as such none others but those who heard and obeyed the word of God.

Besides the evident power manifested in His miracles the accounts that follow to the end of chapter 8 present different aspects of the work of Christ, and of His reception, and of its consequences.

First the Lord although, apparently, He takes no notice is associated with His disciples in the difficulties and storms that surround them, because they have embarked in His service. We have seen that He gathered the disciples around Himself: they are devoted to His service. As far as man's power to avert it went, they were in imminent danger. The waves are ready to swallow them up. Jesus, in their eyes, cares nothing about it; but God has permitted this exercise of faith. They are there on account of Christ, and with Him. Christ is with them; and the power of Christ, for whose sake they are in the storm, is there to protect them. They are together with Him in the same vessel. If as to themselves they might perish, they are associated in the counsels of God with Jesus, and His presence is their safeguard. He permits the storm, but He is Himself in the vessel. When He shall awake and manifest Himself, all will be calm.

In the healing of the demoniac, in the country of the Gadarenes, we have a living picture of what was passing.

As to Israel, the remnant however great the enemy's power is delivered. The world beseeches Jesus to depart, desiring their own ease, which is more disturbed by the presence and power of God than by a legion of devils. He goes away. The man who was healed the remnant would fain be with Him; but the Lord sends him back (into the world that He quitted Himself) to be a witness of the grace and power of which he had been the subject. The herd of swine, I doubt not, set before us the career of Israel towards their destruction, after the rejection of the Lord. The world accustoms itself to the power of Satan painful as it may be to see it in certain cases never to the power of God.

The next two histories present the effect of faith, and the real need with which the grace that meets it has to do. The faith of the remnant seeks Jesus to preserve the life of that which is ready to perish. The Lord answers it, and comes Himself to answer it. On the way (it is there He was, and, as to final deliverance, He is still there), in the midst of the crowd that surrounded

Him, faith touches Him. The poor woman had a disease which no means at man's disposal could heal. But power is found in the Man, Christ, and comes forth from Him for the healing of man, wherever faith exists, while waiting for the final accomplishment of His mission on earth. She is healed, and confesses before Christ her condition and all that had happened to her: and thus, by means of the effect of faith, testimony is rendered to Christ. The remnant is manifested, faith distinguishes them from the multitude; their condition being the fruit of divine power in Christ.

This principle applies to the healing of every believer, and, consequently, to that of the Gentiles, as the apostle argues. Healing power is in the Person of Christ; faith by grace and by the attraction of Christ profits by it. It does not depend on the relationship of the Jew, although, as to his position, he was the first to profit by it. It is a question of what there is in the Person of Christ, and of faith in the individual. If there is faith in the individual, this power acts; he goes away in peace, healed by the power of God Himself. But, in fact, if we consider in full the condition of man, it was not sickness merely which was in question, but death. Christ, before the full manifestation of the state of man, met it, so to speak, on the way; but, as in the case of Lazarus, the manifestation was allowed; and to faith this manifestation took place in the death of Jesus. Thus, here, it is permitted that the daughter of Jairus should die before the arrival of Christ; but grace has come to raise from the dead, with the divine power that alone can accomplish it; and Jesus, in comforting the poor father, bids him not to fear, but only to believe, and his daughter should be made whole. It is faith in His Person, in the divine power in Him, in the grace that comes to exercise it, which obtains joy and deliverance. But Jesus does not seek the multitude here; the manifestation of this power is only for the consolation of those who feel their need of it, and for the faith of those who are really attached to Him. The multitude know, indeed, that the maiden is dead; they bewail her, and do not understand the power of God that can raise her up. Jesus gives back to her parents the child whose life He had restored. Thus will it be with the Jews at the end, in the midst of the unbelief of the many. Meantime by faith we anticipate this joy, convinced that it is our state by grace; we live: only that for us it is in connection with Christ in heaven, the firstfruits of a new creation.

With respect to His ministry, Jesus will have this hidden. He must be received according to the testimony which He bore to the conscience and to the heart. On the way this testimony was not entirely finished. We shall see His last efforts with the unbelieving heart of man in the succeeding chapters.

Note #24

It is exceedingly interesting to see the distinct place of the disciples and the women. Nor, as said above, have the women a bad place. We find them again at the cross and the sepulchre when at any rate save John the disciples had fled, or, even if called by the women to the sepulchre, gone home! when they saw He was raised.

Luke Chapter 9

In chapter 9 the Lord charges the disciples with the same mission in Israel as that which He Himself fulfilled. They preach the kingdom, heal the sick, and cast out devils. But this is added, that their work takes the character of a final mission. Not that the Lord had ceased to work, for He also sent forth the seventy; but final in this sense, that it became a definite testimony against the people if they rejected it. The twelve were to shake off the dust from their feet on leaving the cities that would reject them. This is intelligible at the point we have reached in the Gospel. It is repeated, with a yet greater force, in the case of the seventy. We shall speak of it in the chapter that relates to their being sent forth. Their mission comes after the manifestation of His glory to the three disciples. But the Lord as long as He was here continued His exercise of power in mercy, for it was what He personally was here, and sovereign goodness in Him was above all the evil He met with.

To go on with our chapter. That which follows Verse 7 (Luk 9:7) shews that the fame of His marvellous works had reached the ears of the king. Israel was without excuse. Whatever little conscience there was felt the effect of His power. The people also followed Him. Gone apart with the disciples, who had returned from their mission, He is soon surrounded by the multitude; again, their servant in grace, however great their unbelief, He preaches to them and heals all who needed it.

But He would give them a fresh and very especial proof of the divine power and presence that was among them. It had been said that in the time of Israel's blessing from the Lord, when He should make the horn of David to flourish, He would satisfy the poor with bread. Jesus now does so. But there is more than this here. We have seen throughout this Gospel that He exercises this power, in His humanity, by the unmeasured energy of the Holy Ghost. Hence a marvellous blessing for us, granted according to the sovereign counsels of God, through the perfect wisdom of Jesus in selecting His instruments. He will have the disciples do it. Nevertheless the power that performs it is all His own. The disciples see nothing beyond that which their eyes can estimate. But, if He who feeds them is Jehovah, He ever takes His place Himself in the dependence of the nature He had assumed. He retires with His disciples, and there, afar from the world, He prays. And, as in the two remarkable cases [See Note #25] of the descent of the Holy Ghost and the selection of the Twelve, so here also His prayer is the occasion of the manifestation of His glory which was due to Him, but which the Father gave Him as man, and in connection with the sufferings and the humiliation, which, in His love, He voluntarily underwent.

The attention of the people was excited, but they did not go beyond the speculations of the human mind with regard to the Saviour. The disciples' faith recognised without hesitation the Christ in Jesus. But He was no longer to be proclaimed as such the Son of man was to suffer. Counsels more important, a glory more excellent than that of the Messiah, were to be realised: but it should be through suffering that, as to human trials, His disciples were to share by following Him. But in losing their life for Him, they would gain it; for in following Jesus, the eternal life of the soul was the question and not merely the kingdom. Moreover He who was now rejected would return in His own glory, namely, as Son of man (the character He takes in this Gospel), in the glory of the Father, for He was the Son of God, and in that of the angels as Jehovah the Saviour, taking place above them, although (yea as) man: He was worthy of this, for He created them. The salvation of the soul, the glory of Jesus acknowledged according to His rights, everything warned them to confess Him while He was despised and disallowed. Now, to strengthen the faith of those whom He would make pillars, and through them the faith of all, He announces that some of them,

before they tasted death (they should neither wait for death, in which the value of eternal life would be felt, nor for the return of Christ), should see the kingdom of God.

In consequence of this declaration, eight days later He took the three who afterwards were pillars, and went up into a mountain to pray. There He is transfigured. He appears in glory, and the disciples see it. But Moses and Elias share it with Him. The saints of the Old Testament have part with Him in the glory of the kingdom founded upon His death. They speak with Him of His decease. They had heretofore spoken of other things. They had seen the law set up, or had sought to bring the people back to it, for the introduction of blessing; but now that this new glory is the subject, all depends on the death of Christ, and on that alone. Everything else disappears. The heavenly glory of the kingdom and death are in immediate relationship. Peter sees only the introduction of Christ into a glory equal to theirs; connecting the latter in his mind with that which they both were to a Jew, and associating Jesus with it. It is then that the two disappear entirely, and Jesus remains alone. It was He alone whom they were to hear. The connection of Moses and Elias with Jesus in the glory, depended on the rejection of their testimony by the people to whom they had addressed it.

But this is not all. The church, properly so called, is not seen here. But the sign of the excellent glory, of the presence of God, shews itself the cloud in which Jehovah dwelt in Israel. Jesus brings the disciples to it as witnesses. Moses and Elias disappear, and, Jesus having brought the disciples close to the glory, the God of Israel manifests Himself as the Father, and owns Jesus as the Son in whom He delighted. All is changed in the relationships of God with man. The Son of man, put to death on earth, is owned in the excellent glory to be the Son of the Father. The disciples know Him thus by the testimony of the Father, are associated with Him, and, as it were, introduced into connection with the glory in which the Father Himself thus acknowledged Jesus in which the Father and the Son are found. Jehovah makes Himself known as Father by revealing the Son. And the disciples find themselves associated on earth with the abode of glory, from whence, at all times, Jehovah Himself had protected Israel. Jesus was there with them, and He was the Son of God. What a position! What a change for them! It is,

in fact, the change from all that was most excellent in Judaism to connection with the heavenly glory, which was wrought at that moment, in order to make all things new. [See Note #26]

The personal profit of this passage is great, in that it reveals to us, in a very striking manner, the heavenly and glorious state. The saints are in the same glory as Jesus, they are with Him, they converse familiarly with Him, they converse on that which is nearest to His heart on His sufferings and death. They speak with the sentiments that flow from circumstances which affect the heart. He was to die in the beloved Jerusalem, instead of their receiving the kingdom. They speak as understanding the counsels of God; for the thing had not yet taken place. Such are the relationships of the saints with Jesus in the kingdom. For, up to this point, it is the manifestation of the glory as the world will see it, with the addition of the intercourse between the glorified and Jesus. The three were standing on the mountain. But the three disciples go beyond thus. They are taught of the Father. His own affections for His Son are made known to them. Moses and Elias have borne testimony to Christ, and shall be glorified with Him; but Jesus now remains alone for the church. This is more than the kingdom, it is fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus (not understood, assuredly, at that time, but now is by the power of the Holy Ghost). It is wonderful, this entrance of the saints into the excellent glory, into the Shekinah, the abode of God; and these revelations on God's part of His own affections for His Son. This is more than the glory. Jesus, however, is always the object that fills the scene for us. Observe also for our position down here, that the Lord speaks as intimately of His death to His disciples on the earth as to Moses and Elias. These are not more intimate with Him than are Peter, James, and John. Sweet and precious thought! And mark how thin a veil there is between us and what is heavenly. [See Note #27]

That which follows is the application of this revelation to the state of things below. The disciples are unable to profit by the power of Jesus, already manifested, to cast out the power of the enemy. And this justifies God in that which was revealed of His counsels on the mount, and leads to the setting aside of the Jewish system, in order to introduce their fulfilment. But this does not hinder the action of the grace of Christ in delivering men while

He was yet with them, until man had finally rejected Him. But, without noticing the fruitless astonishment of the people, He insists with His disciples on His rejection and on His crucifixion; carrying this principle on to the renunciation of self, and the humility which would receive that which was least.

In the remainder of the chapter, from Verse 46 (Luk 9:46), the Gospel gives us the different features of selfishness and of the flesh that are in contrast with the grace and devotedness manifested in Christ, and that tend to prevent the believer from walking in His steps. Verses 46-48 (Luk 9:46-48); 49-50 (Luk 9:49-50); 51-56 (Luk 9:51-56), respectively, present examples [See Note #28] of this; and, from 57 to 62, the contrast between the illusive will of man and the efficacious call of grace; the discovery of the repugnance of the flesh, when there is a true call; and the absolute renunciation of all things, in order to obey it, are set before us by the Spirit of God. [See Note #29] The Lord (in reply to the spirit that sought the aggrandisement of their own company on earth, forgetful of the cross) expresses to the disciples that which He did not conceal from Himself, the truth of God, that all were in such wise against them that, if any one were not so, he was even thereby for them. So thoroughly did the presence of Christ test the heart. The other reason, given elsewhere, is not repeated here. The Spirit, in this connection, confines Himself to the point of view we are considering. Thus rejected, the Lord judges no one. He does not avenge Himself; He was come to save men's lives. That a Samaritan should repulse the Messiah was, to the disciples, worthy of destruction. Christ came to save the lives of men. He submits to the insult, and goes elsewhere. There were some who wished to serve Him here below. He had no home to which He could take them. Meantime, for this very reason, the preaching of the kingdom was the only thing to His unwearying love; the dead (to God) might bury the dead. He who was called, who was alive, must be occupied with one thing, with the kingdom, to bear testimony to it; and that without looking back, the urgency of the matter lifting him above all other thoughts. He who had put his hand to the plough must not look back. The kingdom, in presence of the enmity the ruin of man, of all that opposed it, required the soul to be wholly absorbed in its interests by the power of God. The work of God, in the presence of Christ's rejection, demanded entire consecration.

Note #25

Observe also here, that it is not only in the case of acts of power, or in that of testimony to the glory of His Person in answer to His prayer, that these prayers are offered. His conversation with the disciples respecting the change in the dispensations of God (in which He speaks of His sufferings, and forbids them to make Him known as the Christ) is introduced by His prayer when He was in a desert place with them. That His people were to be given up for a time occupied His heart as much as the glory. Moreover, He pours out His heart to God, whatever may be the subject that occupies Him according to the ways of God.

Note #26

It is the display of the kingdom, not of the church in heavenly places. I suppose the words "they entered" must refer to Moses and Elias. But the cloud overshadowed the disciples. Yet it carries us beyond that display. The word "overshadowed" is the same as that used by the LXX for the cloud coming and filling the tabernacle. We learn from Matthew it was a bright cloud. It was the Shekinah of glory which had been with Israel in the wilderness I may say the Father's house. His voice came from it. Into this they entered. It is this in Luke that makes the disciples afraid. God had talked with Moses out of it; but here they enter into it. Thus, besides the kingdom, there is the proper dwelling-place of the saints. This is found in Luke only. We have the kingdom, Moses and Elias in the same glory with the Son, and others in flesh on the earth, but the heavenly sojourn of the saints also.

Note #27

Note too that if Jesus takes up the disciples to see the glory of the kingdom, and the entrance of the saints into the excellent glory where the Father was, He came down also and met the crowd of this world and the power of Satan where we have to walk.

Note #28

These three passages point out, each in succession, a more subtle selfishness less easily detected by man: gross personal selfishness,

corporate selfishness, and the selfishness that clothes itself with the appearance of zeal for the Lord, but which is not likeness to Him.

Note #29

Observe that, when the will of man acts, he does not feel the difficulties, but he is not qualified for the work. When there is a true call, the hindrances are felt.

Luke Chapter 10

The mission of the seventy follows in chapter 10, a mission important in its character for the development of the ways of God.

This character is, in fact, different in some respects from that of the beginning of chapter 9. The mission is founded on the glory of Christ manifested in chapter 9. This of necessity, settles the question more decisively of the Lord's relations with the Jews: for His glory came after, and, as to His human position, was the result of His rejection by the nation.

This rejection was not yet accomplished: this glory was only revealed to three of His disciples; so that the Lord still exercised His ministry among the people. But we see these alterations in it. He insists on that which is moral and eternal, the position into which it would bring His disciples, the true effect of His testimony in the world, and the judgment about to fall upon the Jews. Nevertheless the harvest was great. For love, unchilled by sin, saw the need through the outward opposition; but there were few moved by this love. The Lord of the harvest alone could send forth true labourers.

Already the Lord announces that they are as lambs among wolves. What a change from the presentation of the kingdom to the people of God! They were to trust (like the twelve) to the care of the Messiah present on the earth, and who influenced the heart with divine power. They were to go as the Lord's labourers, openly avowing their object, not toiling for their food, but as having claims on His part. Wholly devoted to their work, they were to salute no one. Time pressed. Judgment was coming. There were those in Israel who were not children of peace. The remnant would be distinguished by the effect of their mission on the heart, not yet judicially. But peace should rest on the children of peace. These messengers exercised the power

gained by Jesus over the enemy, and which He could thus bestow (and this was much more than a miracle); and they were to declare unto those whom they visited that the kingdom of God had come nigh unto them. Important testimony! When the judgment was not executed, it required faith to recognise it in a testimony. If they were not received, they were to denounce the city, assuring them that, received or not, the kingdom of God had come nigh. What a solemn testimony, now that Jesus was going to be rejected a rejection that filled up the measure of man's iniquity! It would be more tolerable for infamous Sodom, in the day that judgment should be executed, than for that city.

This clearly points out the character of the testimony. The Lord denounces [See Note #30] the cities in which He had wrought, and assures His disciples that to reject them in their mission was the same thing as to reject Him, and that, in rejecting Him, He who had sent Him was rejected the God of Israel the Father. On their return they announce the power that had accompanied their mission; demons were subject to their word. The Lord replies that in effect these tokens of power had made present to His mind the full establishment of the kingdom Satan cast out entirely from heaven (an establishment of which these miracles were only a sample); but that there was something more excellent than this, and in which they might rejoice their names were written in heaven. The power manifested was true, its results sure, in the establishment of the kingdom but something else was beginning to appear a heavenly people were dawning, who should have their portion with Him, whom the unbelief of the Jews and of the world was driving back to heaven.

This very clearly unfolds the position now taken. The testimony of the kingdom rendered in power, leaving Israel without excuse, Jesus passed into another position into the heavenly one. This was the true subject of joy. The disciples, however, did not yet understand it. But the Person and the power of Him who was to introduce them into the heavenly glory of the kingdom, His right to the glorious kingdom of God, have been revealed to them by the Father. The blinding of human pride, and the Father's grace towards babes, became Him, who fulfilled the counsels of His sovereign grace through the humiliation of Jesus, and were in accordance with His

heart who came to fulfil them. Moreover all things were given to Jesus. The Son was too glorious to be known, save by the Father, who was Himself only known by the revelation of the Son. To Him must men come. The root of the difficulty in receiving Him lay in the glory of His Person, who was known only to the Father, and this action and glory of the Father, which needed the Son Himself to reveal it. All this was in Jesus there on earth. But He could tell His disciples in private that, having seen in Him the Messiah and His glory, they had seen that which kings and prophets had in vain desired to see. The Father had been proclaimed to them, yet they but little understood it. In the mind of God it was their portion, realised afterwards by the presence of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of adoption.

We may remark here, the power of the kingdom bestowed on the disciples; their enjoyment at that moment (by the presence of the Messiah Himself, bringing with Him the power of the kingdom which overthrew that of the enemy) of the sight of those things of which the prophets had spoken; at the same time the rejection of their testimony, and the judgment of Israel among whom it was rendered; and, finally, the call of the Lord (while acknowledging in their work all the power that shall establish the kingdom) to rejoice, not in the kingdom thus established on earth, but in that sovereign grace of God who, in His eternal counsels, had granted them a place and a name in heaven, in connection with their rejection on earth. The importance of this chapter is evident in this point of view. Luke constantly brings in the better and unseen part in a heavenly world.

The extent of the dominion of Jesus in connection with this change, and the revelation of the counsels of God that accompanied it, are given us in Verse 22 (Luk 10:22), as well as the discovery of the relationships and the glory of the Father and of the Son; at the same time also the grace shewn to the humble according to the character and the rights of God the Father Himself. Afterwards we find the development of the change as to moral character. The teacher of the law desires to know the conditions of eternal life. This is not the kingdom, nor heaven, but a part of the Jewish apprehension of the relationship of man with God. The possession of life was proposed to the Jews by the law. It had, by scriptural developments subsequent to the law, been discovered to be eternal life, which they then, at least the Pharisees,

attached as such to the observance of that law a thing possessed by the glorified in heaven, by the blessed on earth during the millennium, which we now possess in earthen vessels; which the law, as interpreted by conclusions drawn from the prophetic books, proposed as the result of obedience: [See Note #31] "The man that doeth these things shall live by them."

The lawyer therefore asks what it is that he must do. The answer was plain: the law (with all its ordinances, its ceremonies, all the conditions of God's government, which the people had broken, and the violation of which led to the judgment announced by the prophets judgment that should be followed by the establishment, on God's part, of the kingdom in grace) the law, I say, contained the kernel of the truth in this respect, and distinctly expressed the conditions of life, if man was to enjoy it according to human righteousness righteousness wrought by himself, by which he himself should live. These conditions were summed up in a very few words to love God perfectly, and one's neighbour as oneself. The lawyer giving this summary, the Lord accepts it and repeats the words of the Lawgiver: "This do, and thou shalt live." But man has not done it and is conscious that he has not. As to God he is far away; man easily gets rid of Him; he will render Him some outward services and make his boast in them. But man is near; his selfishness makes him alive to the performance of this precept, which, if observed, would be his happiness make this world a kind of paradise. Disobedience to it is repeated every moment, in the circumstances of each day, which bring this selfishness into play. All that surrounds him (his social ties) makes man conscious of these violations of this precept, even when the soul would not of itself be troubled about it. Here the lawyer's heart betrays itself. Who, he asks, is my neighbour?

The Lord's answer exhibits the moral change which has taken place through the introduction of grace through the manifestation of this grace in man, in His own Person. Our relationships with one another are now measured by the divine nature in us, and this nature is love. Man under the law measured himself by the importance he could attach to himself, which is always the opposite of love. The flesh gloried in a nearness to God which was not real, which did not belong to participation in His nature. The priest and the Levite pass by on the other side. The Samaritan, despised as such, did not ask who

was his neighbour. The love that was in his heart made him a neighbour to any one who was in need. This is what God Himself did in Christ; but then legal and carnal distinctions disappeared before this principle. The love that acted according to its own impulses found the occasion of its exercise in the need that came before it.

Here ends this part of the Lord's discourses. A new subject begins in Verse 38 (Luk 10:38).

From that Verse to the end of Verse 13 in chapter 11 the Lord makes known to His disciples the two great means of blessing the word and prayer. In connection with the word, we find the energy that attaches itself to the Lord, in order to receive it from Himself, and that leaves everything in order to hear His word, because the soul is laid hold of by the communications of God in grace. We may remark that these circumstances are connected with the change that had been wrought at that solemn moment. The reception of the word takes the place of the attentions that were due to the Messiah. These attentions were demanded by the presence of a Messiah on the earth; but, seeing the condition man was in (for he rejected the Saviour), he needed the word; and Jesus, in His perfect love, will have nothing else. For man, for the glory of God, but one thing was needful; and it is that which Jesus desires. As to Himself, He would go without everything for that. But Martha, though preparing for the Lord, which was right surely, yet shews how much self is inherent in this kind of care; for she did not like to have all the trouble of it.

Note #30

In Verse 25 of this chapter (Luk 10:25), as well as in Luk 13:34, we have examples of the moral order in Luke, of which we have spoken (p. 232). The testimonies of the Lord are perfectly in place. They are of infinite assistance in understanding the whole connection of the passage, and their position here throws great light on their own meaning. Historical order is not the question here. The position taken by Israel by the disciples by all, through the rejection of Christ, is the subject of which the Holy Ghost treats. These passages relate to it, and shew very plainly the condition of the people who had been visited by Jesus, their true character, the counsels of God in

bringing in the heavenly things through the fall of Israel, and the connection between the rejection of Christ and the introduction of the heavenly things, and of eternal life, and of the soul. Nevertheless the law was not broken. In fact its place was taken by grace, which, outside the law, did that which could not be done through the law. We shall see this in going on with our chapter.

Note #31

It is to be remarked, that the Lord never used the word eternal life in speaking of the effect of obedience. "The gift of God is eternal life." If they had been obedient, that life might have been endless; but in fact and truth, now that sin had entered, obedience was not the way to have eternal life, and the Lord does not so state it.

Luke Chapter 11

The prayer which He taught His disciples (chapter 11) has respect also to the position into which they came before the gift of the Holy Ghost. [See Note #32] Jesus Himself prayed, as the dependent man on earth. He had not yet received the promise of the Father, in order to pour it out on His disciples, and could not till His ascension into heaven. These, however, are in relationship with God as their Father. The glory of His name, the coming of His kingdom, were to occupy their first thoughts. They depended on Him for their daily bread. They needed pardon, and to be kept from temptation. The prayer comprised the desire of a heart true to God; the need of the body committed to their Father's care; the grace required for their walk when they had sinned, and in order that their flesh should not manifest itself, that they might be saved from the power of the enemy.

The Lord then dwells on perseverance, that petitions should not be those of a heart indifferent to the result. He assures them that their prayers should not be in vain; also, that their heavenly Father would give the Holy Spirit to those that asked Him. He puts them into His own relationship on earth with God. Harkening to God, applying to Him as a Father it is the whole of practical christian life.

Afterwards the two great weapons of His testimony are shewn forth, namely, casting out demons, and the authority of His word. He had manifested the power that cast out demons; they attributed it to the prince of the demons. Nevertheless He had bound the strong man; He had spoiled his goods; and this proved that the kingdom of God was indeed come. In such a case as this, God being come to deliver man, everything took its true place; everything was either of the devil, or of the Lord. Moreover, if the unclean spirit had gone out and God was not there, the wicked spirit would come back with others more wicked than himself; and the last state is worse than the first.

These things were taking place at that time. But miracles were not all. He had proclaimed the word. A woman, sensible to the joy of having a son like Jesus, declares aloud the value of such a relationship to Him after the flesh; the Lord puts this blessing, as He did in the case of Mary, on those who heard and kept His word. The Ninevites had hearkened to Jonah, the queen of Sheba to Solomon, without even one miracle being wrought; and a greater than Jonah was now among them. There were two things there the testimony plainly set forth (Luk 11:33), and the motives which governed those that heard it. If the true light shone fully into the heart, there remained no darkness in it. If the perfect truth was presented according to God's own wisdom, it was the heart that rejected it. The eye was evil. The notions and motives of a heart at a distance from God only darkened it: a heart that had but one object, God and His glory, would be full of light. Moreover light does not merely display itself, it enlightens all around it. If God's light were in the soul, it would be full of it and no part dark.

Verses 37-52 (Luk 11:37-52). Invited to the Pharisee's house, He judges the condition of the nation, and the hypocrisy of its pretended righteousness, putting His finger on the whited show and inward covetousness and self-seeking, the making God's law burdensome to others, while neglecting the fulfilment of it themselves, announcing the mission of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, the rejection of whom would fill up the measure of Israel's iniquity, and bring to a final test those who hypocritically built the tombs of the prophets their fathers had killed. And then all the blood, with respect to which God had exercised His long-suffering, sending

testimonies to enlighten the people, and which had been shed on account of those testimonies, should at length be required at the hand of the rebels. The Lord's words did but stir up the malice of the Pharisees, who sought to entangle Him in His talk. In a word we have, on one side, the word of the testimony set in full relief, in place of the Messiah fulfilling the promises; and, on the other, the judgment of a nation that had rejected both, and would also reject even that which should afterwards be sent to bring them back.

Note #32

The desire to have a form of prayer given by the Lord has led to a corruption of the text here, recognised by all who have seriously inquired into it (the object being to conform the prayer here to that given in Matthew). It runs thus: "Father, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, give us each day our needed bread, and forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us, and lead us not into temptation."

Luke Chapter 12

chapter 12 puts the disciples into this place of testimony by the power of the Holy Ghost, and with the world opposed to them, after the Lord's departure. It is the word and the Holy Ghost, instead of the Messiah on the earth. They were neither to fear opposition, nor to trust in themselves, but to fear God and trust to His help; and the Holy Ghost would teach them what to say. All things should be revealed. God reaches the soul: man can only touch the body. Here that which goes beyond present promises, the connection of the soul with God, is put forward. It is coming out from Judaism to be before God. Their calling was to manifest God in the world at all costs to manifest Him to faith before all things were made manifest. It might cost them dear before men: Jesus would confess them before angels. It is bringing the disciples into the light as God is in it, and the fear of God by the word and faith when the power of evil was present; all that evil, however secret, would be brought to light.

Nor this only. Blasphemy against the witness given would, in their case, be worse than blaspheming Christ. This might be forgiven (it has been indeed, and will be at the end to the Jews as a nation); but whosoever spoke in

blasphemy against the testimony of the disciples blasphemed against the Holy Ghost. It should not be forgiven. But the Lord deals with their heart as well as with their conscience. He encourages them by three things: 1st, the protection of Him who counted the hairs of their head, whatever might be the trials of their faith; 2nd, the fact that, in heaven and before the angels, their faithfulness to Christ in this painful mission should be acknowledged by Him; and 3rd, the importance of their mission, its rejection being more fatally condemning than the rejection of Christ Himself. God had taken a step, and a final step, in His grace and in His testimony. The bringing to light of all things, the care of God, their being confessed by Christ in heaven, the power of the Holy Ghost with them these are the motives and the encouragements here given to the disciples for their mission after the Lord's departure.

That which follows brings out yet more distinctly the position in which the disciples were placed, according to the counsels of God, by the rejection of Christ (Luk 12:13). The Lord formally refuses to execute justice in Israel. This was not His place. He deals with souls, and directs their attention to another life which outlasts the present; and, instead of dividing the inheritance between the brothers, He warns the multitude to beware of covetousness, instructing them by the parable of the rich man who was suddenly called hence in the midst of his projects. What became of his soul?

But, having established this general basis, He turns to His disciples and teaches them the great practical principles that were to guide their walk. They were not to think of the morrow, but to trust in God. Moreover they had no power over it. Let them seek the kingdom of God, and all that they needed should be added. This was their position in the world that rejected Him. But besides the Father's heart was interested in them: they were to fear nothing. It was the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. Strangers and pilgrims here, their treasure was to be in heaven; and thus their heart would be there also. [See Note #33] Besides this, they were to wait for the Lord. Three things were to influence their souls: the Father would give them the kingdom, their heart's treasure in heaven, and the expectation of the Lord's return. Until the Lord should come, they were required to watch to have their lamps burning; their whole position should

manifest the effect of the continual expectation of the Lord should express this expectation. They were to be as men who waited for Him with their loins girded; and in that case, when all should be according to the Lord's own heart, re-established by His power, and they brought into His Father's house, He would make them sit down, and, in His turn, gird Himself to serve them.

It is of all importance to fix the attention of the reader on the point, that what the Lord looks for here is not the holding, however clearly, the Lord's coming at the end of the age, but that the Christian should be waiting for Him, in a full profession of Christ, and his heart in spiritual order. Such, the Lord will make to sit down as guests, but such for ever, in His Father's house where He has brought them, and will Himself in love minister the blessing. This love will make the blessings ten thousand fold more precious, all received from His hand. Love likes to serve, selfishness to be served. But He did not come to be ministered to. This love He will never give up.

Nothing can be more exquisite than the grace expressed in these verses, 35 and 37. [See Note #34] On the inquiry of Peter, desirous of knowing to whom Jesus addressed these instructions, the Lord refers him to the responsibility of those to whom He committed duties during His absence. Thus we have the two things that characterise the disciples after the rejection of Christ the expectation of His return, and service. The expectation, the vigilance that watches with girded loins to receive Him, finds its reward in rest, and in the feast (happiness ministered by Him) at which Jesus girds Himself to serve them; faithfulness in service, by having rule over all that belongs to the Lord of glory. We have seen, besides these special relationships between the walk of the disciples and their position in the world to come, the general truth of the renunciation of the world in which the Saviour had been rejected, and the possession of the kingdom by the gift of the Father.

In that which He says afterwards of the service of those who bear His name during His absence, the Lord also points out those who will be in this position, but unfaithful; thus characterising those who, while publicly exercising ministry in the church, should have their portion with the unbelievers. The secret of the evil that characterises their unbelief would be

found in this, that their hearts would put off the return of Jesus, instead of desiring it and hastening it by their aspirations, and serving with humility in the desire of being found faithful. They will say, He is not coming immediately; and, in consequence, they will do their own will, accommodate themselves to the spirit of the world, and assume authority over their fellow-servants. What a picture of that which has taken place! But their Master (for He was so, although they had not truly served Him) would come at a moment when they did not expect Him, as a thief in the night; and, although professing to be His servants, they should have their portion with unbelievers. Nevertheless there would be a difference between the two; for the servant who knew his own Master's will and did not make ready for Him, as the fruit of his expectations, and did not perform his Master's will, should be severely punished; whilst he who had not the knowledge of His will should be punished less severely. I have added "own" to the word "Master," according to the original, which signifies a recognised relationship with the Lord, and its consequent obligation. The other was ignorant of the explicit will of the Lord, but he committed the evil which in any case he ought not to have done. It is the history of true and false servants of Christ, of the professing church, and of the world in general. But there cannot be a more solemn testimony as to what brought unfaithfulness into the church, and led to its ruin and approaching judgment, namely, the giving up the present expectation of the Lord's coming.

If it shall be required of persons according to their advantages, who will be so guilty as those that call themselves the ministers of the Lord, if they do not serve Him as in expectation of His return?

Nevertheless the Lord, thus rejected, was come to bring conflict and fire on the earth. His presence kindled it even before His rejection, in the baptism of death through which He was to pass, was accomplished. It was not, however, till after this that His love would have full liberty to develop itself in power. Thus His heart, which was love even according to the infinitude of the Godhead, was straitened until the atonement gave free course to it, and to the accomplishment of all the purposes of God, in which His power should be manifested according to that love, and to which this atonement was absolutely necessary as the basis of the reconciliation of all things in

heaven and earth. [See Note #35] Verse 51-53 (Luk 12:51-53). He shews in detail the divisions that would be the result of His mission. The world would no more endure faith in the Saviour than it did the Saviour Himself, who was its object and whom it confessed. It is well to note how the presence of the Saviour draws out the evil of the human heart. The state described here is in Micah, the description of the most dreadful state of evil conceivable (Mic 7:1-7).

He then addresses Himself to the people, to warn them of the existing signs of the times in which they lived. He puts this testimony on a twofold ground: the evident signs which God gave; and the moral proofs which, even without the signs, conscience ought to acknowledge, and which thus oblige them to receive the testimony.

Be they ever so blind, they are in the way to the judge. Once delivered up, they should not come out till the chastisement of God was fully executed upon them. [See Note #36] (compare Isa 40:2).

Note #33

Observe here, that the heart follows the treasure. It is not, as men say, where your heart is, your treasure is my heart is not in it; but "where your treasure is, there win your heart be also."

Note #34

Here we have the heavenly portion of those who wait for the Lord during His absence. It is the character of the we disciple in his heavenly aspect, as service in his place on earth. Observe also that the Lord was a servant down here. According to John 13 He becomes a servant on ascending to heaven, an Advocate, to wash our feet. In this place He makes Himself a servant for our blessing in heaven. In Exodus 21, if the servant who had fulfilled his service did not wish to go out free, he was brought to the judges, and was fastened to the door by an awl which bored his ear in token of perpetual bondage. Jesus had perfectly accomplished His service to His Father at the end of His life on earth. In Psalm 40 His "ears were digged" (that is, a body prepared, which is the position of obedience: compare Philippians 2). This is the incarnation. Now His service was finished in His life on earth as man, but

He loved us too much He loved His Father too much in the character of servant to give it up; and at His death His ear, according to Exodus 21, was bored, and He became servant for ever a man for ever now to wash our feet; hereafter in heaven, when He shall take us to Himself according to the passage we are considering. What a glorious picture of the love of Christ.

Note #35

It is blessed to see here how, let evil in man be what it may, it after all leads to the accomplishment of the counsels of His grace. The unbelief of man drove back divine love into the heart of Christ, unweakened surely, but unable to flow forth and express itself; but its full effect on the cross made it flow forth unhindered, in grace that reigns through righteousness, to the vilest. It is a singularly interesting and blessed passage.

Note #36

Let us here, in a note, sum up the contents of these two chapters, that we may better understand the instruction they contain. In the first (12) the Lord speaks, in order to detach the thoughts of all from this world to the disciples, by directing them to Him who had power over the soul as well as the body, and encouraging them with the knowledge of their Father's faithful care, and His purposes to give them the kingdom; meanwhile they were to be strangers and pilgrims, without anxiety as to all that happened around them to the multitude, by shewing them that the most prosperous man could not secure one day of life. But He adds something positive. His disciples were to expect Him from day to day, constantly. Not only should heaven be their portion, but there they should possess all things. They shall sit at meat, and He Will Himself serve them. This is the heavenly portion of the church at the Lord's return. In service until He comes service that requires incessant watchfulness; it will then be His turn to serve them. We next have their inheritance, and the judgment of the professing church and of the world. His teaching produced division, instead of establishing the kingdom in power. But He must die. This leads to another subject the present judgment of the Jews. They were on the road, with God, towards judgment (chapter 13). The government of God would not manifest itself by distinguishing the wicked in Israel through partial judgments. All should

perish, unless they repented. The Lord was cultivating the fig tree for the final year; if the people of God did not bring forth fruit, it spoilt His garden. To make a pretence of the law in opposition to a God present with them (even He who had given them the law) was hypocrisy. The kingdom was not to be established by the manifestation on earth of the King's power. It should grow from a little seed until it became an immense system of power in the earth, and a doctrine which, as a system, should penetrate the whole mass. On inquiry being made whether the remnant was numerous, He insists upon entrance by the narrow gate of conversion, and of faith in Himself; for many would seek to enter into the kingdom and not be able: when once the Master of the house had risen up and shut the door (that is, Christ being rejected of Israel), in vain should they say that He had been in their cities. Workers of iniquity should not enter into the kingdom. The Lord is speaking here entirely of the Jews. They shall see the patriarchs, the prophets Gentiles even from all parts in the kingdom, and themselves outside. Nevertheless the accomplishment of the rejection of Christ did not depend on the will of man, of the false king who sought, by the Pharisees' account, to get rid of Him. The purposes of God, and alas! the iniquity of man, were fulfilled together. Jerusalem was to fill up the measure of her iniquity. It could not be that a prophet should perish except at Jerusalem. But then the putting man to the proof in his responsibility closes in the rejection of Jesus. He speaks, in touching and magnificent language, as Jehovah Himself. How many times this God of goodness would have gathered the children of Zion under His wings, and they would not! As far as depended on the will of man, it was complete separation and desolation. And in fact it was so. All was over now for Israel with Jehovah, but not for Jehovah with Israel. It was the prophet's part to reckon on the faithfulness of his God and assured that this could not fail, and that, if judgments came, it would only be for a time to say, "How long?" (Isa 6:11; Psa 79:5). Distress is complete when there is no faith, no one to say, "How long?" (Psa 74:9). But here the great Prophet Himself is rejected. Nevertheless asserting His rights of grace, as Jehovah, He declares to them, unasked, the end of their desolation. "Ye shall not see me until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." This sudden manifestation of the rights of His divinity, and of His divinity itself, in grace, when as to their responsibility all was lost in spite of His gracious culture, is

surpassingly beautiful. It is God Himself who appears at the end of all His dealings. We see from this recapitulation that chapter 12 gives us the heavenly portion of the church, heaven, and the life to come; chapter 13 adding to it (with Verses 54-59 of chapter 17 Luk 17:54-59) the government of Israel and of the earth, with the outward form of that which should replace it here below.

Luke Chapter 13

Now, at this moment they reminded Him of a terrible judgment that had fallen upon some among them. He declares to them that neither this case, nor another which He recalls to their minds, is exceptional: that except they repent, the same thing should happen to them all. And He adds a parable in order to make them understand their position. Israel was the fig tree in the vineyard of God. For three years He had been threatening to cut it down; it did but spoil His vineyard did but encumber and uselessly cover the ground. But Jesus was trying for the last time all that could be done to make it bear fruit; if this did not succeed, grace could but make way for the just judgment of the Master of the vineyard. Why cultivate that which only did harm?

Nevertheless He acts in grace and in power towards the daughter of Abraham, according to the promises made to that people, and demonstrates that their resistance, pretending to oppose the law to grace, was but hypocrisy.

However (Luk 13:18-21) the kingdom of God was to take an unexpected form in consequence of His rejection. Sown by the word, and not introduced in power, it would grow on the earth until it became a worldly power; and, as an outward profession and doctrine, would penetrate the whole sphere prepared for it in the sovereign counsels of God. Now this was not the kingdom established in power acting in righteousness, but as left to the responsibility of man, although the counsels of God were being accomplished.

At last, the Lord takes up, in a direct manner, the question of the position of the remnant and of the fate of Jerusalem (Luk 13:22-35).

As He went through the cities and villages, fulfilling the work of grace, in spite of the contempt of the people, some one asked Him whether the remnant, those that would escape the judgment of Israel, should be many. He does not reply as to the number; but addresses Himself to the conscience of the inquirer, urging him to put forth all his energy that he might enter in at the strait gate. Not only would the multitude not enter in, but many, neglecting that gate, would desire to enter into the kingdom and not be able. And moreover, when once the master of the house was risen up, and the door was shut, it would be too late. He would say unto them, "I know you not, whence ye are." They would plead that He had been in their city. He would declare that He knew them not, workers of iniquity: there was "no peace for the wicked." The gate of the kingdom was moral, real before God-conversion. The multitude of Israel would not go in at it; and outside, in tears and anguish, they should see the Gentiles sitting with the depositaries of the promises; while they, the children of the kingdom, according to the flesh, were shut out, and so much the more miserable that they had been nigh unto it. And those who had appeared to be first should be the last, and the last first.

The Pharisees, under pretence of consideration for the Lord, advise Him to go away. Thereupon He refers finally to the will of God as to the fulfilment of His work. It was no question of the power of man over Him. He should accomplish His work, and then go away; because Jerusalem had not known the time of her visitation. Himself, her true Lord, Jehovah, how often would He have gathered the children of this rebellious city under His wings, and they would not! Now His last effort in grace was accomplished, and their house left desolate, until they should repent, and, returning to the Lord, say according to Psalm 111, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Then He would appear, and they should see Him.

Nothing can be plainer than the connection and the force of these conversations. For Israel it was the last message, the last visitation of God. They rejected it. They were forsaken of God (though still beloved) until they should call upon Him whom they had rejected. Then this same Jesus would appear again, and Israel should see Him. This would be the day that the Lord had made.

His rejection admitting the establishment of the kingdom as a tree and as leaven, during His absence bore its fruit among the Jews until the end; and the revival amid that nation in the last days, and the return of Jesus on their repentance, will have reference to that great act of sin and rebellion. But this gives rise to further important instructions with regard to the kingdom.

Luke Chapter 14

Some moral details are unfolded in the next chapter (14). [See Note #37] The Lord, being invited to eat with a Pharisee, vindicates the rights of grace over that which was the seal of the old covenant, judging the hypocrisy which at any rate broke the sabbath when their own interest was in question. He then shews the spirit of humility and lowliness that became man in the presence of God, and the union of this spirit with love when there was the possession of worldly advantages. By such a walk, which was indeed His own, in opposition to the spirit of the world, one's place there would be lost; the reciprocations of society would not exist: but another hour was beginning to dawn through His rejection, and which in fact was its necessary consequence the resurrection of the just. Cast out by the world from its bosom, they should have their place apart in that which the power of God should effect. There would be a resurrection of the just. Then should they have the reward of all that they had done through love to the Lord and for His name's sake. We see the force with which this allusion applies to the Lord's position at that moment, ready to be put to death in this world.

And the kingdom, what would then become of it? With reference to it at that moment, the Lord gives its picture in the parable of the great supper of grace (Luk 14:16-24). Despised by the chief part of the Jews, when God invited them to come in, He then sought out the poor of the flock. But there was room in His house, and He sends out to seek the Gentiles, and bring them in by His call that went forth in efficacious power when they sought Him not. It was the activity of His grace. The Jews, as such, should have no part in it. But those who entered in must count the cost (Luk 14:25-33). All must be forsaken in this world; every link with this world must be broken. The nearer anything was to the heart, the more dangerous, the more it must be abhorred. Not that the affections are evil things; but, Christ being rejected by this world, everything that binds us to earth must be sacrificed

for Him. Cost what it may, He must be followed; and one must know how to hate one's own life, and even to lose it, rather than grow lax in following the Lord. All was lost here in this life of nature. Salvation, the Saviour, eternal life, were in question. To take up one's cross, therefore, and follow Him, was the only way to be His disciples. Without this faith, it were better not to begin building; and, being conscious that the enemy is outwardly much stronger than we are, it must be ascertained whether, come what may, we dare, with settled purpose, go out to meet him by faith in Christ. Everything connected with the flesh as such must be broken with.

Moreover (Luk 14:34-35), they were called to bear a peculiar testimony, to witness to the character of God Himself, as He was rejected in Christ, of which the cross was the true measure. If the disciples were not this, they were nothing worth. They were disciples in this world for no other purpose. Has the church maintained this character? A solemn question for us all!

Note #37

chapters 15 and 16 present the sovereign energy of grace, its fruits, and its consequences, in contrast with all apparent earthly blessing, and God's government on earth in Israel, and the old covenant. The fourteenth, before entering on that full revelation, shews us the place to be taken in such a world as this, in view of the distributive justice of God, of the judgment He will execute when He comes. Self-exaltation in this world leads to humiliation. Self-humiliation taking the lowest place according to what we are, on the one side, and, on the other, to act in love leads to exaltation on the part of Him who judges morally. After this we have set before us, the responsibility that flows from the presentation of grace; and that which it costs in a world like this. In a word, sin existing there, to exalt oneself is ministering to it; it is selfishness, and the love of the world in which it unfolds itself. One sinks morally. It is being far from God morally. When love acts, It is representing God to the men of this world. Nevertheless it is at the cost of all things that we become His disciples.

Luke Chapter 15

Having thus unfolded the difference in character between the two dispensations, and the circumstances of the transition from the one to the

other, the Lord turns (chapter 15) to higher principles the sources of the one that was brought in by grace.

It is indeed a contrast between the two, as well as the chapters we have been going through. But this contrast rises to its glorious source in God's own grace, contrasted with the miserable self-righteousness of man.

The publicans and sinners draw near to hear Jesus. Grace had its true dignity to those who needed it. Self-righteousness repulsed that which was not as contemptible as itself, and God Himself at the same time in His nature of love. The Pharisees and the scribes murmured against Him who was a witness of this grace in fulfilling it.

I cannot meditate on this chapter, which has been the joy of so many souls, and the subject of so many testimonies to grace, from the time that the Lord pronounced it, without enlarging upon grace, perfect in its application to the heart. Nevertheless I must confine myself here to great principles, leaving their application to those who preach the word. This is a difficulty that constantly presents itself in this portion of the word.

First, the great principle which the Lord exhibits, and on which He founds the justification of God's dealings (sad state of heart that requires it! marvellous grace and patience that gives it!) the great principle, I repeat, is that God finds His own joy in shewing grace. What an answer to the horrid spirit of the Pharisees who made it an objection!

It is the Shepherd who rejoices when the sheep is found, the woman when the piece of money is in her hand, the Father when His child is in His arms. What an expression of that which God is! How truly is Jesus the one to make it known! It is on this that all the blessing of man can alone be founded. It is in this that God is glorified in His grace.

But there are two distinct parts in this grace the love that seeks, and the love with which one is received. The first two parables describe the former character of this grace. The shepherd seeks his sheep, the woman her piece of money: the sheep and the piece of silver are passive. The shepherd seeks (and the woman also) until he finds, because he has an interest in the matter. The sheep, wearied with its wanderings, has not to take one step in

returning. The shepherd lays it on his shoulders and carries it home. He takes the whole charge, happy to recover his sheep. This is the mind of heaven, whatever the heart of man on earth may be. It is the work of Christ, the Good Shepherd. The woman sets before us the pains which God takes in His love; so that it is more the work of the Spirit, which is represented by that of the woman. The light is brought she sweeps the house until she finds the piece she had lost. Thus God acts in the world, seeking sinners. The hateful and hating jealousy of self-righteousness finds no place in the mind of heaven, where God dwells, and produces, in the happiness that surrounds Him, the reflex of His own perfections.

But although neither the sheep nor the piece of silver does anything towards its own recovery, there is a real work wrought in the heart of one who is brought back; but this work, necessary as it is for the finding or even the seeking of peace, is not that on which the peace is grounded. The return and the reception of the sinner are therefore described in the third parable. The work of grace, accomplished solely by the power of God, and complete in its effects, is presented to us in the first two. Here the sinner returns, with sentiments which we will now examine sentiments produced by grace, but which never rise to the height of the grace manifested in his reception until he has returned.

First his estrangement from God is depicted. While as guilty at the moment that he crosses the paternal threshold, in turning his back upon his father, as when he eats husks with the swine, man, deceived by sin, is here presented in the last state of degradation to which sin conducts him. Having expended all that fell to him according to nature, the destitution in which he finds himself (and many a soul feels the famine which it has brought itself into, the emptiness of all around without a desire after God or holiness, and often into what is degrading in sin) does not incline him towards God, but leads him to seek a resource in that which Satan's country (where nothing is given) can supply; and he finds himself among the swine. But grace operates; and the thought of the happiness of his father's house, and of the goodness that blessed all around it, awakes in his heart. Where the Spirit of God works, there are always two things found, conviction in the conscience and the attraction of the heart. It is really the revelation of God to the soul,

and God is light and He is love; as light, conviction is produced in the soul, but as love there is the attraction of goodness, and truthful confession is produced. It is not merely that we have sinned, but that we have to do with God and desire to have, but fear because of what He is, yet are led to go. So the woman in chapter 7. (See page 240.) So Peter in the boat. This produces the conviction that we are perishing, and a sense, feeble it may be, yet true, of the goodness of God and the happiness to be found in His presence, although we may not feel sure of being received; and we do not remain in the place where we are perishing. There is the sense of sin, there is humiliation; the sense that there is goodness in God; but not the sense of what the grace of God really is. Grace attracts one goes towards God, but one would be satisfied to be received as a servant a proof that, though the heart be wrought in by grace, it has not yet met God. Progress, moreover, although real, never gives peace. There is a certain rest of heart in going; but one does not know what reception to expect, after having been guilty of forsaking God. The nearer the prodigal son drew to the house, the more would his heart beat at the thought of meeting his father. But the father anticipates his coming, and acts towards him, not according to his son's deserts, but according to his own heart as a father the only measure of the ways of God towards us. He is on his son's neck while the latter is still in rags, before he has had time to say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." It was no longer time to say it. It belonged to a heart anticipating how it would be received, not to one who had met God. Such an one knows how it has been received. The prodigal arranges to say it (as people speak of an humble hope, and a low place); but though the confession is complete when he arrives, he does not then say, Make me a hired servant. How could he? The father's heart had decided his position by its own sentiments, by its love towards him, by the place his heart had given him towards himself. The father's position decided that of the son. This was between himself and his son; but this was not all. He loved his son, even as he was, but he did not introduce him into the house in that condition. The same love that received him as a son will have him enter the house as a son, and as the son of such a father should be. The servants are ordered to bring the best robe and put it on him. Thus loved, and received by love, in our wretchedness, we are clothed with Christ to enter the house. We do not bring the robe: God

supplies us with it. It is an entirely new thing; and we become the righteousness of God in Him. This is heaven's best robe. All the rest have part in the joy, except the self righteous man, the true Jew. The joy is the joy of the father, but all the house shares it. The elder son is not in the house. He is near it, but he will not come in. He will have nothing to do with the grace that makes the poor prodigal the subject of the joy of love. Nevertheless, grace acts; the father goes out and entreats him to come in. It is thus that God acted, in the Gospel, towards the Jew. Yet man's righteousness, which is but selfishness and sin, rejects grace. But God will not give up His grace. It becomes Him. God will be God; and God is love.

It is this which takes the place of the pretensions of the Jews, who rejected the Lord, and the accomplishment of the promises in Him.

That which gives peace, and characterises our position, is not the sentiments wrought in our hearts, although they indeed exist, but those of God Himself.

Luke Chapter 16

In chapter 16, the effect of grace on conduct is presented, and the contrast that exists (the dispensation being changed) between the conduct that Christianity requires with regard to the things of the world, and the position of the Jews in that respect. Now this position was only the expression of that of man made evident by the law. The doctrine thus embodied by the parable is confirmed by the parabolic history of the rich man and Lazarus, lifting up the veil that hides the other world in which the result of men's conduct is manifested.

Man is the steward of God (that is, God has committed His goods to man). Israel stands especially in this position.

But man has been unfaithful; Israel had indeed been so. God has taken away his stewardship; but man is still in possession of the goods to administer them, at least, in fact (as Israel was at that moment). These goods are the things of earth that which man can possess according to the flesh. Having lost his stewardship by his unfaithfulness, and being still in possession of the goods, he uses them to make friends of his master's debtors by doing them

good. This is what Christians should do with earthly possessions, using them for others, having the future in view. The steward might have appropriated the money due to his master; he preferred gaining friends with it (that is, he sacrifices present to future advantage). We may turn the miserable riches of this world into means of fulfilling love. The spirit of grace which fills our hearts (ourselves the objects of grace) exercises itself with regard to temporal things, which we use for others. For us it is in view of the everlasting habitations. "That they may receive you" is equivalent to "that you may be received" a common form of expression in Luke, to designate the fact without speaking of the individuals that perform it, although using the word they.

Observe that earthly riches are not our own things; heavenly riches, in the case of a true Christian, are his own.

These riches are unrighteous, in that they belong to fallen man, and not to the heavenly man, nor had any place when Adam was innocent.

Now, when the veil is lifted from the other world, the truth is fully brought to light. And the contrast between the Jewish dispensation and the Christian, is clearly unfolded; for Christianity reveals that world, and, as to its principle, belongs to heaven.

Judaism, according to God's government on earth, promised temporal blessing to the righteous; but all was in disorder: even the Messiah, the head of the system, was rejected. In a word, Israel, looked at as set under responsibility, and to enjoy earthly blessing on obedience, had entirely failed. Man, in this world, could no longer, on that footing, be the means of bearing testimony to the ways of God in government. There will be a time of earthly judgment, but it was not yet come. Meanwhile, the possession of riches was anything rather than a proof of God's favour. Personal selfishness, and alas! indifference to a brother in distress at his door, was, instead, the characteristic of its possession among the Jews. Revelation opens the other world to our view. Man, in this world, is fallen, wicked man. If he has received his good things here, he has the portion of sinful man; he will be tormented, while the other one whom he had despised will find happiness in the other world.

It is not a question here of that which gives title to enter heaven, but of character, and of the contrast between the principles of this world and the invisible world. The Jew made choice of this world; he has lost this and the other also. The poor man whom he had thought contemptible is found in Abraham's bosom. The whole tenor of this parable shews its connection with the question of Israel's hopes, and the idea that riches were a proof of the favour of God (an idea which, false as it may be in every case, is intelligible enough if this world is the scene of blessing under the government of God). The subject of the parable is shewn also by that which is found at the end of it. The miserable rich man desires that his brethren might be warned by some one who had risen from the dead. Abraham declares to him the uselessness of this means. It was all over with Israel. God has not again presented His Son to the nation who rejected Him, despising the law and the prophets. The testimony of His resurrection met with the same unbelief that had rejected Him when living, as well as the prophets before Him. There is no consolation in the other world if the testimony of the word to the conscience is rejected in this. The gulf cannot be crossed. A returning Lord would not convince those who had despised the word. All is in connection with the judgment of the Jews, which would close the dispensation; as the preceding parable shews what the conduct of Christians should be with regard to things temporal. All flows from the grace which, in love on God's part, accomplished the salvation of man, and set aside the legal dispensation and its principles by bringing in the heavenly things.

Luke Chapter 17

Grace is the spring of the Christian's walk, and furnishes directions for it. He cannot with impunity (chapter 17) despise the weak. He must not be weary of pardoning his brother. If he have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, the power of God is, so to speak, at his disposal. Nevertheless, when he has done all, he has but done his duty (Luk 17:5-10). The Lord then shews (Luk 17:11-37) the deliverance from Judaism, which He still recognised; and, after that, its judgment. He was passing through Samaria and Galilee: ten lepers come towards Him, entreating Him, from a distance, to heal them. He sends them to the priests. This was, in fact, as much as to say, You are clean. It

would have been useless to have them pronounced unclean; and they knew it. They take Christ's word, go away with this conviction, and are immediately healed on their way. Nine of them, satisfied with reaping the benefit of His power, pursue their journey to the priests, and remain Jews, not coming out of the old sheepfold. Jesus, indeed, still acknowledged it; but they only acknowledge Him so far as to profit by His presence, and remain where they were. They saw nothing in His Person, nor in the power of God in Him, to attract them. They remain Jews. But this poor stranger the tenth recognises the good hand of God. He falls at the feet of Jesus, giving Him glory. The Lord bids him depart in the liberty of faith "Go thy way; thy faith hath saved thee." He has no longer need to go to the priests. He had found God and the source of blessing in Christ, and goes away freed from the yoke which was soon to be judicially broken for all.

For the kingdom of God was among them. To those who could discern it, the King was there in their midst. The kingdom did not come in such a manner as to attract the attention of the world. It was there, so that the disciples would soon desire to see one of those days which they had enjoyed during the time of the Lord's presence on earth, but would not see it. He then announces the pretensions of false Christs, the true having been rejected, so that the people would be left a prey to the wiles of the enemy. His disciples were not to follow them. In connection with Jerusalem they would be exposed to these temptations, but they had the Lord's directions for guidance through them.

Now the Son of man, in His day, would be like the lightning: but, before that, He must suffer many things from the unbelieving Jews. The day would be like that of Lot, and that of Noe: men would be at ease, following their carnal occupations, like the world overtaken by the flood, and Sodom by the fire from heaven. It will be the revelation of the Son of man His public revelation sudden and vivid. This referred to Jerusalem. Being thus warned, their concern was to escape the judgment of the Son of man which, at the time of His coming, would fall upon the city that had rejected Him; for this Son of man, whom they had disowned, would come again in His glory. There must be no looking back; that would be to have the heart in the place of judgment. Better lose all, life itself, rather than be associated with that

which was going to be judged. If they should escape and have their lives spared through unfaithfulness, the judgment was the judgment of God; He would know how to reach them in their bed, and to distinguish between two that were in one bed, and between two women who ground the corn of the household at the same mill.

This character of the judgment shews that it is not the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus that is meant. It was the judgment of God that could discern, take away, and spare. Neither is it the judgment of the dead, but a judgment on earth: they are in bed, they are at the mill, they are on the housetops and in the fields. Warned by the Lord, they were to forsake all, and to care only for Him who came to judge. If they asked where this should be wherever the dead body lay, there would be the judgment that would come down like a vulture, which they could not see, but from which the prey would not escape.

Luke Chapter 18

Grace is the spring of the Christian's walk, and furnishes directions for it. He cannot with impunity (chapter 17) despise the weak. He must not be weary of pardoning his brother. If he have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, the power of God is, so to speak, at his disposal. Nevertheless, when he has done all, he has but done his duty (Luk 18:5-10). The Lord then shews (Luk 18:11-37) the deliverance from Judaism, which He still recognised; and, after that, its judgment. He was passing through Samaria and Galilee: ten lepers come towards Him, entreating Him, from a distance, to heal them. He sends them to the priests. This was, in fact, as much as to say, You are clean. It would have been useless to have them pronounced unclean; and they knew it. They take Christ's word, go away with this conviction, and are immediately healed on their way. Nine of them, satisfied with reaping the benefit of His power, pursue their journey to the priests, and remain Jews, not coming out of the old sheepfold. Jesus, indeed, still acknowledged it; but they only acknowledge Him so far as to profit by His presence, and remain where they were. They saw nothing in His Person, nor in the power of God in Him, to attract them. They remain Jews. But this poor stranger the tenth recognises the good hand of God. He falls at the feet of Jesus, giving Him glory. The Lord bids him depart in the liberty of faith "Go thy way; thy

faith hath saved thee." He has no longer need to go to the priests. He had found God and the source of blessing in Christ, and goes away freed from the yoke which was soon to be judicially broken for all.

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and to care only for Him who came to judge. If they asked where this should be wherever the dead body lay, there would be the judgment that would come down like a vulture, which they could not see, but from which the prey would not escape.

Note #38

The case of the blind man at Jericho is, as already noted, the beginning (in all the synoptical Gospels) of the last events of Christ's life.

Luke Chapter 19

The history of His last approach to Jerusalem and intercourse with it now commences (Luk 19:35). Here then He presents Himself anew as the Son of David, and for the last time; laying on the conscience of the nation His pretensions to that title, while displaying the consequences of His rejection. Near Jericho, [See Note #39] the place of malediction, He gives sight to a blind man who believes in His title of Son of David. So indeed those who possessed that faith did receive their sight to follow Him, and they saw yet greater things than these. In Jericho (chapter 19) He sets forth grace, in spite of the pharisaic spirit. Nevertheless it is as a son of Abraham that He points out Zacchaeus, who in a false position indeed as such had a tender conscience and a generous heart [See Note #40] by grace. His position did not, in the eyes of Jesus, take from him the character of son of Abraham (if it had that effect, who could have been blessed?) and did not bar the way to that salvation which was come to save the lost. It entered with Jesus into the house of this son of Abraham. He brought salvation, whoever might be heir to it.

Nevertheless He does not conceal from them His departure, and the character which the kingdom would assume, owing to His absence. As for them, Jerusalem, and the expectation of the coming kingdom, filled their minds. The Lord therefore explains to them what would take place. He goes away to receive a kingdom and to return. Meanwhile He commits some of His goods (the gifts of the Spirit) to His servants to trade with during His absence. The difference between this parable and that in the Gospel by Matthew is this: Matthew presents the sovereignty and the wisdom of the giver, who varies His gifts according to the aptitude of His servants; in Luke

it is more particularly the responsibility of the servants, who each receive the same sum, and the one gains by it, in his master's interest, more than the other. Accordingly it is not said, as in Matthew, "Enter into the joy of your Lord," the same thing to all, and the more excellent thing; but to the one it is authority over ten cities that is given; to the other, over five (that is to say, a share in the kingdom according to their labour). The servant does not lose that which he has gained, although it was for his master. He enjoys it. Not so with the servant who made no use of his talent; that which had been committed to him is given to the one who had gained ten.

That which we gain spiritually here, in spiritual intelligence and in the knowledge of God in power, is not lost in the other world. On the contrary we receive more, and the glory of the inheritance is given us in proportion to our work. All is grace.

But there was yet another element in the history of the kingdom. The citizens (the Jews) not only reject the king, but, when he is gone away to receive the kingdom, send a messenger after him to say that they will not have him to reign over them. Thus the Jews, when Peter sets their sin before them, and declares to them that if they repent, Jesus would return, and with Him the times of refreshing, reject the testimony, and, so to say, send Stephen after Jesus to testify that they would have nothing to do with Him. When He returns in glory, the perverse nation is judged before His eyes. The avowed enemies of Christ, they receive the reward of their rebellion.

He had declared that which the kingdom was that which it should be. He now comes to present it for the last time in His own Person to the inhabitants of Jerusalem according to the prophecy of Zechariah. This remarkable scene has been considered in its general aspect when studying Matthew and Mark; but some particular circumstances require notice here. All is gathered round His entrance. The disciples and the Pharisees are in contrast. Jerusalem is in the day of her visitation, and she knows it not.

Some remarkable expressions are uttered by His disciples, moved by the Spirit of God, on this occasion. Had they been silent, the stones would have broken out in proclamation of the glory of the rejected One. The kingdom, in

their triumphant acclamations, is not simply the kingdom in its earthly aspect. In Matthew it was, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." That was indeed true; but here we have something more. The Son of David disappears. He is indeed the King, who comes in the name of the Lord; but it is no longer the remnant of Israel who seek salvation in the name of the Son of David, acknowledging His title. It is "peace in heaven and glory in the highest." The kingdom depends on peace being established in the heavenly places. The Son of man, exalted on high, and victorious over Satan, has reconciled the heavens. The glory of grace in His Person is established for the everlasting and supreme glory of the God of love. The kingdom on earth is but a consequence of this glory which grace has established. The power that cast out Satan has established peace in heaven. At the beginning, in Luk 2:14, we have, in the manifested grace, Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth; the good pleasure [of God] in men. To establish the kingdom, peace is made in heaven; the glory of God is fully established in the highest.

Note #39

In Luke the coming to Jericho is stated as a general fact, in contrast with His general journey which is in view from Luk 9:51. In point of fact it was on going out of Jericho He saw the blind man. The general fact is all we have here, to give the whole history, Zacchaeus and all, Its moral place.

Note #40

I doubt not that Zacchaeus sets before Jesus that which he did habitually, before the Lord came to him. Nevertheless salvation came that day to his house.

Luke Chapter 20

It will be remarked here that, as He draws nigh to Jerusalem, the Lord weeps over the city. It is not now as in Matthew, where, while discoursing with the Jews, He points it out to them as that which having rejected and slain the prophets Emmanuel also, the Lord, who would so often have gathered her children under His wings, having been ignominiously rejected was now given up to desolation until His return. It is the hour of her

visitation, and she has not known it. If only she had, even now, hearkened to the call of the testimony of her God! She is given up into the hands of the Gentiles, her enemies, who will not leave her one stone upon another. That is to say, not having known this visitation of God in grace in the Person of Jesus, she is set aside the testimony goes no farther she gives place to a new order of things. Thus the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus is here prominent. It is the moral character of the temple also of which the Lord here speaks. The Spirit does not notice here that it is to be the temple of God for all nations. It is simply (Luk 20:16) the vineyard is given to others. They fell upon the stone of stumbling then: when it falls on them when Jesus comes in judgment it will grind them to powder.

In His reply to the Sadducees, three important things are added to that which is said in Matthew. 1st, It is not only the condition of those who are raised, and the certainty of the resurrection; it is an age, which a certain class only, who are accounted worthy of it, shall obtain, a separate resurrection of the just (Luk 20:35). 2nd, This class is composed of the children of God, as being the children of the resurrection (Luk 20:36). 3rd While waiting for this resurrection, their souls survive death, all live unto God, although they may be hidden from the eyes of men (Luk 20:38).

The parable of the wedding feast is omitted here. In chapter 14 of this Gospel we find it with characteristic elements, a mission to the lanes of the city, to the despised of the nations, which is not in Matthew, who gives us the judgment of Jerusalem instead, before announcing the evangelisation of the Gentiles. All this is characteristic. In Luke it is grace, a moral condition of man before God, and the new order of things founded on the rejection of Christ. I will not dwell upon those points which Luke relates in common with Matthew. They naturally meet in the great facts that relate to the Lord's rejection by the Jews, and its consequences.

If we compare Matthew 23 and Luk 20:45-47, we shall see at once the difference. In Luke the Spirit gives us in three Verses that which morally puts the scribes aside. In Matthew their whole position with respect to the dispensation is developed; whether as having a place, so long as Moses continued, or with reference to their guiltiness before God in that place.

Luke Chapter 21

The Lord's discourse in chapter 21 displays the character of the Gospel in a peculiar manner. The spirit of grace, in contrast with the Judaic spirit, is seen in the account of the poor widow's offering. But the Lord's prophecy requires more detailed notice. Verse 6 (Luk 21:9), as we saw at the end of chapter 19, speaks only of the destruction of Jerusalem as she then stood. This is true also of the disciples' question. They say nothing of the end of the age. The Lord afterwards enters upon the duties and the circumstances of His disciples previous to that hour. In Verse 8 (Luk 21:8) it is said, "The time draweth near," which is not found in Matthew. He goes much more into detail with regard to their ministry during that period, encourages them, promises them necessary help. Persecution should turn to them for a testimony. From the middle of Verse 11 to the end of Verse 19 (Luk 21:11-19) we have details relative to His disciples, that are not found in the corresponding passage of Matthew. They present the general state of things in the same sense, adding the condition of the Jews, of those especially who, more or less, professedly received the word. The whole stream of testimony, as rendered in connection with Israel, but extending to the nations, is found in Matthew to the end of Verse 14 (Luk 21:14). In Luke it is the coming service of the disciples, until the moment when the judgment of God should put an end to that which was virtually terminated by the rejection of Christ. Consequently the Lord says nothing in Verse 20 (Luk 21:20) of the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, but gives the fact of the siege of Jerusalem, and its then approaching desolation not the end of the age, as in Matthew. These were the days of vengeance on the Jews, who had crowned their rebellion by rejecting the Lord. Therefore Jerusalem should be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled, that is, the times destined to the sovereignty of the Gentile empires according to the counsel of God revealed in the prophecies of Daniel. This is the period in which we now live. There is a break here in the discourse. Its principal subject is ended; but there are still some events of the last scene to be revealed, which close the history of this Gentile supremacy.

We shall see also that, although it is the commencement of the judgment, from which Jerusalem will not arise until all is accomplished and the song of Isaiah 40 is addressed to her, nevertheless, the great tribulation is not mentioned here. There is great distress, and wrath upon the people, as was indeed the case in the siege of Jerusalem by Titus; and the Jews were also led away captive. Neither is it said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days." Nevertheless, without designating the epoch, but after having spoken of the times of the Gentiles, the end of the age comes. There are signs in heaven, distress on earth, a mighty movement in the waves of human population. The heart of man, moved by a prophetic alarm, foresees the calamities which, still unknown, are threatening him; for all the influences that govern men are shaken. Then shall they see the Son of man, once rejected from the earth, coming from heaven with the ensigns of Jehovah, with power and great glory the Son of man, of whom this Gospel has always spoken. There the prophecy ends. We have not here the gathering together of the elect Israelites, who had been dispersed, of which Matthew speaks.

That which follows consists of exhortations, in order that the day of distress may be a token of deliverance to the faith of those who, trusting in the Lord, obey the voice of His servant. The "generation" (a word already explained when considering Matthew) should not pass away till all was fulfilled. The length of the time that has elapsed since then, and that must elapse until the end, is left in darkness. Heavenly things are not measured by dates. Moreover that moment is hidden in the knowledge of the Father. Still heaven and earth should pass away, but not the words of Jesus. He then tells them that, as dwelling on earth, they must be watchful, lest their own hearts should be overcharged with things that would sink them into this world, in the midst of which they were to be witnesses. For that day would come as a snare upon all those who had their dwelling here, who were rooted here. They were to watch and pray, in order to escape all those things, and to stand in the presence of the Son of man. This is still the great subject of our Gospel. To be with Him, as those who have escaped from the earth, to be among the 144,000 on Mount Zion, will be an accomplishment of this blessing, but the place is not named; so that, supposing the faithfulness of those whom He was personally addressing, the hope

awakened by His words would be fulfilled in a more excellent manner in His heavenly presence in the day of glory.

Luke Chapter 22

In chapter 22, Luke commence the details of the end of our Lord's life. The chief priests, fearing the people, seek how they may kill Him. Judas, under the influence of Satan, offers himself as an instrument, that they might take Him in the absence of the multitude. The day of Passover comes, and the Lord pursues that which belonged to His work of love in these immediate circumstances. I will notice the points that appertain to the character of this Gospel, the change that took place in immediate and direct connection with the Lord's death. Thus He desired to eat this last Passover with His disciples, because He would eat thereof no more until it was fulfilled in the kingdom of God, that is, by His death. He drinks wine no more until the kingdom of God shall come. He does not say, until He shall drink it new in the kingdom of His Father, but only that He will not drink it till the kingdom shall come: just as the times of the Gentiles are in view as a present thing, so here Christianity, the kingdom as it is now, not the millennium. Observe also what a touching expression of love we have here: His heart needed this last testimony of affection before leaving them.

The new covenant is founded on the blood here drunk in figure. The old was done away. Blood was required to establish the new. At the same time the covenant itself was not established; but everything was done on God's part. The blood was not shed to give force to a covenant of judgment like the first; it was shed for those who received Jesus, while waiting for the time when the covenant itself should be established with Israel in grace.

The disciples, believing the words of Christ, do not themselves know, and they ask one another, which of them it could be that should betray Him, a striking expression of faith in all he uttered — for none, save Judas, had a bad conscience — and marked their innocence. And at the same time, thinking of the kingdom in a carnal way, they dispute for the first place in it; and this, in the presence of the cross, at the table where the Lord was giving them the last pledges of His love. Truth of heart there was, but what a heart to have truth in! As for Himself, He had taken the lowest place, and

that &mdash as the most excellent for love &mdash was His alone. They had to follow Him as closely as they could. His grace recognises their having done so, as if He were their debtor for their care during His time of sorrow on earth. He remembered it. In the day of His kingdom they should have twelve thrones, as heads of Israel, among whom they had followed Him.

But now it was a question of passing through death; and, having followed Him thus far, what an opportunity for the enemy to sift them since they could no longer follow Him as men living on the earth! All that belonged to a living Messiah was completely overthrown, and death was there. Who could pass through it? Satan would profit by this, and desired to have them that he might sift them. Jesus does not seek to spare His disciples this sifting. It was not possible, for He must pass through death, and their hope was in Him. They cannot escape it: the flesh must be put to the test of death. But He prays for them, that the faith of the one, whom He especially names, may not fail. Simon, ardent in the flesh, was exposed more than all to the danger into which a false confidence in the flesh might lead him, but in which it could not sustain him. Being however the object of this grace on the Lord's part, his fall would be the means of his strength. Knowing what the flesh was, and also the perfection of grace; he would be able to strengthen his brethren. Peter asserts that he could do anything &mdash the very things he should entirely fail in. The Lord briefly warns him of what he would really do.

Jesus then takes occasion to forewarn them that all was about to change. During His presence here below, the true Messiah, Emmanuel, He had sheltered them from all difficulties; when He sent them throughout Israel, they had lacked nothing. But now (for the kingdom was not yet coming in power) they would be, like Himself, exposed to contempt and violence. Humanly speaking, they would have to take care of themselves. Peter, ever forward, taking the words of Christ literally, was permitted to lay bare his thoughts by exhibiting two swords. The Lord stops him by a word that shewed him it was of no use to go farther. They were not capable of it at that time. As to Himself, He pursues with perfect tranquillity His daily habits.

Pressed in spirit by that which was coming, He exhorts His disciples to pray, that they enter not into temptation; that is to say, that when the time came that they should be put to the test, walking with God, it should be for them

obedience to God, and not a means of departure from Him. There are such moments, if God permits them to come, in which everything is put to the proof by the enemy's power.

The Lord's dependence as man is then displayed in the most striking manner. The whole scene of Gethsemane and the cross, in Luke, is the perfect dependent man. He prays: He submits to His Father's will. An angel strengthens Him: this was their service to the Son of man. [See Note #41]

Afterwards, in deep conflict, He prays more earnestly: dependent man, He is perfect in His dependence. The deepness of the conflict deepens His intercourse with His Father. The disciples were overwhelmed by the shadow only of that which caused Jesus to pray. They take refuge in the forgetfulness of sleep. The Lord, with the patience of grace, repeats His warning, and the multitude arrive. Peter, confident when warned, sleeping at the approach of temptation when the Lord was praying, strikes when Jesus allows Himself to be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and then alas! denies when Jesus confesses the truth. But, submissive as the Lord was to His Father's will, He plainly shews that His power had not departed from Him. He heals the wound that Peter inflicted on the high priest's servant, and then permits Himself to be led away, with the remark that it was their hour and the power of darkness. Sad and terrible association!

In all this scene we behold the complete dependence of the man, the power of death felt as a trial in all its force; but, apart from that which was going on in His soul and before His Father, in which we see the reality of these two things, there was the most perfect tranquillity, the most gentle calmness towards men [See Note #42] — grace that never belies itself. Thus, when Peter denied Him as He had foretold, He looks upon him at the fitting moment. All the parade of His iniquitous trial does not distract His thoughts, and Peter is broken down by that look. When questioned, He has little to say. His hour was come Subject to His Father's will, He accepted the cup from His hand. His judges did but accomplish that will, and bring Him the cup. He makes no answer to the question whether He is the Christ. It was no longer the time to do so. They would not believe it — would not answer Him if He had put questions to them that would have brought out the truth; neither would they have let Him go. But He bears the plainest

testimony to the place which, from that hour, the Son of man took. This we have repeatedly seen in reading this Gospel. He would sit on the right hand of the power of God. We see also it is the place He takes at present. [See Note #43] They immediately draw the right conclusion &mdash "Thou art, then, the Son of God?" He bears testimony to this truth, and all is ended; that is to say, He waives the question, whether He was the Messiah &mdash that was gone by for Israel &mdash He was going to suffer; He is the Son of man, but thenceforth only as entering into glory; and He is the Son of God. It was all over with Israel as to their responsibility; the heavenly glory of the Son of man, the personal glory of the Son of God was about to shine forth; and Jesus (Luke 23) is led away to the Gentiles, that all may be accomplished.

Note #41

There are elements of the profoundest interest which appear in comparing this Gospel with others in this place; and elements which bring out the character of this Gospel in the most striking way. In Gethsemane we have the Lord's conflict brought out more fully in Luke than anywhere; but on the cross we have His superiority to the sufferings He was in. There is no expression of them: He is above them. It is not, as in John, the divine side of the picture. There in Gethsemane we have no agony, but when He names Himself, they go backward and fall to the ground. On the cross, no "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" but He delivers up His own spirit to God. This is not so in Luke. In Gethsemane we have the Man of sorrows, a man feeling in all its depths what was before Him, and looking to His Father. "Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly." On the cross we have One who as man has bowed to His Father's will, and is in the calmness of One who, in whatever sorrow and suffering, is above it all. He tells the weeping women to weep for themselves, not for Him, the green tree, for judgment was coming. He prays for those who were crucifying Him; He speaks peace and heavenly joy to the poor thief who was converted; He was going into Paradise before the kingdom came. The same is seen specially in the fact of His death. It is not, as in John, He gave up His spirit; but, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." He trusts His spirit in death, as a man who knows and believes in God His Father, to Him whom He thus knew. In

Matthew we have the forsaking of God and His sense of it. This character of the Gospel, revealing Christ distinctively as perfect Man, and the perfect Man, is full of the deepest interest. He passed through His sorrows with God, and then in perfect peacefulness was above them all; His trust in His Father perfect, even in death &mdash a path not trodden by man hitherto, and never to be trodden by the saints. If Jordan overflowed all its banks at the time of harvest, the ark in the depths of it made it a passage dryshod into the inheritance of God's people.

Note #42

It is most striking to see how Christ met, according to divine perfectness, every circumstance He was in. They only drew out the perfectness. He felt them all, was governed by none, but met them always Himself. This which was always true was wonderfully shewn here. He prays with the fullest sense of what was coming upon Him &mdash the cup He had to drink &mdash turns and warns them, and gently rebukes and excuses Peter, as if walking in Galilee, the flesh was weak; and then returns into yet deeper agony with His Father. Grace suited Him with Peter, agony in the presence of God; and He was grace with Peter &mdash in agony at the thought of the cup.

Note #43

The word "hereafter," in the Authorised Version, should be "henceforth." That is, from this hour they would see Him no longer in humiliation, but as Son of man in power.

Luke Chapter 23

The Gentiles, however, are not presented in this Gospel as being voluntarily guilty. We see, no doubt, an indifference which is flagrant injustice in a case like this, and an insolence which nothing could excuse; but Pilate does what he can to deliver Christ, and Herod, disappointed, sends Him back unjudged. The will is altogether on the side of the Jews. That is the characteristic of this part of the history in Luke's Gospel. Pilate would rather not have burdened himself with this useless crime, and he despised the Jews; but

they were resolved on the crucifixion of Jesus, and require Barabbas to be released a seditious man and a murderer (see Luk 23:20-25). [See Note #44]

Jesus, therefore, as He was led to Calvary, announced to the women, who with natural feeling lamented for Him, that it was all over with Jerusalem, that they had to bewail their own fate and not His; for days were coming upon Jerusalem which would make them call those happy who had never been mothers days in which they would in vain seek refuge from terror and judgment. For if in Him, the true green tree, these things were done, what would become of the dry tree of Judaism without God? Nevertheless, at the moment of His crucifixion, the Lord intercedes for the unhappy people: they knew not what they did intercession, to which Peter's discourse to the Jews (Acts 3) is the remarkable answer by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. The rulers among the Jews, completely blinded, as well as the people, taunt Him with being unable to save Himself from the cross not knowing that it was impossible if He was a Saviour, and that all was taken from them, and that God was establishing another order of things, founded on atonement, in the power of eternal life by the resurrection. Dreadful blindness, of which the poor soldiers were but imitators, according to the malignity of human nature! But the judgment of Israel was in their mouth, and (on God's part) upon the cross. It was the King of the Jews who hung there abased indeed, for a thief hung by His side could rail on Him but in the place to which love had brought Him for the everlasting and present salvation of souls. This was manifested at the very moment. The insults that reproached Him for not saving Himself from the cross, had His answer in the fate of the converted thief, who rejoined Him the same day in Paradise.

This history is a striking demonstration of the change to which this Gospel leads us. The King of the Jews, by their own confession, is not delivered He is crucified. What an end to the hopes of this people! But at the same time a gross sinner, converted by grace on the very gibbet, goes straight to Paradise. A soul is eternally saved. It is not the kingdom, but a soul out of the body in happiness with Christ. And remark here how the presentation of Christ brings out the wickedness of the human heart. No thief would mock at or reproach another thief on the gibbet. But the moment it is Christ who is there, this takes place.

But I would say a few words on the condition of the other thief, and on the reply of Christ. We see every mark of conversion, and of the most remarkable faith. The fear of God, the beginning of wisdom, is there; conscience upright and vigorous. It is not "and justly" to his fellow, but "we indeed justly"; knowledge of the perfect sinless righteousness of Christ as man; the acknowledgment of Him as the Lord, when His own disciples had forsaken and denied Him, and when there was no sign of His glory or of the dignity of His Person. He was accounted by man as one like himself. His kingdom was but a subject of scorn to all. But the poor thief is taught of God; and all is plain. He is as sure that Christ will have the kingdom as if He was reigning in glory. All his desire is that Christ should remember him then; and what confidence in Christ is here shewn through the knowledge of Him in spite of his acknowledged guilt! It shews how Christ filled his heart, and how his confiding in grace by its brightness shut out human shame, for who would like to be remembered in the shame of a gibbet! Divine teaching is singularly manifested here. Do not we know by divine teaching that Christ was sinless, and to be assured of His kingdom there was a faith above all circumstances? He alone is a comfort to Jesus upon the cross, and makes Him think (in answering his faith) of the Paradise that awaited Him when He should have finished the work that His Father had given Him to do. Observe the state of sanctification this poor man was in by faith. In all the agonies of the cross, and while believing Jesus to be the Lord, he seeks no relief at His hands, but asks that He will remember him in His kingdom. He is filled with one thought to have his portion with Jesus. He believes that the Lord will return; he believes in the kingdom, while the King is rejected and crucified, and when, as to man, there was no longer any hope. But the reply of Jesus goes farther in the revelation of that proper to this Gospel, and adds that which brings in, not the kingdom, but everlasting life, the happiness of the soul. The thief had asked Jesus to remember him when He returned in His kingdom. The Lord replies that he should not wait for that day of manifested glory which would be visible to the world, but that this very day he should be with Him in Paradise. Precious testimony, and perfect grace! Jesus crucified was more than King He was Saviour. The poor malefactor was a testimony to it, and the joy and consolation of the Lord's heart the first-fruits of the love which had placed them side by side, where, if the poor

thief bore the fruit of his sins from man, the Lord of glory at his side was bearing the fruit of them from God, treated as Himself a malefactor in the same condemnation. Through a work unknown to man save by faith the sins of His companion were for ever put away, they no longer existed, their remembrance was only that of the grace which had taken them away, and which had for ever cleansed his soul from them, making him that moment as fit to enter Paradise as Christ Himself his companion there!

The Lord then, having fulfilled all things, and still full of strength, commends His spirit to His Father. He commits it to Him, the last act of that which composed His whole life the perfect energy of the Holy Ghost acting in a perfect confidence in His Father, and dependence upon Him. He commits His spirit to His Father, and expires. For it was death that He had before Him but death in absolute faith which trusted in His Father death with God by faith; and not the death that separated from God. Meantime nature veiled itself acknowledged the departure from this world of Him who had created it. All is darkness. But on the other hand God reveals Himself the veil of the temple is rent in twain from the top to the bottom. God had hidden Himself in thick darkness the way into the holiest had not yet been manifested. But now there is no longer a veil; that which has put sin away through perfect love now shines forth, while the holiness of God's presence is joy to the heart, and not torment. What brings us into the presence of perfect holiness without a veil, put away the sin which forbade us to be there. Our communion is with Him through Christ, holy and unblameable before Him in love.

The poor centurion, struck with all that had taken place, confesses such is the power of the cross upon the conscience that this Jesus whom he has crucified was certainly the righteous man. I say conscience, because I do not pretend to say that it went any farther than that in the case of the centurion. We see the same effect on the spectators: they went away smiting their breasts. They perceived that something solemn had happened that they had fatally compromised themselves with God.

Note #44

This wilful guilt of the Jews is strongly brought out in John's Gospel also, that is, their national guilt. Pilate treats them with contempt; and there it is they say, "We have no king but Caesar."

Luke Chapter 24

But the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, had prepared everything for the burial of His Son, who had glorified Him by giving Himself up to death. He is with the rich in His death. Joseph, a just man, who had not consented to the sin of his people, lays the Lord's body in a tomb that had never yet been used. It was the preparation before the sabbath; but the sabbath was near. At the time of His death the women faithful (though ignorant) to their affection for Him while living see where the body is laid, and go to prepare all that was needed for its embalming. Luke only speaks in general terms of these women: we shall therefore enter on the details elsewhere, following our Gospel as it presents itself. The women (chapter 24) come, find the stone rolled away, and the sepulchre no longer containing the body of Him whom they had loved. While perplexed at this, they see two angels near them, who ask why they came to seek the living among the dead, and remind them of the plain words which Jesus had spoken to them in Galilee. They go and tell these things to all the disciples, who cannot believe their account; but Peter runs to the sepulchre, sees everything in order, and departs, wondering at that which had come to pass. In all this there was no faith in the words of Jesus, nor in that which the scriptures had spoken. In the journey to Emmaus the Lord connects the scriptures with all that happened to Himself, shewing to their minds still lingering round the thought of an earthly kingdom, that according to these scriptures God's revealed counsels, the Christ ought to suffer and enter into His glory, a rejected and heavenly Christ. He awakens that ardent attention which the heart feels whenever it is touched. He then reveals Himself in breaking bread the sign of His death: not that this was the Eucharist, but this particular act was linked with that event. Then their eyes were opened, and He disappears. It was the true Jesus; but in resurrection. Here He Himself explained all that the scriptures had spoken, and presented Himself in life with the symbol of His death. The two disciples return to Jerusalem.

The Lord had already shewn Himself to Simon an appearance, of which we have no details. Paul also mentions it as the first with reference to the apostles. While the two disciples related that which had happened to them, Jesus Himself stood in their midst. But their minds were not yet formed to this truth, and His presence alarms them. They cannot realise the idea of the resurrection of the body. The Lord uses their confusion (very natural, humanly speaking) for our blessing, by giving them the most sensible proofs that it was Himself risen; but Himself, body and soul, the same as before His death. He bids them touch Him, and He eats before their eyes. [See Note #45] It was indeed Himself.

An important thing remained the basis of true faith: the words of Christ, and the testimony of scripture. This He sets before them. But two things were yet required. First, they needed capacity to understand the word. He opens their understanding therefore, that they might understand the scriptures, and establishes them as witnesses that were not only able to say, "Thus it is, for we have seen it"; but "Thus it must needs have been, for so hath God said in his word"; and the testimony of Christ Himself was fulfilled in His resurrection.

But now grace was to be preached Jesus rejected by the Jews, slain and risen again for the salvation of souls, having made peace, and bestowing life according to the power of resurrection, the work which cleansed from sin being accomplished, and pardon already granted in thus bestowing it. Grace was to be preached among all nations, that is to say, repentance and pardon to sinners; beginning at that place, with which indeed the patient grace of God still owned a link, through the intercession of Jesus, but which could only be reached by sovereign grace, and in which sin the most aggravated rendered pardon the most necessary, by a testimony which, coming from heaven, must deal with Jerusalem as it dealt with all. They were to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The Jew, a child of wrath, even as others, must come in on the same ground The testimony had a higher source, although it was said "to the Jew first."

But, secondly, something more therefore was needed for the accomplishment of this mission, that is, power. They were to tarry at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. Jesus would

send the Holy Ghost whom He had promised, of whom the prophets also had spoken.

While blessing His disciples, heaven and heavenly grace characterising His relationship with them, Jesus was parted from them, and carried up into heaven; and they returned to Jerusalem with joy.

It will have been remarked that the narrative of Luke is very general here, and contains the great principles on which the doctrines and proofs of the resurrection are founded; the unbelief of the natural heart so graphically painted in the most simple and touching accounts; the disciples' attachment to their own hopes of the kingdom, and the difficulty with which the doctrine of the word took possession of their hearts, although, in proportion to their realisation, their hearts opened to it with joy; the Person of Jesus risen, still a man, the gracious One they knew; the doctrine of the word; the understanding of the word bestowed; the power of the Holy Ghost given all that belonged to the truth and to the eternal order of things made manifest. Nevertheless, Jerusalem was still recognised as the first object of grace on earth according to God's dispensations towards her; yet she was not, even as a place, the point of contact and connection between Jesus and His disciples. He does not bless them from Jerusalem, although, in the dealings of God with the earth, they were to tarry there for the gift of the Holy Ghost; for themselves and their relationship with Him He leads them out to Bethany. From thence He had set out to present Himself as King to Jerusalem. It was there that the resurrection of Lazarus took place; there that the family, which present the character of the remnant attached to His Person, now rejected, with better hopes in the most striking manner received Jesus. It was thither He retired when His testimony to the Jews was ended, that His heart might rest for a few moments among those whom He loved, who, through grace, loved Him. It was there that He established the link (as to circumstances) between the remnant attached to His Person and heaven. From thence He ascends.

Jerusalem is but the public starting-point of their ministry, as it had been the last scene of His witness. For themselves it was Bethany and heaven which were connected in the Person of Jesus. From thence was the testimony to come for Jerusalem herself. This is the more striking when we compare it

with Matthew. There He goes to Galilee, the place of association with the Jewish remnant, and there is no ascension, and the mission is exclusively to the nations. It is a carrying out to them, what was then confined to the Jews and forbidden to be carried further.

NOTE. In the text I have strictly followed the passage; I add some developments here, connecting this Gospel with the others.

There are two distinct parts in the sufferings of Christ: 1st, that which He suffered from the efforts of Satan as man in conflict with the power of the enemy who has dominion over death, but with the sense of what it was from God in view, and this in communion with His Father, presenting His requests to Him; and 2ndly, that which He suffered to accomplish expiation for sin, when actually bearing our sins, made sin for us, drinking the cup which the will of His Father had given Him to drink.

When speaking on the Gospel of John, I shall enter more on the character of the temptations; but I would notice here, that at the commencement of His public life the tempter endeavoured to turn Jesus aside by setting before Him the attractiveness of all that which, as privilege, belonged to Him, all that might be agreeable to Christ as man, as to which His own will might work. He was defeated by the perfect obedience of Christ. He would have Christ, being Son, go out of the place He had taken as servant. Blessed be God he failed. Christ by simple obedience bound the strong man as to this life, and then returning in the power of the Spirit into Galilee spoiled his goods. Putting away sin and bearing our sins was another matter. Satan then departed from Him for a season. In Gethsemane he returns, using the fear of death to throw anguish into the heart of the Lord. And He must needs go through death; and death was not only Satan's power but God's judgment on man, if man was to be delivered from it, for it was man's portion; and He alone, by going down into it, could break its chains. He had become man, that man might be delivered and even glorified. The distress of His soul was complete. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Thus His soul was that which the soul of a man ought to be in the presence of death, when Satan puts forth all his power in it, with the cup of God's judgment as yet unemptied in it: only He was perfect in it; it was a part of His perfection put to the test in all that was possible to man. But with

tears and supplications He makes His request to Him who had power to save Him from death. For the moment, His agony increases: presenting it to God makes it more acute. This is the case in our own little conflicts. But thus the thing is settled according to perfection before God. His soul enters into it with God; He prays more fervently. It is now evident that this cup which He puts before His Father's eyes when Satan presents it to Him as the power of death in His soul must be drunk. As obedience to His Father, He takes it in peace. To drink it is but perfect obedience, instead of being the power of Satan. But it must be drunk in reality; and upon the cross Jesus, the Saviour of our souls, enters into the second phase of His sufferings. He goes under death as the judgment of God, the separation of the soul from the light of His countenance. All that a soul which enjoyed nothing except communion with God could suffer in being deprived of it, the Lord suffered according to the perfect measure of the communion which was interrupted. Yet He gave glory to God "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." The cup for I pass over the outrages and insults of men: we may spare them the cup was drunk. Who can tell the horrors of that suffering? The true pains of death, understood as God understands it, felt according to the value of His presence divinely, as by a man who depended on that presence as man. But all is accomplished; and that which God required in respect to sin is done exhausted, and He is glorified as to it: so that He has only to bless whosoever comes to Him through a Christ who is alive and was dead, and who lives for ever a man, for ever before God.

The sufferings of Christ in His body (real as they were), the insults and upbraidings of men, were but the preface of His affliction, which, by depriving Him as man of all consolation, left Him wholly in the place of judgment as made sin, to His sufferings [See Note #46] in connection with the judgment of sin, when the God who would have been His full comfort was, as forsaking Him, the source of sorrow which left all the rest as unfelt and forgotten.

Note #45

Nothing can be more touching than the way in which He cultivates their confidence as that One they had known, the man, still a true man (though with a spiritual body) as He had been before! Handle me and see that it is I

myself. Blessed be God, for ever a man, the same who has been known in living love in the midst of our weakness.

Note #46

Psalm 22 is His appeal to God from the violence and wickedness of man to find Himself there forsaken and only sin in His sight, but perfect there. Christ suffered all from man hostility, unrighteousness, desertion, denial, betrayal, and then, as trusting in god, forsaking. But what a spectacle, the one righteous Man who did put His trust in Him to have to declare, at the end of His life, openly to all, He was forsaken of God!

JOHN

Introduction to John

The Gospel of John has a peculiar character, as every Christian perceives. It does not present the birth of Christ in this world, looked at as the Son of David. It does not trace His genealogy back to Adam, in order to bring out His title of Son of man. It does not exhibit the Prophet who, by His testimony, accomplished the service of His Father in this respect here below. It is neither His birth, nor the commencement of His gospel, but His existence before the beginning of everything that had a beginning. "In the beginning was the Word." In short, it is the glory of the Person of Jesus, the Son of God, above all dispensation a glory developed in many ways in grace, but which is always itself. It is that which He is; but making us share in all the blessings that flow from it, when He is so manifested as to impart them.

John Chapter 1

John 1:1

joh 1:1

The first chapter asserts what He was before all things, and the different characters in which He is a blessing to man, being made flesh. He is, and He is the expression of, the whole mind that subsists in God, the Logos. In the beginning He was. If we go back as far as is possible to the mind of men, how far soever beyond all that has had a beginning, He is. This is the most perfect idea we can form historically, if I may use such an expression, of the existence of God or of eternity. "In the beginning was the Word." Was there nothing beside Him? Impossible! Of what would He have been the Word? "The Word was with God." That is to say, a personal existence is ascribed to Him. But, lest it may be thought that He was something which eternity implies but which the Holy Ghost comes to reveal, it is said that He "was God." In His existence eternal in His nature divine in His Person distinct, He might have been spoken of as an emanation in time, as though His personality were of time, although eternal in His nature: the Spirit therefore

adds, "In the beginning he was with God." It is the revelation of the eternal Logos before all creation. This Gospel therefore really begins before Genesis. The Book of Genesis gives us the history of the world in time: John gives us that of the Word, who existed in eternity before the world was; who when man can speak of beginning was; and, consequently, did not begin to exist. The language of the Gospel is as plain as possible, and, like the sword of paradise, turns every way, in opposition to the thoughts and reasonings of man, to defend the divinity and personality of the Son of God.

By Him also were all things created. There are things which had a beginning; they all had their origin from Him: "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." Precise, positive, and absolute distinction between all that has been made and Jesus. If anything has been made, it is not the Word; for all that has been made was made by that Word.

But there is another thing, besides the supreme act of creating all things (an act that characterises the Word) there is that which was in Him. All creation was made by Him; but it does not exist in Him. But in Him was life. In this He was in relation with an especial part of creation a part which was the object of the thoughts and intentions of God. This "life was the light of men," revealed itself as a testimony to the divine nature, in immediate connection with them, as it did not with respect to any others at all. [See Note #1] But, in fact, this light shone in the midst of that which was in its own nature [See Note #2] contrary to it, and evil beyond any natural image, for where light comes, darkness is no longer: but here the light came, and the darkness had no perception of it remained darkness, which therefore neither comprehended nor received it. These are the relations of the Word with creation and with man, seen abstractedly in His nature. The Spirit pursues this subject, giving us details, historically, of the latter part.

We may remark here and the point is of importance how the Spirit passes from the divine and eternal nature of the Word who was before all things, to the manifestation, in this world, of the Word made flesh in the Person of Jesus. All the ways of God, the dispensations, His government of the world, are passed over in silence. In beholding Jesus on the earth we are in immediate connection with Him as existing before the world was. Only He is

introduced by John, and that which is found in the world is recognised as created. John is come to bear witness of the Light. The true Light was that which, coming into the world, shone for all men, and not for the Jews only. He is come into the world; and the world, in darkness and blind, has not known Him. He is come unto His own, and His own (the Jews) have not received Him. But there were some who received Him. Of them two things are said: they have received authority to become the children [See Note #3] of God, to take their place as such; and, secondly, they are, in fact, born of God. Natural descent, and the will of man, went for nothing here.

Thus we have seen the Word, in His nature, abstractedly (Joh 1:1-3); and, as life, the manifestation of divine light in man, with the consequences of that manifestation (Joh 1:4-5); and how He was received where it was so (Joh 1:10-13). This general part, in regard to His nature, ends here. The Spirit carries on the history of what the Lord is, manifested as man on earth. So that, as it were, we begin again here (Joh 1:14) with Jesus on the earth what the Word became, not what He was. As light in the world, there was the unanswered claim of what He was on man. Not knowing Him, or rejecting Him where He was dispensationally in relationship was the only difference. Grace in life-giving power then comes in to lead men to receive Him. The world did not know its Creator come into it as light, His own rejected their Lord. Those who were born not of man's will but of God received Him. Thus we have not what the Word was (en), but what He became (egeneto).

The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us in the fulness of grace and truth. This is the great fact, the source of all blessing to us; [See Note #4] that which is the full expression of God, adapted, by taking man's own nature, to all that is in man, to meet every human need, and all the capacity of the new nature in man to enjoy the expression of all in which God is suited to him. It is more than light, which is pure and shews all things; it is the expression of what God is, and God in grace, and as a source of blessing. And note, God could not be to angels what He is to man grace, patience, mercy, love, as shewn to sinners. And all this He is, as well as the blessedness of God, to the new man. The glory in which Christ was seen, thus manifested (by those who had eyes to see), was that of an only Son with His Father, the one concentrating object of His delight as Father.

These are the two parts of this great truth. The Word, who was with God and who was God, was made flesh; and He who was beheld on the earth had the glory of an only Son with the Father.

Two things are the result. Grace (what greater grace? It is love itself that is revealed, and towards sinners) and truth, that are not declared, but come, in Jesus Christ. The true relation of all things with God is shewn, and their departure from it. This is the groundwork of truth. Everything takes its true place, its true character, in every respect; and the centre to which all refers is God. What God is, what perfect man, what sinful man, what the world, what its prince, Christ's presence brings all out. Grace then and truth are come. The second thing is, that the only Son in the bosom of the Father reveals God, and reveals Him consequently as known by Himself in that position. And this is largely connected with the character and revelation of grace in John: first, fulness, with which we are in communication, and from which we have all received; then relationship.

But there are yet other important instructions in these verses. The Person of Jesus, the Word made flesh, dwelling among us, was full of grace and truth. Of this fulness we have all received: not truth upon truth (truth is simple, and puts everything exactly in its place, morally and in its nature); but we have received that which we needed grace upon grace, the favour of God abundantly, divine blessings (the fruit of His love) heaped one upon another. Truth shines everything is perfectly manifested; grace is given.

The connection of this manifestation of the grace of God in the Word made flesh (in which perfect truth also displays itself) with other testimonies of God is then taught us. John bore witness to Him; the service of Moses had quite another character. John preceded Him in his service on earth; but Jesus must be preferred before him; for (humble as He might be) God above all, blessed for ever, He was before John, although coming after him. Moses gave the law, perfect in its place requiring from man, on God's part, that which man ought to be. Then God was hidden, and God sent out a law shewing what man ought to be; but now God has revealed Himself by Christ, and the truth (as to everything) and grace are come. The law was neither the truth, full and entire, [See Note #5] in every respect, as in Jesus, nor grace; it was no transcript of God, but a perfect rule for man. Grace and

truth came by Jesus Christ, not by Moses. Nothing can be more essentially important than this statement. Law requires from man what he ought to be before God, and, if he fulfils it, it is his righteousness. Truth in Christ shews what man is (not ought to be), and what God is, and, as inseparable from grace, does not require but brings to man what he needs. If thou knewest the gift of God, says the Saviour to the Samaritan woman. So at the end of the wilderness journey Balaam has to say: "according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?" The verb "came" is in the singular after grace and truth. Christ is both at once; indeed, if grace were not there He would not be the truth as to God. To require from man what he ought to be was righteous requirement. But to give grace and glory, to give His Son was another thing in every respect; only sanctioning the law as perfect in its place.

We have thus the character and the position of the Word made flesh that which Jesus was here below, the Word made flesh; His glory as seen by faith, that of an only Son with His Father. He was full of grace and truth. He revealed God as He knew Him, as the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father. It was not only the character of His glory here below; it is what He was (what He had been, what He ever is) in the Father's own bosom in the Godhead: and it is thus that He declared Him. He was before John the Baptist, although coming after him; and He brought, in His own Person, that which was in its nature entirely different from the law given by Moses.

Here then is the Lord manifested on earth. His relations with men follow, the positions He took, the characters He assumed, according to the purposes of God, and the testimony of His word among men. First of all, John the Baptist gives place to Him. It will be remarked that he bears testimony in each of the parts [See Note #6] into which this chapter is divided Joh 1:6, [See Note #7] in the effect of the abstract revelation of the nature of the Word; as light, Joh 1:15, with regard to His manifestation in the flesh; Joh 1:19, the glory of His Person, although coming after John; Joh 1:29, respecting His work and the result; and Verse 36 (Joh 1:36), the testimony for the time being, in order that He might be followed, as having come to seek the Jewish remnant.

After the abstract revelation of the nature of the Word, and that of His manifestation in the flesh, the testimony actually borne in the world is given. Joh 1:19-28 form a kind of introduction, in which, on the inquiry of the scribes and Pharisees, John gives account of himself, and takes occasion to speak of the difference between himself and the Lord. So that, whatever the characters may be that Christ takes in connection with His work, the glory of His Person is ever first in view. The witness is occupied naturally, so to speak, with this, before bearing his formal testimony to the office which he fulfilled. John is neither Elias nor that prophet (that is, the one of whom Moses spoke) nor the Christ. He is the voice mentioned by Isaiah, who was to prepare the way of the Lord before Him. It is not precisely before the Messiah, although He was that; neither is it Elias before the day of Jehovah, but the voice in the wilderness before the Lord (Jehovah) Himself. Jehovah was coming. It is this consequently of which he speaks. John baptised indeed unto repentance; but there was already One, unknown, among them, who, coming after him, was yet his superior, whose shoe's latchet he was not worthy to unloose.

We have next the direct testimony of John, when he sees Jesus coming to him. He points Him out, not as the Messiah, but according to the whole extent of His work as enjoyed by us in the everlasting salvation He has accomplished, and the full result of the glorious work by which it was accomplished. He is the Lamb of God, one whom God alone could furnish, and was for God, and according to His mind, who takes away the sin (not the sins) of the world. That is to say, He restores (not all the wicked, but) the foundations of the world's relations with God. Since the fall, it is indeed sin whatever may be His dealings [See Note #8] that God had to consider in His relations with the world. The result of Christ's work shall be, that this will no longer be the case; His work shall be the eternal basis of these relations in the new heavens and the new earth, sin being entirely put aside as such. We know this by faith before the public result in the world.

Although a Lamb for the sacrifice, He is preferred before John the Baptist, for He was before him. The Lamb to be slain was Jehovah Himself.

In the administration of the ways of God, this testimony was to be borne in Israel, although its subject was the Lamb whose sacrifice reached to the sin

of the world, and the Lord, Jehovah. John had not known Him personally; but He was the one and only object of his mission.

But this was not all. He had made Himself man, and as man had received the fulness of the Holy Ghost, who had descended upon Him and abode upon Him; and the man thus pointed out, and sealed on the part of the Father, was Himself to baptise with the Holy Ghost. At the same time He was pointed out by the descent of the Holy Ghost in another character, to which John therefore bears testimony. Thus subsisting and seen and sealed on the earth, He was the Son of God. John recognises Him and proclaims Him as such.

Then comes what may be called the direct exercise and effect of his ministry at that time. But it is always the Lamb of whom he speaks; for that was the object, the design of God, and it is that which we have in this Gospel, although Israel is recognised in its place; for the nation held that place from God.

Upon this the disciples of John [See Note #9] follow Christ to His abode. The effect of John's testimony is to attach the remnant to Jesus, the centre of their gathering. Jesus does not refuse it, and they accompany Him. Nevertheless this remnant how far soever the testimony of John might extend do not, in fact, go beyond the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah. This was the case, historically; [See Note #10] it but Jesus knew them thoroughly, and declares the character of Simon as soon as he comes to Him, and gives him his appropriate name. This was an act of authority which proclaimed Him the head and centre of the whole system. God can bestow names; He knows all things. He gave this right to Adam, who exercised it according to God with regard to all that was put under him as well as in the case of his wife. Great kings, who claim this power, have done the same. Eve sought to do it, but she was mistaken; although God can give an understanding heart which, under His influence, speaks aright in this respect. Now Christ does so here, with authority and with all knowledge, the moment the case presents itself.

Joh 1:43. [See Note #11] We have next the immediate testimony of Christ Himself and of His followers. In the first place, on repairing to the scene of

His earthly pilgrimage, according to the prophets, He calls others to follow Him. Nathanael, who begins by rejecting one who came from Nazareth, sets before us, I doubt not, the remnant of the last days (the testimony to which the gospel of grace belongs came first, Joh 1:29-34). We see him at first rejecting the despised of the people, and under the fig tree, which represents the nation of Israel; as the fig tree which was to bear no more fruit, represents Israel under the old covenant. But Nathanael is the figure of a remnant, seen and known by the Lord, in connection with Israel. The Lord who thus manifested Himself to his heart and conscience is confessed as Son of God and King of Israel. This is formally the faith of the spared remnant of Israel in the last days according to Psalm 2. But those who thus received Jesus when He was on earth should see yet greater things than those which had convinced them. Moreover thenceforth [See Note #12] they should see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. He who by His birth had taken His place among the children of men would, by that title, be the object of service to the most excellent of God's creatures. The expression is emphatic. The angels of God Himself should be in the service of the Son of man. So that the remnant of Israel without guile acknowledges Him to be the Son of God and King of Israel; and the Lord declares Himself also to be the Son of man in humiliation indeed, but the object of service to the angels of God. Thus we have the Person and the titles of Jesus, from His eternal and divine existence as the Word, to His millennial place as King of Israel and Son of man; [See Note #13] which He already was as born into this world, but which will be realised when He returns in His glory.

Before going farther, let us review some points in this chapter. The Lord is revealed as the Word as God and with God as light as life: secondly, as the Word made flesh, having the glory of an only Son with His Father as such He is full of grace and truth come by Him, of His fulness we have all received, and He has declared the Father (compare chapter 14) the Lamb of God the One on whom the Holy Ghost could descend, and who baptised with the Holy Ghost the Son of God: [See Note #14] thirdly, His work what He does, Lamb of God taking away sin, and Son of God and King of Israel. This closes the revelation of His Person and work. Then, Joh 1:35-42, John's ministry, but where Jesus, as He alone could, becomes the gathering centre. Joh 1:43,

Christ's ministry, in which He calls to follow Him, which, with Joh 1:38-39, give His double character as the one attractive point in the world; with this His entire humiliation, but owned through a divine testimony reaching the remnant as according to Psalm 2, but the taking His title of Son of man according to Psalm 8 the Son of man: we may say, all His personal titles. His relationship to the assembly is not here, nor His function as Priest; but that which belongs to His Person, and the connection of man with God in this world. Thus, besides His divine nature, it is all that He was and will be in this world: His heavenly place and its consequences to faith are taught elsewhere, and barely alluded to, when necessary, in this Gospel.

Observe that, in preaching Christ, in a way to a certain degree complete, the heart of the hearer may truly believe and attach itself to Him, though investing Him with a character which the condition of soul cannot yet go beyond, and while ignorant of the fulness in which He has been revealed. Indeed where it is real, the testimony, however exalted in character, meets the heart where it is. John says, "Behold the Lamb of God!" "We have found the Messiah," say the disciples who followed Jesus on John's testimony.

Note also, that the expression of what was in John's heart had greater effect than a more formal, more doctrinal testimony. He beheld Jesus, and exclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The disciples heard him, and followed Jesus. It was, no doubt, his proper testimony on God's part, Jesus being there; but it was not a doctrinal explanation like that of the preceding verses.

The two testimonies to Christ that were to be borne in this world, both gathering to Him as centre, had been borne; that of John, and that of Jesus taking His place in Galilee with the remnant the two days of God's dealings with Israel here below. [See Note #15]

Note #1

The form of expression in Greek is very strong, as identifying completely the life with the light of men, as co-extensive propositions.

Note #2

It is not here my object to develop the manner in which the word meets the errors of the human mind; but, in fact, as it reveals truth on God's part, it also replies, in a remarkable way, to all the mistaken thoughts of man. With respect to the Lord's Person, the first Verses of the chapter bear witness to it. Here the error, which made of the principle of darkness a second god in equal conflict with the good Creator, is refuted by the simple testimony that the life was the light, and the darkness a moral condition, without power, and negative, in the midst of which this life was manifested in light. If we have the truth itself, we have no need to be acquainted with error. The voice of the Good Shepherd known, we are sure that none other is of Him. But, in fact, the possession of the truth, as revealed in the scripture, is an answer to all the errors into which man has fallen, innumerable as they are.

Note #3

Sons in Paul's writings is the place Christians have in connection with God into which Christ has brought them by redemption, that is, His own relative place with God according to His counsels. Children is that they are of the Father's family. (Both are found in Rom 8:14-16, and the force of both may there be seen. We cry Father, so are children, but by the Spirit we take up the place of grown up sons with Christ before God.) Up to the end of Verse 13 (Joh 1:13), we have abstractedly what Christ intrinsically was and from eternity, and what man was darkness. This first to the end of Verse 5 (Joh 1:5). Then God's dealings John's place and service; then the Light came, came into the world He had made, and it did not know Him, to His own, the Jews, and they would not have Him. But there were those, born of God, who had authority to take the place of children, a new race.

Note #4

It is indeed the source of all blessing; but the condition of man was such, that without His death no one would have had any part in the blessing. Unless the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

Note #5

Indeed it told what man ought to be, not what man or anything actually was, and this is properly truth.

Note #6

It will be observed that the chapter is thus divided: Joh 1:1-18 (this part is subdivided into Joh 1:1-5; Joh 1:6-13; Joh 1:14-18), Joh 1:19-28; Joh 1:29-34 (subdivided into Joh 1:29-31 Joh 1:32-34), Joh 1:35 to the end. These last Verses are subdivided into Joh 1:35-42, and Joh 1:42 to the end. That is, first, what Christ is abstractedly and intrinsically John's testimony to Him as light; when come, what He is personally in the world John, only forerunner of Jehovah, witness of Christ's excellency; the work of Christ (Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, He baptises with the Holy Ghost, and is Son of God); John gathers to Him; He gathers to Himself. This goes on till the upright remnant of Israel own Him Son of God, King of Israel; then He takes the larger character of Son of Man. All the personal characters of Christ, so to speak, are found here and His work, but not His relative characters, not Christ, not Priest, not Head of the assembly His body; but Word, Son of God, Lamb of God, Baptiser with the Holy Ghost; and, according to Psalm 2, Son of God, King of Israel; and Son of man, according to Psalm 8, whom the angels serve; God withal, life, and the light of men.

Note #7

The strictly abstract statement ends in Verse 5 (Joh 1:5), and goes by itself. The reception of Christ as come into the world as light introduces John. We are no longer in what is strictly abstract; though not developing the object what the Word became it is historical as to the reception of the light, and thus shews what man was, and what he is by grace as born of God, in respect of the object.

Note #8

As the flood, law, grace. There was a paradise of innocence, then a world of sin, by-and-by a kingdom of righteousness, finally a world (new heavens and new earth) wherein dwelleth righteousness. But it is everlasting righteousness, and founded on that work of the Lamb of God which can

never lose its value. It is an immutable state of things. The church or assembly is something above and apart from all this, though revealed in it.

Note #9

Note, it is not on his public testimony, but on the expression of his heart addressed to no one, which they heard.

Note #10

A principle of the deepest interest to us, as the effect of grace. In receiving Jesus we receive all that He is; notwithstanding that at the moment we may only perceive in Him that which is the least exalted part of His glory.

Note #11

These Verses 38 and 43 (Joh 1:38; Joh 1:43) take in the two characters in which we have to do with Christ. He receives them and they abide with Him, and He calls upon them to follow Him. We have no world where we can abide, no centre in it which gathers round itself those rightly disposed by grace. No prophet, no servant of God could. Christ is the one centre of gathering in the world. Then following supposes that we are not in God's rest. In Eden no following was called for. In heaven there will be none. It is perfect joy and rest where we are. In Christ we have a divine object, giving us a clear path through a world in which we cannot rest with God, for sin is there.

Note #12

Not "hereafter." Many authorities leave the word out.

Note #13

Except what concerns the assembly and Israel. Here, He is not High Priest, He is not Head of the body, He is not revealed as the Christ. John does not give what shews man in heaven, but God in man on earth not what is heavenly as gone up, but what is divine here. Israel is looked on all through as rejected. The disciples own Him as the Christ, but He is not so proclaimed.

Note #14

Here He is seen as the Son of God in this world; in Verse 14 (Joh 1:14), He is in the glory of an only Son with His Father; and Verse 18 (Joh 1:18), He is so in the bosom of His Father.

Note #15

Remark here, that Jesus accepts the place of that centre round which souls are to be gathered a very important principle. None else could hold this place. It was a divine one. The world was all wrong, without God, and a new gathering out of it was to be made round Him. Next, He furnishes the path in which man was to walk "Follow me." Adam in paradise needed no path. Christ gives a divinely ordered one, in a world where of itself there could not be a right one, for its whole condition was the fruit of sin. Thirdly, He reveals man in His Person as the glorious Head over all, whom the highest creatures serve.

John Chapter 2

The third day we find in chapter 2. A marriage takes place in Galilee. Jesus is there; and the water of purification is changed into the wine of joy for the marriage-feast. Afterwards at Jerusalem He cleanses the temple of God with authority, executing judgment on all those who profaned it. In principle these are the two things that characterise His millennial position. Doubtless these things took place historically; but, as introduced here and in this manner, they have evidently a wider meaning. Besides, why the third day? After what? Two days of testimony had taken place that of John, and that of Jesus; and now blessing and judgment are accomplished. In Galilee the remnant had their place; and it is the scene of blessing, according to Isaiah 9 Jerusalem is that of judgment. At the feast He would not know His mother: this was the link of His natural relation with Israel, which, looking at Him as born under the law, was His mother. He separates Himself from her to accomplish blessing. It is only in testimony therefore in Galilee, for the moment. It is when He returns that the good wine will be for Israel true blessing and joy at the end. Nevertheless He still abides with His mother, whom, as to His work, He did not acknowledge. And this also was the case with regard to His connection with Israel.

Afterwards, in judging the Jews and judicially cleansing the temple, He presents Himself as the Son of God. It is His Father's house. The proof of this which He gives is His resurrection, when the Jews should have rejected and crucified Him. Moreover He was not only the Son: it was God who was there not in the temple. It was empty that house built by Herod. The body of Jesus was now the true temple. Sealed by His resurrection, the scriptures and the word of Jesus were of divine authority to the disciples, as speaking of Him according to the intention of the Spirit of God.

This subdivision of the book ends here. It closes the earthly revelation of Christ including His death; but even so it is the sin of the world. Chapter 2 gives the millennium; chapter 3 is the work in and for us which qualifies for the kingdom on earth or heaven; and the work for us, closing Messiah's connection with the Jews, opens the heavenly things by the lifting up of the Son of man divine love and eternal life.

The miracles that He wrought convinced many as to their natural understanding. No doubt it was sincerely; but a just human conclusion. But another truth now opens. Man, in his natural state, [See Note #16] was really incapable of receiving the things of God; not that the testimony was insufficient to convince him, nor that he was never convinced: many were so at this time; but Jesus did not commit Himself to them. He knew what man was. When convinced, his will, his nature, was not altered. Let the time of trial come, and he would shew himself as he was, alienated from God, and even His enemy. Sad but too true testimony! The life, the death, of Jesus proves it. He knew it when He began His work. This did not make His love grow cold; for the strength of that love was in itself.

Note #16

Observe, that the state of man is here manifested fully and thoroughly. Supposing him to be outwardly righteous according to the law, and to believe in Jesus according to sincere natural convictions, he clothes himself with this, in order to hide from himself what he really is. He does not know himself at all. What he is remains untouched. And he is a sinner. But this leads us to another observation. There are two great principles from Paradise itself responsibility and life. Man can never disentangle them, till he

learns that he is lost, and that no good exists in him. Then he is glad to know that there is a source of life and pardon outside himself. It is this which is shewn us here. There must be a new life; Jesus does not instruct a nature which is only sin. These two principles run through scripture in a remarkable way: first, as stated, in Paradise, responsibility and life in power. Man took of one tree, failing in responsibility, and forfeited life. The law gave the measure of responsibility when good and evil were known, and promised life on the ground of doing what it required, satisfying responsibility. Christ comes, meets the need of man's failure in responsibility, and is, and gives, eternal life. Thus, and thus only, can the question be met, and the two principles reconciled. Moreover two things are presented in Him to reveal God. He knows man, and all men. What a knowledge in this world! A prophet knows that which is revealed to him; he has, in that case, divine knowledge. But Jesus knows all men in an absolute way. He is God. But when once He has introduced life in grace, He speaks of another thing; He speaks that which He knows, and testifies that which He has seen. Now He knows God His Father in heaven. He is the Son of man who is in heaven. He knows man divinely; but He knows God and all His glory divinely also. What a magnificent picture, or, rather should I say, revelation, of that which He is for us! For it is here as man that He tells us this; and also, in order that we may enter into it and enjoy it, He becomes the sacrifice for sin according to the eternal love of God His Father.

John Chapter 3

But there was a man (chapter 3) and that a Pharisee who was not satisfied with this inoperative conviction. His conscience was reached. Seeing Jesus, and hearing His testimony, had produced a sense of need in his heart. It is not the knowledge of grace, but it is with respect to man's condition a total change. He knows nothing of the truth, but he has seen that it is in Jesus, and he desires it. He has also at once an instinctive sense that the world will be against him; and he comes by night. The heart fears the world as soon as it has to do with God; for the world is opposed to Him. The friendship of the world is enmity against God. This sense of need made the difference in the case of Nicodemus. He had been convinced like the others. Accordingly he says, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God." And the source of

this conviction was the miracles. But Jesus stops him short; and that on account of the true need felt in the heart of Nicodemus. The work of blessing was not to be wrought by teaching the old man. Man needed to be renewed in the source of his nature, without which he could not see the kingdom. [See Note #17]

The things of God are spiritually discerned; and man is carnal, he has not the Spirit. The Lord does not go beyond the kingdom which, moreover, was not the law for Nicodemus ought to have known something about the kingdom. But He does not begin to teach the Jews as a prophet under the law. He presents the kingdom itself; but to see it, according to His testimony, a man must be born again. But the kingdom as thus come in the carpenter's Son could not be seen without a wholly new nature, it struck no chord of man's comprehension or Jews' expectation, though testimony to it was amply given in word and work: as to entering and having a part in it there is more development as to the how. Nicodemus sees no farther than the flesh.

The Lord explains Himself. Two things were necessary to be born of water, and of the Spirit. Water cleanses. And, spiritually, in his affections, heart, conscience, thoughts, actions, etc., man lives, and in practice is morally purified, through the application, by the power of the Spirit, of the word of God, which judges all things, and works in us livingly new thoughts and affections. This is the water; it is withal the death of the flesh. The true water which cleanses in a christian way came forth from the side of a dead Christ. He came by water and blood, in the power of cleansing and of expiation. He sanctifies the assembly by cleansing it through the washing of water by the word. "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." It is therefore the mighty word of God which, since man must be born again in the principle and source of his moral being, judges, as being death, all that is of the flesh. [See Note #18]

But there is in fact the communication of a new life; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, is not flesh, has its nature from the Spirit. It is not the Spirit that would be an incarnation; but this new life is spirit. It partakes of the nature of its origin. Without this, man cannot enter into the kingdom. But this is not all. If it was a necessity for the Jew, who already was nominally a child of the kingdom, for here we deal with what is essential and true, it was

also as a sovereign act of God, and consequently it is accomplished wherever the Spirit acts in this power. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." This in principle opens the door to the Gentiles.

Nevertheless Nicodemus, as a master of Israel, ought to have understood this. The prophets had declared that Israel was to undergo this change, in order to enjoy the fulfilment of the promises (see Ezekiel 36), which God had given them with regard to their blessing in the holy land. But Jesus spoke of these things in an immediate way, and in connection with the nature and the glory of God Himself. A master in Israel ought to have known that which the sure word of prophecy contained. The Son of God declared that which He knew, and that which He had seen with His Father. The defiled nature of man could not be in relationship with Him who revealed Himself in heaven whence Jesus came. The glory (from the fulness of which He came, and which formed therefore the subject of His testimony as having seen it, and from which the kingdom had its origin) could have nothing in it that was defiled. They must be born again to possess it. He bore testimony therefore, as having come from above and knowing that which was suitable to God His Father. Man did not receive His testimony. Convinced outwardly by miracles he might be; but to receive that which was befitting the presence of God was another thing. And if Nicodemus could not receive the truth in its connection with the earthly part of the kingdom, of which even the prophets had spoken, what would he and the other Jews do if Jesus spoke of heavenly things? Nevertheless no one could learn anything about them by any other means. No one had gone up there and come down again to bring back word. Jesus only, in virtue of what He was, could reveal them the Son of man on earth, existing at the same time in heaven, the manifestation to men of that which was heavenly, of God Himself in man as God being in heaven and everywhere as the Son of man being before the eyes of Nicodemus and of all. Nevertheless He was to be crucified, and thus lifted up from the world to which He had come as the manifestation of the love of God in all His ways and of God Himself, and so only could the door be opened for sinful men into heaven, so only a link formed for man with it.

For this brought out another fundamental truth. If heaven was in question, something more was needed than being born again. Sin existed. It must be

put away for those who should have eternal life. And if Jesus, coming down from heaven, was come to impart this eternal life to others, He must, in undertaking this work, put sin away be thus made sin in order that the dishonour done to God should be washed away, and the truth of His character (without which there is nothing sure, or good, or righteous) maintained. The Son of man must be lifted up, even as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, that the curse, under which the people were dying, might be removed. His divine testimony rejected, man, as he was down here, shewed himself to be incapable of receiving blessing from above. He must be redeemed, his sin expiated and put away; he must be treated according to the reality of his condition, and according to the character of God who cannot deny Himself. Jesus in grace undertook to do this. It was necessary that the Son of man should be lifted up, rejected from the earth by man, accomplishing the atonement before the God of righteousness. In a word, Christ comes with the knowledge of what heaven is and divine glory. In order that man might share it, the Son of man must die must take the place of expiation outside the earth. [See Note #19] Observe here the deep and glorious character of that which Jesus brought with Him, of the revelation He made.

The cross, and the absolute separation between man on earth and God this is the meeting-place of faith and God; for there is at once the truth of man's condition, and the love that meets it. Thus, in approaching the holy place from the camp, the first thing they met on going through the gate of the court was the altar. It presented itself to every one that quitted the world without, and entered in. Christ, lifted up from the earth, draws all men to Him. But if (owing to man's state of alienation and guilt) it needed that the Son of man should be lifted up from the earth, in order that whosoever believes in Him should have everlasting life, there was another aspect of this same glorious fact; God had so loved the world that He had given His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should have everlasting life. On the cross we see the necessity morally of the death of the Son of man; we see the ineffable gift of the Son of God. These two truths unite in the common object of the gift of eternal life to all believers. And if it was to all believers, it was a question of man, of God, and of heaven, and went outside the promises made to the Jews, and the limits of God's dealings with that

people. For God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn it, but to save it. But salvation is by faith; and he who believes in the coming of the Son, putting all things now to the test, is not condemned (his state is decided thereby); he who believes not is condemned already, he has not believed in the only begotten Son of God, he has manifested his condition.

And this is the thing that God lays to their charge. Light is come into the world, and they have loved darkness because their works were evil. Could there be a more just subject of condemnation? It was no question of their not finding pardon, but of their preferring darkness to light that they might continue in sin.

The rest of the chapter presents the contrast between the positions of John and of Christ. They are both before the eye. The one is the faithful friend of the Bridegroom, living only for Him; the other is the Bridegroom, to whom all belongs: the one, in himself, an earthly man, great as might be the gift he had received from heaven; the other from heaven Himself, and above all. The bride was His. The friend of the Bridegroom, hearing His voice, was full of joy. Nothing more beautiful than this expression of John the Baptist's heart, inspired by the Lord's presence, near enough to Jesus to be glad and rejoice that Jesus was all. Thus it ever is.

With respect to the testimony, John bore witness in connection with earthly things. For that end he was sent. He who Himself came from heaven was above all, and bore witness of heavenly things, of that which He had seen and heard. No one received His testimony. Man was not of heaven. Without grace one believes according to one's own thoughts. But in speaking as a man on the earth, Jesus spoke the words of God; and he who received His testimony set to his seal that God was true. For the Spirit is not given by measure. As a witness the testimony of Jesus was the testimony of God Himself; His words, the words of God. Precious truth! Moreover, He was the Son, [See Note #20] and the Father loved Him, and had given all things into His hand. This is another glorious title of Christ, another aspect of His glory. But the consequences of this for man were eternal. It was not almighty help to pilgrims, nor faithfulness to promises, so that His people could trust in Him in spite of all. It was the quickening life-giving Son of the Father. All was comprised in it. "He who believeth in the Son hath everlasting life, he who

believeth not shall not see life." He remains in his guilt. The wrath of God abides on him.

All this is a kind of introduction. The ministry of the Lord, properly so called, comes after. John (Joh 3:24) was not yet cast into prison. It was not till after that event that the Lord began His public testimony. The chapter we have been considering explains what His ministry was, the character in which He came, His position, the glory of His Person, the character of the testimony He bore, the position of man in connection with the things of which He spake, beginning with the Jews, and going on, by the new birth, the cross, and the love of God, to His rights as come into the world, and the supreme dignity of His own Person, to His properly divine testimony, to His relationship with the Father, the object of whose love He was, and who had given all things into His hand. He was the faithful witness, and that of heavenly things (see Joh 3:13), but He was also the Son Himself come from the Father. Everything for man rested on faith in Him. The Lord comes out from Judaism, while presenting the testimony of the prophets, and brings from heaven the direct testimony of God and of glory, shewing the only ground on which we can have a part in it. Jew or Gentile must be born again; and heavenly things could only be entered by the cross, the wondrous proof of God's love to the world. John gives place to Him, bringing out not in public testimony to Israel but to his disciples the true glory of His Person and of His work [See Note #21] in this world. The thought of the bride and Bridegroom is, I believe, general. John says indeed that he is not the Christ, and that the earthly bride belongs to Jesus; but He has never taken her; and John speaks of His rights, which for us are realised in a better land and another clime than this world. It is, I repeat, the general idea. But we have now entered on the new ground of a new nature, the cross, and the world and God's love to it.

Note #17

That is, as it was then come. They saw the carpenter's Son. In glory, of course, every eye on earth shall see it.

Note #18

Observe here that baptism, instead of being the sign of the gift of life, is the sign of death. We are baptised to His death. In coming up out of the water, we begin a new life in resurrection (all that belonged to the natural man being reckoned to be dead in Christ, and passed away for ever). "Ye are dead"; and "he that is dead is freed [justified] from sin." But we live also and have a good conscience by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus Peter compares baptism to the deluge, through which Noah was saved, but which destroyed the old world, that had, as it were, a new life when it emerged from the flood.

Note #19

On the cross, Christ is not on the earth, but lifted up from it, rejected ignominiously by man, but withal through this presented as a victim on the altar to God.

Note #20

The question presents itself naturally, where John's testimony closes and the evangelist's begins. The last two verses, I apprehend, are the evangelist's.

Note #21

Observe here, that the Lord while not concealing (Joh 3:11-13) the character of His testimony, as indeed He could not speak of the necessity of His death, and of the love of God. John speaks of the glory of His Person. Jesus magnifies His Father by submitting to the necessity which the condition of men imposed on Him, if He would bring them into a new relationship with God. "God," said He, "hath so loved." John magnifies Jesus. All is perfect and in place. There are four points in that which is said with regard to Jesus: His supremacy; His testimony this is the Baptist's testimony to Him. What follows (Joh 3:35-36) His having all things given to Him by the Father who loved Him, life everlasting in contrast with the wrath that is the portion of the unbeliever from God is rather the new revelation; the purpose of God giving all things to Him, and His being Himself eternal life come down from heaven, is that of John the evangelist.

John Chapter 4

And now Jesus, being driven away by the jealousy of the Jews, begins His ministry outside that people, while still acknowledging their true position in the dealings of God. He goes away into Galilee; but His road led Him by Samaria, in which dwelt a mingled race of strangers and of Israel a race who had forsaken the idolatry of the strangers, but who, while following the law of Moses and calling themselves by the name of Jacob, had set up a worship of their own at Gerizim. Jesus does not enter the town. Being weary He sits down outside the town on the brink of the well for He must needs go that way; but this necessity was an occasion for the acting of that divine grace which was in the fulness of His Person, and which overflowed the narrow limits of Judaism.

There are some preliminary details to remark before entering on the subject of this chapter. Jesus did not Himself baptise, for He knew the whole extent of the counsels of God in grace, the true object of His coming. He could not bind souls by baptism to a living Christ. The disciples were right in so doing. They had so to receive Christ. It was faith on their part.

When rejected by the Jews, the Lord does not contend. He leaves them; and, coming to Sychar, He found Himself in the most interesting associations as regards the history of Israel, but in Samaria: sad testimony of Israel's ruin. Jacob's well was in the hands of people who called themselves of Israel, but the greater part of whom were not so, and who worshipped they knew not what, although pretending to be of the stock of Israel. Those who were really Jews had driven away the Messiah by their jealousy. He a man despised by the people had gone away from among them. We see Him sharing the sufferings of humanity, and, weary with His journey, finding only the side of a well on which to rest at noon. He contents Himself with it. He seeks nothing but the will of His God: it brought Him thither. The disciples were away; and God brought thither at that unusual hour a woman by herself. It was not the hour at which women went out to draw water; but, in the ordering of God, a poor sinful woman and the Judge of quick and dead thus met together.

The Lord, weary and thirsty, had no means even to quench His thirst. He is dependent as man, on this poor woman to have a little water for His thirst. He asks it of her. The woman, seeing that He is a Jew, is surprised; and now

the divine scene unfolds itself, in which the heart of the Saviour, rejected by men and oppressed by the unbelief of His people, opens to let that fulness of grace flow out which finds its occasion in the necessities and not in the righteousness of men. Now this grace did not limit itself to the rights of Israel, nor lend itself to national jealousy. It was a question of the gift of God, of God Himself who was there in grace, and of God come down so low, that, being born among His people, He was dependent, as to His human position, on a Samaritan woman for a drop of water to quench His thirst. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and [not, who I am, but] who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink"; that is to say, If thou hadst known that God gives freely, and the glory of His Person who was there, and how deeply He had humbled Himself, His love would have been revealed to thy heart, and would have filled it with perfect confidence, in regard even to the wants which a grace like this would have awakened in thy heart. "Thou wouldest have asked," said the divine Saviour, "and he would have given thee" the living water that springeth up into everlasting life. Such is the heavenly fruit of the mission of Christ, wherever He is received. [See Note #22]

His heart lays it open (it was revealing Himself), pours it out into the heart of one who was its object; consoling itself for the unbelief of the Jews (rejecting the end of promise) by presenting the true consolation of grace to the misery that needed it. This is the true comfort of love, which is pained when unable to act. The floodgates of grace are lifted up by the misery which that grace waters. He makes manifest that which God is in grace; and the God of grace was there. Alas! the heart of man, withered up and selfish, and pre-occupied with its own miseries (the fruits of sin), cannot at all understand this. The woman sees something extraordinary in Jesus; she is curious to know what it means is struck with His manner, so that she has a measure of faith in His words; but her desires are limited to the relief of the toils of her sorrowful life, in which an ardent heart found no answer to the misery it had acquired for its portion through sin.

A few words on the character of this woman. I believe the Lord would shew that there is need, that the fields were ready for the harvest; and that if the wretched self-righteousness of the Jews rejected Him, the stream of grace would find its channel elsewhere, God having prepared hearts to hail it with

joy and thanksgiving, because it answered their misery and need not the righteous. The channel of grace was dug by the need and the misery which the grace itself caused to be felt.

The life of this woman was shameful; but she was ashamed of it; at the least her position had isolated her, by separating her from the crowd that forgets itself in the tumult of social life. And there is no inward grief like an isolated heart; but Christ and grace more than meets it. Its isolation more than ceases. He was more isolated than she. She came alone to the well; she was not with the other women. Alone, she met with the Lord, by the wonderful guidance of God who brought her there. The disciples even must go away to make room for her. They knew nothing of this grace. They baptised indeed in the name of a Messiah in whom they believed. It was well. But God was there in grace He who would judge the quick and the dead and with Him a sinner in her sins. What a meeting! And God who had stooped so low as to be dependent on her for a little water to quench His thirst!

She had an ardent nature. She had sought for happiness; she had found misery. She lived in sin, and was weary of life. She was indeed in the lowest depths of misery. The ardour of her nature found sin no obstacle. She went on, alas! to the uttermost. The will, engaged in evil, feeds on sinful desires, and wastes itself without fruit. Nevertheless her soul was not without a sense of need. She thought of Jerusalem, she thought of Gerizim. She waited for the Messiah, who would tell them all things. Did this change her life? In no wise. Her life was shocking. When the Lord speaks of spiritual things, in language well suited to awaken the heart, directing her attention to heavenly things in a way that one would have thought it impossible to misunderstand, she cannot comprehend it. The natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit: they are spiritually discerned.

The novelty of the Lord's address excited her attention, but did not lead her thoughts beyond her waterpot, the symbol of her daily toil; although she saw that Jesus took the place of one greater than Jacob. What was to be done? God wrought He wrought in grace, and in this poor woman. Whatever the occasion might be as regards herself, it was He who had brought her thither. But she was unable to comprehend spiritual things though expressed in the plainest manner; for the Lord spoke of the water that

springs up in the soul unto everlasting life. But as the human heart is ever revolving in its own circumstances and cares, her religious need was limited practically to the traditions by which her life, as regarded its religious thoughts and habits, was formed, leaving still a void that nothing could fill. What then was to be done? In what way can this grace act, when the heart does not understand the spiritual grace which the Lord brings? This is the second part of the marvellous instruction here. The Lord deals with her conscience. A word spoken by Him who searches the heart, searches her conscience: she is in the presence of a man who tells her all that ever she did. For, her conscience awakened by the word, and finding itself laid open to the eye of God, her whole life is before her.

And who is He that thus searches the heart? She feels that His word is the word of God. "Thou art a prophet." Intelligence in divine things comes by the conscience, not by the intellect. The soul and God are together, if we may so speak, whatever instrument is employed. She has everything to learn, no doubt; but she is in the presence of Him who teaches everything. What a step! What a change! What a new position! This soul, which saw no farther than her waterpot and felt her toil more than her sin, is there alone with the Judge of quick and dead with God Himself. And in what manner? She knows not. She only felt that it was Himself in the power of His own word. But at least He did not despise her, as others did. Although she was alone, she was alone with Him. He had spoken to her of life of the gift of God; He had told her that she had only to ask and have. She had understood nothing of His meaning; but it was not condemnation, it was grace grace that stooped to her, that knew her sin and was not repelled by it, that asked her for water, that was above Jewish prejudice with regard to her, as well as the contempt of the humanly righteous grace which did not conceal her sin from her, which made her feel that God knew it nevertheless, He who knew it was there without alarming her. Her sin was before God, but not in judgment.

Marvellous meeting of a soul with God, which the grace of God accomplishes by Christ! Not that she reasoned about all these things; but she was under the effect of their truth without accounting for it to herself; for the word of God had reached her conscience, and she was in the

presence of Him who had accomplished it, and He was meek and lowly, and glad to receive a little water at her hands. Her defilement did not defile Him. She could, in fact, trust in Him, without knowing why. It is thus that God acts. Grace inspires confidence brings back the soul to God in peace, before it has any intelligent knowledge, or can explain it to itself. In this way, full of trust, she begins (it was the natural consequence) with the questions that filled her own heart; thus giving the Lord an opportunity of fully explaining the ways of God in grace. God had so ordered it; for the question was far from the sentiments which grace afterwards led her to. The Lord replies according to her condition: salvation was of the Jews. They were the people of God. Truth was with them, and not with the Samaritans who worshipped they knew not what. But God put all that aside. It was now neither at Gerizim nor at Jerusalem, that they should worship the Father who manifested Himself in the Son. God was a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Moreover the Father sought such worshippers. That is to say, the worship of their hearts must answer to the nature of God, to the grace of the Father who had sought them. [See Note #23] Thus true worshippers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Jerusalem and Samaria disappear entirely have no place before such a revelation of the Father in grace. God no longer hid Himself; He was revealed perfectly in light. The perfect grace of the Father wrought, in order to make Him known, by the grace that brought souls to Him.

Now the woman was not yet brought to Him; but, as we have seen in the case of the disciples and of John the Baptist, a glorious revelation of Christ acts upon the soul where it is, and brings the Person of Jesus into connection with the need already felt. "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh; and when he is come, he will tell us all things." Small as her intelligence might be, and unable as she was to understand what Jesus had told her, His love meets her where she can receive blessing and life; and He replies, "I, that speak unto thee, am he." The work was done: the Lord was received. A poor Samaritan sinner receives the Messiah of Israel, whom the priests and the Pharisees had rejected from among the people. The moral effect upon the woman is evident. She forgets her waterpot, her toil, her circumstances. She is engrossed by this new object that is revealed to her soul by Christ; so engrossed that, without thinking,

she becomes a preacher; that is, she proclaims the Lord in the fulness of her heart and with perfect simplicity. He had told her all that she had ever done. She does not think at that moment of what it was. Jesus had told it her; and the thought of Jesus takes away the bitterness of the sin. The sense of His goodness removes the guile of heart that seeks to conceal its sin. In a word, her heart is entirely filled with Christ Himself. Many believed in Him through her declaration "He has told me all that ever I did"; many more, when they had heard Him. His own word carried with it a stronger conviction, as more immediately connected with His Person.

Meanwhile the disciples come, and naturally marvel at His talking with the woman. Their Master, the Messiah they understood this; but the grace of God manifested in the flesh was still beyond their thoughts. The work of this grace was the meat of Jesus, and that in the lowliness of obedience as sent of God. He was taken up with it, and, in the perfect humility of obedience, it was His joy and His food to do His Father's will, and to finish His work. And the case of this poor woman had a voice that filled His heart with deep joy, wounded as it was in this world, because He was love. If the Jews rejected Him, still the fields in which grace sought its fruits for the everlasting granary were white already to harvest. He, therefore, who laboured should not fail of his wages, nor of the joy of having such fruit unto life eternal. Nevertheless, even the apostles were but reapers where others had sown. The poor woman was a proof of this. Christ, present and revealed, met the need which the testimony of the prophet had awakened. Thus (while exhibiting a grace which revealed the love of the Father, of God the Saviour, and coming out, consequently, from the pale of the Jewish system) He fully recognised the faithful service of His labourers in former days, the prophets who, by the Spirit of Christ from the beginning of the world, had spoken of the Redeemer, of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. The sowers and the reapers should rejoice together in the fruit of their labours.

But what a picture is all this of the purpose of grace, and of its mighty and living fulness in the Person of Christ, of the free gift of God, and of the incapability of the spirit of man to apprehend it, preoccupied and blinded as he is by present things, seeing nothing beyond the life of nature, although

suffering from the consequences of his sin! At the same time, we see that it is in the humiliation, the deep abasement, of the Messiah, of Jesus, that God Himself is manifested in this grace. It is this that breaks down the barriers, and gives free course to the torrent of grace from on high. We see, also, that conscience is the doorway of understanding in the things of God. We are brought truly into relationship with God when He searches the heart. This is always the case. We are then in the truth. Moreover God thus manifests Himself, and the grace and love of the Father. He seeks worshippers, and that, according to this double revelation of Himself, however great His patience may be with those who do not see farther than the first step of the promises of God. If Jesus is received, there is a thorough change; the work of conversion is wrought; there is faith. At the same time what a divine picture of our Jesus humbled, indeed, but even thereby the manifestation of God in love, the Son of the Father, He who knows the Father, and accomplishes His work! What a glorious and boundless scene opens before the soul that is admitted to see and to know Him!

The whole range of grace is open to us here in His work and its divine extent, in that which regards its application to the individual, and the personal intelligence we may have respecting it. It is not precisely pardon, nor redemption, nor the assembly. It is grace flowing in the Person of Christ; and the conversion of the sinner, in order that he may enjoy it in himself, and be capable of knowing God and of worshipping the Father of grace. But how entirely have we broken out in principle from the narrow limits of Judaism!

Nevertheless in His personal ministry, the Lord, always faithful, putting Himself aside in order to glorify His Father by obeying Him, repairs to the sphere of labour appointed Him of God. He leaves the Jews, for no prophet is received in his own country, and goes into Galilee, among the despised of His people, the poor of the flock, where obedience, grace, and the counsels of God alike placed Him. In that sense, He did not forsake His people, perverse as they were. There He works a miracle which expresses the effect of His grace in connection with the believing remnant of Israel, feeble as their faith might be. He comes again to the place where He had turned the water of purification into the wine of joy ("which cheereth God and man").

By that miracle He had, in figure, displayed the power which should deliver the people, and by which, being received, He would establish the fulness of joy in Israel, creating by that power the good wine of the nuptials of Israel with their God. Israel rejected it all. The Messiah was not received. He retired among the poor of the flock in Galilee, after having shewn to Samaria (in passing) the grace of the Father, which went beyond all promises to, and dealings with, the Jew, and in the Person and the humiliation of Christ led converted souls to worship the Father (outside all Jewish system, true or false) in spirit and in truth; and there, in Galilee, He works a second miracle in the midst of Israel, where He still labours, according to His Father's will, that is to say, wherever there is faith; not yet, perhaps, in His power to raise the dead, but to heal and save the life of that which was ready to perish. He fulfilled the desire of that faith, and restored the life of one who was at the point of death. It was this, in fact, which He was doing in Israel while here below. These two great truths were set forth that which He was going to do according to the purposes of God the Father, as being rejected; and that which He was doing at the time for Israel, according to the faith He found among them.

In the chapters that follow we shall find the rights and the glory shewn forth that attach to His Person; the rejection of His word and of His work; the sure salvation of the remnant, and of all His sheep wherever they may be. Afterwards acknowledged by God, as manifested on earth, the Son of God, of David, and of man that which He will do when gone away, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, are unfolded; also the position in which He placed the disciples before the Father, and with regard to Himself. And then after the history of Gethsemane, the giving of His own life, His death as giving His life for us the whole result, in the ways of God, until His return, is briefly given in the chapter that closes the book.

We may go more rapidly through the chapters till the tenth, not as of little importance far from it but as containing some great principles which may be pointed out, each in its place, without requiring much explanation.

Note #22

Note, too, here, that it is not as with Israel in the wilderness that there was water from the smitten rock to drink. Here the promise is of a well of water springing up unto everlasting life in ourselves..

Note #23

It will be found in John's writings that, when responsibility is spoken of, God is the word used; when grace to us, the Father and the Son. When indeed it is goodness (God's character in Christ) towards the world, then God is spoken of.

John Chapter 5

chapter 5 contrasts the quickening power of Christ, the power and the right of giving life to the dead, with the powerlessness of legal ordinances. They required strength in the person that was to profit by them. Christ brought with Him the power that was to heal, and indeed to quicken. Further, all judgment is committed to Him, so that those who had received life would not come into judgment. The end of the chapter sets forth the testimonies that have been borne to Him, and the guilt therefore of those who would not come to Him to have life. One is sovereign grace, the other responsibility because life was there. To have life His divine power was needed; but in rejecting Him, in refusing to come unto Him that they might have life, they did so in spite of the most positive proofs.

Let us go a little into the details. The poor man who had an infirmity for thirty-eight years was absolutely hindered, by the nature of his disease, from profiting by means that required strength to use them. This is the character of sin, on the one hand, and of law on the other. Some remains of blessing still existed among the Jews. Angels, ministers of that dispensation, still wrought among the people. Jehovah did not leave Himself without testimony. But strength was needed to profit by this instance of their ministry. That which the law could not do, being weak through the flesh, God has done through Jesus. The impotent man had desire, but not strength; to will was present with him, but no power to perform. The Lord's question brings this out. A single word from Christ does everything. "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." Strength is imparted. The man rises, and goes away carrying his bed. [See Note #24] It was the Sabbath an important

circumstance here, holding a prominent place in this interesting scene. The Sabbath was given as a token of the covenant between the Jews and the Lord. [See Note #25]

But it had been proved that the law did not give God's rest to man. The power of a new life was needed; grace was needed, that man might be in relationship with God. The healing of this poor man was an operation of this same grace, of this same power, but wrought in the midst of Israel. The pool of Bethesda supposed power in man; the act of Jesus employed power, in grace, on behalf of one of the Lord's people in distress. Therefore, as dealing with His people in government, He says to the man, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." It was Jehovah acting by His grace and blessing among His people; but it was in temporal things, the tokens of His favour and lovingkindness, and in connection with His government in Israel. Still it was divine power and grace. Now, the man told the Jews that it was Jesus. They rise up against Him under the pretence of a violation of the Sabbath. The Lord's answer is deeply affecting, and full of instruction a whole revelation. It declares the relationship, now openly revealed by His coming, that existed between Himself (the Son) and His Father. It shews and what depths of grace! that neither the Father nor Himself could find their Sabbath [See Note #26] in the midst of misery and of the sad fruits of sin. Jehovah in Israel might impose the Sabbath as an obligation by the law, and make it a token of the previous truth that His people should enter into the rest of God. But, in fact, when God was truly known, there was no rest in existing things; nor was this all He wrought in grace, His love could not rest in misery. He had instituted a rest in connection with the creation, when it was very good. Sin, corruption, and misery had entered into it. God, the holy and the just, no longer found a Sabbath in it, and man did not really enter into God's rest (compare Hebrews 4). Of two things, one: either God must, in justice, destroy the guilty race; or and this is what He did, according to His eternal purposes He must begin to work in grace, according to the redemption which the state of man required a redemption in which all His glory is unfolded. In a word, He must begin to work again in love. Thus the Lord says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God cannot be satisfied where there is sin. He cannot rest with misery in sight. He has no

Sabbath, but still works in grace. How divine an answer to their wretched cavils!

Another truth came out from that which the Lord said: He put Himself on an equality with His Father. But the Jews, jealous for their ceremonies for that which distinguished them from other nations saw nothing of the glory of Christ, and seek to kill Him, treating Him as a blasphemer. This gives Jesus occasion to lay open the whole truth on this point. He was not like an independent being with equal rights, another God who acted on His own account, which, moreover, is impossible. There cannot be two supreme and omnipotent beings. The Son is in full union with the Father, does nothing without the Father, but does whatsoever He sees the Father do. There is nothing that the Father does which He does not in communion with the Son; and greater proofs of this should yet be seen, that they might marvel. This last sentence of the Lord's words, as well as the whole of this Gospel, shews that, while revealing absolutely that He and the Father are one, He reveals it, and speaks of it as in a position in which He could be seen of men. The thing of which He speaks is in God; the position in which He speaks of it is a position taken, and, in a certain sense, inferior. We see everywhere that He is equal to, and one with, the Father. We see that He receives all from the Father, and does all after the Father's mind. (This is shewn very remarkably in chapter 17). It is the Son, but the Son manifested in the flesh, acting in the mission which the Father sent Him to fulfil.

Two things are spoken of in this chapter (Joh 5:21-22) which demonstrate the glory of the Son. He quickens and He judges. It is not healing that is in question a work which, at bottom, springs from the same source, and has its occasion in the same evil: but the giving of life in a manner evidently divine. As the Father raises the dead and quickens them, so the Son quickens whom He will. Here we have the first proof of His divine rights, He gives life, and He gives it to whom He will. But, being incarnate, He may be personally dishonoured, disallowed, despised of men. Consequently all judgment is committed unto Him, the Father judging no man, in order that all, even those who have rejected the Son, should honour Him, even as they honour the Father whom they own as God. If they refuse when He acts in grace, they shall be compelled when He acts in judgment. In life, we have

communion by the Holy Ghost with the Father and the Son (and quickening or giving life is the work alike of the Father and the Son); but in the judgment, unbelievers will have to do with the Son of man whom they have rejected. The two things are quite distinct. He whom Christ has quickened will not need to be compelled to honour Him by undergoing judgment. Jesus will not call into judgment one whom He has saved by quickening him.

How may we know, then, to which of these two classes we belong? The Lord (praised be His name!) replies, he that hears His word, and believes Him who sent Him (believes the Father by hearing Christ), has everlasting life (such is the quickening power of His word), and shall not come into judgment. He is passed from death into life. Simple and wonderful testimony! [See Note #27] The judgment will glorify the Lord in the case of those who have despised Him here. The possession of eternal life, that they may not come into judgment, is the portion of those who believe.

The Lord then points out two distinct periods, in which the power that the Father committed to Him as having come down to the earth, is to be exercised. The hour was coming was already come in which the dead should hear the voice of the Son of God, and those that heard should live. This is the communication of spiritual life by Jesus, the Son of God, to man, who is dead by sin, and that by means of the word which he should hear. For the Father has given to the Son, to Jesus, thus manifested on earth, to have life in Himself (compare Jo1 1:1-2). He has also given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of man. For the kingdom and the judgment, according to the counsels of God, belong to Him as Son of man in that character in which He was despised and rejected when He came in grace.

This passage also shews us that, although He was the eternal Son, one with the Father, He is always looked upon as manifested here in the flesh, and, therefore, as receiving all from the Father. It is thus that we have seen Him at the well of Samaria the God who gave, but the One who asked the poor woman to give Him to drink.

Jesus, then, quickened souls at that time. He still quickens. They were not to marvel. A work, more wonderful in the eyes of men, should be

accomplished. All those that were in the grave should come forth. This is the second period of which He speaks. In the one He quickens souls; in the other, He raises up bodies from death. The one has lasted during the ministry of Jesus and 1800 years since His death; the other is not yet come, but during its continuance two things will take place. There will be a resurrection of those who have done good (this will be a resurrection of life, the Lord will complete His quickening work), and there will be a resurrection of those who have done evil (this will be a resurrection for their judgment). This judgment will be according to the mind of God, and not according to any separate personal will of Christ. Thus far it is sovereign power, and as regards life sovereign grace He quickens whom He will. What follows is man's responsibility as regards the obtaining eternal life. It was there in Jesus, and they would not come to Him to have it.

The Lord goes on to point out to them four testimonies rendered to His glory and to His Person, which left them without excuse: John, His own works, His Father, and the scriptures. Nevertheless, while pretending to receive the latter, as finding in them eternal life, they would not come to Him that they might have life. Poor Jews! The Son came in the name of the Father, and they would not receive Him; another shall come in his own name, and him they will receive. This better suits the heart of man. They sought honour from one another: how could they believe? Let us remember this. God does not accommodate Himself to the pride of man does not arrange the truth so as to feed it. Jesus knew the Jews. Not that He would accuse them to the Father: Moses, in whom they trusted, would do that; for if they had believed Moses, they would have believed Christ. But if they did not credit the writings of Moses, how would they believe the words of a despised Saviour?

In result, the Son of God gives life, and He executes judgment. In the judgment that He executes, the testimony which had been rendered to His Person leaves man without excuse on the ground of his own responsibility. In chapter 5 Jesus is the Son of God who, with the Father, gives life, and as Son of man judges. In chapter 6 He is the object of faith, as come down from heaven and dying. He just alludes to His going on high as Son of man.

Note #24

Christ brings the strength with Him which the law requires in man himself to profit by it.

Note #24

The Sabbath is introduced, whatever new institution or arrangement is established under the law. And in truth, a part in the rest of God is, in certain aspects, the highest of our privileges (see Hebrews 4). The Sabbath was the close of the first or this creation, and will be so when fulfilled. Our rest is in the new one, and that not in the first man's creation state but risen, Christ the second Man being its beginning and head. Hence the first day of the week.

Note #26

God's Sabbath is a Sabbath of love and holiness.

Note #27

Remark how full the bearing of this is. If they do not come into judgment to settle their state, as man would put it, they are shewn to be wholly dead in sin. Grace in Christ does not contemplate an uncertain state which judgment will determine. It gives life and secures from judgment. But while He judges as Son of man according to the deeds done in the body, He shews us here that all were dead in sin to begin with.

John Chapter 6

In chapter 6, then, it is the Lord come down from heaven, humbled and put to death, not now as the Son of God, one with the Father, the source of life; but as He who, although He was Jehovah and at the same time the Prophet and the King, would take the place of Victim, and that of Priest in heaven: in His incarnation, the bread of life; dead, the true nourishment of believers; ascended again to heaven, the living object of their faith. But He only glances at this last feature: the doctrine of the chapter is that which goes before. It is not the divine power that quickens, but the Son of man come in flesh, the object of faith, and so the means of life; and, though, as plainly declared by the calling of grace, yet it is not the divine side, quickening whom He will, but faith in us laying hold of Him. In both He acts

independently of the limits of Judaism. He quickens whom He will, and comes to give life to the world.

It was on the occasion of the Passover, a type which the Lord was to fulfil by the death of which He spoke. Observe, here, that all these chapters present the Lord, and the truth that reveals Him, in contrast with Judaism, which He forsook and set aside. Chapter 5 was the impotence of the law and its ordinances; here it is the blessings promised by the Lord to the Jews on earth (Psa 132:15), and the characters of Prophet and King fulfilled by the Messiah on earth in connection with the Jews, that are seen in contrast with the new position and the doctrine of Jesus. That of which I here speak characterises every distinct subject in this Gospel.

First, Jesus blesses the people, according to the promise of that which Jehovah should do, given them in Psalm 132, for He was Jehovah. On this, the people acknowledge Him to be "that Prophet," and desire by force to make Him their King. But this He declines now could not take it in this carnal way. Jesus leaves them, and goes up by Himself into a mountain. This was, figuratively, His position as Priest on high. These are the three characters of the Messiah in respect of Israel; but the last has full and special application to the saints now also, as walking on the earth, who continue as to this the position of the remnant. The disciples enter a ship, and, without Him, are tossed upon the waves. Darkness comes on (this will happen to the remnant down here), and Jesus is away. Nevertheless He rejoins them, and they receive Him joyfully. Immediately the ship is at the place to which they were going. A striking picture of the remnant journeying on earth during the absence of Christ, and their every wish fully and immediately satisfied full blessing and rest when He rejoins them. [See Note #28]

This part of the chapter, having shewn us the Lord as already the Prophet here below, and refusing to be made King, and also that which will yet take place when He returns to the remnant on earth the historical framework of what He was and will be the remainder of the chapter gives us that which He is meanwhile to faith, His true character, the purpose of God in sending Him, outside Israel, and in connection with sovereign grace. The people seek Him. The true work, which God owns, is to believe in Him whom He has sent. This is that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which is given by the

Son of man (it is in this character we find Jesus here, as in chapter 5 it was the Son of God), for He it is whom God the Father has sealed. Jesus had taken this place of Son of man in humiliation here below. He went to be baptised of John the Baptist; and there, in this character, the Father sealed Him, the Holy Ghost coming down upon Him.

The multitude ask Him for a proof like the manna. He was Himself the proof the true manna. Moses did not give the heavenly bread of life. Their fathers died in the very wilderness in which they had eaten the manna. The Father now gave them the true bread from heaven. Here, observe, it is not the Son of God who gives, and who is the sovereign Giver of life to whom He will. He is the object set before faith; He is to be fed upon. Life is found in Him; he that eats Him shall live by Him, and shall never hunger. But the multitude did not believe in Him; in fact, the mass of Israel, as such, were not in question. Those that the Father gave Him should come unto Him. He was there the passive object, so to say, of faith. It is no longer to whom He will, but to receive those whom the Father brought Him. Therefore, be it who it might, He would in no wise cast them out: enemy, scoffer, Gentile, they would not come if the Father had not sent them. The Messiah was there to do His Father's will, and whomsoever the Father brought Him He would receive for life eternal (compare Joh 5:21). The Father's will had these two characters. Of all whom the Father should give Him, He would lose none. Precious assurance! The Lord saves assuredly to the end those whom the Father has given Him; and then every one that should see the Son and believe on Him should have everlasting life. This is the gospel for every soul, as the other is that which infallibly assures the salvation of every believer. But this is not all. The subject of hope was not now the fulfilment on earth of the promises made to the Jew, but being raised from the dead, having part in everlasting life in resurrection at the last day (that is, of the age of the law in which they were). He did not crown the dispensation of the law; He was to bring in a new dispensation, and with it resurrection. The Jews [See Note #29] murmur at His saying that He came down from heaven. Jesus replies by the testimony that their difficulty was easy to be understood: no one could come unto Him except the Father brought him. It was grace that produced this effect; whether they were Jews or not made no difference. It was a question of eternal life, of being raised from the dead by Him; not of

performing the promises as Messiah, but of bringing in the life of a widely different world to be enjoyed by faith the Father's grace having led the soul to find it in Jesus. Moreover, the prophets had said they should all be taught of God. Every one, therefore, who had learned of the Father came unto Him. No man, doubtless, had seen the Father excepting Him who was of God Jesus; He had seen the Father. He that believed in Him was already in possession of eternal life, for He was the bread come down from heaven, that a man might eat thereof and not die.

But this was not only by the incarnation, but by the death of Him who came down from heaven. He would give His life; His blood should be taken from the body which He had assumed. They should eat His flesh; they should drink His blood. Death should be the believer's life. And, in fact, it is in a dead Saviour that we see the sin taken away which He bore for us, and death for us is death to the sinful nature in which evil and our separation from God lay. There He made an end of sin He who knew no sin. Death, which sin brought in, puts away the sin that attached to the life, which there comes to its end. Not that Christ had any sin in His own Person; but He took sin, He was made sin, on the cross, for us. And he who is dead is justified from sin. I feed, therefore, on the death of Christ. Death is mine; it is become life. It separates me from sin, from death, from the life in which I was separated from God. In it sin and death have finished their course. They were attached to my life. Christ, in grace, has borne them, and He has given His flesh for the life of the world; and I am freed from them; and I feed on the infinite grace that is in Him, who has accomplished this. The expiation is complete, and I live, being happily dead to all that separated me from God. It is death as fulfilled in Him that I feed upon, first for me, and entering withal into it by faith. He needed to live as man in order to die, and He has given His life. Thus His death is efficacious; His love infinite; the expiation total, absolute, perfect. That which was between me and God exists no longer, for Christ died, and it all passed away with His life here on earth life as He had it before expiring on the cross. Death could not hold Him. To perform this work, He needed to possess a power of divine life which death could not touch; but this is not the truth expressly taught in the chapter before us, although it is implied.

In speaking to the multitude, the Lord, while rebuking them for their unbelief, presents Himself, come in the flesh, as the object of their faith at that moment (Joh 6:32-35). To the Jews, in laying open the doctrine, He repeats that He is the living bread come down from heaven, of which if any man eat he should live for ever. But He makes them understand that they could not stop there they must receive His death. He does not say here, "he that eateth me," but it was to eat His flesh and drink His blood, to enter fully into the thought the reality of His death; to receive a dead (not a living) Messiah, dead for men, dead before God. He does not exist now as a dead Christ; but we must acknowledge, realise, feed upon, His death identify ourselves with it before God, participating in it by faith, or we have no life in us. [See Note #30] Thus it was for the world. Thus they should live, not of their own life, but by Christ, through feeding on Him. Here He returns to His own Person, faith in His death being established. Moreover, they should dwell in Him (Joh 6:56) should be in Him before God, according to all His acceptance before God, all the efficacy of His work in dying. [See Note #31] And Christ should dwell in them according to the power and grace of that life in which He had gained the victory over death, and in which, having gained it, He now lives. As the living Father had sent Him, and He lived, not by an independent life which had not the Father for its object or source, but by reason of the Father, so he that thus ate Him should live because of Him. [See Note #32]

Afterwards, in reply to those who murmured at this fundamental truth, the Lord appeals to His ascension. He had come down from heaven this was His doctrine; He would ascend thither again. Material flesh profited nothing. It was the Spirit who gave life, by realising in the soul the mighty truth of that which Christ was, and of His death. But He returns to that which He had told them before; in order to come to Him thus revealed in truth, they must be led of the Father. There is such a thing as faith that is ignorant perhaps, although through grace real. Such was that of the disciples. They knew that He, and He only, had the words of eternal life. It was not only that He was the Messiah, which they indeed believed, but His words had laid hold of their hearts with the power of the divine life which they revealed, and through grace communicated. Thus they acknowledged Him as the Son of God, not only officially, so to speak, but according to the power of divine

life. He was the Son of the living God. Nevertheless there was one among them who was of the devil.

Jesus therefore, come down to earth, put to death, ascending again to heaven, is the doctrine of this chapter. As come down and put to death, He is the food of faith during His absence on high. For it is on His death we must feed, in order to dwell spiritually in Him and He in us.

Note #28

The direct application of this is to the remnant; but then, as hinted in the text, we, as to our path on earth, are, so to speak, the continuation of that remnant, and Christ is on high for us, while we are on the waves below. The subsequent part of the chapter, of the bread of life, is properly for us. The world, not Israel, is in question. Indeed though Christ is Aaron within the veil for Israel, while He is there the saints have properly their heavenly character.

Note #29

In John, the Jews are always distinguished from the multitude. They are the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea. It would, perhaps, be easier to understand this Gospel, if the words were rendered "those of Judea," which is the true sense.

Note #30

This truth is of vast importance as regards the sacramental question. Sacraments are declared by the Puseyite school to be the continuation of the incarnation. This is in every respect error, and, in truth, a denial of the faith. Both sacraments signify death. We are baptised to Christ's death; and the Lord's supper is confessedly emblematic of His death. I say "denial of the faith"; because, as the Lord shews, if they do not eat His flesh and blood, they have no life in them. As incarnate Christ is alone. His presence in flesh on earth shewed that God and sinful men could not be united. His presence as man in the world resulted in His rejection proved the impossibility of union or fruit on that ground. Redemption must come in, His blood be shed, Himself lifted up from the earth, and so draw men to Him: death must come in, or He abode alone. They could not eat the bread unless they ate the flesh and drank the blood. A meat-offering without a bloody offering was null, or

rather a Cain offering. Further, the Lord's supper presents a dead Christ, and a dead Christ only the blood apart from the body. No such Christ exists; and therefore transubstantiation and consubstantiation and all such thoughts are a blundering fable. We are united to a glorified Christ by the Holy Ghost; and we celebrate that most precious death upon which all our blessing is founded, through which we got there. We do it in remembrance of Him, and in our hearts feed on Him, so given, and shedding His blood.

Note #31

Abiding imports constancy of dependence, confidence, and living by the life in which Christ lives. "Dwelling" and "abiding," though the word be changed in English, are the same in the original: so in chapter 15 and elsewhere.

Note #32

It may be well to note that in the Greek in this passage, in Verses Joh 6:51 and Joh 6:53, eating is in the aorist tense whosoever has done so. In Verses Joh 6:54, Joh 6:56 and Joh 6:57, it is the present tense a present continuous action.

John Chapter 7

In chapter 7 His brethren after the flesh, still sunk in unbelief, would have Him shew Himself to the world, if He did these great things; but the time for this was not yet come. At the fulfilment of the type of the feast of tabernacles He will do so. The passover had its antitype at the cross, pentecost at the descent of the Holy Ghost. The feast of tabernacles, as yet, has had no fulfilment. It was celebrated after the harvest and the vintage, and Israel joyfully commemorated, in the land, their pilgrimage before entering on the rest which God had given them in Canaan. Thus the fulfilment of this type will be when, after the execution of judgment (whether in discerning between the wicked and the good, or simply in vengeance [See Note #33], Israel, restored to their land, shall be in possession of all their promised blessing. At that time Jesus will shew Himself to the world; but at the time of which we are speaking His hour was not yet come. Meanwhile, having gone away (Joh 7:33-34), He gives the Holy Ghost to believers (Joh 7:38-39).

Remark here, there is no pentecost brought in. We pass from the passover in chapter 6 to the tabernacles in chapter 7, in lieu of which believers would receive the Holy Ghost. As I have remarked, this Gospel treats of a divine Person on earth, not of the man in heaven. The coming of the Holy Ghost is spoken of as substituted for the last or eighth day of the feast of tabernacles. Pentecost supposes Jesus on high.

But He presents the Holy Ghost in such a way as to make Him the hope of faith at the time in which He spoke, if God created a sense of need in the soul. If any one thirsted, let him come to Jesus and drink. Not only should his thirst be quenched, but from the inner man of his soul should flow forth streams of living water. So that coming to Him by faith to satisfy the need of their soul, not only should the Holy Ghost be in them a well of water springing up into everlasting life, but living water should also flow forth from them in abundance to refresh all those who thirsted. Observe here, that Israel drank water in the wilderness before they could keep the feast of tabernacles. But they only drank. There was no well in them. The water flowed from the rock. Under grace every believer is not doubtless a source in himself; but the full stream flows from him. This however would only take place when Jesus was glorified, and in those who were already believers, previous to their receiving it. What is spoken of here is not a work that quickens. It is a gift to those who believe. Moreover at the feast of tabernacles Jesus will shew Himself to the world; but this is not the subject of which the Holy Ghost thus received is especially the witness. He is given in connection with the glory of Jesus, while He is hidden from the world. It was also on the eighth day of the feast, the sign of a portion beyond the sabbath rest of this world, and which began another period a new scene of glory.

Observe also that, practically, although the Holy Ghost is presented here as power acting in blessing outside the one in whom He dwells, His presence in the believer is the fruit of a personal thirst, of need felt in the soul need for which the soul had sought an answer in Christ. He who thirsts, thirsts for himself. The Holy Ghost in us, revealing Christ, becomes, by dwelling in us when we have believed, a river in us, and thus for others.

The spirit of the Jews plainly shewed itself. They sought to kill the Lord; and He tells them that His relationship with them on earth would soon be ended

(Joh 7:33). They need not hasten so much to get rid of Him: soon they would seek Him and not be able to find Him. He was going away to His Father.

We see clearly the difference here between the multitude and the Jews two parties always distinguished from each other in this Gospel. The former did not understand why He spoke of the desire to kill Him. Those of Judea were astonished at His boldness, knowing that at Jerusalem they were conspiring against His life. His time was not yet come. They send officers to take Him; and these return, struck with His discourse, without laying hands on Him. The Pharisees are angry, and express their contempt for the people. Nicodemus hazards a word of justice according to the law, and brings their contempt on himself But each one goes away to his home. Jesus, who had no home until He went back to heaven whence He came, goes to the Mount of Olives, the witness of His agony, His ascension, and His return a place which He habitually frequented, when at Jerusalem, during the time of His ministry on earth.

The contrast of this chapter with Judaism, even with its best hopes in the future that God has prepared for His earthly people, is too evident to be dwelt upon. This Gospel, throughout, reveals Jesus outside all that belonged to that earthly system. In chapter 6 it was death here below on the cross. Here it is glory in heaven, the Jews being rejected, and the Holy Ghost given to the believer. In chapter 5 He gives life, as the Son of God; in chapter 6 He is the same Son, but not as divinely quickening and judging as being Son of man, but as come down from heaven, the Son in humiliation here, but the true bread from heaven which the Father gave. But in that lowly One, they must see the Son, to live. Then, as so come, and having taken the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, He (Joh 7:53) humbles Himself, and suffers on the cross, as Son of man; in chapter 7 He, when glorified, sends the Holy Ghost. Chapter 5 displays His titles of personal glory; chapters 6-7, His work and the giving of the Spirit to believers consequent on His present glory in heaven, [See Note #34] to which the presence of the Holy Ghost answers on earth. In chapters 8-9 [See Note #35] we shall find His testimony and His works rejected, and the question decided between Him and the Jews. It will be observed also, that chapters 5 and 6 treat of the life. In chapter 5 it is given sovereignly and divinely by Him who possesses it;

in chapter 6, the soul, receiving and being occupied with Jesus by faith, finds life, and feeds upon Him by the grace of the Father: two things distinct in their nature God gives; man, by grace, feeds. On the other hand, chapter 7 is Christ's going to Him that sent Him, and meanwhile the Holy Ghost, who unfolds the glory He is gone into, in us and by us, in its heavenly character. In chapter 5 Christ is the Son of God, who quickens in abstract divine power and will, what He is, not the place He is in, but alone judges, being Son of man; in chapter 6, the same Son, but come down from heaven, the object of faith in His humiliation, then the Son of man, dying, and returning again; in chapter 7, not yet revealed to the world. The Holy Ghost is given instead when He is glorified above, the Son of man in heaven at least contemplating His going there.

Note #33

The harvest is discriminating judgment, there are tares and wheat. The winepress is the destructive judgment of vengeance. In the former there will be two in one bed, one taken and another left, but the winepress is simple wrath, as Isaiah 63. So in Revelation 14.

Note #34

This glory, however, is only supposed, not taught. He cannot be at the feast of tabernacles, Israel's rest, nor shew Himself, as He will then, to the world; but gives the Holy Ghost instead. This we know supposes His present position, just referred to in chapter 6.

Note #35

The doctrine of chapter 9 continues to the 30th Verse of chapter 10 (Joh 10:30).

John Chapter 8

In chapter 8, as we have said, the word of Jesus is rejected; and, in chapter 9, His works. But there is much more than that. The personal glories of chapter 1 are reproduced and developed in all these chapters separately (leaving out for the moment from Verse 36 to 51 of chapter 1; Joh 1:36-51): we have found again the Joh 1:14-34 in chapters 5, 6, and 7. The Holy Ghost

now returns to the subject of the first Verses in the chapter. Christ is the Word; He is the life, and the life which is the light of men. The three chapters that I have now pointed out speak of what He is in grace for men, while still declaring His right to judge. The Spirit here (in chapter 8) sets before us that which He is in Himself, and that which He is to men (thus putting them to the test, so that in rejecting Him they reject themselves, and shew themselves to be reprobate).

Let us now consider our chapter. The contrast with Judaism is evident. They bring a woman whose guilt is undeniable. The Jews, in their wickedness, bring her forward in the hope of confounding the Lord. If He condemned her, He was not a Saviour the law could do as much. If He let her go, He despised and disallowed the law. This was clever; but what avails cleverness in the presence of God who searches the heart? The Lord allows them to commit themselves thoroughly by not answering them for awhile. Probably they thought He was entangled. At last He says, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast the stone." Convicted by their conscience, without honesty and without faith, they quit the scene of their confusion, separating from each other, each caring for himself, caring for character not conscience, and departing from Him who had convicted them; he who had the most reputation to save going out first. What a sorrowful picture! What a mighty word! Jesus and the woman are left together alone. Who can stand unconvicted in His presence? With regard to the woman, whose guilt was known, He does not go beyond the Jewish position, except to preserve the rights of His own Person in grace.

This is not the same thing as in Luke 7, plenary pardon and salvation. The others could not condemn her He would not. Let her go, and let her sin no more. It is not the grace of salvation that the Lord exhibits here. He does not judge, He was not come for this; but the efficacy of the pardon is not the subject of these chapters it is the glory here of His Person, in contrast with all that is of the law. He is the light, and by the power of His word He entered as light into the conscience of those who had brought the woman.

For the Word was light; but that was not all. Coming into the world, He was (Joh 1:4-10) the light. Now it was the life that was the light of men. It was not a law that made demands, and condemned; or that promised life on

obedience to its precepts. It was the Life itself which was there in His Person, and that life was the light of men, convincing them, and, perhaps, judging them; but it was as light. Thus Jesus says here in contrast with the law, brought by those who could not stand before the light "I am the light of the world" (not merely of the Jews). For in this Gospel we have what Christ is essentially in His Person, whether as God, the Son come from the Father, or Son of man not what God was in special dealings with the Jews. Hence He was the object of faith in His Person, not in dispensational dealings. Whoso followed Him should have the light of life. But it was in Him, in His Person, that it was found. And He could bear record of Himself, because, although He was a man there, in this world, He knew whence He came and whither He was going. It was the Son, who came from the Father and was returning to Him again. He knew it, and was conscious of it. His testimony, therefore, was not that of an interested person which one might hesitate to believe. There was, in proof that this man was the One whom He represented Himself to be, the testimony of the Son (His own), and the testimony of the Father. If they had known Him, they would have known the Father.

At that time in spite of such testimony as this no one laid hands on Him: His hour was not yet come. That only was wanting; for their opposition to God was certain, and known to Him. This opposition was plainly declared (Joh 8:19-24); consequently, if they believed not, they would die in their sins. Nevertheless He tells them that they shall know who He is, when He shall have been rejected and lifted up on the cross, having taken a very different position as the Saviour, rejected by the people and unknown of the world; when no longer presented to them as such, they should know that He was indeed the Messiah, and that He was the Son who spoke to them from the Father. As He spake these words, many believed on Him. He declares to them the effect of faith, which gives occasion to the true position of the Jews being manifested with terrible precision. He declares that the truth would set them free, and that if the Son (who is the truth) should set them free, they would be free indeed. The truth sets free morally before God. The Son, by virtue of the rights that were necessarily His, and by inheritance in the house, would place them in it according to those rights, and that in the power of divine life come down from heaven the Son of God with power as resurrection declared it. In this was the true setting free.

Piqued at the idea of bondage, which their pride could not bear, they declare themselves to be free, and never to have been in bondage to any one. In reply, the Lord shews that those who commit sin are the servants (slaves) of sin. Now, as being under the law, as being Jews, they were servants in the house: they should be sent away. But the Son had inalienable rights; He was of the house and would abide in it for ever. Under sin, and under the law, was the same thing for a child of Adam; he was a servant. The apostle shews this in Romans 6 (compare chapters 7 and 8) and in Galatians 4 and 5. Moreover, they were neither really, nor morally, the children of Abraham before God, although they were so according to the flesh; for they sought to kill Jesus. They were not children of God; had they been, they would have loved Jesus who came from God. They were the children of the devil and would do his works.

Observe here, that to understand the meaning of the word is the way to apprehend the force of the words. One does not learn the definition of words and then the things; one learns the things, and then the meaning of the words is evident.

They begin to resist the testimony, conscious that He was making Himself greater than all those whom they had leant upon. They rail upon Him because of His words; and by their opposition the Lord is induced to explain Himself more clearly; until, having declared that Abraham rejoiced to see His day, and the Jews applying this to His age as man, He announces positively that He is the One who calls Himself I am the supreme name of God, that He is God Himself He whom they pretended to know as having revealed Himself in the bush.

Wondrous revelation! A despised, rejected man, despised and rejected by men, contradicted, ill-treated, yet it was God Himself who was there. What a fact! What a total change! What a revelation to those who acknowledged Him, or who know Him! What a condition is theirs who have rejected Him, and that because their hearts were opposed to all that He was, for He did not fail to manifest Himself! What a thought, that God Himself has been here! Goodness itself! How everything vanishes before Him! the law, man, his reasonings. Everything necessarily depends on this great fact. And, blessed be His name! this God is a Saviour. We are indebted to the sufferings

of Christ for knowing it. And note here, how the setting aside formal dispensations from God, if true, is by the revelation of Himself, and so introduces infinitely greater blessing.

But here He presents Himself as the Witness, the Word, the Word made flesh, the Son of God, but still the Word, God Himself. In the narrative at the beginning of the chapter He is a testimony to the conscience, the Word that searches and convicts. Joh 8:18, He bears testimony with the Father. Joh 8:26, He declares in the world that which He has received of the Father, and as taught of God He has spoken. Moreover the Father was with Him. Joh 8:32-33, the truth was known by His word, and the truth made them free. Joh 8:47, He spoke the words of God. Joh 8:51, His word, being kept, preserved from death. Joh 8:58, it was God Himself, the Jehovah whom the fathers knew, that spoke.

Opposition arose from its being the word of truth (Joh 8:45). Opposers were of the adversary. He was a murderer from the beginning, and they would follow him; but as the truth was the source of life, so that which characterised the adversary was, that he abode not in the truth: there is no truth in him. He is the father and the source of lies, so that, if falsehood speaks, it is one belonging to him that speaks. Sin was bondage, and they were in bondage by the law. (Truth, the Son Himself, made free.) But, more than that, the Jews were enemies, children of the enemy, and they would do his works, not believing the words of Christ because He spoke the truth. There is no miracle here; it is the power of the word, and the living word is God Himself: rejected by men, He is, as it were, compelled to speak the truth, to reveal Himself, hidden at once and manifested, as He was in the flesh hidden as to His glory, manifested as to all that He is in His Person and in His grace.

John Chapter 9

In chapter 9, we come to the testimony of His works, but as down here as a man in lowliness. It is not the Son of God quickening whom He will as the Father, but by the operation of His grace down here, the eye opened to see in the lowly man the Son of God. In chapter 8 it is that which He is towards men; in chapter 9 it is that which He does in man, that man may see Him.

Thus we shall find Him presented in His human character, and (the word being received) acknowledged to be the Son of God; and in this way the remnant separated, the sheep restored to the good Shepherd. He is the light of the world while He is in it; but where, through grace received in His humiliation, He communicated the power to see the light, and to see all things by it.

Observe here, that when it is the word (the manifestation in testimony of what Christ is), man is manifested as he is in himself, a child in his nature of the devil, who is a murderer and a liar from the beginning, the inveterate enemy of Him who can say, "I am." [See Note #36] But when the Lord works, He produces something in man that he had not previously. He bestows sight on him, attaching him thus to the One who had enabled him to see. The Lord is not here understood or manifested in apparently as exalted a manner, because He comes down to the wants and circumstances of man, in order that He may be more closely known; but, in result, He brings the soul to the knowledge of His glorious Person. Only, instead of being the word and the testimony the Word of God to shew as light what man is, He is the Son, one with the Father, [See Note #37] giving eternal life to His sheep, and preserving them in this grace for ever. For, as to the blessing that flows from thence, and the full doctrine of His true position with regard to the sheep in blessing, chapter 10 goes with chapter 9. Chapter 10 is the continuation of the discourse begun at the end of chapter 9.

chapter 9 opens with the case of a man that gives rise to a question from the disciples, in relation to the government of God in Israel. Was it his parents' sin that brought this visitation on their child, according to the principles God had given them in Exodus? Or was it his own sin, known to God though not manifested to men, that had procured him this judgment? The Lord replies, that the man's condition did not depend on the government of God with respect to the sin either of himself or of his parents. His case was but the misery which gave room for the mighty operation of God in grace. It is the contrast that we have continually seen; but here it is in order to set forth the works of God.

God acts. It is not only that which He is, nor even simply an object of faith. The presence of Jesus on earth made it day. It was therefore the time of work to do the works of Him that sent Him. But He who works here, works by means that teach us the union which exists between an object of faith and the power of God who works. He makes clay with His spittle and the earth, and puts it on the eyes of the man who was born blind. As a figure, it pointed to the humanity of Christ in earthly humiliation and lowliness, presented to the eyes of men, but with divine efficacy of life in Him. Did they see any more? If possible, their eyes were the more completely closed. Still the object was there; it touched their eyes, and they could not see it. The blind man then washes in the pool that was called "Sent," and is enabled to see clearly. The power of the Spirit and of the word, making Christ known as the One sent by the Father, gives him sight. It is the history of divine teaching in the heart of man. Christ, as man, touches us. We are absolutely blind, we see nothing. The Spirit of God acts, Christ being there before our eyes; and we see plainly.

The people are astonished and know not what to think. The Pharisees oppose. Again the Sabbath is in question. They find (it is always the story) good reasons for condemning Him who bestowed sight, in their pretended zeal for God's glory. There was positive proof that the man was born blind, that he now saw, that Jesus had done it. The parents testify to the only thing that was important on their part. As to who it was that had given him sight, others knew more than they; but their fears bring out in evidence, that it was a settled thing to cast out, not only Jesus, but all who should confess Him. Thus the Jewish leaders brought the thing to a decisive point. They not only rejected Christ, but they cast out from the privileges of Israel, as to their ordinary worship, those who confessed Him. Their hostility distinguished the manifested remnant and put them apart; and that, by using confession of Christ as a touchstone. This was deciding their own fate, and judging their own condition.

Observe, that proofs here went for nothing; the Jews, the parents, the Pharisees, had them before their eyes. Faith came through being personally the subject of this mighty operation of God, who opened the eyes of men to the glory of the Lord Jesus. Not that the man understood it all. He perceives

that he has to do with some one sent of God. To him Jesus is a prophet. But thus the power which He had manifested in giving sight to this man enables him to trust the Lord's word as divine. Having gone so far, the rest is easy: the poor man is led much farther, and finds himself on ground that sets him free from all his former prejudices, and that gives a value to the Person of Jesus which overcomes all other considerations. The Lord develops this in the next chapter.

In truth, the Jews had made up their mind. They would have nothing to do with Jesus. They were all agreed to cast out those who believed in Him. Consequently, the poor man having begun to reason with them on the proof that existed in his own person of the Saviour's mission, they cast him out. Thus cast out, the Lord rejected before him finds and reveals Himself to him by His personal name of glory. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" The man refers it to the word of Jesus, which to him was divine truth, and He proclaims Himself to him as being Himself the Son of God, and the man worships Him.

Thus the effect of His power was to blind those who saw, who were full of their own wisdom, whose light was darkness; and to give sight to those who were born blind.

Note #36

chapter 8 is practically Joh 1:5; only that there is, besides that, enmity, hostility against Him who was light.

Note #37

This distinction of grace and responsibility (in connection with the names Father and Son, and God) has been already noticed. See page 316.

John Chapter 10

In chapter 10 He contrasts Himself with all those who pretended, or had pretended, to be shepherds of Israel. He develops these three points; He comes in by the door; He is the door; and He is the Shepherd of the sheep the good Shepherd.

He comes in by the door. That is to say, He submits to all the conditions established by Him who built the house. Christ answers to all that is written of the Messiah, and takes the path of God's will in presenting Himself to the people. It is not human energy and power awakening and attracting the passions of men; but the obedient man who bowed to Jehovah's will, kept the lowly place of a servant, and lived by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God, bowed in lowliness to the place in which Jehovah's judgment had placed and viewed Israel. All the Lord's quotations in His conflict with Satan are from Deuteronomy. Consequently He who watches over the sheep, Jehovah, acting in Israel by His Spirit and providence, and arranging all things, gives Him access to the sheep in spite of the Pharisees and priests and so many others. The elect of Israel hear His voice. Now Israel was under condemnation: He therefore brings the sheep out, but He goes before them. He leaves that ancient fold, under reproach doubtless, but going before His sheep, in obedience according to the power of God a security to every one who believed in Him that it was the right road, a warrant for their following Him, come what might, meeting every danger and shewing them the way.

The sheep follow Him, for they know His voice. There are many other voices, but the sheep do not know them. Their safety consists, not in knowing them all, but in knowing that they are not the one voice which is life to them the voice of Jesus. All the rest are the voices of strangers.

He is the door for the sheep. He is their authority for going out, their means of entering in. By entering in, they are saved. They go in and out. It is no longer the yoke of ordinances, which, in guarding them from those without, put them in prison. The sheep of Christ are free: their safety is in the personal care of the Shepherd; and in this liberty they feed in the good and fat pastures which His love supplies. In a word, it is no longer Judaism; it is salvation, and liberty, and food. The thief comes to make his profit on the sheep by killing them. Christ is come that they might have life, and that abundantly; that is, according to the power of this life in Jesus, the Son of God, who would soon have this life (whose power was in His Person) in resurrection beyond death.

The true Shepherd of Israel at least of the remnant of the sheep the door to authorise their coming out of the Jewish fold, and to admit them into the privileges of God by giving them life according to the abundance in which He was able to bestow it He was also in special connection with the sheep thus set apart, the good Shepherd who thus gave His life for the sheep. Others would think of themselves, He of His sheep. He knew them, and they knew Him, even as the Father knew Him, and He knew the Father. Precious principle! They could have understood an earthly knowledge and interest on the part of the Messiah on earth with regard to His sheep. But the Son, although He had given His life and was in heaven, knows His own, even as the Father knew Him when He was on the earth.

Thus He laid down His life for the sheep; and He had other sheep who were not of this fold, and His death intervened for the salvation of these poor Gentiles. He would call them. Doubtless He had given His life for the Jews also for all the sheep in general, as such (Joh 10:11). But He does not speak distinctly of the Gentiles until after He has spoken of His death. He would bring them also, and there should be but one flock (not "one fold," there is no fold now) and one Shepherd .

Now this doctrine teaches the rejection of Israel, and the calling out of the elect among that people, presents the death of Jesus as being the effect of His love for His own, tells of His divine knowledge of His sheep when He shall be away from them, and of the call of the Gentiles. The importance of such instruction at that moment is obvious. Its importance, thank God! is not lost by the lapse of time, and is not limited to the fact of a change of dispensation. It introduces us into the substantial realities of the grace connected with the Person of Christ. But the death of Christ was more than love for His sheep. It had an intrinsic value in the Father's eyes. "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." He does not say here for His sheep it is the thing itself that is well-pleasing to the Father. We love because God has first loved us, but Jesus, the divine Son, can furnish motives for the Father's love. In laying down His life, He glorified the Father. Death was owned to be the just penalty for sin (being at the same time annulled and he who had the power of it, Ti2 1:10; Heb 2:14), and eternal life brought in as the fruit of redemption life from

God. Here also the rights of the Person of Christ are set forth. No man takes His life from Him: He lays it down Himself. He had this power (possessed by no other, true only of Him who had divine right) to lay it down, and power to take it again. Nevertheless, even in this, He did not depart from the path of obedience. He had received this commandment from His Father. But who would have been able to perform it save He who could say, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again"? [See Note #38] They discuss what He had been saying. There were some who only saw in Him a man beside himself, and who insulted Him. Others, moved by the power of the miracle He had performed, felt that His words had a different character from that of madness. To a certain point their consciences were reached. The Jews surround Him, and ask how long He would keep them in suspense. Jesus answers that He had already told them; and that His works bore Him testimony. He appeals to the two testimonies which we have seen brought forward in the previous chapter (8 and 9); namely, His word and His works. But He adds, they were not of His sheep. He then takes occasion, without noticing their prejudices, to add some precious truths respecting His sheep. They hear His voice; He knows them; they follow Him; He gives them eternal life; they shall never perish. On the one hand, there shall be no perishing of life as within; on the other, no one shall pluck them out of the Saviour's hand force from without shall not overcome the power of Him who keeps them. But there is another and an infinitely precious truth which the Lord in His love reveals to us. The Father had given us to Jesus, and He is greater than all who would seek to pluck us out of His hand. And Jesus and the Father are one. Precious teaching! in which the glory of the Person of the Son of God is identified with the safety of His sheep, with the height and depth of the love of which they are the objects. Here it is not a testimony which, as altogether divine, sets forth what man is. It is the work and the efficacious love of the Son, and at the same time that of the Father. It is not "I am"; but "I and the Father are one." If the Son has accomplished the work, and takes care of the sheep, it was the Father who gave them to Him. The Christ may perform a divine work, and furnish a motive for the Father's love, but it was the Father who gave it Him to do. Their love to the sheep is one, as those who bear that love are one.

chapter 8, therefore, is the manifestation of God in testimony, and as light; chapters 9 and 10, the efficacious grace which gathers the sheep under the care of the Son, and of the Father's love. John speaks of God when he speaks of a holy nature, and man's responsibility of the Father and the Son, when he speaks of grace in connection with the people of God.

Observe, that the wolf may come and catch [See Note #39] the sheep, if the shepherds are hirelings; but he cannot catch [See Note #39] them out of the Savior's hands. At the end of the chapter, the Jews having taken up stones to stone Him, because He made Himself equal with God, the Lord does not seek to prove to them the truth of what He is, but shows that, according to their own principles and the testimony of the scriptures, they were wrong in this case. He appeals again to His own words and works, as proving that He was in the Father and the Father in Him. Again they take up stones, and Jesus definitely leaves them. It was all over with Israel.

Note #38

Love and obedience are the governing principles of divine life. This is unfolded in the First Epistle of John as to ourselves. Another mark of it in the creature is dependence, and this was fully manifested in Jesus as man.

Note #39

The words catcheth and pluck in Verses 12, 28 and 29 (Joh 10:12; Joh 10:28-29) are the same in the original.

John Chapter 11

We come now to the testimony which the Father renders to Jesus in answer to His rejection. In this chapter the power of resurrection and of life in His own Person are presented to faith. [See Note #40] But here it is not simply that He is rejected: man is looked upon as dead, and Israel also. For it is man in the person of Lazarus. This family was blessed; it received the Lord into its bosom. Lazarus falls sick. All the Lord's human affections would be naturally concerned. Martha and Mary feel this; and they send Him word that he whom He loved was sick. But Jesus stays where He is. He might have said the word, as in the case of the centurion, and of the sick child at the beginning of this Gospel. But He did not. He had manifested His power and

His goodness in healing man as he is found on earth, and delivering him from the enemy, and that in the midst of Israel. But this was not His object here far from it or the limits of what He was come to do. It was a question of bestowing life, or raising up again that which was dead before God. This was the real state of Israel; it was the state of man. Therefore He allows the condition of man under sin to go on and manifest itself in all the intensity of its effects down here, and permits the enemy to exercise his power to the end. Nothing remained but the judgment of God; and death, in itself, convicted man of sin while conducting him to judgment. The sick may be healed there is no remedy for death. All is over for man, as man here below. Nothing remains but the judgment of God. It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. The Lord therefore does not heal in this instance. He allows the evil to go on to the end to death. That was the true place of man. Lazarus once fallen asleep, He goes to awaken him. The disciples fear the Jews, and with reason. But the Lord, having waited for His Father's will, does not fear to accomplish it. It was day to Him.

In fact, whatever might be His love for the nation, He must needs let it die (indeed it was dead), and wait for the time appointed by God to raise it up again. If He must die Himself to accomplish it, He commits Himself to His Father.

But let us follow out the depths of this doctrine. Death has come in; it must take effect. Man is really in death before God; but God in grace comes in. Two things are presented in our history. He might have healed. The faith and hope of neither Martha, Mary, nor the Jews, went any farther. Only Martha acknowledges that, as the Messiah, favoured of God, He would obtain from Him whatsoever He asked. But He had not prevented the death of Lazarus. He had done so many times, even for strangers, for whosoever desired it. In the second place, Martha knew that her brother would rise again at the last day; but true as it was, this truth availed nothing. Who would answer for man, dead through judgment on sin? To rise again and appear before God was not an answer to death come in by sin. The two things were true. Christ had often delivered mortal man from his sufferings in flesh, and there shall be a resurrection at the last day. But these things were of no value in the presence of death. Christ was, however, there; and He is, thanks be to God!

the resurrection and the life. Man being dead, resurrection comes first. But Jesus is the resurrection and the life in the present power of a divine life. And observe that life, coming by resurrection, delivers from all that death implies, and leaves it behind [See Note #41] sin, death, all that belongs to the life that man has lost. Christ, having died for our sins, has borne their punishment has borne them. He has died. All the power of the enemy, all its effect on mortal man, all the judgment of God, He has borne it all, and has come up from it, in the power of a new life in resurrection, which is imparted to us; so that we are in spirit alive from among the dead, as He is alive from among the dead. Sin (as made sin, and bearing our sins in His own body on the tree), death, Satan's power, God's judgment, are all past through and left behind, and man is in a wholly new state, in incorruption. It will be true of us, if we die (for we shall not all die), as to the body, or, being changed, if we do not die. But in the communication of His life who is risen from the dead, God has quickened us with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.

Jesus here manifested His own divine power to this effect; the Son of God was glorified in it, for we know He had not yet died for sin; but it was this same power in Him that was manifested. [See Note #42] The believer, even if he were dead, shall rise again; and the living who believe in Him shall not die. Christ has overcome death; the power for this was in His Person, and the Father bore Him witness of it. Are any that are His alive when the Lord exercises this power? They will never die death exists no more in His presence. Have any died before He exercises it? They shall live death cannot subsist before Him. All the effect of sin upon man is completely destroyed by resurrection, viewed as the power of life in Christ. This refers of course to the saints, to whom life is communicated. The same divine power is, of course, exercised as to the wicked; but it is not the communication of life from Christ, nor being raised with Him, as is evident. [See Note #43] Christ exercised this power in obedience and in dependence on His Father, because He was man, walking before God to do His will; but He is the resurrection and the life. He has brought the power of divine life into the midst of death; and death is annihilated by it, for in life death is no more. Death was the end of natural life to sinful man. Resurrection is the end of death, which has thus no longer anything in us. It is our advantage that, having done all it could do, it is finished. We live in the life [See Note #44]

that put an end to it. We come out from all that could be connected with a life that no longer exists. What a deliverance! Christ is this power. He became this for us in its full display and exercise in His resurrection.

Martha, while loving Him and believing in Him, does not understand this; and she calls Mary, feeling that her sister would better understand the Lord. We will speak a little of these two presently. Mary, who waited for the Lord's own calling her to Him, modestly though sorrowfully leaving the initiative with Him, believing thus that the Lord had called her, goes to Him directly. Jews and Martha and Mary all had seen miracles and healings that had arrested the power of death. To this they all refer. But here life had passed away. What now could help? If He had been there, His love and power they could have counted on. Mary falls down at His feet weeping. On the point of resurrection power she understood no more than Martha; but her heart is melted under the sense of death in the presence of Him who had life. It is an expression of need and sorrow rather than a complaint that she utters. The Jews also weep: the power of death was on their hearts. Jesus enters into it in sympathy. He was troubled in spirit. He sighs before God, He weeps with man; but His tears turn into a groan, which was, though inarticulate, the weight of death, felt in sympathy, and presented to God by this groan of love which fully realised the truth; and that in love to those who were suffering the ill that His groan expressed.

He bore death before God in His spirit as the misery of man the yoke from which man could not deliver himself, and He is heard. The need brings His power into action. It was not His part now patiently to explain to Martha what He was. He feels and acts upon the need to which Mary had given expression, her heart being opened by the grace that was in Him.

Man may sympathise: it is the expression of his powerlessness. Jesus enters into the affliction of mortal man, puts Himself under the burden of death that weighs upon man (and that more thoroughly than man himself can do), but He takes it away with its cause. He does more than take it away; He brings in the power that is able to take it away. This is the glory of God. When Christ is present, if we die, we do not die for death, but for life: we die that we may live in the life of God, instead of in the life of man. And wherefore? That the Son of God may be glorified. Death came in by sin; and

man is under the power of death. But this has only given room for our possessing life according to the second Adam, the Son of God, and not according to the first Adam, the sinful man. This is grace. God is glorified in this work of grace, and it is the Son of God whose glory shines brightly forth in this divine work.

And, observe, that this is not grace offered in testimony, it is the exercise of the power of life. Corruption itself is no hindrance to God. Why did Christ come? To bring the words of eternal life to dead man. Now Mary fed upon those words. Martha served cumbered her heart with many things. She believed, she loved Jesus, she received Him into her house: the Lord loved her. Mary listened to Him: this was what He came for; and He had justified her in it. The good part which she had chosen should not be taken from her.

When the Lord arrives, Martha goes of her own accord to meet Him. She withdraws when Jesus speaks to her of the present power of life. We are ill at ease when, although Christians, we feel unable to apprehend the meaning of the Lord's words, or of what His people say to us. Martha felt that this was rather Mary's part than hers. She goes away and calls her sister, saying, that the Master (He who taught observe this name that she gives Him) was come, and called for her. It was her own conscience that was to her the voice of Christ. Mary instantly arises and comes to Him. She understood no more than Martha. Her heart pours out its need at the feet of Jesus, where she had heard His words and learnt His love and grace; and Jesus asks the way to the grave. To Martha, ever occupied with circumstances, her brother stank already.

Afterwards (Martha served, and Lazarus was present), Mary anoints the Lord, in the instinctive sense of what was going on; for they were consulting to put Him to death. Her heart, taught by love to the Lord, felt the enmity of the Jews; and her affection, stimulated by deep gratitude, expends on Him the most costly thing she had. Those present blame her; Jesus again takes her part. It might not be reasonable, but she had apprehended His position. What a lesson! What a blessed family was this at Bethany, in which the heart of Jesus found (as far as could be on earth) a relief that His love accepted! With what love have we to do! Alas, with what hatred! for we see in this Gospel the dreadful opposition between man and God.

There is an interesting point to be observed here before we pass on. The Holy Ghost has recorded an incident, in which the momentary but guilty unbelief of Thomas was covered by the Lord's grace. It was needful to relate it; but the Holy Ghost has taken care to shew us, that Thomas loved the Lord, and was ready, at heart, to die with Him. We have other instances of the same kind. Paul says, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry." Poor Mark! this was necessary on account of what took place at Perga. Barnabas also has the same place in the apostle's affection and remembrance. We are weak: God does not hide it from us; but He throws the testimony of His grace over the feeblest of His servants.

But to continue. Caiaphas, the chief of the Jews, as high priest, proposes the death of Jesus, because He had restored Lazarus to life. And from that day they conspire against Him. Jesus yields to it. He came to give His life a ransom for many. He goes on to fulfil the work His love had undertaken, in accordance with His Father's will, whatever might be the devices and the malice of men. The work of life and Or death, of Satan and of God, were face to face. But the counsels of God were being accomplished in grace, whatever the means might be. Jesus devotes Himself to the work by which they were to be fulfilled. Having shewn the power of resurrection and of life in Himself, He is again, when the time comes, quietly in the place to which His service led Him; but He no longer goes in the same manner as before into the temple. He goes thither indeed; but the question between God and man was morally settled already.

Note #40

It is very striking to see the Lord in the lowliness of obedient service, allowing evil to have its full way in man's failure (death) and Satan's power, till His Father's will called Him to meet it. Then no danger hinders, and then He is the resurrection and the life in personal presence and power, and then giving Himself being such, up to death for us.

Note #41

Christ took human life in grace and sinless; and as alive in this life He took sin upon Him. Sin belongs, so to speak, to this life in which Christ knew no sin,

but was made sin for us. But He dies He quits this life. He is dead to sin; He has done with sin in having done with the life to which sin belonged, not in Him indeed but in us, and alive in which He was made sin for us. Raised up again by the power of God, He lives in a new condition, into which sin cannot enter, being left behind with the life that He left. Faith brings us into it by grace. It has been pretended that these thoughts affect the divine and eternal life which was in Christ. But this is all idle and evil cavil. Even in an unconverted sinner, dying or laying down life has nothing to do with ceasing to exist as to the life of the man within. All live to God, and divine life in Christ never could cease or be changed. He never laid that down, but in the power of that, laid down His life as He possessed it here as man, to take it up in an entirely new way in resurrection beyond the grave. The cavil is a very evil cavil. In this edition I have changed nothing in this note, but have added a few words in the hope that it may be clear to all. The doctrine itself is vital truth. In the text I have erased or altered a part for another reason, namely, that there was confusion between the divine power of life in Christ, and God's raising Him viewed as a dead man from the grave. Both are true and blessedly so, but they are different and were here confounded together. In Ephesians Christ as man is raised by God. In John it is the divine and quickening power in Himself.

Note #42

Resurrection has a double character: divine power, which He could exercise and did exercise as to Himself (Joh 2:19), and here as to Lazarus, both the proof of divine sonship; and the deliverance of a dead man from his state of death. Thus God raised Christ from the dead, so here Christ raises Lazarus. In Christ's resurrection both were united in His own Person. Here, of course, they were separate. But Christ has life in Himself and that in divine power. But He laid down His life in grace. We are quickened together with Him in Ephesians 2. But it seems avoided saying, He was quickened, when speaking of Him alone in chapter 1.

Note #43

The cavil I have referred to in the note to page 345 sanctions (most unwittingly, I gladly admit) the pestiferous doctrine of annihilation, as if

laying down life, or death, that is the end of natural life, were ceasing to exist. I notice it, because this form of evil doctrine is one very current now. It subverts the whole substance of Christianity.

Note #44

Observe the sense which the apostle had of the power of this life, when he says, "That mortality might be swallowed up of life." Consider, in this point of view, the first five chapters of 2 Corinthians.

John Chapter 12

His place (chapter 12) now is with the remnant, where His heart found rest the house of Bethany. We have, in this family, a sample of the true remnant of Israel, three different cases with regard to their position before God. Martha had faith which, no doubt, attached her to Christ, but which did not go beyond that which was needed for the kingdom. Those who will be spared for the earth in the last days will have the same. Their faith will at length acknowledge Christ the Son of God. Lazarus was there, living by that power which could have also raised up all the dead saints in the same way, [See Note #45] which, by grace, at the last day, will call up Israel, morally, from their state of death. In a word, we find the remnant, who will not die, spared through true faith (but faith in a living Saviour, who should deliver Israel), and those who shall be brought back as from the dead, to enjoy the kingdom. Martha served; Jesus is in company with them; Lazarus sits at the table with Him.

But there was also the representative of another class. Mary, who had drunk at the fountain of truth, and had received that living water into her heart, had understood that there was something more than the hope and the blessing of Israel namely, Jesus Himself. She does that which is suitable to Jesus in His rejection to Him who is the resurrection before He is our life. Her heart associates her with that act of His, and she anoints Him for His burial. To her it is Jesus Himself who is in question and Jesus rejected; and faith takes its place in that which was the seed of the assembly, still hidden in the soil of Israel and of this world, but which, in the resurrection, would come forth in all the beauty of the life of God of eternal life. It is a faith that expends itself on Him, on His body, in which He was about to undergo the

penalty of sin for our salvation. The selfishness of unbelief, betraying its sin in its contempt of Christ, and in its indifference, gives the Lord occasion to attach its true value to this action of His beloved disciple. Her anointing His feet is pointed out here, as shewing that all that was of Christ, that which was Christ, had to her a value which prevented her regarding anything else. This is a we appreciation of Christ. The faith that knows His love which passes knowledge this kind of faith is a sweet odour in the whole house. And God remembers it according to His grace. Jesus understood her: that was all she wanted. He justifies her: who should rise up against her? This scene is over, and the course of events is resumed.

The enmity of the Jews (alas! that of man's heart, thus given up to itself, and consequently to the enemy who is a murderer by nature and the enemy of God an enemy that nothing merely human can subdue) would fain kill Lazarus also. Man is indeed capable of this: but capable of what? Everything yields to hatred to this kind of hatred of God who manifests Himself. But for this it would in fact be inconceivable. They must now either believe in Jesus or reject Him: for His power was so evident that they must do the one or the other a man publicly raised from the dead after four days, and alive among the people, left no longer any possibility of indecision. Jesus knew it divinely. He presents Himself as King of Israel to assert His rights, and to offer salvation and the promised glory to the people and to Jerusalem. [See Note #46] The people understand this. It must be a deliberate rejection, as the Pharisees are well aware. But the hour was come: and although they could do nothing, for the world went after Him, Jesus is put to death, for "he gave himself."

The second testimony of God to Christ has now been borne to Him, as the true Son of David. He has been witnessed to as the Son of God in raising Lazarus (Joh 11:4), and Son of David in riding into Jerusalem on the ass's colt. There was yet another title to be acknowledged. As Son of man He is to possess all the kingdoms of the earth. The Greeks [See Note #47] come (for His fame had gone abroad), and desire to see Him. Jesus says, "The hour is come for the Son of man to be glorified." But now He returns to the thoughts of which Mary's ointment was the expression to His heart. He should have been received as the Son of David; but, in taking His place as

the Son of man, a very different thing necessarily opens before Him. How could He be seen as Son of man, coming in the clouds of heaven to take possession of all things according to the counsels of God, without dying? If His human service on earth was finished, and He had gone out free, calling, if need were, for twelve legions of angels, no one could have had any part with Him: He would have remained alone. "Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." If Christ takes His heavenly glory, and is not alone in it, He dies to attain it, and to bring with Him the souls whom God has given Him. In fact the hour was come: it could no longer tarry. Everything was now ready for the end of the trial of this world, of man, of Israel; and, above all, the counsels of God were being fulfilled.

Outwardly all was testimony to His glory. He enters Jerusalem in triumph the multitude proclaiming Him King. What were the Romans about? They were silent before God. The Greeks came to seek Him. All is ready for the glory of the Son of man. But the heart of Jesus well knew that for this glory for the accomplishment of the work of God, for His having one human being with Him in the glory, for the granary of God to be filled according to the counsels of grace He must die. No other way for guilty souls to come to God. That which Mary's affection foresaw, Jesus knows according to the truth; and according to the mind of God He feels it, and submits to it. And the Father responds at this solemn moment, by bearing testimony to the glorious effect of that which His sovereign majesty at the same time required majesty which Jesus fully glorified by His obedience: and who could do this, excepting Him who, by that obedience, brought in the love and the power of God which accomplished it?

In that which follows, the Lord introduces a great principle connected with the truth contained in His sacrifice. There was no link between the natural life of man and God. If in the man Christ Jesus there was a life in entire harmony with God, He must needs lay it down on account of this condition of man. Being of God, He could not remain in connection with man. Man would not have it. Jesus would rather die than not fulfil His service by glorifying God than not be obedient unto the end. But if any one loved his life of this world, he lost it; for it was not in connection with God. If any one

by grace hated it separated himself in heart from this principle of alienation from God, and devoted his life to Him, he would have it in the new and eternal state. To serve Jesus therefore was to follow Him; and where He was going, there should His servant be. The result of association of heart with Jesus here, shewn in following Him, passes out of this world, as He was indeed doing, and Messiah blessings, into the heavenly and eternal glory of Christ. If any one served Him, the Father would remember it, and would honour him. All this is said in view of His death, the thought of which comes over His mind; and His soul is troubled. And in the just dread of that hour which, in itself, is the judgment of God, and the end of man as God created him here on earth, He asks God to deliver Him from that hour. And, in truth, He had come not then to be (although He was) the Messiah, not then (although it was His right) to take the kingdom; but He had come for this very hour by dying to glorify His Father. This He desires, involve what it may. "Father, glorify thy name," is His only prayer. This is perfectness He feels what death is: there would have been no sacrifice if He had not felt it. But while feeling it, His only desire was to glorify His Father. If that cost Him everything, the work was perfect in proportion.

Perfect in this desire, and that unto death, the Father could not but answer Him In His answer, as it appears to me, the Father announces the resurrection. But what grace, what marvel, to be admitted into such communications! The heart is astounded, while filled with worship and with grace, in beholding the perfection of Jesus, the Son of God, unto death; that is to say, absolute; and in seeing Him, with the full sense of what death was, seeking the sole glory of the Father; and the Father answering an answer morally needful to this sacrifice of the Son, and to His own glory. Thus He said, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." I believe that He had glorified it in the resurrection of Lazarus; [See Note #48] He would do so again in the resurrection of Christ a glorious resurrection which, in itself, implied ours; even as the Lord had said, without naming His own.

Let us now observe the connection of the truths spoken of in this remarkable passage. The hour was come for the glory of the Son of man. But, in order to this, it needed that the precious corn of wheat should fall into the ground and die; else it would remain alone. This was the universal

principle. The natural life of this world in us had no part with God. Jesus must be followed. We should thus be with Him: this was serving Him. Thus also we should be honoured by the Father. Christ, for Himself, looks death in the face, and feels all its import. Nevertheless He gives Himself to one only thing the glory of His Father. The Father answers Him in this. His desire should be fulfilled. He should not be without an answer to His perfection. The people hear it as the voice of the Lord God, as described in the Psalms. Christ (who, in all this, had put Himself entirely aside, had spoken only of the glory of His followers and of His Father) declares that this voice came for the people's sake, in order that they might understand what He was for their salvation. Then there opens before Him, who had thus put Himself aside and submitted to everything for His Father's sake, not the future glory, but the value, the import, the glory, of the work He was about to do. The principles of which we have spoken are here brought to the central point of their development. In His death the world was judged: Satan was its prince, and he is cast out: in appearance it is Christ who was so. By death He morally and judicially destroyed him who had the power of death. It was the total and entire annihilation of all the rights of the enemy, over whomsoever and whatsoever it might be, when the Son of God and Son of man bore the judgment of God as man in obedience unto death. All the rights that Satan possessed through man's disobedience and the judgment of God upon it, were only rights in virtue of the claims of God upon man, and come back to Christ alone. And being lifted up between God and the world, in obedience, on the cross, bearing that which was due to sin, Christ became the point of attraction for all men living, that through Him they might draw nigh to God. While living, Jesus ought to have been owned as the Messiah of promise; lifted up from the earth as a victim before God, being no longer of the earth as living upon it, He was the point of attraction towards God for all those who, living on earth, were alienated from God, as we have seen, that they might come to Him there (by grace), and have life through the Saviour's death. Jesus warns the people that it was only for a little time that He, the light of the world, would remain with them. They should believe while it was yet time. Soon would the darkness come, and they would not know whither they went. We see that, whatever might be the thoughts that occupy His

heart, the love of Jesus never grows cold. He thinks of those around Him of men according to their need.

Nevertheless they did not believe according to the testimony of the prophet, given in view of His humiliation unto death, given in sight of the vision of His divine glory, which could but bring judgment on a rebellious people (Isa. 53 and 6).

Nevertheless, such is grace, His humiliation should be their salvation; and, in the glory that judged them, God would remember the counsels of His grace, as sure a fruit of that glory as was the judgment which the Holy, Holy, Holy, Jehovah of Hosts must pronounce against evil a judgment suspended, by His longsuffering, during centuries, but now fulfilled when these last efforts of His mercy were despised and rejected. They preferred the praise of men.

At last Jesus declares that which His coming really was that in fact, they who believed in Him, in the Jesus whom they saw on the earth, believed in His Father, and saw His Father. He was come as the light, and they who believed should not walk in darkness. He did not judge; He was come to save; but the word which He had spoken should judge those who heard, for it was the Father's word, and it was life everlasting.

Note #45

I speak only of the power needed to produce this effect; for in truth, the sinful condition of man, whether Jew or Gentile, required expiation; and there would have been no saints to call out from among the dead, if the grace of God had not acted by virtue, and in view, of that expiation. I speak merely of the power that dwelt in the Person of Christ, that overcame all the power of death, which could do nothing against the Son of God. But man's condition, which made the death of Christ necessary, was only demonstrated by His rejection, which proved that all means were unavailing to bring back man, as he was, to God.

Note #46

In this Gospel the occasion of the assembling of the crowd to meet and to accompany Jesus, was the raising of Lazarus the testimony to His being Son of God.

Note #47

Greeks properly speaking: not Hellenists, that is, Jews who spoke the Greek language, and belonged to foreign countries, being of the dispersion.

Note #48

Resurrection follows the condition of Christ. Lazarus was raised while Christ was living here in the flesh, and Lazarus is raised to life in the flesh. When Christ in glory raises us, He will raise us in glory. And even now that Christ is hid in God, our life is hid with Him there.

John Chapter 13

Now, then, the Lord has taken His place as going to the Father. The time was come for it. He takes His place above, according to the counsels of God, and is no longer in connection with a world that had already rejected Him; but He loves His own unto the end. Two things are present to Him: on the one hand, sin taking the form most painful to His heart; and on the other, the sense of all glory being given to Him as man, and of whence He came and whither He was going: that is, His personal and heavenly character in relationship with God, and the glory that was given Him. He came from God and went to God; and the Father had put all things into His hands.

But neither His entrance into glory, nor the heartlessness of man's sin, takes His heart away from His disciples or even from their wants. Only He exercises His love, to put them in connection with Himself in the new position He was creating for them by entering thus into it. He could no longer remain with them on earth; and if He left them, and must leave them, He would not give them up, but fit them for being where He was. He loved them with a love that nothing stopped. It went on to perfect its results; and He must fit them to be with Him. Blessed change that love accomplished even from His being with them here below! They were to have a part with Him who came from God and went to God, and into whose hands the Father had put all things; but then they must be fit to be with Him there. To this end He is still their servant in love, and even more so than ever. No doubt He had been so in His perfect grace, but it was while among them. They were thus in a certain sense companions. They were all supping together here at

the same table. But He quits this position, as He did His personal association with His disciples by ascending to heaven, by going to God. But, if He does, He still girds Himself for their service, and takes water [See Note #49] to wash their feet. Although in heaven, He is still serving us. [See Note #50] The effect of this service is, that the Holy Ghost takes away practically by the word all the defilement that we gather in walking through this world of sin. On our way we come in contact with this world that rejected Christ. Our Advocate on high (compare 1 John 2), He cleanses us from its defilement by the Holy Ghost and the word; He cleanses us in view of the relationships with God His Father, unto which He has brought us by entering into them Himself as man on high.

A purity was needed that should befit the presence of God, for He was going there. However it is only the feet that are in question. The priests that served God in the tabernacle were washed at their consecration. That washing was not repeated. So, when once spiritually renewed by the word, this is not repeated for us. In "he that is washed" it is a different word from "save to wash his feet." The first is bathing the whole body; the latter washing hands or feet. We need the latter continually, but are not, once born of water by the word, washed over again, any more than the priests' first consecration was repeated. The priests washed their hands and their feet every time they engaged in service that they drew near to God. Our Jesus restores communion and power to serve God, when we have lost it. He does it, and with a view to communion and service; for before God we are entirely clean personally. The service was the service of Christ of His love. He wiped their feet with the towel wherewith He was girded (a circumstance expressive of service). The means of purification was water the word, applied by the Holy Ghost. Peter shrinks from the idea of Christ thus humbling Himself. but we must submit to this thought, that our sin is such that nothing less than the humiliation of Christ can in any sense cleanse us from it. Nothing else will make us really know the perfect and dazzling purity of God, or the love and devotedness of Jesus: and in the realisation of these consists the having a heart sanctified for the presence of God. Peter, then, would have the Lord to wash also his hands and his head. But this is already accomplished. If we are His we are born again and cleansed by the word which He has already applied to our souls; only we defile our feet in

walking. It is after the pattern of this service of Christ in grace that we are to act with regard to our brethren.

Judas was not clean; he had not been born again, was not clean through the word Jesus had spoken. Nevertheless, being sent of the Lord, they who had received him had received Christ. And this is true also of those whom He sends by His Spirit. This thought brings the treachery of Judas before the Lord's mind; His soul is troubled at the thought, and He unburdens His heart by declaring it to His disciples. What His heart is occupied with here is, not His knowledge of the individual, but of the fact that one of them should do it, one of those who had been His companions.

Therefore it was, because of His saying this, that the disciples looked upon one another. Now there was one near Him, the disciple whom Jesus loved; for we have, in all this part of the Gospel of John, the testimony of grace that answers to the diverse forms of malice and wickedness in man. This love of Jesus had formed the heart of John had given him confidingness and constancy of affection; and consequently, without any other motive than this, he was near enough to Jesus to receive communications from Him. It was not in order to receive them that he placed himself close to Jesus: he was there because he loved the Lord, whose own love had thus attached him to Himself; but, being there, he was able to receive them. It is thus that we may still learn of Him.

John Chapter 14

The Lord now begins to discourse with them in view of His departure. He was going where they could not come. To human sight they would be left alone upon the earth. It is to the sense of this apparently desolate condition that the Lord addresses Himself, shewing them that He was an object for faith, even as God was. In doing this, He opens to them the whole truth with respect to their condition. His work is not the subject treated of, but their position by virtue of that work. His Person should have been for them the key to that position, and would be so now: the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who should come, would be the power by which they should enjoy it, and indeed more yet.

To Peter's question, "Whither goest thou?" the Lord replies. Only when the desire of the flesh seeks to enter into the path on which Jesus was then entering, the Lord could but say that the strength of the flesh was unavailing there; for, in fact, he proposed to follow Christ in death. Poor Peter!

But when the Lord has written the sentence of death upon the flesh for us, by revealing its impotency, He can then (chapter 14) reveal that which is beyond it for faith; and that which belongs to us through His death throws its light back, and teaches who He was, even when on earth, and always, before the world was. He did but return to the place from which He came. But He begins with His disciples where they were, and meets the need of their hearts by explaining to them in what manner better, in a certain sense, than by following Him here below they should be with Him when absent where He would be. They did not see God corporeally present with them: to enjoy His presence they believed in Him; It was to be the same thing with regard to Jesus. They were to believe in Him. He did not forsake them in going away, as though there were only room for Himself in His Father's house. (He alludes to the temple as a figure.) There was room for them all. The going thither, observe, was still His thought He is not here as the Messiah. We see Him in the relationships in which He stood according to the eternal truths of God. He had always His departure in view: had there been no room for them, He would have told them so. Their place was with Him. But He was going to prepare a place for them. Without presenting redemption there, and presenting Himself as the new man according to the power of that redemption, there was no place prepared in heaven. He enters it in the power of that life which should bring them in also. But they should not go alone to rejoin Him, nor would He rejoin them down here. Heaven, not earth, was in question. Nor would He simply send others for them; but as those He dearly valued, He would come for them Himself, and receive them unto Himself, that where He was, there should they be also. He would come from the Father's throne: there, of course, they cannot sit; but He will receive them there, where He shall be in glory before the Father. They should be with Him a far more excellent position than His remaining with them here below, even as Messiah in glory on the earth.

Now, also, having said where He was going, that is, to His Father (and speaking according to the effect of His death for them), He tells them that they knew whither He was going, and the way. For He was going to the Father, and they had seen the Father in seeing Him; and thus, having seen the Father in Him, they knew the way; for in coming to Him, they came to the Father, who was in Him as He was in the Father. He was, then, Himself the way. Therefore He reproaches Philip with not having known Him. He had been long with them, as the revelation in His own Person of the Father; and they ought to have known Him, and to have seen that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him, and thus have known where He was going, for it was to the Father. He had declared the name of the Father; and if they were unable to see the Father in Him, or to be convinced of it by His words, they ought to have known it by His works; for the Father who dwelt in Him He it was who did the works. This depended on His own Person, being still in the world; but a striking proof was connected with His departure. After He was gone, they would do even greater works than He did, because they should act in connection with His greater nearness to the Father. This was requisite to His glory. It was even unlimited. He placed them in immediate connection with the Father by the power of His work and of His name; and whatsoever they should ask the Father in His name, Christ Himself would do it for them. Their request should be heard and granted by the Father shewing what nearness He had acquired for them; and He (Christ) would do all they should ask. For the power of the Son was not, and could not be, wanting to the Father's will: there was no limit to His power.

But this led to another subject. If they loved Him, it was to be shewn, not in regrets, but in keeping His commandments. They were to walk in obedience. This characterises discipleship up to the present time. Love desires to be with Him, but shews itself by obeying His commands; for Christ also has a right to command. On the other hand He would seek their good on high, and another blessing should be granted them; namely, the Holy Ghost Himself, who should never leave them, as Christ was about to do. The world could not receive Him. Christ, the Son, had been shewn to the eyes of the world, and ought to have been received by it. The Holy Ghost would act, being invisible; for by the rejection of Christ, it was all over with the world in its natural and creature relationships with God. But the Holy Ghost should be

known by the disciples; for He should not only remain with them, as Christ could not, but be in them, not with them as He was. The Holy Ghost would not be seen then or known by the world.

Until now, in His discourse, He had led His disciples to follow Him (in spirit) on high, through the knowledge which acquaintance with His Person (in which the Father was revealed) gave them of whither He was going, and of the way. He was Himself the way, as we have seen. He was the truth itself, in the revelation (and the perfect revelation) of God and of the soul's relationship to Him; and, indeed, of the real condition and character of all things, by bringing out the perfect light of God in His own Person who revealed Him. He was the life, in which God and the truth could thus be known. Men came by Him; they found the Father revealed in Him; and they possessed in Him that which enabled them to enjoy, and in the reception of which they came in fact to, the Father.

But, now, it is not what is objective which He presents; not the Father in Him (which they ought to have known) and He in the Father, when here below. He does not, therefore, raise their thoughts to the Father through Himself and in Himself, and He in the Father in heaven. He sets before them that which should be given them down here the stream of blessing that should flow for them in this world, by virtue of that which Jesus was, and was for them, in heaven. The Holy Ghost once introduced as sent, the Lord says, "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you." His presence, in spirit, here below, is the consolation of His people. They should see Him; and this is much more true than seeing Him with the eyes of flesh. Yes, more true; it is knowing Him in a much more real way, even though by grace they had believed in Him as the Christ, the Son of God. And, moreover, this spiritual sight of Christ by the heart, through the presence of the Holy Ghost, is connected with life. "Because I live, ye shall live also." We see Him, because we have life, and this life is in Him, and He in this life. "This life is in the Son." It is as sure as His duration. It is derived from Him. Because He lives, we shall live. Our life is, in everything, the manifestation of Himself who is our life. Even as the apostle expresses it, "That the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal bodies." Alas! the flesh resists; but this is our life in Christ.

But this is not all. The Holy Ghost dwelling in us, we know that we are in Christ. [See Note #52] "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." It is not "the Father in me [which, however, was always true], and I in him" words, the first of which, here omitted, expressed the reality of His manifestation of the Father here on earth. The Lord only expresses that which belongs to His being really and divinely one with the Father "I am in my Father." It is this last part of the truth (implied, doubtless, in the other when rightly understood) of which the Lord here speaks. It could not really be so; but men might imagine such a thing as a manifestation of God in a man, without this man being really such so truly God, that is to say, in Himself that it must also be said, He is in the Father. People dream of such things; they speak of the manifestation of God in flesh. We speak of God manifest in the flesh. But here all ambiguity is obviated He was in the Father, and it is this part of the truth which is repeated here; adding to it, in virtue of the presence of the Holy Ghost, that while the disciples should indeed fully know the divine Person of Jesus, they should moreover know that they were themselves in Him. He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Jesus did not say that they ought to have known this while He was with them on earth. They ought to have known that the Father was in Him and He in the Father. But in that He was alone. The disciples, however, having received the Holy Ghost, should know their own being in Him a union of which the Holy Ghost is the strength and the bond. The life of Christ flows from Him in us. He is in the Father, we in Him, and He also in us, according to the power of the presence of the Holy Ghost.

John Chapter 15

The beginning of this chapter, and that which relates to the vine, belongs to the earthly portion to that which Jesus was on earth to His relationship with His disciples as on the earth, and does not go beyond that position.

"I am the true vine." Jehovah had planted a vine brought out of Egypt (Psa 80:8). This is Israel after the flesh; but it was not the true Vine. The true Vine was His Son, whom He brought up out of Egypt Jesus. [See Note #55] He presents Himself thus to His disciples. Here it is not that which He will be after His departure; He was this upon earth, and distinctively upon earth. We do not speak of planting vines in heaven, nor of pruning branches there.

The disciples would have considered Him as the most excellent branch of the Vine; but thus He would have been only a member of Israel, whereas He was Himself the vessel, the source of blessing, according to the promises of God. The true Vine, therefore, is not Israel; quite the contrary, it is Christ in contrast with Israel, but Christ planted on earth, taking Israel's place, as the true Vine. The Father cultivates this plant, evidently on the earth. There is no need of a husbandman in heaven. Those who are attached to Christ, as the remnant of Israel, the disciples, need this culture. It is on the earth that fruit-bearing is looked for. The Lord therefore says to them, "Ye are clean already, through the word which I have spoken unto you"; "Ye are the branches." Judas, perhaps it may be said, was taken away, so the disciples who walked no more with Him. The others should be proved and cleansed, that they might bear more fruit.

I do not doubt that this relationship, in principle and in a general analogy, still subsists. Those who make a profession, who attach themselves to Christ in order to follow Him, will, if there is life, be cleansed; if not, that which they have will be taken away. Observe therefore here, that the Lord speaks only of His word that of the true prophet and of judgment, whether in discipline or in cutting off. Consequently He speaks not of the power of God, but of the responsibility of man a responsibility which man will certainly not be able to meet without grace; but which has nevertheless that character of personal responsibility here.

Jesus was the source of all their strength. They were to abide in Him; thus for this is the order He would abide in them. We have seen this in chapter 14. He does not speak here of the sovereign exercise of love in salvation, but of the government of children by their Father; so that blessing depends on walk (Joh 15:21; Joh 15:23). Here the husbandman seeks for fruit; but the instruction given presents entire dependence on the Vine as the means of producing it. And He shews the disciples that, walking on earth, they should be pruned by the Father, and a man (for in Verse 6 (Joh 15:6) He carefully changes the expression, for He knew the disciples and had pronounced them already clean) a man, any one who bore no fruit, would be cut off. For the subject here is not that relationship with Christ in heaven by the Holy Ghost, which cannot be broken, but of that link which even then was

formed here below, which might be vital and eternal, or which might not. Fruit should be the proof.

In the former vine this was not necessary; they were Jews by birth, they were circumcised, they kept the ordinances, and abode in the vine as good branches, without bearing any fruit at all. They were only cut off from Israel for wilful violation of the law. Here it is not a relationship with Jehovah founded on the circumstance of being born of a certain family. That which is looked for is the glorifying the Father by fruit-bearing. It is this which will shew that they are the disciples of Him who has borne so much.

Christ, then, was the true Vine; the Father, the Husbandman; the eleven were the branches. They were to abide in Him, which is realised by not thinking to produce any fruit except as in Him, looking to Him first. Christ precedes fruit. It is dependence, practical habitual nearness of heart to Him, and trust in Him, being attached to Him through dependence on Him. In this way Christ in them would be a constant source of strength and of fruit. He would be in them. Out of Him they could do nothing. If, by abiding in Him, they had the strength of His presence, they should bear much fruit.

Moreover, "if a man" (He does not say "they"; He knew them as true branches and clean) did not abide in Him, he should be cast forth to be burnt. Again, if they abode in Him (that is, if there was the constant dependence that draws from the source), and if the words of Christ abode in them, directing their hearts and thoughts, they should command the resources of divine power; they should ask what they would, and it should be done. But, further, the Father had loved the Son divinely while He dwelt on earth. Jesus did the same with regard to them. They were to abide in His love. In the former Verses it was in Him, here it is in His love. [See Note #56] By keeping His Father's commandments, He had abode in His love; by keeping the commandments of Jesus, they should abide in His. Dependence (which implies confidence, and reference to Him on whom we depend for strength, as unable to do anything without Him, and so clinging close to Him) and obedience, are the two great principles of practical life here below. Thus Jesus walked as man: He knew by experience the true path for His disciples. The commandments of His Father were the expression of what the Father was; by keeping them in the spirit of obedience, Jesus had ever

walked in the communion of His love; had maintained communion with Himself. The commandments of Jesus when on earth were the expression of what He was, divinely perfect in the path of man. By walking in them, His disciples should be in the communion of His love. The Lord spoke these things to His disciples, in order that His joy [See Note #57] should abide in them, and that their joy should be full.

We see that it is not the salvation of a sinner that is the subject treated of here, but the path of a disciple, in order that he may fully enjoy the love of Christ, and that his heart may be unclouded in the place where joy is found.

Neither is the question entered on here, whether a real believer can be separated from God, because the Lord makes obedience the means of abiding in His love. Assuredly He could not lose the favour of His Father, or cease to be the object of His love. That was out of the question; and yet He says, "I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." But this was the divine path in which He enjoyed it. It is the walk and the strength of a disciple that is spoken of, and not the means of salvation.

John Chapter 16

In chapter 16 a further step is taken in the revelation of this grace. The Holy Ghost is looked upon as already here below.

In this chapter the Lord declares that He has set forth all His instruction with regard to His departure; their sufferings in the world as holding His place; their joy, as being in the same relationship to Him as that in which He had been while on earth to His Father; their knowledge of the fact that He was in the Father and they in Him, and He Himself in them; the gift of the Holy Ghost, in order to prepare them for all that would happen when He was gone, that they might not be offended. For they should be cast out of the synagogues, and he who should kill them would think that he was serving God. This would be the case with those who, resting in their old doctrines as a form, and rejecting the light, would only use the form of truth by which they accredited the flesh as orthodox to resist the light which, according to the Spirit, would judge the flesh. This would they do, because they knew neither the Father nor Jesus, the Son of the Father. It is fresh truth which tests the soul, and faith. Old truth, generally received and by which a body

of people are distinguished from those around them, may be a subject of pride to the flesh, even where it is the truth, as was the case with the Jews. But fresh truth is a question of faith in its source: there is not the support of a body accredited by it, but the cross of hostility and isolation. They thought they served God. They knew not the Father and the Son.

Nature is occupied with that which it loses. Faith looks at the future into which God leads. Precious thought! Nature acted in the disciples: they loved Jesus; they grieved at His going away. We can understand this. But faith would not have stopped there. If they had apprehended the necessary glory of the Person of Jesus; if their affection, animated by faith, had thought of Him and not of themselves, they would have asked, "Whither goest thou?" Nevertheless He who thought of them assures them that it would be gain to them even to lose Him. Glorious fruit of the ways of God! Their gain would be in this, that the Comforter should be here on earth with them and in them. Here, observe, Jesus does not speak of the Father. It was the Comforter here below in His stead, to maintain the testimony of His love for the disciples, and His relationship to them. Christ was going away: for if He went not away, the Comforter would not come; but if He departed, He would send Him. When He was come, He would act in demonstration of the truth with regard to the world that rejected Christ and persecuted His disciples; and He would act for blessing in the disciples themselves.

With regard to the world, the Comforter had one only subject of testimony, in order to demonstrate the sin of the world. It has not believed in Jesus in the Son. Doubtless there was sin of every kind, and, to speak truth, nothing but sin sin that deserved judgment; and in the work of conversion, He brings these sins home to the soul. But the rejection of Christ put the whole world under one common judgment. No doubt every one shall answer for his sins; and the Holy Ghost makes me feel them. But, as a system responsible to God, the world had rejected His Son. This was the ground on which God dealt with the world now; this it was which made manifest the heart of man. It was the demonstration that, God being fully revealed in love such as He was, man would not receive Him. He came, not imputing their trespasses unto them; but they rejected Him. The presence of Jesus was not the Son of God Himself manifested in His glory, from which man might shrink with fear,

though he could not escape; it was what He was morally, in His nature, in His character. Man hated Him: all testimony to bring man to God was unavailing. The plainer the testimony, the more he turned from it and opposed it. The demonstration of the sin of the world was its having rejected Christ. Terrible testimony, that God in goodness should excite detestation because He was perfect, and perfectly good! Such is man. The testimony of the Holy Ghost to the world, as God's to Cain of old, would be, Where is my Son? It was not that man was guilty; that he was when Christ came; but he was lost, the tree was bad. [See Note #62]

But this was God's path to something altogether different the demonstration of righteousness, in that Christ went to His Father, and the world saw Him no more. It was the result of Christ's rejection. Human righteousness there was none. Man's sin was proved by the rejection of Christ. The cross was indeed judgment executed upon sin. And in that sense it was righteousness; but in this world it was the only righteous One condemned by man and forsaken by God; it was not the manifestation of righteousness. It was a final judicial separation between man and God (see chapters 11 and Joh 12:31). If Christ had been delivered there, and had become the King of Israel, this would not have been an adequate consequence of His having glorified God. Having glorified God His Father, He was going to sit at His right hand, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, to be glorified in God Himself, to sit on the Father's throne. To set Him there was divine righteousness (see Joh 13:31-32 and Joh 17:1, Joh 17:4-5). This same righteousness deprived the world, as it is, of Jesus for ever. Man saw Him no more. Righteousness in favour of men was in Christ at God's right hand in judgment as to the world, in that it had lost Him hopelessly and for ever.

Moreover Satan had been proved to be the prince of this world by leading all men against the Lord Jesus. To accomplish the purposes of God in grace, Jesus does not resist. He gives Himself up to death. He who has the power of death committed himself thoroughly. In his desire to ruin man he had to hazard everything in his enterprise against the Prince of Life. He was able to associate the whole world with himself in this, Jew and Gentile, priest and people, governor, soldier, and subject. The world was there, headed by its

prince, on that solemn day. The enemy had everything at stake, and the world was with him. But Christ has risen, He has ascended to His Father, and has sent down the Holy Ghost. All the motives that govern the world, and the power by which Satan held men captive, are shewn to be of him; he is judged. The power of the Holy Ghost is the testimony of this, and surmounts all the powers of the enemy. The world is not yet judged, that is, the judgment executed it will be in another manner; but it is morally, its prince is judged. All its motives, religious and irreligious, have led it to reject Christ, placing it under Satan's power. It is in that character that he has been judged; for he led the world against Him who is manifested to be the Son of God by the presence of the Holy Ghost consequent on His breaking the power of Satan in death.

All this took place through the presence on earth of the Holy Ghost, sent down by Christ. His presence in itself was the demonstration of these three things. For, if the Holy Ghost was here, it was because the world had rejected the Son of God. Righteousness was evidenced by Jesus being at the right hand of God, of which the presence of the Holy Ghost was the proof, as well as in the fact that the world had lost Him. Now the world which rejected Him was not outwardly judged, but, Satan having led it to reject the Son, the presence of the Holy Ghost proved that Jesus had destroyed the power of death; that he who had possessed that power was thus judged; that he had shewn himself to be the enemy of Him whom the Father owned; that his power was gone, and victory belonged to the Second Adam, when Satan's whole power had been arrayed against the human weakness of Him who in love had yielded to it. But Satan, thus judged, was the prince of this world.

The presence of the Holy Ghost should be the demonstration not of Christ's rights as Messiah, true as they were, but of those truths that related to man to the world, in which Israel was now lost, having rejected the promises, although God would preserve the nation for Himself. But the Holy Ghost was doing something more than demonstrating the condition of the world. He would accomplish a work in the disciples; He would lead them into all truth, and He would shew them things to come; for Jesus had many things to tell them which they were not yet able to bear. When the Holy Ghost

should be in them, He should be their strength in them as well as their teacher; and it would be a wholly different state of things for the disciples. Here He is considered as present on the earth in place of Jesus, and dwelling in the disciples, not as an individual spirit speaking from Himself, but even as Jesus said, "As I hear I judge," with a judgment perfectly divine and heavenly: so the Holy Ghost, acting in the disciples, would speak that which came from above, and of the future, according to divine knowledge. It should be heaven and the future of which He would speak, communicating what was heavenly from above, and revealing events to come upon the earth, the one and the other being witnesses that it was a knowledge which belonged to God. How blessed to have that which He has to give!

But, further, He takes here the place of Christ. Jesus had glorified the Father on earth. The Holy Ghost would glorify Jesus, with reference to the glory that belonged to His Person and to His position. He does not here speak directly of the glory of the Father. The disciples had seen the glory of the life of Christ on earth; the Holy Ghost would unfold to them His glory in that which belonged to Him as glorified with the Father that which was His own.

They would learn "in part." This is man's measure when the things of God are in question, but its extent is declared by the Lord Himself: "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. An that the Father hath is mine: therefore, said I, He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

Thus we have the gift of the Holy Ghost variously presented in connection with Christ. In dependence on His Father, and representing His disciples as gone up from among them, on their behalf, He addresses Himself to the Father; He asks the Father to send the Holy Ghost (Joh 14:16). Afterwards we find that His own name is all powerful. All blessing from the Father comes in His name. It is on His account, and according to the efficacy of His name, of all that in Him is acceptable to the Father, that good comes to us. Thus the Father will send the Holy Ghost in His name (Joh 14:26). And Christ being glorified on high, and having taken His place with His Father, He Himself sends the Holy Ghost (Joh 15:26) from the Father, as proceeding from Him. Finally, the Holy Ghost is present here in this world, in and with the disciples, and He glorifies Jesus, and takes of His and reveals it to His

own (Joh 16:13-15). Here all the glory of the Person of Christ is set forth, as well as the rights belonging to the position He has taken. "All things that the Father hath" are His. He has taken His position according to the eternal counsels of God, in virtue of His work as Son of man. But if He has entered into possession in this character, all that He possesses in it is His, as a Son to whom (being one with the Father) all that the Father has belongs.

There He should be hidden for a while: the disciples should afterwards see Him, for it was only the accomplishment of the ways of God; it was no question of being, as it were, lost by death. He was going to His Father. On this point the disciples understood nothing. The Lord develops the fact and its consequences, without yet shewing them the whole import of what He said. He takes it up on the human and historical side. The world would rejoice at having got rid of Him. Miserable joy! The disciples would lament, although it was the true source of joy for them; but their sorrow should be turned into joy. As testimony, this took place when He shewed Himself to them after His resurrection; it will be fully accomplished when He shall return to receive them unto Himself. But when they had seen Him again, they should understand the relationship in which He has placed them with His Father, they should enjoy it by the Holy Ghost. It should not be as though they could not themselves draw nigh to the Father, while Christ could do so (as Martha said, "I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, he will give it thee"). They might themselves go directly to the Father, who loved them, because they had believed in Jesus, and had received Him when He had humbled Himself in this world of sin (in principle it is always thus); and asking what they would in His name they should receive it, so that their joy might be full in the consciousness of the blessed position of unfailing favour into which they were brought, and of the value of all that they possessed in Christ.

Nevertheless the Lord already declares to them the basis of the truth He came from the Father, He was going away to the Father. The disciples think they understand that which He had thus spoken without a parable. They felt that He had divined their thought, for they had not expressed it to Him. Yet they did not rise really to the height of what He said. He had told them that they had believed in His having come "from God." This they understood; and

that which had taken place had confirmed them in this faith, and they declare their conviction with regard to this truth; but they do not enter into the thought of coming "from the Father," and going away "to the Father." They fancied themselves quite in the light; but they had apprehended nothing that raised them above the effect of Christ's rejection, which the belief that He came from the Father and was going to the Father would have done. Jesus therefore declares to them, that His death would scatter them, and that they would forsake Him. His Father would be with Him; He should not be alone. Nevertheless He had explained all these things to them, in order that they should have peace in Him. In the world that rejected Him they should have tribulation; but He had overcome the world, they might be of good cheer.

This ends the conversation of Jesus with His disciples on earth. In the following chapter He addresses His Father as taking His own place in departing, and giving His disciples theirs (that is, His own), with regard to the Father and to the world, after He had gone away to be glorified with the Father. The whole chapter is essentially putting the disciples in His own place, after laying the ground for it in His own glorifying and work. It is, save the last verses, His place on earth. As He was divinely in heaven, and so shewed a divine heavenly character on earth, so (He being glorified as man in heaven) they, united with Him, were in turn to display the same. Hence we have first the place He personally takes, and the work which entitles them to be in it.

Note #62

Man is judged for what he has done; he is lost by what he is.

John Chapter 17

chapter 17 is divided thus: Joh 17:1-5 relate to Christ Himself, to His taking His position in glory, to His work, and to that glory as belonging to His Person, and the result of His work. Joh 17:1-3 present His new position in two aspects: "glorify thy Son" power over all flesh, for eternal life to those given to Him; Verses 4-5 (Joh 17:4-5), His work and its results. In Joh 17:6-13. He speaks of His disciples as put into this relationship with the Father by His revealing His name to them, and then His having given them the words

which He had Himself received, that they might enjoy all the full blessedness of this relationship. He also prays for them that they may be one as He and the Father were. In Joh 17:14-21, we find their consequent relationship to the world; in Joh 17:20-21, He introduces those who should believe through their means into the enjoyment of their blessing. Joh 17:22-26 make known the result, both future, and in this world, for them: the possession of the glory which Christ Himself had received from the Father to be with Him, enjoying the sight of His glory that the Father's love should be with them here below, even as Christ Himself had been its object and that Christ Himself should be in them. The last three Verses alone (Joh 17:24-26) take the disciples up to heaven as a supplemental truth.

This is a brief summary of this marvellous chapter, in which we are admitted, not to the discourse of Christ with man, but to hear the desires of His heart, when He pours it out to His Father for the blessing of those that are His own. Wonderful grace that permits us to hear these desires, and to understand all the privileges that flow from His thus caring for us, from our being the subject of intercourse between the Father and the Son, of their common love towards us, when Christ expresses His own desires that which He has at heart, and which He presents to the Father as His own personal wishes!

Some explanations may assist in apprehending the meaning of certain passages in this marvellous and precious chapter. May the Spirit of God aid us!

The Lord, whose looks of love had until then been directed towards His disciples on the earth, now lifts His eyes to heaven as He addresses His Father. The hour was come to glorify the Son, in order that from the glory He might glorify the Father. This is, speaking generally, the new position. His career here was finished, and He had to ascend on high. Two things were connected with this power over all flesh, and the gift of eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him. "The head of every man is Christ." Those whom the Father had given Him receive eternal life from Him who has gone up on high. Eternal life was the knowledge of the Father, the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom He had sent. The knowledge of the Almighty gave assurance to the pilgrim of faith; that of Jehovah, the certainty of the

fulfilment of the promises of God to Israel; that of the Father, who sent the Son, Jesus Christ (the Anointed Man and the Saviour), who was that life itself, and so received as a present thing (Jo1 1:1-4), was life eternal. True knowledge here was not outward protection or future hope, but the communication, in life, of communion with the Being thus known to the soul of communion with God Himself fully known as the Father and the Son. Here it is not the divinity of His Person that is before us in Christ, though a divine Person alone could be in such a place and so speak, but the place that He had taken in fulfilling the counsels of God. That which is said of Jesus in this chapter could only be said of One who is God; but the point treated is that of His place in the counsels of God, and not the revelation of His nature. He receives all from His Father He is sent by Him, His Father glorifies Him. [See Note #63]

We see the same truth of the communication of eternal life in connection with His divine nature and His oneness with the Father in Jo1 5:20. Here He fulfils the Father's will, and is dependent on Him in the place that He has taken, and that He is going to take, even in the glory, however glorious His nature may be. So, also, in chapter 5 of our Gospel, He quickens whom He will; here it is those whom the Father has given Him. And the life He gives is realised in the knowledge of the Father, and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

He now declares the conditions under which He takes this place on high. He had perfectly glorified the Father on earth. Nothing that manifested God the Father had been wanting, whatever might be the difficulty; the contradiction of sinners was but an occasion of so doing. But this very thing made the sorrow infinite. Nevertheless Jesus had accomplished that glory on the earth in the face of all that opposed itself. His glory with the Father in heaven was but the just consequence the necessary consequence, in mere justice. Moreover Jesus had had this glory with His Father before the world was. His work and His Person alike gave Him a right to it. The Father glorified on earth by the Son: the Son glorified with the Father on high: such is the revelation contained in these Verses a right, proceeding from His Person as Son, but to a glory into which He entered as man, in consequence of having, as such, perfectly glorified His Father on earth. These are the Verses that

relate to Christ. This, moreover, gives the relationship in which He enters into this new place as man, His Son, and the work by which He does so in righteousness, and thus gives us a title, and the character in which we have a place there.

He now speaks of the disciples; how they entered into their peculiar place in connection with this position of Jesus into this relationship with His Father. He had manifested the Father's name to those whom the Father had given Him out of the world. They belonged to the Father, and the Father had given them to Jesus. They had kept the Father's word. It was faith in the revelation which the Son had made of the Father. The words of the prophets were true. The faithful enjoyed them: they sustained their faith. But the word of the Father, by Jesus, revealed the Father Himself, in Him whom the Father had sent, and put him who received them into the place of love, which was Christ's place; and to know the Father and the Son was life eternal. This was quite another thing from hopes connected with the Messiah or what Jehovah had given Him. It is thus, also, that the disciples are presented to the Father; not as receiving Christ in the character of Messiah, and honouring Him as possessing His power by that title. They had known that all which Jesus had was of the Father. He was then the Son; His relationship to the Father was acknowledged. Dull of comprehension as they were, the Lord recognises them according to His appreciation of their faith, according to the object of that faith, as known to Himself, and not according to their intelligence. Precious truth! (compare Joh 14:7).

They acknowledged Jesus, then, as receiving all from the Father, not as Messiah from Jehovah; for Jesus had given them all the words that the Father had given Him. Thus He had brought them in their own souls into the consciousness of the relationship between the Son and the Father, and into full communion, according to the communications of the Father to the Son in that relationship. He speaks of their position through faith not of their realisation of this position. Thus they had acknowledged that Jesus came forth from the Father, and that He came with the Father's authority the Father had sent Him. It was from thence He came, and He came furnished with the authority of a mission from the Father. This was their position by faith.

And now the disciples being already in this position He places them, according to His thoughts and His desires, before the Father in prayer. He prays for them, distinguishing them completely from the world. The time would come when (according to Psalm 2) He would ask of the Father with reference to the world; He was not doing so now, but for those out of the world, whom the Father had given Him. For they were the Father's. For all that is the Father's is in essential opposition to the world (compare Jo 1 2:16).

The Lord presents to the Father two motives for His request: 1st, They were the Father's, so that the Father, for His own glory, and because of His affection for that which belonged to Him, should keep them; 2nd, Jesus was glorified in them, so that if Jesus was the object of the Father's affection, for that reason also the Father should keep them. Besides, the interests of the Father and the Son could not be separated. If they were the Father's they were, in fact, the Son's; and it was but an example of that universal truth all that was the Son's was the Father's, and all that was the Father's was the Son's. What a place for us! to be the object of this mutual affection, of these common and inseparable interests of the Father and the Son. This is the great principle the great foundation of the prayer of Christ. He prayed the Father for His disciples, because they belonged to the Father; Jesus must needs, therefore, seek their blessing. The Father would be thoroughly interested for them, because in them the Son was to be glorified.

He then presents the circumstances to which the prayer applied. He was no longer in this world Himself. They would be deprived of His personal care as present with them, but they would be in this world, while He was coming to the Father. This is the ground of His request with regard to their position. He puts them in connection, therefore, with the Holy Father all the perfect love of such a Father the Father of Jesus and their Father, maintaining (it was their blessing) the holiness that His nature required, if they were to be in relationship with Him. It was direct guardianship. The Father would keep in His own name those whom He had given to Jesus. The connection thus was direct. Jesus committed them to Him, and that, not only as belonging to the Father, but now as His own, invested with all the value which that would give them in the Father's eyes.

The object of His solicitude was to keep them in unity, even as the Father and the Son are one. One only divine Spirit was the bond of that oneness. In this sense the bond was truly divine. So far as they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they had but one mind, one counsel, one aim. This is the unity referred to here. The Father and the Son were their only object; the accomplishing their counsels and objects their only pursuit. They had only the thoughts of God; because God Himself, the Holy Ghost, was the source of their thoughts. It was one only divine power and nature that united them the Holy Ghost. The mind, the aim, the life, the whole moral existence, were consequently one. The Lord speaks, necessarily, at the height of His own thoughts, when He expresses His desires for them. If it is a question of realisation, we must then think of man; yet of a strength also that is perfected in weakness.

This is the sum of the Lord's desires sons, saints, under the Father's care; one, not by an effort or by agreement, but according to divine power. He being here, had kept them in the Father's name, faithful to accomplish all that the Father had committed to Him, and to lose none of those that were His. As to Judas, it was only the fulfilment of the word. The guardianship of Jesus present in the world could now no longer exist. But He spoke these things, being still here, the disciples hearing them, in order that they might understand that they were placed before the Father in the same position that Christ had held, and that they might thus have fulfilled in themselves, in this same relationship, the joy which Christ had possessed. What unutterable grace! They had lost Him, visibly, to find themselves (by Him and in Him) in His own relationship with the Father, enjoying all that He enjoyed in that communion here below, as being in His place in their own relationship with the Father. Therefore He had imparted to them all the words that the Father had given Him the communications of His love to Himself, when walking as Son in that place here below; and, in the especial name of "Holy Father," by which the Son Himself addressed Him from the earth, the Father was to keep those whom the Son had left there. Thus should they have His joy fulfilled in themselves.

This was their relationship to the Father, Jesus being away. He turns now to their relationship with the world, in consequence of the former.

He gave them the word of His Father not the words to bring them into communion with Him, but His word the testimony of what He was. And the world had hated them as it had hated Jesus (the living and personal testimony of the Father) and the Father Himself. Being thus in relationship with the Father, who had taken them out from the men of the world, and having received the Father's word (and eternal life in the Son in that knowledge), they were not of the world even as Jesus was not of the world: and therefor the world hated them. Nevertheless the Lord does not pray that they might be taken out of it; but that the Father should keep them from the evil. He enters into the detail of His desires in this respect, grounded on their not being of the world. He repeats this thought as the basis of their position here below. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." What then were they to be? By what rule, by what model, were they to be formed? By the truth, and the Father's word is truth. Christ was always the Word, but the living Word among men. In the scriptures we possess it, written and stedfast: they reveal Him, bear witness to Him. It was thus that the disciples were to be set apart. "Sanctify them by thy truth: thy word is the truth." It was this, personally, that they were to be formed by, the Father's word, as He was revealed in Jesus.

Their mission follows. Jesus sends them into the world, as the Father had sent Him into the world; into the world in no wise of the world. They are sent into it on the part of Christ: were they of it, they could not be sent into it. But it was not only the Father's word which was the truth, nor the communication of the Father's word by Christ present with His disciples (points of which from Joh 17:14 till now Jesus had been speaking, "I have given them thy word"): He sanctified Himself. He set Himself apart as a heavenly man above the heavens, a glorified man in the glory, in order that all truth might shine forth in Him, in His Person, raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father all that the Father is being thus displayed in Him; the testimony of divine righteousness, of divine love, of divine power, totally overturning the lie of Satan, by which man had been deceived and falsity brought into the world; the perfect model of that which man was according to the counsels of God, and as the expression of His power morally and in glory the image of the invisible God, the Son, and in glory. Jesus set Himself apart, in this place, in order that the disciples might be sanctified by the

communication to them of what He was; for this communication was the truth, and created them in the image of that which it revealed. So that it was the Father's glory, revealed by Him on earth, and the glory into which He had ascended as man; for this is the complete result the illustration in glory of the way in which He had set Himself apart for God, but on behalf of His own. Thus there is not only the forming and governing of the thoughts by the word, setting us apart morally to God, but the blessed affections flowing from our having this truth in the Person of Christ, our hearts connected with Him in grace. This ends the second part of that which related to the disciples, in communion and in testimony.

In Joh 17:20, He declares that He prays also for those who should believe on Him through their means. Here the character of the unity differs a little from that in Joh 17:11. There, in speaking of the disciples, He says, "as we are"; for the oneness of the Father and the Son shewed itself in fixed purpose, object, love, work, everything. Therefore the disciples were to have that kind of unity. Here those who believed, inasmuch as receiving and taking part in that which was communicated, had their oneness in the power of the blessing into which they were brought. By one Spirit, in which they were necessarily united, they had a place in communion with the Father and the Son. It was the communion of the Father and of the Son (compare Jo1 1:3; and how similar the language of the apostle is to that of Christ!). Thus, the Lord asks that they may be one in them the Father and the Son. This was the means to make the world believe that the Father had sent the Son; for here were those that had believed it, who, however opposed their interests and habits might be, however strong their prejudices, yet were one (by this powerful revelation and by this work) in the Father and the Son.

Here His prayer ends, but not all His converse with His Father. He gives us (and here the witnesses and the believers are together) the glory which the Father has given Him. It is the basis of another, a third, [See Note #64] mode of oneness. All partake, it is true, in glory, of this absolute oneness in thought, object, fixed purpose, which is found in the oneness of the Father and the Son. Perfection being come, that which the Holy Ghost had produced spiritually, His absorbing energy shutting out every other, was natural to all in glory.

But the principle of the existence of this unity, added yet another character to that truth that of manifestation, or at least of an inward source which realised its manifestation in them: "I in them," said Jesus, "and thou in me." This is not the simple, perfect oneness of Joh 17:11, nor the mutuality and communion of Joh 17:21. It is Christ in all believers, and the Father in Christ, a unity in manifestation in glory, not merely in communion a oneness in which all is perfectly connected with its source. And Christ, whom alone they were to manifest, is in them; and the Father, whom Christ had perfectly manifested, is in Him. The world (for this will be in the millennial glory, and manifested to the world) will then know (He does not say, "that it may believe") that Jesus had been sent by the Father (how deny it, when He should be seen in glory?) and, moreover, that the disciples had been loved by the Father, even as Jesus Himself was loved. The fact of their possessing the same glory as Christ would be the proof.

But there was yet more. There is that which the world will not see, because it will not be in it. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." There we are not only like Christ (conformed to the Son, bearing the image of the heavenly man before the eyes of the world), but with Him where He is. Jesus desires that we should see His glory. [See Note #65] Solace and encouragement for us, after having partaken of His shame: but yet more precious, inasmuch as we see that He who has been dishonoured as man, and because He became man for our sake, shall, even on that account, be glorified with a glory above all other glory, save His who has put all things under Him. For He speaks here of given glory. It is this which is so precious to us, because He has acquired it by His sufferings for us, and yet it is what was perfectly due to Him the just reward for having, in them, perfectly glorified the Father. Now, this is a peculiar joy, entirely beyond the world. The world will see the glory that we have in common with Christ, and will know that we have been loved as Christ was loved. But there is a secret for those who love Him, which belongs to His Person and to our association with Himself. The Father loved Him before the world was a love in which there is no question of comparison but of that which is infinite, perfect, and thus in itself satisfying. We shall share this in the sense of seeing our Beloved in it, and of being with Him, and of beholding the glory which the Father has given Him, according to the love wherewith He loved

Him before the world had any part whatever in the dealings of God. Up to this we were in the world; here in heaven, out of all the world's claims or apprehension (Christ seen in the fruit of that love which the Father had for Him before the world existed). Christ, then, was the Father's delight. We see Him in the eternal fruit of that love as Man. We shall be in it with Him for ever, to enjoy His being in it that our Jesus, our Beloved, is in it, and is what He is.

Meantime, being such, there was justice in the dealings of God with regard to His rejection. He had fully, perfectly, manifested the Father. The world had not known Him, but Jesus had known Him, and the disciples had known that the Father had sent Him. He appeals here, not to the holiness of the Father, that He might keep them according to that blessed name, but to the righteousness of the Father, that He might make a distinction between the world on one side, and Jesus with His own on the other; for there was the moral reason as well as the ineffable love of the Father for the Son. And Jesus would have us enjoy, while here below, the consciousness that the distinction has been made by the communications of grace, before it is made by judgment.

He had declared unto them the Father's name, and would declare it, even when He had gone up on high, in order that the love wherewith the Father had loved Him might be in them (that their hearts might possess it in this world what grace!) and Jesus Himself in them, the communicator of that love, the source of strength to enjoy it, conducting it, so to speak, in all the perfection in which He enjoyed it, into their hearts, in which He dwelt Himself the strength, the life, the competency, the right, and the means of enjoying it thus, and as such, in the heart. For it is in the Son who declares it to us, that we know the name of the Father whom He reveals to us. That is, He would have us enjoy now that relationship in love in which we shall see Him in heaven. The world will know we have been loved as Jesus when we appear in the same glory with Him; but our part is to know it now, Christ being in us.

Note #63

The more we examine the Gospel of John, the more we shall see One who speaks and acts as a divine Person one with the Father alone could do, but yet always as One who had taken the place of a servant, and takes nothing to Himself, but receives all from His Father. "I have glorified thee": "now glorify me." What language of equality of nature and love! but He does not say, And now I will glorify myself. He has taken the place of man to receive all, though it be a glory He had with the Father before the world was. This is of exquisite beauty. I add, it was out of this the enemy sought to seduce Him, in vain, in the wilderness.

Note #64

There are three unities spoken of. First of the disciples, "as we are," unity by the power of one Spirit in thought, purpose, mind, service, the Holy Ghost making them all one, their path in common, the expression of His mind and power, and of nothing else. Then, of those who should believe through their means, unity in communion with the Father and the Son, "one in us" still by the Holy Ghost but, as brought into that, as already said above, as in Jo1 1:3. Then unity in glory, "perfect in one," in manifestation and descending revelation, the Father in the Son, and the Son in all of them. The second was for the world's believing, the third for its knowing. The two first were literally accomplished according to the terms in which they are expressed. How far believers are departed from them since need not be said.

Note #65

This answers to Moses and Elias entering into the cloud, besides their display in the same glory as Christ, standing on the mountain.

John Chapter 18

The history of our Lord's last moments begins after the words that He addressed to His Father. We shall find even in this part of it, the general character of that which is related in this Gospel (according to all that we have seen in it), that the events bring out the personal glory of the Lord. We have, indeed, the malice of man strongly characterised; but the principal object in the picture is the Son of God, not the Son of man suffering under the weight of that which is come upon Him. We have not the agony in the

garden. We have not the expression of His feeling Himself forsaken by God. The Jews too are put in the place of utter rejection.

The iniquity of Judas is as strongly marked here as in chapter 13. He well knew the place; for Jesus was in the habit of resorting thither with His disciples. What a thought to choose such a place for His betrayal! What inconceivable hardness of heart! But alas! he had, as it were, given himself up to Satan, the tool of the enemy, the manifestation of his power and of his true character.

How many things had taken place in that garden! What communications from a heart filled with God's own love, and seeking to make it penetrate into the narrow and too insensible hearts of His beloved disciples! But all was lost upon Judas. He comes, with the agents employed by the malice of the priests and Pharisees, to seize the Person of Jesus. But Jesus anticipates them. It is He who presents Himself to them. Knowing all things that should come upon Him, He goes forth, inquiring, "Whom seek ye?" It is the Saviour, the Son of God, who offers Himself. They reply, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus says unto them, "I am he." Judas, also, was there, who knew Him well, and knew that voice, so long familiar to his ears. No one laid hands on Him: but as soon as His word echoes in their hearts, as soon as that divine "I am" is heard within them, they go backward, and fall to the ground. Who will take Him? He had but to go away and leave them there. But He came not for this; and the time to offer Himself up was come. He asks them again, therefore, "Whom seek ye?" They say, as before, "Jesus of Nazareth." The first time, the divine glory of the Person of Christ must needs display itself; and now His care for the redeemed ones. "If ye seek me," said the Lord, "let these go their way" that the word might be fulfilled, "Of those whom thou hast given me, I have lost none." He presents Himself as the good Shepherd, giving His life for the sheep. He puts Himself before them, that they may escape the danger that threatens them, and that all may come upon Himself. He yields Himself up. All is His own free offering here.

Nevertheless, whatever might be the divine glory that He manifested, and the grace of a Saviour who was faithful to His own, He acts in obedience, and in the perfect calmness of an obedience that had counted the whole cost with God, and that received it all from His Father's hand. When the

carnal and unintelligent energy of Peter employs force to defend Him, who, if He would, had only needed to have gone away when a word from His lips had cast down to the ground all those who came to take Him, and the word that revealed to them the object of their search deprived them of all power to seize it. When Peter smites the servant Malchus, Jesus takes the place of obedience. "The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" The divine Person of Christ had been manifested; the voluntary offering of Himself had been made, and that, in order to protect His own; and now His perfect obedience is at the same time displayed.

The malice of a hardened heart, and the want of intelligence of a carnal though sincere heart, have been brought to view. Jesus has His place alone and apart. He is the Saviour. Submitting thus to man, in order to accomplish the counsels and the will of God, He allows them to take Him whither they would. Little of all that took place is related here. Jesus, although questioned, says scarcely anything of Himself. There is, before both the high priest and Pontius Pilate, the calm though meek superiority of One who was giving Himself: yet He is condemned only for the testimony He gave of Himself. Every one had already heard that which He taught. He challenges the authority which pursues the inquiry, not officially, but peacefully and morally; and when unjustly struck, He remonstrates with dignity and perfect calmness, while submitting to the insult. But He does not acknowledge the high priest in any way; while at the same time He does not at all oppose him. He leaves him in his moral incapacity.

The carnal weakness of Peter is manifested; as before his carnal energy.

When brought before Pilate (although because of truth, confessing that He was king), the Lord acts with the same calmness and the same submission; but He questions Pilate and instructs him in such a manner that Pilate can find no fault in Him. Morally incapable, however, of standing at the height of that which was before him, and embarrassed in presence of the divine prisoner, Pilate would have delivered Him by availing himself of a custom, then practised by the government, of releasing a culprit to the Jews at the passover. But the uneasy indifference of a conscience which, hardened as it was, bowed before the presence of One who (even while thus humbled) could not but reach it, did not thus escape the active malice of those who

were doing the enemy's work. The Jews exclaim against the proposal which the governor's disquietude suggested, and chose a robber instead of Jesus.

John Chapter 19

Pilate (chapter 19) gives way to his usual inhumanity. In the account, however, given in this Gospel, the Jews are prominent, as the real authors (as far as man was concerned) of the Lord's death. Jealous for their ceremonial purity, but indifferent to justice, they are not content to judge Him according to their own law; [See Note #66] they choose to have Him put to death by the Romans, for the whole counsel of God must needs be accomplished.

It is on the repeated demands of the Jews that Pilate delivers Jesus into their hands thoroughly guilty in so doing, for he had openly avowed His innocence, and had had his conscience decidedly touched and alarmed by the evident proofs there were that he had some extraordinary person before him. He will not shew that he is touched, but he is so (Joh 19:8). The divine glory that pierced through the humiliation of Christ acts upon him, and gives force to the declaration of the Jews that Jesus had made Himself the Son of God. Pilate had scourged Him and given Him up to the insults of the soldiers; and here he would have stopped. Perhaps he hoped also that the Jews would be satisfied with this, and he presents Jesus to them crowned with thorns. Perhaps he hoped that their jealousy with regard to these national insults would induce them to ask for His deliverance. But, ruthlessly pursuing their malicious purpose, they cry out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate objects to this for himself, while giving them liberty to do it, saying that he finds no fault in Him. Upon this they plead their Jewish law. They had a law of their own, say they, and by this law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. Pilate, already struck and exercised in mind, is the more alarmed; and, going back to the judgment hall again, questions Jesus. He makes no reply. The pride of Pilate awakes, and he asks if Jesus does not know that he has power to condemn or to release Him. The Lord maintains, in replying, the full dignity of His Person. Pilate had no power over Him, were it not the will of God to this He submitted. It heightened the sin of those who had delivered Him up, to suppose that man could do anything against Him, were it not that the will of God was thus to

be accomplished. The knowledge of His Person formed the measure of the sin committed against Him. The not perceiving it caused everything to be falsely judged, and, in the case of Judas, shewed the most absolute moral blindness. He knew His Master's power. What was the meaning of delivering Him up to man, if it were not that His hour was come? But, this being the case, what was the betrayer's position?

But Jesus always speaks according to the glory of His Person, and as being thereby entirely above the circumstances through which He was passing in grace, and in obedience to His Father's will. Pilate is thoroughly disturbed by the Lord's reply, yet his feeling is not strong enough to counteract the motive with which the Jews press him, but it has sufficient power to make him throw back upon the Jews all that there was of will in His condemnation, and to make them fully guilty of the Lord's rejection.

Pilate sought to withdraw Him from their fury. At last, fearing to be accused of infidelity to Caesar, he turns with contempt to the Jews, saying, "Behold your King"; acting although unconsciously under the hand of God, to bring out that memorable word from their lips, their condemnation, and their calamity even to this day, "We have no king but Caesar." They denied their Messiah. The fatal word, which called down the judgment of God, was now pronounced; and Pilate delivers up Jesus to them.

Jesus, humbled and bearing His cross, takes His place with the transgressors. Nevertheless He who would that all should be fulfilled ordained that a testimony should be rendered to His dignity; and Pilate (perhaps to vex the Jews, certainly to accomplish the purposes of God) affixes to the cross as the Lord's title, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews": the twofold truth the despised Nazarene is the true Messiah. Here, then, as throughout this Gospel, the Jews take their place as cast off by God.

At the same time the apostle shews here, as elsewhere that Jesus was the true Messiah, by quoting the prophecies which speak of that which happened to Him in general, with regard to His rejection and His sufferings, so that He is proved to be the Messiah by the very circumstances in which He was rejected of the people.

After the history of His crucifixion, as the act of man, we have that which characterises it in respect to what Jesus was upon the cross. The blood and water flow from His pierced side.

The devotedness of the women who followed Him, less important perhaps on the side of action, shines out in its own way nevertheless in that perseverance of love which brought them nigh to the cross. The more responsible position of the apostles as men scarcely allowed it to them, circumstanced as they were; but this takes nothing from the privilege which grace attaches to woman when faithful to Jesus. But it was the occasion for Christ to give us fresh instruction, by shewing Himself such as He was, and by setting His work before us, above all mere circumstances, as the effect and the expression of a spiritual energy which consecrated Him, as man, entirely to God, offering Himself also to God by the eternal Spirit. His work was done. He had offered Himself up. He returns, so to speak, into His personal relationships. Nature, in His human feelings, is seen in its perfection; and, at the same time, His divine superiority, personally, to the circumstances through which He passed in grace as the obedient man. The expression of His filial feelings shews, that the consecration to God, which removed Him from all those affections that are alike the necessity and the duty of the man according to nature, was not the want of human feeling, but the power of the Spirit of God. Seeing the women, He speaks to them no longer as Teacher and Saviour, the resurrection and the life; it is Jesus, a man, individually, in His human relationship.

"Woman," He says, "behold thy son!" committing His mother to the care of John, the disciple whom Jesus loved and to the disciple, "Behold thy mother!" and thenceforth that disciple took her to his own home. Sweet and precious commission! A confidence which spoke that which he who was thus loved could alone appreciate, as being its immediate object. This shews us also that His love for John had a character of human affection and attachment, according to God, but not essentially divine, although full of divine grace a grace which gave it all its value, but which clothed itself with the reality of the human heart. It was this, evidently, which bound Peter and John together. Jesus was their only and common object. Of very different characters and so much the more united on that account they thought but

of one thing. Absolute consecration to Jesus is the strongest bond between human hearts. It strips them of self, and they have but one soul in thought, intent, and settled purpose, because they have only one object. But in Jesus this was perfect, and it was grace. It is not said, "the disciple who loved Jesus"; that would have been quite out of season. It would have been to take Jesus entirely out of His place, and His dignity, His personal glory, and to destroy the value of His love to John. Nevertheless John loved Christ, and consequently appreciated thus his Master's love; and, his heart attached to Him by grace, he devoted himself to the execution of this sweet commission, which he takes pleasure in relating here. It is indeed love that tells it, although it does not speak of itself.

I believe that we again see this feeling (used by the Spirit of God, not evidently as the foundation, but to give its colour to the expression of that which he had seen and known) in the beginning of John's first epistle.

We also see here that this Gospel does not shew us Christ under the weight of His sufferings, but acting in accordance with the glory of His Person as above all things, and fulfilling all things in grace. In perfect calmness He provides for His mother; having done this, He knows that all is finished. He has, according to human language, entire self-possession.

There is yet one prophecy to be fulfilled. He says, "I thirst," and, as God had foretold, they give Him vinegar. He knows that now there is not one detail left of all that was to be accomplished. He bows His head, and Himself gives [See Note #67] up His spirit. Thus, when the whole divine work is accomplished the divine man giving up His spirit, that spirit leaves the body which had been its organ and its vessel. The time was come for so doing; and by doing it, He secured the accomplishment of another divine word "Not one of his bones shall be broken." But everything bore its part in the fulfilment of those words, and the purposes of Him who had pronounced them beforehand.

A soldier pierces His side with a spear. It is from a dead Saviour that flow forth the tokens of an eternal and perfect salvation the water and the blood; the one to cleanse the sinner, the other to expiate his sins. The evangelist saw it. His love for the Lord makes him like to remember that he

saw Him thus unto the end; he tells it in order that we may believe. But if we see in the beloved disciples the vessel that the Holy Ghost uses (and very sweet it is to see it, and according to the will of God), we see plainly who it is that uses it. How many things John witnessed which he did not relate! The cry of grief and of abandonment the earthquake the centurion's confession the history of the thief: all these things took place before his eyes, which were fixed upon his Master; yet he does not mention them. He speaks of that which his Beloved was in the midst of all this. The Holy Ghost causes him to relate that which belonged to the personal glory of Jesus. His affections made him find it a sweet and easy task. The Holy Ghost attached him to it, employing him in that which he was well suited to perform. Through grace the instrument lent itself readily to the work for which the Holy Ghost set it apart. His memory and his heart were under the dominant and exclusive influence of the Spirit of God. That Spirit employed them in His work. One sympathises with the instrument; one believes in that which the Holy Ghost relates by his means, for the words are those of the Holy Ghost.

Nothing can be more touching, more deeply interesting, than divine grace thus expressing itself in human tenderness and taking its form. While possessing the entire reality of human affection, it had all the power and depth of divine grace. It was divine grace that Jesus should have such affections. On the other hand, nothing could be farther from the appreciation of this sovereign source of divine love, flowing through the perfect channel which it made for itself by its own power, than the pretension to express our love as reciprocal; it would be, on the contrary, to fail entirely in that appreciation. True saints among the Moravians have called Jesus "brother," and others have borrowed their hymns or the expression; the word never says so. "He is not ashamed to call us brethren," but it is quite another thing for us to call Him so. The personal dignity of Christ is never lost in the intensity and tenderness of His love.

But the rejected Saviour was to be with the rich and the honourable in His death, however despised He may previously have been; and two, who dared not confess Him while He lived, awakened now by the greatness of the sin of their nation, and by the event itself of His death which the grace of God, who had reserved them for this work, made them feel occupy themselves

with the attentions due to His dead body. Joseph, himself a counsellor, comes to ask Pilate for the body of Jesus, Nicodemus joining with him to render the last honours to Him whom they had never followed during His life. We can understand this. To follow Jesus constantly under reproach, and compromise oneself for ever on His account, is a very different thing from acting when some great occasion happens in which there is no longer room for the former, and when the extent of the evil compels us to separate from it; and when the good, rejected because it is perfect in testimony, and perfected in its rejection, forced us to take a part, if through grace any moral sense exists in us. God thus fulfilled His words of truth. Joseph and Nicodemus place the Lord's body in a new sepulchre in a garden near the cross; for, on account of it being the Jews' preparation, they could do no more at that moment.

Note #66

It is said that their Jewish traditions forbade their putting any one to death during the great feasts. It is possible that this may have influenced the Jews; but however that might be, the purposes of God were thus accomplished. At other times the Jews were not so prompt in submitting to the Roman exigencies that deprived them of the right of life and death.

Note #67

This is the force of the expression; which is quite different from the word translated expired. We learn from Luk 23:46 that He did this when He had said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." But in John, the Holy Ghost is setting forth even His death as the result of a voluntary act, giving up His spirit, and not saying to whom He committed (as man with absolute and perfect faith) His human spirit, His soul, in dying. It is His divine competency that is here shewn, and not His trust in His Father. The word is never used in this way but in this passage as to Christ, in either the New Testament or the LXX.

John Chapter 20

In chapter 20, we have, in a summary of several of the leading facts among those which took place after the resurrection of Jesus, a picture of all the

consequences of that great event, in immediate connection with the grace that produced them, and with the affections that ought to be seen in the faithful when again brought into relationship with the Lord; and at the same time, a picture of all God's ways up to the revelation of Christ to the remnant before the millennium. In chapter 21, the millennium is pictured to us.

Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons, appears first in the scene a touching expression of the ways of God. She represents, I doubt not, the Jewish remnant of that day, personally attached to the Lord, but not knowing the power of resurrection. She is alone in her love: the very strength of her affection isolates her. She was not the only one saved, but she comes alone to seek wrongly to seek, if you will, but to seek Jesus, before the testimony of His glory shines forth in a world of darkness, because she loved Himself. She comes before the other women, while it was yet dark. It is a loving heart (we have already seen it in the believing women) occupied with Jesus, when the public testimony of man is still entirely wanting. And it is to this that Jesus first manifests Himself when He is risen. Nevertheless her heart knew where it would find a response. She goes away to Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, when she does not find the body of Christ. Peter and the other disciple go, and find the proofs of a resurrection accomplished (as to Jesus Himself) with all the composure that became the power of God, great as the alarm might be that it created in the mind of man. There had been no haste; everything was in order: and Jesus was not there.

The two disciples, however, are not moved by the same attachment as that which filled her heart, who had been the object of so mighty a deliverance [See Note #68] on the Lord's part. They see, and, on these visible proofs, they believe. It was not a spiritual understanding of the thoughts of God by means of His word; they saw and believed. There is nothing in this which gathers the disciples together. Jesus was away; He had risen. They had satisfied themselves on this point, and they go away to their home. But Mary, led by affection rather than by intelligence, is not satisfied with coldly recognising that Jesus was again risen. [See Note #69] She thought Him still dead, because she did not possess Him. His death, the fact of her not finding

Him again, added to the intensity of her affection, because He Himself was its object. All the tokens of this affection are produced here in the most touching manner. She supposes that the gardener must know who was in question without her telling him, for she only thought of one (as if I inquired of a beloved object in a family, "How is he?"). Bending over the sepulchre, she turns her head when He approaches; but then the Good Shepherd, risen from the dead, calls His sheep by her name; and the known and loved voice mighty according to the grace which thus called her instantly reveals Him to her who heard it. She turns to Him, and replies, "Rabboni my Master."

But while thus revealing Himself to the beloved remnant, whom He had delivered, all is changed in their position and in His relationship with them. He was not going now to dwell bodily in the midst of His people on earth. He did not come back to re-establish the kingdom in Israel. "Touch me not," says He to Mary. But by redemption He had wrought a far more important thing. He had placed them in the same position as Himself with His Father and His God; and He calls them which He never had, and never could have done before His brethren. Until His death the corn of wheat remained alone. Pure and perfect, the Son of God, He could not stand in the same relationship to God as the sinner; but, in the glorious position which He was going to resume as man, He could, through redemption, associate with Himself His redeemed ones, cleansed, regenerated, and adopted in Him.

He sends them word of the new position they were to have in common with Himself. He says to Mary, "Touch me not; but go to my brethren, and tell them that I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." The will of the Father accomplished by means of the glorious work of the Son, who, as man, has taken His place, apart from sin, with His God and Father and the work of the Son, the source of eternal life to them, have brought the disciples into the same position as Himself before the Father.

The testimony borne to this truth gathers the disciples together. They meet with closed doors, unprotected now by the care and power of Jesus, the Messiah, Jehovah on earth. But if they had no longer the shelter of the Messiah's presence, they have Jesus in their midst, bringing them that which they could not have before His death "Peace."

But He did not bring them this blessing merely as their own portion. Having given them proofs of His resurrection, and that in His body He was the same Jesus, He sets them in this perfect peace as the starting point of their mission. The Father, eternal and infinite fountain of love, had sent the Son, who abode in it, who was the witness of that love, and of the peace which He, the Father, shed around Himself, where sin had no existence. Rejected in His mission, Jesus had on behalf of a world where sin existed made peace for all who should receive the testimony of the grace which had made it; and He now sends His disciples from the bosom of that peace into which He had brought them, by the remission of sins through His death, to bear testimony to it in the world.

He says again, "Peace be unto you," to send them forth into the world clothed and filled with that peace, their feet shod with it, even as the Father had sent Him. He gives them the Holy Ghost for this end, that according to His power they might bear the remission of sins to a world that was bowed down under the yoke of sin.

I do not doubt that, speaking historically, the Spirit here is distinguished from Acts 2, inasmuch as here it is a breath of inward life, as God breathed into the nostrils of Adam a breath of life. It is not the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Thus Christ, who is a quickening Spirit, imparts spiritual life to them according to the power of resurrection. [See Note #70] As to the general picture figuratively presented in the passage, it is the Spirit bestowed on the saints gathered by the testimony of His being risen and His going to the Father, as the whole scene represents the assembly in its present privileges. Thus we have the remnant attached to Christ by love; believers individually recognised as children of God, and in the same position before Him as Christ; and then the assembly founded on this testimony, gathered together with Jesus in the midst, in the enjoyment of peace; and its members, individually constituted, in connection with the peace which Christ has made, a witness to the world of the remission of sins its administration being committed to them.

Thomas represents the Jews in the last days, who will believe when they see. Blessed are they who have believed without seeing. But the faith of Thomas is not concerned with the position of sonship. He acknowledges, as

the remnant will do, that Jesus is his Lord and his God. He was not with them in their first church gathering.

The Lord here, by His actions, consecrates the first day of the week for His meeting together with His own, in spirit here below.

The evangelist is far from exhausting all that there was to relate of that which Jesus did. The object of that which he has related is linked with the communication of eternal life in Christ; first, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and, second, that in believing we have life through His name. To this the Gospel is consecrated.

Note #68

"Seven demons." This represents the complete possession of this poor woman by the unclean spirits to whom she was a prey. It is the expression of the real state of the Jewish people.

Note #69

It is impossible to me, in giving great principles for the help of those who seek to understand the word, to develop all that is so deeply touching and interesting in this twentieth chapter, on which I have often pondered with (through grace) an ever-growing interest. This revelation of the Lord to the poor woman who could not do without her Saviour, has a touching beauty, which every detail enhances. But there is one point of view to which I cannot but call the reader's attention. There are four conditions of soul presented here which, taken together, are very instructive, and each in the case of a believer: 1st. John and Peter, who see and believe, are really believers; but they do not see in Christ the only centre of all the thoughts of God, for His glory, for the world, for souls. Neither is He so for their affections, although they are believers. Having found that He was risen, they do without Him. Mary, who did not know this, who was even culpably ignorant, could nevertheless not do without Jesus. She must possess Himself. Peter and John go to their home; this is the centre of their interests. They believe indeed, but self and home suffice them. 2nd. Thomas believes, and acknowledges with true orthodox faith, on incontestable proofs, that Jesus is his Lord and his God. He truly believes for himself. He

has not the communications of the efficacy of the Lord's work, and of the relationship with His Father into which Jesus brings His own, the assembly. He has peace perhaps, but he has missed all the revelation of the assembly's position. How many souls saved souls even are there in these two conditions! 3rd. Mary Magdalene is ignorant in the extreme. She does not know that Christ is risen. She has so little right sense of His being Lord and God, that she thinks some one might have taken away His body. But Christ is her all, the need of her soul, the only desire of her heart. Without Him she has no home, no Lord, no anything. Now to this need Jesus answers; it indicates the work of the Holy Ghost. He calls His sheep by her name, shews Himself to her first of all, teaches her that His presence was not now to be a Jewish bodily return to earth, that He must ascend to His Father, that the disciples were now His brethren, and that they were placed in the same position as Himself with His God and His Father as Himself, the risen Man, ascended to His God and Father. All the glory of the new individual position is opened to her. 4th. This gathers the disciples together. Jesus then brings them the peace which He has made, and they have the full joy of a present Saviour who brings it them. He makes this peace (possessed by them in virtue of His work and His victory) their starting-point, sends them as the Father had sent Him, and imparts to them the Holy Ghost as the breath and power of life, that they may be able to bear that peace to others. These are the communications of the efficacy of His work, as He had given to Mary that of the relationship to the Father which resulted from it. The whole is the answer to Mary's attachment to Christ, or what resulted from it. If through grace there is affection, the answer will assuredly be granted. It is the truth which flows from the work of Christ. No other state than that which Christ here presents is in accordance with what He has done, and with the Father's love. He cannot, by His work, place us in any other.

Note #70

Compare Romans 4-8 and Colossians 2 and 3. Resurrection was the power of life which brought them out of the dominion of sin, that had its end in death, and that was condemned in the death of Jesus, and they dead to it, but not condemned by it, sin having been condemned in His death. This is a question, not of guilt, but of state. Our guilt, blessed be God, was put away

too. But here we die with Christ, and resurrection presents us (Romans, as quoted, unfolds the side of death; Colossians adds resurrection. Romans is death to sin, Colossians to the world) living before God in a life in which Jesus and we by Him appeared in His presence according to the perfection of divine righteousness. But this supposed His work also.

John Chapter 21

The next chapter, while rendering a fresh testimony to the resurrection of Jesus, gives us to Verse 13 a picture of the millennial work of Christ; from thence to the end, the especial portions of Peter and John in connection with their service to Christ. The application is limited to the earth, for they had known Jesus on earth. It is Paul who will give us the heavenly position of Christ and the assembly. But he has no place here.

Led by Peter, several of the apostles go a fishing. The Lord meets them in the same circumstances as those in which He found them at the beginning, and reveals Himself to them in the same manner. John at once understands that it is the Lord. Peter, with his usual energy, casts himself into the sea to reach Him.

Observe here, that we find ourselves again upon the ground of the historic Gospels that is to say, that the miracle of the draught of fishes identifies itself with the work of Christ on earth, and is in the sphere of His former association with His disciples. It is Galilee, not Bethany. It has not the usual character of the doctrine of this Gospel, which presents the divine Person of Jesus, outside all dispensation, here below; raising our thoughts above all such subjects. Here (at the end of the Gospel and of the sketch given in chapter 20 of the result of the manifestation of His divine Person and of His work) the evangelist comes for the first time on the ground of the synoptics, of the manifestation and coming fruits of Christ's connection with earth. Thus the application of the passage to this point is not merely an idea which the narrative suggests to the mind, but it rests upon the general teaching of the word.

Still there is a notable difference between that which took place at the beginning and here. In the former scene the ships began to sink, the nets broke. Not so here, and the Holy Ghost marks this circumstance as

distinctive: Christ's millennial work is not marred. He is there after His resurrection, and that which He performs does not rest, in itself, on man's responsibility as to its effect here below: the net does not break. Also, when the disciples bring the fish which they had caught, the Lord has some already there. So shall it be on earth at the end. Before His manifestation He will have prepared a remnant for Himself on the earth; but after His manifestation He will gather a multitude also from the sea of nations.

Another idea presents itself. Christ is again as in companionship with His disciples. "Come," says He, "and dine." There is no question here of heavenly things, but of the renewing of His connection with His people in the kingdom. All this does not immediately belong to the subject of this Gospel, which leads us higher. Accordingly it is introduced in a mysterious and symbolical manner. This appearance of Christ's is spoken of as His third manifestation. I doubt His manifestation on earth before His death being included in the number. I would rather apply it to that which, first, after His resurrection, gave rise to the gathering together of the saints as an assembly; secondly, to a revelation of Himself to the Jews after the manner of that which is presented in the Song of Songs; and lastly here to the public display of His power, when He shall already have gathered the remnant together. His appearing like the lightning is outside all these things. Historically the three appearances were the day of His resurrection; the following first day of the week; and His appearance at the sea of Galilee.

Afterwards, in a passage full of ineffable grace, He entrusts Peter with the care of His sheep (that is, I doubt not, of His Jewish sheep; he is the apostle of the circumcision), and leaves to John an indefinite period of sojourn upon earth. His words apply much more to their ministry than to their persons, with the exception of one Verse referring to Peter. But this demands a little more development.

The Lord begins with the full restoration of Peter's soul. He does not reproach him with his fault, but judges the source of evil that produced it self-confidence. Peter had declared, that if all should deny Jesus, yet he at least would not deny Him. The Lord therefore asks him, "Lovest thou me more than do these?" and Peter is reduced to acknowledge that it required the omniscience of God to know that he, who had boasted of having more

love than all others for Jesus, had really any affection for Him at all. And the question thrice repeated must indeed have searched the depths of his heart. Nor was it till the third time that he says, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus did not let his conscience go until he had come to this. Nevertheless the grace which did this for Peter's good the grace which had followed him in spite of everything, praying for him before he felt his need or had committed the fault is perfect here also. For, at the moment when it might be thought that at the utmost he would be re-admitted through divine forbearance, the strongest testimony of grace is lavished upon him. When humbled by his fall, and brought to entire dependence upon grace, all-abounding grace displays itself. The Lord commits that which He most loved to him the sheep whom He had just redeemed. He commits them to Peter's care. This is the grace which surmounts all that man is, which is above all that man is; which consequently produces confidence, not in self, but in God, as One whose grace can always be trusted in, as being full of grace and perfect in that grace which is above everything, and is always itself; grace which makes us able to accomplish the work of grace towards whom? man who needs it. It creates confidence in proportion to the measure in which it acts.

I think that the Lord's words apply to the sheep already known to Peter; and with whom only Jesus had been in daily connection; who would naturally be before His mind, and that in the scene which we see this chapter puts before us the sheep of the house of Israel.

It appears to me that there is progression in that which the Lord says to Peter. He asks, "Lovest thou me more than do these?" Peter says, "Thou knowest that I have affection for thee." Jesus replies, "Feed my lambs." The second time He says only, "Lovest thou me?" omitting the comparison between Peter and the rest, and his former pretension. Peter repeats the declaration of his affection. Jesus says to him, "Shepherd my sheep." The third time He says, "Hast thou affection for me?" using Peter's own expression; and on Peter's replying, as we have seen, seizing this use of his words by the Lord, He says, "Feed my sheep." The links between Peter and Christ known on earth made him fit to pasture the flock of the Jewish remnant to feed the lambs, by shewing them the Messiah as He had been,

and to act as a shepherd, in guiding those that were more advanced, and in supplying them with food.

But the grace of the loving Saviour did not stop here. Peter might still feel the sorrow of having missed such an opportunity of confessing the Lord at the critical moment. Jesus assures him that if he had failed in doing so of his own will, he should be allowed to do it by the will of God; and as when young he girded himself, others should gird him when old and carry him whither he would not. It should be given him by the will of God to die for the Lord, as he had formerly declared himself ready to do in his own strength. Now also that Peter was humbled and brought entirely under grace that he knew he had no strength that he felt his dependence on the Lord, his utter inefficiency if he trusted to his own power now, I repeat, the Lord calls Peter to follow Him; which he had pretended to do, when the Lord had told him he could not. It was this that his heart desired. Feeding those whom Jesus had continued to feed until His death, he should see Israel reject everything, even as Christ had seen them do; and his own work end, even as Christ had seen His work end (the judgment ready to fall, and beginning at the house of God). Finally, what he had pretended to do and could not, he would now do follow Christ to prison and to death.

Then comes the history of the disciple whom Jesus loved. John having, no doubt, heard the call addressed to Peter, follows also himself; and Peter, linked with him, as we have seen, by their common love to the Lord, inquires what should happen to him likewise. The Lord's answer announces the portion and ministry of John, but, as it appears to me, in connection with the earth. But the Lord's enigmatical expression is, nevertheless, as remarkable as it is important: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" They thought, in consequence, that John would not die. The Lord did not say so a warning not to ascribe a meaning to His words, instead of receiving one; and at the same time shewing our need of the Holy Spirit's help; for the words literally might be so taken. Giving heed myself, I trust, to this warning, I will say what I think to be the meaning of the Lord's words, which I do not doubt to be so a meaning which gives a key to many other expressions of the same kind.

In the narrative of the Gospel, we are in connection with the earth (that is, the connection of Jesus with the earth). As planted on earth at Jerusalem, the assembly, as the house of God, is formally recognised as taking the place of the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem. The history of the assembly, as thus formally established as a centre on earth, ended with the destruction of Jerusalem. The remnant saved by the Messiah was no longer to be in connection with Jerusalem, the centre of the gathering of the Gentiles. In this sense the destruction of Jerusalem put an end judicially to the new system of God upon earth a system promulgated by Peter (Acts 3); with regard to which Stephen declared to the Jews their resistance to the Holy Ghost, and was sent, as it were, as a messenger after Him who was gone to receive the kingdom and to return; while Paul elected from among those enemies of the good news still addressed to the Jews by the Holy Ghost after the death of Christ, and separated from Jews and Gentiles, in order to be sent to the latter performs a new work that was hidden from the prophets of old, namely, the gathering out of a heavenly assembly without distinction of Jew or Gentile.

The destruction of Jerusalem put an end to one of these systems, and to the existence of Judaism according to the law and the promises, leaving only the heavenly assembly. John remained the last of the twelve until this period, and after Paul, in order to watch over the assembly as established on that footing, that is, as the organised and earthly frame-work (responsible in that character) of the testimony of God, and the subject of His government on the earth. But this is not all. In his ministry John went on to the end, to the coming of Christ in judgment to the earth; and he has linked the judgment of the assembly, as the responsible witness on earth, with the judgment of the world, when God shall resume His connection with the earth in government (the testimony of the assembly being finished, and it having been caught up, according to its proper character, to be with the Lord in heaven).

Thus the Apocalypse presents the judgment of the assembly on earth, as the formal witness for the truth; and then passes on to God's resumption of the government of the earth, in view of the establishment of the Lamb upon the throne, and the setting aside of the power of evil. The heavenly character of

the assembly is only found there, when its members are exhibited on thrones as kings and priests, and when the marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven. The earth after the Seven Churches has no longer the heavenly testimony. It is not the subject, either in the seven assemblies, or in the properly so-called prophetic part. Thus, taking the assemblies as such in those days, the assembly according to Paul is not seen there. Taking the assemblies as descriptions of the assembly, the subject of God's government on earth, we have it until its final rejection; and the history is continuous, and the prophetic part immediately connected with the end of the assembly: only, in place of it, we have the world and then the Jews. [See Note #71] The coming of Christ therefore, which is spoken of at the end of the Gospel, is His manifestation on earth; and John, who lived in person until the close of all that was introduced by the Lord in connection with Jerusalem, continues here, in his ministry, until the manifestation of Christ to the world.

In John, then, we have two things. On the one hand, his ministry, as far as connected with dispensation and with the ways of God, does not go beyond that which is earthly: the coming of Christ, is His manifestation to complete those ways, and to establish the government of God. On the other hand, he links us with the Person of Jesus, who is above and outside all dispensations, and all the dealings of God, save as being the manifestation of God Himself. John does not enter upon the ground of the assembly as Paul sets it forth. It is either Jesus personally, or the relations of God with the earth. [See Note #72] His epistle presents the reproduction of the life of Christ in ourselves, guarding us thus from all pretensions of perverse teachers. But by these two parts of the truth, we have a precious sustainment of faith given to us, when all that belongs to the body of testimony may fail: Jesus, personally the object of faith in whom we know God; the life itself of God, reproduced in us, as being quickened by Christ. This is for ever true, and this is eternal life, if we were alone without the assembly on earth: and it leads us over its ruins, in possession of that which is essential, and of that which will abide for ever. The government of God will decide all the rest: only it is our privilege and duty to maintain Paul's part of the testimony of God, as long as through grace we can.

Remark also that the work of Peter and Paul is that of gathering together, whether it be in circumcision or the Gentiles. John is conservative, maintaining that which is essential in eternal life. He relates the judgment of God in connection with the world, but as a subject that is outside his own relations with God, which are given as an introduction and exordium to the Apocalypse. He follows Christ when Peter is called, because, although Peter was occupied, as Christ had been, with the call of the Jews, John without being called to that work followed Him on the same ground. The Lord explains it, as we have seen.

Joh 21:24-25 are a kind of inscription on the book. John has not related all that Jesus did, but that which revealed Him as everlasting life. As to His works, they could not be numbered.

Here, thanks be to God, are these four precious books laid open, as far as God has enabled me to do so, in their great principles. Meditation on their contents in detail, I must leave to each individual heart, assisted by the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost; for if studied in detail, one might almost say with the apostle that the world would not contain the books that should be written. May God in His grace lead souls into the enjoyment of the inexhaustible streams of grace and truth in Jesus which they contain!

Note #71

Thus we have in the ministerial life, and in the teaching, of Peter and John, the whole religious earthly history from the beginning to the end; commencing with the Jews in continuation of the relations of Christ with them, traversing the whole christian epoch, and finding itself again, after the close of the earthly history of the assembly, on the ground of God's relationship to the world (comprising the Jewish remnant) in view of the introduction of the First-born into the world (the last glorious event terminating the history which began with His rejection). Paul is on very different ground. He sees the assembly, as the body of Christ, united to Him in heaven.

Note #72

John presents the Father manifested in the Son, God declared by the Son in the bosom of the Father, and that withal as eternal life God to us, and life. Paul is employed to reveal our presentation to God in Him. Though each alludes in passing to the other point, one is characterised by the presentation of God to us, and eternal life given, the other, by our presentation to God.

ACTS

Introduction to Acts

The Acts of the Apostles are divided essentially into three parts Chapters 1, 2 to 12, and 13 to the end. Chapters 11-12 may be termed transitional chapters founded on the event related in Chapter 10. Chapter 1 gives us that which is connected with the Lord's resurrection; Chapters 2-12 that work of the Holy Ghost of which Jerusalem and the Jews were the centre, but which branches out into the free action of the Spirit of God, independent of, but not separated from, the twelve and Jerusalem as the centre; Chapter 13, and the succeeding Chapters, the work of Paul, flowing from a more distinct mission from Antioch; Chapter 15 connecting the two in order to preserve unity in the whole course. We have indeed the admission of Gentiles in the second part, but it is in connection with the work going on among the Jews. These latter had rejected the witness of the Holy Ghost to a glorified Christ, as they had rejected the Son of God in His humiliation; and God prepared a work outside them, in which the apostle of the Gentiles laid foundations that annulled the distinction between Jew and Gentile, and which unite them as in themselves equally dead in trespasses and sins to Christ, the Head of His body, the assembly, in heaven. [See Note #1]

Note #1:

It is a sorrowful, but instructive, thing to see, in the last division of the book, how the spiritual energy of a Paul closes, as to its effect in work, in the shadow of a prison. Yet, we see the wisdom of God in it. The boasted apostolicism of Rome never had an apostle, but as a prisoner; and Christianity, as the Epistle to the Romans testifies, was already planted there.

Acts Chapter 1

Acts 1:1

act 1:1

Let us now examine the Chapters in their course. Chapter 1 supplies us with the narrative of that which relates to Jesus risen, and the actions of the apostles before the descent of the Holy Ghost. The Lord's communications present several very interesting points. Jesus, the risen man, acts and speaks by the Holy Ghost after His resurrection as before it. Precious token of our own position, as reminding us that we shall have the Holy Ghost after our resurrection, and that, being no longer engaged in restraining and mortifying the flesh, His divine energy in us will be entirely consecrated to eternal joy and worship, and to the service committed to us by God. The risen Lord then gives His disciples commandments in connection with the new position He assumes. Their life and their service are to be formed and guided in view of His resurrection a truth of which they had irrefragable proofs. They were still on earth, but they were pilgrims there, having Him in view who had gone before them raised from among the dead. Their relations with Him are still connected with their position on earth. He speaks to them of the kingdom, and of that which concerned the kingdom. Jerusalem was the starting-point of their ministry, even more than of His own. For He had gathered together the poor of the flock wherever He had found them, especially in Galilee; [See Note #2] but now, resurrection having made Him in power the vessel of the sure mercies of David, He calls Israel afresh to own as Prince and Saviour the One whom they had rejected as the living Messiah on earth. The Epistles of Peter are connected with the gospel in this point of view.

Nevertheless, to exercise this ministry, they were to wait for the accomplishment of the Father's promise, the Holy Ghost, with whom they were to be baptised, according to John's testimony, which the Lord assured them should soon take place. The mission of the Holy Ghost led them, at the same time, out of the Jewish field of purely temporal promises. The Father's promise of the Holy Ghost was a very different thing from that of the restoration of the kingdom of Israel by the power of Jehovah, the God of judgment. It was not for them to know the time and season of this restoration, the knowledge of which the Father kept in His own possession; but they should themselves receive the power of the Holy Ghost, who would come down upon them; and they should be witnesses unto Jesus (as they had known Him, and according to the manifestation of Himself after

His resurrection), both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth thus making Jerusalem the starting-point and first object, according to the mission, Luk 24:47. Nevertheless, their testimony was founded on their beholding their Master and their Lord caught up from their midst, and received into the clouds of heaven, which hid Him from their sight. While looking steadfastly upwards, as this took place, two messengers from heaven come and announce to them that He will return in like manner. His manifestation in this lower world, beneath the heavens, is therefore here intended. He will return to earth to be seen of the world. We have not the rapture of the assembly, nor the assembly's association with Him while absent. With the knowledge of Jesus taken up out of the world, and to come again into the world, as the termini and elements of all their teaching, they return to Jerusalem, there to wait for the Holy Ghost who was promised unto them. It is not into Galilee that they go. They are to be witnesses in Jerusalem of the heavenly rights of that Christ who had been rejected on earth by Jerusalem and the Jews. [See Note #3] All this clearly shews the position in which they were placed, and the mission committed to them. But before they receive the Holy Ghost for its fulfilment, some other characteristic circumstances find their place in this Chapter. They act, under the guidance of Peter, according to intelligence in the word, before they are endowed with power from on high. These two things are therefore distinct from each other.

It appears that, although Peter was not directly led of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit put His seal on that which was done in accordance with the word in the Old Testament understood by the apostle. We have before seen that Christ, after His resurrection, opened the understanding of His disciples that they might understand the scriptures. They now act, not having received the Holy Ghost, according to a Jewish principle. They present the lot to the Lord, that He may decide. Nevertheless the lot was not all, nor was it drawn without making a distinction. Apostolic authority flowed from the nomination of Christ Himself. Intelligence of the scriptures makes them understand that which ought to be. The object which the Lord had assigned to their service narrowed the choice to the little circle of those who could fulfil that object. Their history made them capable, as Jesus had said, of being His witnesses, because they had been with Him from the beginning,

and could now testify that this same Jesus, whom the Jews had rejected and crucified, was indeed risen from among the dead.

Apostolic authority is exercised in Jerusalem on the Jewish principle, before the gift of the Holy Ghost. In this there was neither research nor the exercise of the human mind. "His bishopric let another take" guided their conduct; the capacity to testify of Jesus in His life on earth, and now of His resurrection and ascension, decided on the needed qualifications; the lot of Jehovah determined the individual who was to take Judas' place. Two are chosen, according to these needful qualifications, and the lot falls upon Matthias, who is numbered with the eleven apostles. But they were still without the promised power.

Note #2

The mission given in Luke 24 is the one fulfilled both in Peter's and Paul's discourses in the Acts, but especially in Chapters 2 and 13, not that of Matthew 28 which, indeed, was only to Gentiles. Luke's was on His ascension from Bethany, Matthew's in resurrection from Galilee, where He had sought the poor of the flock (compare Mat 4:15).

Note #3

In this sense it is not a continuation of Christ's mission on the earth, continued in the Matthew mission from Galilee.

Acts Chapter 2

Chapter 2 relates the fulfilment of this promise, in answer to the spirit of dependence manifested in their united prayers.

The Spirit comes from above, in His own power, to possess and fill the dwelling-place prepared for Him.

This event, important beyond all others with respect to man's condition here below, has here a very simple character, because there is no question of the causes of this marvellous gift, of the work on which it depends, of the glory with which it is connected and which it reveals, and of which it is the earnest: we have here only the fact of its power. The disciples "were endued with power from on high."

The form of its appearance, however, is characteristic. On Jesus the Holy Ghost descended in the shape of a dove, because He was not to make His voice heard in the streets, nor break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. But here it was the power of God in testimony, the word; which was like consuming fire, judging all that came before it. Nevertheless it was in grace, and was to go beyond the narrow limits of Jewish ordinances to proclaim the wonderful works of God to every tongue and nation under the sun. It was that mighty wind from heaven, which manifested itself to the disciples, and came upon them in the form of tongues of fire, each one divided into several. This marvel attracts the multitude; and the reality of this divine work is proved by the fact that persons from numerous countries hear these poor Galileans proclaim to them the wonderful works of God, each one in the language of the country whence he came up to Jerusalem. [See Note #4]

The Jews, who did not understand these languages, mock; and Peter declares to them in their own tongue, and according to their own prophecies, the true character of that which had taken place. He takes his stand upon the resurrection of Christ, foretold by the prophet-king, and upon His exaltation by the right hand of God. This Jesus, whom they had crucified, had there received the promise of the Father, and shed forth that which produced the effects that they heard and saw. They were therefore to know assuredly, that God had made that same Jesus whom they had rejected both Lord and Christ.

The character of this testimony will be remarked here. It is essentially that of Peter. It goes no farther than the affirmation of the fact, that He who had been rejected by the Jews is made in heaven Lord and Christ. It begins with Jesus known of the Jews on earth, and establishes the truth of His being raised again, and exalted to the position of Lord. God has done this. The apostle does not even proclaim Him as the Son of God. We shall see that, if it is not done by Peter in the Acts, Paul on the contrary does it from the first moment of his conversion. Peter states the result at that moment in power, and does not speak of the kingdom. He only reminds them that the Spirit was promised in the last days, and alludes to the terrible day of the coming judgment, which would be preceded by alarming signs and wonders.

Without speaking of the fulfilment of the promise of the kingdom, the time of which the Father had kept secret, he puts the fact of the gift of the Holy Ghost in connection with the responsibility of Israel, to whom God still acted in grace, by preaching to them a glorified Christ, and by giving them proofs of His glory in the gift of the Holy Ghost, made sensible to all. This is the presence of the Holy Ghost according to Joh 15:26-27. The testimony as a whole, however, is founded on and carries out the mission of Luke 24. Only in Luke we have nothing of baptism. See Luk 24:47-49, to which this fully corresponds. The testimony was addressed to the Jews; nevertheless it was not confined to them, [See Note #5] and it was separative. "Separate yourselves from this untoward generation." This separation was founded on a real and moral work "repent": the past was all to be judged, and publicly demonstrated by their reception amongst Christians by baptism, in order to receive the remission of their sins, and participate in this heavenly gift of the Holy Ghost. "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." This work is individual. There was judgment on all the past, the admission amongst them by baptism, and the consequent participation in the Holy Ghost, who dwelt where they came. We see at once the difference between the moral change already wrought, the repentance which their godly sorrow works, and the reception of the Holy Ghost. This was consequent on the remission of their sins to which they were brought. This gift depended in a regular way on their admission amongst Christians, the house where He dwelt, built in the name of Jesus. Afterwards the promise is declared to belong to them and to their children to the house of Israel as such to them and to their children after them. But it went beyond the limits of God's ancient people. The promise was also to those that were afar off; for it was fulfilled, in connection with faith in Christ, to all who through grace should come into the new house all whom the Lord, the God of Israel, should call. The call of God characterised the blessing. Israel, with her children, was owned, but a remnant called out from among them. The Gentiles, being called, shared the blessing.

The result of this ineffable gift is related to us. It was not merely a moral change, but a power which set aside all the motives that individualised those who had received it, by uniting them as one soul and in one mind. They

continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine; they were in communion with each other and the apostles; they broke bread; they spent their time in prayer. The sense of God's presence was powerful among them; and many signs and wonders were wrought by the hands of the apostles. They were united in the closest bonds; no man called anything his own, but all divided their possessions with those that needed. They were daily in the temple, the public resort of Israel for religious exercises, whilst having their own apart breaking bread at home daily. They ate with joy and gladness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people around them.

Thus the assembly was formed; and the Lord added to it daily the remnant of Israel, who were to be saved from the judgments that should fall on a nation which had rejected the Son of God, their Messiah; and, thank God, from yet deeper ruin. God brought into the assembly thus owned of Him by the presence of the Holy Ghost those whom He spared in Israel. [See Note #6] A new order of things had commenced, marked by the presence of the Holy Ghost. [See Note #7] Here was found the presence and the house of God, although the old order of things still existed until the execution of judgment upon it.

The assembly was formed therefore by the power of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, on the testimony that Jesus, who had been rejected, was raised up to heaven, being made of God both Lord and Christ. It was composed of the Jewish remnant who were to be spared, with the reserve of bringing in Gentiles whenever God should call them. It was as yet formed in connection with Israel in the patience of God, yet apart in power, God's dwelling place.

Note #4

The rationalistic notion that it was a kind of excited gibberish, just as the unbelieving Jews thought, is absurd beyond conception. Think of Paul's thanking God that he spoke more kinds of gibberish than they all, and God giving a gift for interpreting gibberish!

Note #5

The testimony is in terms which, applying to Jews there and scattered abroad, yet opened the door to the Gentiles in the sovereignty of God "all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call." God is still the God of man; but He calls whom He pleases.

Note #6

This is the force of ('soozomenos') "those that were to be saved," Act 2:47.

Note #7

God never dwelt with man but on the ground of redemption, not with Adam nor Abraham. Compare Exo 29:46.

Acts Chapter 3

In Chapter 3 the Spirit addresses His testimony to the people by the mouth of Peter. God still acted in patience towards His foolish people, and with more than patience. He acts in grace towards them, as His people, in virtue of the death and intercession of Christ alas! in vain. Their unbelieving leaders silenced the word. [See Note #8] The attention of the people is attracted by a miracle that restored strength to a poor lame man, known to all who frequented the temple; and, the multitude crowding to behold him, Peter preaches Christ to them. The God of their fathers, said he, had glorified His servant Jesus, whom they had denied, when Pilate would have set Him free. They had denied the Holy One and the Just desired a murderer killed the Prince of Life; but God had raised Him from the dead. And His name, through faith, had healed the impotent man. Grace could esteem their act done as through ignorance, and that as to their rulers also. We here see the Holy Ghost responding to the intercession of Christ: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Guilty of the ten thousand talents, the great King remits it them, sending the message of mercy which calls them to repentance. To this Peter invites them: "Repent ye, and be converted; so [See Note #9] that the time of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, whom the heaven must receive," he tells them, until the time ordained of God for the restoration which should accomplish all that the prophets had foretold. That is to say, he preaches repentance to the Jews as a nation, declaring that, on their repentance,

Jesus, who had ascended up to heaven, would return; and the fulfilment of all the blessings spoken of by the prophets should take place on their behalf. The return of Jesus with this object depended (and still depends) on the repentance of the Jews. Meanwhile He remains in heaven.

Moreover Jesus was the prophet announced by Moses: and whosoever would not hear Him should be cut off from the people. His voice still sounded in especial grace by the mouth of His disciples. All the prophets had spoken of these days. They were the children of the prophets, the natural heirs of the blessings which they had announced for Israel, as well as of the promises made to Abraham of a seed in whom all nations should be blessed. To them also in consequence, God, having raised up His servant Jesus, [See Note #10] had sent Him to bless them, in turning away every one of them from his iniquities.

Note #8

It is striking to see the counsels of God and their accomplishment in grace, as far as they were now being fulfilled, so clearly distinguished from the responsibility of those with whom God was dealing. In Chapter 2 Peter says, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." God was gathering, according to His own knowledge of what was coming. In Chapter 3 he says, "God hath sent him to bless you in turning every one of you away from his iniquities." So He had, and patience still waited, though God acted in present grace according to the result known to Himself: in Jeremiah often. Had they repented, God would surely have turned from judgment, as stated also in Jeremiah.

Note #9

Not "when." There is no pretence for so translating it.

Note #10

This refers to the time of His life on the earth, though on His intercession there was a renewal of the mercy in testimony to a glorified Christ, who would return on their repentance.

Acts Chapter 4

In a word, they are invited to return by repentance, and enjoy all the promises made to Israel. The Messiah Himself should return from heaven to establish their blessing. The whole nation is here addressed as natural heirs of the promises made to Abraham. But, while they were speaking, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came to lay hands on them, being grieved that they preached the resurrection, which their unbelief and dogmatic system did not receive. They put them in prison, for it was evening. The hope of Israel was set aside; the grace of God had spoken in vain, great and patient as it was. Many, however, believed their word: five thousand persons already confessed the Lord Jesus.

We have seen the address which God, in His grace, sent to Israel by the mouth of Peter. We shall now see, not only the reception (already noticed) which it met with from the rulers of the people, but the deliberate answer of their inmost heart, as we may call it. On the morrow the rulers, the elders, and the scribes assemble at Jerusalem, together with Annas and his kindred; and, setting the apostles in their midst, they demand by what power or in what name they have wrought this miracle on the impotent man. Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, declares announcing it to all Israel, and with the utmost readiness and entire boldness that it was by Jesus, whom they had crucified, and whom God had raised from the dead. Thus the question between God and the rulers of Israel was very formally stated, and that by the Spirit of God. Jesus was the stone rejected by them, the builders, which had become the head of the corner. Salvation could nowhere else be found. No carefulness not to offend, with regard to the adversaries and the rulers; with the people, as such, ignorant and misled, everything to win them. The council recognised them as former companions of Christ: the man who had been healed was there. What could they say or do in the face of the multitude who had witnessed the miracle? They could only exhibit a will in decided opposition to the Lord and His testimony, and yield to the public opinion, which was necessary to their own importance, by which too they were governed. With threats they commanded the apostles to teach no more in the name of Jesus. We may remark here, that Satan had Sadducean instruments arrayed against the doctrine of the resurrection, as he had Pharisees as suited instruments against a living Christ. We must expect the well-ordered opposition of Satan against the truth.

Now Peter and John allow of no ambiguity with respect to their course. God had commanded them to preach Christ: the prohibition of man had no weight with them. "We cannot," say they, "but speak the things which we have seen and heard." What a position for the rulers of the people! Accordingly, a testimony like this plainly demonstrates that the leaders of Israel were fallen from the place of interpreters of the will of God. The apostles do not drive them away do not attack them: God would judge them; but they act immediately on the part of God, and disregard their authority altogether with respect to the work that God had committed to themselves. The testimony of God was with the apostles, and not with the rulers of the temple; and the presence of God was in the assembly, and not there.

Peter and John return to their own company, for a separate people who knew each other was formed; and all, moved by the Holy Ghost (for it was there that God dwelt by His Spirit, not now in the temple), lift up their voice to God, the Governor of all things, to acknowledge that this opposition of the rulers was but the accomplishment of the word and the counsels and the purposes of God. These threatenings were but the occasion of asking God to manifest His power in connection with the name of Jesus. In a word, the world (including the Jews, who formed a part of it in their opposition) had stood up against Jesus, the Servant of God, and opposed itself to the testimony rendered to Him. The Holy Ghost is the strength of this testimony, whether in the courage of those who bore witness (Act 4:8), or in His presence in the assembly (Act 4:31), or in the energy of service (Act 4:33), or in the fruits that are again produced among the saints with a power which makes it manifest that the Holy Ghost has dominion in their hearts over all the motives that influence man, making them walk by those of which He is the source. It is the energy of the Spirit in the presence of opposition, as before it was His natural fruit in those among whom He dwelt. Fresh persons sell their goods, and lay their price at the apostles' feet; among others, a man whom the Holy Ghost takes pleasure in distinguishing Barnabas, from the island of Cyprus.

To sum up this Chapter demonstrates, on one side, the condition of the Jews, their rejection of the testimony which was addressed to them in

grace; and on the other, the power of the Holy Ghost and God's presence and guidance elsewhere, namely, in the midst of the disciples.

These three Chapters (2-4) present the first forming of the assembly, and its blessed character through the Holy Spirit dwelling in it. They present to us its first beauty as formed of God, and His habitation.

Acts Chapter 5

Alas! evil shews itself there also (Chapter 5). If the mighty Spirit of God is there, the flesh also is there. There are some who wished to have the credit of devotedness which the Holy Ghost produces, although devoid of that faith in God, and that self-renunciation, which, shewing itself in the path of love, constitutes all the value and all the truth of this devotedness. But it only gives fresh occasion to manifest the power of the Spirit of God, the presence of God within, against evil; as the preceding Chapter shewed His energy outside, and the precious fruits of His grace. If there be not the simple fruit and of good already described, there is the power of good against evil. The present state of the assembly, as a whole, is the power of evil over good. God cannot endure evil where He dwells; still less than where He does not dwell. However great the energy of the testimony which He sends to those who are outside, He exercises all patience until there is no remedy within. The more His presence is realised and manifested (and even in proportion as that is done), the more He shews Himself intolerant of evil. It cannot be otherwise. He judges in the midst of His saints, where He will have holiness; and that according to the measure of the manifestation of Himself. Ananias and Sapphira disregarding the presence of the Holy Ghost, whose impulse they pretended to follow, fall down dead before the God whom, in their blindness, they sought to deceive in forgetting Him. God was in the assembly.

Mighty, though painful, testimony to His presence! Fear pervades every heart, both within and outside. In fact, the presence of God is a serious thing, however great its blessing. The effect of this manifestation of the power of a God present with those whom He acknowledged as His own was very great. Multitudes joined themselves by faith to the confession of the name of the Lord at least from among the people, for the rest dared not.

The more position we have in the world, the more we fear the world which gave it us. This miraculous testimony to the power of God was also displayed in a still more remarkable way, so that people came from far to profit by it. The apostles were constantly together in Solomon's porch.

But alas! the manifestation of the power of God, in connection with the despised disciples of Jesus, and working outside the beaten track in which the self-importance of the high priest and those that were with him found its path, together with the progress made by that which they rejected, and the attention drawn to the apostles by the miracles that were wrought, excite the opposition and jealousy of the rulers; and they put the apostles in prison. In this world good ever works in the presence of the power of evil.

A power different from that of the Holy Ghost in the assembly now displays itself. The providence of God, watching over His work, and acting through the ministry of angels, frustrates all the plans of the unbelieving heads of Israel. The priests shut up the apostles in prison. An angel of the Lord opens the prison doors, and sends the apostles to pursue their accustomed work in the temple. The officers whom the council send to the prison find it shut, and everything in order; but no apostles.

Meanwhile the council are informed that they are in the temple, teaching the people. Confounded and alarmed, the council send to fetch them; but the officers bring them without violence, fearing the people. For God holds everything in check, until His testimony be rendered, when He will have it rendered. The high priest remonstrates with them on the ground of his former prohibition. Peter's reply is more concise than on the former occasion, and is rather the announcement of a settled purpose, than the rendering a testimony by reasoning with those who will not hearken, and who shewed themselves to be adversaries. It is the same in substance as what he had said when previously brought before the rulers: God is to be obeyed rather than men. Opposed to God, the heads of Israel were merely men. In saying this, all was decided: the opposition between them and God was evident. The God of their fathers had raised up Jesus, whom the rulers of Israel had crucified. The apostles were His witnesses, and so was the Holy Ghost, whom God had given to those who obeyed Him. All was said; the position clearly announced. Peter, in the name of the apostles, formally

takes it on the part of God and of Christ, and in agreement with the seal of the Holy Ghost, who, given to believers, bore witness in the Saviour's name. Nevertheless there is no pride, no self-will. He must obey God. He still takes his place in Israel ("the God," he says, "of our fathers"); but the place of testimony for God in Israel. The advice of Gamaliel prevails to turn aside the purposes of the council, for God has always His instruments ready, unknown perhaps to us, where we are doing His will; nevertheless they cause the apostles to be beaten, and command them not to preach, and send them away. They were at a loss what to do only made the opposition of their will the more evident, while how simple the path when sent of God, and consciously doing His will! We must obey God.

The object of this latter part of the Chapter is to shew that the providential care of God, whether miraculously by means of angels, or by disposing the hearts of men to accomplish His purposes, was exercised on behalf of the assembly, even as the Spirit of God bore testimony in it and manifested in it His power. The apostles, in no wise terrified, return, full of joy at being counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus; and every day, in the temple, or from house to house, they cease not to teach and to preach the good news of Jesus the Christ. However weak they might be, God Himself maintains His testimony.

Acts Chapter 6

Other evils, unhappily, assail the church (Chapter 6). The flesh begins to shew itself, in the midst of the power of the Holy Ghost, the trouble arising from the different circumstances of the disciples, and in those things in which grace had been especially manifested, on the side on which they were connected with the flesh. The Hellenists (Jews born in Grecian or heathen countries) murmur against the Hebrews (natives of Judea), because the widows of the latter were favoured, as they imagined, in the distribution of the goods bestowed on the assembly by its wealthier members. But here the wisdom given by the Spirit meets the difficulty, profiting by the occasion to give development to the work, according to the necessities that were growing up; and seven persons are named to undertake this business, for which the apostles would not forsake their own work. We also find, in the case of Philip and Stephen, the truth of what Paul says: "Those who have

used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Observe here, that the apostles put prayer before preaching in their work, their conflict with the power of evil being more especially carried on in it, as well as their realisation of the power of God for the strength and wisdom they needed; and, in order that they might act directly on God's part, it was necessary that grace and unction should be maintained in their hearts.

Observe also the grace that discovers itself under the influence of the Spirit of God in this matter: all the names, as far as we can judge, are those of Hellenists.

The influence of the word extended, and many priests were obedient to the faith. Thus, until now, the opposition from without, and the evil within, did but minister occasion to the progress of the work of God, by the manifestation of His presence in the midst of the church. Take especial notice of this fact. It is not only that the Spirit does good by His testimony, but, although evil is there without and within, yet where power displays itself, that evil does but bear witness to the efficacy of His presence. There was evil, but there was power to meet it. Still it shewed there was leaven even in the Pentecostal cake.

The energy of the Spirit manifests itself especially in Stephen, who is full of grace and power. The Hellenist Jews oppose him; and, not being able to answer him, they accuse him before the council, and in particular of having announced in the name of Jesus the destruction of the temple and of the city, and the change of the customs of their law. Here, observe, we see the free power of the Holy Ghost, without any sending by any other to the work, as in the apostles appointed by Christ Himself. It is not authority in the apostles, it is not in the Jews of Palestine. He distributes to whom He will. It is the godly and devoted Hellenist who renders the last testimony to the heads of the nation. If priests believe on the one side, Jews from without Judea bear testimony on the other, and prepare the way for a still more extended testimony; but at the same time for the definitive rejection, morally, of the Jews as the basis and centre of the testimony, and of the work of gathering together. For as yet Jerusalem was the centre of

testimony and gathering. Peter had testified of a glorious Christ promising His return on their repentance, and they had stopped His testimony. Now judgment is pronounced on them by the Holy Ghost through the mouth of Stephen, in whom they shew themselves open adversaries to this testimony. It is not the apostles who, by official authority, break off with Jerusalem. The free action of the Holy Ghost anticipates a breach, which did not take place so as to form a part of the scripture narrative. The thing is done by the power of God; and the taking up to heaven of the witness raised up by the Spirit to denounce the Jews as adversaries, and to declare their fallen condition, placed the centre of gathering in heaven according to the Spirit that heaven to which the faithful witness, who was filled with the Spirit, had gone up. Already, while on earth, he had the appearance of an angel to the eyes of the council who judged him; but the hardness of their hearts would not let them stop in the path of hostility towards the testimony rendered to Christ a testimony which comes out here in a special way as the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

Acts Chapter 7

Stephen, [See Note #11] as far as we are told, had not known the Lord during His life on earth. Certainly he was not appointed, like the apostles, to be a witness of that life. He was simply the instrument of the Holy Ghost, distributing to whom He would.

Acts Chapter 8

Saul was present at Stephen's death, and consenting to it. [See Note #14] This is the end of the first phase of the assembly of God its history in immediate connection with Jerusalem and the Jews, as the centre to which the work of the apostles related, "beginning at Jerusalem"; carried on, however, in a believing remnant, but inviting Israel, as such, to come into it, as being nationally the object of the love and care of God, but they would not. Some accessory events follow, which enlarge the sphere of labour and maintain the unity of the whole, previously to the revelation of the call of the Gentiles, as such, properly speaking, and of the assembly as one body, independent of Jerusalem, and apart from the earth. These events are the work of Philip in the conversion of Samaria and of the Ethiopian; that of

Cornelius, with Peter's vision that took place after the vocation of Saul, who himself is brought in by a Jew of good report among the Jews as such; the labours of Peter in all the land of Canaan; and, finally, the connection established between the apostles at Jerusalem and the converted Gentiles at Antioch; the opposition of Herod, the false king of the Jews, and the care which God still takes of Peter, and the judgment of God upon the king. Afterwards comes the direct work among the Gentiles, having Antioch for its starting-point, already prepared by the conversion of Paul, through means and with a revelation that were quite peculiar. Let us follow the details of these Chapters.

After the death of Stephen persecution breaks out. The victory, gained by a hatred the accomplishment of whose object was allowed by Providence, opens the floodgates to the violence of the Jewish leaders, enemies to the gospel. The barrier that restrained them once broken, the waves of passion overflow on all sides. People are often held back by a little remaining conscience, by habits, by a certain idea of the rights of others; but when the dykes are broken, hatred (the spirit of murder in the heart) satiates itself, if God permit, by actions that shew what man is when left to himself. But all this hatred accomplishes the will of God, in which man would perhaps otherwise have failed, and which in some respects he could not or ought not even to have executed, that is to say, the will of God in sovereign judgment. The dispersion of the assembly was Israel's judgment a judgment which the disciples would have found it difficult to declare and to execute by the communication of greater light to them; for whatever may be the blessing and energy in the sphere where the grace of God acts, the ways of God in directing all things are in His own hand. Our part, too, in His ways as to those without, is in grace.

The whole assembly then, except the apostles, is scattered. It is questionable also, that the apostles did right in remaining, and whether a more simple faith would not have made them go away, and thus have spared the assembly many a conflict and many a difficulty in connection with the fact that Jerusalem continued to be a centre of authority. [See Note #15] The Lord had even said with Israel in view, "When they persecute in one city, flee into another"; and after His resurrection He commands them to go and

disciple all nations. This last mission we do not find executed in the history of the Acts and the work among the Gentiles, and, as we see in Galatians 2, by a special agreement entered into at Jerusalem, it fell into the hands of Paul, being placed on an entirely new footing. The word tells us nothing of the accomplishment of this mission of the twelve towards the Gentiles, unless it be the slight general intimation in the end of Mark. God is mighty in Peter toward the circumcision and in Paul towards the Gentiles. It may be said that the twelve were not persecuted. It is possible, and I say nothing decided on the point; but it is certain that the passages which I have quoted have no fulfilment in the Bible history, and that another arrangement, another order of things, took place in lieu of that which the Lord prescribed, and that Jewish prejudices had in fact an influence, resulting from this concentration at Jerusalem, from which even Peter had the greatest difficulty to free himself.

Those who were scattered abroad preached the word everywhere, but only to the Jews, before some of them arrived at Antioch (Act 11:19).

Philip however went down to Samaria, and preached Christ to them, and wrought miracles. They all give heed to him and are even baptised. A man who until then had bewitched them with sorcery, so that they had said he was the great power of God, even he also submits to the power which eclipsed his false marvels, and convinced him so much the more of its reality as he was conscious of the falseness of his own. The apostles make no difficulty with regard to Samaria. The history of Jesus must have enlightened them in that respect. Moreover, the Samaritans were not Gentiles. Still it was a Hellenist who preached the gospel there.

A new truth comes out here in connection with the regular process of the assembly namely, that the apostles conferred the Holy Ghost by means of prayer and the laying on of hands: a very important fact in the history of God's dealings. Moreover Samaria was a conquest which all the energy of Judaism had never been able to make. It was a new and splendid triumph for the gospel. Spiritual energy to subdue the world appertained to the assembly. Jerusalem was set aside: its day was over in that respect.

The presence of the power of the Holy Ghost acting in Peter preserves the assembly as yet from the entrance of hypocrites, the instruments of Satan. The great and powerful fact that God was there manifested itself and made the darkness evident which circumstances had concealed. Carried along by the strong current, Simon had yielded, as to his intelligence, to the authority of Christ whose name was glorified by Philip's ministry. But the true condition of his heart, the desire of his own glory, the complete opposition between his moral condition and all principle all light from God betrays itself in presence of the fact that a man can impart the Holy Ghost. He desires to buy this power with money. What a thought! It is thus that the unbelief which appears quite to pass away, so that the things of God are outwardly received, betrays itself by something which, to one who has the Spirit, is so grossly contrary to God that its true character is manifest even to a child taught by God Himself.

Samaria is thus brought into connection with the centre of the work of Jerusalem, where the apostles still were. Already the Holy Ghost's being bestowed on the Samaritans was an immense step in the development of the assembly. Doubtless they were circumcised, they acknowledged the law, although the temple had in a certain degree lost its importance. The body of believers was more consolidated, and, so far as they still held to Jerusalem, it was a positive gain; for Samaria, by receiving the gospel, entered into connection with her ancient rival, as much as the apostles themselves were so, and submitted to her. Probably the apostles, during that time of persecution, did not go to the temple. God had opened a wide door to them outside, and thus made them ample amends in their work, for the success of the rulers of Israel who had stopped it in Jerusalem; for the energy of the Spirit was with them. To sum up: that which is presented here is the free energy of the Spirit in others than the apostles, and outside Jerusalem which had rejected it; and the relations maintained with the apostles and Jerusalem by their central action, and the authority and power with which they were invested.

Having accomplished their work, and themselves evangelised several villages of the Samaritans, Peter and John return to Jerusalem. The work outside goes on, and by other means. Philip, who presents the character of

prompt unquestioning obedience in simplicity of heart, is called to leave his prosperous work with which all his personal importance (if he had been seeking it) was connected, and in which he was surrounded with respect and affection. "Go," said the angel of the Lord, "toward the south, unto the way that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza." It was a desert. Philip's ready obedience does not think of the difference between Samaria and Gaza, but of the Lord's will: and he goes. The gospel now extends to the proselytes from among the Gentiles, and makes its way to the centre of Abyssinia. The Queen's treasurer is admitted among the disciples of the Lord by baptism, which sealed his faith in the testimony of the prophet Isaiah; and he goes on his way, rejoicing in the salvation which he had taken a toilsome journey from a far country to seek in legal duties and ceremonies, but with faith in God's word, in Jerusalem. Beautiful picture of the grace of the gospel! He carries away with him, and to his home, that which grace had bestowed on him in the wilderness that which his wearisome journey to Jerusalem had not procured him. The poor Jews, who had driven away the testimony from Jerusalem, are outside everything. The Spirit of the Lord carries Philip far away, and he is found at Azotus; for all the power of the Lord is at the service of the Son of man for the accomplishment of the testimony to His glory. Philip evangelises all the cities unto Caesarea.

Note #14

We may remark here, that the sanctuary, so to speak, is open to all believers. The veil indeed was rent by the death of Christ, but the grace of God was still acting towards the Jews, as such, and proposed to them the return of Jesus to the earth; that is to say, outside the veil, in the event of their repentance, so that the blessing would then have been upon the earth the times of refreshing by the coming of Christ, which the prophets had announced. But now it is no longer a Messiah, the Son of David, but a Son of man in heaven; and, by the Holy Ghost here below, an opened heaven is seen and known, and the great High Priest (standing as yet) at the right hand of God is not hidden behind a veil. All is open to the believer; the glory, and He who has entered into it for His people. And this, it appears to me, is the reason why He is seen standing. He had not definitely taken His place as seated ('eis to dienekes'; in perpetuity) on the heavenly throne, until the

testimony of the Holy Ghost to Israel of His exaltation had been definitively rejected on earth. The free testimony of the Spirit which is developed, here and afterwards, is highly interesting, without touching apostolic authority in its place, as we shall see. As to the Jews, till the High Priest comes out, they cannot know that His work is accepted for the nation; as, in the day of atonement, they had to wait till he came out that they might know it. But for us the Holy Ghost is come out while He is within, and we know it.

Note #15

This is no wise prevents the manifestation of the sovereign wisdom of God. The development of the doctrine of the assembly in its oneness, and as the body of Christ, was but so much the more perfect and unmixed, as we find it taught by Paul; who was called outside of Judaism by the revelation of a heavenly Christ. Neither do these ways of sovereign wisdom in God make any change at all in the responsibility of man. The outward unity of the assembly was also preserved by this means, by the connection kept up between the other places and Jerusalem, until the work among the Gentiles outside Judaism made these connections extremely difficult and precarious. This, however, rendered the grace and the wisdom of God but so much the more apparent.

Acts Chapter 9

A work and a workman of another character begin now to dawn upon the scene.

We have seen the inveterate opposition of the heads of Israel to the testimony of the Holy Ghost, their obstinacy in repelling the patient grace of God. Israel rejected all the work of the God of grace in their behalf. Saul makes himself the apostle of their hatred to the disciples of Jesus, to the servants of God. Not content with searching them out at Jerusalem, he asks for letters from the high priest, that he may go and lay hands on them in foreign cities. When Israel is in full opposition to God, he is the ardent missionary of their malice in ignorance, no doubt, but the willing slave of his Jewish prejudices.

Thus occupied, he approaches Damascus. There, in the full career of an unbroken will, the Lord Jesus stops him. A light from heaven shines round about him, and envelopes him in its dazzling brightness. He falls to the earth, and hears a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" The glory which had thrown him to the ground left no doubt accompanied as it was by that voice that the authority of God was revealed in it. His will broken, his pride overthrown, his mind subdued, he asks, "Who art thou, Lord?" The authority of the One who spoke was unquestionable; Saul's heart was subject to that authority: and it was Jesus. The career of his self-will was ended for ever. But moreover the Lord of glory was not only Jesus; He also acknowledged the poor disciples, whom Saul desired to carry prisoners to Jerusalem, as being Himself.

How many things were revealed in those few words! The Lord of glory declared Himself to be Jesus, whom Saul persecuted. The disciples were one with Himself. The Jews were at open war with the Lord Himself. The whole system which they maintained, all their law, all their official authority, all the ordinances of God, had not prevented their being at open war with the Lord. Saul himself, armed with their authority, found himself occupied in destroying the name of the Lord and His people from off the earth: a terrible discovery, completely overwhelming his soul, all-powerful in its effects, not leaving one moral element of his soul standing before its strength. Extenuation of the evil was fruitless; zeal for Judaism was zeal against the Lord. His own conscience had only animated that zeal. The authorities constituted of God, surrounded with the halo of centuries of honour, enhanced by the present calamities of Israel which had now nothing but her religion these authorities had but sanctioned and favoured his efforts against the Lord. The Jesus whom they rejected was the Lord. The testimony which they endeavoured to suppress was His testimony. What a change for Saul! What a new position, even for the minds of the apostles themselves who remained at Jerusalem, when all were dispersed faithful indeed in spite of the opposition of the rulers of Israel, but themselves in connection with the nation.

But the work went deeper yet. Misguided no doubt, but his conscience in itself for he thought he ought to do many things against the name of Jesus

of Nazareth left him the enemy of the Lord. Blameless righteousness according to law, as man could measure it, more than left him hardened in open opposition to the Lord. His superiors, and the authorities of the ancient religion all his soul was based on morally as well as religiously all was smashed within him for ever. He was broken up in the whole man before God. Nothing remained in him but discovered enmity against God, save as his own will was also broken in the process, he who an hour before was the conscientious, blameless, religious man! Compare, though the revelation of Christ carried him much farther, Gal 2:20; Philippians 3; Co2 1:9; Co2 4:10; and a multitude of passages.

Other important points are brought out here. Saul had not known Jesus on earth. He had not a testimony because he had known Him from the beginning, declaring that He was made Lord and Christ. It is not a Jesus who goes up into heaven where He is out of sight; but the Lord who appears to him for the first time in heaven, and who announces to him that He is Jesus. A glorious Lord is the only one whom he knows. His gospel (as he expresses it himself) is the gospel of the glory. If he had known Christ after the flesh, he knows Him thus no more. But there is yet another important principle found here. The Lord of glory has His members on earth. "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." It was Himself: those poor disciples were bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh. He looked upon them and cherished them as His own flesh. The glory and the oneness of the saints with Jesus, their Head in heaven, are the truths connected with the conversion of Saul, with the revelation of Jesus to him, with the creation of faith in his heart, and that in a way which overthrew Judaism in all its bearings in his soul; and that in a soul in which this Judaism formed an integral part of its existence, and gave it its whole character.

Another point, borrowed from his account of the vision later in the book, which is remarkable in connection with his career: "Separating thee," says the Lord, "from the people and from the Gentiles, to whom I now send thee." This moral end of Saul separated him from both of course from the Jews, but did not make a Gentile of him either and united him with a glorified Christ. He was neither a Jew nor a Gentile in his spiritual standing.

All his life and ministry flowed from his association with a heavenly glorified Christ.

Nevertheless he comes into the assembly by the usual means like Jesus in Israel humbly taking his place there where the truth of God was established by His power. Blind for three days and fully engrossed as was natural with such a discovery, he neither eats nor drinks; and afterwards, besides the fact of his blindness, which was a quiet, continual, and unequivocal proof of the truth of that which had happened to him, his faith must have been confirmed by the arrival of Ananias, who can declare to him from the Lord that which had happened to him, although he had not been out of the city a circumstance so much the more striking because, in a vision, Saul had seen him come and restore his sight. And this Ananias does: Saul receives sight, and is baptised. He takes food and is strengthened. The conversation of Jesus with Ananias is remarkable, as shewing with what distinct evidence the Lord revealed Himself in those days, and the holy liberty and confidence with which the true and faithful disciple conversed with Him. The Lord speaks as a man to his friend in details of place and circumstances, and Ananias reasons in all confiding openness with the Lord in regard to Saul; and Jesus answers him, not in harsh authority, though of course Ananias had to obey, but with gracious explanation, as with one admitted to His confidence, by declaring that Saul is a chosen vessel to bear His name before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel; and that He will shew him how great things he must suffer for His sake.

Saul makes no delay in confessing and declaring his faith; and that which he says is eminently worthy of notice. He preaches in the synagogue that Jesus is the Son of God. It is the first time that this is done. That He was exalted to the right hand of God that He was Lord and Christ had been already preached; the rejected Messiah was exalted on high. But here it is the simple doctrine as to His personal glory; Jesus is the Son of God.

In the words of Jesus to Ananias, the children of Israel come last.

Saul does not yet begin his public ministry. It is, so to speak, only the expression of his personal faithfulness, his zeal, his faith, among those that surrounded him, with whom he was naturally connected. It was not long

before opposition manifested itself, in the nation that would have no Christ, at least according to God, and the disciples sent him away, letting him down by the wall in a basket; and through the agency of Barnabas (a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, whom grace had taught to value the truth with regard to the new disciple) the dreaded Saul found his place among the disciples even at Jerusalem. [See Note #16] Wonderful triumph of the Lord! Singular position for himself there, had he not been absorbed by the thought of Jesus. At Jerusalem he reasons with the Hellenists. He was one of them. The Hebrews were not his natural sphere. They seek to put him to death; the disciples bring him down to the sea, and send him to Tarsus, the place of his birth. The triumph of grace has, under God's hand, silenced the adversary. The assemblies are left in peace, and edify themselves walking in the fear of God and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, the two great elements of blessing; and their numbers increase. Persecution accomplishes the designs of God. The peace which He grants gives opportunity for ripening in grace and in the knowledge of Himself. We learn the ways and government of God in the midst of the imperfection of man.

Peace being established through the goodness of God sole resource of those who truly wait upon Him in submission to His will Peter passes throughout all parts of Israel. The Spirit of God relates this circumstance here, between the conversion of Saul and his apostolic work, to shew us, I doubt not, the apostolic energy in Peter existing at the very time when the call of the new apostle was to bring in new light, and a work that was new in many important respects (thus sanctioning as His own work, and in its place, that which had been done before, whatever progress in accomplishment His counsels might make); and in order to shew us the introduction of the Gentiles into the assembly as it was at first founded by His grace in the beginning, preserving thus its unity, and putting His seal upon this work of heavenly grace.

The assembly existed. The doctrine of her oneness, as the body of Christ, outside the world, was not yet made known. The reception of Cornelius did not announce it, although paving its way.

Note #16

This was, it would appear, later, but is noticed here to put him, so to speak, in his place among Christians.

Acts Chapter 10

The undiminished power of Peter, his apostolic authority, in the midst of which the entrance of Cornelius into the spiritual house of God takes place, in connection with Peter's ministry, and that, after the calling of Saul, which opened a new perspective all these facts taken together confirmed that which went before. The original work was in no wise set aside to bring in another. Nevertheless, Peter's vision did not reveal the assembly as the body of Christ, neither did the admission of Cornelius. They only shewed that in every nation he who feared God was acceptable to Him in a word, that the favour of God was not limited to the Jews, and that there was no need of becoming a Jew in order to share the salvation that is in Christ. The oneness of the body united to its Head in heaven was not brought out by this event; but it prepared the way for the promulgation of that truth, since in fact the Gentile was admitted on earth without becoming a Jew. The thing was done on earth individually, although the doctrine itself was not taught. Repentance unto life eternal was granted to the Gentiles as such. The Holy Ghost the seal of christian blessing among the Jews, the fruit of redemption accomplished by Jesus was given to Gentiles as to Jews. The latter might be astonished at it; but there was no resisting God. Through grace they could praise Him for it.

>From Chapter 9:32 to 11:18, we find then, the power of the Spirit of God with Peter in the midst of Israel, and the admission of Gentiles into the earthly assembly, without their becoming Jews, or submitting to the ancient order which was passing away; the seal of the Spirit put upon them; and the heads of the assembly at Jerusalem, and the most ardent of the circumcision, accepting the fact as the will of God, and praising Him while submitting to it, in spite of their prejudices. The door then is open to the Gentile. This was an immense step. The precious doctrine of the assembly had yet to be announced.

Peter had proclaimed the call of the Gentiles in his first discourse; but to realise it, and give form to its conditions, in connection with that which had

already existed historically, required the intervention, the authority, and the revelation of God. Progress is evident through the patient grace of God; for it was not the wisdom of man. Altogether Jewish at the commencement, the people of Jerusalem were taught that Jesus would return if they repented. This testimony of grace is rejected, and, in the person of him who maintained it, the firstfruits of the assembly go up to heaven. The Holy Ghost, in His sovereign liberty, acts in Samaria and among the proselytes. The assembly being scattered by the persecution, Saul is brought in by the revelation of a glorious Christ, and by a testimony from His mouth which implies the union of saints on earth with Himself their Head in heaven as only one body. After this a pious Gentile, converted but still a Gentile, receives faith in Christ and the Holy Ghost; so that, marked out by this testimony this seal from God Himself to his faith the apostle and the disciples who were the most attached to Judaism receive him; Peter by baptising him, and the others by accepting Peter's act.

Let us notice here, that salvation is not only the fact of being quickened and pious, but that of complete deliverance so as to present us to Himself in righteousness, which God grants to every one who has life through the operation of God. Cornelius was pious and earnestly so; but he hears words of a work done for him whereby he may be, and (as we know) was saved. Finally the seal of the Holy Ghost, upon believing in Jesus, [See Note #17] is the ground on which those whom God accepts are acknowledged. That is to say, it is the full evidence for man.

Note #17

If we examine closely the scriptures in its statements and facts, we shall find, I think, as to detail, that it is faith in the work of Jesus for the remission of sins which is sealed.

Acts Chapter 11

Act 11:19 begins the narration of the new order of things by which the ministry of Paul is distinguished. Among those who were scattered abroad on the occasion of Stephen's death, and who went as far even as Antioch preaching the Lord Jesus, there were some who, being men of Cyprus and Cyrene, were more habitually connected with Greeks. They addressed the

Greeks therefore in this ancient capital of the Seleucidae, and many received their word and turned to the Lord. The assembly at Jerusalem, already prepared through the conversion of Cornelius, by which God had shewn them the entering in of the Gentiles, accept this event also and send Barnabas himself a man of Cyprus to Antioch. A good man and filled with the Holy Ghost, his heart is full of joy on seeing this work of the grace of God; and much people is added unto the Lord.

As yet all is linked with the work at Jerusalem, although extending now to the Gentiles. Barnabas, apparently no longer sufficient for the work and at all events led of God, departs in search of Saul, who had gone to Tarsus, when they sought to kill him at Jerusalem. And these two meet with the assembly at Antioch, teaching much people. Still everything takes place in connection with Jerusalem, whence some prophets come down and announce a famine. The links between the flock and Jerusalem as a centre are shewn and strengthened, by the sending of relief to that religious metropolis of Judaism, and of Christianity looked at as having its commencement in the Jewish remnant who believed in Jesus as the Christ.

Barnabas and Saul are themselves charged with this service, and go up to Jerusalem to accomplish it. This circumstance carries us back to Jerusalem, where the Spirit has still something to shew us of the ways of God.

Acts Chapter 12

Herod, to please the Jews, begins to persecute the assembly in that city. We may remark here, that the company of believers at Antioch are also called the assembly (church), which is the case nowhere else as yet. All were accounted as forming a part integrally of the work at Jerusalem, [See Note #18] even as all Jews were in connection with that centre of their religious system, however numerous their synagogues or great the influence of their rabbis. Every Jew, as such, sprang from Jerusalem. Barnabas and Saul assemble with the church or assembly at Antioch. A local assembly, conscious of its existence distinct from, while connected with, Jerusalem has been formed; and assemblies without a metropolis begin to appear.

To return to Jerusalem. Herod, an impious king, and in certain respects a type of the adversary king at the end, begins to persecute the faithful

remnant at Jerusalem. It is not only the Jews who are opposed to them. The king whom, as Jews, they detested unites himself to them by his hatred to the heavenly testimony, thinking to win their favour by this means. He kills James, and proceeds to take Peter and put him in prison. But God preserves His servant, and delivers him by His angel in answer to the prayers of the saints. He allows some to be slain (happy witnesses to their heavenly portion in Christ), and preserves others to carry on the testimony on earth, in spite of all the power, apparently irresistible, of the enemy a power which the Lord baffles by the manifestation of that which belongs to Him and to Him alone, and which He employs when He will and how He will. The poor saints, although praying fervently (they had prayer-meetings in those days), can hardly believe, when Peter comes to the door, that God had really granted their prayer. The desire presents itself sincerely to God; faith can scarcely reckon upon Him.

Herod, confounded by the power of Him whom he resisted, condemns the instruments of his hatred to death, and goes away to the Gentile seat of his authority. There displaying his glory, and accepting the adulatory homage of the people, as though he were a god, God Himself smites him, and shews that He is the governor of this world, however great the pride of man. But the word of God extends through His grace; and Barnabas and Saul, having fulfilled their ministry, return to Antioch, taking with them John whose surname was Mark.

Note #18

There is a question of the reading in Act 9:31, which does not however affect the general thought, that a local assembly, distinct from Jerusalem, composed primarily of Gentiles, was now formed.

Acts Chapter 13

We come now to the beginning of the direct history of the work, new in some important respects, that is, connected with Paul's mission by the immediate intervention of the Holy Ghost. It is not now Christ upon earth, who by His personal authority sends forth the twelve, afterwards endowed with the power of the Holy Ghost from on high to announce His exaltation to heaven and His return, and to gather under the standard of the cross

those who should believe in Him. Paul has seen Christ in glory, and therefore has united himself to the assembly already gathered. But here there is no Christ personally present to send him forth as the witness of His presence on earth, or of His rejection as One whom Paul had known in earth. The Holy Ghost Himself sends him, not from Jerusalem, but from a Greek city, in which in free and sovereign power He had converted and gathered together some Gentiles, doubtless some Jews likewise, but forming an assembly whose existence was first marked by the fact that the gospel had been preached to the Greeks.

In Chapter 13 we find ourselves again in the assembly at Antioch, and in the midst of the independent [See Note #19] action of the Spirit of God. Certain prophets are there, Saul among them. They fasted and were occupied with the service of the Lord. The Holy Ghost commands them to separate unto Him Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He had called them. Such was the source of the ministry of these two. Assuredly it bore testimony to Him in whom they had believed, and whom Saul, at least, had seen, and it was under His authority they acted; but the positive and obvious source of their mission was the Holy Ghost. It was the Holy Ghost who called them to the work. They were sent forth (Act 13:4) by Him an all-important principle as to the Lord's ways upon earth. We come out from Jerusalem, from Judaism, from the jurisdiction of the apostles nominated by the Lord while He was on earth. Christ is no longer known after the flesh, as Saul (when become Paul) expresses it. They have to strive against the Judaic spirit to shew consideration for it as far as it is sincere; but the sources of their work are not now in connection with the system which that work no longer knows as a starting-point. A glorious Christ in heaven, who owns the disciples as members of His body as Himself on high a mission from the Holy Ghost on earth which only knows His energy as the source of action and authority (bearing testimony of course to Christ) this is the work which now opens, and which is committed to Barnabas and Saul. Barnabas, it is true, forms a link between the two. He was himself a Hellenist of Cyprus; it was he who presented Saul to the apostles after his conversion near Damascus. Barnabas had more largeness of heart was more open to the testimonies of divine grace than even the apostles and the others who had been nurtured in a strict Judaism; for God in His grace provides for everything. There is

always a Barnabas, as well as a Nicodemus, a Joseph, and even a Gamaliel, whenever needed. The actings of God in this respect are remarkable in all this history. Would that we only trusted more entirely, while by the Spirit doing His will, to Him who disposes all things!

Nevertheless even this link is soon broken. It was still in connection with the "old cloth," the "old bottles"; blessed as the man himself was, to whom the Holy Ghost rendered so fine a testimony, and in whom we see an exquisite character. He determined to take his kinsman also (see Col 4:10), Mark. Mark returns to Jerusalem almost from the beginning of the work of evangelisation in the Gentile regions; and Saul continues his work with such instruments as God formed under his hand, or a Silas who chose to remain at Antioch when (the particular service which had been committed to him at Jerusalem being ended) he might naturally have returned thither with Judas.

Sent forth thus by the Holy Ghost, Barnabas and Saul, with John Mark as their ministering servant, go away to Seleucia, then to Cyprus; and being at Salamis, a town in that island, they preach the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. Whatever therefore might be the energy of the Holy Ghost, He acts in connection with the counsels and the promises of God, and that with perfect patience. To the end of his life, notwithstanding the opposition of the Jews, vexatious and implacable as it might be, the apostle continues as the ways and counsels of God in Christ had commanded to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles. Once brought in where truth and grace were fully revealed in God's assembly, there was no difference between Jew and Gentile. God is one in His character and fully revealed, and the veil rent; sin is one in its character and is opposed to God; the foundation of truth changes not, and the oneness of the assembly is connected with the height of grace in God and comes down to the deep totality of sin, in respect of which that grace has displayed itself. But, with regard to the ways of God upon earth, the Jews had the first place, and the Spirit, who is above all, can therefore act in full liberty in recognising all the ways of God's sovereignty; even as Christ, who made Himself a servant in grace, submitted to them all, and now, being exalted on high, unites all these various ways and dispensations in Himself as head and centre of a

glory to which the Holy Ghost bears witness, in order to accomplish it here below, as far as may be, by grace.

This does not prevent his giving a distinct and positive judgment as to the condition of the Jews when the occasion requires it.

Even here, at the commencement of his ministry, the two things are presented together. We have already noticed that he begins with the Jews. Having traVersed the island, he arrives at the seat of government. There the proconsul, a prudent and thoughtful man, asks to hear the gospel. Beset already by a false prophet (who took advantage of the felt need of a soul which, while ignorant, was earnestly desirous of something that could fill up the void it experienced in the nothingness of pagan ceremonies, and in its disgusting immorality), he sends for Barnabas and Saul. Elymas withstands them. This was natural. He would lose his influence with the governor if the latter received the truth that Paul preached Now Elymas was a Jew. Saul (who is henceforth named Paul) filled with the Holy Ghost, pronounces on him the sentence, on God's part, of temporary blindness, executed at the moment by the mighty hand of God. The proconsul, struck with the power that accompanied his word, submits to the gospel of God.

I do not doubt that in this wretched Bar-jesus we see a picture of the Jews at the present time, smitten with blindness for a season, because jealous of the influence of the gospel. In order to fill up the measure of their iniquity, they withstood its being preached to the Gentiles. Their condition is judged: their history given in the mission of Paul. [See Note #20] Opposed to grace, and seeking to destroy its effect upon the Gentiles, they have been smitten with blindness nevertheless only for a season.

Departing from Paphos, they go into Asia Minor; and now Paul definitively takes his place in the eyes of the historian of the Spirit. His whole company are only those who were with Paul, an expression in Greek which makes Paul everything (Paul's company Lit. "those around Paul"). When they reached Perga, John Mark leaves them to return to Jerusalem a milder and more moderate form of the Judaic influence, but shewing that, wherever it exercised itself, if it did not produce opposition, it at least took away the vigour needful for the work of God as it was now unfolding among the

Gentiles. Barnabas however goes farther, and still continues with Paul in the work. The latter, when they were come to Antioch, [See Note #21] again begins first with the Jews. He goes on the sabbath day into the synagogue, and, on the invitation of the ruler, proclaims Jesus, rejected by the Jews at Jerusalem and crucified, but by the power of God raised up again, and through whom they might be justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. Here the testimony of Paul is very like that of Peter, and is very particularly allied to the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews, with regard to the character of the testimony: Verse 33 (Act 13:33) is quite Peter's testimony in Acts 3. In Verse 31 (Act 13:31) he sets the twelve distinctly in the place of testimony to Israel, as those who had personally accompanied the Lord, and who had seen Him after His resurrection. "They are," he says, "his witnesses unto the people." But Paul's testimony (which, as to the fulfilment of the promises by the coming of Christ, and the mercies of David made sure in His resurrection, returns into the order of Peter's preaching) departs from it in an important point. He says nothing of God's having made Jesus both Lord and Christ. He announces that the remission of sins is proclaimed in His name, exhorting his hearers not to neglect this great salvation. [See Note #22] Many follow Paul [See Note #23] and Barnabas in consequence of this announcement, and are exhorted by them to continue in the grace which had been proclaimed to them. The mass of the people come together the following sabbath to hear the word of God; the Gentiles having besought that this gospel of grace might be preached to them again. Their souls had found more truth in the doctrine of the one only God, acknowledged by the Jews, than in the senseless worship of the Pagans, which, to an awakened and unsatisfied mind, no longer presented any food that could appease it a mind that was too active to allow the imagination to amuse itself with ceremonies which had no charms but for ignorance, which could be captivated by the pageantry of festivals, to which it was accustomed, and which gratified the religious element of the flesh. Still, the coldly acknowledged doctrine of one only true God, although it set the mind free from all that shocked it in the senseless and immoral mythology of Paganism, did not at all feed the soul as did the powerful testimony of a God acting in grace, borne by the Holy Ghost through the mouth of messengers whom He had sent a testimony

which, while faithful to the promises made to the Jews, yet addressed itself as a "word of salvation" (Act 13:26) to all those who feared God. But the Jews, jealous of the effect of the gospel which thus met the soul's need in a way that their system could not, withstand Paul and blaspheme the doctrine of Christ. Paul therefore and Barnabas turn boldly to the Gentiles.

It was a decisive and important moment. These two messengers of the Holy Ghost quote the testimony of the Old Testament with regard to God's purpose towards the Gentiles, of whom Christ was to be the light a purpose which they accomplished according to the intelligence in it that the Spirit gave them, and by His power. The passage is in Isaiah (Chapter 49), where the opposition of Israel, that made the testimony of Christ useless to themselves, gave God occasion to declare that this work was but a small thing, and that Christ should be a light to the Gentiles, and great even to the ends of the earth.

We shall do well to observe this last circumstance, the energy in action imparted by spiritual intelligence, and the way in which prophetic declarations turn into light and authority for action, when the Spirit of God gives the true practical meaning the application. Another might not perhaps understand it; but the spiritual man has a full guarantee for his own conscience in the word which he has understood. He leaves the rest to God.

The Gentiles rejoice at the testimony, and the election believe. The word spreads through all the region. The Jews now shew themselves in their true character of enemies to the Lord and to His truth. With regard to them Paul and Barnabas shake off the dust of their feet against them. The disciples, whatever might be their difficulties, are no hindrance to this. The position here taken by the Jews which, moreover, we find everywhere makes us understand what a source of grief and pain they must have been to the apostles.

Note #19

The acting of the Spirit is always independent; but here I mean to express that it was outside the authority of the apostles. This authority is not the source of that which is done; nor does that which is done refer itself to it.

Note #20

I do not know if the change of name pointed out on this occasion the meaning of which has excited the curiosity of etymologists is not simply an alteration by which its Jewish form was lost, in order to assume a Roman or Gentile aspect.

Note #21

In Pisidia.

Note #22

Both, as we have seen, follow (in the main) the commission in Luke 24.

Note #23

Here Paul is placed before Barnabas; in the former Chapter, Barnabas has the first place.

Acts Chapter 14

Their missionary labours continue in Iconium with the same opposition from the Jews who, incapable themselves of the work, stir up the Gentiles against those who are performing it. As long as it was only opposition, it was but a motive for perseverance; but, being warned in time of an assault that was planned against them, they depart to Lystra and Derbe. There, having healed a cripple, they excite the idolatrous respect of these poor pagans; but, filled with horror, they turn them from their error by the energy of the Holy Ghost faithful to the testimony of their God. Hither also the Jews follow them. Now, if man will not ally himself with the idolatry of the heart, and accept exaltation from men, the power of his testimony, which they began by admiring as long as they thought they could elevate man and acquire importance through their flatteries being accepted, ends by exciting the hatred of their hearts. The Jews bring this hatred into action and stir up the people, who leave Paul for dead. But he rises up and re-enters the city, remaining tranquilly there another day, and on the morrow he goes with Barnabas to Derbe.

Afterwards they revisit the cities through which they had passed, and at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, they confirm the disciples in the faith, and teach them that they must pass through tribulation to inherit the kingdom. They choose elders for them; and passing through some other cities to the place where they had disembarked, they return to Antioch, from whence they had been commended to God for the work, causing great joy to the disciples there in that the door of faith was opened to the Gentiles. This is the first formal mission among the Gentiles where assemblies are formed, elders appointed by the apostles, and the hostility of the Jews to the grace of God, outside their nation and independently of their law, is distinctly marked. The word assumes a positive character among the Gentiles, and the energy of the Holy Ghost displays itself to this end, constituting and forming them into assemblies, establishing local rulers in them, outside and independently of the action of the apostles and assembly at Jerusalem, and the obligation of the law which was still maintained there.

A question concerning this (that is, whether it could be allowed) is soon raised at Antioch. It is no longer the opposition of the Jews hostile to the gospel, but the bigotry of those who had embraced it, desiring to impose the law on the converted Gentiles. But the grace of God provides for this difficulty also.

Acts Chapter 15

Chapter 15 contains the account of this. Certain persons come from Jerusalem, where all was still going on in connection with the requirements of the law; and they seek to impose these requirements on the Gentiles in this new centre and starting-point of the work which was formed at Antioch. It was the will of God that this matter should be settled, not by the apostolic authority of Paul, or by the action of His Spirit at Antioch only, which might have divided the church, but by means of conference at Jerusalem, so as to maintain union, whatever might be the prejudices of the Jews. The ways of God in this respect are remarkable, shewing the way in which He has maintained sovereign care in grace over the church. In reading the Epistle to the Galatians, we see that in reality things were in question that touched Christianity to the quick, that affected its very foundations, the deep principles of grace, of the rights of God, of the sinful condition of man

principles on which the whole edifice of man's eternal relations with God is founded. If any one was circumcised, he was under the law; he had given up grace, he had fallen away from Christ. Nevertheless Paul the apostle, Paul full of faith, of energy, of burning zeal, is obliged to go up to Jerusalem, whither he had not desired to go, in order to arrange this matter. Paul had laboured at Antioch; but the work in that city was not his work. He was not the apostle at Antioch as he was that of Iconium, of Lystra, and afterwards of Macedonia and of Greece. He went out from Antioch, from the bosom of the church already formed there. The question was to be settled for the church, apart from the apostolic authority of Paul. The apostle must yield before God and His ways.

Paul disputes with the men from Judea, but the end is not gained. It is determined to send some members of the church to Jerusalem, but with them Paul and Barnabas, so deeply interested in this question. Moreover Paul had a revelation that he should go up. God directed his steps. It is good however to be obliged to submit sometimes, although ever so right or so full of spiritual energy.

The question then is entered upon at Jerusalem. It was already a great thing that the subjecting of the Gentiles to the law should be resisted at Jerusalem, and still more that they should there decide not to do it. We see the wisdom of God in so ordering it, that such a resolution should have its origin at Jerusalem. Had there been no bigotry there, the question would not have been necessary; but alas! good has to be done in despite of all the weakness and all the traditions of men. A resolution made at Antioch would have been a very different thing from a resolution made at Jerusalem. The Jewish church would not have acknowledged the truth, the apostolic authority of the twelve would not have given its sanction to it. The course at Antioch and of the Gentiles would have been a course apart; and a continual struggle would have commenced, having (at least in appearance) the authority of the primitive and apostolic church on the one side, and the energy and liberty of the Spirit with Paul for its representative on the other. The Judaizing tendency of human nature is ever ready to abandon the high energy of the Spirit, and return into the ways and thoughts of the flesh. This tendency, nourished by the traditions of an ancient faith, had already given

sorrow and difficulty enough to him who was specially labouring among the Gentiles according to the liberty of the Spirit, without the additional strength of having the course of the apostles and of the church at Jerusalem to countenance it.

After much discussion at Jerusalem, full liberty for which was given, Peter, taking the lead, relates the case of Cornelius. Afterwards Paul and Barnabas declare the wonderful manifestation of God through the power of the Holy Ghost which had taken place among the Gentiles. James then sums up the judgment of the assembly, which is assented to by all, that the Gentiles shall not be obliged to be circumcised, or to obey the law; but only to abstain from blood, from things strangled, from fornication, and from meat offered to idols. We shall do well to consider the nature and stipulations of this decree.

It is a direction which teaches, not that which is abstractedly good or evil, but that which was suitable to the case presented. It was "necessary," not "righteous before God," to avoid certain things. The things might be really evil, but they are not here looked at in that way. There were certain things to which the Gentiles were accustomed, which it was proper they should renounce, in order that the assembly might walk as it ought before God in peace. To the other ordinances of the law they were not to be subjected. Moses had those who preached him. That sufficed, without compelling the Gentiles to submit to his laws, when they joined themselves, not to the Jews, but to the Lord.

This decree therefore does not pronounce upon the nature of the things forbidden, but upon the opportuneness the Gentiles having in fact been in the habit of doing all these things. We must observe that they were not things forbidden by the law only. It was that which was contrary to the order established by God as Creator, or to a prohibition given to Noah when he was told to eat flesh. Woman was only to be connected with man in the sanctity of marriage, and this is a very great blessing. Life belonged to God. All fellowship with idols was an outrage against the authority of the true God. Let Moses teach his own laws; these things were contrary to the intelligent knowledge of the true God. It is not therefore a new law imposed by Christianity, nor an accommodation to the prejudices of the Jews. It has

not the same kind of validity as a moral ordinance that is obligatory in itself. It is the expression to christian intelligence of the terms of man's true relations with God in the things of nature, given by the goodness of God, through the leaders at Jerusalem, to ignorant Christians, setting them free from the law, and enlightening them with regard to the relations between God and man, and to that which was proper to man things of which, as idolatrous Gentiles, they had been ignorant. I have said, addressed to christian intelligence: accordingly there is nothing inconsistent in eating anything that is sold at the shambles; for I acknowledge God who gave it, and not an idol. But if the act implies communion with the idol, even to the conscience of another, it would be provoking God to jealousy; I sin against Him or against my neighbour. I do not know whether an animal is strangled or not, but if people act so as to imply that it is indifferent whether life belongs to God or not, I sin again; I am not defiled by the thing, but I fail in christian intelligence with regard to the rights of God as Creator. With regard to fornication, this enters into the category of christian purity, besides being contrary to the order of the Creator; so that it is a direct question of good and evil, and not only of the rights of God revealed to our intelligence. This was important as a general principle, more than in the detail of the things themselves.

In sum the principles established are these: purity by marriage according to God's original institution; that life belongs to God; and the unity of God as one only true God Godhead, life, and God's original ordinance for man. The same thing is true of the foundations laid by the assembly at the basis of their decree, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us."

The Holy Ghost had manifested Himself in the case of Cornelius and of the conversion of the Gentiles, of which Peter and Paul and Barnabas had given the account. On the other hand the apostles were the depositaries of the authority of Christ, those to whom the government of the assembly as founded in connection with the true Jewish faith had been committed. They represented the authority of Christ ascended on high, even as the power and will of the Holy Ghost had been shewn in the cases I have just mentioned. The authority was exercised in connection with that which, in a certain sense, was the continuation of a Judaism enlarged by fresh

revelations, and which had its centre at Jerusalem, acknowledging as Messiah the ascended Jesus rejected by the people. Christ had committed to them the authority necessary to govern the assembly. They had also been sealed on the day of Pentecost in order to perform it.

The spirit of grace and wisdom is truly seen in their way of acting. They give their full sanction to Paul and Barnabas, and they send with them persons of note in the assembly at Jerusalem, who could not be suspected of bringing an answer in support of their own pretensions, as might have been supposed in the case of Paul and Barnabas.

The apostles and elders assemble for deliberation; but the whole flock acts in concert with them.

Thus Jerusalem has decided that the law was not binding on the Gentiles. These, sincere in their desire of walking with Christ, rejoice greatly at their freedom from this yoke. Judas and Silas, being prophets, exhort and confirm them, and afterwards are dismissed in peace. But Silas thinks it good to remain on his own account, influenced by the Spirit. He prefers the work among the Gentiles to Jerusalem. Judas returns from it to Jerusalem.

The work continues at Antioch by means of Paul and Barnabas and others. At Antioch we again see the full liberty of the Holy Ghost.

Paul proposes to Barnabas that they should go and visit the assemblies already formed by their means in Asia Minor. Barnabas consents, but he determines to take John who had formerly forsaken them. Paul wishes for some one who had not drawn back from the work, nor abandoned for his own home the place of a stranger for the work's sake. Barnabas insists; and these two precious servants of God separate. Barnabas takes Mark and goes to Cyprus. Now Mark was his kinsman, and Cyprus his own country. Paul takes Silas, who had preferred the work to Jerusalem instead of Jerusalem to the work and departs. From his name we may believe that Silas was a Hellenist.

It is happy to find that, after this, Paul speaks of Barnabas with entire affection, and desires that Mark should come to him, having found him profitable for the ministry.

Moreover Paul is commended by the brethren to the grace of God in his work. The title given to Paul and Barnabas by the apostles shews the difference between the apostolic authority, established by Christ in person, and that which was constituted such by the power of the Holy Ghost sent by Christ Himself, no doubt, but in point of fact going forth by the direction of the Holy Ghost, and their mission warranted by His power. With the apostles, Paul and Barnabas have no title except their work "men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." They are that which the Holy Ghost has made them. The apostles are the twelve.

The liberty and the power of the Spirit characterise Paul He is that which the Spirit makes him. If Jesus had appeared to him, although Ananias can testify it, he must in reality prove it by the power of his ministry. The effects of this ministry are related as well as its character in Chapters 16-20. The action and the liberty of the Holy Ghost are there displayed in a remarkable manner.

Acts Chapter 16

There is perhaps no example of this more remarkable than that which Paul does with regard to Timothy. He uses circumcision in all liberty to set aside Jewish prejudice. It is very doubtful whether, according to the law, he ought to have been circumcised. Ezra and Nehemiah shew us the strange wives sent away; but here, the mother being a Jewess, Paul causes the child of this mixed marriage to follow the rule of the Jews and submit to that rite.

Liberty fully recognises the law in its place, although itself exempt from it, and distinctly states, for the assurance of the Gentiles, the absence of all pretension, on the part of the Judaeans Christians, to impose the law upon Gentiles. Paul circumcises Timothy, and does not give subjection for an hour to those who would have compelled Titus to be circumcised. He would become a Jew to the Jews from love; but the Jews themselves must renounce all pretension to impose the law on others. The decrees given at Jerusalem are left with the churches a plain answer to every Jew who desired to subject the Gentiles to Judaism. The decrees, we may remark, were those of the apostles and the elders.

It is the Holy Ghost alone who directs the apostle. He forbids him to preach in Asia (the province), and will not suffer him to go into Bithynia. By a vision

in the night they are called to go into Macedonia. Here the historian meets them. It is the Lord who calls them into Macedonia. It is well to note here that, while the gospel is sent under Paul's ministry to the whole creation under heaven, yet there is specific direction as to where we are to go.

Here the apostle goes first to the Jews, even when it was only a few women who came together by the river side a place, as it appears, usually chosen where there was no synagogue. A Greek woman, who worshipped the God of Israel, is converted by grace. Thus the door is opened, and others also believe (Act 16:40). Here Satan tries to tamper with the work by bearing a testimony to the ministers of the word. Not that this spirit acknowledged Jesus he would not then have been an evil spirit, he would not have thus possessed the damsel. He speaks of the agents, in order to have a share of the glory, and of the most high God compelled perhaps by the presence of the Spirit to speak, as had been the case with others by the presence of Jesus, when His power was before their eyes. The testimony of Satan could not go so far as to own Him Lord; and if Paul had not been faithful, it would have mixed up the work of the enemy with that of the Lord. But it was not a testimony to Paul that Paul sought, nor a testimony rendered by an evil spirit, whatever might be the appearance of its testimony. The proof which the evil spirit had to give that the power of God was present, was to submit to it by being driven away. It could not be a support to the work of God. We see in this circumstance the disinterestedness of the apostle, his spiritual discernment, the power of God with him, and the faith which will have no other support than that of God. It would have been useful to have a testimony rendered to his ministry: the reasonings of the flesh might have said, 'I did not seek it.' Persecution would have been avoided. But God will have no other testimony than that which He bears to Himself. No other can be a testimony from Him, for He reveals Himself where He is not known; faith waits only on Him to render it. Paul went on without troubling himself about this malicious attempt of the enemy's, and possibly in wisdom avoiding conflict where there was no fruit for the Lord, until by its persistency the apostle was forced to attend to it. The Spirit of God does not tolerate the presence of an evil spirit when it makes itself actively manifest before Him. He does not lend Himself to its devices by giving it importance through a voluntary interposition; for He has His own work, and He does not

turn away from it to occupy Himself about the enemy. He is occupied, in love, about souls. But if Satan comes in His way, so as to perplex these souls, the Spirit reveals Himself in His energy, and the enemy flees before Him.

But Satan is not without resources. The power which he cannot exercise in a direct way, he employs in exciting the passions and lusts of men in opposition to that power against which he cannot himself stand, and which will neither unite itself to him nor recognise him. Even as the Gadarenes desired Jesus to depart, when He had healed Legion, so the Philippians rise up tumultuously against Paul and his companions at the instigation of the men who had lost their dishonest gains. But God makes use of all this to direct the progress of His own work, and give it the form He pleases. There is the gaoler to be converted, and the magistrates themselves are to confess their wrong with respect to the messengers of God. The assembly is gathered out, a flock (as the epistle addressed to them bears witness) full of love and affection. The apostle goes to labour elsewhere. We see a more active, a more energetic, testimony here than in the similar case that happened to Peter. The intervention of God is more striking in Peter's case. It is the old Jerusalem, worn out in everything except hatred, and God faithful to the one who trusted in Him. The hatred is disappointed. Paul and Silas sing, instead of quietly sleeping; the doors burst suddenly open; and the gaoler himself is converted, and his family. The magistrates are obliged to come as supplicants to Paul. Such is the result of the tumult. The enemy was mistaken here. If he stopped their work at Philippi, he sent the apostles to preach elsewhere according to the will of God.

We must not pass over in silence this energy which embraced whole houses, and subdued them to the christian faith. We only see it, however, when it is a question of bringing in the Gentiles. [See Note #24] But Cornelius, Lydia, the gaoler of Philippi, are all witnesses to this power.

Note #24

We see however, in the case of Lydda and Saron, what is more analogous to the introduction of a people. They heard of the miracle done to Aeneas; and the town and neighbourhood turned to the Lord. Saron is a district along the coast.

Acts Chapter 17

In the last case it was the power exercised by the enemy over the passions of the Gentiles that caused the persecution of the apostles: at Thessalonica we again find the old and universal enmity of the Jews. Nevertheless many Jews and proselytes received the gospel. After a tumult there also, the apostles go away to Berea. There the Jews are more noble; what they hear, they examine by the word of God. Through this a great number among them believed. Nevertheless the Jews of Thessalonica, jealous of the progress the gospel made, go over to Berea. Paul leaves the city and passes on to Athens. Silas and Timothy remain for the moment at Berea, Paul being the special object of the Jews' pursuit. At Athens, although he resorted to the synagogue, yet, his spirit stirred at the sight of the universal idolatry in that idle city, he disputes daily in public with their philosophers; consequent on these interviews, he proclaims the true God to the chief men of that intellectual capital. He had sent word to Silas and Timothy to join him there.

With a people like the Athenians such is the effect of intellectual cultivation without God he has to come down to the lowest step in the ladder of truth. He sets forth the oneness of God, the Creator, and the relationship of man to Him, declaring also that Jesus will judge the world, of which God had given proof by raising Him up from the dead. With the exception of the judgment of this world being put in place of the promises respecting the return of Jesus, we might think it was Peter addressing the Jews. We must not imagine that the historian relates everything that Paul said. What is given is his defence, not his preaching. The Holy Ghost gives us that which characterised the manner in which the apostle met the circumstances of those he addressed. That which remained on the minds of his first hearers was that he preached Jesus and the resurrection. It appears even that some took the resurrection, as well as Jesus, to be a God. It is, indeed, the basis of Christianity, which is founded on Jesus personally, and the fact of His resurrection; but it is only the basis.

I have said that we are reminded here of Peter's preaching. I mean as to the degree of height in his doctrine with regard to Christ. We shall observe, at the same time, the appropriateness of the application of facts in either case to the persons addressed. Peter set forth the rejected Christ ascended on

high, ready to return on the repentance of the Jews, and who would establish at His coming all things of which the prophets had spoken. Here the judgment of the world sanction of the truth to the natural conscience is presented to the learned men, and to the inquisitive people; nothing that could interest their philosophic minds, but a plain and convincing testimony to the folly of their idolatry, according even to that which the natural conscience of their own poets had acknowledged.

The dishonest gain, to which Satan ministered opportunity, met the gospel at Philippi; the hardness and moral indifference of knowledge that flattered human vanity, at Athens; at Thessalonica, the efforts of Jewish jealousy. The gospel goes on its way, victorious over the one, yielding to the effect of another, and, after laying bare to the learned Athenians all that their condition tolerated, leaving them, and finding, amid the luxury and the depraved manners of the wealthy city of Corinth, a numerous people to bring into the assembly. Such are the ways of God, and the exercises of His devoted servant led by the Holy Ghost.

We may notice, that this energy, which seeks the Gentiles, never loses sight of the favour of God towards His elect people a favour that sought them until they rejected it.

Acts Chapter 18

At Thessalonica Paul twice received succour from Philippi; at Corinth, where money and commerce abounded, he does not take it, but quietly works with two of his countrymen of the same trade as himself. He again begins with the Jews, who oppose his doctrine and blaspheme. The apostle takes his course with the boldness and decision of a man truly led of God, calmly and wittingly, so as not to be turned aside. He shakes his garments in token of being pure of their blood, and declares that now he turns to the Gentiles according to Isaiah 49, taking that prophecy as a command from God.

In Corinth God has "much people." He therefore uses the unbelieving indifference of Gallio to defeat the projects and malice of the Jews, jealous as ever of a religion that eclipsed their importance, whatever might be its grace towards them. Paul, after labouring there a long time, goes away in peace. His Jewish friends, Priscilla and Aquila, go with him. He was going

himself to Jerusalem. He was also under a vow. The opposition of the Jews does not take away his attachment to his nation his faithfulness in preaching the gospel to them first in recognising everything that belonged to them in grace before God. He even submits to Jewish ordinances. Possibly habit had some influence over him, which was not of the Spirit; but according to the Spirit he had no thought of disallowing that which the patient grace of God granted to the people. He addresses himself to the Jews at Ephesus. They are inclined to hear him, but he desires to keep the feast at Jerusalem. Here he is still a Jew with his feasts and vows. The Spirit has evidently introduced these circumstances to give us a true and complete picture of the relationship that existed between the two systems the degree of freedom from the influence of the one, as well as the energy that established the other. The first remains often to a certain degree, where energy to do the other is in a very high degree. The liberty that condescends to prejudices and habits is not the same thing as subjection to these prejudices in one's own person. In our feebleness the two mingle together; but they are in fact opposed to each other. To respect that which God respects, even when the system has lost all real force and value, if called to act in connection with this system when it is really nothing more than a superstition and a weakness, is a very different thing from putting oneself under the yoke of superstition and weakness. The first is the effect of the Spirit; the last, of the flesh. In us, alas! the one is often confounded with the other. Charity becomes weakness, giving uncertainty to the testimony.

Paul takes his journey; goes up to Jerusalem, and salutes the assembly; goes down to Antioch, and visits again all the first assemblies he had formed, thus binding all his work together Antioch and Jerusalem. How far his old habits influenced him in his ways of acting, I leave the reader to judge. He was a Jew. The Holy Ghost would have us see that he was as far as possible from any contempt for the ancient people of God, for whom divine favour will never change. This feeling was surely right. It appears elsewhere that he went beyond the limits of the Spirit and of spirituality. Here we have only the facts. He may have had some private reason that was valid in consequence of the position in which he stood. One may be in circumstances which contradict the liberty of the Spirit, and which, nevertheless, when we are in them, have a certain right over us, or exercise

an influence which necessarily weakens in the soul the energy of that liberty. We may have done wrong in putting ourselves into those circumstances, but, being in them, the influence is exercised, the rights assert their claim. A man called to serve God, driven out from his father's house, walks in the liberty of the Spirit. Without any change in his father, he goes into the paternal house: the rights of his father revive where is his liberty? Or a man possessed of much clearer spiritual intelligence places himself in the midst of friends who are spiritually altogether below him: it is almost impossible for him to retain a spiritual judgment. However it may have been here, the link is now formed voluntarily on the part of him who stood in the place of liberty and grace, and the Christians in Jerusalem remain at the level of their former prejudices, and claim patience and indulgence from him who was the vessel and the witness of the liberty of the Spirit of God.

This, with the supplement of his work at Ephesus, forms the circle of the active labours of the apostle in the gospel, to shew us in him the ways of the Spirit with men.

Acts Chapter 19

From Verse 24 of Chapter 18 to Verse 7 of Chapter 19 we have a kind of summary of the progress made by the doctrine of Christ, and of the power that accompanied it. Apollos knew only of the teaching of John; but, upright in heart, he publicly confessed and preached that which he knew. It was the faith of a regenerate soul. Aquila and Priscilla enlighten him fully with regard to the facts of the gospel, and the doctrine of a dead and glorified Christ. At Corinth he becomes a powerful teacher of the gospel, of the Lord among the Jews, thus confirming the faith of the disciples. The energy of the Holy Ghost manifests itself in him without any intervention of the apostle or of the twelve. He acts independently; that is, the Spirit acts independently in him. People could say, "I am of Apollos." It is interesting to see these different manifestations of the power and liberty of the Spirit, and to remember that the Lord is above all, and that, if He acts greatly by a Paul, He acts also in whom He will.

In that which follows we find, on another side, the progress of the divine revelation in union with Paul's apostolic power made very prominent by the

capability of communicating the Holy Ghost. Twelve persons had believed, but with no other instruction than that of John: their baptism had been in reference to it. It was a Christ to come, and a Holy Ghost whom He would communicate, that they looked for. Now John's baptism required repentance, but in no way came out of the Jewish pale; although it opened a perspective of something different, according to the sovereignty of God, and as the effect of Christ's coming. But it was a baptism unto repentance for man on the earth, and not Christ's death and resurrection. Grace acted in a remnant, but of whom Jesus was a companion on earth. Now Christianity (for man's sin has been fully manifested) is founded on death and resurrection; first, that of Christ, thus accomplishing redemption, and then on our death and resurrection with Him so as to place us in Him and as Him before God in sinless life, life of His life, and washed in His blood from all our sins. But John's baptism, in fact, only taught repentance here below in order to receive Christ; Christianity taught the efficacy of the death and resurrection of a rejected Christ, in virtue of which the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete come down from heaven, should be received.

These twelve men (although John had announced that the baptism of the Holy Ghost should be the result of Christ's intervention) did not know whether there was yet any Holy Ghost [See Note #25] a plain proof that they had not come into the house of God in which He dwelt. Paul explains this to them, and they are baptised in the name of Jesus. Paul, in his apostolic capacity, lays his hands on them; and they receive the Holy Ghost. They speak with tongues, and they prophesy.

This power, and he who was its instrument, were now to be brought out into distinct relief. The capital city of Asia (that is, of the Roman province so named) is the theatre in which this was to be effected. We shall see a power displayed in this locality, which acts independently of all traditional forms, and which governs all that surrounds it, whether man, conscience, or the enemy an organising power, which forms of itself and for itself the institutions and the body that suit it, and which governs the whole position. The power of active grace has been displayed in the work of Paul, beginning with Antioch; and had shewn itself in different ways. Here we have some details of its formal establishment in a great centre.

During three months of patience he preaches Christ in the synagogue, and reasons with the Jews, conscious of divine strength and of the truth. He grants precedence, as the sphere of testimony, to that which had been the instrument and the people of God: "To the Jews first." It is no longer said, "Salvation is of the Jews," but it is preached to them first.

But this work having had its development, and many taking the place of adversaries, Paul acts as the founder of that which was according to God and on the part of God. He separates the disciples, and discourses upon Christianity in the hall of a Greek who had a public class. This went on for two years: so that the doctrine was spread through all the country among both the Jews and the Greeks. God did not fail to bear testimony to the word of His grace, and His power was displayed in a remarkable manner in connection with the person of the apostle who bore the testimony. The manifestations of the enemy's power disappear before the action of this liberative power of the Lord, and the name of Jesus was glorified. Now the reality of this action was demonstrated in a striking way, that is, its source in the personal, positive, and real action of the Lord on the one side, and on the other, the mission of Paul, and faith as the instrument by which this supernatural power wrought. Certain Jews desired to avail themselves of it for their own self-interest; and devoid of faith, they use the name of "Jesus whom Paul preached" as though it had been a kind of charm. But the evil spirit, whose power was as true and real in its way as that of the Lord which he was forced to acknowledge when it was in exercise, knew very well that here it was not so, that there was neither faith nor power. "Jesus I know," said he, "and who Paul is I know; but who are ye?" And the man who was possessed attacked and wounded them. Striking testimony to the action of the enemy, but at the same time to that superior force. to the reality of that intervention of God. which was carried into effect by means of Paul. Now, when God shews Himself, conscience always shews itself; and the power of the enemy over it is manifested and ceases. The Jews and Greeks are filled with fear, and many who became Christians brought the proofs of their sorceries.

The mighty action of the Spirit shewed itself by the decision it produced, by the immediate and unhesitating acting out of the thoughts and resolutions

produced in the heart. There were no long inward arguments; the presence and the power of God produced their natural effects.

The enemy's resources were, however, not exhausted. The work of God was done, in the sense of the establishment of the testimony through apostolic labour; and God was sending His servant elsewhere. The enemy, as usual, excites a tumult, stirring up the passions of men against the instruments of the testimony of God. Paul had already intended to go away, but a little later; he had therefore sent Timothy and Erastus before him into Macedonia, purposing to visit Macedonia, Achaia, and Jerusalem, and afterwards to go to Rome; and he still remains some time in Asia. But after the departure of these two brethren, Demetrius excites the people against the Christians. Inveterate against the gospel, which shook the whole system in connection with which he made his fortune, and which was linked with all that gave him importance, this agent of the enemy knew how to act on the passions of the workmen who had the same occupation as himself; for he made little portable shrines to Diana, in silver. His employment was connected with that which all the world admired, with that which had possession of men's minds a great comfort to man who feels the need of something sure with that which had long given its hue to their religious habits. A great part of the influence exercised was, not "Great is Diana!" but "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" It was, in short, the power of the enemy among the Gentiles. The Jews apparently sought to avail themselves of this by putting one Alexander forward the same possibly who had withstood Paul, and who they supposed would therefore be listened to by the people. But it was the evil spirit of idolatry that agitated them; and the Jews were foiled in their hope. Paul was prevented, both by the brethren and by some of the Asiarchs, [See Note #26] from shewing himself in the theatre. The assembly was dissolved by the town authorities; and Paul, when he had seen the disciples, went away in peace. [See Note #27] His work there was finished, and the gospel planted in the capital of the province of Asia, and even in the whole province: Greece and Macedonia had already received it.

There was yet Rome. In what manner should he go thither? This is now the remaining question. His free and active life ended with the events which now occupy us, as far as it is given us by the Holy Ghost. A life blessed with

an almost unequalled faith, with an energy that surpassed anything that has been seen in men, and which, through the divine power that wrought in it, produced its effects in spite of obstacles apparently insurmountable, in spite of every kind of opposition, in contempt and destitution, and which stamped its character on the assembly by giving it, instrumentally, its existence; and that, not only in spite of two hostile religions which divided the civilised world between them, but in spite of a religious system which possessed the truth, but which ever sought to confine it within the boundary of traditions that granted some place to the flesh a system that had the plea of priority, and was sanctioned by the habits of those apostles who were nominated by the Lord Himself.

The assembly indeed, as Paul foresaw, soon returned to its Judaic ways, when the energy of the apostle was absent. It requires the power of the Holy Ghost to rise above the religiousness of the flesh. Piety does not necessarily do this; and power is never a tradition it is itself, and thereby independent of men and of their traditions, even when bearing with them in love. The flesh therefore always returns to the path of traditions and forms; because it is never power in the things of God, although it can recognise duty. It does not therefore rise to heaven; it does not understand grace; it can see what man ought to be for God (without however perceiving the consequences of this, if God is revealed), but it cannot see what God in His sovereign grace is for man. It will perhaps retain it as orthodoxy, where the Spirit has wrought; but it will never bring the soul into it. This it was, more than the violence of the pagans or the hatred of the Jews, which wrung the heart and caused the anguish of the faithful and blessed apostle, who by grace had a character, or rather a position, more like that of Christ than any other on earth.

These conflicts will be unfolded to us in the Epistles, as well as that ardent heart which while embracing in its thoughts all the revealed counsels of God, and putting each part in its place, and embracing in its affections the whole of the work and of the assembly of God could equally concentrate its whole energy of thought on a single important point, and of affection on a poor slave whom grace had given to him in his chains. The vessel of the Spirit, Paul shines with a heavenly light throughout the whole work of the

gospel. He condescends at Jerusalem, thunders in Galatia when souls were being perverted, leads the apostles to decide for the liberty of the Gentiles, and uses all liberty himself to be as a Jew to the Jews, and as without law to those that had no law, as not under law, but always subject to Christ. Yet how difficult to maintain the height of life and of spiritual revelation, in the midst of so many opposing tendencies! He was also "void of offence." Nothing within hindered his communion with God, whence he drew his strength to be faithful among men. He could say, and none but he, "Be ye imitators of me, as I am of Christ." Thus also he could say, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory," words which would not be improper in the Lord's mouth in a more exalted sense doubtless, because He endured for Paul himself the wrath that would have been his eternal condemnation yet words which bring out the remarkable position of this man of God, as the vessel of the Holy Ghost by whom he was used. "I fill up," said he, "that which is lacking [See Note #28] of the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake, which is the assembly; whereof I am made a minister to complete the word of God.

John (through his intimate knowledge of the Person of Christ, born on earth and Son of God) was able to maintain this essential and individually vital truth, in the same field in which Paul laboured; but it was Paul's part to be the active instrument for propagating the truth which saves the soul, and brings ruined man into connection with God by faith, by communicating all His counsels of grace.

Still Paul was a man, although a man wonderfully blest. The intrinsic power of Judaism in connection with its relationship to the flesh is marvellous. As to the result indeed, if man takes his place below grace, that is, below God, it is better in a certain sense that he should be man under law than man without law. He will be the one or the other; but in taking up the exclusive idea of duty he forgets God as He is for He is love; and too often forgets also man as he is for he is sin. If he unites the idea of duty and of sin, it is continual bondage, and this is what Christianity in general is reduced to; with the addition of ordinances to ease the burdened conscience, of forms to create piety where communion is absent; clothing it all with the name of

Christ, and with the authority of the church, so named, the very existence of which in its reality is identified with the principle of sovereign grace, and characterised by subjection. [See Note #29]

Note #25

Literally whether the Holy Ghost was. The expression, which is the same as in John 7, is a very striking testimony to the distinctness and importance of the Holy Ghost's presence down here on earth. It is called "the Holy Ghost," though we all know He had ever been. But what is called the Holy Ghost, that is, His presence down here this had never been.

Note #26

Honorary magistrates from among the notables, who presided over the celebration of religious festivals.

Note #27

It may perhaps interest the reader and help him to understand this part of the New Testament history, if I point out the time at which Paul wrote some of his epistles. He wrote the First to the Corinthians from Ephesus, and sent it by Titus. Timothy he sent by way of Macedonia. The latter might perhaps go into Greece; "If he come," the apostle says to the Corinthians. Then came the tumult, and just at this moment, or about the same time, his life was endangered; he did not even suppose that he should save it. He had purposed going by Greece into Macedonia, and then returning to Greece; but the state Corinth was in prevented it, and he went first into Macedonia. On his way he goes to Troas, but does not stay there; in Macedonia he is much exercised in mind, and has no rest, because Titus had not brought him tidings of the Corinthians. There, however, Titus found him, and the apostle was comforted in his trouble by the good news of the return of the Corinthians to a right mind. Upon this he writes the second letter to them, and, after having visited the assemblies, he pursues his journey to Corinth, whence he wrote his epistle to the Romans. I only speak here of that which relates to thus part of the apostle's history, and throws light upon his labours.

Note #28

The reader must distinguish between the Lord's sufferings for sin from God in righteousness, and those which He endured from sinful men for righteousness' sake. We partake in the latter, while Christ has saved us from the former, in which there is no question at all of participation, but of His substitution for us when we have deserved the condemnation due to sin.

Note #29

See Eph 5:24.

Acts Chapter 20

But let us return to the history of Paul.

After the uproar has ceased he sends for the disciples, embraces them, and departs for Macedonia; he visits that whole country, and comes into Greece. The beginning of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians gives the details of this part of his history. In Greece he remains three months; and when the Jews lay wait for him, he goes round by Macedonia, instead of sailing straight to Syria. At Troas (where a door had been opened to him on his way into Greece, but where his affection for the Corinthians had not allowed him to remain) he spends his Sunday, and even the whole week, in order to see the brethren. We perceive the usual object of their assembly: they "came together to break bread"; and the ordinary occasion of holding it "the first day of the week." Paul avails himself of this to speak to them all night; but it was an extraordinary occasion. The presence and the exhortations of an apostle failed in keeping them all awake. It was not however an assembly held in secret or in the dark. There were many lamps to light the upper chamber in which they met. By the place in which they came together we see that the assemblies were not composed of very many persons. The upper room in Jerusalem received, perhaps, one hundred and twenty. It appears by different salutations, that they met in private houses probably in several, if the number of believers required it; but there was only one assembly.

Eutychus pays the penalty of his inattention; but God bears testimony to His own goodness, and to the power with which He had endued the apostle, by raising him from a state of death. Paul says that his soul was yet in him: he

had only to renew the connection between it and his physical organism. In other cases the soul had been recalled.

Paul chose to go alone from Troas to Assos. We see all through the history, that he arranged, by the power that the Spirit gave him over them, the willing services of his companions not, doubtless, as their master, yet more absolutely than if he had been so. He is (under Christ) the centre of the system in which he labours, the centre of energy. Christ alone can be by right the centre of salvation and of faith. It was only as filled with the Spirit of God that Paul was the centre even of that energy; and it was, as we have seen, by not grieving Him, and by exercising himself to have a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men.

Paul does not stop at Ephesus, because in so central a place he must have stayed some time. It is necessary to avoid that which has a certain moral claim upon us, if we would not and ought not to be detained by the obligation it imposes upon us.

It was no want of affection for the beloved Ephesians, nor any thought of neglecting them. He sends for the elders, and addresses a discourse to them, which we must examine a little, as setting before us the position of the assembly at that time, and the work of the gospel among the nations.

The assemblies were consolidated over a pretty large extent of country, and in divers places at least had taken the form of a regularly ordered institution. Elders were established and recognised. The apostle could send for them to come to him. His authority also was acknowledged on their part. He speaks of his ministry as a past thing solemn thought! but he takes them to witness not only that he had preached the truth to them, but a truth that spoke to their conscience; setting them before God on the one hand, and on the other presenting to them Him in whom God made Himself known, and in whom He communicated all the fulness of grace on their behalf Jesus, the object of their faith, the Saviour of their souls. He had done this through trouble and through difficulty, in face of the unprincipled opposition of the Jews who had rejected the Anointed One, but in accordance with the grace that rose above all this evil and declared salvation to the Jews, and going beyond these limits (because it was grace) addressed itself to the Gentiles,

to all men, as sinners and responsible to God. Paul had done this, not with the pride of a teacher, but with the humility and the perseverance of love. He desired also to finish his ministry, and to fail in nothing that Jesus had committed to him. And now he was going to Jerusalem, feeling bound in spirit to do so, not knowing what would befall him, but warned by the Holy Ghost that bonds and afflictions awaited him. With regard to themselves, he knew his ministry was ended, and that he should see their face no more. Henceforth responsibility would specially rest upon them.

Thus what the Holy Ghost here sets before us is, that now, when the detail of his work among the Gentiles to plant the gospel is related as one entire scene among Jews and Gentiles, he bids adieu to the work; in order to leave those whom he had gathered together in a new position, and in a certain sense to themselves. [See Note #30] It is a discourse which marks the cessation of one phase of the assembly that of apostolic labours and the entrance into another its responsibility to stand fast now that those labours had ceased, the service of the elders whom "the Holy Ghost had made overseers," and at the same time the dangers and difficulties that would attend the cessation of apostolic labour, and complicate the work of the elders on whom the responsibility would now more especially devolve.

The first remark that flows from the consideration of this discourse is, that apostolic succession is entirely denied by it. Owing to the absence of the apostle various difficulties would arise, and there would be no one in his place to meet or to prevent these difficulties. Successor therefore he had none. In the second place the fact appears that, this energy which bridled the spirit of evil, once away, devouring wolves from without, and teachers of perverse things from within, would lift up their heads and attack the simplicity and the happiness of the assembly, which would be harassed by the efforts of Satan without possessing apostolic energy to withstand them.

This testimony of Paul's is of the highest importance with regard to the whole ecclesiastical system. The attention of the elders who are left in charge is directed elsewhere than to present apostolical care (as having no longer this resource, or anything that officially replaced it), in order that the assembly might be kept in peace and sheltered from evil. It was their part to care for the assembly in these circumstances. In the next place, that which

was principally to be done for the hindrance of evil was to shepherd the flock, and to watch, whether over themselves or over the flock, for that purpose. He reminds them how he had himself exhorted them night and day with tears. Let them therefore watch. He then commends them, neither to Timothy, nor to a bishop, but in a way that sets aside all official resource to God, and to the word of His grace which was able to build them up and assure them of the inheritance. This was where he left the assembly; that which it did afterwards is not my subject here. If John came later to work in these parts, it was a great favour from God, but it changed nothing in the position officially. His labours (with the exception of the warnings to the seven assemblies in the Apocalypse, where judgment is in question) regarded the individual life, its character, and that which sustained it.

With deep and touching affection Paul parts from the assembly at Ephesus. Who filled the gap? At the same time he appealed to their consciences for the uprightness of his walk. The free labours of the apostle of the Gentiles were ended. Solemn and affecting thought! He had been the instrument chosen of God to communicate to the world His counsels respecting the assembly, and to establish in the midst of the world this precious object of His affections united to Christ at His right hand. What would become of it down here?

Note #30

If Paul was ever set free and returned to these parts (not necessarily to Ephesus) as Philippians and Philemon and perhaps 2 Timothy would lead us to suppose, we have no scriptural account of it.

Acts Chapter 21

After this time the apostle has to give account of himself, and to accomplish in a striking manner the predictions of the Lord. Brought before tribunals by the malice of the Jews, given up through their hatred into the hands of the Gentiles, it was all to turn to a testimony. Kings and rulers shall hear the gospel, but the love of many will grown cold. This in general is his position; but there were details personal to himself.

We may remark here a leading feature in this book which has been little noticed; that is, the development of the enmity of the Jews, bringing on their final rejection, such as they were. The Acts ends with the last case presented; the work in the midst of that people is left in oblivion, and that of Paul occupies the whole scene in the historical narrative given by the Spirit. The antagonism of the Jews to the manifestation of the assembly, which took their place and blotted out the distinction between them and the Gentiles, by bringing in heaven and full sovereign grace in contrast with law, which while universal in its direction was given to a distinct people (grace of which the sinner availed himself by faith) this antagonism, presenting itself at every step in the career of the apostle, although he acted with all possible circumspection, is aroused in its full intensity at Jerusalem, its natural centre, and manifests itself by violence and by efforts made with the Gentiles for the purpose of cutting off Paul from the earth. This rendered the apostle's position very serious with regard to the Gentiles at Jerusalem a city the more jealous of its religious importance from having in fact under Roman bondage lost the reality of it, through its being transformed into a spirit of rebellion against the authority which crippled it.

After the history of Christianity, viewed as connected with Judaism (in reference to the promises and their fulfilment in the Messiah), we find Paul in three different positions. First, condescending, for the purpose of conciliation, to take account of that which still existed at Jerusalem, and even addressing the Jews everywhere in their synagogues, as having administratively the first right to hear the gospel ("To the Jew first and then to the Greek") for Jesus was the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to fulfil the promises made to the fathers. In this respect he never failed, and he establishes these principles clearly and dogmatically in the Epistle to the Romans. We next find him, in all the liberty of the full truth of grace and of the purposes of God, in his own especial work from which he condescended in grace. This is recorded in the Epistle to the Ephesians. In both these cases he acts under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, fulfilling the Lord's will. Afterwards, in the third place, we see him in conflict with the hostility of legal Judaism, the emissaries of which he met continually, and into the very focus of which he at length threw himself by going to Jerusalem, in that part of his history which we are now considering. How

much was of God how much was the consequence of his own steps is matter for consideration in this narrative. That the hand of God was in it for the good of the assembly, and in conducting His beloved servant for his own good in the end, is beyond all doubt. We have only to search out how far the will and the mind of Paul came in, as means which God used to bring about the result He intended, whether for the assembly or for His servant, or for the Jews. These thoughts are of the deepest interest, and require humble examination of that which God has set before us to instruct us on this point in the history which the Spirit Himself has given us of these things.

The first thing which strikes us at the beginning of this history is that the Holy Ghost tells him not to go to Jerusalem (Act 21:4). This word has evident importance. Paul felt himself bound: there was something in his own mind which impelled him thither, a feeling that forced him in that direction; but the Spirit, in His positive and outward testimony forbade his going.

The apostle's intention had been to go to Rome. The apostle of the Gentiles sent forth to preach the gospel to every creature, there was nothing of self in this project that was not according to grace (Rom 1:13-15). Nevertheless God had not allowed him to go thither. He was obliged to write his Epistle to them without seeing them. Heaven is the metropolis of Christianity. Rome and Jerusalem must have no place with Paul, except as to bearing with the one in affection, and being ready, when he might, to evangelise the other. Act 19:21, which is translated "in the spirit," only means the spirit of Paul. He purposed, in his own mind, saying, "When I have been there, I must also see Rome." Afterwards he charge himself with the offerings of the saints in Achaia and Macedonia. He wished to prove his affection for the poor of his own people (Gal 2:10). This was all well. I do not know if it was a function suited to an apostle. It was an evidently Jewish feeling, which set peculiar value on the poor of Jerusalem, and so far on Jerusalem itself. A Jew would rather be poor at Jerusalem than rich among the Gentiles. Poor Christians were there no doubt from the time of their conversion, but that was the origin of this system (compare Neh 11:2 and Act 24:17). All this belonged to relationship with Judaism (Rom 15:25-28). Paul loved the nation to which he belonged after the flesh, and which had been the people beloved of God and was still His people although rejected for a time, the

remnant having now to enter the kingdom of God through Christianity. This attachment of Paul to them (which had its right and deeply affecting side, but which on another side had to do with the flesh) led him into the centre of Judaism. He was the messenger of the heavenly glory, which brought out the doctrine of the assembly composed of Jews and Gentiles, united without distinction in the one body of Christ, thus blotting out Judaism; but his love for his nation carried him, I repeat, into the very centre of hostile Judaism Judaism enraged against this spiritual equality. His testimony, the Lord had told him, they would not receive.

Nevertheless the hand of God was doubtless in it. Paul individually found his level.

As the instrument of God's revelation, he proclaims in all its extent and all its force the purpose of the sovereign grace of God. The wine is not adulterated; it flows out as pure as he had received it. And he walked in a remarkable way at the height of the revelation committed to him. Still Paul individually is a man; he must be exercised and manifested, and in those exercises to which God has subjected us. Where the flesh has found its pleasure, the sphere in which it has gratified itself, it is there that, when God acts, it finds its sorrow. Yet, if God saw fit to prove His servant and manifest him to himself, He stood by him, and blessed him even through the trial itself-turned it into testimony, and refreshed the heart of His beloved and faithful servant. The manifestation of that in him which is not according to the Spirit, or to the height of his calling, was in love for his blessing and for that of the assembly. Blessed is he who can walk as faithfully and maintain his standing to the same degree through grace in the path of grace! Nevertheless Christ is the only model. I see no one who (in another career) so much resembled Him in His public life as Paul.

The more we search into the apostle's walk the more we shall see this resemblance. Only that Christ was the model of perfection in obedience; in His precious servant there was the flesh. Paul would have been the first to acknowledge that perfection may be ascribed to Jesus only.

I believe then that the hand of God was in this journey of Paul's; that in His sovereign wisdom He willed that His servant should undertake it, and also

have blessing in it; but that the means employed to lead him into it according to that sovereign wisdom, was the apostle's human affection for the people who were his kinsmen after the flesh; and that he was not led into it by the Holy Ghost acting on the part of Christ in the assembly. This attachment to his people, this human affection, met with that among the people which put it in its place. Humanly speaking, it was an amiable feeling; but it was not the power of the Holy Ghost founded on the death and resurrection of Christ. Here there was no longer Jew nor Gentile. In the living Christ it was right. Christ went on in it to the end in order that He might die; for this purpose He came.

Paul's affection was good in itself, but as a spring of action it did not come up to the height of the work of the Spirit, who on Christ's part had sent him afar from Jerusalem to the Gentiles in order to reveal the assembly as His body united to Him in heaven. Thus the Jews hearkened to him till it came to that word, and then they cried out and raised the tumult which caused Paul to be made prisoner. [See Note #31] He suffered for the truth, but where that truth had no access according to Christ's own testimony: "they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." It was necessary however that the Jews should manifest their hatred to the gospel, and give this final proof of their inveterate opposition to the ways of God in grace.

At the same time, whatever may have been the subsequent labours of the apostle (if there were any the Holy Ghost does not make mention of them: Paul sees the Jews in his own house, and receives all who come to him; but) the page of the Spirit's history closes here. This history is ended. The apostolic mission to the Gentiles in connection with the founding of the assembly is concluded. Rome is but the prison of the apostle of the truth, to whom the truth had been committed. Jerusalem rejects him, Rome imprisons him and puts him to death as it had done to Jesus, whom the blessed apostle had to resemble in this also according to his desire in Philippians 3; for Christ and conformity to Him was his only object. It was given him to find this conformity in his service, as it was so strongly in his heart and soul, with the necessary difference between a ministry which was not to break the bruised reed nor lift up its voice in the street, and one which in testimony was to bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

The mission of the twelve to the Gentiles, going out from Jerusalem (Matt. 28), never took place, so far as any record of it by the Holy Ghost goes. [See Note #32] Jerusalem detained them. They did not even go over the cities of Israel. The ministry of the circumcision was given to Peter, that of the Gentiles to Paul in connection with the doctrine of the assembly and of a glorious Christ a Christ whom he no longer knew after the flesh. Jerusalem, to which the apostle was drawn by his affection, rejected both him and his mission. His ministry to the Gentiles, so far as the free effect of the power of the Spirit, ended likewise. Ecclesiastical history may perhaps tell us more; nevertheless God has taken care to bury it in profound darkness Nothing farther is owned by the Spirit. We hear no more of the apostles at Jerusalem; and Rome, as we have seen, had none, so far as the Holy Ghost informs us, excepting that the apostle of the Gentiles was a prisoner there and finally put to death. Man has failed everywhere on earth. The religious and political centres of the world-centres, according to God, as to the earth have rejected the testimony, and put the testifier to death; but the result has been that Heaven has maintained its rights inviolate and in their absolute purity. The assembly the true heavenly and eternal metropolis of glory and of the ways of God the assembly which had its place in the counsels of God before the world was the assembly which answers to His heart in grace as united to Christ in glory remains the object of faith. It is revealed according to the mind of God, and perfectly such as it is in His mind, until, as the heavenly Jerusalem, it shall be manifested in glory, in connection with the accomplishment of the ways of God on the earth, in the re-establishment of Jerusalem as the centre of His earthly dealings in grace, His throne, His metropolis in the midst even of the Gentiles, and in the disappearance even of Gentile power, the seat and centre of which was Rome.

Let us now examine the thoughts of the apostle, and that which took place historically. Paul wrote from Corinth to Rome, when he had this journey in view. Christianity had flowed towards that centre of the world, without any apostle whatsoever having planted it there. Paul follows it. Rome is, as it were, a part of his apostolic domain which escapes him (Rom 1:13-15). He returns to the subject in Chapter 15. If he might not come (for God will not begin with the capital of the world compare the destruction of Hazor in

Canaan, Jos 11:11), he will at least write to them on the ground of his universal apostleship to the Gentiles. Some Christians were already established there: so God would have it. But they were in some sort, of his province. Many of them had been personally in connection with him. See the number and character of the salutations at the end of the epistle, which have a peculiar stamp, making the Roman Christians in great part the children of Paul.

In Rom 15:14-29 he develops his apostolic position with respect to the Romans and others. He desired also to go into Spain when he had seen the brethren at Rome a little. He wishes to impart spiritual gifts to them, but to be comforted by their mutual faith, to enjoy a little of their company. They are in connection with him; but they have their place as Christians at Rome without his ever having been there. When therefore he had seen them a little, he would go into Spain. But he was disappointed with regard to these projects. All that we are told by the Holy Ghost is that he was a prisoner at Rome. Profound silence as to Spain. Instead of going farther when he had seen them and imparted gifts, he remains two years a prisoner at Rome. It is not known whether he was set free or not. Some say yes, others no; the word says nothing.

It is here, when he had laid open his intentions and the character of his relationships in the Spirit with Rome, and when a large field opens before him in the west, that his old affection for his people and for Jerusalem intervenes "But now I go unto Jerusalem to carry help to the saints" (Rom 15:25-28). Why not go to Rome according to the energy of the Spirit, his work being finished in Greece? (Act 21:23). God, no doubt, ordained that those things should happen at Jerusalem, and that Rome and the Romans should have this sad place with respect to the testimony of a glorified Christ and of the assembly, which the apostle rendered before the world. But as to Paul, why put rebellious Jerusalem between his evangelical desire and his work? The affection was good, and the service good for a deacon, or a messenger of the churches: but for Paul, who had the whole west open before his evangelising thought!

For the moment Jerusalem intercepted his view. Accordingly, as we have seen, the Holy Ghost warned him on his way. He foresaw himself also the

danger he was running into (Rom 15:30-32). He was sure (Act 21:29) of coming in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ; but he was not sure that he should come with joy. The thing for which he asked their prayers turned out quite otherwise than he desired. He was delivered, but as a prisoner. He took courage when he saw the brethren at Appii Forum and the Three Taverns. There was no journey into Spain either.

All this to me is very solemn. The Lord, full of grace and tenderness, was with His poor but beloved servant. In the case of such an one as Paul, it is a most affecting history, and the Lord's ways adorable and perfect in goodness. The reality of faith is there in full; the ways of grace perfect, and perfect in tenderness also, in the Lord. He stands by His servant in the trial in which he finds himself, to encourage and strengthen him. At the same time, with regard to the desire of going to Jerusalem, he is warned by the Spirit, and its consequences are set before him; and, not turning back, he undergoes the needful discipline, which brings his soul into its place, and a full place of blessing before God. His walk finds its level as to spiritual power. He feels the power outwardly of that whereof he had felt the moral power seeking to hinder his ministry; and a chain upon his flesh answers to the liberty he had allowed it. There was justice in God's dealings. His servant was too precious for it to be otherwise. At the same time, as to result and testimony, God ordered everything for His own glory, and with perfect wisdom as to the future welfare of the assembly. Jerusalem, as we have seen, rejects the testimony to the Gentiles, in a word the ways of God in the assembly (compare Th1 2:14-16); and Rome becomes the prison of that testimony; while according to the Lord's promise the testimony is carried before rulers and kings, and before Caesar himself.

I have said that grace put Paul into the position of Christ given up to the Gentiles by the hatred of the Jews. It was a great favour. The difference besides the infinite love of the Lord who gave Himself up was that Jesus was there in His true place before God. He had come to the Jews: that He should be delivered up was the crowning act of His devotedness and His service. It was in fact the offering Himself by the eternal Spirit. It was the sphere of His service as sent of God. Paul re-entered it: the energy of the Holy Ghost had placed him outside "Delivering thee," said the Lord, "from the people and

from the Gentiles, to whom I now send thee to open their eyes," etc. (Act 26:17). Jesus had taken him out from them both, to exercise a ministry that united the two in one body in Christ in heaven who had thus sent him. In his service Paul knew no one after the flesh; in Christ Jesus there was neither Jew nor Greek.

Let us resume his history. He is warned by the Holy Ghost not to go up (Act 21:4). Nevertheless he continues his journey to Caesarea. A prophet named Agabus comes down from Judea, and announces that Paul shall be bound and given up to the Gentiles. It might be said that this did not forbid his going. It is true; yet, coming after the other, it strengthened the warning already given. When he walked in the liberty of the Spirit, warned of danger, he fled from it, while braving every peril if the testimony required it. At Ephesus he allowed himself to be persuaded not to go into the theatre.

The Holy Ghost does not usually warn of danger. He leads in the path of the Lord, and if persecution comes, He gives strength to endure it. Here Paul was continually warned. His friends entreat him not to go up. He will not be persuaded. They hold their peace, little satisfied, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." And, I doubt not, it was His will, but for the accomplishment of purposes that Paul knew not by the intelligence given of the Holy Ghost. Only he felt pressed in spirit to go, and ready to suffer all things for the Lord.

Note #31

And this circumstance is worthy of note, that it was Christ's declaration that he should go to the Gentiles; to which we may add that this at the time was accompanied by the declaration, "Get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me." So that what declared his testimony was of no avail in Jerusalem was the occasion of his being seized. On Christ's word and his own shewing, his apostolic service was not there but elsewhere.

Note #32

Mar 16:20 is the only passage which may be supposed to allude to what would fulfil it; and even not so as such, for that and Col 1:6 refer to all the

world, and are founded on ascension, not a mission to the Gentiles only founded on resurrection.

Acts Chapter 22

He departs therefore to Jerusalem; and when there, he goes to the house of James, and all the elders assemble. Paul relates to them the work of God among the Gentiles. They turn to their Judaism, of which the multitude were full, and, while rejoicing in the good that was wrought of God by the Spirit, they wish Paul to shew himself obedient to the law. The believers in Jerusalem must needs come together on the arrival of Paul, and their prejudices with regard to the law must be satisfied. Paul has brought himself into the presence of man's exigencies: to refuse compliance with them would be to say that their thoughts about him were true; to act according to their desire was to make a rule, not of the guidance of the Spirit in all liberty of love, but of the ignorant and prejudiced condition of these Jewish believers. It is that Paul was there, not according to the Spirit as an apostle, but according to his attachment to these former things. One must be above the prejudices of others, and free from their influence, to be able to condescend to them in love.

Being there, Paul can hardly do other than satisfy their demands. But the hand of God is in it. This act throws him into the power of his enemies. Seeking to please the believing Jews, he finds himself in the lion's mouth, in the hands of the Jews who were adversaries to the gospel. It may be added that we hear nothing more of the Christians of Jerusalem. They had done their work. I have no doubt that they accepted the alms of the Gentiles.

The whole city being moved and the temple shut, the commander of the band comes to rescue Paul from the Jews who wished to kill him, taking him however into custody himself, for the Romans were used to these tumults, and heartily despised this nation beloved of God, but proud and degraded in their own condition. Nevertheless Paul commands the respect of the captain of the band by his manner of addressing him, and he permits him to speak to the people. To the chief captain Paul had spoken in Greek; but, always ready to win by the attentions of love, and especially when the loved though rebellious people were in question, he speaks to them in Hebrew;

that is, in their ordinary language called Hebrew. He does not enlarge upon what the Lord said revealing Himself to him, but he gives them a particular account of his subsequent interview with Ananias, a faithful Jew and esteemed of all. He then enters on the point which necessarily characterised his position and his defence. Christ had appeared to him, saying, "They will not receive thy testimony at Jerusalem. I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." Blessed be God! it is the truth; but why tell it to those very persons who, according to his own words, would not receive his testimony? The only thing which gave authority to such a mission was the Person of Jesus, and they did not believe in it.

In his testimony to the people the apostle laid stress in vain upon the Jewish piety of Ananias: genuine as it might be, it was but a broken reed.

Nevertheless it was all, except his own. His discourse had but one effect to bring out the violent and incorrigible hatred of this unhappy nation to every thought of grace in God, and the unbounded pride which indeed went before the fall that crushed them. The chief captain, seeing the violence of the people, and not at all understanding what was going on, with the haughty contempt of a Roman, orders Paul to be bound and scourged to make him confess what it meant. Now Paul was himself a Roman citizen, and born such, while the chief captain had purchased that freedom. Paul quietly makes this fact known, and they who were about to scourge him withdraw. The chief captain was afraid because he had bound him; but, as his authority was concerned in it, he leaves him bound. The next day he looses him and brings him before the council, or Sanhedrim, of the Jews. The people, not merely their rulers, had rejected grace.

Acts Chapter 23

Paul addresses the council with the gravity and dignity of an upright man accustomed to walk with God. It is not a testimony borne to them for their good; but the appeal of a good conscience to their consciences, if they had any. The immediate answer is an outrage on the part of the judge or chief of the council. Paul, roused by this procedure, denounces judgment on him from God; but, warned that he was the high priest (who was not so clothed as to be recognised), he excuses himself by his ignorance of the fact, quoting the formal prohibition of the law to speak evil of the ruler of the

people. All this was right and in place with regard to men; but the Holy Ghost could not say, "I wist not." It is not the activity of the Spirit performing the work of grace and of testimony. But it is the means of the final judgment of God upon the people. It is in this character, as regards the Jews, that Paul appears here. Paul makes a much better appearance than his judges, who thoroughly disgrace themselves and manifest their dreadful condition; but he does not appear for God before them. Afterwards he avails himself of the different parties of which the council were composed to throw complete disorder into it, by declaring himself to be a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, and called in question for a dogma of that sect. This was true; but it was below the height of his own word, "that which was gain I counted loss for Christ's sake." The Jews however fully manifest themselves. That which Paul said raises a tumult, and the chief captain takes him from among them. God has all things at His disposal. A nephew of Paul's, never mentioned elsewhere, hears of an ambush laid for him and warns him of it. Paul sends him to the chief captain, who expedites the departure of Paul under a guard to Caesarea. God watched over him, but all is on the level of human and providential ways. There is not the angel as in Peter's case, nor the earthquake as at Philippi. We are sensibly on different ground.

Acts Chapter 24

Paul appears before the governors in succession the Sanhedrim, Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and afterwards Caesar. And here, when occasion offers, we have striking appeals to conscience; when his defence is in question, the manly and honest declarations of a good conscience, that rose above the passions and interests that surrounded him. I pass over in silence the worldly egotism which betrays itself in Lysias and Festus, by their assumption of all sorts of good qualities and good conduct; the mixture of awakened conscience and absence of principle in the governors; the desire to please the Jews for their own importance, or to facilitate their government of a rebellious people; and the contempt felt by those who were not as responsible as Lysias for the public tranquillity. The position of Agrippa and all the details of the history have a remarkable stamp of truth, and present the various characters in so living a style that we seem to be in

the scenes described. We see the persons moving in it. This moreover strikingly characterises the writings of Luke.

Other circumstances claim our attention. Festus, in order to please the Jews, proposed to take Paul to Jerusalem. But Rome was to have its share in the rejection of the gospel of grace, of the testimony to the assembly; and Paul appeals to Caesar. Festus must therefore send him thither, although embarrassed to know what crime he is to charge him with in sending him. Sad picture of man's injustice! But everything accomplishes the purposes of God. In the use of the means Paul succeed no better than in his attempt to satisfy the Jews. It was perhaps to the eye of man his only resource under the circumstances; but the Holy Ghost is careful to inform us that he might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to Caesar.

In Agrippa there was, I believe, more curiosity than conscience, though there may have been some desire to profit by the occasion to know what the doctrine was which had so stirred up people's minds, a disposition to inquire which was more than curiosity. In general his words are taken as if he was not far from being convinced that Christianity was true: perhaps he would have been so if his passions had not stood in the way. But it may be questioned whether this is the force of the Greek, as generally supposed, and not, rather, 'In a little you are going to make a Christian of me,' covering his uneasiness at the appeal to his professed Judaism before Festus, by an affected and slighting remark. And such I believe to be the case. The notion of an "almost christian" is quite a mistake, though a man's mind may be under influences which ought to lead him to it, and yet reject it. He would have been glad for Paul to be set free. He expressed his conviction that it might have been done if he had not appealed to Caesar. He gives his opinion to Festus as a wise and reasonable man; but his words were in reality dictated by his conscience words that he could venture to utter when Festus and all the rest were agreed that Paul had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

God would have the innocence of his beloved servant proved in the face of the world. His discourse tends to this. He goes farther, but his object is to give account of his conduct. His miraculous conversion is related in order to justify his subsequent career; but it is so related as to act upon the

conscience of Agrippa, who was acquainted with Jewish things, and evidently desired to hear something of Christianity, which he suspected to be the truth. Accordingly he lays hold with eagerness of the opportunity that presents itself to hear the apostle explain it. But he remains much where he was. His condition of soul opens however the mouth of Paul, and he addresses himself directly and particularly to the king; who moreover, evidently engrossed by the subject, had called on him to speak. To Festus it was all a rhapsody.

Acts Chapter 25

The dignity of Paul's manner before all these governors is perfect. He addresses himself to the conscience with a forgetfulness of self that shewed a man in whom communion with God, and the sense of his relationship with God, carried the mind above all effect of circumstances. He was acting for God; and, with a perfect deference for the position of those he addressed, we see that which was morally altogether superior to them. The more humiliating his circumstances, the more beauty there is in this superiority. Before the Gentiles he is a missionary from God. He is again (blessed be God!) in his right place. All that he said to the Jews was right and deserved; but why was he, who had been delivered from the people, subjected to their total want of conscience, and their blind passions which gave no place for testimony? Nevertheless, as we have seen, it was to be so in order that the Jews might in every way fill up the measure of their iniquity, and indeed that the blessed apostle might follow the steps of his Master.

Acts Chapter 26

Paul's address to king Agrippa furnishes us with the most complete picture of the entire position of the apostle, as he himself looked at it when his long service and the light of the Holy Ghost illuminated his backward glance.

He does not speak of the assembly that was a doctrine for instruction, and not a part of his history. But everything that related to his personal history, in connection with his ministry, he gives in detail. He had been a strict Pharisee; and here he connects the doctrine of Christ with the hopes of the Jews. He was in bonds "for the hope of the promise made unto the fathers." No doubt resurrection entered into it. Why should the king think

resurrection impossible, that God was not able to raise the dead? This brings him to another point. He had verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things against Jesus of Nazareth, and had carried them out with all the energy of his character, and with the bigotry of a devout Jew. His present condition, as a witness among the Gentiles, depended on the change wrought in him by the revelation of the Lord when he was engaged in seeking to destroy His name. Near Damascus a light brighter than the sun struck them all to the earth, and he alone heard the voice of the Righteous One, so that he knew from His own mouth that it was Jesus, and that He looked upon those who believed in Him as Himself. He could not resist such a testimony. But as this was the great grievance to the Jews, he shews that his own position was formally marked out by the Lord Himself. He was called to give ocular evidence of the glory which he had seen; that is, of Jesus in that glory; and of other things also, for the manifestation of which Jesus would again appear to him. A glorious Christ known (personally) only in heaven was the subject of the testimony committed to him. For this purpose He had set Paul apart from the Jews as much as from the Gentiles, his mission belonging immediately to heaven, having its origin there; and he was sent formally by the Lord of glory to the Gentiles, to change their position with respect to God through faith in this glorious Jesus, opening their eyes, bringing them out of darkness into light, from the power of Satan to God, and giving them an inheritance among the sanctified. This was a definite work. The apostle was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, and he had taught the Gentiles to turn to God, and to act as those who had done so. For this cause the Jews sought to kill him.

Nothing more simple, more truthful, than this history. It put the case of Paul and the conduct of the Jews in the clearest light. When called to order by Festus, who naturally thought it nothing more than irrational enthusiasm, he appeals with perfect dignity and quick discernment to Agrippa's knowledge of the facts upon which all this was based: for the thing had not been done in a corner.

Agrippa was not far from being convinced; but his heart was unchanged. The wish that Paul expresses brings the matter back to its moral reality. The meeting is dissolved. The king resumes his kingly place in courtesy and

condescension, and the disciple that of a prisoner; but, whatever might be the apostle's position, we see in him a heart thoroughly happy and filled with the Spirit and love of God. Two years of prison had brought him no depression of heart or faith, but had only set him free from his harassing connection with the Jews, to give him moments spent with God.

Agrippa, surprised and carried away by Paul's clear and straightforward narrative, [See Note #33] relieves himself from the pressure of Paul's personal address by saying, 'In a little you are going to make a Christian of me.' Charity might have said, "Would to God that thou wert!" But there is a spring in the heart of Paul that does not stop there. "Would to God," says he, "that not only thou, but all those that hear me, were ... altogether such as I am, except these bonds!" What happiness and what love (and in God these two things go together) are expressed in these words! A poor prisoner, aged and rejected, at the end of his career he is rich in God. Blessed years that he had spent in prison! He could give himself as a model of happiness; for it filled his heart. There are conditions of soul which unmistakably declare themselves. And why should he not be happy? His fatigues ended, his work in a certain sense finished, he possessed Christ and in Him all things. The glorious Jesus, who had brought him into the pains and labour of the testimony, was now his possession and his crown. Such is ever the case. The cross in service by virtue of what Christ is is the enjoyment of all that He is, when the service is ended; and in some sort is the measure of that enjoyment. This was the case with Christ Himself, in all its fulness; it is ours, in our measure, according to the sovereign grace of God. Only Paul's expression supposes the Holy Ghost acting fully in the heart in order that it may be free to enjoy, and that the Spirit is not grieved.

A glorious Jesus a Jesus who loved him, a Jesus who put the seal of His approbation and love upon his service, a Jesus who would take him to Himself in glory, and with whom he was one (and that known according to the abundant power of the Holy Ghost, according to divine righteousness), a Jesus who revealed the Father, and through whom he had the place of adoption was the infinite source of joy to Paul, the glorious object of his heart and of his faith; and, being known in love, filled his heart with that love overflowing towards all men. What could he wish them better than to be as

he was except his bonds? How, filled with this love, could he not wish it, or not be full of this large affection? Jesus was its measure.

Note #33

It is hardly to be read "almost." Relieving himself, Agrippa says, "You'll soon be making a Christian of me," covering his feelings, as I have said, by a slighting speech. But I have no doubt his mind was greatly wrought upon.

Acts Chapter 27

His innocence fully established and acknowledged by his judges, the purposes of God must still be accomplished. His appeal to Caesar must carry him to Rome, that he may bear testimony there also. In his position here he again resembles Jesus. But at the same time, if we compare them, the servant, blessed as he is, grows dim, and is eclipsed before Christ, so that we could no longer think of him. Jesus offered Himself up in grace; He appealed to God only; He answered but to bear testimony to the truth that truth was the glory of His Person, His own rights, humbled as He was. His Person shines out through all the dark clouds of human violence, which could have had no power over Him had it not been the moment for thus fulfilling the will of God. For that purpose He yields to power given them from above. Paul appeals to Caesar. He is a Roman a human dignity conferred by man, and available before men; he uses it for himself, God thus accomplishing His purposes. The one is blessed, and his services; the other is perfect, the perfect subject of the testimony itself.

Nevertheless, if there is no longer the free service of the Holy Ghost for Paul, and if he is a prisoner in the hands of the Romans, his soul at least is filled with the Spirit. Between him and God all is liberty and joy. All this shall turn to his salvation, that is, to his definitive victory, in his contest with Satan. How blessed! Through the communications of the Spirit of Jesus Christ the word of God shall not be bound. Others shall gain strength and liberty in view of his bonds, even although, in the low state of the church, some take advantage of them. But Christ will be preached and magnified, and with that Paul is content. Oh how true this is, and the perfect joy of the heart, come what may! We are the subjects of grace (God be praised!), as well as instruments of grace in service. Christ alone is its object, and God

secures His glory nothing more is needed: this itself is our portion and our perfect joy.

It will be remarked in this interesting history, that at the moment when Paul might have been the most troubled, when his course was perhaps the least evidently according to the power of the Spirit, when he brought disorder into the council by using arguments which afterwards he hesitates himself entirely to justify it is then that the Lord, full of grace, appears to him to encourage and strengthen him. The Lord, who formerly had told him at Jerusalem to go away because they would not receive his testimony, who had sent him warnings not to go thither, but who accomplished His own purposes of grace in the infirmity and through the human affections of His servant, by their means even, exercising at the same time His wholesome discipline in His divine wisdom by these same means Jesus appears to him to tell him that, as he had testified of Him at Jerusalem, so should he bear witness at Rome also. This is the way that the Lord interprets in grace the whole history, at the moment when His servant might have felt all that was painful in his position, perhaps have been overwhelmed by it, remembering that the Spirit had forbidden him to go up; for, when in trial, a doubt is torment. The faithful and gracious Saviour intervenes therefore to encourage Paul, and to put His own interpretation on the position of His poor servant, and to mark the character of His love for him. If it was necessary to exercise discipline for his good on account of his condition and to perfect him, Jesus was with him in the discipline. Nothing more touching than the tenderness, the opportuneness, of this grace. Moreover, as we have said, it all accomplished the purposes of God with regard to the Jews, to the Gentiles, to the world. For God can unite in one dispensation the most various ends.

And now, restored, reanimated by grace, Paul shews himself in his journey to be master of the position. It is he who counsels, according to the communication he receives from God, he who encourages, he who acts, in every way, on God's part, in the midst of the scene around him. The description, full of life and reality, which Luke his companion, gives of this voyage, needs no comment. It is admirable as a living picture of the whole

scene. Our concern is to see what Paul was amid the false confidence, or the distress of the whole company.

Acts Chapter 28

At Melita we find him again exercising his accustomed power among that barbarous people. One sees that God is with him. Evangelisation does not, however, appear in the account of his sojourn there, or of his journey.

Landed in Italy, we see him depressed: the love of the brethren encourages and reanimates him; and he goes on to Rome, where he dwells two years in a house that he hires, a soldier being with him as a guard. Probably those who carried him to Rome had been given to understand that it was only a matter of Jewish jealousy, for all through the journey they treated him with all possible respect. Besides he was a Roman.

Arrived at Rome, he sends for the Jews; and here, for the last time, their condition is set before us, and the judgment which had been hanging over their heads ever since the utterance of the prophecy (which was especially connected with the house of David and with Judah) the judgment pronounced by Esaias, which the Lord Jesus declared should come upon them because of His rejection, the execution of which was suspended by the long-suffering of God, until the testimony of the Holy Ghost was also rejected this judgment is here brought to mind by Paul at the end of the historical part of the New Testament. It is their definitive condition solemnly declared by the minister of sovereign grace, and which should continue until God interposed in power to give them repentance, and to deliver them, and to glorify Himself in them by grace.

We have already marked this characteristic of the Acts, which comes out here in a clear and striking manner the setting aside of the Jews. That is to say, they set themselves aside by the rejection of the testimony of God, of the work of God. They put themselves outside that which God was setting up. They will not follow Him in His progress of grace. And thus they are altogether left behind, without God and without present communication with Him. His word abides for ever, and His mercy; but others take the place of positive and present relationship with Him. Individuals from among them

enter into another sphere on other grounds; but Israel disappears and is blotted out for a time from the sight of God.

It is this which is presented in the book of Acts. The patience of God is exercised towards the Jews themselves in the preaching of the gospel and the apostolic mission at the beginning. Their hostility develops itself by degrees and reaches its height in the case of Stephen. Paul is raised up, a witness of grace towards them as an elect remnant, for he was himself of Israel; but introducing, in connection with a heavenly Christ, something entirely new as doctrine the assembly, the body of Christ in heaven; and the setting aside of all distinction between Jew and Gentile as sinners, and in the oneness of that body. This is linked historically with that which had been established at Jerusalem, in order to maintain unity and the connection of the promises; but in itself, as a doctrine, it was a thing hidden in God in all the ages, having been in His purposes of grace before the world was. The enmity of the Jews to this truth never abated. They used every means to excite the Gentiles against those who taught the doctrine, and to prevent the formation of the assembly itself. God, having acted with perfect patience and grace unto the end, puts the assembly into the place of the Jews, as His house, and the vessel of His promises on earth, by making it His habitation by the Spirit. The Jews were set aside (alas! their spirit soon took possession of the assembly itself); and the assembly, and the clear and positive doctrine of no difference between Jew and Gentile (by nature alike the children of wrath), and of their common and equal privileges as members of one only body, has been fully declared and made the basis of all relationship between God and every soul possessed of faith. This is the doctrine of the apostle in the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians. [See Note #34] At the same time the gift of eternal life, as promised before the world was, has been made manifest by being born again [See Note #35] (the commencement of a new existence with a divine character), and partaking of divine righteousness; these two things being united in our resurrection with Christ, by which, our sins being forgiven, we are placed before God as Christ, who is at once our life and our righteousness. This life manifests itself by conformity to the life of Christ on earth, who left us an example that we should follow His steps. It is the divine life manifested in man in Christ as the object, in us as testimony.

The cross of Christ is the basis, the fundamental centre, of all these truths, the relations between God and man as he was, his responsibility; grace; expiation; the end of life, as to sin, the law, and the world; the putting away of sin through the death of Christ, and its consequences in us. Everything is established there, and gives place to the power of life that was in Christ, who there perfectly glorified God to that new existence into which He entered as man into the presence of the Father; by whose glory, as well as by His own divine power, and by the energy of the Holy Ghost, He was raised from the dead.

This does not prevent God's resuming His ways in government with the Jews on earth, when the church is complete and manifested on high; and which He will do according to His promises and the declarations of prophecy. The apostle explains this also in the Epistle to the Romans; but it belongs to the study of that epistle. The ways of God in judgment with regard to the Gentiles also at the same period will be shewn us in the Apocalypse, as well as in prophetic passages of the Epistles in connection with the coming of Christ, and even with His government of the world in general from the beginning to the end; together with the warnings necessary for the assembly when the days of deception begin to dawn and to be developed morally in the ruin of the assembly, viewed as God's witness in the world.

Our apostle, when brought to Rome, declares (upon the manifestation of unbelief among the Jews, which we have pointed out) that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles; and he dwells two whole years in the house he had hired, receiving those who came to him (for he had not liberty to go to them) preaching the kingdom of God and those things which concerned the Lord Jesus, with all boldness, no man forbidding him. And here the history is ended of this precious servant of God, beloved and honoured by his Master, a prisoner in that Rome which, as head of the fourth empire, was to be the seat of opposition among the Gentiles, as Jerusalem of opposition among the Jews, to the kingdom and to the glory of Christ. The time for the full manifestation of that opposition was not yet come; but the minister of the assembly and of the gospel of glory is a prisoner there. It is thus that Rome

begins its history in connection with the gospel that the apostle preached. Nevertheless God was with him.

Note #34

In Romans in their personal position, in Ephesians in the corporate.

Note #34

The word "regeneration" is not applied in scripture to our being born again; it is a change of position in us connected with our having died with Him and resurrection. It is found twice; once in Matthew 19 it is Christ's coming kingdom; and in Titus it is the washing of baptism, as typically bringing out of the old Adam state and into the christian, but distinguished from the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

ROMANS

Introduction to Romans

The Epistle to the Romans is well placed at the head of all the others, as laying the foundations, in a systematic way, of the relations of man with God; reconciling, at the same time, this universal truth of man's position, first, in responsibility, and, secondly, in grace, with the special promises made to the Jews. It also establishes the great principles of Christian practice, the morality, not of man, but that which is the fruit of the light and revelation given by Christianity. It is important to see that it always views the Christian as in this world. He is justified and has life in Christ, but is here, and not viewed as risen with Him.

The following is, I believe, the arrangement of the epistle. After some introductory verses, which open his subject, several of which are of the deepest importance and furnish the key to the whole teaching of the epistle and man's real state with God (Rom 1:1-17), the apostle (to the end of Rom 3:20) [See Note #1] shews man to be utterly corrupt and lost, in all the circumstances in which he stands. Without law, it was unbridled sin; with philosophy, it was judging evil and committing it; under law, it was breaking the law, while boasting of its possession, and dishonouring the name of Him with whose glory those who possessed it were (so to say) identified, by having received from Him that law as His people. From chapter 3:21 to the end of chapter 8 we find the remedy plainly set forth in two parts. In chapter 3:21 to the end of the chapter, in a general way, through faith the blood of Christ is the answer to all the sin which the apostle has just been describing; afterwards, in chapter 4, resurrection, the seal of Christ's work, and the witness of its efficacy for our justification. All this meets the responsibility of the child of Adam, which the law only aggravated, according to the full grace unfolded in Rom 5:1-11. But in chapter 8, they are assumed to be in Christ who is on high, placing him who had part in it (that is, every believer) in a new position before God in Christ, who thus gave him liberty and life the liberty in which Christ Himself was, and the life which He

Himself lived. It is this last which inseparably unites justification and holiness in life.

But there is connected with this another point, which gives occasion to notice a division yet more important of the subjects of the epistle. From chapter 3:21 to the end of verse 11 of chapter 5, the apostle treats the subject of our sins individual guilt is met by the blood of Christ who (in chapter 4), delivered for our offences, is raised for our justification. But from Rom 5:12, the question of sin is treated not a future judgment met, but deliverance from a present state. [See Note #2] One ends in the blessing of chapter 5:1-11, (), the other in that of chapter 8.

In chapters 9-11, the apostle reconciles these truths of the same salvation, common to every believing man without distinction, with the promise made to the Jews, bringing out the marvellous wisdom of God, and the way in which these things were foreseen, and revealed in the word.

He, afterwards, sets forth (in chapter 12 et seqq.) the practical Christian spirit. In this last part, he alludes to the assembly as a body. Otherwise, it is in general man, the individual, before a God of righteousness; and the work of Christ, which places him there, individually, in peace. For the same reason, save in one passage in chapter 8 to bring in intercession, the ascension is not spoken of in Romans. It treats of death, and Christ's resurrection as the ground of a new status for man before God. [See Note #3]

Let us now examine the line of thought given by the Holy Ghost in this epistle. We find in it the answer to the solemn question of Job, angry at finding himself without resource in the presence of the judgment of God: "I know it is so of a truth, but how should man be just with God?"

Nevertheless, that is not the first thought which presents itself to the apostle. That is man's necessity; but the gospel comes first, revealing and bringing Christ. It is grace and Jesus which it brings in its hands; it speaks of God in love. This awakens the sense of need, [See Note #4] while bringing that which meets it; and gives its measure in the grace that sets before us all the fulness of the love of God in Christ. It is a revelation of God in the Person of Christ. It puts man in his place before God, in the presence of Him who is revealed both in himself, and in grace in Christ. All the promises are also

accomplished in the Person of Him who is revealed. But it is important to note that it begins with the Person of Christ, not forgiveness or righteousness, though this is fully developed afterwards from verse 17.

Note #1:

After the introduction till the end of chapter 3, we find the evil, and the remedy which God has granted in the blood of Jesus Christ: and afterwards, in chapter 4, the resurrection of Christ (after being delivered for our offences) for our justification, and, thus, peace with God, our present standing in favour, and hope of glory, with all its blessed consequences in the love of God. Abraham and David, the great roots of promise, confirmed this principle of grace and justification without works. This part closes with Rom 5:11, which divides the epistle into two distinct parts, as to its main doctrine of justification, and our standing before God. More of this farther on.

Note #2:

This, while the subject is sin in the flesh and death to it, involves the question of law the means of discovering it when its spirituality is known.

Note #3:

See what has just been said on the division at Rom 5:11, and the fuller development of the division of the epistle farther on.

Note #4:

The heart and the conscience are both brought in. Law can shew man's guilt, and even, when spiritually known, man's ruined state, to the conscience; a sense of need proves that the heart also is brought into action.

Romans Chapter 1

Romans 1:1

rom 1:1

There is no epistle in which the apostle places his apostleship on more positive and formal ground than in this; for at Rome he had no claim in virtue of his labours. He had never seen the Romans. He was none the less their apostle; for he was that of the Gentiles. He was a debtor to the Gentiles. He writes to them because he had received a mission from the Lord Himself towards all the Gentiles. They were in his allotted sphere of service as being Gentiles. It was his office to present them as an offering sanctified by the Holy Ghost (Rom 15:16). This was his commission. God was mighty in Peter towards the Jews; the mission of Paul was to the Gentiles. It was to him this mission was entrusted. The twelve moreover acknowledged it. If God has ordained that Paul should accomplish his mission in direct connection with heaven and outside the secular influence of the capital, and if Rome was to be a persecutor of the gospel, that city was not the less Gentile on this account. It belonged to Paul with reference to the gospel. According to the Holy Ghost Peter addresses the Jews in the exercise of his apostleship; Paul, the Gentiles.

This was the administrative order according to God; let us now come to the substance of his position. Paul was the servant of Christ that was his character, his life. But others were, more or less, that. He was more than that. He was an apostle by the call of the Lord, a "called apostle"; and not only that, and laborious as occasion presented itself, he was nothing but that in life here below. He was set apart for the glad tidings of God.

These two last characters are very definitely warranted by the revelation of the Lord to Paul on the way to Damascus his call, and his mission to the Gentiles on that occasion; and by setting apart by the Holy Ghost at Antioch, when he went forth to fulfil his mission.

He calls the gospel to which he was set apart, the gospel or glad tidings "of God": the Holy Ghost presents it in its source. It is not that which man ought to be for God, nor yet the means merely by which man can approach Him on His throne. It is the thoughts of God, and His acts, we may add, towards man His thoughts in goodness, the revelation of Him in Christ His Son. He approaches man according to that which He is and that which He wills in grace. God comes to him; it is the gospel of God. This is the true aspect: the

gospel is never rightly understood until it is to us the gospel of God, the activity and revelation of His nature, and of His will in grace towards man.

Having pointed out the source, the Author of the gospel, the One whom it thus reveals in His grace, the apostle presents the connection between this gospel and the dealings of God which historically preceded it its promulgation here below, and at the same time its own proper object; that is to say, its subject properly so called, and the place held with regard to it by that which preceded it (the order of things which those to whom they belonged sought to maintain as a substantive and independent system by rejecting the gospel). He here introduces that which preceded, not as a subject of controversy, but in its true character, to enforce the testimony of the gospel (anticipating objections, which are thus solved beforehand).

To the Gentile it was the revelation of the truth, and of God, in grace; to the Jew it was indeed that, while also putting everything that regarded him in its right place. The connection of the Old Testament with the gospel is this: the gospel of God had been announced beforehand by His prophets in holy writings. Observe here, that in these holy scriptures the gospel of God was not come, nor was it then addressed to men: but promised or announced beforehand, as to be sent. The assembly was not even announced: the gospel was announced, but as being yet to come.

Moreover, the subject of this gospel is, first of all, the Son of God. He has accomplished a work: but it is Himself who is the true subject of the gospel. Now He is presented in a twofold aspect: 1st, the object of the promises, Son of David according to the flesh; 2nd, the Son of God in power, who, in the midst of sin, walked by the Spirit in divine and absolute holiness (resurrection being the illustrious and victorious proof of who He was, walking in this character). That is to say, resurrection is a public manifestation of that power by which He walked in absolute holiness during His life a manifestation that He is the Son of God in power. He is clearly shewn forth as Son of God in power by this means Here it was no question of promise, but of power, of Him who could enter into conflict with the death in which man lay, and overcome it completely; and that, in connection with the holiness which bore testimony during His life to the power of that Spirit by which He walked, and in which He guarded Himself from being

touched by sin. It was in the same power by which He was holy in life absolutely that He was raised from the dead.

In the ways of God on the earth He was the object and the fulfilment of the promises. With regard to the condition of man under sin and death, He was completely conqueror of all that stood in His way, whether living or in resurrection. It was the Son of God who was there, made known by resurrection according to the power that was in Him, a power that displayed itself according to the Spirit by the holiness in which He lived. [See Note #5] What marvellous grace to see the whole power of evil that dreadful door of death which closed upon the sinful life of man, leaving him to the inevitable judgment that he deserved broken, destroyed, by Him, who was willing to enter into the gloomy chamber it shut in, and take upon Himself all the weakness of man in death, and thus completely and absolutely deliver him whose penalty He had borne in submitting to death! This victory over death, this deliverance of man from its dominion, by the power of the Son of God become man, when He had undergone it, and that as a sacrifice for sin, is the only ground of hope for mortal and sinful man. It sets aside all that sin and death have to say. It destroys, for him who has a portion in Christ, the seal of judgment upon sin, which is in death; and a new man, a new life, begins for him who had been held under it, outside the whole scene, the whole effect of his former misery a life founded on all the value of that which the Son of God had there accomplished.

In fine, we have, as the subject of the gospel, the Son of God, made of the seed of David after the flesh; and, in the bosom of humanity and of death, declared to be the Son of God in power by resurrection, [See Note #6] Jesus Christ our Lord. The gospel was the gospel of God Himself; but it is by Jesus Christ the Lord that the apostle received his mission. He was the head of the work, and sent forth the labourers into the harvest which they were to reap in the world. The object of his mission, and its extent, was the obedience of faith (not obedience to the law) among an nations, establishing the authority and the value of the name of Christ. It was this name which should prevail and be acknowledged.

The apostle's mission was not only his service; the being trusted with it was at the same time the personal grace and favour of Him whose testimony he

bore. I am not speaking of salvation, although in Paul's case the two things were identified a fact that gave a remarkable colour and energy to his mission; but there was grace and favour in the commission itself, and it is important to remember it. It gives character to the mission and to its execution. An angel performs a providential mission; a Moses details a law in the spirit of the law; a Jonah, a John the Baptist, preaches repentance, withdraws from the grace that appeared to falsify his threatenings against the wicked Gentiles, or in the wilderness lays the axe to the root of the unfruitful trees in God's garden. But by Jesus, Paul, the bearer of the glad tidings of God, receives grace and apostleship. He carries, by grace and as grace, the message of grace to men wherever they may be, the grace which comes in all the largeness of the rights of God over men, and in Himself as sovereign, and in which He exercises His rights. Among these Gentiles, the believing Romans also were the called of Jesus Christ.

Paul therefore addresses all the believers in that great city. They were beloved of God, and saints by calling. [See Note #7] He wishes them (as in all his epistles) grace and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, on whose part he delivered his message. The perfect grace of God by Christ, the perfect peace of man, and that with God; it was this which he brought in the gospel and in his heart. These are the true conditions of God's relationship with man, and that of man with God, by the gospel the ground on which Christianity places man. When an individual is addressed, another consideration comes in, namely, that of his own weaknesses and infirmities: therefore "mercy" is added to the wish of the sacred writers in the case of individuals. (See the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, and the Second Epistle of John.) [See Note #8] If the love of God is in the heart, if He has His place there, it is before God that one is occupied with the objects of grace; and then, the work of God in them, the grace that has been displayed is the first thing that comes into the mind, whether in love or in thankfulness. The faith of the Romans ascends in thanksgivings from the heart of the apostle, whom the report of it had reached.

He then expresses his desire to see them, a desire that often occupied his mind. Here he brings out his apostolic relationship towards them, with all the tenderness and all the delicacy that belong to the grace and the love

which had formed this relationship and which constituted its strength. He is apostle by right to all the Gentiles, even although he may not have seen them; but in heart he is their servant; and with the most true and ardent brotherly love, flowing from the grace that had made him apostle, he desires to see them, that he might impart to them some spiritual gift, which his apostleship put him in a position to communicate. What he had in his heart in this was, that he might enjoy the faith which was common to him and to them faith strengthened by these gifts for their mutual comfort. Often he had purposed coming, that he might have some fruit in this part also of the field which God had committed to him; but he had been hindered until now.

He then declares himself a debtor to all the Gentiles, and ready, as far as in him lay, to preach the gospel to those of Rome also. The way in which the apostle claims the whole field of the Gentiles as his own, and in which he was prevented by God from going to Rome until he arrived there at the end of his career (and then only as a prisoner), is worthy of all attention.

However it might be, he was ready, and that because of the value of the gospel a point which leads him to state both the value and the character of this gospel. For, he says, he was not ashamed of it. It was the power of God to salvation. Observe here the way in which the apostle presents everything as coming from God. It is the gospel of God, the power of God to salvation, the righteousness of God, and even the wrath of God, and that from heaven a different thing from earthly chastisement. This is the key to everything. The apostle lays stress upon it, putting it forward from the commencement of the epistle; for man ever inclines to have confidence in himself, to boast of himself, to seek for some merit some righteousness, in himself, to Judaize, to be occupied with himself, as though he could do something. It was the apostle's joy to put his God forward.

Thus, in the gospel, God intervened, accomplishing a salvation which was entirely His own work a salvation of which He was the source and power, and which He Himself had wrought. Man came into it by faith: it was the believer who shared it, but to have part in it by faith was exactly the way to share it without adding anything whatsoever to it, and to leave it wholly the salvation of God. God be praised that it is so, whether for righteousness or

for power, or for the whole result; for thus it is perfect, divine. God has come in, in His almighty power and in His love, to deliver the wretched, according to His own might. The gospel is the expression of this: one believes it and one shares it.

But there is an especial reason why it is the power of God in salvation. Man had departed from God by sin. Righteousness alone could bring him back into the presence of God, and make him such that he could be there in peace. A sinner, he had no righteousness, but quite the contrary; and if man were to come before God as a sinner, judgment necessarily awaits him: righteousness would be displayed in this way. But, in the gospel, God reveals a positive righteousness on His part. If man has none, God has a righteousness which belongs to Him, which is His own, perfect like Himself, according to His own heart. Such a righteousness as this is revealed in the gospel. Human righteousness there was none: a righteousness of God is revealed. It is all-perfect in itself, divine and complete. To be revealed, it must be so. The gospel proclaims it to us.

The principle on which it is announced is faith, because it exists, and it is divine. If man wrought at it, or performed a part of it, or if his heart had any share in carrying it out, it would not be the righteousness of God; but it is entirely and absolutely His. We believe in the gospel that reveals it. But if it is the believer who participates in it, every one who has faith has part in it. This righteousness is on the principle of faith. It is revealed, and consequently to faith, wherever that faith exists.

This is the force of the expression which is translated "from faith to faith" on the principle of faith unto faith. Now the importance of this principle is evident here. It admits every believing Gentile on the same footing as the Jew, who has no other right of entrance than he. They both have faith: the gospel recognises no other means of participating in it. The righteousness is that of God; the Jew is nothing more in it than the Gentile. As it is written, "The just shall live by faith." The scriptures of the Jews testified to the truth of the apostle's principle.

This is what the gospel announced on God's part to man. The primary subject was the Person of Christ, son of David according to flesh

(accomplishment of promise); and the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness. But the righteousness of God (not of man) was revealed in it. This is the grand theme of all that follows. The apostle had indeed reason not to be ashamed of it, despised as it was by men.

But this doctrine was confirmed by another consideration, and was based on the great truth contained in it. God, in presenting Himself, could not look at things according to the partial communications adapted to the ignorance of men, and to the temporary dispensations by which He governed them. Wrath was not merely His intervention in government, as by the Assyrian or Babylonish captivity. It was "wrath from heaven." The essential opposition of His nature to evil, and penal rejection of it wherever it was found, was manifested. Now God manifested Himself in the gospel. Thus divine wrath does not break forth indeed (for grace proclaimed the righteousness of God in salvation for sinners who should believe) but it is revealed (not exactly in the gospel that is the revelation of righteousness; but it is revealed) from heaven against ungodliness all that does not respect the presence of God against all that does not comport with the presence of God, and against all unrighteousness or iniquity in those who possessed the truth but still dishonoured God; that is to say, against all men, Gentile or otherwise, and particularly the Jews who had the knowledge of God according to the law; and, again (for the principle is universal, and flows from that which God is, when He reveals Himself), against every one who professes Christianity, when he walks in the evil that God hates.

This wrath, divine wrath, according to God's nature as in heaven, against man as a sinner, made God's righteousness necessary. Man was now to meet God fully revealed as He is. This shewed him wholly a sinner, but paved the way in grace for a far more excellent place and standing one based on the righteousness of God. The gospel reveals the righteousness: its opportuneness and necessity are demonstrated by the state of sin in which all men are, and by occasion of which wrath was revealed from heaven. Man was not merely to be governed by God, and find governmental wrath, but to appear before God. How could we stand there? The answer is the revelation of God's righteousness by the gospel. Hence, too, even in speaking of resurrection Christ is declared to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of

holiness. God has to be met such as He is. The revelation of God Himself in His holy nature went necessarily farther than mere Jews. It was against the thing sin, wherever it was, wherever it met sin, to make good what God is. It is a glorious truth; and how blessed that thus divine righteousness in sovereign grace should be revealed! And, God being love, we can say that it could not be otherwise; but how glorious to have God thus revealed!

The thesis of the epistle then is in Verse 17 (Rom 1:17), that which proved its need in Verse 18 (Rom 1:18). From Verse 19 to the end of Verse 20 in Chapter 3, the condition of men, Jews and Gentiles, to whom this truth applies, is given in detail, in order to shew in what way this wrath was deserved, and all were shut up in sin (Rom 1:19 and Rom 1:21 of this Chapter giving the leading principles of the evil as regards the Gentiles). From Verse 21 to 31 of Chapter 3 (Rom 3:21-31), the answer in grace by the righteousness of God, through the blood of Christ, is briefly but powerfully declared. For we first get the answer by Christ's blood to the old state, and then the introduction, by death and life through Christ, into the new.

The apostle begins with the Gentiles "all ungodliness" of men. I say the Gentiles (it is evident that if a Jew falls into it, this guilt attaches to him; but the condition described, as far as Rom 2:17, is that of Gentiles); afterwards that of the Jews, to Rom 3:20.

Rom 1:18 is the thesis of the whole argument from Rom 3:19-20, this part of the epistle shewing the ground of that wrath.

The Gentiles are without excuse on two accounts. First, that which may be known of God has been manifested by creation His power and His Godhead. This proof has existed since the creation of the world. Secondly, that, having the knowledge of God as Noah had it, they had not glorified Him as God, but in the vanity of their imaginations, reasoning upon their own thoughts on this subject and the ideas it produced in their own minds, they became fools while professing themselves to be wise, and fell into idolatry, and that of the grossest kind. Now God has judged this. If they would not retain a just thought of the glory of God, they should not even retain a just idea of the natural honour of man. They should dishonour themselves as they had dishonoured God. It is the exact description, in a few strong and energetic

words, of the whole pagan mythology. They had not discernment, moral taste, to retain God in their knowledge: God gave them up to a spirit void of discernment, to boast themselves in depraved tastes, in things unbecoming nature itself. The natural conscience knew that God judged such things to be worthy of death according to the just exigencies of His nature. Nevertheless they not only did them, but they took pleasure in those who did them, when their own lusts did not carry them away. And this left no excuse for those who judged the evil (and there were such), for they committed it while judging it. Man then by judging condemned himself doubly: for by judging he shewed that he knew it to be evil, and yet he did it. But the judgment of God is according to truth against those who commit such things: they who acquired credit by judging them should not escape it.

Note #5

This puts us, since it is for us, in connection with a holiness (as does the revelation of righteousness farther on, but there more openly) which implies connection with God as He is in Himself fully revealed not like the Jews outside the veil.

Note #6

It is not said "by His resurrection," but "by resurrection" abstractly. His own was the great proof, but that of every man is a proof likewise.

Note #7

The reader must take notice that, in Verses 1 and 7 (Rom 1:1; Rom 1:7), it is not "called to be an apostle," nor "called to be saints," but apostle by call, saints by call. They were the thing declared, and they were so by the call of God. A Jew was not holy by call; he was born holy, relatively to the Gentiles. These were the called of Jesus Christ; but they were not simply called to be holy, they were so by call.

Note #8

The Epistle to Philemon might appear at first sight to be an exception; but it confirms this remark, for it will be seen that the assembly in his house is

included in the wish. This makes the address of Jude the more remarkable. There is however a question of a various reading in Tit 1:4.

Romans Chapter 2

Two things are presented here with respect to God; His judgment against evil the evil-doer shall not escape (the real difference of right and wrong would be maintained by judgment); and His mercy, patience, and long-suffering with regard to the evil-doer His goodness inviting him to repentance. He who continued in evil deceived himself by trying to forget the sure judgment of God and by despising His goodness. The consequences, both of a life opposed to God and to His truth on the one hand, and of the search after that which is pleasing to Him, and thereby for eternal life on the other, were sure tribulation and anguish in the one case, in the other glory and honour; and that without more respect to the Jews than to the Gentiles.

God judged things according to their true moral character, and according to the advantages which the guilty one had enjoyed. [See Note #9] Those who had sinned without law should perish without law, and those who had sinned under the law should be judged according to the law, in the day when God should judge the secrets of the heart according to the gospel which Paul preached. This character of the judgment is very important. It is not the government of the world by an earthly and outward judgment, as the Jew understood it, but that of the individual according to God's knowledge of the heart.

Also God would have realities. The Gentile who fulfilled the law was better than a Jew who broke it. If he called himself a Jew and acted ill (Rom 2:17), he only dishonoured God, and caused His name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles whilst boasting in his privileges. He then enlarges on the point that God requires moral reality, and that a Gentile who did that which the law demanded was better worth than a Jew who disobeyed it, and that the real Jew was he who had the law in his heart, being circumcised also in the spirit, and not he who had only outward circumcision. This was a condition which God could praise, and not man only.

Note #9

How strikingly this also brings out what so breaks everywhere through the doctrine of this epistle that everything is according to its reality before God, God being revealed through Christ and the cross. All must take its true character and result according to what He was. Note moreover that the terms suppose gospel knowledge "seek for glory, honour, and incorruptibility." These are known by Christianity.

Romans Chapter 3

Having established the great truth that God required real moral goodness, he considers the position of the Jews. Could they not plead special divine favour? Was there no advantage in Judaism? Surely there was, especially in that they possessed the oracles of God. The ways of God were full of blessing in themselves, although that did not change the immutable truths of His nature. And if many among them had been unbelieving, this did not alter the faithfulness of God; and the fact that the unbelief of many did but the more demonstrate the faithfulness of God, who remained the same whatever they might be, took nothing from the claims of righteousness. Unbelievers should be punished according to what they were; it would but magnify the unfailing faithfulness of God, which never failed, however unavailing it might be for the mass of the nation. Otherwise He could judge no one, not even the world (which the Jew was willing to see judged); for the condition of the world also enhanced and put in evidence the faithfulness of God towards His people. If then the Jew had advantages, was he therefore better? In no wise: all were shut up under sin, whether Jew or Gentile, as God had already declared. [See Note #10]

The apostle now cites the Old Testament to prove this with regard to the Jews, who did not deny it with regard to the Gentiles which he had already also shewn. The law, says he, belongs to you. You boast that it refers to you exclusively. Be it so: hear then what it says of the people, of yourselves. It speaks to you, as you acknowledge. There is not then one righteous man among you on whom God can look down from heaven. He quotes Psa 14:2-3; Isa 59:7-8, to set forth the judgment pronounced on them by those oracles of which they boasted. Thus every mouth was shut, and all the world guilty before God. Therefore it is that no flesh can be justified before God by

the law; for if the world in the midst of darkness wallowed in sin, by means of the law sin was known.

But now, without law, apart from all law, a righteousness that is of God has been manifested, the law and the prophets bearing witness to it.

Hence then we find not only the condition of the Gentiles and of the Jews set forth, together with the great immutable principles of good and evil, whatever might be the dealings of God, but the effect of the law itself, and that which was introduced by Christianity as regarded righteousness, altogether outside the law, although the law and the prophets bore witness to it. In a word, the eternal truth as to sin and as to the responsibility of man, the effect of the law, the connection of the Old Testament with Christianity, the true character of the latter in that which relates to righteousness (namely, that it is a thing entirely new and independent), the righteousness of God Himself—the whole question between man and God, with regard to sin and righteousness, is settled, as to its foundation, in these few words. The manner of its accomplishment is now to be treated of. [See Note #11] It is the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Man has not accomplished it, man has not procured it. It is of God, it is His righteousness; by believing in Jesus Christ participation in it is obtained. Had it been a human righteousness, it would have been by the law which is the rule of that righteousness a law given to the Jews only. But being the righteousness of God Himself, it had reference to all; its range embraced not the one more than the other. It was the righteousness of God "unto all." A Jew was not more in relation with the righteousness of God than a Gentile. It was in fact universal in its aspect and in its applicability. A righteousness of God for man, because no man had any for God, it was applied to all those who believe in Jesus. Wherever there was faith, there it was applied. The believer possessed it. It was towards all, and upon all those who believed in Jesus. For there was no difference: all had sinned, and outside the glory of God, [See Note #12] deprived of that glory, were justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whether a Jew or a Gentile, it was a sinful man: the righteousness was the righteousness of God; the goodness of God was that which bestowed it, redemption in Christ Jesus the divine means of having part in it. [See Note #13] Before the accomplishment

of this redemption, God, in view of it, had in patience borne with the faithful, and His righteousness in forgiving them was now clearly manifested. But, further, the righteousness itself was manifested: we come to Christ as a propitiatory that God has set forth before men, and we find on it the blood which gives us free access to God in righteousness, God whose glory is satisfied in the work that Christ Jesus has accomplished, His blood upon the mercy-seat bearing witness thereof. It is no longer "forbearance" righteousness is manifested, so that God is seen to be righteous and just in justifying him who is of faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting? For the Jews boasted much in reference to the Gentiles self-righteousness always boasts: it is not a law of works that can shut it out. Man justifying himself by his works would have something to boast in. It is this law of faith, this divine principle on which we are placed, which shuts it out: for it is by the work of another, without works of law, that we through grace have part in divine righteousness, having none of our own.

And is God a limited God [See Note #14] the God of the Jews only? No, He is also the God of the Gentiles. And how? In grace: in that it is one God who justifies the Jews (who seek after righteousness) on the principle of faith, and since justification is on the principle of faith the believing Gentiles also by faith. Men are justified by faith; the believing Gentile then is justified. With regard to the Jew, it is the principle which is established (for they were seeking the righteousness). With regard to the Gentile, since faith existed in the case supposed, he was justified, for justification was on that principle.

Is it then that faith overturned the authority of law? By no means. It established completely the authority of law; but it made man participate in divine righteousness, while acknowledging his just and total condemnation by the law when under it a condemnation which made another righteousness necessary, since according to the law man had none of his own. The law demanded righteousness, but it shewed sin was there. If righteousness which it demanded had not been necessary, when it failed to produce it in man, there was no need of another. Now faith affirmed this need and the validity of man's condemnation under law, by making the believer participate in this other righteousness, which is that of God. That which the law demanded it did not give; and even, because it demanded it,

man failed to produce it. To have given it would have effaced the obligation. God acts in grace, when the obligation of the law is fully maintained in condemnation. He gives righteousness, because it must be had. He does not efface the obligation of the law, according to which man is totally condemned; [See Note #15] but, while recognising and affirming the justice of that condemnation, He glorifies Himself in grace by granting a divine righteousness to man, when he had no human righteousness to present before God in connection with the obligations imposed on him by the law. Nothing ever put divine sanction on the law like the death of Christ, who bore its curse, but did not leave us under it. Faith does not then annul law; it fully establishes its authority. It shews man righteously condemned under it, and maintains the authority of the law in that condemnation, for it holds all who are under it to be under the curse. [See Note #16] The reader will remark that what is distinctly set forth to the end of this third Chapter is the blood of Christ as applying itself to the sins of the old man, hence making forgiving a righteous thing, and the believer clear from sins, because cleared by Christ's blood. This met all the guilt of the old man.

We now enter on another aspect of that which justifies, but still proves sins; not yet, however, putting us in a new place that of resurrection, in connection with, and consequent on, this.

Note #10

Note here a very important principle, that there are positive advantages of position, where there is no intrinsic change. Compare Rom 11:17, and 1 Corinthians 11.

Note #10

Rom 3:21 reverts in fact to Rom 1:17; what comes between is the demonstration of the ground of Rom 1:18, which made the righteousness of Verse 17 imperatively necessary.

Note #12

Remark here how, God being revealed, sin is measured by the glory of God. We are so used to read this that we overlook its force. How strange to say, "and come short of the glory of God!" Man might say, Why, of course we

have; but, morally speaking, this has been revealed, and if one cannot stand before it, according to it, we cannot subsist before God at all. Of course it is not of His essential glory all creatures are short of that, of course but of that which was fitting for, according to, could stand in, His presence. If we cannot stand there, fitly "walk in the light as God is in the light," we cannot be with God at all. There is no veil now.

Note #13

To shew how complete is this instruction of Paul's, I give here a summary of its elements. In itself it is the righteousness of God, without law, the law and the prophets bearing witness to it: as to its application, the righteousness of God by faith in Christ Jesus unto all, and upon all them that believe. Christ is proposed as the propitiatory by faith in His blood, to shew forth this righteousness by the remission of past sins (of the Abrahams, etc.) according to the forbearance of God; but to shew it forth in the present time, in order that He may be just, and justify those who believe in Jesus.

Note #14

See here again how God is brought out in Himself. Compare Mat 15:19-28.

Note #15

The law is the perfect rule of right and wrong for every child of Adam in itself, though only given to the Jews. But it was not arbitrary. It took up all the relationships in which men stood, gave a perfect rule as to them, and the sanction of God's authority to them, with a penal sanction. But now we have something much higher, not what man ought to be, but God Himself glorified.

Note #16

Hence those who put Christians under law do not maintain its authority; for they hold them exempt from its curse, though they break it.

Romans Chapter 4

In dealing with the Jew, and even in dealing with the question of righteousness, there was, besides the law, another consideration of great

weight both with the Jews themselves and in the dealings of God. What of Abraham, called of God to be the parent stock, the father of the faithful? The apostle, therefore, after having set forth the relation in which faith stood towards the law by the introduction of the righteousness of God, takes up the question of the ground on which Abraham was placed as well-pleasing to God in righteousness. For the Jew might have admitted his personal failure under the law, and pleaded the enjoyment of privilege under Abraham. If we consider him then thus according to the flesh (that is, in connection with the privileges that descended from him as inheritance for his children) and take our place under him in the line of succession to enjoy those privileges, on what principle does this set us? On the same principle of faith. He would have had something to boast of if he was justified by works; but before God it was not so. For the scriptures say, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not counted of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." For thereby, in fact, he glorifies God in the way that God desires to be glorified, and according to the revelation He has made of Himself in Christ.

Thus the testimony borne by Abraham's case is to justification by faith. David also supports this testimony and speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom righteousness is imputed without works. He whose iniquities are pardoned, whose sins are covered, to whom the Lord does not impute sin he is the man whom David calls blessed. But this supposed man to be a sinner and not righteous in himself. It was a question of what God was in grace to such a one, and not of what he was to God, or rather when he was a sinner. His blessedness was that God did not impute to him the sins he had committed, not that he was righteous in himself before God. Righteousness for man was found in the grace of God. Here it is identified with non-imputation of sins to man, guilty through committing them. No sin is imputed.

Was then this righteousness for the circumcision only? Now our thesis is, that God counted Abraham to be righteous by faith. But was he circumcised when this took place? Not so; he was uncircumcised. Righteousness then is

by faith, and for the uncircumcised through faith a testimony that was overwhelming to a Jew, because Abraham was the beau ideal to which all his ideas of excellence and of privilege referred. Circumcision was only a seal to the righteousness by faith which Abraham possessed in uncircumcision, that he might be the father of all believers who were in the same state of uncircumcision, that righteousness might be imputed to them also; and the father of circumcision that is, the first model of a people truly set apart for God not only with regard to the circumcised, but to all those who should walk in the steps of his faith when uncircumcised. For, after all, the promise that he should be heir of the world was not made to Abraham nor to his seed in connection with the law, but with righteousness by faith. For if they who are on the principle of law are heirs, the faith by which Abraham received it is vain, and the promise made of none effect; [See Note #17] for, on the contrary, the law produces wrath and that is a very different thing from bringing into the enjoyment of a promise for where there is no law there is no transgression. Observe, he does not say there is no sin; but where there is no commandment, there is none to violate. Now, the law being given to a sinner, wrath is necessarily the consequence of its imposition.

This is the negative side of the subject. The apostle shews that with regard to the Jews themselves, the inheritance could not be on the principle of law without setting Abraham aside, for to him the inheritance had been given by promise, and this implied that it was by faith: for we believe in a promise, we do not ourselves fulfil a promise that has been made to us. Accordingly the righteousness of Abraham was according to scripture through this same faith. It was imputed to him for righteousness.

This principle admitted the Gentiles; but here it is established with regard to the Jews themselves or rather with regard to the ways of God, in such a manner as to exclude the law as a means of obtaining the inheritance of God. The consequence with regard to Gentiles believing the gospel is stated in Verse 16 (Rom 4:16), "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed" of Abraham to whom the promise was made; not to that only which was under the law, but

to all that had the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all before God, as it is written, "I have made thee a father of many nations."

Thus we have the great principle established. It is by faith, before and without law [See Note #18]; and the promise is made to man in uncircumcision, and he is justified by believing it.

Another element is now introduced. Humanly speaking, the fulfilment of the promise was impossible, for in that respect both Abraham and Sarah were as dead, and the promise must be believed in against all hope, resting on the almighty power of Him who raises the dead, and calls things that are not as though they were. This was Abraham's faith. He believed the promise that he should be the father of many nations, because God had spoken, counting on the power of God, thus glorifying Him, without calling in question anything that He had said by looking at circumstances; therefore this also was counted to him for righteousness. He glorified God according to what God was. Now, this was not written for his sake alone the same faith shall be imputed to us also for righteousness faith in God as having raised up Jesus from the dead. It is not here faith in Jesus, but in Him who came in power into the domain of death, where Jesus lay because of our sins, and brought Him forth by His power, the mighty activity of the love of God who brought Him who had already borne all the punishment of our sins out from under all their consequences; so that, by believing God who has done this, we embrace the whole extent of His work, the grace and the power displayed in it; and we thus know God. Our God is the God who has done this. He has Himself raised up Jesus from among the dead, who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. Our sins were already upon Him. The active intervention of God delivered Him who lay in death because He had borne them. It is not only a resurrection of the dead, but from among the dead the intervention of God to bring forth in righteousness the One who had glorified Him. By believing in such a God we understand that it is Himself who, in raising Christ from among the dead, has delivered us Himself from all that our sins had subjected us to; because He has brought back in delivering power Him who underwent it for our sakes.

Note #17

The careful reader of Paul's epistles must attend to the use of this word "for." In very many cases it does not express an inference, but turns to some collateral subject which, in the apostle's mind, would lead to the same conclusion, or some deeper general principle, which lay at the groundwork of the argument, enlarging the sphere of vision in things connected with it.

Note #18

('chooris nomou', Lit: "apart from law," which had nothing to do with it.

Romans Chapter 5

Thus, being justified by faith, we have peace with God. Remark here also the difference of Abraham's faith and ours. He believed God could perform what He promised. We are called to believe He has performed. Faith in God's word, believing God, and this faith laying hold on His power in resurrection, is faith that this has lifted us out [See Note #19] of the whole effect of our sins. It reposes in God's power as having wrought this deliverance for us, and justified us therein. Christ has been delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. [See Note #20] The apostle had established the great principles. He comes now to the source and application of all (that is to say, their application to the condition of the soul in its own feelings). He sets before us the effect of these truths when received by faith through the power of the Holy Ghost. The work is done; the believer has part in it, and is justified. Having been justified, we have peace with God, we stand in divine favour, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We believe in a God who has intervened in power to raise Him from the dead who had borne our offences, and who, being raised, is the eternal witness that our sins are put away, and that the only true God is He who has done it in love. I have then peace with Him; all my sins are blotted out annulled by the work of Christ; my unburdened heart knows the Saviour God. I stand as a present thing in that grace or favour, God's blessed present favour resting on me, which is better than life. Through Christ, entered into His presence, I am even now in the enjoyment of His favour, in present grace. All the fruits of the old man are cancelled before God by the death of Christ. There cannot be a question as to my sins between me and God. He has nothing to impute to me that has been all settled in Christ's death and resurrection. As to the present time, I

am brought into His presence in the enjoyment of His favour. Grace characterises my present relationship with God. Further, all my sins having been put away according to the requirements of God's glory, and Christ being risen from the dead, having met all that glory, I rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. It is a full well-grounded hope of being in it, not a coming short of it. All is connected with God Himself, with, and according to, His perfections, the favour of God, and His glory for our hope. All is connected with His power in resurrection peace with God already settled, the present favour of God, and the hope of glory.

Remark here that justification is distinct from peace. "Having been justified, we have peace." Justification is my true state before God, by virtue of the work of Christ, of His death, and of resurrection. Faith, thus knowing God, is at peace with God; but this is a result, like the present enjoyment of the grace wherein we stand. Faith believes in the God who has done this, and who exercising His power in love and in righteousness has raised from the dead the One who bore my sins, having entirely abolished them, and having perfectly glorified God in so doing. On this ground, too, "by Him" we have found access into the full favour of God in which we stand. And what is the result? It is glory; we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. It is God who is the root and the accomplisher of all. It is the gospel of God, the power of God in salvation, the righteousness of God, and it is into the glory of God that we are introduced in hope. Such is the efficacy of this grace with regard to us; it is peace, grace or favour, glory. One would say, This is all we can have: the past, present, and future are provided for.

Nevertheless there is more. First, practical experience. We pass in fact through tribulations; but we rejoice in this, because it exercises the heart, detaches us from the world, subdues the will, the natural working of the heart, purifies it from those things which dim our hope by filling it with present things, in order that we may refer more to God in all things, which, after all, are entirely directed by Him whose faithful grace ministered all this to us. We learn better that the scene in which we move passes away and changes, and is but a place of exercise, and not the proper sphere of life. Thus hope, founded on the work of Christ, becomes more clear, more disentangled from the mixture of that which is of man here below; we

discern more clearly that which is unseen and eternal, and the links of the soul are more complete and entire with that which is on before us.

Experience, which might have discouraged nature, works hope, because, come what may, we have the key to all, because the love of God who has given us this hope, made clearer by these exercises, is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us, who is the God of love dwelling in us.

Nevertheless, while giving this inward foundation of joy, the Spirit is careful to refer it to God, and to what He has done outside us, as regards the proof we have of it, in order that the soul may be built upon that which is in Him, and not on that which is in ourselves. This love is indeed in us; it sweetly explains all; but the love which is there through the presence of the Holy Ghost is the love of God, proved, namely, in that when we were destitute of all strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. The due time was when man had been demonstrated to be ungodly, and without strength to come out of this condition, although God, under the law, shewed him the way. Man can devote himself when he has an adequate motive; God has displayed the love that was peculiar [See Note #21] to Himself, in that, when there was no motive for Him in us, when we were nothing but sinners, Christ died for us! The source was in Himself, or rather was Himself. What a joy to know that it is in Him and of Him that we have all these things!

God, then, having reconciled us to Himself according to the prompting of His own heart, when we were enemies, will much more, now that we are justified, go on to the end; and we shall be saved from wrath through Christ. Accordingly he adds, speaking of the means, "If we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," by that which was, so to speak, His weakness, "much more shall we be saved by his life," the mighty energy in which He lives eternally. Thus the love of God makes peace with regard to that which we were, and gives us security with regard to our future, making us happy withal in the present. And it is that which God is that secures to us all these blessings. He is love full of consideration for us, full of wisdom.

But there is a second "not only," after our state peace, grace, and glory what seemed complete and is complete salvation, had been established. "Not only" do we joy in tribulation, but we joy in God. We glory in Himself.

This is the second part of the Christian's blessed experience of the joy which results from our knowledge of God's love in Christ, and our reconciliation by Him. The first was that he gloried in tribulation because of its effect, divine love being known. The second is the love of God Himself in man. This known, we glory, not only in our salvation, and even in tribulation, but knowing such a Saviour God (a God who has raised up Jesus from the dead, and has saved us in His love), we glory in Him. Higher joy than this we cannot have.

This closes this section of the epistle, in which, through the propitiation made by Christ, the putting away of our sins, and the love of God Himself, has been fully made good and revealed: peace, grace possessed, and glory in hope; and that by the pure love of God Himself known in Christ's dying for sinners. It is purely of God and thus divinely perfect. It was no matter of experience, whatever joy flowed from it, but God's own acting from Himself, and so revealing Himself in what He is. Up to this, sins and personal guilt are treated of; now, sin and the state of the race. The pure favour of God towards us, beginning with us as sinners, is wonderfully brought out, going on to our rejoicing in Himself who has been, and is, such to us.

Having given the foundation and the source of salvation, and the confidence and enjoyment that flow from it, having based all on God, who had to do with those who were nothing but sinners devoid of all strength, and that by the death of Christ, the question of our sins was settled that for which each man would have had to be judged according to what each had respectively done. Lawless, or under law, all were guilty; a propitiatory, or mercy-seat, was set forth in the precious blood of Christ, peace made for the guilty, and God revealed in love. But this has carried us up higher. We have to do with God, and man as he is as a present thing. It is a question of sinful man; the Jew had no privilege here, he had nothing to boast of. He could not say, sin came in by us and by the law. It is man, sin, and grace that are in question. The apostle takes up this fundamental and essential question not sins and guilt to be judged of hereafter if not repented of, but the present state of man.

Man had nothing to boast of either. The God of grace is before our eyes, acting with regard to sin, when there was nothing else, save that law had aggravated the case by transgressions. Now sin came in by one man, and by

sin death. This brings us to the condition of the race, not merely the acts of the individuals. That condition was exclusion from God, and an evil nature. All were alike in it, though surely each had added his own personal sins and guilt. Sin had come in by one, and death by sin. And thus death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. For sin was in the world before the law. Nor did the law add much to the advantage of man's condition; it definitively imputed [See Note #22] his sin to him by giving him knowledge of it and forbidding it. Nevertheless, although there had been no imputation according to the government of God in virtue of an imposed and known rule, yet death reigned a constant proof of sin (moreover, the history of Genesis made all this incontestable, even to the Jew) over those who had not broken a covenant founded on a known commandment, as Adam [See Note #23] had done; and the Jews also, after the law was given. Men, between Adam and Moses, when there was no question of a law, as there was both before and after that interval, died just the same sin reigned.

We must observe here that from the end of Verse 12 to that of 17 (Rom 5:12-17) is a parenthesis: only the idea is developed, as in similar cases. In the parenthesis the apostle, after having presented Adam as the figure of Him who was to come of Christ, argues that the character of the gift cannot be inferior to that of the evil. If the sin of the one first man was not confined in its effects to him who committed it, but extended to all those who as a race were connected with him, with much greater reason shall the grace which is by one, Christ Jesus, not end in Him, but embrace the many under Him also. And with regard to the thing, as well as to the person and here the law is in view one single offence brought in death, but grace remits a multitude of offences. Thus it could suffice for that which the law had made necessary. And, as to the effect, death has reigned; but by grace, not only shall life reign, but we shall reign in life by One according to the abundance of grace by Jesus Christ.

In Verse 18 (Rom 5:18) the general argument is resumed in a very abstract way. "By one offence," he says, "towards all for condemnation, even so by one accomplished righteousness (or act of righteousness) towards all men, for justification of life." One offence bore in its bearing, so to speak, referred to all, and so it was with the one act of righteousness. This is the scope of

the action in itself. Now for the application: for as by the disobedience of one man (only) many are constituted sinners, so by the obedience of one (only) many are constituted righteous. It is still the thought that the act of the individual is not confined, as to its effects, within the limits of his own person. It affects many others, bringing them under the consequences of that act. It is said "all," when the scope of the action [See Note #24] is spoken of; "the many," when it is the definitive effect with regard to men; that is, the "many" who were in connection with him who accomplished the act.

This then was outside the law, though the law might aggravate the evil. It was a question of the effect of the acts of Adam and of Christ, and not of the conduct of individuals, to which evidently the law related. It is by one man's disobedience the many (all men) were made sinners, not by their own sins. Of sins each has his own: here it is a state of sin common to all. Of what use then was the law? It came in, as it were, exceptionally, and accessory to the chief fact, "that the offence [See Note #25] might abound." But not only where the offence, but where sin abounded for under the law and without the law it has abounded; grace has superabounded; in order that, as sin has reigned in death, grace should reign through righteousness in eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. If where sin reigns righteousness had reigned, it would have been to condemn the whole world. It is grace that reigns the sovereign love of God. Righteousness is on a level with the evil, when it deals with evil, by the fact that it is righteousness; but God is above it, and acts, and can act has a right to act according to His own nature; and He is love. Is it that He sanctions unrighteousness and sin? No, in His love He brings about the accomplishment of divine righteousness by Jesus Christ. He has accomplished in Him that divine righteousness in raising Him to His right hand. But this is in virtue of a work wrought for us, in which He has glorified God. Thus He is our righteousness, we the righteousness of God in Him. It is the righteousness of faith, for we have it by believing in Him. It is love which taking the character of grace when sin is in question reigns, and gives eternal life above and beyond death life that comes from above and ascends thither again; and that in divine righteousness, and in connection with that righteousness, magnifying it and manifesting it through the work of Jesus Christ, in whom we have this life, when He had wrought what brought out

divine righteousness, in order that we might possess eternal life and glory according to it. If grace reigns, it is God who reigns. That righteousness should be maintained is that which His nature required. But it is more than maintained according to the measure of the claim God had on man as such. Christ was perfect surely as man; but He has glorified what God is Himself, and, He being raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, God has glorified His righteousness by setting Him at His right hand, as He did His love in giving Him. It is now righteousness in salvation given by grace to those who possessed none given in Jesus, who by His work laid the full ground for it in glorifying God with regard even to sin, in the place where in this respect all that God is has been displayed.

The fulfilment of the law would have been man's righteousness: man might have gloried in it. Christ has glorified God a most weighty point in connection with righteousness, connecting it withal with glory. And grace imparts this to the sinner by imputation, accounting him righteous according to it, introducing him in the glory which Christ merited by His work the glory in which He was as Son before the world began.

But alas! in this glorious redemption accomplished by grace, which substitutes the righteousness of God and the person of the second Adam for the sin and the person of the first, the perversity of the flesh can find occasion for the sin which it loves, or at least to charge the doctrine with it. If it is by the obedience of One that I am constituted righteous, and because grace superabounds, let us sin that it may abound: that does not touch this righteousness, and only glorifies this superabundance of grace. Is this the apostle's doctrine? or a legitimate consequence of his doctrine? In no wise. The doctrine is, that we are brought into God's presence through death, in virtue of the work which Christ therein accomplished, and by having a part in that death. Can we live in the sin to which we are dead? It is to contradict oneself in one's own words. But, being baptised unto Christ (in His name, to have part with Him, according to the truth contained in the revelation we have of Him), I am baptised to have part in His death for through this it is that I have this righteousness in which He appears before God, and I in Him. But it is to sin that He has died. He has done with it for ever. When He died, He who knew no sin came out of that condition of life in flesh and blood, to

which in us sin attached, in which we were sinners; and in which He the sinless One, in the likeness of sinful flesh and as a sacrifice for sin, was made sin for us. [See Note #26] We have then been buried with Him by baptism for death (Rom 5:4), having part in it, entering into it by baptism which represents it, in order that, as Christ was raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, we also should walk in newness of life. In a word I am brought into the participation of this divine and perfect righteousness by having part in death unto sin; it is impossible therefore that it should be to live in it. Here it is not duty that is spoken of, but the nature of the thing. I cannot die to a thing in order to live in it. The doctrine itself refutes as absolute nonsense the argument of the flesh, which under the pretence of righteousness will not recognise our need of grace. [See Note #27]

Note #19

Not that the body of course is yet renewed.

Note #20

I reject entirely the interpretation "because we have been justified." It is not the force of the Greek, and by excluding faith from our being justified contradicts the beginning of Chapter 5.

Note #21

The word is emphatic in the original, ('eautou') His own love, Rom 5:8.

Note #22

The word "imputed" in this passage (Rom 5:13) is not the same as righteousness imputed, or faith imputed for righteousness. It means an act (or sum) put to the account of another, not esteeming the person to be such or such.

Note #23

This is a quotation from Hos 6:7 according to its true sense, which accuses Israel of having done the same thing as Adam. "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant."

Note #24

The same distinction, with the same difference in the preposition, is found in connection with the righteousness of God, when the apostle speaks of the efficacy of the blood: only he points out who the many are, because the object of faith is presented rather than the efficacy of the work, although this is supposed, Rom 3:22 ('oikaiosune de Theou dia pisteoos Iesou Christou eis pantas, kai epi pantas tous pisteuontas' LIT: "righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all and upon all those who believe"); unto all, and upon all believers. So here it was by one offence ('eis pantas' LIT: "towards all,") and then the many connected with Christ are constituted righteous by His obedience.

Note #25

Not sin. Sin was already there; the law made each of its motions a positive offence.

Note #26

This does not refer simply to bearing our sins: that is the subject of the first part of the epistle. The condition in which we were, as a whole race, was that of fallen sinful Adam. Christ the sinless One came and stood for us and God's glory substitutively; that is, as a sacrifice in that place, He was made sin, underwent the forsaking of God, and, glorifying God, died in and to the place, to the whole condition of being, in which we were, and in which, as made sin, He stood for us before God. This work, though done as and for man, I doubt not, goes farther than our salvation. He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He takes away, as God's Lamb, the sin of the world. His sacrifice is the basis of the condition of that new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Note #27

Note, we are not here viewed as risen with Christ; the believer being always viewed here, as I have said, as being on the earth, though alive in Christ and justified, it is used as a ground for practice and walk here.

Romans Chapter 6

The character of this new life, into which the resurrection of Christ has brought us, is presented here in a striking way. Christ had perfectly glorified God in dying; also even in dying was He the Son of the living God. It is not all, therefore, that He could not be holden of it, true as that is because of His Person; His resurrection was also a necessity of the glory of God the Father. All that was in God was compelled to do it by His glory itself (even as Christ had glorified all), His justice. His love, His truth, His power; His glory, in that He could not low death to have the victory over the One who was faithful; His relationship as Father, who ought not, could not, leave His Son in bondage to the fruit of sin and to the power of the enemy. It was due to Christ on the part of God, due to His own glory as God and Father, necessary also, in order to shew the reflex of His own glory, to manifest it according to His counsels, and that in man. Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. All that the Father is came into it, engaged to give Jesus the triumph of resurrection, of victory over death, and to give resurrection the brightness of His own glory. Having entered, as the fruit of the operation of His glory, into this new position, this is the model the character of that life in which we live before God. [See Note #28] Without this manifestation in Christ, God, although acting and giving testimonies of His power and of His goodness, remained veiled and hidden. In Christ glorified, the centre of all the counsels of God, we see the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, and every mouth confesses Him Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Our life ought to be the practical reflection of this glory of the Lord in heaven. The power that brings us into association with Him in this place, and still works in us, is shewn at the end of the first Chapter of the Ephesians [See Note #29] . But there it is to introduce our resurrection with Christ. Here it is Christ's own resurrection, the doctrine, or the thing in itself, and its consequences and moral import with regard to the individual living here below, in view of his relationship with God as a responsible man. It is an altogether new life. We are alive unto God through Him.

Identified thus with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall also enter into that of His resurrection. We see here that resurrection is a consequence which he deduces as a fact, not a mystical participation in the thing; knowing this first (as the great foundation of everything), that our old man

that in us which pleads for sin as the fruit of the perfect grace of God is crucified with Christ, in order that the whole body of sin should be destroyed so that we should no more serve sin. He takes the totality and the system of sin in a man, as a body which is nullified by death; its will is judged and no longer masters us. For he who is dead is justified [See Note #30] from sin. Sin can no longer be laid to his charge as a thing that exists in a living and responsible man. Therefore, being thus dead with Christ professedly by baptism, really by having Him for our life who died we believe that we shall live with Him; we belong to that other world where He lives in resurrection. The energy of the life in which He lives is our portion: we believe this, knowing that Christ, being raised from among the dead, dieth no more. His victory over death is complete and final; death has no more dominion over Him. Therefore it is that we are sure of resurrection, namely, on account of this complete victory over death, into which He entered for us in grace. By faith we have entered into it with Him, having our part in it according to His therein. It is the power of the life of love that brought Him there. Dying, He died unto sin. He went down even to death rather than fail in maintaining the glory of God. Until death, and even in death, He had to do with sin, though there were none in Him, and with temptation; but there He has done with all for ever. We die unto sin by participating in His death. The consequence by the glory of the Father is resurrection. Now, therefore, "in that he died, he died unto sin once for all; in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

Thus He has nothing more to do with sin. He lives, only perfectly, without reference in His life to anything else, unto God. In that He lives, His life is in relationship to God only. [See Note #31] We also then ought to reckon for it is by faith that we are dead to sin and alive to God, having no other object of life than God, in Christ Jesus. I ought to consider myself dead, I have a right to do so, because Christ has died for me; and being alive now for ever unto God, I ought to consider myself as come out, by the life which I live through Him, from the sin to which I died. For this is the Christ I know; not a Christ living on the earth in connection with me according to the nature in which I live here below. In that nature I am proved to be a sinner, and incapable of true relationship with Him. He has died for me as living of that life, and entered, through resurrection, into a new state of life outside the former. It

is there that as a believer I know Him. I have part in death, and in life through Him who is risen. I have righteousness by faith, but righteousness as having part with Christ dead and raised again, as being therefore by faith dead unto sin.

And this is the essential difference of this part of the epistle. It is not that Christ has shed His blood for our sins, but that we have died with Him. There is an end for faith to our state and standing in flesh. The Christ who is become our life did die, and, as alive through Him, what He has done is mine; and I have to say I died. I reckon myself dead. [See Note #32] The apostle deduces the evident consequence: "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body." Do not yield your members as instruments to the sin to which you are dead by Christ; but as alive, as awakened up from amongst the dead, yield your members as instruments of righteousness to God unto whom you live. The body is now the mere instrument of divine life; and we are free to use it for God as such. For in fact sin shall not have dominion over us, because we are not under the law but under grace. Here it is not the principle but the power that is spoken of. In principle we are dead to sin, according to faith; in practice it has no power over us. Observe that the source of practical power to conquer sin is not in the law, but in grace.

Now it is true that, not being under the law, the rule under which we are placed is not that of imputation but of non-imputation. Is this a reason why we should sin? No! there is a reality in these things. We are slaves to that which we obey. Sin leads to death; obedience to practical righteousness. We are upon the wider principle of a new nature and grace; not the application of an external rule to a nature which was not, and could not be subject to it. And, in truth, having been in the former case, the disciples in Rome had given proof of the justice of the apostle's argument by walking in the truth. Set free from the slavery of sin, they had become (to use human language) the slaves of righteousness, and this did not end in itself; practical righteousness developed itself by the setting apart of the whole being for God with ever-growing intelligence. They were obedient in such-and-such things; but the fruit was sanctification, a spiritual capacity, in that they were separated from evil, unto a deeper knowledge of God. [See Note #33] Sin produced no fruit, it ended in death; but set free from sin and become

servants to God the true righteousness of obedience, like that of Christ Himself-they had their fruit already in holiness, and the end should be eternal life. For the wages of sin was death, the gift of God was eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Now this life was living unto God, and this is not sin; nevertheless it is grace. Here the apostle, whose subject is judicial righteousness before God, approximates to John, and connects his doctrine with that of the First Epistle of John, who there, on the other hand, enters upon the doctrine of propitiation and acceptance when speaking of the impartation of life. The appeal is very beautiful to a man in true liberty the liberty of grace, being dead to sin. He is set wholly free by death. To whom is he now going to yield himself? For now he is free; is he going to give himself up to sin? It is a noble appeal. [See Note #34]

Note #28

Indeed Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were all engaged in the resurrection of Christ. He raised the temple of His body in three days, was quickened by the Spirit, and raised by the glory of the Father.

Note #20

To which we may add in full effect the end of the third. Details are found elsewhere.

Note #30

The word is "justified." And here we see distinctly the important difference between sin and sins: you cannot charge a dead man with sin. He has no perverse will, no evil lusts. He may have committed many sins while alive, he may or may not be justified from them. But you cannot accuse him of sin. And, as we have seen, from Chapter 5:12, we are treating of sin of man's state not of sins.

Note #31

This is a wonderful expression. As to faithfulness His life was spent for God, He lived to God. But now His life knows nothing but God.

Note #32

Note here, the Epistle to the Romans does not go on to say we are risen with Christ. That leads on necessarily to union, and is Ephesian ground. Only we must remark that death and resurrection never go on to the heavenly state; they are the subjective experimental state. In Ephesians, when dead in sins, we are taken, quickened, and put into Christ, as Christ was raised and put into glory above the heavens: simply God's work. Here it is individual: we are alive in Him. We shall have part in His resurrection, walking in newness of life. It is personal and practical: man, as we have seen, alive on earth.

Note #33

Compare Exo 33:13.

Note #34

It is not, note, an appeal to sinners as sometimes used, but to those already set free.

Romans Chapter 7

We have considered the effect of the death and resurrection of Christ with reference to justification and to practical life. In the early part of the epistle (to Chapter 5:11) He has died for our sins. From Chapter 5:12, He having died, we reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God through Him. Our state as under the two heads, Adam and Christ, has been discussed. Another point remained to be treated of by the apostle the effect of this last doctrine upon the question of the law. The Christian, or, to say better, the believer, has part in Christ as a Christ who has died, and lives to God, Christ being raised from the dead through Him. What is the force of this truth with regard to the law (for the law has only power over a man so long as he lives)? Being then dead, it has no longer any hold upon him. This is our position with regard to the law. Does that weaken its authority? No. For we say that Christ has died, and so have we therefore; but the law no longer applies to one that is dead.

In bringing out the effect of this truth, the apostle uses the example of the law of marriage. The woman would be an adulteress if she were to be to another while her husband was alive; but when her husband is dead she is free. The application of this rule changes the form of the truth. It is certain

that one cannot be under the authority of two husbands at once. One excludes the other. The law, and Christ risen, cannot be associated in their authority over the soul. But in our case the law does not lose its force (that is, its rights over us) by its dying, but by our dying. It reigns over us only while we live. It is with this destruction of the bond by death the apostle began. The husband died, but in application it is annulled by our dying. We are then dead to the law by the body of Christ (for we have to do with a Christ risen after His death), that we should be to Him who is raised from the dead, in order that we should bear fruit for God; but we cannot belong to the two at once.

When we were in the flesh when, as man, any one was held to be walking in the responsibility of a man living in the life of nature, as a child of Adam, the law to him was the rule and perfect measure of that responsibility, and the representative of the authority of God. The passions which impelled to sin acted in that nature, and, meeting with this barrier of the law, found in it that which, by resisting it, excited the will, and suggested, even by the prohibition itself, the evil which the flesh loved and which the law forbade; and thus these passions acted in the members to produce fruit which brought in death. But now he was outside its authority, he had disappeared from its pursuit, [See Note #35] being dead in that law to the authority of which we had been subjected. Now to have died under the law would have been also condemnation; but it is Christ who went through this and took the condemnation, while we have the deliverance from the old man which is in death. Our old man is crucified with Him, so that it is our deliverance to die to the law. It did but condemn us, but its authority ends with the life of him who was under that authority. And being dead in Christ, the law can no longer reach those who had been under it: we belong to the new husband, to Christ risen, in order that we should serve in newness of spirit, the goodwill of grace in our new life, and as the apostle will afterwards explain, by the Holy Ghost [See Note #36] not in the bondage of the letter.

This is the doctrine. Now for the conclusions that may be deduced from it. Is the law, then, sin, that we are withdrawn from its authority? By no means. But it gave the knowledge of sin, and imputed it. For the apostle says, that he would not have understood that the mere impulse of his nature was sin,

if the law had not said, Thou shalt not covet. But the commandment gave sin occasion to attack the soul. Sin, that evil principle of our nature, [See Note #37] making use of the commandment to provoke the soul to the sin that is forbidden (but which it took occasion to suggest by the interdiction itself, acting also on the will which resisted the interdiction), produced all manner of concupiscence. For, without the law, sin could not plunge the soul into this conflict, and give the sentence of death in it, by making it responsible in conscience for the sin which, without this law, it would not have known. Under the law lust acted, with the conscience of sin in the heart; and the result was death in the conscience, without any deliverance for the heart from the power of concupiscence.

Without the law, sin did not thus agitate a will which refused submission to that which checked it. For a barrier to the will awakens and excites the will: and the conscience of sin, in the presence of God's prohibition, is a conscience under sentence of death. Thus the commandment, which in itself was unto life, became in fact unto death. "Do this and live" became death, by shewing the exigencies of God to a sinful nature whose will rejected them, and to a conscience which could not but accept the just condemnation.

A man walks in quiet indifference, doing his own will, without knowledge of God, or consequently any sense of sin or rebellion. The law comes, and he dies under its just judgment, which forbids everything that he desires. Lust was an evil thing, but it did not reveal the judgment of God; on the contrary, it forgot it. But when the law was come, sin (it is looked at here as an enemy that attacks some person or place), knowing that the will would persist and the conscience condemn, seized the opportunity of the law, impelled the man in the direction contrary to the law, and slew him, in the conscience of sin which the law forbade on the part of God. Death to the man, on God's part in judgment, was the result. The law then was good and holy, since it forbade the sin, but in condemning the sinner.

Was death then brought in by that which was good? [See Note #38] No. But sin, in order that it might be seen in its true light, employed that which was good to bring death upon the soul; and thus, by the commandment, became

exceedingly sinful. In all this, sin is personified as some one who seeks to kill the soul.

Such then was the effect of the law, that first husband, seeing sin existed in man. To bring this out more plainly, the apostle communicates his spiritual apprehension of the experience of a soul under the law.

We must remark here, that the subject treated of is not the fact of the conflict between the two natures, but the effect of the law, supposing the will to be renewed, and the law to have obtained the suffrage of the conscience and to be the object of the heart's affections a heart which recognises the spirituality of the law. This is neither the knowledge of grace, nor of the Saviour Christ, nor of the Spirit. [See Note #39] The chief point here is not condemnation (although the law does indeed leave the soul under judgment), but the entire want of strength to fulfil it, that it may not condemn us. The law is spiritual; but I, as man, am carnal, the slave of sin, whatever the judgment of my inward man may be: for I allow not that which I do. That which I would I do not; and that which I hate I practise. Thus loving and thus hating, I consent to the law that it is good. It is not that I do the evil as to moral intent of the will, for I would not the evil which I do; on the contrary I hate it. It is the sin then that dwells in me, for in fact in me (that is, in my flesh the whole natural man as he is) there exists no good, for even where there is the will, I do not find the way to perform any good. Power is totally wanting.

In Verse 20 (Rom 7:20) the apostle, having this explanation, lays stress upon the I and me. "If that which I myself would" (we should read), and "It is no longer myself that does it, but the sin that dwelleth in me." I find then evil present with the myself which would do good; for, as to the inward man, I delight in the law of God. But there is in me another constant principle which wars against the law of my mind, which brings me into captivity to this law of sin in my members. So that, whatever my desires may be, the better even that they are, I am myself a miserable man. Being man, and such a man, I cannot but be miserable. But, having come to this, an immense step has been taken.

The evil here spoken of is the evil that is in our nature, and the want of power to get rid of it. The forgiveness of sins had been fully taught. What distresses here is the present working of sin which we cannot get rid of. The sense of this is often a more painful thing than past sins, which the believer can understand as put away by the blood of Christ. But here we have the conscience of sin still in us, though we may hate it, and the question of deliverance is mixed up with our experience, at least till we have learned what is taught us in this part of the epistle, to judge the old man as sin in us, not ourselves, and reckon ourselves dead. Christ, through whom we now live, having died, and being a sacrifice for sin, our condemnation is impossible, while sin is condemned and we free through "the law of the Spirit of life in him." It is not forgiveness, but deliverance, sin in the flesh being condemned in the cross.

Under divine grace the renewed man learned three things. First, he has come to the discovery that in him, that is, in his flesh, there is no good thing; but, secondly, he has learned to distinguish between himself, who wills good, and sin which dwells in him; but, further, that when he wills good, sin is too strong for him. Having thus acquired knowledge of himself, he does not seek to be better in the flesh, but deliverance, and he has it in Christ. Power comes after. He is come to the discovery and to the confession that he has no power. He throws himself upon another. He does not say, How can I? or, How shall I? but, Who shall deliver me? Now it was when we were devoid of all strength that Christ died for the ungodly. This want of strength is discovered; and we find grace at the end, when with regard to what we are, and to all hope of amelioration in ourselves, grace is our only resource.

But happily, when we cast ourselves upon grace, there is nothing but grace before us. Deliverance is accomplished by our not being alive in the flesh at all: we have died away from it, and from under the law, which held us in bondage and condemnation, and we are married to another, Christ raised from the dead; and as soon as the distressed soul has said, "Who shall deliver me?" the answer is ready, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The answer is not, He will deliver. Deliverance is already accomplished: he gives thanks.

The man was wretched in conflict under law, without knowledge of redemption. But he has died in the death of Christ out of the nature which made him so; he has quite done with himself. The deliverance of God is complete. The two natures are still opposed to each other, but the deliverance is not imperfect. This deliverance wrought of God, and the progress of its manifestation, are developed in the next Chapter.

We may here remark that the apostle does not say, "We know that the law is spiritual, and we are carnal." Had he done so, it would have been to speak of Christians, as such, in their proper and normal condition. It is the personal experience of what the flesh is under law, when the man is quickened, and not the state of a Christian as such before God. Observe, also, that the law is looked at from the point of view of christian knowledge "we know" when we are no longer under it, and when we are capable of judging concerning its whole import, according to the spirituality of him who judges: and who sees also, being spiritual, what the flesh is; because he is now not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. [See Note #40] Literally, this passage is not the condition of anyone at all; but principles opposed to each other, the result of which is laid open by supposing a man under the law: the will always right, but good never done, evil always. Nevertheless to the conscience this is the practical condition of every renewed man under the law. We may remark one other important principle. Man in this condition is entirely taken up with himself; he desires good, he does not perform it, he does that which he would not. Neither Christ nor the Holy Ghost is named. In the normal condition of a Christian, he is occupied with Christ. But what is expressed in this seventh Chapter is the natural and necessary result of the law, when the conscience is awakened and the will renewed. For to will is present with him. But he is under law, sees its spirituality, consents to it, delights in it after the inner man, and cannot perform what is good. Sin has dominion over him. The sense of unanswered responsibility, and the absence of peace, cause the soul necessarily to turn in upon itself. It is taken up entirely with self, which is spoken of nearly forty times from Verse 14 (Rom 7:14). It is well to be so, rather than to be insensible. It is not peace.

This peace is found elsewhere, and it is in this; when reduced to the consciousness of one's own inability to do good towards God, one finds that

God has done for us the good which we need. We are not only forgiven but delivered, and are in Christ, not in the flesh at all.

The conflict goes on, the opposition between the two natures continues, but we give thanks to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. [See Note #41] Remark here that deliverance is only found when there is the full conviction of our incapacity and want of power, as well as of our sins. It is much more difficult to arrive at this conviction of incapacity than at that of having sinned. But the sin of our nature its irremediable perversity, its resistance to good, the law of sin in our members is only known in its legal gravity by experience of the uselessness of our efforts to do well. Under the law the uselessness of these efforts leaves the conscience in distress and bondage, and produces the sense of its being impossible to be with God. Under grace the efforts are not useless, and the evil nature shews itself to us (either in communion with God, or by downfalls if we neglect communion) in all its deformity in presence of that grace. But in this Chapter the experience of sin in the nature is presented as acquired under the law, in order that man may know himself in this position may know what he is as regards his flesh, and that in fact he cannot succeed in this way in coming before God with a good conscience. He is under the first husband; death had not yet severed the bond as to the state of the soul.

We must now remember that this experience of the soul under the law is introduced parenthetically, to shew the sinful condition to which grace applies and the effect of the law. Our subject is that the believer has part in the death of Christ and has died, and is alive through Him who is risen; that Christ, having by grace gone under death, having been made sin, has for ever done with that state in which He had to do with sin and death in the likeness of sinful flesh; and having for ever done with all that was connected with it, has entered by resurrection into a new order of things a new condition before God, totally beyond the reach of all that to which He had subjected Himself for us, which in us was connected with our natural life, and beyond reach of the law which bound sin upon the conscience on God's part. In Christ we are in this new order of things.

Note #35

It is thus, I doubt not, that this passage should be read. My reader may perhaps find "the law being dead." The expression, "dead to that wherein we were held," alludes to Verse 4 (Rom 7:4), where it is said, "ye died to the law." Christ under the law died under its curse. To be in the flesh is to live under the responsibility of a man in his natural life a child of fallen Adam. In that life (unless it is lawless) the law is the rule of human righteousness. We must not confound the flesh being in the Christian with a man being in the flesh. The principle of the old life is still there, but it is in no way the principle of his relationship to God. When I am in the flesh, it is the principle of my relationship with God; but, its will being sinful, it is impossible that I should please God. I may seek for righteousness in it it will be on the ground of law. But the Christian is dead by Christ to all that state of things does not live of that life; his life is in Christ, and he has received the Holy Ghost. The flesh is no longer the principle of his relationship with God; on that ground he has owned himself lost. Elsewhere we learn that he is in Christ on the ground upon which Christ is before God. The Holy Ghost, as we shall see, places him there in power by faith, Christ being his life.

Note #36

He does not say here by the Spirit, because he has not yet spoken of the gift of the Holy Ghost in virtue of the work of Christ. He only speaks of the manner, the character, of the service rendered.

Note #37

It will be remembered that all through this part of the epistle (that is, from Chapter 5:12) we have to do with sin, not with sins.

Note #38

Sin and death are correlative. The law is introduced in order to make manifest through the offence what they both are. The apostle first asks, "Is the law sin?" since its result was death to man. God forbid! but it gave the knowledge of sin, and wrote death upon the soul through judgment, man being a sinner. The second question is, "The law being thus good in itself, has it become death to me?" No. It is sin which (in order that it might appear in all its enormity) has slain me, using the law as a means, in my conscience.

It found in man's condition the means of perverting this good thing, and making it death to him.

Note #39

There is also conflict, when the Holy Ghost dwells in us. Galatians 5 speaks of this. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit," etc. But then we are not under the law, as the apostle goes on to say, "If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law." Here the person spoken of is under the law: everything is in connection with the law. The law is spiritual; we consent to the law, we delight in the law. Neither Christ nor the Spirit is mentioned until the question of deliverance comes in.

Note #40

This gives the key to this alas! because souls are not free much spoken of passage. It is not the present experience of any one, but a delivered person describing the state of an undelivered one. An undelivered person could not speak exactly thus, because he is uneasy as to the result for himself. A man in a morass does not quietly describe how a man sinks into it, because he fears to sink and stay there; when he is out, he describes how a man sinks there. The end of Romans 7 is a man out of the morass shewing in peace the principle and manner in which one sinks in it. All this part of the epistle is more complicated than what precedes Chapter 5:12, because our own experience is in conflict with what faith teaches us to say. If through grace I am forgiven and justified, there is no contradiction in my experience. It is what God has done for me outside myself. My debt is paid. But if I am to say, I am dead to sin, my experience contradicts it. Hence we have no rest in this respect, till we give up self or flesh as wholly bad and irremediable, and learn that, consequent on redemption, we are not in the flesh at all. Compare Chapters 7 and 8.

Note #41

The last Verse of Chapter 7 (Rom 7:25) speaks of the abstract mind and character of the opposed natures; one the mind, however, and purpose of heart in the renewed man; the other, the fact of flesh being there, one "I

myself," the other "my flesh." So the "I" is right; only it is not considered under the law or the contrary.

Romans Chapter 8

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those which are in Christ Jesus" (Chapter 8). He does not here speak of the efficacy of the blood in putting away sins (all-essential as that blood is, and the basis of all the rest), but of the new position entirely beyond the reach of everything to which the judgment of God applied. Christ had indeed been under the effect of the condemnation in our stead; but when risen He appears before God. Could there be a question there of sin, or of wrath, or of condemnation, or of imputation? Impossible! It was all settled before He ascended thither. He was there because it was settled. And that is the position of the Christian in Christ. Still, inasmuch as it is by resurrection, it is a real deliverance. It is the power of a new life, in which Christ is raised from the dead, and of which we live in Him. It is as to this life of the saint the power, efficacious and continued, and therefore called a law, by which Christ was raised from the dead the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; and it has delivered me from the law of sin and death which previously reigned in my members, producing fruit unto death. It is our connection with Christ in resurrection, witness of the power of life which is in Him, and that by the Holy Ghost, which links the "no condemnation" of our position with the energy of a new life, in which we are no longer subject to the law of sin, having died to it in His death, or to the law, whose claims 'have ceased also necessarily for him who has died, for it has power over a man as long as he lives. Christ, in bearing its curse, has fully magnified it withal. We see, at the end of Ephesians 1, that it is the power of God Himself which delivers; and assuredly it had need be so that power which wrought the glorious change to us this new creation.

This deliverance from the law of sin and death is not a mere experience (it will produce precious experiences); it is a divine operation, known by faith in His operation who raised up from the dead, known in all its power by its accomplishment in Jesus, in the efficacy of which we participate by faith. The difficulty of receiving it is that we find our experience clashing with it. That Christ has put away my sins, and that God has loved me, is a matter of

simple faith through grace. That I am dead is apt to find itself contradicted in my heart. The process of Chapter 7 must be gone through, and the condemnation of sin in the flesh seen in Christ's sacrifice for sin, and I alive by Him judging sin as a distinct thing (an enemy I have to deal with, not I), in order to have solid peace. It is not all that Christ has put away our sins. I live by Him risen, and am linked with this husband, and He being my life the true "I" in me, I can say that I have died because He has. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." If so, I have died, for He has; as one taken into partnership has the advantages belonging to that acquired, before he was taken into it. That this is so is evident according to Verse 3 (Rom 8:3). God has done it in Christ, the apostle says; he does not say "in us." The result in us is found in Verse 4 (Rom 8:4). The efficacious operation, by which we reckon ourselves dead, was in Christ a sacrifice for sin. There sin in the flesh was condemned. God has done it, for it is always God, and God who has wrought, whom he brings forward in order to develop the gospel of God. The thing to condemn is indeed in us; the work which put an end to it for our true conscious state before God, has been accomplished in Christ, who has been pleased in grace, as we shall see, to put Himself into the position necessary for its accomplishment. Nevertheless, through participation in the life that is in Him, it becomes a practical reality to us: only this realisation has to contend with the opposition of the flesh; but not so as that we should walk in it.

One other point remains to be noticed here. In Verse 2 (Rom 8:2), we have the new life in its power in Christ, which sets us free from the law of sin and death. In Verse 3 (Rom 8:3), we have the old nature, sin in the flesh, dealt with, condemned, but in the sacrifice for sin in which Christ suffered and died, so that it is done with for faith. This completes the deliverance and the knowledge of it.

The key to all this doctrine of the apostle's, and that which unites holy practice, the christian life, with absolute grace and eternal deliverance from condemnation, is the new position entirely apart from sin, which death gives to us, being alive in Christ now before God. The power of God, the glory of the Father, the operation of the Spirit, are found acting in the resurrection of Christ, and placing Him, who had borne our sins and been made sin for us,

in a new position beyond sin and death before God. And by faith I have part in His death, I participate in this life.

It is not only satisfaction made by Christ for sins committed, and glorifying God in His work the basis, indeed, of all but the deliverance of the person who was in sin, even as when Israel was brought out of Egypt. The blood had stayed the hand of God in judgment; the hand of God in power delivered them for ever at the Red Sea. Whatever they may have been, they were for that time with God who had guided them to His holy habitation.

Moreover, the first Verses of this Chapter sum up the result of God's work with regard to this subject in Chapters 5:12 to the end, 6 and 7: no condemnation for those who are in Christ; the law of the Spirit of life in Him delivering from this law of sin and death; and that which the law could not do God has done.

It will be remarked that the deliverance is from the law of sin and death: in this respect the deliverance is absolute and complete. Sin is no longer at all a law. This deliverance, to one who loves holiness, who loves God, is a profound and immense subject of joy. The passage does not say that the flesh is changed quite the contrary; one would not speak of the law of a thing which no longer existed. We have to contend with it, but it is no more a law; neither can it bring us under death in our conscience.

Romans Chapter 9

There remained one important question to be considered, namely, how this salvation, common to Jew and Gentile, both alienated from God this doctrine that there was no difference was to be reconciled with the special promises made to the Jews. The proof of their guilt and ruin under the law did not touch the promises of a faithful God. Was the apostle going to do away with these to place the Gentiles on the same footing? They did not fail also to accuse the apostle of having despised his nation and its privileges. Chapters 9, 10 and 11 reply to this question; and, with rare and admirable perfection, set forth the position of Israel with respect to God and to the gospel. This reply opens, in itself, a wide door to intelligence in the ways of God.

The apostle begins by affirming his deep interest in the blessing of Israel. Their condition was a source of constant grief to him. Far from despising them, he loved them as much as Moses had done. He had wished to be anathema from Christ for them. [See Note #51] He acknowledged that all the privileges granted by God until then, belonged to them. But he does not allow that the word of God had failed; and he develops proof of the free sovereignty of God, conformably to which, without trenching upon the promises made to the Jews, He could admit the Gentiles according to His election.

In the first place, this truth displayed itself in the bosom of Abraham's own family. The Jews alleged their exclusive right to the promises in virtue of their descent from him, and to have their promises by right, and exclusively, because they were descended from him. But they are not all Israel which are of Israel. Neither because they were of the seed of Abraham were they therefore all children. For in that case Ishmael must have been received; and the Jews would by no means hear of that. God then was sovereign. But it might be alleged that Hagar was a slave. But Esau's case excluded even this saving thought. The same mother bore both sons of one father, and God had chosen Jacob and rejected Esau. It was thus on the principle of sovereignty and election, that God had decided that the seed should be called in the family of Isaac. And before Esau and Jacob were born, God declared that the elder should serve the younger. The Jews must then admit God's sovereignty on this point.

Was God then unrighteous? He plainly declared His sovereignty for good to Moses as a principle. It is the first of all rights. But in what case had He exercised this right? In a case that concerned that right of Israel to blessing, of which the Jews sought to avail themselves. All Israel would have been cut off, if God had dealt in righteousness; there was nothing but the sovereignty of God which could be a door of escape. God retreated into His sovereignty in order to spare whom He would, and so had spared Israel (justice would have condemned them all alike, gathered round the golden calf which they set up to worship) this, on the side of mercy; on that of judgment, Pharaoh served for an example. The enemy of God, and of His people, he had treated the claims of God with contempt, exalting himself proudly against Him

"Who is Jehovah, that I should obey him? I will not let his people go." Pharaoh being in this state, Jehovah uses him to give an example of His wrath and judgment. So that He shows mercy to whom He will, and hardens whom He will. Man complains of it, as he does of the grace that justifies freely.

As to rights, compare those of God and those of the creature who has sinned against Him. How can man, who is made of clay, dare to reply against God? The potter has power to do as he will with the lump. No one can say to God, What doest Thou? God's sovereignty is the first of all rights, the foundation of all rights, the foundation of all morality. If God is not God, what will He be? The root of the question is this; is God to judge man, or man God? God can do whatsoever He pleases. He is not the object for judgment. Such is His title: but when in fact the apostle presents the two cases, wrath and grace, He puts the case of God showing long suffering towards one already fitted for wrath, in order to give at last an example to men of His wrath in the execution of His justice; and then of God displaying His glory in vessels of mercy whom He has prepared for glory. There are then these three points established with marvelous exactitude; the power to do all things, no one having the right to say a word; wonderful endurance with the wicked, in whom at length His wrath is manifested; demonstration of His glory in vessels, whom He has Himself prepared by mercy for glory, and whom He has called, whether from among the Jews or Gentiles, according to the declaration of Hosea.

The doctrine established, then, is the sovereignty of God in derogation of the pretensions of the Jews to the exclusive enjoyment of all the promises, as being descended from Abraham; for, among his descendants, more than one had been excluded by the exercise of this sovereignty; and it was nothing less than its exercise which, on the occasion of the golden calf, had spared those who pretended to the right of descent. It was necessary therefore that the Jew should recognise it, or else that he should admit the Idumeans in full right, as well as the Ishmaelites, and renounce it himself, the families of Moses and Joshua alone perhaps excepted. But if such was the sovereignty of God, He would now exercise it in favor of the Gentiles, as well as Jews. He called whom He would.

If we look closely into these quotations from Hosea, we shall find that Peter, who writes to converted Jews alone, takes only the passage at the end of Chapter 2, where Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah become Ammi and Ruhamah. Paul quotes that also, which is at the end of Chapter 1, where it is written, "In the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called not 'my people,' but 'the children of the living God.'" It is this last passage which he applies to the Gentiles called by grace.

But further passages from the prophets amply confirm the judgment which the apostle pronounces by the Spirit on the Jews. Isaiah declared formally that, if God had not left them a little remnant, they would have been as Sodom and Gomorrah; numerous as the people were, a little remnant only should be saved; for God was cutting the work short in judgment on the earth. And here was the state of things morally: the Gentiles had obtained the righteousness which they had not sought, had obtained it by faith; and Israel, seeking to obtain it by the fulfillment of a law, had not attained to righteousness. Why? Because they sought it not by faith, but by works of law. For they had stumbled at the stumbling-stone (that is, at Christ), as it is written, "I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offense: and whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed."

Note #51

Read, "I have wished." Moses, in his anguish, had said, "Blot me out of thy book." Paul had not been behind him in his love.

Romans Chapter 10

Having touched on this subject, the apostle, who deeply loved his nation as the people of God, pours out his heart with respect of the doctrine which was a stumbling-stone to them. His desire, the aim of his heart's affection, was their salvation. The object of his affections, they were clothed in his eyes with their zeal for God, ignorant as it was; ignorant, alas! on the side of that which God taught. Being ignorant of God's righteousness, they sought in their zeal to establish their own righteousness, and did not submit themselves to that of God. For Christ is the end of law for righteousness to every believer. There was found the righteousness of God, there the stumblingstone to Israel.

Nevertheless the apostle establishes his argument clearly and firmly. He establishes it on his own part; but Deuteronomy supplies him with an unexpected proof of the great principle. He quotes a passage from that book which speaks on the subject of Israel's condition, when they should have broken the law and be suffering its consequences. "Secret things," the lawgiver had said, "belong to our God; but those that are revealed" are for the people. That is to say, the law was given as a condition to the enjoyment of the blessing, plainly and positively; what God might do in grace, when Israel should be under the consequences of the broken law, remained in the secrecy of His supreme will. Upon this, however, another principle is distinctly revealed, namely, that when the fulfilment of the law was impossible, and when Israel had been driven out of their land for having broken it, if then their heart turned to God in that far country, He would accept them. It was all over with the law as a condition of relationship with God. Israel was driven out according to the Chapter we are looking at (Deut. 30) was Lo-ammi, no longer the people of God. The testimony of God was nevertheless addressed to them: they might turn to Him in spirit, and by faith. It was no longer the law, it was faith. But, says the apostle, if so, it is Christ who is its object. No Jew would have denied that the testimony of God was the hope of every true Israelite when all was ruined.

This passage then in Deuteronomy when Moses has done with the law, and has supposed other counsels of God, and on them founds the principle of turning in heart to God when all is over with regard to the law, and Israel is in a place where it would be impossible to keep it, being in captivity among the Gentiles this passage has remarkable significance in the argument of the apostle; and its being quoted is an extraordinary proof, that in his reasonings it is the Holy Ghost who acts. It is the apostle who introduces Christ; but the combination of the truths of the different positions of Israel, of the law, and of the return in heart when they were lost under the law a combination of which Christ was the key-stone and alone could be exhibits a comprehensive view of the oneness of all God's ways, morally and in His dispensations, of which the Spirit of God alone is capable, and which evidently expresses His thoughts. See Deuteronomy 29 (at the end) and 30.

The word of faith then set forth as being the hope of Israel, was that which the apostle announced that if any one confessed with his mouth the Lord Jesus, and believed in his heart that God had raised Him from the dead, he should be saved. Precious, simple, and positive assertion! and borne out, if that were needed, by the testimony of the Old Testament: "Whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed." The words heart and mouth are in contrast with the law. In the case Deuteronomy supposes, Israel could not fulfil the law; the word of their God, Moses told them, could be in their heart and in their mouth. Thus now for the Jew (as for every one) it was the belief of the heart.

Observe, it does not say, If you love in your heart, or, If your heart is what it ought to be towards God; but, If you believe in your heart. A man believes with his heart, when he really believes with a heart interested in the thing. His affections being engaged in the truth, he desires, when grace is spoken of, that that which is told him should be the truth. He desires the thing, and at the same time he does not doubt it. It is not in his having part in it that he believes, but in the truth of the thing itself, being concerned in it as important to himself. It is not the state of his affections (a very serious consideration, however, in its place) that is the subject here, but the importance and the truth of that which is presented by the word its importance to himself, as needing it for his salvation, a salvation that he is conscious of needing, that he cannot do without a truth of which he is assured, as a testimony from God Himself. God affirms to such a one that salvation belongs to him, but it is not that which he has to believe in as the object of faith; it is that of which God assures every one who does believe.

Moreover thus faith is manifested by the proof it gives of its sincerity by confession of the name of Christ. If some one were convinced that Jesus is the Christ, and refused to confess Him, his conviction would evidently be his greater condemnation. The faith of the heart produces the confession of the mouth; the confession of the mouth is the counterproof of the sincerity of the faith, and of honesty, in the sense of the claim which the Lord has upon us in grace. It is the testimony which God requires at the outset. It is to sound the trumpet on earth in face of the enemy. It is to say that Christ has conquered, and that everything belongs in right to Him. It is a confession

which brings in God in answer to the name of Jesus. It is not that which brings in righteousness, but it is the public acknowledgment of Christ, and thus gives expression to the faith by which there is participation in the righteousness of God, so that it may be said, 'He believes in Christ unto salvation; he has the faith that justifies.'

I have entered here a little more into detail, because this is a point on which the human heart perplexes itself; and perplexes itself so much the more because it is sincere, as long as there is any unbelief and self-righteousness remaining. It is impossible that an awakened soul should not feel the necessity of having the heart set right and turned to God; and hence, not submitting to the righteousness of God, he thinks to make the favour of God depend on the state of his own affections, whereas God loves us while we are yet sinners. The state of our affections is of all importance; but it supposes a relationship already existing, according to which we love. We love too because we are loved of God. Now His love has done something according to our necessities, and according to the divine glory. It has given Jesus; and Jesus has accomplished what was required, in order that we may participate in divine righteousness; and thus He has placed every one who (acknowledging that he is a lost sinner) believes in Him, in the secure relationship of a child and of a justified soul before God, according to the perfection of the work of Christ. Salvation belongs to this soul according to the declaration of God Himself. Loved with such love, saved by such grace, enjoying such favour, let it cultivate affections suitable to the gift of Jesus, and to the knowledge it has of Him and of His goodness.

It is evident that, if it is "whosoever" believes in Jesus, the Gentile comes in as well as the Jew. There is no difference; the same Lord is rich unto all that call upon Him. It is beautiful to see this form of expression, "There is no difference," repeated here. The apostle had used it before with the addition "for all have sinned." Sin puts all men on a level in ruin before God. But there is also no difference, "for the same Lord over all is rich unto all," for every one who calls upon His name shall be saved.

On this declaration, the apostle founds another argument; and by it he justifies the ways of God that were accomplished in his ministry. The Jewish

scriptures declared that every one who called upon the name of the Lord should be saved. Now, the Jews acknowledged that the Gentiles did not know the name of the true and living God. It was needful therefore to proclaim Him, in order that they might call upon Him, and the whole ministry of the apostle was justified. Accordingly it was written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace." For, in dealing with these questions among the Jews, he naturally rests on the authority of their own scriptures.

But he applies this principle for evangelisation to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles (for the law was not the announcement of good news). He quotes Isaiah to the same purpose. It was in a proclamation a truth thus publicly preached that Israel had not believed; so that there ought to be faith in a truth thus preached, in the word proclaimed. Verse 18 (Rom 10:18) presents some difficulty. It is certain that the apostle intends to explain that a proclamation of the truth on God's part had taken place. Israel was without excuse, for the report had even gone out everywhere, the words which announced God unto the ends of the earth. The testimony then was not confined to the Jews The Gentiles had heard it everywhere. This is plain. But does the apostle merely borrow the words (which in the passage quoted apply to the testimony of creation), or does he mean to speak of the testimony of nature itself? I believe that he uses the passage to shew that God had the Gentiles in view in His testimonies; that he wishes quietly to suggest this to the Jews by a quotation from their own scriptures, that not only have they, the Jews, heard, but that the testimony has gone everywhere, and that this was in the mind of God. Paul does not quote the passage as a prophecy of that which was taking place; he borrows the words, without that form of speech, to shew that this universal testimony was in the mind of God, whatever might be the means employed. And then, stating the thing with more precision for the Jew, he adds, Did not Israel know? Was not the nation apprised of this extension to the Gentiles, of the testimony of this proclamation of grace to them, of the reception of the testimony by the Gentiles, so as to bring them into relationship with God? Yes; Moses had already said, that God would provoke Israel to jealousy by a people without knowledge. And Isaiah had spoken boldly, formally declaring that God should be found by a nation that sought Him not; and to Israel,

that all day long He had stretched forth His hands to a rebellious and gainsaying people; in a word, that the Gentiles should find Him, and Israel be perverse and disobedient. Thus, the testimony borne to their relative positions although the apostle approaches it gradually and quietly is distinct and formal: the Gentiles received; Israel at enmity.

Romans Chapter 11

Hereupon the question is immediately raised, has God then rejected His people? To this Chapter 11 is the answer. The apostle gives three proofs that it is by no means the case. Firstly, he is himself an Israelite; there is a remnant whom God has reserved, as in the days of Elias a proof of the constant favour of the Lord, of the interest He takes in His people, even when they are unfaithful; so that when the prophet, the most faithful and energetic among them, knew not where to find one who was true to God besides himself, God had His eyes upon the remnant who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Secondly, the call of the Gentiles, and their substitution for Israel, was not the definitive rejection of the latter in the counsels of God; for God had done it to provoke Israel to jealousy. It was not, then, for their rejection. Thirdly, the Lord would come forth out of Sion. and turn away the iniquities of Jacob.

That which the apostle, or rather which the Holy Ghost, says on this point requires to be looked at in more detail.

The apostle, in quoting the case of Elias, shews that when Israel was in such a state that even Elias pleaded against them, yet God had not rejected them, He had reserved for Himself seven thousand men. This was the election of sovereign grace. It was the same thing now. But it was by grace, and not by works. The election then, has obtained the blessing, and the rest was blinded. Even as it was written, "God hath given them the spirit of slumber," etc.

Had they then stumbled that they should fall? No! But through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy a second proof that it was not for their rejection. But if their diminishing and fall was a blessing to the Gentiles, what should not the fruit be of their restoration? If the first-fruits are holy, so is the lump; if the root, the tree also. Now, as to

the continued chain of those who enjoy the promises in this world, Abraham was the root, and not the Gentiles; Israel, the natural stock and branches. And here is that which happened in the good olive-tree of promise in this world, of which Abraham was the root (God Himself the source of leaf and fruit), and Israel the stem and the tree. There had been some bad branches, and they had been cut off; and others from the Gentiles grafted in, in their place, who thus enjoyed the richness natural to the tree of promise. But it was on the principle of faith that they, being of the wild olive-tree, had been grafted in. Many of the Israelite branches, the natural heirs of the promises, had been cut off because of their unbelief; for when the fulfilment of the promises was offered them, they rejected it. They rested on their own righteousness, and despised the goodness of God. Thus the Gentiles, made partakers of the promises, stood on the principle of faith. But if they abandoned this principle, they should lose their place in the tree of promise, even as the unbelieving Jews had lost theirs. Goodness was to be their portion in this dispensation of God's government, with regard to those who had part in the enjoyment of His promises, if they continued in this goodness; if not, cutting off. This had happened to the Jews; it should be the same with the Gentiles if they did not continue in that goodness. Such is the government of God, with regard to that which stood as His tree on the earth. But there was a positive counsel of God accomplished in that which took place, namely, the partial blinding of Israel (for they were not rejected) until all the Gentiles who were to have part in the blessing of these days should have come in. After this Israel should be saved as a whole; it should not be individuals spared and added to the assembly, in which Israel had no longer any place as a nation; they should be saved as a whole, as Israel. Christ shall come forth from Sion as the seat of His power, and shall turn away iniquity from Jacob, God pardoning them all transgressions.

This is the third proof that Israel was not rejected. For while enemies, as concerning the gospel at the present time, they are still beloved for the fathers' sakes. For that which God has once chosen and called He never casts off. He does not repent of His counsels, nor of the call which gives them effect. But if the counsel of God remains unchangeable, the way in which it is accomplished brings out the marvellous wisdom of God. The Gentiles had long continued in the disobedience of unbelief. God comes in in

grace. The Jews opposed themselves to the actings of grace. They lose all right to the promises through this unbelief, so that they must receive the effect of the promise on the footing of pure mercy and the sovereign grace of God, [See Note #52] in the same way as the poor Gentile. For He had shut them all up in unbelief, that it might be pure mercy to all. Therefore it is that the apostle exclaims, O depth of wisdom and knowledge! The promises are fulfilled, and the pretension to human righteousness annihilated; the Jews who have lost everything receive all on the true ground of the goodness of God. Their apparent loss of all is but the means of their receiving all from sovereign grace, instead of having it by virtue of human righteousness, or an unforfeited promise. All is grace: yet God is ever faithful, and that in spite of man's unfaithfulness. Man is blessed; the Jew receives the effect of the promise; but both the one and the other have to attribute it to the pure mercy of God. There is nothing about the assembly here: it is the tree of promise, and those who in virtue of their position have part successively in the enjoyment of the promises of earth. The unbelieving Jews were never cut off from the church, they were never in it. They had been in the position of natural heirs of the right to the promises. The assembly is not the Jews' own olive-tree according to nature, so that they should be grafted into it again. Nothing can be plainer: the chain of those who had a right to the promises from Abraham was Israel; some of the branches were then cut off. The tree of promise remains on the earth: the Gentiles are grafted into it in place of the Jews, they also become unfaithful (that is to say, the case is supposed), and they would in their turn be cut off, and the Jews be reinstated in the old olive-tree, according to the promises and in order to enjoy them; but it is in pure mercy. It is clearly not by the gospel they get the blessing; for, as touching the gospel, they are enemies for the Gentiles' sake; as touching election, beloved for the fathers' sake.

Remark further here an important principle: the enjoyment of privileges by position makes us responsible for them, without saying the individual was born again. The Jewish branch was in the tree of promise and broken off: so the Gentiles. There was nothing vital or real; but they were in the place of blessing, "partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree," by being grafted in.

These communications of the mind of God end this portion of the book, namely, that in which the apostle reconciles sovereign grace shewn to sinners (putting all on a level in the common ruin of sin) with the especial privileges of the people of Israel, founded on the faithfulness of God. They had lost everything as to right. God would fulfil His promises in grace and by mercy.

Note #52

Verse 31 (Rom 11:31) should be translated, "Even so these [the Jews] have now been unbelieving with regard to your mercy, in order that they should receive mercy" (or that they should be the objects of mercy) "your mercy," that is to say, the grace in Christ which extended to the Gentiles. Thus the Jews were the objects of mercy, having forfeited all right to enjoy the effect of the promise. God would not fail to fulfil it. He bestows it on them in mercy at the end, when He has brought in the fulness of the Gentiles.

Romans Chapter 12

The apostle resumes the thread of his instructions, by taking up as he does in all his epistles the moral consequences of his doctrine. He places the believer at the outset on the ground of God's mercy, which he had fully developed already. The principle of grace that saves had been established as the basis of salvation. The ground of all christian morality is now laid in this fundamental principle: to present our bodies as a sacrifice, living, holy, acceptable to God an intelligent service, not that of the hands, not consisting in ceremonies which the body could perform a simple but deep-reaching and all-efficacious principle. This was for man personally. As to his outward relationships, he was not to be conformed to the world. Neither was this to be an outside mechanical nonconformity, but the result of being renewed in mind, so as to seek for and discern the will of God, good and acceptable and perfect; the life being thus transformed.

This connects itself with the end of Chapter 6. It is not those sitting in heavenly places, imitators of God as dear children, but men on earth set free by the delivering power of redemption and grace, yielding themselves up to God to do His will. The exhortation follows the character we have seen to be that of the epistle.

Thus the christian walk was characterised by devotedness and obedience. It was a life subjected to the will of another, namely, to the will of God; and therefore stamped with humility and dependence. But there was absolute devotedness of heart in self-sacrifice. For there was a danger, flowing from the power that acted in it, of the flesh coming in and availing itself of it. With regard to this, every one was to have a spirit of wisdom and moderation, and to act within the limits of the gift which God had dispensed to him, occupying himself with it according to the will of God; even as each member has its own place in the body, and should accomplish the function which God has ascribed to it. The apostle passes on insensibly to all the forms which duty assumes in the Christian, according to the various positions in which he stands, and to the spirit in which he ought to walk in every relationship.

It is in Chapter 12 only that the idea of the assembly as a body is thus found in this epistle; and that, in connection with the duties of the members individually duties that flowed from their positions as such. Otherwise it is the position of man in his individual responsibility before God, and this met by grace, and then the delivered man, that is set before us in the Epistle to the Romans. The directions given by the apostle extend to the Christian's relationship with the authorities under which he is placed. He recognises them as accomplishing the service of God, and as armed with authority from Him, so that resisting them would be resisting that which God had established. Conscience therefore, and not merely force, constrained the Christian to obey. In fine he was to render to every man that which was due to him in virtue of his position; to leave nothing owing to any one, be it of whatever character it might excepting love a debt which never can be liquidated.

Romans Chapter 13

Among themselves Christians are exhorted not to seek the high things of this world, but to walk as brethren with those of low degree: a precept too much forgotten in the assembly of God to her loss. If the Christian of high degree requires that honour according to the flesh should be paid him, let it be done with good will. Happy he who, according to the example of the King of kings and to the precept of our apostle, knows how to walk in

company with those of low degree in their journey through the wilderness. Now love is the fulfilling of the law; for love works no ill to his neighbour, and so fulfils the law.

Another principle acts also on the spirit of the Christian. It is time to awake. The deliverance from this present evil age, which the Lord will accomplish for us, draws nigh. The night is far spent, the day is at hand God knows the moment. The characteristics which marked its approach in the days of the apostle have ripened in a very different way since then, although God, with a view to those whom He is gathering in, is still even now restraining them. Let us then walk as children of the day, casting off the works of darkness. We belong to the day, of which Christ Himself will be the light. Let our walk be in accordance with that day, putting on Christ Himself, and not being studious of that which is in accordance with the will and the lusts of the flesh.

Romans Chapter 14

From the beginning of Chapter 14 to the end of Verse 7 in Chapter 15 another point is taken up, to which the different positions of the Jew and Gentile gave rise. It was difficult for a Jew to rid himself of the sense of difference between days and between meats. A Gentile, having abandoned his whole religious system as idolatrous, held to nothing. Human nature is liable in this respect to sin on both sides a want of conscience, an unbridled will, and a ceremonial conscience. Christianity recognises neither of these things. It delivers from the question of days and meats by making us heavenly with Christ. But it teaches us to bear with conscientious weakness, and to be conscientious ourselves. Conscience cannot have a right to prescribe a new thing to us as a duty, but it may, through ignorance, hold to a traditional thing as obligatory. In reality we have entire liberty, but we ought to bear with weakness of faith in another, and not put a stumbling-block in his way. The apostle gives three directions in this respect: First, to receive the weak, but not for the discussion of questions that have to be settled; second, not to judge our brother, since he is Christ's servant, not ours; and every one must give account of himself to God; third, to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves; to walk in the spirit of love, and, if we are in a higher state, to shew it by receiving one another, as Christ has

received us, to the glory of God, which eclipses man and his petty superiorities, and which kindles charity and makes it ardent, earnest in seeking the good of others taking us so out of self, and beyond little things, that we are able to adapt ourselves to others, where the will of God and His glory are not in question.

Many important principles are brought forward in these exhortations. Every one shall give account of himself to God. Everyone, in these cases, should be fully persuaded in his own mind, and should not judge another. If any one has faith that delivers him from traditional observances, and he sees them to be absolutely nothing as indeed they are let him have his faith for God, and not cause his brother to stumble.

No one lives to himself, and no one dies to himself; we are the Lord's. The weak then regard the day for the Lord's sake; the others do not regard it because of the Lord. This is the reason therefore for not judging. He whom I judge is the Lord's. Therefore also I should seek to please my brother for his edification he is the Lord's; and I should receive him, as I have been received, to share in the glory of God which has been conferred on him. We serve Christ in these things by thinking of the good of our brother. As to the energy of a man's faith, let him have it between himself and God. Love is the ruler for the use of his liberty, if it is liberty, and not the bondage of disregarding. For the converse of this principle, when these observances are used to destroy liberty in Christ, see Galatians 4, where the apostle shews that, if the observance is taught as a principle, it is really turning back to Paganism.

Romans Chapter 15

These instructions close the epistle. From Rom 15:8, it is the exordium, the personal circumstances of the apostle, and salutations.

In Verses 8 to 12 (Rom 15:8-12), he sums up his thoughts respecting God's dealings with the Jew and the Gentile in the advent of Jesus. He was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to accomplish the promises made to the fathers. For to the Jews God had made promises; but none to the Gentiles. To the latter it was not truth that was in question: but by grace they might through Jesus glorify God for His mercy. For them the apostle

quotes passages from Deuteronomy (that is to say, from the Law), from the Psalms, and from the Prophets.

In Verse 13 (Rom 15:13), he turns affectionately to the Romans to express his desires for them, and his confidence in the blessing they had received from God, which enabled them mutually to exhort one another, while expressing at the same time his boldness in some sort, because of the grace God had given him, to be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles by fulfilling a public function with regard to them; being, as it were, a priest to offer up the Gentiles as an offering acceptable to God, because sanctified by the Holy Ghost (see Num 8:11). This was his glory before God. This sanctification by the Holy Ghost was that which took the place of sanctification by birth, and it was well worth it.

Moreover he had accomplished his task from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum; nowhere Christ had been preached before, but where they had not yet heard of Him. This had prevented his coming to Rome. But now that there was no more place for him, according to the Holy Ghost nothing more in those parts for him to do, and having long desired to see them, he thought to visit them on his way to Spain. For the moment he was going to Jerusalem with the collection made in Macedonia and Achaia for the saints.

We see that his heart turns to the Jews; they occupied his thoughts; and while desiring to put the seal of performance on the grace which this collection betokened, he was pre-occupied with them as Jews, as those who had a claim: a mingled feeling perhaps of one who was anxious to shew that he did not forget them; for, in fact, he loved his nation. We have to learn whether, in executing this service (properly that of a deacon), pleasing as it might be, he was at the height of his mission as apostle. However that might be, the hand of God was in it to make all things work for the good of His beloved servant and child, as well as for His own glory. Paul had a presentiment that it would not perhaps turn out well, and he asks the prayers of the saints at Rome, that he might be delivered from the hands of the wicked, and see their face with joy. We know how it ended: the subject was spoken of when we were considering the Acts. He saw them indeed at Rome; he was delivered, but as a prisoner; and we do not know if he ever

went to Spain The ways of God are according to His eternal counsels, and according to His grace, and according to His perfect wisdom.

Romans Chapter 16

Never having known the Roman Christians as an assembly, Paul sends many personal salutations. This was the link which subsisted. We see how touchingly his heart dwells upon all the details of service which attached him to those who had rendered it. He who by grace had searched into all the counsels of God, who had been admitted to see that which could not be made known to man here below, remembered all that these humble Christians these devoted women had done for him and for the Lord. This is love; it is the real proof of the power of the Spirit of God; it is the bond of charity.

We have also here a precious and most perfect rule for our walk, namely, to be simple concerning evil, and wise unto that which is good. Christianity alone could have given such a rule; for it provides a walk that is positively good, and wisdom to walk in it. As Christians we may be simple concerning evil. What a deliverance! While the man of the world must needs acquaint himself with evil, in order to avoid it in this world of snares and of artifice, he must corrupt his mind, accustom himself to think of evil, in order not to be entrapped by it. But soon there should be entire deliverance soon should Satan be trodden under their feet.

We see also that the apostle did not write his letters himself, but employed a brother to do it. Here it was one named Tertius (Rom 16:22). Deeply concerned at the condition of the Galatians, he wrote himself the letter addressed to them; but the salutation at the end of this, as of other epistles, was in his own hand in order to verify the contents of the epistle. (Co1 16:21; Th2 3:17, in which the feigned epistle alluded to in 2 Thessalonians 2 gave occasion to state this proof, which he always gave, that an epistle was truly his.) We see likewise, by this little circumstance, that he attached a solemn and authoritative character to his epistles, that they were not merely the effusions of a spiritual heart, but that in writing them he knew and would have others understand, that they were worthy of consideration and of being preserved as authorities, as the expression and exercise of his

apostolic mission, and were to be received as such; that is to say, as possessing the Lord's authority, with which he was furnished by the power of the Holy Ghost. They were letters from the Lord by his means, even as his words had also been (Th1 2:13, and Co1 14:37).

We have yet to observe, with regard to the three Verses at the end of the epistle (Rom 16:25-27), that they are, as it were, detached from all the rest, introducing, in the form of a doxology, the suggestion of a truth, the communication of which distinguished the apostle's teaching. He does not develop it here. The task which the Holy Ghost accomplished in this epistle, was the presentation of the soul individually before God according to the divine thoughts. Nevertheless this connects itself immediately with the position of the body; and the doctrine respecting the body, the assembly, cannot be separated from it. Now the apostle informs us distinctly, that the mystery, the assembly, and the gathering together in one of all things under Christ, had been entirely unknown: God had been silent on that subject in the times which were defined by the word ages, the assembly not forming a part of that course of events, and of the ways of God on earth. But the mystery was now revealed and communicated to the Gentiles by prophetic writings not "the writings of the prophets." The epistles addressed to the Gentiles possessed this character; they were prophetic writings a fresh proof of the character of the epistles in the New Testament.

He who has understood the doctrine of this epistle, and of the writings of Paul in general, will readily apprehend the significance of this postscript. The epistle itself develops with divine perfection and fulness how a soul can stand before God in this world, and the grace and righteousness of God, maintaining withal His counsels as to Israel.

1 CORINTHIANS

Introduction to I Corinthians

The Epistle to the Corinthians presents very different subjects from those which occupied us in the one addressed to the Romans. We find in it moral details, and the interior order of an assembly, with regard to which the Spirit of God here displays His wisdom in a direct way. There is no mention of elders or of other functionaries of the assembly. Through the labours of the apostle, a numerous assembly had been formed (for God had much people in that city) in the midst of a very corrupt population, where riches and luxury were united with a moral disorder which had made the city a proverb. At the same time, here as elsewhere, false teachers (in general, Jews) sought to undermine the influence of the apostle. The spirit of philosophy did not fail also to exercise its baneful influence, although Corinth was not, like Athens, its principal seat. Morality and the authority of the apostle were compromised together; and the state of things was most critical. The Epistle was written from Ephesus, where the tidings of the sad state of the flock at Corinth had reached the apostle, almost at the moment when he had determined to visit them on his way into Macedonia (instead of passing along the coast of Asia Minor as he did), then returning to pay them a second visit on his way back. These tidings prevented his doing so, and, instead of visiting them to pour out his heart among them, he wrote this letter. The second epistle was written in Macedonia, when Titus had brought him word of the happy effect of the first.

The subjects of this first epistle are very easily divided into their natural order. In the first place, before he blames the Christians at Corinth to whom he writes, the apostle acknowledges all the grace which God had already bestowed on them, and would still impart. Co1 1:1-9. From verse 10 to chapter 4:21, the subject of divisions, schools of doctrine and human wisdom, is spoken of in contrast with revelation and divine wisdom. Chapter 5, the corruption of morals, and discipline, whether by power, or in the responsibility of the assembly. Chapter 6, temporal affairs, law-suits; and

again the subject of fornication, which was of primary importance for the Christians of this city. Chapter 7, marriage is considered. Ought people to marry? The obligation of those who had already married; and the case of a converted husband or of a converted wife, whose wife or whose husband was not converted. Chapter 8, should they eat things offered to idols? chapter 9, his apostleship. Chapter 10, their condition in general, their danger of being seduced, whether by fornication, or by idolatry, and idolatrous feasts, with the principles relating thereto, which introduces the Lord's supper. Chapter 11, questions connected with their behaviour in religious matters individually or (Co1 11:17) in the assembly. Afterwards, chapter 12, the exercise of gifts, and their true value, and the object of their use, magnifying (chapter 13) the comparative value of charity; to the end of chapter 14, ordering the exercise of gifts also, with which it is compared. Chapter 15, the resurrection, which some denied, and specially that of the saints; and chapter 16, the collections for the poor in Judea, with some salutations, and the principles of subordination to those whom God has raised up for service, even where there were no elders. It is of great value to have these directions immediately from the Lord, independent of a formal organisation, so that individual conscience and that of the body as a whole should be engaged.

But there are some other considerations as to the character and structure of the epistle which I must not pass by.

The reader may remark a difference in the address in the Corinthians and Ephesians. In the Corinthians, "To the church of God," etc., "with all that in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus." It is the professing church, the members being assumed to be faithful, at any rate in character such till put out, and with that, every one that owned Jesus as Lord, the house; hence Co1 10:1-5. In Ephesians, it is "Holy and faithful brethren," and we have the proper privileges of the body. This character of the epistle, as embracing the professing church, and recognising a local assembly as representing it in the locality, gives the epistle great importance. Further, I think it will be found that the outward professing assembly is dealt with to the middle of chapter 10 (and there the nature of the Lord's supper introduces the one body of Christ, which is treated of as to the gifts of the Spirit in chapter 12);

comeliness in woman's activities in the first verses of chapter 11; and, afterwards, from Co1 11:17, what befits the coming together in the assembly, and the Lord's supper, with the government of God. Co1 11:1-16 do not apply to the assembly. Still, order in the local assembly is everywhere the subject; only, from chapter 1 to chapter 10:14, the professing multitude is in view, supposed however sincere, but possibly not so. From chapter 10:15 to the end of chapter 12, the body is in view.

1 Corinthians Chapter 1

1 Corinthians 1:1

CO1 1:1

I will now turn back to take up the thread of the contents of this epistle from the beginning. Paul was an apostle by the will of God. That was his authority, however it might be with others. Moreover the same call that made those of Corinth Christians had made him an apostle. He addresses the assembly of God at Corinth, adding a character (the application of which is evident when we consider the contents of the epistle) "sanctified in Christ Jesus." Afterwards the universality of the application of the doctrine and instructions of the epistle, and of its authority over all Christians, wherever they might be, is brought forward in this address. Happily, whatever sorrow he felt at the state of the Corinthians, the apostle could fall back upon the grace of God, and thus recognise all the grace which He had bestowed on them. But the placing them thus in relationship to God brought all the effects of His holiness to bear upon their consciences, while giving the apostle's heart the encouragement of the perfect grace of God towards them. And this grace itself became a powerful lever for the word in the hearts of the Corinthians. In the presence of such grace they ought to be ashamed of sin. Nor can there be a more remarkable testimony than is here found of reckoning on the faithfulness of God towards His people. The relationship does claim holiness: in holiness alone it is enjoyed; but it reposes on the faithfulness of God. The Corinthians were walking, as we know, badly. The apostle lets none of the evil pass; but still he declares that God was faithful and would confirm them to the end that they might be not

safe, but blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then proceeds to blame them. what a wonderful testimony!

Paul (the Spirit Himself) thus linked the Corinthians with God; and that which He was in this connection with them had all its force upon their hearts and consciences. At the same time the use of this weapon opened their heart to all that the apostle had to say. One must be very near the Lord to be able in practice thus to look at Christians who are walking badly. It is not to spare their sins the apostle is very far from doing that; but it is grace which brings their own consciences to be occupied with it, as having a relationship with God that was too precious to allow them to continue in sin or to permit it.

The Epistle to the Galatians supplies us with a remarkable instance of the confidence thus inspired; compare Co1 4:20; Co1 5:10.

The Corinthians were enriched by God with His gifts, and His testimony was thus confirmed among them, so that they came behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of the Lord, the fulfilment of all things. Solemn day! for which God, who had called them, confirmed them in His faithfulness, that they might be without reproach in that day, called as they were to the fellowship and communion of His Son Jesus Christ. Short but precious exposition of the grace and faithfulness of God, serving as a basis (if their condition did not allow the apostle to develop it as he did to the Ephesians) to all the exhortations and instructions which he addressed to the Corinthians in order to strengthen them and direct their wavering steps.

The apostle first takes up the folly of the Corinthians in making the chief christian ministers and Christ Himself heads of schools. Christ was not divided. They had not been baptised unto the name of Paul. He had indeed, on occasion, baptised a few; but his mission was to preach, not to baptise. [See Note #1] It was in virtue of, and according to, Act 26:17, and Act 13:2-4, and not Mat 28:19. Moreover, all this human wisdom was but foolishness, which God brought to nothing: the preaching of the cross was the power of God; and God had chosen the weak things, the things of nought, foolish things according to the world, to annihilate the wisdom and strength of the world, in order that the gospel should be evidently the power of God. The

Jews asked for a sign, the Greeks sought for wisdom; but God caused Christ crucified to be preached, a scandal to the Jews, foolishness to the Greeks, but to them which are called the power of God. By things that are not He brought to nought things that are, because His weakness is stronger than the strength of the world; His foolishness wiser than the wisdom of the age. The flesh shall not glory in His presence. God dealt with conscience, though in grace, according to the true position of responsible man, and did not subject Himself to the judgment and reasonings of man's mind, wholly incompetent thereto, and which put him out of his place as if he could judge of God. But, besides this, the Christian was more even than the object of God's instruction; he was himself of God in Christ Jesus; of God he had his life, his being, his position as a Christian. And Christ was unto him, from God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption all in contrast with the pretensions of the human mind, with the false righteousness of the Jew under the law, with the means and the measure of the sanctification it supplied, and with the weakness of man, the last trace of which God will remove in the deliverance He will accomplish by His power in Christ when He shall complete the work of His grace. Thus we are of God, and Christ is everything for us on God's part, in order that he who glories may glory in the Lord: a brief but mighty testimony to what Christianity is in its elements.

Note #1

This statement is the more remarkable, as he had a special revelation as to the Lord's supper. But that ordinance has reference to the unity of the body, which was specially the testimony of the apostle. The twelve were sent to baptise the nations (Matt. 28).

1 Corinthians Chapter 2

It was in this spirit that Paul had come among them at first; he would know nothing but Christ, [See Note #2] and Christ in His humiliation and abasement, object of contempt to senseless men. His speech was not attractive with the carnal persuasiveness of a factitious eloquence: but it was the expression of the presence and action of the Spirit, and of the power which accompanied that presence. Thus their faith rested, not on the fair words of man, which another more eloquent or more subtle might

upset, but on the power of God a solid foundation for our feeble souls blessed be His name for it!

Nevertheless, when once the soul was taught and established in the doctrine of salvation in Christ, there was a wisdom of which the apostle spoke; not the wisdom of this present age, nor of the princes of this age, which perish, wisdom and all; but the wisdom of God in a mystery, a secret counsel of God (revealed now by the Spirit), ordained in His settled purpose unto our glory before the world was a counsel which, with all their wisdom, none of the princes of this world knew. Had they known it, they would not have crucified the One in whose Person it was all to be accomplished.

The apostle does not touch the subject of the mystery, because he had to feed them as babes, and only in order to put it in contrast with the false wisdom of the world; but the way in which this wisdom was communicated is important. That which had never entered into the heart of man [See Note #3] God had revealed by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. It is only the spirit of a man which is in him that knows the things which he has not communicated. So no one knows the things of God save the Spirit of God. Now it is the Spirit of God which the apostle and the other vessels of revelation had received, that they might know the things which are freely given of God. This is the knowledge of the things themselves in the vessels of revelation. Afterwards this instrument of God was to communicate them. He did so, not in words which the art of man taught, but which the Spirit which God taught, communicating spiritual things by a spiritual medium. [See Note #4] The communication was by the Spirit as well as the thing communicated. There was yet one thing wanting that this revelation might be possessed by others the reception of these communications. This also required the action of the Spirit. The natural man did not receive them; and they are spiritually discerned.

The source, the medium of communication, the reception, all was of the Spirit. Thus the spiritual man judges all things; he is judged of no man. The power of the Spirit in him makes his judgment true and just, but gives him motives and a walk that are unintelligible to one who has not the Spirit. Very simple as to that which is said nothing can be more important than that which is here taught. Alas! the Corinthians, whether when the apostle was at

Corinth, or at the time of writing this letter, were not in a condition to have the mystery communicated to them a grievous humiliation to their philosophic pride, but therefore a good remedy for it.

Note #2

Take notice here, that Paul does not say he would know nothing but the cross, as some persons and even Christians wrongly apply it. He would know nothing but Christ in contrast with philosophy among these Pagans, and Christ in the most humbled form, in order to overturn the pride of man. He goes on to inform us, that among those who were initiated into Christianity he taught wisdom, but it was the wisdom of God, revealed by Him who searches the deep things of God Himself. It is a very grievous abuse that is often made of this passage (incorrectly quoted besides).

Note #3

The passage is often quoted to shew the things are so great one cannot know them. Whereas it is a quotation from Isaiah to shew that what could not then be known (when the evil was there, and man was dealt with according to what he was) is now revealed, now that man is in glory in the Person of Christ, and the Holy Ghost come down to shew us what is there. Christianity is not Judaism.

Note #4

I have no doubt that this is the meaning of the passage. The means were of the same nature as the thing for which they were employed (Co1 2:13).

1 Corinthians Chapter 3

They were not natural men; but they were carnal (not spiritual) men, so that the apostle had to feed them with milk and not with meat which was only fit for those that were of full age. That with which they nourished their pride was a proof of their divisions into schools of doctrine. Paul, no doubt, had planted; Apollos watered. It was well. But it was God alone who gave the increase. Moreover the apostle had laid the foundation of this building of God, the assembly at Corinth; others had built since had carried on the work of the edification of souls. Let every one take heed. There was but one

foundation; it was laid. But in connection with it, they might teach things solid or worthless and form souls by one or the other perhaps even introduce souls won by such vain doctrines among the saints. The work would be proved, sooner or later, by some day of trial. If they had wrought in the work of God, with solid materials, the work would stand; if not, it would come to nothing. The effect, the fruit of labour, would be destroyed the man who had wrought be saved, because he had built on the foundation had true faith in Christ. Yet the shaking, caused by the failure of all that he had thought genuine, [See Note #5] would be apt, for himself, to shake the consciousness of his connection with, and confidence in, the foundation. He should be saved as through the fire. He who had wrought according to God should receive the fruit of his labour. If any one corrupted the temple of God introduced that which destroyed fundamental truths, he should be destroyed himself.

The subject then is ministerial labour, carried on by means of certain doctrines, either good, worthless, or subversive of the truth; and the fruits which this labour would produce. And there are three cases; the work good as well as the workman; the work vain, but the workman saved; the corrupter of God's temple here the workman would be destroyed.

Finally, if any one desired to be wise in this world, let him become unintelligent in order to be wise. God counted the wisdom of the wise as foolishness, and would take them in their own craftiness. But in this the saints were below their privileges. All things were theirs, since they were the children of God. "All things are yours" Paul, Apollos, all things you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Note #5

Remark here, the very important instruction as to the assembly viewed as God's building. In Matthew 16 we have Christ's building, and Satan's power cannot prevail against it. This building will go on till complete at the end. Hence in 1 Peter 2 and Ephesians 2 we have no workman, and the stones come, and the building grows. It is Christ's own work: He builds, and the building is not yet complete. Here it is God's building; but there is a builder, and man's responsibility comes in. There is a wise master-builder, or it may

be those who build with wood, hay, and stubble yea, even those who corrupt. In Ephesians 2 there is also a present building, but it is the fact viewed abstractedly. Here the responsibility is formally stated. The confusion of Christ's building (not yet finished) and man's building, the applying the promise made to one to the other which rests on man's responsibility and is a present building on earth, is one grand source of Popish and Puseyite errors. Against Christ's work nothing can prevail. Man may build with wood and hay and stubble, and his work be destroyed, as it will.

1 Corinthians Chapter 4

As for the apostle and the labourers, they were to consider them as stewards employed by the Lord. And it was to Him that Paul committed the judgment of his conduct. He cared little for the judgment man might form respecting him. He was not conscious of anything wrong, but that did not justify him. He who judged (examined) him was the Lord. And, after all, who was it that gave to the one or to the other that which he could use in service?

Paul had thought well, in treating this subject, to use names that they were using in their carnal divisions, and those, especially himself and Apollos, which could not be used to pretend he was getting rid of others to set up himself; but what was the real state of the case? They had despised the apostle. Yes, he says, we have been put to shame, despised, persecuted, in distress; you have been at ease, like kings a reproach in accordance with their own pretensions, their own reproaches a reproach that touched them to the quick, if they had any feeling left. Paul and his companions had been as the offscouring of the earth for Christ's sake, while the Corinthians were reposing in the lap of luxury and ease. Even while writing to them, this was still his position. "Would to God," he says, "ye did reign" (that the day of Christ were come) "in order that we might reign with you." He felt his sufferings, although he bore them joyfully. They, the apostles, were set forth on God's part as though to be the last great spectacle in those marvellous games of which this world was the amphitheatre; and as His witnesses they were exposed to the fury of a brutal world. Patience and meekness were their only weapons.

Nevertheless he did not say these things to put them to shame, he warned them as his beloved sons; for his sons they were. Though they might have ten thousand teachers, he had begotten them all by the gospel. Let them then follow him. In all this there is the deep working of the affection of a noble heart, wounded to the utmost, but wounded in order to bring out an affection that rose above his grief. It is this which so strikingly distinguishes the work of the Spirit in the New Testament, as in Christ Himself. The Spirit has come into the bosom of the assembly, takes part in her afflictions her difficulties. He fills the soul of one who cares for the assembly, [See Note #6] making him feel that which is going on feel it according to God, but with a really human heart. Who could cause all this to be felt for strangers, except the Spirit of God? Who would enter into these things with all the perfection of the wisdom of God, in order to act upon the heart, to deliver the conscience, to form the understanding, and to set it free, except the Spirit of God? Still the apostolic individual bond was to be formed, to be strengthened. It was the essence of the work of the Holy Ghost in the assembly to bind all together in this way. We see the man: otherwise it would not have been Paul and his dear brethren. We see the Holy Ghost, whom the latter had grieved, no doubt, and who acts in the former with divine wisdom, to guide them in the right way with all the affection of their father in Christ. Timothy, his son in the faith and in heart, might meet the case. Paul had sent him; Paul himself would soon be there. Some said, No, he would not, and took occasion to magnify themselves in the absence of the apostle; but he would come himself and put everything to the test; for the kingdom of God was not in word, but in power. Did they wish him to come with a rod, or in love?

Here this part of the epistle ends. Admirable specimen of tenderness and of authority! of authority sure enough of itself on the part of God, to be able to act with perfect tenderness towards those who were thoroughly dear to him, in the hope of not being forced to exercise itself in another way. The most powerful truths are unfolded in so doing.

Note #6

sunantilambanei tais astheneiais hemon ("The Spirit joins also its help to our weakness," Rom 8:26.)

1 Corinthians Chapter 5

He begins to treat the details of conduct and of discipline; and, first of all, the carnal defilement carried on in their midst to the last degree of hardness of conscience. Those who sought their own personal influence as teachers allowed them to go on in it. He condemns it without reservation. Discipline follows; for Christ had been offered up as the Paschal Lamb, and they were to keep the feast without leaven, keeping themselves from the old leaven; in order that they might be in fact, what they were before God an unleavened lump. As to discipline, it was this: before they knew that it was their duty to cut off the wicked person, and that God had given them the power and imposed on them the obligation to do so, a moral sense of evil ought, at least, to have led them to humble themselves before God, and to pray that He would take him away. On the contrary, they were puffed up with pride. But now the apostle teaches them what must be done, and enforces it with all his apostolic authority. He was among them in spirit if not in body, and with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, they being gathered together, to deliver such a one to Satan; but as a brother for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit might be saved in the day of Christ.

Here all the power of the assembly in its normal condition, united to and led by the apostolic energy, is displayed. Its members; the apostle, vessel and channel of the power of the Spirit; and the power of the Lord Jesus Himself, the Head of the body. Now the world is the theatre of Satan's power; the assembly, delivered from his power, is the habitation of God by the Spirit. If the enemy had succeeded in drawing aside by the flesh a member of Christ, so that he dishonours the Lord by walking after the flesh as men of the world do, he is put outside, and by the power of the Spirit, as then exercised in their midst by the apostle, delivered up to the enemy, who is in spite of himself the servant of the purposes of God (as in the case of Job), in order that the flesh of the Christian (which, from his not being able to reckon it dead, had brought him morally under the power of Satan) should be physically destroyed and broken down. Thus would he be set free from the illusions in which the flesh held him captive. His mind would learn how to discern the difference between good and evil, to know what sin was. The judgment of God would be realised within him, and would not be executed

upon him at that day when it would be definitive for the condemnation of those who should undergo it. This was a great blessing, although its form was terrible. Marvellous example of the government of God, which uses the adversary's enmity against the saints as an instrument for their spiritual blessing! We have such a case fully set before us in the history of Job. Only we have here, in addition, the proof that in its normal state, apostolic power [See Note #7] being there, the assembly exercised this judgment herself, having discernment by the Spirit and the authority of Christ to do it. Moreover, whatever may be the spiritual capacity of the assembly to wield this sword of the Lord (for this is power), her positive and ordinary duty is stated at the end of the Chapter.

The assembly was an unleavened lump, looked at in the Spirit as an assembly, and not individually. It is thus that we must view it, for it is only in the Spirit that it is so. The assembly is seen of God as being before Him in the new nature in Christ. Such she ought to be in practice by the power of the Spirit, in spite of the existence of the flesh, which by faith she ought to count as dead, and allow nothing in her walk that is contrary to this state. The assembly ought to be a "new lump," and was not if evil was allowed, and, consequently, ought to purge herself from the old leaven, because she is unleavened in God's thoughts. Such is her position before God. For Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us: therefore we ought to keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. They did wrong therefore in boasting while this evil was in their midst, however great their gifts might be. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. The evil did not attach to that man alone who was personally guilty of it. The assembly was not clear till the evil was put out (Co2 7:11). They could not dissociate themselves in the intercourse of ordinary life from all those who, in the world, walked corruptly, for in that case they would have to go out of the world. But if any one called himself a brother and walked in this corruption, with such a one they ought not even to eat. God judges those who are outside. The assembly must herself judge those that are within, and put out whatever must be called "wicked."

Note #7

The apostle (Ti1 1:20) exercises this power alone as to certain blasphemers. It is power, not mere duty, and it is important clearly to distinguish the two: though the apostle here did it in and with the gathered assembly, yet he says, "I have judged already to deliver such an one to Satan. In Verse 13 (Co1 5:13) we have the positive duty of the assembly without the question of special power.

1 Corinthians Chapter 6

Co1 6:1-11 treats the subject of wrongs. It was shameful that those who were to judge the world and the angels should be incapable of judging the paltry affairs of this world. Let the least esteemed in the assembly be employed in this service. Rather should they bear the wrong, whereas they did wrong themselves. But the wicked and the unrighteous would assuredly not inherit the kingdom. What a wonderful mixture we have here of astonishing revelations, of a morality that is unchangeable whatever may be the divine supremacy of grace, and of ecclesiastical order and discipline! The assembly is united to Christ. When He shall judge the world and pronounce the doom of the angels, she will be associated with Him and take part in His judgment, for she has His Spirit and His mind. Nothing however that is unrighteous shall enter into that kingdom, for in effect how could evil be judged by any that took pleasure in it? Christians should not go to a worldly tribunal for justice, but have recourse to the arbitration of the brethren a service which, as entering so little into christian spirituality, was suited to the weakest among them. Moreover the proper thing was rather to suffer the wrong. Be it as it might, the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom.

Judaism, which took pleasure in a carnal sanctity of outward regulations, and the spirit of the world with conformity to its ways, were the two dangers that threatened the assembly at Corinth dangers, indeed, which exist for the heart of man at all times and in all places. With regard to meats the rule is simple: perfect liberty, since all is allowed true liberty, in that we are in bondage to none of these things. Meats and the belly, as in relationship to each other, should both perish; the body has a higher destiny it is for the Lord, and the Lord for it. God has raised up Christ from the dead, and He will raise us up again by His power. The body belongs to this and not to meats.

But the doctrine that the body is for Christ decided another question, to which the depraved habits of the Corinthians gave rise. All fornication is forbidden. To us, with our present Christian habits of mind, it is a thing of course to Pagans, new; but the doctrine exalts every subject. Our bodies are the members of Christ. Another truth connected with this is of great importance: if (by union according to the flesh) two were one body, he who is united to the Lord is one spirit. The Spirit whose fulness is in Christ is the same Spirit who dwells in me and unites me to Him. Our bodies are His temples. What a mighty truth when we think of it!

Moreover we are not our own, but were bought with a price the blood of Christ offered for us. Therefore we ought to glorify God in our bodies, which are His powerful and universal motive, governing the whole conduct without exception. Our true liberty is to belong to God. All that is for oneself is stolen from the rights of Him who has bought us for His own. All that a slave was, or gained, was the property of his master; he was not the owner of himself. Thus it was with the Christian. Outside that, he is the wretched slave of sin and of Satan selfishness his rule, and eternal banishment from the source of love his end. Horrible thought! In Christ we are the special objects and the vessels of that love. We have here two mighty motives for holiness: the value of Christ's blood, at which we are purchased; also the fact that we are the temples of the Holy Ghost.

1 Corinthians Chapter 7

The apostle proceeds by answering a question in connection with the subject he had been treating the will of God with regard to the relationship between man and woman. They do well who remain outside this relationship in order to walk with the Lord according to the Spirit, and not to yield in anything to their nature. God had instituted marriage woe to him who should speak ill of it! but sin has come in, and all that is of nature, of the creature, is marred. God has introduced a power altogether above and outside nature that of the Spirit. To walk according to that power is the best thing; it is to walk outside the sphere in which sin acts. But it is rare; and positive sins are for the most part the effect of standing apart from that which God has ordained according to nature. In general then for this reason, every man should have his own wife: and the union once formed, he had no

longer power over himself. As to the body, the husband belonged to his wife, the wife to her husband. If, by mutual consent, they separated for awhile that they might give themselves to prayer and to spiritual exercises, the bond was to be immediately acknowledged again, lest the heart, not governing itself, should give Satan occasion to come in and distress the soul, and destroy its confidence in God and in His love lest he should tempt by distressing doubts (it is for, not by incontinency) a heart that aimed at too much, and failed in it.

This permission, however, and this direction which recommended Christians to marry, was not a commandment from the Lord, given by inspiration, but the fruit of the apostle's experience an experience to which the presence of the Holy Ghost was not wanting. [See Note #8] He would rather that every one were like himself; but every one had, in this respect, his gift from God. To the unmarried and the widows, it is good, he says, to abide as he himself was; but if they could not subdue their nature and remain in calm purity, it was better to marry. Unsubduedness of desire was more hurtful than the bond of marriage. But as to marriage itself, there was no longer room for the counsel of experience, the commandment of the Lord was positive. The woman was not to separate from the man, nor the man from the woman; and if they separated, the bond was not broken; they must remain unmarried or else be reconciled.

But there was a case more complicated, when the man was converted and the wife unconverted, or vice versa. According to the law a man who had married a woman of the Gentiles (and was consequently profane and unclean) defiled himself, and was compelled to send her away; and their children had no right to Jewish privileges; they were rejected as unclean (see Ezr 10:3). But under grace it was quite the contrary. The converted husband sanctified the wife, and vice versa, and their children were reckoned clean before God; they had part in the ecclesiastical rights of their parent. This is the sense of the word "holy," in connection with the question of order and of outward relationship towards God, which was suggested by the obligation under the law to send away wife and children in a similar case. Thus the believer was not to send away his wife, nor to forsake an unbelieving husband. If the unbeliever forsook the believer definitively, the

latter (man or woman) was free "let him depart." The brother was no longer bound to consider the one who had forsaken him as his wife, nor the sister the man who had forsook her as her husband. But they were called to peace, and not to seek this separation, for how did the believer know if he should not be the means of the unbeliever's conversion? For we are under grace. Moreover every one was to walk as God had distributed to him.

As regarded occupations and positions in this world, the general rule was that every one should continue in the state wherein he was called; but it must be "with God" doing nothing that would not be to His glory. If the state was in itself of a nature contrary to His will, it was sin; clearly he could not remain in it with God. But the general rule was to remain and glorify God in it.

The apostle had spoken of marriage, of the unmarried and of widows; he had been questioned also with respect to those who had never entered into any relationship with woman. On this point he had no commandment from the Lord. He could only give his judgment as one who had received mercy of the Lord to be faithful. It was good to remain in that condition, seeing what the world was and the difficulties of a christian life. If they were bound to a wife, let them not seek to be loosed. If free, they would do well to remain so. Thus if they married, they did well; not marrying, they did better. He who had not known a woman did not sin if he married, but he should have trouble after the flesh in his life here below. (It will be observed, that it is not the daughter of a Christian that is here spoken of, but his own personal condition.) If he stood firm, and had power over his own will, it was the better way; if he married, he still did well; if he did not marry, it was better. It was the same with a woman; and if the apostle said that according to his judgment it was better, he had the Spirit of God. His experience if he had no commandment had not been gained without the Spirit, but it was that of a man who could say (if any one had a right to say it) that he had the Spirit of God.

Moreover the time was short: the married were to be as having no wives; buyers, as having no possession; they who used the world, not using it as though it were theirs. Only the apostle would have them without carefulness or distraction, that they might serve the Lord. If by reckoning

themselves dead to nature this effect was not produced, they gained nothing, they lost by it. When married they were pre-occupied with things below, in order to please their wives and to provide for their children. But they enjoyed a repose of mind, in which nature did not claim her rights with a will that they had failed to silence, and holiness of walk and of heart was maintained. If the will of nature was subjugated and silenced, they served the Lord without distraction, they lived according to the Spirit and not according to nature, even in those things which God had ordained as good with respect to nature.

As to the slave, he might console himself as being the Lord's free-man; but (seeing the difficulty of reconciling the will of a pagan or even an unspiritual master with the will of God) if he could be made free, he should embrace the opportunity.

Two things strike us here in passing: the holiness which all these directions breathe with regard to that which touches so closely the desires of the flesh. The institutions of God, formed for man when innocent, are maintained in all their integrity, in all their authority, a safeguard now against the sin to which man is incited by his flesh. The Spirit introduces a new energy above nature, which in no wise weakens the authority of the institution. If any one can live above nature in order to serve the Lord in freedom, it is a gift of God a grace which he does well to profit by. A second very important principle flows from this Chapter. The apostle distinguishes accurately between that which he has by inspiration, and his own spiritual experience that which the Spirit gave him in connection with the exercises of his individual life spiritual wisdom, however exalted it might be. On certain points he had no commandment from the Lord. He gave the conclusion at which he had arrived, through the help of the Spirit of God, in a life of remarkable faithfulness, and aided by the Spirit whom he but little grieved. But it was not a commandment of the Lord. On other points that which he did not except in this manner was to be received as the commandment of the Lord (compare Co1 14:37). That is to say, he affirms the inspiration, properly so called, of his writings they were to be received as emanating from the Lord Himself-distinguishing this inspiration from his own spiritual competency, a principle of all importance.

Note #8

Note here, we have formally distinguished, what infidels of the modern school have sought to confound, spiritual thoughts as a man, and inspiration. The apostle gives his thoughts and judgment as a spiritual man, his mind animated and guided by the Spirit, and contrasts it with inspiration and what the Lord said. How wonderfully the Lord has provided in scripture for everything! Compare Verse 25 (Co1 7:25).

1 Corinthians Chapter 8

After this the apostle answers the question respecting meats offered to idols, which gives occasion to a few words on the value of knowledge. Simply as knowledge, it is worth nothing. If we look at it as knowledge that we possess, it does but puffs us up; it is something in me, my knowledge. True christian knowledge unfolded something in God. By means of that which is revealed, God, better known, became greater to the soul. It was in Him the thing known, and not a knowledge in me by which I made myself greater. He who loves God is known of Him. As to the question itself, love decided it. Since such a question had arisen, it was evident that all consciences were not brought into full light by spiritual intelligence. Now undoubtedly the idol was nothing: there was but one God, the Father; and one Lord, Jesus Christ. But if he who was strong sat at meat in the idol's temple, another who had not full light would be encouraged to do the same, and his conscience would be unfaithful and defiled. Thus I lead into sin, and, as far as depends on me, I ruin a brother for whom Christ died. I sin against Christ Himself in so doing. Thus, if meat causes a brother to stumble, let me altogether abstain from it rather than be a snare to him. Here the apostle treats the question as arising among the brethren, so as that which regards the conscience of each, choosing to maintain in all its force that in fact an idol was nothing but a piece of wood or stone. It was important to set the question on this ground. The prophets had done so before. But this was not all that there was to say. There was the working of Satan and of wicked spirits to explain, and this he does further on.

We may remark in passing the expression, "To us there is but one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ." The apostle does not here treat the

abstract question of the Lord's divinity, but the connection of men with that which was above them in certain relationships. Pagans had many gods, and many lords, intermediate beings. Not so Christians. For them is the Father abiding in the absoluteness of the divinity, and Christ who, become man, has taken the place and the relationship of Lord towards us. The position, and not the nature, is the subject. It is the same thing in Co1 12:2-6, where the contrast is with the multitude of spirits whom the Pagans knew, and the number of gods and lords. Nevertheless every one was not, in fact, thus delivered from the influence of false gods on his imagination. They were still perhaps, in spite of himself, something to him. He had conscience of the idol, and if he ate that which had been offered to it, it was not to him simply that which God had given for food. The idea of the existence of a real and powerful being had a place in his heart, and thus his conscience was defiled. Now they were not better in God's sight for having eaten, and by eating they had put a stumbling block in their brother's way, and, so far as the act of those who had full light was concerned, had ruined him by defiling his conscience and estranging him from God in unfaithfulness. This was sinning against Christ, who had died for that precious soul. If God intervened to shield him from the result of this unfaithfulness, that in nowise diminished the sin of him who led the weak one to act against his conscience. In itself that which separates us from God ruins us in that which regards our responsibility. Thus he who has the love of Christ in his heart would rather never eat meat than do that which would make a brother unfaithful, and tend to ruin a soul which Christ has redeemed.

1 Corinthians Chapter 9

The apostle was exposed to the accusations of false teachers, who asserted that he carried on his evangelisation and his labours from interested motives, and that he took the property of Christians, availing himself of their devotedness. He speaks therefore of his ministry. He declares openly that he is an apostle, an eye-witness of the glory of Christ, having seen the Lord. Moreover, if he was not an apostle to others, doubtless he was to the Corinthians, for he had been the means of their conversion. Now the will of the Lord was that they who preached the gospel should live of the gospel. He had a right to take with him a sister as his wife, even as Peter did, and the

brethren of the Lord. Nevertheless he had not used this right. Obligated by the call of the Lord to preach the gospel, woe unto him if he failed to do it! His glory was to do it gratuitously, so as to take away all occasion from those who sought it. For, being free from all, he had made himself the servant of all, that he might win as many as he could. Observe that this was in his service; it was not accommodating himself to the world, in order to escape the offence of the cross. He put this plainly forward (Co1 2:2); but in preaching it, he adapted himself to the religious capacity and to the modes of thought belonging to the one and to the other, in order to gain access for the truth into their minds; and he did the same in his manner of conduct among them. It was the power of charity which denied itself in all things, in order to be the servant of all, and not the selfishness which indulged itself under the pretence of gaining others. He did so in every respect for the sake of the gospel, desiring, as he said, to be a partaker with it, for he personifies it as doing the work of God's love in the world.

It was thus they should run; and, in order to run thus, one must deny oneself. In this way the apostle acted. He did not run with uncertain steps, as one who did not see the true end, or who did not pursue it seriously as a known thing. He knew well what he was pursuing, and he pursued it really, evidently, according to its nature. Every one could judge by his walk. He did not trifle as a man who beats the air easy prowess. In seeking that which was holy and glorious, he knew the difficulties he resisted in the personal conflict with the evil that sought to obstruct his victory. As a vigorous wrestler, he kept under his body, which would have hindered him. There was reality in his pursuit of heaven: he would tolerate nothing that opposed it. Preaching to others was not all. He might do that, and it might be, as regards himself, labour in vain; he might lose everything be rejected afterwards himself, if not personally a Christian. He was a Christian first of all, then a preacher, and a good preacher, because he was a Christian first. Thus, also (for the beginning of Chapter 10 connects itself with the close of Chapter 9), others might make a profession, partake of the initiatory and other ordinances, as he might be a preacher, and after all not be owned of God. This warning is a testimony to the condition to which, in part at least, the assembly of God was already reduced: a warning always useful, but which supposes that those who bear the name of Christian, and have

partaken of the ordinances of the church, no longer inspire that confidence which would receive them without question as the true sheep of Christ. The passage distinguishes between participation in christian ordinances and the possession of salvation: a distinction always true, but which it is not necessary to make when christian life is bright in those who have part in the outward privileges of the assembly.

1 Corinthians Chapter 10

The apostle then gives the Corinthians the ways of God with Israel in the wilderness, as instruction with regard to His ways with us, declaring that the things which happened to them were types or figures which serve as patterns for us: an important principle, and one which ought to be clearly apprehended, in order to profit by it. It is not Israel who is the figure, but that which happened to Israel the ways of God with Israel. The things themselves happened to Israel; they were written for our instruction who find ourselves at the close of God's dispensations. That which shall follow will be the judgment of God, when these examples will no longer serve for the life of faith.

Two principles are next established which also have great practical importance: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." This is our responsibility. On the other side we have the faithfulness of God. He does not permit us to be tempted beyond our strength, but provides a way of escape in order that we may not stumble.

He enjoins, with regard to idolatry, that holy fear which avoids the occasion of doing evil, the occasion of falling. There is association and communion through the table of which we partake with that which is on it; and we Christians, being many, are but one bread and one body, [See Note #9] inasmuch as we share the same bread at the Lord's supper. Those in Israel who ate of the sacrifices were partakers of the altar were identified with it. So those who ate of idol's meat as such were identified with the idol it was offered to. Was this to say that the idol was anything? No. But as it is written (Deut. 32), "The things which the Gentiles offered, they offered to demons and not to God." Should a Christian then, partake of the table of demons? The table was the table of demons, the cup the cup of demons an important

principle for the assembly of God. Would one provoke the Lord by putting Him on a level with demons? Allusion is again made to Deu 32:21. The apostle repeats his principle already established, that he had liberty in every respect, but that on the one hand he would not put himself under the power of anything; on the other, being free, he would use his liberty for the spiritual good of all. To follow out this rule, these are his instructions: Whatsoever was sold in the market they should eat without question of conscience. If any man said, "This was sacrificed to idols," it was a proof that he had conscience of an idol. They should then not eat of it, because of his conscience. For as to him who was free, his liberty could not be judged by the conscience of the other; for, as to doctrine, and where there was knowledge, the apostle recognises it as a truth that the idol was nothing. The creature was simply the creature of God. Communion with that which was false I ought to avoid for myself, especially in that which relates to communion with God Himself. I should deny myself the liberty which the truth gave me, rather than wound the weak conscience of others.

Moreover in all things, even in eating or drinking, we ought to see the glory of God, and do all to His glory; giving no offence by using our liberty, either to Jew or Gentile, or the assembly of God; following the apostle's example, who, denying himself, sought to please all for their edification.

Having given these rules in answer to questions of detail, he turns to that which regarded the presence and action of the Holy Ghost; which also introduces the subject of the conduct proper for them in their assemblies.

Note #9

It is here the apostle comes to the inner circle of the body of Christ, the true assembly of God united together by the Holy Ghost, of which the Lord's supper is the expression.

1 Corinthians Chapter 11

Observe here the way in which the apostle grounded his replies with regard to details on the highest and fundamental principles. This is the manner of Christianity (compare Tit 2:10-14). He introduces God and charity, putting

man in connection with God Himself. In that which follows we have also a striking example of this. The subject is a direction for women.

They were not to pray without having their heads covered. To decide this question, simply of what was decent and becoming, the apostle lays open the relationship and the order of the relationship subsisting between the depositories of God's glory and Himself, [See Note #10] and brings in the angels, to whom Christians, as a spectacle set before them, should present that of order according to the mind of God. The head of the woman is the man; that of man is Christ; of Christ, God. This is the order of power, ascending to Him who is supreme. And then, with respect to their relationship to each other, he adds, the man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man. And as to their relations with other creatures, intelligent and conscious of the order of the ways of God, they were to be covered because of the angels, who are spectators of the ways of God in the dispensation of redemption, and of the effect which this marvellous intervention was to produce. Elsewhere (see note below) it is added, in reference to the history of that which took place, the man was not deceived; but the woman, being deceived, transgressed first. Let us add from the passage we are considering that, as to creation, the man was not taken from the woman, but the woman from the man. Nevertheless the man is not without the woman, nor the woman without the man, in the Lord; but all things are of God; and all this to regulate a question of modesty as to women, when in praying they were before the eyes of others. [See Note #11] The result in that which concerns the details is that the man was to have his head uncovered, because he represented authority, and in this respect was invested (as to his position) with the glory of God, of whom he was the image. The woman was to have her head covered, as a token that she was subject to the man (her covering being a token of the power to which she was subject). Man however could not do without woman, nor woman without man. Finally the apostle appeals to the order of creation, according to which a woman's hair, her glory and ornament, shewed, in contrast with the hair of man, that she was not made to present herself with the boldness of man before all. Given as a veil, her hair shewed that modesty, submission a covered head that hid itself, as it were, in that submission and in that modesty was her true position, her distinctive glory.

Moreover, if any one contested the point, it was a custom which neither the apostle nor the assemblies allowed.

Observe also here that, however man may have fallen, divine order in creation never loses its value as the expression of the mind of God. Thus also in James, man is said to be created in the image of God. As to his moral condition, he needs (now that he has knowledge of good and of evil) to be born again, created in righteousness and in true holiness, that he may be the image of God as now revealed through Christ; but his position in the world, as the head and centre of all things which no angel has been is the idea of God Himself, as well as the position of the woman, the companion of his glory but subject to him; an idea which will be gloriously accomplished in Christ, and with respect to the woman in the assembly; but which is true in itself, being the constituted order of God, and always right as such: for the ordinance of God creates order, although, no doubt, His wisdom and His perfection are displayed in it.

The reader will remark, that this order in creation, as well as that which is established in the counsels of God in respect of the woman, of the man, of Christ, and of God Himself, and the fact that men at least Christians under redemption are a spectacle to angels (compare Co1 4:9), subjects which here I can only indicate, have the highest interest. [See Note #12] The apostle afterwards touches upon the subject of their assemblies. In Verse 2 (Co1 11:2) he had praised them; but on this point he could not do so (Co1 11:17). Their assemblies manifested a spirit of division. This division concerned the distinction between the rich and the poor, but, as it seems, gave rise to others: at least others were necessary to make manifest those who were really approved of God. Now these divisions had the character of sects; that is to say, particular opinions divided Christians of the same assembly, of the assembly of God, into schools; they were hostile to each other, although they took the Lord's supper together if indeed it could be said that they took it together. Jealousies that had arisen between the rich and the poor tended to foster the sectarian division. If, I observed, it could be said that they broke bread together; for each one took care to eat his own supper before the others did so, and some were hungry while others took their fill. This was not really eating the Lord's supper.

The apostle, guided by the Holy Ghost, seizes the opportunity to declare to them the nature and the import of this ordinance. We may notice here, that the Lord had taught it him by an especial revelation proof of the interest that belongs to it, [See Note #13] and that it is a part of the Lord's mind in the entire christian walk, to which He attaches importance in view of our moral condition, and of the state of our spiritual affections individually, as well as those of the assembly. In the joy of christian liberty, amid the powerful effects of the presence of the Holy Ghost of the gifts by which He manifested Himself in the assembly, the Lord's death, His broken body, was brought to mind, and, as it were, made present to faith as the basis and foundation of everything. This act of love, this simple and solemn deed, weak and empty in appearance, preserved all its importance. The Lord's body had been offered for us! to which the Holy Ghost Himself was to bear witness, and which was to maintain all its importance in the Christian's heart, and to be the foundation and centre of the edifice of the assembly. Whatever might be the power that shone forth in the assembly, the heart was brought back to this. The body of the Lord Himself had been offered, [See Note #14] the lips of Jesus had claimed our remembrance. This moral equilibrium is very important to saints. Power, and the exercise of gifts do not necessarily act upon the conscience and the heart of those to whom they are committed, nor of those always who enjoy their display. And, although God is present (and when we are in a good state, that is felt), still it is a man who speaks and who acts upon others; he is prominent. In the Lord's supper the heart is brought back to a point in which it is entirely dependent, in which man is nothing, in which Christ and His love are everything, in which the heart is exercised, and the conscience remembers that it has needed cleansing, and that it has been cleansed by the work of Christ that we depend absolutely on this grace. The affections also are in the fullest exercise. It is important to remember this. The consequences that followed forgetfulness of the import of this ordinance confirmed its importance and the Lord's earnest desire that they should take heed to it. The apostle is going to speak of the power of the Holy Ghost manifested in His gifts, and of the regulations necessary to maintain order and provide for edification where they were exercised in the assembly; but, before doing so, he places the Lord's supper as the moral centre, the object of the assembly.

Let us remark some of the thoughts of the Spirit in connection with this ordinance.

First, He links the affections with it in the strongest way. It was the same night on which Jesus was betrayed that He left this memorial of His sufferings and of His love. As the paschal lamb brought to mind the deliverance which the sacrifice offered in Egypt had procured for Israel, thus the Lord's supper called to mind the sacrifice of Christ. He is in the glory, the Spirit is given; but they were to remember Him. His offered body was the object before their hearts in this memorial. Take notice of this word "Remember." It is not a Christ as He now exists, it is not the realisation of what He is: that is not a remembrance His body is now glorified. It is a remembrance of what He was on the cross. It is a body slain, and blood shed, not a glorified body. It is remembered, though, by those who are now united to Him in the glory into which He is entered. As risen and associated with Him in glory, they look back to that blessed work of love, and His love in it which gave them a place there. They drink also of the cup in remembrance of Him. In a word, it is Christ looked at as dead: there is not such a Christ now.

It is the remembrance of Christ Himself. It is that which attaches to Himself, it is not only the value of His sacrifice, but attachment to Himself, the remembrance of Himself. The apostle then shews us, if it is a dead Christ, who it is that died. Impossible to find two words, the bringing together of which has so important a meaning, The death of the Lord. How many things are comprised in that He who is called the Lord had died! What love! what purposes! what efficacy! what results! The Lord Himself gave Himself up for us. We celebrate His death. At the same time, it is the end of God's relations with the world on the ground of man's responsibility, except the judgment. This death has broken every link has proved the impossibility of any. We shew forth this death until the rejected Lord shall return, to establish new bonds of association by receiving us to Himself to have part in them. It is this which we proclaim in the ordinance when we keep it. Besides this, it is in itself a declaration that the blood on which the new covenant is founded has been already shed; it was established in this blood. I do not go beyond that which the passage presents; the object of the Spirit of God here, is to set

before us, not the efficacy of the death of Christ, but that which attaches the heart to Him in remembering His death, and the meaning of the ordinance itself. It is a dead, betrayed Christ whom we remember. The offered body was, as it were, before their eyes at this supper. The shed blood of the Saviour claimed the affections of their heart for Him. They were guilty of despising these precious things, if they took part in the supper unworthily. The Lord Himself fixed our thoughts there in this ordinance, and in the most affecting way, at the very moment of His betrayal.

But if Christ attracted the heart thus to fix its attention there, discipline was also solemnly exercised in connection with this ordinance. If they despised the broken body and the blood of the Lord by taking part in it lightly, chastisement was inflicted. Many had become sick and weak, and many had fallen asleep, that is, had died. It is not the being worthy to partake that is spoken of, but the partaking in an unworthy manner. Every Christian, unless some sin had excluded him, was worthy to partake because he was a Christian. But a Christian might come to it without judging himself, or appreciating as he ought that which the supper brought to his mind, and which Christ had connected with it. He did not discern the Lord's body; and he did not discern, did not judge, the evil in himself. God cannot leave us thus careless. If the believer judges himself, the Lord will not judge him; if we do not judge ourselves, the Lord judges; but when the Christian is judged, he is chastened of the Lord that he may not be condemned with the world. It is the government of God in the hands of the Lord who judges His own house: an important and too much forgotten truth. No doubt the result of all is according to the counsels of God, who displays in it all His wisdom, His patience, and the righteousness of His ways; but this government is real. He desires the good of His people in the end; but He will have holiness, a heart whose condition answers to that which He has revealed (and He has revealed Himself), a walk which is its expression. The normal state of a Christian is communion, according to the power of that which has been revealed. Is there failure in this communion is lost, and with it the power to glorify God, a power found nowhere else. But if one judges oneself, there is restoration: the heart being cleansed from the evil by judging it, communion is restored. If one does not judge oneself, God must interpose and correct

and cleanse us by discipline discipline which may even be unto death (see Job 33, 36; Jo1 5:16; Jam 5:14-15).

There are yet one or two remarks to be made. To "judge" oneself, is not the same word as to be "judged" of the Lord. It is the same that is used in Co1 11:29, "discerning the Lord's body." Thus, what we have to do is not only to judge an evil committed, it is to discern one's condition, as it is manifested in the light even as God Himself is in the light by walking in it. This prevents our falling into evil either in act or thought. But if we have fallen, it is not enough to judge the action; it is ourselves we must judge, and the state of heart, the tendency, the neglect, which occasioned our falling into the evil in a word, that which is not communion with God or that which hinders it. It was thus the Lord dealt with Peter. He did not reproach him for his fault, He judged its root.

Moreover the assembly ought to have power to discern these things. God acts in this way, as we have seen in Job; but the saints have the mind of Christ by the Spirit of Christ, and ought to discern their own condition.

The foundation and centre of all this, is the position in which we stand towards Christ in the Lord's supper, as the visible centre of communion and the expression of His death; in which sin, all sin, is judged. Now we are in connection with this holy judgment of sin as our portion. We cannot mingle the death of Christ with sin. It is, as to its nature and efficacy, of which the full result will in the end be manifested, the total putting away of sin. It is the divine negation of sin. He died to sin, and that in love to us. It is the absolute holiness of God made sensible and expressed to us in that which took place with regard to sin. It is absolute devotedness to God for His glory in this respect. To bring sin or carelessness into it, is to profane the death of Christ, who died rather than allow sin to subsist before God. We cannot be condemned with the world, because He has died and has put away sin for us; but to bring sin to that which represents this very death in which He suffered for sin is a thing which cannot be borne. God vindicates that which is due to the holiness and the love of a Christ who gave up His life to put away sin. One cannot say, I will not go to the table; that is, I will accept the sin and give up the confession of the value of that death. We examine ourselves, and we go; we re-establish the rights of His death in our

conscience for all is pardoned and expiated as to guilt, and we go to acknowledge these rights as the proof of infinite grace.

The world is condemned. Sin in the Christian is judged, it escapes neither the eye nor the judgment of God. He never permits it; He cleanses the believer from it by chastening him, although He does not condemn, because Christ has borne his sins, and been made sin for him. The death of Christ forms then the centre of communion in the assembly, and the touchstone of conscience, and that, with respect to the assembly, in the Lord's supper.

Note #10

In Ti1 2:11-15 the moral effect of the circumstances of the fall is introduced, as giving the woman her true place in the assembly with regard to man.

Note #11

We are not as yet come to the order in the assembly. That commences with Verse 17 (Co1 11:17).

Note #12

The first Chapter of Genesis gives us man in his place in creation as from God the Creator; the second, his own relationship with Jehovah God, where he was placed in connection with Him, and the woman's with himself.

Note #13

This connects itself too with the fact that it is the expression of the unity of the body truth specially committed to the apostle. On the other hand, he was not sent to baptise. That was mere admission to the house already formed, and to which the apostle had been admitted like others.

Note #14

I do not say "broken", the best MSS. omitting it; but it is the memorial of Christ slain, and His precious blood poured out.

1 Corinthians Chapter 12

The other branch of the truth, in reference to the assembly of God in general and to the assemblies, is the presence and the gifts of the Holy

Ghost. These, as well as the Lord's supper, are in connection with unity [See Note #15]; the individual being responsible in each. It is the subject of spiritual manifestations which the apostle takes up in Chapter 12. The first point was to establish the distinctive marks of the Spirit of God. There were evil spirits, who sought to creep in among the Christians, and to speak or act pretending to be the Spirit of God, and thus to confound everything. Christians of the present day hardly believe in such efforts of the enemy as these. Spiritual manifestations are, no doubt, less striking now than at the time of which the apostle speaks; but the enemy adapts his means of deception to the circumstances in which man and the work of God are found. As Peter says in a similar case, "As there were false prophets among the people, so shall there be false teachers among you." The enemy does not cease to act. "Forbidding to marry," etc., was the doctrine of devils. In the last days his power will be manifested still more. God can restrain him by the energy of His Spirit, and by the power of the truth; but if he is not bridled, he still acts, deceiving men, and that by such things as one would suppose it impossible (if not deceived oneself) that a man of sober sense could believe. But it is surprising what a man can believe when he is left to himself, without being kept by God, when the power of the enemy is there. We talk of common sense, of reason (very precious they are); but history tells us that God alone gives them or preserves them to us.

Here the Spirit of God manifested Himself by the effects of His power, which broke forth in the midst of the assembly, attracting the attention even of the world. The enemy imitated them. The greater part of the Christians at Corinth having been poor Gentiles, without discernment, and stupidly led by the delusions of the enemy, they were the more in danger of being again deceived by this means. When a man is not filled with the Spirit of God, who gives force to the truth in his heart, and clearness to his moral vision, the seductive power of the enemy dazzles his imagination. He loves the marvellous, unbelieving as he may be with regard to the truth. He lacks holy discernment, because he is ignorant of the holiness and character of God, and has not the stability of a soul that possesses the knowledge of God (God Himself, we may say) as his treasure of a soul which knows that it has all in Him, so that it needs no other marvels. If a man is not thus established by the knowledge of God, the power of the enemy strikes him pre-occupies

him; he cannot shake it off, he cannot account for it. He is a victim to the influence which this power exercises over his mind; the flesh is pleased with it, for in one shape or another the result is always liberty to the flesh.

Long led blindly by the power of evil spirits, the converted Gentiles were hardly in a state to discern and judge them. Strange to say, this demoniac power exercised such an influence that they forgot the importance even of the name of Jesus, or at least forgot that His name was not acknowledged by it. The enemy transforms himself into an angel of light, but he never really owns Jesus Christ as Lord. He will speak of Paul and Silvanus, and would have his part with Christians, but Christ is not acknowledged; and at last it is the breaking up and ruin of those who follow him. An unclean spirit would not say Lord Jesus, and the Spirit of God could not say Anathema to Jesus. But it is a question here of spirits, and not of conversion, nor of the necessity of grace working in the heart for the true confession of the name of Jesus a very true thing, as we know, but not the subject here.

We come now to positive instructions. Nothing more important, more distinctive, more marvellous, than the presence of the Holy Ghost here below in the midst of Christians; the fruit to us, of the perfect work of Christ, but in itself the manifestation of the presence of God among men on the earth. The providence of God manifests His power in the works of creation, and His government which directs all things; but the Holy Ghost is His presence in this world, the testimony that He bears of Himself, of His character. [See Note #16] He is among men to display Himself, not yet in glory, but in power and in testimony of what He is. Christ having accomplished redemption, and having presented the efficacy of His work to God, Sovereign and Judge, the assembly, being ransomed and cleansed by His blood, and united to Him as His body, became also the vessel of this power which acts in His members. Thus she ought to display this power in holiness she is responsible to do so. But in this way, as to its exercise, man becomes in fact individually the vessel of this spiritual energy. It is a treasure committed to him. Now the Spirit is, in the first place, the link between the assembly and Christ, as well as between the Christian and Christ. It is by the Spirit that communion is realised and maintained, it is the primary function of the Spirit; and man must be in communion in order to realise the

character and discern the will of God, and that, according to the testimony intended to be borne by the Spirit come down to earth.

But if the assembly does not maintain this communion, she loses her strength as the responsible witness of God on earth, and in fact her joy and her spiritual intelligence also. God is ever sovereign to act as He chooses, and Christ cannot fail in His faithfulness to His body; but the testimony committed to the assembly is no longer so rendered as to make it felt that God is present on the earth. The assembly is not, perhaps, aware of the estrangement, because she retains for a time much of that which God has given, which is far beyond all that was according to nature; and in losing strength she has also lost the discernment of what she ought to be. But God is never mistaken as to the assembly's condition "Thou hast left thy first love." "Except thou repent," says He, "and do the first works, I will take away thy candlestick" a solemn consideration for the assembly, as to her responsibility, when we reflect on the grace that has been shewn her, on the fruits that have been and those that ought to have been manifested, and on the power given her to produce them.

The purposes of God for the assembly have their end and aim in heaven. They will be accomplished without the possibility of the least thing failing. All that is needful to bring her members there according to His counsels, Christ will do. They are redeemed by His blood to be His.

The ways of God are accomplished and unfolded on the earth for our instruction, both in the assembly and in individuals.

It is not only in His gifts that the presence of the Spirit of God is manifested. There are prophecies and miracles, men moved by the Holy Ghost, before the day of Pentecost. That which is attributed to faith in Hebrews 11 is often ascribed to the Spirit in the Old Testament. But the Spirit was promised in a special way in the Old Testament. He was never at that period the presence of God in the midst of the people, as He dwelt in the assembly. The glory came to take possession of the tabernacle or temple. His Spirit acted in sovereignty outside the order of His house, and could be with them when that glory was gone. But the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to dwell in the disciples and in the assembly on earth, was the manifestation of the

presence of God in His house, of God who was there by the Spirit. And this presence of the Spirit is so distinct, and so plainly noted as a thing known and realised by the first Christians, which demonstrated instead of being demonstrated, that it is spoken of in the word as being the Holy Ghost Himself. In John 7 it is said, "The Holy Ghost was not yet." In Acts 19 the twelve men say to Paul, "We have not so much as heard whether the Holy Ghost is." It was not a question whether there was a Holy Ghost (every orthodox Jew believed it), but whether this presence of the Holy Ghost Himself dwelling here below, the new Comforter and Guide of the disciples, of which John the Baptist had spoken, had yet taken place. When come down, it was the presence of God in His spiritual temple on earth. The place in which the disciples were gathered together was shaken to shew that God was there. Ananias and Sapphira fell down dead before the apostles for having lied to God. Philip is caught away by His power from the presence of the man who had received the knowledge of Jesus by his means.

Such was the presence of the Holy Ghost. In our Chapter, the apostle speaks of the manifestations of His presence in the gifts which were exercised by the instrumentality of members of the body, whether for the calling out and edification of the assembly, or in testimony to those outside. Before entering on this subject, he gives the Corinthians whom the enemy would have deeply deceived that which would enable them to distinguish between the manifestation of the Holy Ghost and the actings of an evil spirit. He then speaks of gifts.

Now there were not divers spirits, as in the case of demons; there was only one and the same Spirit, but diversity of gifts. This gives occasion to bring in the different relationship (for he speaks of the order of the relations of man with God the practical energy of which is in the Holy Ghost) in which men, moved by the Holy Ghost, are placed with regard to God and to Christ. The Spirit, one and the same Spirit, acts in them by various manifestations. But in the exercise of these different gifts they were administrators, and there was one Lord, that is, Christ. It was not therefore in them an independent and voluntary power: whatever might be the energy of the Spirit in them, they did not cease to be servants and stewards of Christ, and they were to act in this character, acknowledging in their service the Lordship of Christ.

Nevertheless, although it was power in a man, and that it was man who acted, so that he was a servant (and a Man who was Head and who was served, although He was Son of God and Lord of all), yet it was God who wrought, one and the same God who wrought all in all. It is not the Trinity, properly speaking, that is presented here in its own character, but one only Spirit acting in Christians, Jesus Lord, and God acting in the gifts.

The gifts are manifestations of the energy of the Spirit thus committed to men, under Christ who is Head and Lord; men were to use them as serving the Lord. Now Christ thought of what was profitable to His people, to those that were His; and the manifestation of the Spirit was given for the profit of souls, of the assembly in general. The apostle notices several of these gifts; but he reminds us again that it is the same Spirit who works in each case, distributing to every one according to His own will. Let the reader remark this passage. The apostle had said that God wrought all these things, and had spoken of the gifts as being manifestations of the Spirit. It might have been supposed that the Spirit was some vague influence, and that one must attribute everything to God without recognising a personal Spirit. But these operations, which were attributed to God in Verse 6 (Co1 12:6), are here attributed to the Spirit; and it is added, that He, the Spirit, distributes to each as He will. It is not therefore an inferior Spirit. Where He works, it is God who works; but these operations in men are gifts distributed according to the will of the Spirit, the Spirit being thus presented as acting personally in this distribution and according to His will.

Some of the gifts may require a short observation. Wisdom is the application of divine light to right and wrong, and to all the circumstances through which we pass an expression which has a wide extent, because it applies to everything with regard to which we have to form a judgment. The Holy Ghost furnishes some in a peculiar way with this wisdom, with a wisdom according to God a perception of the true nature of things, and of their relationship to each other, and of conduct with regard to both, which, coming from God, guides us through the difficulties of the way, and enables us to avoid that which would place us in a false position towards God and man.

Knowledge is intelligence in the mind of God as it is revealed to us. Faith is not here simple faith in the gospel; that is not a distinctive gift which one believer may possess and another not. This is evident. It is the faith, the energy, given by God, which overcomes difficulties, which rises above dangers, which confronts them without being alarmed by them. The discerning of spirits is not that of a man's condition of soul it has nothing to do with it. It is the knowing how to discern, by the mighty energy of the Spirit of God, the actings of evil spirits, and to bring them to light if necessary, in contrast with the action of the Spirit of God.

The other gifts require no comment. We must now return to the unity of the Spirit, with which is connected that which the apostle says after having spoken of the gifts. The Spirit was one, he had said, working diversely in the members according to His will. The importance of His personality, and the immense import of His divinity (if we reflect that it is He who works in and by man) is very evident when we observe that He is the centre and the living power of the unity of the whole body, so that the individuals, in the exercise of their gifts, are but the members of the one and the same body divinely formed by the power and the presence of the Spirit. This point the apostle develops largely, in connection with the oneness of the body, the mutual dependence of the members, and the relationship of each one to the body as a whole.

The practical instructions are easily understood, but there are some important points in the general principles. The oneness of the body is produced by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and the connection of the members depends upon it. By one Spirit we have all been baptised to be one body. The Lord's supper is the expression of this oneness; the Spirit is He who produces it, and who is its strength. The distinctive character of Jew and Gentile and all other distinctions was lost in the power of one Spirit common to all, who united them all as redeemed ones in one only body. The apostle in this Verse (Co1 12:13) speaks of the baptism of the Holy Ghost; but the word suggests to him the supper, the second ordinance of the Lord, and he speaks of drinking into one spirit, alluding, I doubt not, to the Lord's supper. He does not speak of the Holy Ghost: one spirit was the state of the

believers, the word being used in contrast with one body, associated in one heart and mind by the Spirit participating in Christ.

It is not faith which is union, nor even life, though both are the portion of those united, but the Holy Ghost. The baptism of the Holy Ghost, then, is that which forms Christians into one only body, and they are all made partakers of, are animated individually by, one and the same Spirit. Thus there are many members, but one only body, and a body composed of these members, which are dependent the one on the other, and have need of each other. And even those gifts which were the most shining were comparatively of the least value, even as a man clothes and ornaments the least honourable parts of his body, and leaves the more beautiful parts uncovered.

Another point which the apostle marks, is the common interest that exists among them in that they are members of the one and the same body. If one suffers, all suffer, since there is but one body animated by one Spirit. If one is honoured, all rejoice. This also depends on the one self-same Spirit who unites and animates them. Moreover this body is the body of Christ. "Ye are," says the apostle, "the body of Christ, and members in particular."

Observe, also, here that, although that assembly at Corinth was only a part of the body of Christ, the apostle speaks of the whole body; for the assembly there was, according to the principle of its gathering, the body of Christ as assembled at Corinth. It is true that at the beginning he speaks of all those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus; but in fact he addresses the Corinthian assembly. And the general expression shews that, in the walk of the assembly, and in its general interests, a local assembly cannot be separated from the whole body of Christians on earth; and the language employed here shews that, as to their position before God, the Christians of one town were considered as representing the whole assembly, as far as regarded that locality; not as independent of the rest, but, on the contrary, as inseparably united to the others, living and acting, with respect to that locality as members of the body of Christ, and looked upon as such in it, because every Christian formed a part of that body, and they formed a part of it likewise. From the Verses that follow we see that the apostle, while looking upon the Christians there as the body of Christ, the members of

which they were, has in his mind the whole assembly as the assembly of God. In the New Testament there is no other membership than that of Christ, except that they are members of each other, as forming the entire body, but never members of a church; the idea is different. The word speaks of the members of a body, like that of man as a figure, never of the members of an assembly in the modern sense of the word. We are members of Christ, and consequently of the body of Christ; so were the Corinthians, as far as that body was manifested at Corinth.

Moreover the body of Christ, the assembly, is looked at here as a whole upon the earth. God has set in the assembly, apostles, prophets, etc.; miracles, healings, tongues. It is very plain that this is on the earth, as were the Corinthians, and that it is the assembly as a whole. Healings and tongues were not in heaven, and the apostles were not those of an individual assembly. In a word it was the Holy Ghost, come down from heaven, who had formed the unity of the body on earth, and who acted in it by the especial gifts which distinguished the members.

The apostle then points out these gifts, not to give a formal and complete list of them, but to mark the order and importance of those he mentions. Tongues, of which the Corinthians were so proud, are the last gifts named in the list. Some gifts then, were more excellent than others; they were to be estimated according to the measure in which they served for the edification of the assembly. Those which served this end were to be desired.

It is interesting to remark here the difference of this Chapter and Ephesians 4. Here it is simply power, and men are told in certain cases to be silent, when the power was there; it was the Holy Ghost working as power. In Ephesians 4 it is Christ's care as Head of the body. No gifts which are signs of power to others are mentioned; only what founds the assembly, edifies the saints, and builds the assembly up; and then there is promise of continuance till we all come. For Christ cannot cease to care for His body; but sign gifts may disappear, and they have. Apostles and prophets were the foundation, and in that sense they were, when the foundation was laid, no longer in exercise.

Note #15

We have seen this with regard to the supper, in Co1 10:17. Here, Co1 12:13, we see it with regard to the Holy Ghost.

Note #16

It is a very striking truth that God's dwelling with men is the fruit of redemption. He did not dwell with Adam innocent; He could walk in the garden, but did not dwell there. He did not dwell with Abraham.

1 Corinthians Chapter 13

Nevertheless there was something more excellent than all gifts. They were the manifestations of the power of God and of the mysteries of His wisdom; love, that of His nature itself.

They might speak with all tongues; they might have prophecy, the knowledge of mysteries, the faith which can remove mountains; they might give all their possessions to feed the poor, and their bodies to be tortured: if they had not love, it was nothing. Love was conformity to the nature of God, the living expression of what He was, the manifestation of having been made partakers of His nature: it was the acting and feeling according to His likeness. This love is developed in reference to others; but others are not the motive, although they are the object. It has its source within; its strength is independent of the objects with which it is occupied. Thus it can act where circumstances might produce irritation or jealousy in the human heart. It acts according to its own nature in the circumstances; and by judging them according to that nature, they do not act upon the man who is full of love, except so far as they supply occasion for its activity, and direct its form. Love is its own motive. In us participation in the divine nature is its only source. Communion with God Himself alone sustains it through all the difficulties it has to surmount in its path. This love is the opposite of selfishness and of self-seeking, and shuts it out, seeking the good of others, even (as to its principle) as God has sought us in grace (see Eph 4:32; Eph 5:1-2). What a power to avoid evil in oneself, to forget all in order to do good!

It is worthy of note that the qualities of divine love are almost entirely of a passive character.

The first eight qualities pointed out by the Spirit are the expression of this renunciation of self. The three that follow, mark that joy in good which sets the heart free also from that readiness to suppose evil, which is so natural to human nature, on account of its own depth of evil, and that which it also experiences in the world. The last four shew its positive energy, which the source of every kind thought by the powerful spring of its divine nature, presumes good when it does not see it, and bears with evil when it sees it, covering it by longsuffering and patience; not bringing it to light, but burying it in its own depth a depth which is unfathomable, because love never changes. One finds nothing but love where it is real; for circumstances are but an occasion for it to act and shew itself. Love is always itself, and it is love which is exercised and displayed. It is that which fills the mind: everything else is but a means of awakening the soul that dwells in love to its exercise. This is the divine character. No doubt the time of judgment will come; but our relationships with God are in grace. Love is His nature. It is now the time of its exercise. We represent Him on earth in testimony.

In that which is said of love in this Chapter we find the reproduction of the divine nature, except that what is said is but the negative of the selfishness of the flesh in us. Now the divine nature changes not and never ceases; love therefore abides ever. Communications from God; the means by which they are made; knowledge, as attained here below, according to which we apprehend the truth in part only, although the whole truth is revealed to us (for we apprehend it in detail, so that we have never the whole at once, the character of our knowledge being to lay hold of different truths singly); all that is characterised by being in part passes away. Love will not pass away. A child learns; he rejoices too in things that amuse him; when he becomes a man, he requires things in accordance with his intelligence as a man. It was thus with tongues and the edification of the assembly. The time however was coming when they should know even as they were known, not by communications of truths to a capacity that apprehended the truth in its different parts, but they should understand it as a whole in its unity.

Now love subsists already; there are faith and hope also. Not only shall these pass away, but even now, here below, that which is of the nature of God is more excellent than that which is connected with the capacity of human

nature, even though enlightened by God, and having for its object the revealed glory of God.

Believers therefore were to follow after and seek for love, while desiring gifts, especially that they might prophesy, because thus they would edify the assembly, and that was the thing to aim at; it was that which love desired and sought, it was that which intelligence required, the two marks of a man in Christ, of one to whom Christ is all.

1 Corinthians Chapter 14

Two Verses in this Chapter 14 demand a little attention (Co1 14:1-2 the 3rd and the 6th (Co1 14:3; Co1 14:6). Verse 3 (Co1 14:3) is the effect, or rather the quality, of that which a prophet says, and not a definition. He edifies, he encourages, he comforts, by speaking. Nevertheless these words shew the character of what he said. Prophecy is in no wise simply the revelation of future events, although prophets as such have revealed them. A prophet is one who is so in communication with God as to be able to communicate His mind. A teacher instructs according to that which is already written, and so explains its import. But, in communicating the mind of God to souls under grace, the prophet encouraged and edified them. With regard to Verse 6 (Co1 14:6, it is plain that coming with tongues (by the use of which the Corinthians like children, loved to shine in the assembly) he that so spoke, edified no one, for he was not understood. Perhaps he did not understand himself, but was the unintelligent instrument of the Spirit, whilst having the powerful impression of the fact that God spoke by his means, so that in the Spirit he felt that he was in communication with God, although his understanding was unfruitful. In any case no one could speak for the edification of the assembly unless he communicated the mind of God.

Of such communication the apostle distinguishes two kinds revelation and knowledge. The latter supposes a revelation already given, of which some one availed himself by the Holy Ghost for the good of the flock. He then points out the gifts which were respectively the means of edifying in these two ways. It is not that the two latter terms (Co1 14:6) are the equivalents of the two former; but the two things here spoken of as edifying the church were accomplished by means of these two gifts. There might be "prophecy"

without its being absolutely a new revelation, although there was more in it than knowledge. It might contain an application of the thoughts of God, an address on the part of God to the soul, to the conscience, which would be more than knowledge, but which would not be a new revelation. God acts therein without revealing a new truth, or a new fact. "Knowledge," or "doctrine," teaches truths, or explains the word, a thing very useful to the assembly; but in it there is not the direct action of the Spirit in application, and thus not the direct manifestation of the presence of God to men in their own conscience and heart. When any one teaches, he who is spiritual profits by it; when one prophesies, even he who is not spiritual may feel it, he is reached and judged; and it is the same thing with the Christian's conscience. Revelation, or knowledge, is a perfect division and embraces everything. Prophecy, and doctrine, are in intimate connection with the two; but prophecy embraces other ideas, so that this division does not exactly answer to the first two terms.

The apostle insists largely on the necessity for making oneself understood, whether one speaks, or sings, or prays. He desires and the remark is of all importance in judging men's pretensions to the Spirit that the understanding be in exercise. He does not deny that they might speak with tongues without the understanding being at all in it a thing of evident power and utility when persons were present who understood no other language, or whose natural language it was. But, in general, it was an inferior thing when the Spirit did not act upon, and therefore by means of, the understanding in him who spoke. Communion between souls in a common subject, through the unity of the Spirit, did not exist when he who spoke did not understand what he said. The individual speaking did not himself enjoy, as from God, what he communicated to others. If others did not understand it either, it was child's play to utter words without meaning to the hearers. But the apostle desired to understand himself that which he said, although he spoke in many tongues; so that it was not jealousy on his part. He spoke more foreign tongues, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, than they all. But his soul loved the things of God loved to receive truth intelligently from Him loved to hold intelligent intercourse with others; and he would rather say five words with his understanding, than ten thousand without it in an unknown tongue.

What a marvellous power, what a manifestation of the presence of God a thing worthy of the deepest attention and, at the same time, what superiority to all carnal vanity, to the lustre reflected upon the individual by means of gifts what moral power of the Spirit of God, where love saw nothing in these manifestations of power in gift but instruments to be used for the good of the assembly and of souls! It was the practical force of that love, to the exercise of which, as being superior to gifts, he exhorted the faithful. It was the love and the wisdom of God directing the exercise of His power for the good of those whom He loved. What a position for a man! What simplicity is imparted by the grace of God to one who forgets self in humility and love, and what power in that humility! The apostle confirms his argument by the effect that would be produced on strangers who might come into the assembly, or on unenlightened Christians, if they heard languages spoken which no one understood: they would think them mad. Prophecy, reaching their conscience, would make them feel that God was there was present in the assembly of God.

Gifts were abundant in Corinth. Having regulated that which concerned moral questions, the apostle in the second place regulates the exercise of those gifts. Every one came with some manifestation of the power of the Holy Ghost, of which they evidently thought more than of conformity to Christ. Nevertheless the apostle acknowledges in it the power of the Spirit of God, and gives rules for its exercise. Two or three might speak with tongues, provided there was an interpreter, so that the assembly might be edified. And this was to be done one at a time, for it appears they even spoke several at once. In the same way as to the prophets: two or three might speak, the others would judge if it really came from God. For, if it were given to them of God, all might prophesy; but only one at a time, that all might learn a dependence always good for the most gifted prophets and that all might be comforted. The spirits of the prophets (that is to say, the impulse of the power in the exercise of gifts) were subject to the guidance of the moral intelligence which the Spirit bestowed on the prophets. They were, on God's part, masters of themselves in the use of these gifts, in the exercise of this marvellous power which wrought in them. It was not a divine fury, as the pagans said of their diabolical inspiration, which carried them away; for God could not be the author of confusion in the assembly,

but of peace. In a word we see that this power was committed to man in his moral responsibility; an important principle, which is invariable in the ways of God. God saved man by grace, when he had failed in his responsibility; but all that He has committed to man, whatever may be the divine energy of the gift, man holds as responsible to use it for the glory of God, and consequently for the good of others and especially for the assembly.

Women were to be silent in the assembly: it was not permitted to them to speak. They were to remain in obedience and not to direct others. The law moreover held the same language. It would be a shame to hear them speak in public. If they had had questions to ask, they might inquire of their husbands at home.

With all their gifts, the word did not come out from the Corinthians, nor had it come unto them only; they ought to submit to the universal order of the Spirit in the assembly. If they pretended to be led by the Spirit, let them acknowledge (and this would prove it,) that the things which the apostle wrote to them were the commandments of the Lord: a very important assertion; a responsible and serious position of this wonderful servant of God.

What a mixture of tenderness, of patience, and of authority! The apostle desires that the faithful should come to the truth and to order, conducted by their own affections; not fearing, if necessary for their good, to avail himself of an authority without appeal, as speaking directly from God an authority which God would justify if the apostle was forced unwillingly to use it. If any were ignorant that he wrote by the Spirit with the authority of God, it was ignorance indeed; let such be given up to their ignorance. Spiritual and simple men would be delivered from such pretensions. Those who were really filled with the Spirit would acknowledge that what the apostle wrote came immediately from God, and was the expression of His wisdom, of that which became Him: for often there may be the recognition of divine or even human wisdom when it is found, where there was not the ability to find it, nor, if it were perceived in part, the power to set it forth with authority. Meanwhile the man of pretension, reduced to this place, would find the place profitable, and that which he needed.

We shall also observe here the importance of this assertion of the apostle's with regard to the inspiration of the epistles. That which he taught for the details even of the order of the assembly, was so really given of God, came so entirely from God, that they were the commandments of the Lord. For doctrine we have, at the end of the Epistle to the Romans, the same declaration that it was by means of prophetic writings that the gospel was disseminated among the nations.

The apostle resumes his instructions by saying, that they should desire to prophesy, not forbid to speak with tongues, and that all should be done with order and propriety.

1 Corinthians Chapter 15

But other evils had found means to introduce themselves into the midst of the shining gifts which were exercised in the bosom of the flock at Corinth. The resurrection of the dead was denied. Satan is wily in his dealings. Apparently it was only the body that was in question; nevertheless the whole gospel was at stake, for if the dead rose not, then Christ was not risen. And if Christ was not risen, the sins of the faithful were not put away, and the gospel was not true. The apostle therefore reserved this question for the end of his epistle, and he enters into it thoroughly.

First, he reminds them of that which he had preached among them as the gospel, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and was raised again according to the scriptures. This then was the means of their salvation, if they continued in it, unless they had believed in vain. Here at least was a very solid foundation for his argument: their salvation (unless all that they had believed was but a profitless fable) depended on the fact of the resurrection, and was bound up with it. But if the dead rose not, Christ was not risen, for He had died. The apostle begins therefore by establishing this fact through the most complete and positive testimonies, including his own testimony, since he had himself seen the Lord. Five hundred persons had seen Him at once, the greater part of whom were still alive to bear witness of it.

Observe, in passing, that the apostle can speak of nothing without a moral effect being produced in his heart, because he thinks of it with God. Thus,

Verses 8-10 (Co1 15:8-10, he calls to mind the state of things with regard to himself and to the other apostles, and that which grace had done; and then, his heart unburdened, he returns to his subject. The testimony of every divine witness was the same. Everything declared that Christ was risen; everything depended on the fact that He was so. This was his starting-point. If, said he, that which was preached among you is that Christ was raised from the dead, how happens it that some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is none, Christ is not risen; if He is not risen, the preaching of His witnesses is vain, the faith of Christians vain. Nor that only; but these witnesses are false witnesses, for they had declared, with respect to God, that He had raised up Christ from the dead. But God had not raised Him up if the dead do not rise. And in that case their faith was vain: they were yet in their sins; and those who had already fallen asleep in Christ had perished. Now, if it be in this life only that the believer has hope in Christ, he is of all men the most miserable; he does but suffer as to this world. But it is not so, for Christ is risen.

Here, however, it is not only a general doctrine that the dead are raised. Christ, in rising, came up from among the dead. It is the favour and the power of God come in, [See Note #17] to bring back from among the dead the One who had in His grace gone down into death to accomplish and to display the deliverance of man in Christ from the power of Satan and of death; and to put a public seal on the work of redemption, to exhibit openly in man the victory over all the power of the enemy. Thus Christ arose from among all the other dead (for death could not hold Him), and established the glorious principle of this divine and complete deliverance, and He became the first-fruits of them that slept, who, having His life, await the exercise of His power, which will awaken them by virtue of the Spirit that dwells in them.

This evidently gives a very peculiar character to the resurrection. It is not only that the dead rise, but that God, by His power, brings back certain persons from among the dead, on account of the favour which He has for them, and in connection with the life and the Spirit which are in them. Christ has a quite peculiar place. Life was in Him, and He is our life. He gained this victory by which we profit. He is of right the first-fruits. It was due to His

glory. Had He not gained the victory, we should always have remained in prison. He had power Himself to resume life, but the great principle is the same, it is not only a resurrection of the dead, but those who are alive according to God arise as the objects of His favour, and by the exercise of that power which wills to have them for Himself and with Himself-Christ, the first-fruits: those who are Christ's, at His coming. We are associated with Christ in resurrection. We come out like Him, not only from death, but from the dead. We mark, too, here how Christ and His people are inseparably identified. If they do not rise, He is not risen. He was as really dead as we can be, has taken in grace our place under death, was a man as we are men (save sin) so truly that, if you deny this result for us, you deny the fact as to Him; and the object and foundation of faith itself fails. This identification of Christ with men, so as to be able to draw a conclusion from us to Him, is full of power and blessing. If the dead do not rise, He is not risen; He was as truly dead as we can be.

It needed to be by man. No doubt the power of God can call men back from the tomb. He will do so, acting in the Person of His Son, to whom all judgment is given. But that will not be a victory gained in human nature over death which held men captive. This it is which Christ has done. He was willing to be given up to death for us, in order (as man) to gain the victory for us over death and over him who had the power of death. By man came death; by man, resurrection. Glorious victory! complete triumph! We come out of the state where sin and its consequences fully reached us. Evil cannot enter the place into which we are brought out. We have crossed the frontiers for ever. Sin, the power of the enemy, remains outside this new creation, which is the fruit of the power of God after evil had come in, and which the responsibility of man shall not mar. It is God who maintains it in connection with Himself: it depends on Him.

There are two great principles established here: by man, death; by man, the resurrection of the dead; Adam and Christ as heads of two families. In Adam all die; in Christ all shall be made alive. But here there is an all-important development in connection with the position of Christ in the counsels of God. One side of this truth is the dependence of the family, so to call it, upon its head. Adam brought death into the midst of his descendants those who

are in relation with himself. This is the principle which characterises the history of the first Adam. Christ, in whom is life, brings life into the midst of those who are His communicates it to them. This principle characterises the second Adam, and those who are His in Him. But it is life in the power of resurrection, without which it could not have been communicated to them. The grain of wheat would have been perfect in itself, but would have remained alone. But He died for their sins, and now He imparts life to them, all their sins being forgiven them.

Now, in the resurrection, there is an order according to the wisdom of God for the accomplishment of His counsels Christ, the first-fruits; those who are Christ's, at His coming again. Thus those who are in Christ are quickened according to the power of the life which is in Christ; it is the resurrection of life. But this is not the whole extent of resurrection as acquired by Christ, in gaining the victory over death according to the Spirit of holiness. The Father has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him. The latter are those of whom this Chapter treats essentially, because its subject is resurrection among Christians; and the apostle, the Spirit Himself, loves to speak on the subject of the power of eternal life in Christ. Yet he cannot entirely omit the other part of the truth. The resurrection of the dead, he tells us, is come by man. But he is not here speaking of the communication of life in Christ. In connection with this last and nearer part of his subject, he does not touch upon the resurrection of the wicked; but after the coming of Christ he introduces the end, when He shall have given up the kingdom to the Father. With the kingdom is introduced the power of Christ exercised over all things a different thought entirely from the communication of life to His own.

There are three steps therefore in these events: first, the resurrection of Christ; then, the resurrection of those who are His, at His coming; afterwards, the end, when He shall have given up the kingdom to the Father. The first and the second are the accomplishment in resurrection of the power of life in Christ and in His people. When He comes, He takes the kingdom; He takes His great power and acts as king. From His coming then to the end is the development of His power, in order to subdue all things to Himself; during which all power and all authority shall be abolished. For He

must reign till all His enemies are under His feet; the last subdued will be death. Here then, as the effect of His power only, and not in connection with the communication of life, we find the resurrection of those who are not His; for the destruction of death is their resurrection. They are passed over in silence: only that death, such as we see it, has no longer dominion over them. Christ has the right and the power, in virtue of His resurrection and of His having glorified the Father, to destroy the dominion of death over them, and to raise them up again. This will be the resurrection of judgment. Its effect is declared elsewhere.

When He has put all His enemies under His feet, and has given back the kingdom to His Father (for it is never taken from Him, nor given to another, as happens with human kingdoms), then the Son Himself is subject to Him who has put all things under Him, in order that God may be all in all. The reader should observe, that it is the counsels of God with regard to the government of all things which is here spoken of, and not His nature; and moreover it is the Son, as man, of whom these things are said. This is not an arbitrary explanation: the passage is from Psalm 8, the subject of which is the exaltation of man to the position of head of all things, God putting all things under His feet. Nothing, says the apostle, is excepted (Heb 2:8) save, as he adds here, that He is necessarily excepted who put all things under Him. When the man Christ, the Son of God, has in fact accomplished this subjugation, He gives back to God the universal power which had been committed to Him, and the mediatorial kingdom, which He held as man, ceases. He is again subject, as He was on earth. He does not cease to be one with the Father, even as He was so while living in humiliation on the earth, although saying at the same time "Before Abraham was, I am." But the mediatorial government of man has disappeared is absorbed in the supremacy of God, to which there is no longer any opposition. Christ will take His eternal place, a Man, the Head of the whole redeemed family, being at the same time God blessed for ever, one with the Father. In Psalm 2 we see the Son of God, as born on earth, King in Zion, rejected when He presented Himself on earth; in Psalm 8 the result of His rejection, exalted as Son of man at the head of all that the hand of God has made. Then we find Him here laying down this conferred authority, and resuming the normal position of humanity, namely, that of subjection to Him who has put all

things under Him; but through it all, never changing His divine nature, nor save so far as exchanging humiliation for glory His human nature either. But God is now all in all, and the special government of man in the Person of Jesus a government with which the assembly is associated (see Eph 1:20-23, which is a quotation from the same Psalm) is merged in the immutable supremacy of God, the final and normal relationship of God with His creature. We shall find the Lamb omitted in that which is said in Rev 21:1-8, speaking of this same period.

Thus we find in this passage resurrection by man death having entered by man; the relationship of the saints with Jesus, the source and the power of life, the consequence being His resurrection, and theirs at His coming; power over all things committed to Christ, the risen Man; afterwards the kingdom given back to God the Father, the tabernacle of God with men, and the man Christ, the second Adam, eternally a man subject to the Supreme this last a truth of infinite value to us (the resurrection of the wicked, though supposed in the resurrection brought in by Christ, not being the direct subject of the Chapter). The reader must now remark that this passage is a revelation, in which the Spirit of God, having fixed the apostle's thoughts upon Jesus and the resurrection, suddenly interrupts the line of his argument, announcing with that impulse which the thought of Christ always gave to the mind and heart of the apostle all the ways of God in Christ with regard to the resurrection, to the connection of those that are His with Him in that resurrection, and the government and dominion which belong to Him as risen, as well as the eternal nature of His relationship, as man, to God. Having communicated these thoughts of God, which were revealed to him, he resumes the thread of his argument in Verse 29 (Co1 15:29). This part ends with Verse 34 (Co1 15:34), after which he treats the question, which they had brought forward as a difficulty in what manner should the dead be raised?

By taking the Verses 20-28 (Co1 15:20-28) (which contain so important a revelation in a passage that is complete in itself) as a parenthesis, the Verses 29-34 (Co1 15:29-34) become much more intelligible, and some expressions, which have greatly harassed interpreters, have a tolerably determined sense. The apostle had said, in Verse 16 (Co1 15:16), "If the dead rise not," and then, that if such were the case, those who had fallen asleep in Jesus

had perished, and that the living were of all men most miserable. At Verse 28 (Co1 15:28) he returns to these points, and speaks of those who are baptised for the dead, in connection with the assertion, that if there were no resurrection those who had fallen asleep in Christ had perished; "if," he says, repeating more forcibly the expression in Verse 16 (Co1 15:16), "the dead rise not at all"; and then shews how entirely he is himself in the second case he had spoken of, "of all men most miserable," and almost in the case of perishing also, being every moment in danger, striving as with wild beasts, dying daily. Baptised, then, for the dead is to become a Christian with the view fixed on those who have fallen asleep in Christ, and particularly as being slain for Him, taking one's portion with the dead, yea, with the dead Christ; it is the very meaning of baptism (Rom. 6). How senseless if they do not rise! As in 1 Thessalonians 4, the subject, while speaking of all Christians, is looked at in the same way. The word translated "for" is frequently used in these epistles for "in view of," "with reference to."

We have seen that Verses 20-28 (Co1 15:20-28) form a parenthesis. Verse 29 (Co1 15:29) then is connected with Verse 18 (Co1 15:18). Verses 30-32 (Co1 15:30-32) relate to Verse 19 (Co1 15:19). The historical explanations of these last Verses is found in the second epistle (see Co1 1:8-9; Co1 4:8-12). I do not think that Verse 32 (Co1 15:32) should be taken literally. The word translated "I have fought with beasts" is usually employed in a figurative sense, to be in conflict with fierce and implacable enemies. In consequence of the violence of the Ephesians he had nearly lost his life, and even despaired of saving it; but God had delivered him. But to what purpose all these sufferings, if the dead rise not? And observe here, that although the resurrection proves that death does not touch the soul (compare Luk 20:38), yet the apostle does not think of immortality, [See Note #18] apart from resurrection. God has to do so, with man? and man is composed of body and of soul. He gives account in the judgment of the things done in the body. It is when raised from the dead that he will do so. The intimate union between the two, quite distinct as they are, forms the spring of life, the seat of responsibility, the means of God's government with regard to His creatures, and the sphere in which His dealings are displayed. Death dissolves this union; and although the soul survives, and is happy or miserable, the existence of the complete man is suspended, the judgment of God is not applied, the believer is not yet

clothed with glory. Thus to deny the resurrection, was to deny the true relationship of God with man, and to make death the end of man, destroying man as God contemplates him, and making him perish like a beast. Compare the Lord's argument in that passage in Luke of which I have already quoted one Verse.

Alas! the denial of the resurrection was linked with the desire to unbridle the senses. Satan introduced it into the heart of Christians through their communication with persons with whom the Spirit of Christ would have had no communion.

They needed to have their conscience exercised, to be awakened, in order that righteousness might have its place there. It is the lack of that which is commonly the true source of heresies. They failed in the knowledge of God. It was to the shame of these Christians. God grant us to take heed to it! It is the great matter even in questions of doctrine.

But further, the inquisitive spirit of man would fain be satisfied with respect to the physical mode of the resurrection. The apostle did not gratify it, while rebuking the stupid folly of those who had occasion every day to see analogous things in the creation that surrounded them. Fruit of the power of God, the raised body would be, according to the good pleasure of Him who gave it anew for the glorious abode of the soul, a body of honour, which, having passed through death, would assume that glorious condition which God had prepared for it a body suited to the creature that possessed it, but according to the supreme will of Him who clothed the creature with it. There were different kinds of bodies; and as wheat was not the bare grain that had been sown, although a plant of its nature and not another, so should it be with the raised man. Different also were the glories of heavenly and earthly bodies: star differed from star in glory. I do not think that this passage refers to degrees of glory in heaven, but to the fact that God distributes glory as He pleases. Heavenly glory and earthly glory are however plainly put in contrast, for there will be an earthly glory.

And observe here, that it is not merely the fact of the resurrection which is set forth in this passage, but also its character. For the saints it will be a resurrection to heavenly glory. Their portion will be bodies incorruptible,

glorious, vessels of power, spiritual. This body, sown as the grain of wheat for corruption, shall put on glory and incorruptibility. [See Note #19] It is only the saints that are here spoken of "they also that are heavenly," and in connection with Christ, the second Adam. The apostle had said that the first body was "natural." Its life was that of the living soul; as to the body it partook of that kind of life which the other animals possessed whatever might be its superiority as to its relationship with God, in that God Himself had breathed into his nostrils the spirit of life, so that man was thus in a special way in relationship with God (of His race, as the apostle said at Athens). "Adam, the son of God," said the Holy Ghost in Luke made in the image of God. His conduct should have answered to it, and God had revealed Himself to him in order to place him morally in the position that was suitable to this breath of life which he had received. He had become free as he was from death by the power of God who sustained him, or mortal by the sentence of Him who had formed him a living soul. There was not the quickening power in himself. The first Adam was simply a man "the first man Adam."

The word of God does not express itself thus with regard to Christ, when speaking of Him in this passage as the last Adam. He could not be the last Adam without being a man; but it does not say "the last man was a quickening Spirit," but the "last Adam"; and when it speaks of Him as the second Man, adds that He was "from heaven." Christ had not only life as a living soul, He had the power of life, which could impart life to others. Although He was a man on earth, He had life in Himself; accordingly He quickened whom He would. Nevertheless it is as the last Adam, the second Man, the Christ, that the word here speaks of Him. It is not only that God quickens whom He will, but the last Adam, Christ, the Head, spiritually, of the new race, has this power in Himself: and therefore it is said for it is always Jesus on earth who is in question "He hath given to the Son to have life in himself." Of us it is said, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son: he who hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Howbeit that which is of the Spirit is not that which was first, but that which is natural, that is, that which has the natural life of the soul. That which is spiritual, which has its life from the power of the Spirit, comes after. The first man is of the earth has his origin, such as he is (God

having breathed into his nostrils a spirit or breath of life), from the earth. Therefore he is of the dust, even as God said, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The last Adam, though He was as truly man as the first, is from heaven.

As belonging to the first Adam, we inherit his condition, we are as he is: as participating in the life of the second, we have part in the glory which He possesses as Man, we are as He is, we exist according to His mode of being, His life being ours. Now the consequence here is that, as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Observe here, that the first Adam and the last, or second Man, respectively, are looked at as in that condition into which they entered when their respective trials under responsibility had ended; and those who are connected with the one and the other inherit the condition and the consequences of the work of the one and the other, as thus tested. It is the fallen Adam who is the father of a race born after his image a fallen and guilty race, sinful and mortal. He had failed, and committed sin, and lost his position before God, was far from Him, when he became the father of the human race. If the corn of wheat falling into the ground does not die, it bears no fruit; if it die, it bears much fruit. Christ had glorified God, made expiation for sin, and was raised in righteousness; had overcome death and destroyed the power of Satan, before He became, as a quickening Spirit, the Head of a spiritual race, [See Note #20] to whom united to Himself-He communicates all the privileges that belong to the position before God which He has acquired, according to the power of that life by which He quickens them. It is a risen and glorified Christ whose image we shall bear, as we now bear the image of a fallen Adam. Flesh and blood, not merely sin, cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Corruption (for such we are) cannot inherit that which is incorruptible. This leads the apostle to a positive revelation of that which will take place with regard to the enjoyment of incorruptibility by all the saints. Death is conquered. It is not necessary that death should come upon all, still less that all should undergo actual corruption; but it is not possible for flesh and blood to inherit the kingdom of glory. But we shall not all sleep; there are some who will be changed without dying. The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (for redemption being accomplished and Christ ready to judge the quick and the dead, the apostle always looked at it as a thing

immediately before his eyes, ready to take place any moment) shall be changed (a change equivalent to resurrection); for that which is corruptible, if not already in dust and corruption, shall put on incorruptibility; that which is mortal, immortality. We see that this relates to the body; it is in his body that man is mortal, even when he has eternal life, and shall live by Christ and with Christ. The power of God will form the saints whether living or dead for the inheritance of glory.

Take especial notice of what has just been said. Death is entirely conquered annulled in its power for the Christian. He possesses a life (Christ risen), which sets him above death, not perhaps physically, but morally. It has lost all its power over his soul, as the fruit of sin and judgment. It is so entirely conquered, that there are some who will not die at all. All Christians have Christ for their life. If He is absent, and if He does not return as will be the case as long as He sits on His Father's throne, and our life is hid with Him in God we undergo death physically according to the sentence of God; that is to say, the soul is separated from the mortal body. When He shall return and exercise His power, having risen up from the Father's throne to take His people to Himself before He exercises judgment, death has no power at all over them: they do not pass through it. That the others are raised from the dead is a proof of power altogether divine, and more glorious even than that which created man from the dust. That the living are changed proves a perfection of accomplished redemption, and a power of life in Christ which had left no trace, no remains, of the judgment of God as to them, nor of the power of the enemy, nor of the thralldom of man to the consequences of his sin. In place of all that, is an exercise of divine power, which manifests itself in the absolute, complete, and eternal deliverance of the poor guilty creature who before was under it a deliverance that has its perfect manifestation in the glory of Christ, for He had subjected Himself in grace to the condition of man under death for sin; so that to faith it is always certain, and accomplished in His Person. But the resurrection of the dead and the change of the living will be its actual accomplishment for all who are His, at His coming. What a glorious deliverance is that which is wrought by the resurrection of Christ, who sin entirely blotted out, righteousness divinely glorified and made good, Satan's power destroyed transports us by virtue of an eternal redemption, and by the power of a life which has abolished

death, into an entirely new sphere, where evil cannot come, nor any of its consequences, and where the favour of God in glory shines upon us perfectly and for ever! It is that which Christ has won for us according to the eternal love of God our Father, who gave Him to us to be our Saviour.

At an unexpected moment we shall enter into this scene, ordained by the Father, prepared by Jesus. The power of God will accomplish this change in an instant: the dead shall rise, we shall be changed. The last trumpet is but a military allusion, as it appears to me, when the whole troop wait for the last signal to set out all together.

In the quotation from Isa 25:8 we have a remarkable application of scripture. Here it is only the fact that death is thus swallowed up in victory, for which the passage is quoted; but the comparison with Isaiah shews us that it will be, not at the end of the world, but at a period when, by the establishment of the kingdom of God in Zion, the veil, under which the heathen have dwelt in ignorance and darkness, shall be taken off their face. The whole earth shall be enlightened, I do not say at the moment, but at the period. But this certainty of the destruction of death procures us a present confidence, although death still exists. Death has lost its sting, the grave its victory. All is changed by the grace which, at the end, will bring in this triumph. But meantime, by revealing to us the favour of God who bestows it, and the accomplishment of the redemption which is its basis, it has completely changed the character of death. Death, to the believer who must pass through it, is only leaving that which is mortal; it no longer bears the terror of God's judgment, nor that of the power of Satan. Christ has gone into it and borne it and taken it away totally and for ever. Nor that only, He has taken its source away. It was sin which sharpened and envenomed that sting. It was the law which, presenting to the conscience exact righteousness, and the judgment of God which required the accomplishment of that law, and pronounced a curse on those who failed in it, it was the law which gave sin its force to the conscience, and made death doubly formidable. But Christ was made sin, and bore the curse of the law, being made a curse for His own who were under the law; and thus, while glorifying God perfectly with regard to sin, and to the law in its most absolute requirements, He has completely delivered us from the one and

the other, and, at the same time, from the power of death, out of which He came victorious. All that death can do to us is to take us out of the scene in which it exercises its power, to bring us into that in which it has none. God, the Author of these counsels of grace, in whom is the power that accomplishes them, has given us this deliverance by Jesus Christ our Lord. Instead of fearing death, we render thanks to Him who has given us the victory by Jesus. The great result is to be with Jesus and like Jesus, and to see Him as He is. Meanwhile we labour in the scene where death exercises its power where Satan uses it, if God allows him, to stop us in our way. We labour although there are difficulties, with entire confidence, knowing what will be the infallible result. The path may be beset by the enemy; the end will be the fruit of the counsels and the power of our God, exercised on our behalf according to that which we have seen in Jesus, who is the Head and the manifestation of the glory which His own shall enjoy.

To sum up what has been said, we see the two things in Christ: firstly, power over all things, death included; He raises up even the wicked: and secondly, the association of His own with Himself. With reference therefore to the latter, the apostle directs our eyes to the resurrection of Christ Himself. He not only raises up others, but He has been raised up Himself from the dead. He is the first-fruits of them that sleep. But before His resurrection He died for our sins. All that separated us from God is entirely put away death, the wrath of God, the power of Satan, sin, disappear, as far as we are concerned, in virtue of the work of Christ; and He is made to us that righteousness which is our title to heavenly glory. Nothing remains of that which appertained to His former human estate, except the everlasting favour of God who brought Him there. Thus it is a resurrection from among the dead by the power of God in virtue of that favour, because He was the delight of God, and in His exaltation His righteousness is accomplished.

For us it is a resurrection founded on redemption, and which we enjoy even now in the power of a life, which brings the effect and the strength of both into our hearts, enlightened by the Holy Ghost who is given to us. At the coming of Christ the accomplishment will take place in fact for our bodies.

With regard to practice, the assembly at Corinth was in a very poor condition; and being asleep as to righteousness, the enemy sought to lead

them astray as to faith also. Nevertheless, as a body, they kept the foundation; and as to external spiritual power, it shone very brightly.

Note #17

Christ could say, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," for He who dwells in the temple is God. It is also said that He was raised up by the Spirit, and at the same time by the glory of the Father. But here He is viewed as man who has undergone death; and God intervenes, that He may not remain in it, because here the object is, not to shew forth the glory of the Lord's Person, but to prove our resurrection, since He, a dead man, has been raised. By man came death; by man, resurrection. While demonstrating that He was the Lord from heaven, the apostle always speaks here of the Man Christ.

Note #18

But, remark, mortality in the New Testament is never applied to anything but the body, and that exclusively and emphatically, "this mortal" and the like. The separate existence of the soul, as not dying with the body, is taught plainly enough in scripture, and not merely for the Christian (as to whom it is evident, for we are with Christ) but for all, as in Luk 20:38; Luk 12:4-5, and the end of Chapter 16.

Note #19

It is a striking collateral proof of the completeness of our redemption, and the impossibility of our coming into judgment, that we are raised in glory. We are glorified before we arrive before the judgment seat. Christ will have come and changed our vile body and fashioned it like His glorious body.

Note #20

It is not that as Son of God He could not quicken at all times, as indeed He did. But in order to our partaking with Him, all this was needed and accomplished, and here He is looked at as Himself risen from the dead, the heavenly Man. Thus also it is founded in divine righteousness.

1 Corinthians Chapter 16

The apostle, in his letter, had treated of the disorder that reigned among these believers, and his spirit was to a certain degree relieved by fulfilling this duty towards them; for, after all, they were Christians and an assembly of God. In the last Chapter he speaks to them in the sense of this, although he could not make up his mind to go to Corinth, for he had intended to visit them in going to Macedonia, and a second time in returning thence. He does not say here why he did not go thither on his way to Macedonia, and he speaks with uncertainty as to his sojourn at Corinth when he should arrive there on his return from Macedonia; if the Lord permitted, he would tarry awhile with them. The second epistle will explain all this. In their existing state his heart would not allow him to visit them. But he treats them tenderly, nevertheless, as still beloved Christians, giving them directions suited to the circumstances of the moment. They were to make a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, as had been arranged with the apostles when Paul left Jerusalem as the recognised apostle of the Gentiles. This was not to be done in haste when he came, but by laying up every week in proportion to their prosperity. He would send persons chosen by the Corinthians, or take them with him if he went himself to Jerusalem. He thought of remaining till Pentecost at Ephesus, where a great door was opened to him and there were many adversaries. If these two things go together, it is a motive for remaining; the open door is an inducement on the part of God, the activity of adversaries makes it necessary with regard to the enemy. A closed door is a different thing from opposition. People do not hearken if the door is shut; God does not act to draw attention. If God is acting, the assiduity of the enemy is but a reason for not abandoning the work. It appears (Co1 15:32) that Paul had already suffered much at Ephesus, but he still continued his work there. He could not pour out his heart on the subject to the Corinthians, seeing the state they were in. He does it in the second Epistle, when the first had produced the effect he desired. There was a tumult afterwards at Ephesus, stirred up by the craftsmen, in consequence of which Paul left the city (Acts 19). Verses 21, 22, of this Chapter in Act (Act 19:21-22)s shew us the period at which he wrote this letter. The danger to his life had preceded it, but he remained at Ephesus after that. The tumult closed the door and sent him away.

In Act 19:22 we see that he had sent Timothy into Macedonia. In our epistle he supposes that he might go on as far as Corinth. If he came, the Corinthians were to receive him as they would have received Paul. He had begged Apollos to go to them; he had already been made a blessing to them; and Paul thought he might be so again. He did not fear that Apollos would displace him in the heart of the Corinthians. But Apollos shared the apostle's feeling; he was not inclined to recognise, or by his presence to have the appearance of upholding, that which prevented Paul going thither; and the more so because there were some in the assembly at Corinth who wished to use his name as the standard of a party. Free in his movements, he would act according to the judgment which the Lord would enable him to form.

After speaking of Apollos, the apostle's mind turns again to his children in the faith, dear to him, whatever their faults might be. Verses 13, 14 (Co1 16:13-14), are the effusion of a heart which forgot these faults in the ardent desire of a charity that only thought of their blessing according to the Spirit. Three Corinthians had brought him supplies; it does not appear to have been on the part of the assembly, nor that it was any testimony of its love which had refreshed the apostle's heart. He would have the Corinthians to rejoice at it. He does not doubt that they loved him enough to be refreshed because it was so. Their charity had not thought of it beforehand; but he expresses his conviction that they took pleasure in the thought of his heart being refreshed. It is touching to see here, that the apostle's charity suggests that which grace would produce on the heart of the Corinthians, communicating that which they probably would not otherwise have known of the active charity of three brethren of the assembly; and, in love uniting them to his joy, if they had not been united to that which occasioned it. The flame of charity communicates itself by rising above coldness, and reaching the depths of divine life in the heart; and, once communicated, the soul, before unkindled, glows now with the same fire.

We find in this Chapter four channels, so to speak, of ministry. Firstly, the apostle, sent direct from the Lord and by the Holy Ghost. Secondly, persons associated with the apostle in his work, and acting at his desire, and (in the case of Timothy) one pointed out by prophecy. Thirdly, an entirely

independent labourer, partly instructed by others (see Act 18:26), but acting where he saw fit, according to the Lord and to the gift he had received. Fourthly, one who gives himself to the service of the saints, as well as others who helped the apostle and laboured. Paul exhorts the faithful to submit themselves to such, and to all those who helped in the work and laboured. He would also have them acknowledge those who refreshed his heart by their service of devotedness. Thus we find the simple and important principle according to which all the best affections of the heart are developed, namely, the acknowledgment of every one according to the manifestation of grace and of the power of the Holy Ghost in him. The christian man submits to those who addict themselves to the service of the saints; he acknowledges those who manifest grace in a special way. They are not persons officially nominated and consecrated who are spoken of here. It is the conscience and the spiritual affection of Christians which acknowledges them according to their work a principle valid at all times, which does not permit this respect to be demanded, but which requires it to be paid.

We may remark, here, that this epistle, although entering into all the details of the interior conduct of an assembly, does not speak of elders or of any formally established officers at all. It is certain, that in general there were such; but God has provided in the word for the walk of an assembly at all times, and, as we see, principles which oblige us to acknowledge those who serve in it through personal devotedness without being officially appointed. General unfaithfulness, or the absence of such established officers, will not prevent those who obey the word from following it in all that is needful for christian order. We see moreover that, whatever might be the disorder, the apostle recognises the members of the assembly as being all real Christians; he desires them to acknowledge one another by the kiss of love, the universal expression of brotherly affection. This is so entirely the case that he pronounces a solemn anathema on every one who loved not the Lord Jesus. There might be such, but he would in no way recognise them. If there were any, let them be anathema. Is this an allowed mixture? He will not believe it, and he embraces them all in the bonds of christian love (Co1 16:24).

The last point is important. The state of the assembly at Corinth might give room for some uncertainty as to the Christianity of certain members, or persons in connection with them although not dwelling at Corinth. He admonishes them; but in fact, in cases of the most grievous sin where the discipline of God was exercised, or that of man was required, the guilty are looked upon as Christians. (See Chapter 10 for the warning; Co1 11:32 for the Lord's discipline; for that of man, Co1 5:5 in this epistle; for the principle, Co2 2:8). Besides, he denounces with an anathema those who do not love the Lord Jesus. Discipline is exercised towards the wicked man who is called a brother. He who calls himself a Christian, yet does not really love the Lord for there may be such is the subject of the most terrible anathema.

It is sweet to see that, after faithfully (although with anguish of heart) correcting every abuse, the spirit of the apostle returns by grace into the enjoyments of charity in his relationship with the Corinthians. The terrible Verse 22 (Co1 16:22) was not felt to be inconsistent with the love that dictated the other Verses. It was the same spirit, for Christ was the sole spring of his charity.

We may notice (Co1 16:21) that the apostle, as other passages testify, employed some one to write for him. The Epistle to the Galatians is an exception. He verified his epistles to the assemblies by writing the salutation at the end with his own hand, marking the importance he attached to the exactitude of the verbal contents, and confirming the principle of an exact inspiration. His heart flows out (Co1 16:24), and he comforts himself in being able to acknowledge them all in love.

2 CORINTHIANS

2 Corinthians Chapter 1

2 Corinthians 1:1

CO2 1:1

The apostle writes the second Epistle to the Corinthians under the influence of the consolations of Christ consolations experienced when the troubles which came upon him in Asia were at their height; and renewed at the moment when he wrote his letter, by the good news which Titus had brought him from Corinth consolations which (now that he is happy about them) he imparts to the Corinthians; who, by grace, had been their source in the last instance. The first letter had awakened their conscience, and had re-established the fear of God in their heart, and integrity in their walk. The sorrowing heart of the apostle was revived by hearing this good news. The state of the Corinthians had cast him down and a little removed from his heart the feelings produced by the consolations with which Jesus filled it during his trials at Ephesus. How various and complicated are the exercises of him who serves Christ and cares for souls! The spiritual restoration of the Corinthians, by dissipating Paul's anguish, had renewed the joy of these consolations, which the tidings of their misconduct had interrupted. He afterwards returns to this subject of his sufferings at Ephesus; and develops, in a remarkable way, the power of the life by which he lived in Christ. He addresses all the saints of that country, as well as those in the city of Corinth, which was its capital; and, being led by the Holy Ghost to write according to the real sentiments which that Spirit produced in him, he at once places himself in the midst of the consolations which flowed into his heart, in order to acknowledge in them the God who poured them into his tried and exercised spirit. Nothing more touching than the work of the Spirit in the apostle's heart. The mixture of gratitude and worship towards God, of joy in the consolations of Christ, and of affection for those on whose account he now rejoiced, has a beauty entirely inimitable by the mind of man. Its simplicity and its truth do but enhance the excellence and exalted

character of this divine work in a human heart. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted it is for your consolation and salvation." Blessing God for the consolations which he had received, content to suffer, because his participation in suffering encouraged the faith of the Corinthians who suffered, by shewing them the path ordained of God for the most excellent, he pours into their hearts the consolation of his own, as soon as comfort comes to him from God. His first thought (and it is always so with one who realises his dependence on God, and who abides in his presence see Genesis 24) is to bless God, and to acknowledge Him as the source of all consolation. The Christ, whom he has found both in the sufferings and in the consolation, turns his heart immediately to the beloved members of His body. Mark at once the perversity of man's heart and the patience of God. In the midst of sufferings for the sake of Christ, they could take part in the sin that dishonoured His name a sin unknown among the Gentiles. In spite of this sin God would not deprive them of the testimony, which those sufferings gave them, of the truth of their Christianity sufferings which assured the apostle that the Corinthians would enjoy the consolations of Christ, which accompanied sufferings for His sake. It is beautiful to see how grace lays hold of the good, in order to conclude that the evil will surely be corrected, instead of discrediting the good because of the evil. Paul was near Christ the source of strength. He continues by presenting, experimentally, the doctrine of the power of life in Christ, [See Note #1] which had its development and its strength in death to all that is temporal, to all that links us with the old creation, to mortal life itself. He then touches upon almost every subject that had occupied him in the first epistle, but with an unburdened heart, although with a firmness that desired their good, and the glory of God, let it cost himself what sorrow it might. Observe here the admirable connection between the personal circumstances of God's labourers, and the work to

which they are called, and even the circumstances of that work. The first epistle had produced that salutary effect on the Corinthians to which the apostle, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, had destined it. Their conscience had been awakened, and they had become zealous against the evil in proportion to the depth of their fall. This is always the effect of the work of the Spirit, when the conscience of the Christian who has fallen is really touched. The apostle's heart can open with joy to their complete and sincere obedience. Meanwhile he had himself passed through terrible trials, so that he had despaired of life; and he had been able through grace to realise the power of that life in Christ which gained the victory over death, and could pour abundantly into the hearts of the Corinthians the consolations of that life, which were to raise them up again. There is a God who conducts all things in the service of His saints the sorrow through which they pass, as all the rest. Observe, also, that he does not need to begin by reminding the Corinthians, as he had done in the first epistle, of their calling and their privileges as sanctified in Christ. He breaks out in thanksgiving to the God of all consolation. Holiness is brought forward when it is practically wanting among the saints. If they are walking in holiness, they enjoy God, and they speak of Him. The way in which the various parts of the work of God are linked together, in and by means of the apostle, is seen in the expressions that flow from his grateful heart. God comforts him in his sufferings; and the consolation is such that it is suited to comfort others, in whatsoever affliction it may be; for it is God Himself who is the consolation, by pouring into the heart His love and His communion, as it is enjoyed in Christ. If afflicted, it was for the comfort of others by the sight of similar afflictions in those who were honoured of God, and the consciousness of unison in the same blessed cause, and relationship with God (the heart being touched and brought back to these affections by this means). If comforted, it was to comfort others with the consolations that he himself enjoyed in affliction. And the afflictions of the Corinthians were a testimony to him that, however great their moral weakness had been, they had part in those consolations which he enjoyed himself, and which he knew to be so deep, so real, which he knew to be of God, and a token of His favour. Precious bonds of grace! And how true it is in our little measure, that the sufferings of those who labour re-animate on the one hand love towards

them, and on the other re-assure the labourer as to the sincerity of the objects of his christian affection, by presenting them anew to him in the love of Christ. The affliction of the apostle had helped him in writing to the Corinthians with the grief that was suitable to their condition; but what faith was that which occupied itself with such energy and such entire forgetfulness of self about the sad state of others, amid such circumstances as then surrounded the apostle! His strength was in Christ. His heart expands towards the Corinthians. We see that his affections flow freely a thing of great value. He reckons on the interest they will take in the account of his sufferings; he is sure that they will rejoice in what God has given him, even as he rejoices in them as the fruit of his labours, and that they will acknowledge what he is; and he is content to be a debtor to their prayers with regard to the gifts displayed in himself, so that his success in the gospel was to them as a personal interest of their own. He could truly demand their prayers, for his course had been run in unmingled sincerity, and especially among them. This leads him to explain to them the motives of his movements, of which he had not spoken to them before, referring these movements to his own plans and motives, subject to the Lord. He is always master (under Christ) of his movements; but he can now speak freely of that which had decided him, which the Corinthians were not before in a state to know. He wishes to satisfy them, to explain things to them, so as to demonstrate his perfect love for them; and, at the same time, to maintain his entire liberty in Christ, and not make himself responsible to them for what he did. He was their servant in affliction, but free to be so, because he was amenable only to Christ, although he satisfied their conscience (because he served Christ) if their conscience was upright. His own conscience however was clear; and he only wrote to them that which they knew and acknowledged, and, as he trusted, would acknowledge to the end; so that they should rejoice in him, as he in them.

Note #1

The beginning of this Epistle presents the experimental power of that which is doctrinally taught in Rom 5:12 to Chapter 8, and is extremely instructive in this respect. It is not so much Colossians and Ephesians; the practical fruit of

the doctrine there is the display of God's own character. However we have in a measure what is taught in Colossians carried out.

2 Corinthians Chapter 2

But had there been any lightness in his decisions, since, as he now informed them, he had intended to visit them on his way to Macedonia (where he was at the moment of writing this letter), and then a second time on his return from that country? In no wise; they were not intentions lightly formed, according to the flesh, and then abandoned. It was his affection, it was to spare them. He could not bear the idea of going with a rod to those whom he loved. Observe in what manner, although shewing his affection and tenderness, he maintains his authority; and they needed the exercise of this authority. And while reminding them of his authority, he displays all his tenderness. They were not Cretans, perhaps, whom it was necessary to rebuke sharply; but there was a laxity of morals which required delicacy and care lest they should become restive, but also authority and a bridle, lest, in giving them liberty, they should fall into all sorts of bad ways. But he turns immediately to the certainty which was in Christ, the basis of all his own. He would not press too much upon the chord he had touched at the beginning. He lets his authority be known as that which might have been exercised, and he does not employ it. The groundwork of Christianity was needed, in order to put their souls into a condition to judge themselves healthily. They were quite disposed, through the intrigues of false teachers and their habit of schools of philosophy, to separate from the apostle, and, in spirit, from Christ. He brings them back to the foundation, to the sure doctrine that was common to all those that had laboured among them at the beginning. He would give Satan no occasion to detach them from him (see Co2 2:11). He establishes therefore the great principles of christian joy and assurance. I do not speak of the blood, the only source of peace of conscience before God as a judge, but of the manner in which we are placed by the power of God in His presence, in the position and state into which that power introduces us according to the counsels of His grace. Simple certainty was in Christ, according to that which had been said. It was not first Yea, and then Nay: the yea remained always yea a principle of immense importance, but for the establishment of which there was needed the power and the firmness and

even perfection, and the wisdom, of God; for to assure and make steadfast that which was not wise and perfect would certainly not have been worthy of Him. It will be seen that the question was, whether Paul had lightly changed his purpose. He says that he had not; but he leaves the thought of that which concerned him personally to speak of that which pre-occupied his thoughts of Christ; and to him, in fact, to live was Christ. But there was a difficulty to solve, when the immutability of God's promises was the question. It is that we are not in a state to profit by that which was immutable on account of our weakness and inconstancy. He solves this difficulty by setting forth the mighty operations of God in grace. There are two points therefore: the establishment of all the promises in Christ, and the enjoyment, by us, of the effect of these promises. The thing is, as we have seen, not merely to say, to promise, something; but not to change one's intentions, not to depart from what was said, but to keep one's word. Now there had been promises. God had made promises, whether to Abraham unconditionally, or to Israel at Sinai under the condition of obedience. But in Christ there was, not promises, but the Amen to God's promises, the verity and realisation of them. Whatever promises there had been on God's part, the Yea was in Him, and the Amen in Him. God has established deposited, so to speak the fulfilment of all His promises in the Person of Christ. Life, glory, righteousness, pardon, the gift of the Spirit, all is in Him; it is in Him that all is we Yea and Amen. We cannot have the effect of any promise whatsoever out of Him. But this is not all: we, believers, are the objects of these counsels of God. They are to the glory of God by us. But, in the first place, the glory of God is that of Him whoever glorifies Himself in His ways of sovereign grace towards us; for it is in these ways that He unfolds and displays what He is. The Yea and Amen therefore of the promises of God, the accomplishment and the realisation of the promises of God, for His glory by us, are in Christ. But how can we participate in it, if all is Christ and in Christ? It is here that the Holy Ghost presents the second part of the ways of grace. We are in Christ, and we are in Him not according to the instability of the will of man, and the weakness that characterises him in his transitory and changeable works. He who was firmly established us in Christ is God Himself. The accomplishment of all the promises is in Him. Under the law, and under conditions the fulfilment of which depended on the stability of man, the

effect of the promise was never attained; the thing promised eluded the pursuit of man, because man needed to be in a state capable of attaining it by righteousness, and he was not in that state; the accomplishment of the promise therefore was always suspended; it would have its effect if but the "if" was not accomplished, and the Yea and Amen did not come. But all that God has promised is in Christ. The second part is the "by us," and how far we enjoy it. We are firmly established by God in Christ, in whom all the promises subsist, so that we securely possess in Him all that is promised us. But we do not enjoy it as that which subsists in our own hands. But, further, God Himself has anointed us. We have by Jesus received the Holy Ghost. God has taken care that we should understand by the Spirit that which is freely given us in Christ. But the Spirit is given to us, according to the counsels of God, for other things than understanding merely His gifts in Christ. He who has received Him is sealed. God has marked him with His seal, even as He marked Christ with His seal when He anointed Him after His baptism by John. Moreover the Spirit becomes the earnest, in our own hearts, of that which we shall fully possess hereafter in Christ. We understand the things that are given us in the glory; we are marked by the seal of God to enjoy them; we have the earnest of them in our hearts our affections are engaged by them. Established in Christ, we have the Holy Ghost, who seals us when we believe, to bring us into the enjoyment, even while here below, of that which is in Christ. Having again spoken of the care which manifested his affection for them, he expresses his conviction that that which had pained him had pained them also; and this was demonstrated by the way in which they had treated the transgressor. He exhorts them to receive again and comfort the poor guilty one, who was in danger of being entirely overwhelmed by the discipline that had been exercised towards him by the mass of the Christians; adding, that if the Christians forgave him his fault, he forgave it likewise. He would not that Satan should get any advantage through this case to bring in dissension between himself and the Corinthians; for Paul well knew what the enemy aimed at, the object with which he made use of this affair. This gives him occasion to shew how much he had them always in his heart. Coming to Troas for the gospel, and a wide door being opened to him, nevertheless he could not remain there, because he had not found Titus; and he left Troas and continued his journey into

Macedonia. It will be remembered that, instead of passing by the western shores of the Archipelago, in order to visit Macedonia, taking Corinth on his way, and then returning by the same route, the apostle had sent Titus with his first letter, and had gone by way of Asia Minor, or the eastern coast of the sea, which led him to Troas, where Titus was to meet him. But not finding him at Troas, and being uneasy with regard to the Corinthians, he could not be satisfied with there being a work to be done at Troas, but journeyed on to meet Titus and repaired to Macedonia. There he found him, as we shall see presently. But this thought of having left Troas affected him, for in fact it is a serious thing, and painful to the heart, to miss an opportunity of preaching Christ, and the more so when people are disposed to receive Him, or at least to hear of Him. To have left Troas was indeed a proof of his affection for the Corinthians; and the apostle recalls the circumstance as a strong demonstration of that affection. He comforts himself for having missed this work of evangelisation by the thought that after all God led him as in triumph (not "caused him to triumph"). The gospel which he carried with him, the testimony of Christ, was like the perfume caused by burning aromatic drugs in triumphal processions a token of death to some of the captives, of life to others. And this perfume of the gospel was pure in his hands. The apostle was not like some who adulterated the wine they furnished; he laboured in christian integrity before God.

2 Corinthians Chapter 3

These words give rise to an exposition of the gospel in contrast with the law, which the false teachers mixed up with the gospel. He gives this exposition with the most touching appeal to the heart of the Corinthians, who had been converted through his means. Did he begin speaking of his ministry to commend himself anew, or did he need, as others, letters of commendation to them or from them? They were his letters of commendation, the striking proof of the power of his ministry, a proof which he carried always in his heart, ready to bring it forward on every occasion. He can say this now, being happy in their obedience. And why did they serve as a letter in his favour? Because in their faith they were the living expression of his doctrine. They were Christ's letter of commendation, which, by means of his ministry, had been written on the fleshy tables of the

heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, as the law had been graven on tables of stone by God Himself. This was Paul's confidence with regard to his ministry; his competency came from God for the ministry of the new covenant, not of the letter (not even the letter of this covenant, any more than the letter of anything else) but of the Spirit, the true force of the purpose of God, as the Spirit gave it. For the letter kills, as a rule imposed on man; the Spirit quickens, as the power of God in grace the purpose of God communicated to the heart of man by the power of God, who imparted it to him that he might enjoy it. Now the subject of this ministry brought out the difference between it and the ministry of the law yet more strongly. The law, graven on stones, had been introduced with glory, although it was a thing that was to pass away as a means of relation between God and men. It was a ministry of death, for they were only to live by keeping it. Nor could it be otherwise ordered than on this principle. A law was to be kept; but man being already a sinner by nature and by will, having desires which the law forbade, that law could only be death to him it was a ministry of death. It was a ministry of condemnation because the authority of God came in to give to the law the sanction of condemnation against every soul that should break it. It was a ministry of death and of condemnation because man was a sinner. And observe, here, that to mingle grace with the law changes nothing in its effect, except to aggravate the penalty that results from it by aggravating the guilt of him who violated the law, inasmuch as he violated it in spite of the goodness and the grace. For it was still the law, and man was called to satisfy the responsibility under which the law placed him. "The soul that sinneth," said Jehovah to Moses, "will I blot out of my book." The figure used by the apostle shews that he is speaking of the second descent of Moses from Mount Sinai, when he had heard the name of Jehovah proclaimed, merciful and gracious. The face of Moses did not shine the first time that he came down: he broke the tables before he went into the camp. The second time God made all His goodness pass before him, and the face of Moses reflected the glory which he had seen, partial as it may have been. But Israel could not bear this reflection; for how can it be borne, when it must judge the secrets of the heart after all? For, though grace had been shewn in sparing on Moses' intercession, the exigency of the law was still maintained, and every one was to suffer the consequences of his own

disobedience. Thus the character of the law prevented Israel from understanding even the glory which was in the ordinances, as a figure of that which was better and permanent; and the whole system ordained by the hand of Moses was veiled to their eyes, and the people fell under the letter, even in that part of the law which was a testimony of things to be spoken afterwards. It was according to the wisdom of God that it should be so; for in this way all the effect of the law, as brought to bear on the heart and conscience of man, has been fully developed. There are many Christians who make a law of Christ Himself, and in thinking of His love as a fresh motive to oblige them to love Him, think of it only as an obligation, a very great increase to the measure of the obligation which lies upon them, an obligation which they feel bound to satisfy. That is to say, they are still under the law, and consequently under condemnation. But the ministry which the apostle fulfilled was not this; it was the ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit, not as requiring righteousness in order to stand before God, but as revealing it. Christ was this righteousness, made such on God's part for us; and we are made the righteousness of God in Him. The gospel proclaimed righteousness on God's part, instead of requiring it from man according to the law. Now the Holy Ghost could be the seal of that righteousness. He could come down upon the man Christ, because He was perfectly approved of God; He was righteous the righteous One. He came down upon us, because we are made the righteousness of God in Christ. Thus it was the ministry of the Spirit; His power wrought in it. He was bestowed when that which it announced was received by faith; and with the Spirit they also received understanding of the mind and purposes of God, as they were revealed in the Person of a glorified Christ, in whom the righteousness of God was revealed and subsisted eternally before Him. Thus the apostle unites, in the self-same thought, the mind of God in the word according to the Spirit, the glory of Christ who had been hidden in it under the letter, and the Holy Ghost Himself, who gave its force, revealed that glory, and, by dwelling and working in the believer, enables him to enjoy it. Thus, where the Spirit was, there was liberty; they were no longer under the yoke of the law, of the fear of death, and of condemnation. They were in Christ before God, in peace before Him, according to perfect love and that favour which is better than life, even as it shone upon Christ, without a veil, according to the

grace which reigns by righteousness. When it is said, "Now the Lord is that spirit," allusion is made to Verse 6 (Co2 3:6); Verses 7-16 (Co2 3:7-16) is a parenthesis. Christ glorified is the true thought of the Spirit which God had previously hidden under figures. And here is the practical result: they beheld the Lord with open (that is, with unveiled) face; they were able to do it. The glory of the face of Moses judged the thoughts and intents of the hearts, causing terror by threatening the disobedient and the sinner with death and condemnation. Who could stand in the presence of God? But the glory of the face of Jesus, a man on high, is the proof that all the sins of those who behold it are blotted out; for He who is there bore them all before He ascended, and He needed to put them all away in order to enter into that glory. We contemplate that glory by the Spirit, who has been given us in virtue of Christ's having ascended into it. He did not say, "I will go up; peradventure I shall make atonement." He made the atonement and went up. Therefore we gaze upon it with joy, we love to behold it: each ray that we see is the proof that in the eyes of God our sins are no more. Christ has been made sin for us; He is in the glory. Now, in thus beholding the glory with affection, with intelligence, taking delight in it, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the power of the Holy Ghost, who enables us to realise and to enjoy these things; and in this is christian progress. Thus the assembly too becomes the epistle of Christ. The allusion made at the same time to the Jews at the end of the parenthesis, where the apostle makes a comparison between the two systems, is most touching. The veil, he says, is taken away in Christ. Nothing is now veiled. The glorious substance is accomplished. The veil is on the heart of the Jews, when they read the Old Testament. Now every time that Moses entered into the tabernacle to speak to God, or to hear Him, he took off his veil. Thus, says the apostle, when Israel shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. There is but one more remark to be made. "The things that remain" [See Note #2] are the subject the gospel treats of, not the ministry which announces it the glory of the Person of Jesus Christ, the substance of that which the Jewish ordinances represented only in figure. The apostle returns to the subject of his ministry in connection with his sufferings, shewing that this doctrine of a Christ victorious over death, truly received into the heart,

makes us victorious over all fear of death, and over all the sufferings that are linked with the earthen vessel in which this treasure is carried.

Note #2

See Co2 3:11.

2 Corinthians Chapter 4

Having received this ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit, the foundation of which was Christ glorified beheld with open face, he not only used great boldness of speech, but his zeal was not abated, nor his faith enfeebled by difficulties. Moreover, with the courage which through grace was imparted to him by this doctrine, he held back nothing, weakened nothing of this glory; he did not corrupt the doctrine; he manifested it in all the purity and brightness in which he had received it. It was the word of God; such as he had received it, so they received it from him, the unaltered word of God; the apostle thus approving himself, commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. All could not say this. The glory of the Lord Jesus was set forth by Paul's preaching in all the clearness and brightness of its revelation to himself. If, therefore, the good news which he proclaimed was hidden, it was not as in the case of Moses; not only was the glory of the Lord fully revealed with open face in Christ, it was also manifested without a veil in the pure preaching of the apostle. This is the link established between the glory accomplished in the Person of Christ, as the result of the work of redemption, and the ministry which, by the power of the Holy Ghost acting in the instrument chosen of the Lord, proclaimed this glory to the world, and made men responsible for the reception of the truth responsible for submission to this glorious Christ, who announced Himself in grace from heaven, as having established righteousness for the sinner, and as inviting him to come freely and enjoy the love and the blessing of God. Now there was no other means of coming to God. To set up any other would be to put aside and declare imperfect and insufficient that which Christ had done, and that which Christ was, and to produce something better than He. But this was not possible: for that which he announced was the manifestation of the glory of God in the Person of the Son, in connection with the revelation of perfect love, and of the making

good perfect and divine righteousness; so that the pure light was the happy abode of those who by this means entered into it. There could not be anything more, unless there was something more than God in the fulness of His grace and of His perfection. If then this revelation was hidden, it was in the case of those who were lost, whose minds were blinded by the god of this world, lest the light of the good news of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into their hearts. This is translated "glorious gospel." But we have seen that the fact of Christ's being in glory, the glory of God being seen in His face, was the special subject of the preceding Chapter. To that the apostle here alludes as characterising the gospel which he preached. It was the proof of the sin Christ had borne being utterly put away, of victory over death, of the introduction of man into the presence of God in glory according to God's eternal counsels of love. It was withal the full display of the divine glory in man according to grace, which the Holy Ghost takes to shew to us in order to form us after the same likeness. It was the glorious ministration of righteousness, and of the Spirit, which opened the free way for man to God, even into the holiest, in entire liberty. When Christ was thus proclaimed, there was either the joyful acceptance of the good news, submission of heart to the gospel, or else the blinding of Satan. For Paul did not preach himself (which others did not fail to do) but Jesus Christ the Lord, and himself their servant for Jesus' sake. Because in fact (and this is another important principle) the shining forth of this gospel of the glory of Christ is the work of God's power of the same God who, by His word alone, caused the light instantaneously to shine out of the midst of darkness. He had shone into the apostle's heart to give forth the light of the knowledge of His own glory in the face of Jesus Christ. The gospel shone forth by a divine operation similar to that which had, in the beginning, caused the light to shine out of darkness by a single word. The heart of the apostle was the vessel, the lamp, in which this light had been kindled to shine in the midst of the world before the eyes of men. It was the revelation of the glory which shone in the Person of Christ by the power of the Spirit of God in the heart of the apostle, in order that this glory should shine out in the gospel before the world. It was the power of God which wrought in it, in the same manner as when light was caused by the word "Let there be light! and there was light." But the treasure of this revelation of the glory was

deposited, in earthen vessels, in order that power which wrought in it should be of God alone, and not that of the instruments. In all, the weakness of the instrument shewed itself in the trying circumstances which God, for this very purpose (among others), made the testimony pass through. Nevertheless the power of God was manifested in it so much the more evidently, from the vessel's shewing its weakness in the difficulties that beset its path. The testimony was rendered, the work was done, the result was produced, even when man broke down and found himself without resource in presence of the opposition raised up against truth. Afflicted by the tribulation, this was the vessel's part; not straitened, for God was with the vessel. Without means of escape, that was the vessel; yet not without resource, for God was with it. Persecuted, that was the vessel; not forsaken, for God was with it. Cast down, that was the vessel; but not destroyed, for God was with it. Always bearing about in his body the dying [See Note #3] of the Lord Jesus (made like Him, in that the man as such was reduced to nothing), in order that the life of Jesus, which death could not touch, which has triumphed over death, should be manifested in his body, mortal as it was. The more the natural man was annihilated, the more was it evident that a power was there which was not of man. This was the principle, but it was morally realised in the heart by faith. As the Lord's servant, Paul realised in his heart the death of all that was human life, in order that the power might be purely of God through Jesus risen. But besides this, God made him realise these things by the circumstances through which he had to pass; for, as living in this world, he was always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, in order that the life of Jesus might be manifested in his mortal flesh. Thus death wrought in the apostle; what was merely of man, of nature and natural life, disappeared, in order that life in Christ, developing itself in him on the part of God and by His power, should work in the Corinthians by his means. What a ministry! A thorough trial of the human heart, a glorious calling, for a man to be thus assimilated to Christ, to be the vessel of the power of His pure life, and by means of an entire self-renunciation, even that of life itself, to be morally like unto Jesus. What a position by grace! What a conformity to Christ! And yet in a way in which it passed through man's heart to reach man's heart (which indeed is of the essence of Christianity itself), not surely by man's strength, but God's made good in man's

weakness. Therefore it was that the apostle could use the language of the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms, "I believed, and therefore have I spoken." That is to say, 'At whatever cost, in spite of everything, of all the danger, all the opposition, I have spoken for God, I have borne my testimony. I have had confidence enough in God to bear testimony to Him and to His truth, whatever the consequences might be, even if I had died in doing it.' That is, the apostle said, 'I have acted as Christ Himself did, because I know that He who raised up Jesus would do the same for me, and would present me, together with you, before His face in that same glory in which Christ is now in heaven, and for my testimony to which, I have suffered death like Him.' We must clearly distinguish here between Christ's sufferings for righteousness and for His work of love, and His sufferings for sin. The former it is our privilege to share with Him; in the latter He is alone. The apostle said, "will present me with you," for, he adds, according to the heart and mind of Christ towards His own, "all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God." And therefore it was that he did not allow himself to be discouraged; but on the contrary, if the outward man perished, the inward man was renewed day by day. For the light affliction, which was but for a moment (for such he esteemed it in view of the glory it was but the temporary affliction of this poor dying body), worked out for him an eternal weight of glory which was beyond all the most exalted expression of human thought or language. And this renewing took place; and he was not disheartened come what might, in that he looked not at the things that are seen, which are temporal, but at the things that are not seen, which are eternal. Thus the power of the divine life, with all its consequences, was developed in his soul by faith. He knew the result of everything on God's part. It was not only that there were things invisible and glorious. Christians had their part in them. We know, the apostle says in their name, that if this earthly house (passing away as it is) were destroyed and it had very nearly been the case with himself-we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Precious certainty! He knew it. Christians know it as a part of their faith. We know [See Note #4] a certainty which caused this glory, which he knew to be his, to be a real and practical hope in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost a reality present by faith. He saw

this glory as that which belonged to him, with which he was to be invested. And therefore also he groaned in his tabernacle, not (as so many do) because the desires of his flesh could not be fulfilled; and because satisfaction of heart cannot be found for man, even when those desires are fulfilled; nor because he was uncertain whether he was accepted, and the glory his or not; but because the body was a hindrance, tending to depress the divine life, to deprive him of the full enjoyment of that glory which the new life saw and desired, and which Paul saw and admired as his own. It was a burden, this earthly human nature; it was no distress to him that he could not satisfy its desires; his distress was to find himself still in this mortal nature, because he saw something better. Not however that he desired to be unclothed, for he saw in Christ glorified a power of life capable of swallowing up and annihilating every trace of mortality; for the fact that Christ was on high in the glory was the result of this power, and at the same time the manifestation of the heavenly portion that belonged to them that were His. Therefore the apostle desired, not to be unclothed but clothed upon, and that that which was mortal in him should be absorbed by life, that the mortality that characterised his earthly human nature should disappear before the power of life which he saw in Jesus, and which was his life. That power was such that there was no need to die. And this was not a hope which had no other foundation than the desire awakened by a view of the glory might produce: God had formed Christians for this very thing. He who was a Christian was formed for this, and not for anything else. It was God Himself who had formed him for this this glory, in which Christ, the last Adam, was at the right hand of God. Precious assurance! Happy confidence in the grace and the mighty work of God! Ineffable joy to be able to attribute all to God Himself, to be thus certified of His love, to glorify Him as the God of love our Benefactor, to know that it was His work, and that we rest upon a finished work the work of God. It is not here resting upon a work done for us; but the blessed consciousness that God has wrought us for this: we are His workmanship. Nevertheless something else was necessary to our enjoying this, since we are not yet glorified in fact; and God has given it the earnest of the Spirit. Thus, we have the glory before us, we are wrought for it by God Himself, and we have the earnest of the Spirit till we are there, and know that Christ has so entirely overcome death that, if the time were

come, we should be transformed into glory without dying at all. Mortality would be swallowed up of life. This is our portion through grace in the last Adam, through the power of life in which Christ was raised. But next the apostle will treat of the effect as to the natural portion of the first fallen man, death and judgment; for the testimony here is very complete.

Note #3

Or rather, "putting to death."

Note #4

This "we know" is in fact a technical expression for the portion of Christians, known to them as such. "We know that the law is spiritual," "we know that the Son of God is come," and so on.

2 Corinthians Chapter 5

What then is the effect of the possession of life in Christ as applied to death and judgment, the two natural objects of men's fears, the fruit of sin? If our bodies are not yet transformed; and if that which is mortal is not yet swallowed up, we are equally full of confidence, because, being formed for glory, and Christ (who has manifested the victorious power that opened the path of heaven to Him) being our life, if we should leave this tabernacle and be absent from the body before we are clothed upon with the glory, this life remains untouched; it has already in Jesus triumphed over all these effects of the power of death. We should be present with the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by the sight of these excellent things. Therefore we prefer to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. For this reason we seek to be well-pleasing to Him, whether we are found absent from this body, or present in this body, when Christ shall come to take us to Himself and make us share His glory. And this leads on to the second point judgment. For we must all be manifested before the tribunal of Christ, in order that each may receive according to that which he shall have done in the body, be it good or evil. A happy and precious thought, after all, solemn as it may be; for, if we have really understood grace, if we are standing in grace, if we know what God is, all love for us, all light for us, we shall like to be in the full light. It is a blessed deliverance to be in it. It is a burden, an

encumbrance, to have anything concealed, and although we have had much sin in us that no one knows (perhaps even some that we have committed, and which it would be no profit for any one to know), it is a comfort if we know the perfect love of God that all should be in perfect light since He is there. This is the case by faith and for faith, wherever there is solid peace: we are before God as He is, and as we are all sin in ourselves alas! except so far as He has wrought in us by quickening us; and He is all love in this light in which we are placed; for God is light, and He reveals Himself. Without the knowledge of grace, we fear the light: it cannot be otherwise. But knowing grace, knowing that sin has been put away as regards the glory of God, and that the offence is no longer before His eyes, we like to be in the light, it is joy to us, it is that which the heart needs, without which it cannot be satisfied, when there is the life of the new man. Its nature is to love the light, to love purity in all that perfection which does not admit the evil of darkness, which shuts out all that is not itself. Now to be thus in the light, and to be manifested, is the same thing, for the light makes everything manifest. We are in the light by faith when the conscience is in the presence of God. We shall be according to the perfection of that light when we appear before the tribunal of Christ. I have said that it is a solemn thing and so it is, for everything is judged according to that light; but it is that which the heart loves, because thanks to our God! we are light in Christ. But there is more than this. When the Christian is thus manifested, he is already glorified, and, perfectly like Christ, has then no remains of the evil nature in which he sinned. And he now can look back at all the way God has led him in grace, helped, lifted up, kept from falling, not withdrawn His eyes from the righteous. He knows as he is known. What a tale of grace and mercy! If I look back now, my sins do not rest on my conscience; though I have horror of them, they are put away behind God's back. I am the righteousness of God in Christ, but what a sense of love and patience, and goodness and grace! How much more perfect then, when all is before me! Surely there is great gain as to light and love, in giving an account of ourselves to God; and not a trace remains of the evil in us. We are like Christ. If a person fears to have all out thus before God, I do not believe he is free in soul as to righteousness being the righteousness of God in Christ, not fully in the light. And we have not to be judged for anything: Christ has put it all away. But there is another

idea in the passage retribution. The apostle does not speak of judgment on persons, because the saints are included, and Christ has stood in their place for all that regards the judgment of their persons: "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ." They do not come into judgment. But they shall be manifested before His tribunal, and receive that which they have done in the body. The good deserves nothing; they received that by which they have wrought what is good grace produced it in them; nevertheless they shall receive its reward. What they have done is counted as their own act. If, by neglecting grace and the witness of the Spirit in them, the fruits which He would have produced have been turned aside, they will bear the consequences. It is not that, in this case, God will have forsaken them; it is not that the Holy Ghost will not act in them with regard to the condition they are in; but it will be in their conscience that He acts, judging the flesh which has prevented the man's bearing the natural fruit of His presence and operation in the new man. So that the Holy Ghost will have done all that is necessary with respect to their state of heart; and the perfect counsel of God with regard to the person will have been accomplished, His patience manifested, His wisdom, His ways in governing, the care which He deigns to take of each one individually in His most condescending love. Each one will have his place, as it was prepared for him of the Father. But the natural fruit of the presence and operation of the Holy Ghost in a soul which has (or, according to the advantages it has enjoyed, ought to have had) a certain measure of light, will not have been produced. It will be seen what it was that prevented. It will judge, according to the judgment of God, all that was good and evil in itself, with a solemn reverence for that which God is, and a fervent adoration on account of what He has been for us. The perfect light will be appreciated; the ways of God known and understood in all their perfection, by the application of the perfect light to the whole course of our life and of His dealings with us, in which we shall thoroughly recognise that love perfect, sovereign above all things has reigned, with ineffable grace. Thus the majesty of God will have been maintained by His judgment, at the same time that the perfection and tenderness of His dealings will be the eternal recollection of our souls. Light without cloud or darkness will be understood in its own perfection. To understand it is to be in it and to enjoy it. And light is God Himself. How

wonderful to be thus manifested! What love is that which in its perfect wisdom, in its marvellous ways overruling all evil, could bring such beings as we are to enjoy this unclouded light beings knowing good and evil (the natural prerogative of those only of whom God can say "one of us"), under the yoke of the evil which they knew, and driven out by a bad conscience from the presence of God, to whom that knowledge belonged, having testimony enough in their conscience as to the judgment of God, to make them avoid Him and be miserable, but nothing to draw them to Him who alone could find a remedy! What love and holy wisdom which could bring such to the source of good, of pure happiness, in whom the power of good repels absolutely the evil which it judges! With regard to the unrighteous, at the judgment-day they will have to answer personally for their sins, under a responsibility which rests entirely on themselves. However great the happiness of being in the perfect light (and this happiness is complete and divine in its character), it is on the side of conscience that the subject is here presented. God maintains His majesty by the judgment which He executes, as it is written, "The Lord is known by the judgment that he executeth": there, in His government of the world; here, final, eternal, and personal judgment. And, for my part, I believe that it is very profitable for the soul to have the judgment of God present to our minds, and the sense of the unchangeable majesty of God maintained in the conscience by this means. If we were not under grace, it would be it ought to be insupportable; but the maintenance of this sentiment does not contradict grace. It is indeed only under grace that it can be maintained in its truth; for who otherwise could bear the thought, for an instant, of receiving that which he had done in the body? None but he who is completely blinded. But the authority, the holy authority of God, which asserts itself in judgment, forms a part of our relationship with Him; the maintenance of this sentiment, associated with the full enjoyment of grace, a part of our holy spiritual affections. It is the fear of the Lord. It is in this sense, that "Happy is he who feareth always." If this weakens the conviction that the love of God rests fully, eternally, upon us, then we get off the only possible ground of any relation whatever with God, unless perdition could be so called. But, in the sweet and peaceful atmosphere of grace, conscience maintains its rights and its authority against the subtle encroachments of the flesh, through the sense of God's

judgment, in virtue of a holiness which cannot be separated from the character of God without denying that there is a God: for if there is a God, He is holy. This sentiment engages the heart of the accepted believer, to endeavour to please the Lord in every way; and, in the sense of how solemn a thing it is for a sinner to appear before God, the love that necessarily accompanies it in a believer's heart urges him to persuade men with a view to their salvation, while maintaining his own conscience in the light. And he who is now walking in the light, whose conscience reflects that light, will not fear it in the day when it shall appear in its glory. We must be manifested; but, walking in the light in the sense of the fear of God, realising His judgment of evil, we are already manifested to God: nothing hinders the sweet and assured flow of His love. Accordingly the walk of such a one justifies itself in the end to the consciences of others; one is manifested as walking in the light. These are therefore the two great practical principles of the ministry: to walk in the light, in the sense of God's solemn judgment for every one; and, the conscience being thus pure in the light, the sense of the judgment (which in this case cannot trouble the soul for itself, or obscure its view of the love of God) impels the heart to seek in love those who are in danger of this judgment. This connects itself with the doctrine of Christ, the Saviour, through His death upon the cross; and the love of Christ constrains us, because we see that, if one died for all, it is that all were dead. This was the universal condition of souls. The apostle seeks them in order that they may live unto God by Christ. But this goes farther. First, as regards fallen man's lot, death is gain. The saint, if absent from the body, is present with the Lord. As to judgment, he owns the solemnity of it, but it does not make him tremble. He is in Christ will be like Christ; and Christ, before whom he is to appear, has put away all the sins he had to be judged for. The effect is the sanctifying one of bringing him fully manifested into the presence of God now. But it stimulates his love as to others, nor is it only by fear of judgment to come for them; Christ's love constrains him love manifested in death. But this proves more than the acts of sin which bring judgment: Christ died because all were dead. The Spirit of God goes to the source and spring of their whole condition, their state, not merely the fruits of an evil nature all were dead. We find the same important instruction in Joh 5:24, "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and

shall not come into judgment [that which applies to sins] , but is passed from death unto life"; he has come out of the whole state and condition, as an already lost one, into another and different one in Christ. This is a very important aspect of the truth. And the distinction, largely developed in Romans, is found in many passages. The work of manifestation before God in the light is already true, in so far as we have realised the light. Cannot I, being now in peace, look back at what I was before conversion, and at all my failures since my conversion, humbled but adoring the grace of God in all He has done for me, but without a thought of fear, or imputation of sin? Does not this awaken a very deep sense of all that God is in holy grace and love, in unbounded patience towards me, both keeping and helping and restoring? Such will be the case perfectly when we are manifested, when we shall know as we are known. That this point may be still more clear, for it is an important one, let me add some further observations here. What we find in this passage is the perfect manifestation of all that a person is and has been before a throne characterised by judgment, without judgment as to the person in question being guilty. No doubt when the wicked receives the things done in the body, he is condemned. But it is not said "judged" here, because all then must be condemned. But this manifestation is exactly what brings all morally before the heart, when it is capable of judging evil for itself: were it under judgment, it could not. Freed from all fear, and in the perfect light and with the comfort of perfect love (for where we have the conscience of sin, and of its not being imputed, we have the sense, though in a humbling way, of perfect love), and at the same time the sense of authority and divine government fully made good in the soul, all is judged by the soul itself as God judges it, and communion with Himself entered into. This is exceedingly precious. We have to remember that, at our appearing before the judgment-seat of Christ, we are already glorified. Christ has come Himself in perfect love to fetch us; and has changed our vile body according to the resemblance of His glorious body. We are glorified and like Christ before the judgment takes place. And mark the effect on Paul. Does the thought of being manifested awaken anxiety or dread? Not the least. He realises all the solemnity of such a process. He knows the terror of the Lord; he has it before his eyes; and what is the consequence? He sets about to persuade others who are in need of it. There are, so to speak, two parts in

God's nature and character: His righteousness, which judges everything; and His perfect love. These are one for us in Christ, ours in Christ. If indeed we realise what God is, both will have their place: but the believer in Christ is the righteousness which God, from His very nature, must have before Him on His throne, if we are to be with Him and enjoy Him. But the Christ, in the judgment-seat, before whom we are, is our righteousness. He judges by the righteousness which He is; but we are that righteousness, the righteousness of God in Him. Hence this point can raise no question in the soul, will make us adore such grace, but can raise no question, only enhance the sense we have of grace ourselves, make us understand it, as suited to man as he is, and feel the solemn and awful consequences of not having part in it, since there is such a judgment. Hence that other and indeed essential part of the divine nature, love, will work in us towards others; and, knowing the terror of the Lord, we shall persuade men. Thus Paul (it is conscience in view of that most solemn moment) possessed the righteousness which he saw in the Judge, for that which judged was His righteousness; but then he consequently seeks others earnestly, according to the work which had thus brought him near to God, to which he then turns (Co2 5:13-14). But this view of judgment and our complete manifestation in that day, has a present effect on the saint according to its own nature. He realises it by faith. He is manifested. He does not fear being manifested. It will unfold all God's past ways towards him when he is in glory; but he is manifested now to God, his conscience exercised in the light. It has thus a present sanctifying power. Observe here the assemblage of powerful motives, of pre-eminently important principles; contradictory in appearance, but which, to a soul which walks in light, instead of clashing and destroying each other, unite to give its complete and thoroughly furnished character to the christian minister and ministry. First of all, the glory, in such a power of life, that he who realises it does not desire death, because he sees in the power of life in Christ that which can absorb whatever in him is mortal, and he sees it with the certainty of enjoying it such a consciousness of possessing this life (God having formed him for it, and given him the earnest of the Spirit), that death if it arrive to him is but a happy absence from the body in order to be present with the Lord. Now the thought of ascending to Christ gives the desire of being acceptable to Him, and presents Him (the second motive or

principle that gives a form to this ministry) as the Judge who will render to every one that which he has done. The solemn thought of how much this judgment is to be feared takes possession of the apostle's heart. What a difference between this thought and the "building of God," for which he was waiting with certainty! Nevertheless this thought does not alarm him; but, in the solemn sense of the reality of that judgment, it impels him to persuade others. But here a third principle comes in, the love of Christ with reference to the condition of those whom Paul sought to persuade. Since this love of Christ's shews itself in His death, there is in it the witness that all were already dead and lost. Thus we have here set before us glory, with the personal certainty of enjoying it, and death become the means of being present with the Lord; the tribunal of Christ, and the necessity of being manifested before it; and the love of Christ in His death, all being already dead. How are such diverse principles as these to be reconciled and arranged in the heart? It is that the apostle was manifested to God. Hence the thought of being manifested before the tribunal produced, along with the present sanctification, no other effect on him than that of solemnity, for he was not to come into judgment; but it became an urgent motive for preaching to others, according to the love which Christ had manifested in His death. The idea of the tribunal did not in the least weaken his certainty of glory. [See Note #5] His soul, in the full light of God, reflected what was in that light, namely, the glory of Christ ascended on high as man. And the love of this same Jesus was strengthened in its active operation in him by the sense of the tribunal which awaits all men. What a marvellous combination of motives we find in this passage, to form a ministry characterised by the development of all that in which God reveals Himself, and by which He acts on the heart and conscience of man! And it is in a pure conscience that these things can have their force together. If the conscience were not pure, the tribunal would obscure the glory, at least as belonging to oneself, and weaken the sense of His love. At any rate one would be occupied with self in connection with these things, and ought to be so. But when pure before God, it only sees a tribunal which excites no sense of personal uneasiness, and therefore has all its true moral effect, as an additional motive for seriousness in our walk, and a solemn energy in the appeal which the known love of Jesus impels it to address to man. As to how far our own relations

with God enter into the service which we have to render to others, the apostle adds another thing that characterised his walk, and that was the result of the death and resurrection of Christ. He lived in an entirely new sphere, in a new creation, which had left behind, as in another world, all that belonged to a natural existence in the flesh here below. The proof that Christ had died for all proved that all were dead; and that He died for all in order that those who live should live no longer to themselves but to Him who died for them and rose again. They are in connection with this new order of things in which Christ exists as risen. Death is on everything else. Everything is shut up under death. If I live, I live in a new order of things, in a new creation, of which Christ is the type and the head. Christ, so far as in connection with this world below, is dead. He might have been known as the Messiah, living on the earth, and in connection with promises made to men living on the earth in the flesh. The apostle no longer knew Him thus. In fact Christ, as bearing that character, was dead; and now, being risen, He has taken a new and a heavenly character. Therefore if any one is in Christ, he belongs to this new creation, he is of the new creation. He belongs no more at all to the former; the old things have passed away; all things are I become new. The system is not the fruit of human nature and of sin, like all that surrounds us here below, according to the I flesh. Already, looked at as a system existing morally before God, in this new creation, all things are of God. All that is found in it is of God, of Him who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. We live in an order of things, a world, a new creation, entirely of God. We are there in peace, because God, who is its centre and its source, has reconciled us to Himself. We enjoy it, because we are new creatures in Christ; and everything in this new world is of Him, and corresponds with that new nature. He had also committed to the apostle a ministry of reconciliation, according to the order of things into which he had been himself introduced. Being reconciled, and knowing it by the revelation of God who had accomplished it for him, he proclaimed a reconciliation, the effect of which he was enjoying . All this flowed from an immense and all-powerful truth. God was in Christ. But then, in order that others might have a part with him, and the apostle be the minister of this, it was also necessary that Christ should be made sin for us. One of these truths presents the character in which God has drawn nigh to us, the other, the efficacy of that

which has been wrought for the believer. Here is the first of these truths, in connection with the apostle's ministry, which form the subject of these Chapters. God was in Christ (that is to say, when Christ was on earth). The day of judgment had not been waited for. God had come down in love into the world alienated from Him. Such was Christ. Three things were connected with and characterised this great and essential truth: reconciling the world, not imputing transgression, and putting the word of reconciliation into the apostle. As the result of this third consequence of the incarnation, the apostle assumes the character of ambassador for Christ, as though God exhorted by his means, he besought men, in the name of Christ, to be reconciled to God. But such an embassy supposed the absence of Christ; His ambassador acted in His stead. It was in fact based upon another truth of immeasurable importance, namely, that God had made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, in order that we should be made the righteousness of God in Him. This was the true way to reconcile us, and that entirely, to God, according to the perfection of God fully revealed. For He had set His love upon us where we were, giving His Son, who was without spot or motion or principle of sin; and making Him (for He offered Himself to accomplish the will of God) sin for us, in order to make us in Him who in that condition had perfectly glorified Him the expression of His divine righteousness, before the heavenly principalities through all eternity; to make us His delight, as regards righteousness; "that we should be the righteousness of God in him." Man has no righteousness for God: God has made the saints, in Jesus, His righteousness. It is in us that this divine righteousness is seen fully verified of course in Christ first, in setting Him at His right hand, and in us as in Him. Marvellous truth! which, if its results in us cause thanksgiving and praise to resound when looking at Jesus, silences the heart, and bows it down in adoration, astonished at the sight of His wonderful acts in grace. [See Note #6]

Note #5

The truth is, the judgment-seat is what most brings out our assurance before God; for as He is, so are we in this world; and it is when Christ shall appear we shall be like Him.

Note #6

It should be observed that, in Verse 20 (Co2 5:20), the word "you" ought to be omitted. It was the way in which the apostle fulfilled his ministry to the world.

2 Corinthians Chapter 6

Paul had said that God exhorted by his means. In Chapter 6 the affection of the apostle carries on by the Spirit this divine work, beseeching the Corinthians that it might not be in vain in their case that this grace had been brought to them. For it was the acceptable time, the day of salvation. [See Note #7] The apostle had spoken of the great principles of his ministry, and of its origin. He reminds the Corinthians of the way in which he had exercised it in the varied circumstances through which he had been led. The cardinal point of his service is that he was the minister of God, that he represented Him in his service. This rendered two things needful: first, that he should be in all things without reproach; and then that he should maintain this character of God's minister, and the exercise of his ministry, through all the opposition, and in all the circumstances through which the enmity of man's heart, and the cunning even of Satan, could make him pass. Everywhere and in all things he avoided, by his conduct, all real occasion of being reproached, in order that no one should have room to blame the ministry. He approved himself in all things as a minister of God, worthily representing Him in whose name he spoke to men; and that with a patience, and in the midst of persecution and contradiction of sinners, which shewed an inward energy, a sense of obligation to God, and a dependence on Him, which the realisation of His presence and of our duty to Him can alone maintain. It was a quality which reigned through all the circumstances of which the apostle speaks, and had dominion over them. Thus he shewed himself to be the minister of God in everything which could test him; in pureness, in kindness, in love; as a vessel of power; whether disgraced or applauded; unknown to the world, and known and eminent; outwardly trodden under foot of man and chastened, inwardly victorious and joyful, enriching others, and in possession of all things. Here ends his description of the sources, the character, the victory over circumstances, of a ministry which displayed the power of God in a vessel of weakness, whose best portion was death. The restoration of the Corinthians to a moral state

befitting the gospel, associated with the circumstances through which he had just been passing, had allowed him to open his heart to them. Pre-occupied till now with his subject of the glorious Christ, who, having accomplished redemption, sent him as the messenger of the grace to which that redemption had given free course, and having spoken with a free heart of all that was comprised in his ministry, he returns with affection to his beloved Corinthians, shewing that it was with them that he had all this openness, this enlargement of heart. "My mouth is open unto you, O Corinthians," he says, "my heart is enlarged; ye are not straitened in me, but in your own affections." As a recompense for the affections that overflowed from his heart towards them, he only asks for the enlargement of their own hearts. He spoke as to his children. But he avails himself of this tender relationship to exhort the Corinthians to maintain the place in which God had set them: "Be not in the same yoke with unbelievers." Having a hold upon their affections, and rejoicing deeply before God in the grace which had restored them to right sentiments, his heart is free to give way, as though beside himself, to the joy that belonged to him in Christ glorified: and, with a sober mind after all when his dear children in the faith were in question, [See Note #8] he seeks to detach them from all that recognised the flesh, or implied that a relationship which recognised it were possible for a Christian from everything that denied the position of a man who has his life and his interests in the new creation, of which Christ is the Head in glory. An angel can serve God in this world: little would it concern him in what way, provided that way was God's; but to associate himself with its interests, as forming a part of it, to ally himself with those who are governed by the motives that influence the men of this world, so that a common conduct would shew that the one and the other acted according to the principles that form its character, would be, to those heavenly beings, to lose their position and their character. The Christian, whose portion is the glory of Christ who has his world, his life, his true associations, there where Christ has entered in should not either; nor can he, as a Christian, put himself under the same yoke with those who can have only worldly motives, to draw the chariot of life in a path common to both. What communion is there between Christ and Belial; between light and darkness; faith and unbelief; the temple of God and idols? Christians are the temple of the living God who

dwells and walks among them. He is a God to them; they are a people to Him. Therefore must they come out from all fellowship with the worldly, and be separate from them. As Christians, they must stand apart, for they are the temple of God. God dwells among them and walks there, and He is their God. They are therefore to come out from the world and be separate, and God will own them, and will be to them in relationship of a Father with sons and daughters who are dear to Him. This, observe, is the special relationship which God assumes with us. The two preceding revelations of God with men are named here, and He takes a third. To Abraham He revealed Himself as Almighty; to Israel as Jehovah or Lord. Here the Lord Almighty declares that He will be a Father to His own, to His sons and daughters. We come out from among the worldly, for it is just that (not physically out of the world, but while in it), in order to enter into the relationship of sons and daughters to the Almighty God: otherwise we cannot practically realise this relationship. God will not have worldlings in relation with Himself as sons and daughters; they have not entered into this position with regard to Him. Nor will He recognise those who remain identified with the world, as having this position; for the world has rejected His Son, and the friendship of the world is enmity against God: and he who is the friend of the world is the enemy of God. It is not being His child in a practical sense. God says therefore, "Come out from among them, and be separate, and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters." Remember that it is not a question of coming out of the world it is while we are in it but of coming out from among the worldly, to enter into the relationship of sons and daughters, in order to be to Him for sons and daughters, to be owned of Him in this relationship. [See Note #9] But it is not only that from which we are separated to be in this position of sons and daughters that engages the apostle's attention, but the legitimate consequences of such promises. Sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, holiness becomes us. It is not only that we are to be separate from the world; but, in relationship with God, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit: holiness in the outward walk, and that which is quite as important with regard to our relationship to God, purity of thought. For, although man does not see the thoughts, the flow of the Spirit is stopped in the heart. There is not enlargement of heart in communion with God, It is much if His presence is felt, His relationship to us realised;

grace is known, but God scarcely at all, in the way in which He makes Himself gradually known in communion.

Note #7

The passage is a quotation from Isa 49:8, which speaks of the blessing that should be brought to the Gentiles when Christ was rejected by the Jews, but through Christ's work and by the resurrection.

Note #8

What a blessed state is that of a man, who, when he is taken out of himself and a state of calm reflection, is entirely absorbed with, or turned towards, God, and, when he does think soberly and calculates, is occupied in love in seeking the good of his brethren, the members of Christ: who is either rapt up into the contemplation of God and communion with Him, or filled with Him, so as to think only of others in love!

Note #9

The reader may remark that the passage sets two things before us: that God is present in the assembly of those who are separated from the world, and walks among them, as He did in the case of Israel in the wilderness when they had come out of Egypt; and that the individuals who compose the assembly enter into the relationship of sons and daughters.

2 Corinthians Chapter 7

The apostle returns to his own relationships with the Corinthians relations formed by the word of his ministry. And now having laid open what this ministry really was, he seeks to prevent the bonds being broken, which had been formed by this ministry between the Corinthians and himself through the power of the Holy Ghost. "Receive us: we have wronged no one" he is anxious not to wound the feelings of these restored ones, who found themselves again in their old affection for the apostle, and thus in their true relation with God. "I do not say this to condemn you," he adds; "for I have said before that ye are in my heart to die and live with you. My boldness is great towards you, great is my glorying of you. I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all my tribulation." He is not now unfolding the principles

of the ministry, but the heart of a minister, all that he had felt with regard to the state of the Corinthians. When he had arrived in Macedonia (whither, it will be remembered, he had gone without visiting Corinth), after he had left Troas, because he did not find Titus there, who was to bring him the answer to his first letter to the Corinthians when he was come into Macedonia, his flesh had no rest there either; he was troubled on every side: without were fightings, within were fears. There however God, who comforts those who are cast down, comforted him by the arrival of Titus, for whom he had waited with so much anxiety; and not only by his coming, but by the good news he brought from Corinth. His joy went beyond all his sorrow, for his heart was to die and live with them. He saw the moral fruits of the operation of the Spirit, their desire, their tears, their zeal with regard to the apostle; and his heart turns again to them in order to bind up, by the expression of his affection, all the wounds (needful as they were) which his first letter might have made in their hearts. Nothing more touching than the conflict in his heart between the necessity he had felt, on account of their previous state, to write to them with severity, and in some sort with a cold authority, and the affections which, now that the effect had been produced, dictated almost an apology for the grief he might have caused them. If, he says, I made you sorry by the letter, I do not repent: even though he might have repented and had done so for a moment. For he saw that the letter had grieved them, were it but for a season. But now he rejoiced, not that they had been made sorry, but that they had sorrowed unto repentance. What solicitude! What a heart for the good of the saints! If they had a fervent mind towards him, assuredly he had given them the occasion and the motive. No rest till he had tidings: nothing, not open doors, nor distress, could remove his anxiety. He regrets perhaps having written the letter, fearing that he had alienated the hearts of the Corinthians; and now, still pained at the thought of having grieved them, he rejoices, not at having grieved them, but because their godly sorrow had wrought repentance. He writes a letter according to the energy of the Holy Ghost. Left to the affections of his heart, we see him, in this respect, below the level of the energy of inspiration which had dictated that letter which the spiritual were to acknowledge as the commandments of the Lord; his heart trembles at the thought of its consequences, when he receives no tidings. It is very

interesting to see the difference between the individuality of the apostle and inspiration. In the first letter we remarked the distinction which he makes between that which he said as the result of his experience, and the commandments of the Lord communicated through him. Here we find the difference in the experience itself. He forgets the character of his epistle for a moment, and, given up to his affections, he fears to have lost the Corinthians by the effort he had made to reclaim them. The form of the expression he uses shews that it was but for a moment that this sentiment took possession of his heart. But the fact that he had it plainly shews the difference between Paul the individual and Paul the inspired writer. Now he is satisfied. The expression of this deep interest which he feels for them is a part of his ministry, and valuable instruction for us, to shew the way in which the heart enters into the exercise of this ministry, the flexibility of this mighty energy of love, in order to win and bend hearts by the opportune expression of that which is passing in our own: an expression which will assuredly take place when the occasion makes it right and natural, if the heart is filled with affection; for a strong affection likes to make itself known to its object, if possible, according to the truth of that affection. There is a grief of heart which consumes it, but a heart that feels godly sorrow is on the way to repentance. [See Note #10] Greatness of heart does not readily talk about feelings, because it thinks of others, not of itself. But it is not afraid, when occasion arises, to do so; because it thinks of others, and has a depth of purpose in its affections, which is behind all this movement of them. And Christianity gives greatness of heart. And besides, from its nature, it is confiding, and this wins, and gives unsought, influence this greatness of heart does not seek, for it is unselfish. His true relationship for their good the apostle did maintain. The apostle then sets forth the fruits of this godly sorrow, the zeal against sin it had produced, the heart's holy rejection of all association with sin. Now also that they had morally separated themselves, he separates those who were not guilty from those who were so. He will no longer confound them together. They had confounded themselves together morally by walking at ease with those who were in sin. By putting away the sin they were now outside the evil: and the apostle shews that it was with a view to their good, because he was devoted to them, that he had written to testify the loving occupation of his

thoughts about them, and to put to the test their love for him before God. Sad as their walk had been, he had assured Titus, when encouraging him to go to Corinth, that he would certainly find hearts there that would respond to this appeal of apostolic affection. He had not been disappointed, and as he had declared the truth among them, that which he had said of them to Titus was found true also, and the affections of Titus himself were strongly awakened when he saw it.

Note #10

Greatness of heart does not readily talk about feelings, because it thinks of others, not of itself. But it is not afraid, when occasion arises, to do so; because it thinks of others, and has a depth of purpose in its affections, which is behind all this movement of them. And Christianity gives greatness of heart. And besides, from its nature, it is confiding, and this wins, and gives unsought, influence this greatness of heart does not seek, for it is unselfish. His true relationship for their good the apostle did maintain.

2 Corinthians Chapter 8

Commentary for this Chapter is probably included in the next or previous Chapters.

2 Corinthians Chapter 9

In the next Chapter the apostle (being on his way to Judea) exhorts the Corinthians to prepare relief for the poor of Israel; sending Titus that all might be ready as of a willing mind a disposition of which he had spoken on his journey as existing among these Christians, so that others had been stirred up to give likewise. And now, while reckoning upon their goodwill, and knowing that they had begun a year before. he would run no risk of finding that facts gave the lie to what he had said of them. Not that he would burden the Corinthians and ease those of Judea, but that the rich should provide for the need of the poor brethren, in order that none should be in want. Every one, if his will were in it, should be accepted of God according to his ability. He loved a cheerful giver. Only they should reap according as they sowed. Titus, happy at the result of his first visit, and attached to the Corinthians, was ready to go again and gather this fruit also

for their own blessing. With him went the messengers of the other churches, charged with the collection made among them for the same purpose a brother known to all the churches, and another of approved diligence, stimulated by Paul's confidence in the Corinthians. The apostle would not take charge of the money without having companions whose charge it should also be, avoiding all possibility of reproach in affairs of this kind, taking care that everything should be honest before men as well as before God. Nevertheless he did not speak by commandment in all this, but on account of the zeal of other churches, and to prove the sincerity of their love. It will be remembered that it was this collection which occasioned all that happened to Paul at Jerusalem that which put an end to his ministry, stopped him on his way into Spain, and perhaps other places; and which, on the other hand, gave occasion to write the epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and, it may be, to the Hebrews. How little we know the bearing of the circumstances we enter upon, happy that we are led by Him who knows the end from the beginning, and who makes all things work for good to those who love Him! In closing those exhortations to give according to their ability, he commends them to the rich goodness of God, who was able to make them abound in all things, so that they should be in circumstances to multiply their good works, enriched to all bountifulness, so as to produce in others (by means of the apostle's services in this respect) thanksgiving unto God. For, he adds, the happy effect of your practical charity, exercised in the name of Christ, would not only supply the want of the saints (through his administration of the collection made at Corinth) but abound also in thanksgiving to God; for, those who received it blessed God that their benefactors had been brought to confess the name of Christ, and to act with this practical liberality to them and to all. And this thought stirred them up to pray with fervent desire for those who provided in this way for their need, because of the grace of God manifested in them. Thus the bonds of eternal charity were strengthened on both sides, and glory redounded to God. Thanks be to God, says the apostle, for His unspeakable gift; for whatsoever may be the fruits of grace, we have the proof and the power in that which God has given. Here ends the matter of the epistle properly so called.

2 Corinthians Chapter 10

The apostle returns to the subject which pre-occupied him his connections with the Corinthians, and the truth of his apostleship, which was questioned by those who seduced them, throwing contempt on his person. He was weak, they said, when present, and his speech contemptible, though bold when absent (his letters being boastful, but his bodily presence contemptible). "I beseech you," says the apostle, "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ [shewing thus the true character of his own meekness and humility when among them], not to compel me to be bold among you, as I think of being with regard to some who pretend that I walk after the flesh." The strength of the war that he waged against evil was founded on spiritual weapons, with which he brought down all that exalted itself against the knowledge of God. This is the principle on which he acted, to seek to bring to obedience all who hearkened to God, and then severity to all disobedience, when once obedience should be fully established, and those who would hearken were restored to order. Precious principle! the power and the guidance of the Spirit acting in full, and with all patience, to restore to order, and to a walk worthy of God; carrying the remonstrances of grace to the utmost, until all those who would hearken to them and willingly obey God were restored; and then to assert divine authority in judgment and discipline, with the weight which was added to the apostolic action by the conscience and common action of all those who had been brought back to obedience. Observe, that the apostle refers to his personal authority as an apostle; but that he uses it in patience (for he possessed it for the purpose of edification and not for destruction) in order to bring back to obedience and uprightness all those who would hearken; and thus, preserving christian unity in holiness, he clothes the apostolic authority with the power of the universal conscience of the assembly, guided by the Spirit, so far as there was a conscience at work. He then declares that such as he is in his letters, such shall they find him when he is present; and he contrasts the conduct of those who took advantage of his labours, beguiling a people who had already become Christians, in order to stir them up against him, with his own conduct in going where Christ had not yet been known, seeking to bring souls to the knowledge of a Saviour of whom they were ignorant. Also he hoped that, when he visited the Corinthians, his ministry would be enlarged among them by their increase of faith, in order that he might go on beyond

them to evangelise regions that still lay in darkness. But he who gloried, let him glory in the Lord.

2 Corinthians Chapter 11

In Chapter 11, jealous with regard to his beloved Corinthians with a godly jealousy, he carries yet further his arguments relating to false teachers. He asks the faithful in Corinth to bear with him a little, while he acts like a fool in speaking of himself. He had espoused them as a chaste virgin to Christ, and he feared lest any should corrupt their minds, leading them away from the simplicity that is in Him. If the Corinthians had received another Christ from the teachers lately come among them, or another Spirit, or another gospel, they might well bear with what these teachers did. But certainly the apostle had not been a whit behind in his instructions, even if they compared him with the most renowned of the apostles. Had he wronged them by receiving nothing at their hands (as these new teachers boasted of doing), and in taking money from other assemblies, and never being a burden to them? a subject for boasting, of which no one should deprive him in the regions of Achaia. Had he refused to take anything from them because he loved them not? God knew No; it was to deprive the false teachers of a means of commending themselves to them by labouring gratuitously among them, while the apostle received money. He would deprive them of this boast, for they were false apostles. As Satan transformed himself into an angel of light, so his instruments made themselves ministers of righteousness. But again let them bear with him while he spoke as a fool in speaking of himself. If these ministers of Satan accredited themselves as Jews, as of the ancient religion of God, consecrated by its antiquity and its traditions, he could do as much, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and possessing all the titles to glory of which they boasted. And if it was a question of christian service to speak as a fool certainly the comparison would not fail to shew where the devotedness had been. Here in fact God has allowed this invasion of the apostle's work by these wretched judaising men (calling themselves Christians) to be the means of acquainting us with something of the indefatigable labours of the apostle, carried on in a thousand circumstances of which we have no account. In the Acts God has given us the history of the establishment of the assembly in the great principles on which it was

founded, and the phases through which it passed on coming out of Judaism. The apostle will have his own reward in the kingdom of glory, not by speaking of it among men. Nevertheless it is profitable for our faith to have some knowledge of christian devotedness, as it was manifested in the life of the apostle. The folly of the Corinthians has been the means of furnishing us with a little glimpse of it. Troubles and dangers without, incessant anxieties within, a courage that quailed before no peril, a love for poor sinners and for the assembly that nothing chilled these few lines sketch the picture of a life of such absolute devotedness that it touches the coldest heart; it makes us fee] all our selfishness, and bend the knee before Him who was the living source of the blessed apostle's devotedness, before Him whose glory inspired it.

2 Corinthians Chapter 12

Nevertheless, though forced to speak of himself, the apostle would glory only in his infirmities. But he is, as it were, outside his natural work. His past life unfolds before his eyes. The Corinthians obliged him to think of things which he had left behind. After having ended his account, and declared that he would glory in his infirmities alone, there was one circumstance that recurred to him. Nothing can be more natural, more simple, than all these communications. Must he glory? It is but unprofitable. He would come to that of which a man as in the flesh could not glory. It was the sovereign power of God, in which the man had no part. It was a man in Christ of whom he spoke such a one had been caught up to the third heaven, to paradise; in the body, or out of the body, he knew not. The body had no part in it. Of such a one he would glory. That which exalted him on the earth he would put aside. That which took him up to heaven that which gave him a portion there that which he was "in Christ" was his glory, the joy of his heart, the portion in which he readily would glory. Happy being! whose portion in Christ was such that, in thinking of it, he is content to forget all that could exalt him as man; as he says elsewhere as to his hope, "that I may win Christ." The man, the body, had no share in a power, to taste of which he had to be caught up into heaven; but of such a one he would glory. There, where God and His glory are everything, separated from his body as to any consciousness of being in it, he heard things which men in the body were

not capable of entering into, and which it was not fitting that a mortal man should declare, which the mode of being of a man in the body could not admit. These things had made the deepest impression on the apostle; they strengthened him for the ministry; but he could not introduce them into the manner of understanding and communicating which belongs to man's condition here below. But many practical lessons are connected with this marvellous favour shewn to the apostle. I say, marvellous; for in truth one feels what a ministry must his have been, whose strength, and whose way of seeing and judging, were drawn from such a position. What an extraordinary mission was that of this apostle! But he had it in an earthen vessel. Nothing amends the flesh. Once come back into the consciousness of his human existence on earth, the apostle's flesh would have taken advantage of the favour he had enjoyed to exalt him in his own eyes, to say, 'None have been in the third heaven but thou, Paul.' To be near God in the glory, as out of the body, does not puff up. All is Christ, and Christ is all: self is forgotten. To have been there is another thing. The presence of God makes us feel our nothingness. The flesh can avail itself of our having been in it, when we are no longer there. Alas! what is man? But God is watchful; in His grace He provided for the danger of His poor servant. To have taken him up to a fourth heaven so to speak would only have increased the danger. There is no way of amending the flesh; the presence of God silences it. It will boast of it as soon as it is no longer there. To walk safely, it must be held in check, such as it is. We have to reckon it dead; but it often requires to be bridled, that the heart be not drawn away from God by its means, and that it may neither impede our walk nor spoil our testimony. Paul received a thorn in the flesh, lest he should be puffed up on account of the abundant revelations which he had received. We know, by the epistle to the Galatians, that it was something which tended to make him contemptible in his preaching: a very intelligible counterpoise to these remarkable revelations. God left this task to Satan, as He used him for the humiliation of Job. Whatever graces may be bestowed on us, we must go through the ordinary exercises of personal faith, in which the heart only walks safely when the flesh is bridled, and so practically nullified, that we are not conscious of it as active in us when we wish to be wholly given to God, and to think of Him and with Him according to our measure. Three times (like the Lord with

reference to the cup He was to drink) the apostle asks Him that the thorn may be taken away; but the divine life is fashioned in the putting off of self, and imperfect as we are this putting off as to practice that which, as to truth, if we look at our standing in Christ, we have put off, is wrought by our being made conscious of the humiliating unsuitableness of this flesh, which we like to gratify, to the presence of God and the service to which we are called. Happy for us when it is by way of prevention, and not by the humiliation of a fall, as was the case with Peter! The difference is plain. There it was self-confidence mingled with self-will in spite of the Lord's warnings. Here, though still the flesh, the occasion was the revelations which had been made to Paul. If we learn the tendency of the flesh in the presence of God, we come out of it humble, and we escape humiliation. But in general (and we may say in some respects with all) we have to experience the revelations that lift us up to God, whatever their measure may be, and we have to experience what the vessel is in which it is contained, by the pain it gives us through the sense of what it is I do not say through falls. God, in His government, knows how to unite suffering for Christ, and the discipline in the flesh, in the same circumstance; and this explains Heb 12:1-11. The apostle preached: if he was despised in his preaching it was truly for the Lord that he suffered; nevertheless the same thing disciplined the flesh, and prevented the apostle priding himself on the revelations he enjoyed, and the consequent power with which he unfolded the truth. In the presence of God, in the third heaven, he truly felt that man was nothing, and Christ everything. He must acquire the practical experience of the same thing below. The flesh must be annulled, where it is not a nullity, by the experimental sense of the evil which is in it, and must thus become consciously a nullity in the personal experience of that which it is. For what was the flesh of Paul which only hindered him morally in his work, by drawing him away from God except a troublesome companion in his work? The suppression of the flesh felt and judged was a most profitable exercise of the heart. Observe here the blessed position of the apostle, as caught up into the third heaven. He could glory in such a one, because self was entirely lost in the things with which he was in relation He did not merely glory in the things, neither does he say "in myself." Self was completely lost sight of in the enjoyment of things that were unutterable by the man when he

returned into the consciousness of self. He would glory in such a one; but in himself, looked at in flesh, he would not glory, save in his infirmities. On the other hand, is it not humiliating to think that he who had enjoyed such exaltation should have to go through the painful experience of what the flesh is, wicked, despicable, and selfish? Observe also the difference between Christ and any man whatsoever. Christ could be on the mount in glory with Moses, and be owned as His Son by the Father Himself; and He can be on the plain in the presence of Satan and of the multitude; but, although the scenes are different, He is alike perfect in each. We find admirable affections in the apostles, and especially in Paul; we find works, as Jesus said, greater than His own; we find exercises of heart, and astonishing heights by grace; in a word we see a marvellous power developed by the Holy Ghost in this extraordinary servant of the Lord; but we do not find the evenness that was in Christ. He was the Son of man who was in heaven. Such as Paul are chords on which God strikes and on which He produces a wondrous music; but Christ is all the music itself. Finally, observe that the humiliation needed to reduce the rebellious flesh to its nothingness is used by Christ to display His power in it. Thus humbled, we learn our dependence. All that is of us, all that constitutes self, is a hindrance; the infirmity is that in which it is put down, laid low, in which weakness is realised. The power of Christ is perfected in it. It is a general principle; humanly speaking, the cross was weakness. Death is the opposite of the strength of man. Nevertheless it is in it that the strength of Christ revealed itself. In it He accomplished His glorious work of salvation. It is not sin in the flesh that is the subject here when infirmity is spoken of, but what is contrary to the strength of man. Christ never leant on human strength for a moment; He lived by the Father, who had sent Him. The power of the Holy Ghost alone was displayed in Him. Paul needed to have the flesh reduced to weakness, in order that there might not be in it the motion of sin which was natural to it. When the flesh was reduced to its true nothingness as far as good is concerned, and in a manifest way, then Christ could display His strength in it. That strength had its true character. Remark it well: that is always its character strength made perfect in infirmity. The blessed apostle could glory in a man in Christ above, enjoying all this beatitude, these marvellous things which shut out self, so much were they above all we are. While enjoying them, he was not

conscious of the existence of his body. When he was again conscious of it, that which he had heard could not be translated into those communications which had the body for their instrument, and human ears as the means of intelligence. He gloried in that man in Christ above. Here below he only gloried in Christ Himself, and in that infirmity which gave occasion for the power of Christ to rest on him, and which was the demonstration that this power was that of Christ, that Christ made him the vessel of its manifestation. But this nevertheless was realised by painful experiences. The first was the man in Christ, the second the power of Christ resting on the man. For the first the man as to flesh is nothing; as to the second it is judged and put down turned to weakness, that we may learn, and Christ's power may be manifested. There is an impulse, an ineffable source of ministry on high. Strength comes in, on the humiliation of man as he is in this world, when the man is reduced to nothingness his true value in divine things and Christ unfolds in him that strength which could not associate itself with the strength of man, nor depend on it in any way whatsoever. If the instrument was weak, as they alleged, the power which had wrought must have been not its power, but that of Christ. Thus, as at the beginning of the epistle we had the true characteristics of the ministry in connection with the objects that gave it that character, so we have here its practical strength, and the source of that strength, in connection with the vessel in which the testimony was deposited, the way in which this ministry was exercised by bringing a mortal man into connection with the ineffable sources from which it flowed, and with the living, present, active energy of Christ, so that the man should be capable of it, and yet that he should not accomplish it in his own carnal strength a thing moreover impossible in itself. [See Note #11] Thus the apostle gloried in his sufferings and his infirmities. He had been obliged to speak as a fool; they who ought themselves to have proclaimed the excellence of his ministry had forced him to do it. It was among them that all the most striking proofs of an apostolic ministry had been given. If in anything they had been behind other churches with regard to proofs of his apostleship, it was in their not having contributed anything to his maintenance. He was coming again. This proof would still be wanting. He would spend himself for them, as a kind father; even although the more he loved, the less he should be loved. Would they

say that he had kept up appearances by taking nothing himself, but that he knew how to indemnify himself by using Titus in order to receive from them? It was no such thing. They well knew that Titus had walked among them in the same spirit as the apostle. Sad work, when one who is above these wretched motives and ways of judging and estimating things, and full of these divine and glorious motives of Christ, is obliged to come down to those which occupy the selfish hearts of the people with whom he has to do hearts that are on a level with the motives which animate and govern the world that surrounds them! But love must bear all things and must think for others, if one cannot think with them, not they with oneself. Is it then that the apostle took the Corinthians for judges of his conduct? He spoke before God in Christ; and only feared lest, when he came, he should find many of those who professed the name of Christ like the world of iniquity that surrounded them; and that he should be humbled amongst them, and have to bewail many who had already sinned and had not repented of their misdeeds. For the third time he was coming. Everything should be proved by the testimony of two or three witnesses; and this time he would not spare. The apostle says, "This is the third time I am coming"; yet he adds, "as if I were present the second time, and being absent now." This is, because he had been there once, was to have gone there on his way to Macedonia, was coming a second time, but did not on account of the state the Corinthians were in; but this third time he was coming, and he had told them beforehand; and he said beforehand, as if he had gone the second time, although now absent, that if he came again he would not spare. He then puts an end to the question about his ministry by presenting an idea which ought to confound them utterly. If Christ had not spoken by him, Christ did not dwell in them. If Christ was in them, He must have spoken by the apostle, for he had been the means of their conversion. "Since," he says, "ye seek a proof that Christ speaketh in me, examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith. Do ye not know yourselves, that Christ dwelleth in you, unless ye be reprobates?" and that they did not at all think. This was quite upsetting them, and turning their foolish and stupid opposition, their unbecoming contempt of the apostle, to their own confusion. What folly to allow themselves to be led away by a thought which, no doubt, exalted them in their own eyes; but which, by calling in question the apostleship of

Paul, necessarily overturned, at the same time, their own Christianity! From "which to you ward is not weak" to the end of Verse 4 (Co2 12:4) is a parenthesis, referring to the character of his ministry, according to the principles brought forward in the previous Chapter: weakness, and that which tended to contempt, on the side of man; power on God's part: even as Christ was crucified in weakness and was raised again by divine power. If the apostle himself was weak, it was in Christ; and he lived in Him, by the power of God, towards the Corinthians. Whatever might be the case with them, he trusted they should know that he was not reprobate; and he only prayed to God that they should do no evil, not in order that he should not be reprobate (that is, worthless in his ministry, for here he is speaking of ministry), but that they might do good even if he were reprobate. For he could do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. He was not master of the Corinthians for his own interest, but was content to be weak that they might be strong; for what he desired was their perfection. But he wrote, being absent, as he had said, in order that when present he might not be obliged to act with severity, according to the authority which the Lord had given him for edification, and not for destruction. He had written what his heart, filled and guided by the Holy Ghost, impelled him to say; he had poured it all out; and now, wearied, so to speak, with the effort, he closes the epistle with a few brief sentences: "Rejoice, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace." Happen what might, it was this which he desired for them; and that the God of love and of peace should be with them. He rests in this wish, exhorting them to salute one another with affection, as all the saints, including himself, saluted them; praying that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, might be with them all.

Note #11

This Chapter is altogether a striking one. We have Christians in the highest and lowest conditions; in the third heaven, and in actual low sin. In the first, a man in Christ (true in position, if not in vision, of us all), the apostle glories, and we are right to glory that is a man in Christ. As to what he is in himself he has to be brought to utter nothingness. But neither the glorying in the man in Christ, nor his being made nothing of in flesh, is power: the latter is

the path to it; but then, being nothing, Christ's power is with him, rests on him, and here he has power in service, the man in Christ his own place Christ in, or His power on, the man, his strength to serve. So that we have the highest apprehension of the Spirit, the lowest failure in flesh, and the way of power in making nothing of the latter, Christ's power being thereon with us, practical power while in the body. But there will be the sense of weakness, the want of proportion between what we are as to the earthen vessel, and what is ministered and enjoyed. It is not merely what is evil but the earthen vessel in which the treasure is.

2 Corinthians Chapter 13

Commentary for this Chapter is probably included in the next or previous Chapters.

GALATIANS

Galatians Chapter 1

Galatians 1:1

gal 1:1

The epistle to the Galatians sets before us the great source of the afflictions and conflicts of the apostle in the regions where he had preached the glad tidings; that which was at the same time the principal means employed by the enemy to corrupt the gospel. God, it is true, in His love, has suited the gospel to the wants of man. The enemy brings down that which still bears its name to the level of the haughty will of man and the corruption of the natural heart, turning Christianity into a religion that suits that heart, in place of one that is the expression of the heart of God an all-holy God and the revelation of that which He has done in His love to bring us into communion with His holiness. We see, at the same time, the connection between the judaising doctrine which is the denial of full redemption, and looking for good in flesh and man's will, power in man to work out righteousness in himself for God in those who hindered the apostle's work, and the attacks that were constantly aimed against his ministry; because that ministry appealed directly to the power of the Holy Ghost and to the immediate authority of a glorified Christ, and set man as ruined, and Judaism which dealt with man, wholly aside. In withstanding the efforts of the judaisers, the apostle necessarily establishes the elementary principles of justification by grace. Traces both of this combat with the spirit of Judaism, by which Satan endeavoured to destroy true Christianity, and of the maintenance by the apostle of this liberty, and of the authority of his ministry, are found in a multitude of passages in Corinthians, in Philipians, in Colossians, in Timothy, and historically in the Acts. In Galatians the two subjects are treated in a direct and formal way. But the gospel is consequently reduced to its most simple elements, grace to its most simple expression. But, with regard to the error, the question is but the more decisively settled; the

irreconcilable difference between the two principles, Judaism and the gospel, is the more strongly marked.

God allowed this invasion of His assembly in the earliest days of its existence, in order that we might have the answer of divine inspiration to these very principles, when they should be developed in an established system which would claim submission from the children of God as being the church that He had established and the only ministry that He acknowledged. The immediate source of true ministry, according to the gospel that Paul preached to the Gentiles, the impossibility of uniting the law and that gospel of binding up together subjection to its ordinances and distinction of days with the holy and heavenly liberty into which we are brought by a risen Christ, the impossibility, I repeat, of uniting the religion of the flesh with that of the Spirit, are plainly set forth in this epistle.

The apostle begins, at the very outset, with the independence, as to all other men, of the ministry which he exercised, pointing out its true source, from which he received it without the intervention of any intermediate instrument whatsoever: adding, in order to shew that the Galatians were forsaking the common faith of the saints, "all the brethren which are with me." Also, in opening the subject of his epistle, the apostle declares at once, that the doctrine introduced by the judaisers among the Galatians was a different gospel (but which was not really another), not the gospel of Christ.

He begins then by declaring that he is not an apostle either of men or by man. He does not come on the part of men as though sent by them, and it is not by means of any man that he had received his commission, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead. It was by Jesus Christ, on the way to Damascus; and by the Father, it appears to me, when the Holy Ghost said, "Separate to me Barnabas and Paul." But he speaks thus, in order to carry up the origin of his ministry to the primary source of all real good, and of all legitimate authority. [See Note #1] He wishes, as usual, to the assembly, grace and peace from God in His character of Father, and from Jesus in His character of Lord. But he adds here to the name of Jesus, that which belongs to that character of the gospel which the Galatians had lost sight of, namely, that Christ had given Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil age. The natural man, in his

sins, belongs to this age. The Galatians desired to return to it under the pretext of a righteousness according to the law. Christ had given Himself for our sins in order to take us out of it: for the world is judged. Looked at as in the flesh, we are of it. Now the righteousness of the law has to do with men in the flesh. It is man as in the flesh who is to fulfil it, and the flesh has its sphere in this world; the righteousness which man would accomplish in the flesh is directed according to the elements of this world. Legal righteousness, man in the flesh, and the world, go together. Whereas Christ has viewed us as sinners, having no righteousness, and has given Himself for our sins, and to deliver us from this condemned world, in which men seek to establish righteousness by putting themselves on the ground of the flesh which can never accomplish it. This deliverance is also according to the will of our God and Father. He will have a heavenly people, redeemed according to that love which has given us a place on high with Himself, and a life in which the Holy Ghost works, to make us enjoy it and cause us to walk in the liberty and in the holiness which He gives us in this new creation, of which Jesus Himself, risen and glorified, is the head and the glory.

The apostle opens his subject without preamble: he was full of it, and the state of the Galatians who were giving up the gospel in its foundations forced it out from an oppressed, and I may say, an indignant heart. How was it possible that the Galatians had so quickly forsaken him, who had called them according to the power of the grace of Christ, for a different gospel? It was by this call of God that they had part in the glorious liberty, and in the salvation that has its realisation in heaven. It was by the redemption that Christ had accomplished and the grace that belongs to us in Him, that they enjoyed heavenly and christian happiness. And now they were turning to an entirely different testimony; a testimony which was not another gospel, another true glad tidings. It did but trouble their minds by perverting the true gospel. "But," says the apostle, reiterating his words on the subject, "if an angel from heaven, or he [Paul himself], preached anything besides the gospel that he had already preached to them, let him be accursed." Observe here, that he will allow nothing in addition to that which he had preached.

They did not formally deny Christ; they wished to add circumcision. But the gospel which the apostle had preached was the complete and whole gospel.

Nothing could be added to it without altering it, without saying that it was not the perfect gospel, without really adding something that was of another nature, that is to say, corrupting it. For the entirely heavenly revelation of God was what Paul had taught them. In his teaching he had completed the circle of the doctrine of God. To add anything to it was to deny its perfection; and to alter its character, to corrupt it. The apostle is not speaking of a doctrine openly opposed to it, but of that which is outside the gospel which he had preached. Thus, he says, there cannot be another gospel; it is a different gospel, but there are no glad tidings except that which he had preached. It is but a corruption of the true, a corruption by which they troubled souls. Thus, in love to souls, he could anathematise those who turned them away from the perfect truth that he had preached. It was the gospel of God Himself. Everything else was of Satan. If Paul himself brought another, let him be anathema. The pure and entire gospel was already proclaimed, and it asserted its claims in the name of God against all that pretended to associate itself with it. Did Paul seek to satisfy the minds of men in his gospel, or to please men? In no wise; he would not thus be the servant of Christ.

Note #1

Not "of men" what calls itself the clergy would freely admit, but not "by man" they cannot. It strikes at the root of their existence as such. They boast its descent from man, but (it is remarkable enough) none from Paul, the true minister of the assembly, and, where most insisted on, from Peter, the apostle of the circumcision. Peter was not the apostle to the Gentiles at all, and, as far as we know, never went to them.

Galatians Chapter 2

He then speaks historically of his ministry, and of the question whether man had anything to do with it. His gospel was not according to man, for he had not received it from any man; he had not been taught it. That which he possessed was his by the immediate revelation made to him by Jesus Christ. And when God, who, from his mother's womb, set him apart, and had called him by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in him, the revelation had at once all its own power as such. He did not consult any one. He did not put

himself into communication with the other apostles, but at once acted independently of them, as being directly taught of God. It was not till three years after that he went to make acquaintance with Peter, and also saw James. The churches of Judea did not know him by sight; only, they glorified God for the grace he had received. Moreover he was only fifteen days in Jerusalem. He then went into Syria and Cilicia. Fourteen years afterwards he went up to Jerusalem (we have the account in Acts 15) with Barnabas, and took Titus with him. But Titus, Gentile as he was, had not been circumcised; an evident proof of the liberty in which the apostle publicly stood. It was a bold step on his part to take Titus with him, and thus decide the question between himself and the judaising Christians. He went up because of false brethren, who sought to spy out the liberty into which Paul (enjoying it in the Spirit) introduced believers; and he went up by virtue of a revelation.

We may observe here, how the communications of God may be inwardly the guides of our conduct, although we yield to motives presented by others. In Acts 15 we find the outward history; here, that which governed the apostle's heart. God (in order that the thing might be decided at Jerusalem, to shut every mouth and to maintain unity) did not allow the apostle to have the upper hand at Antioch, or to arrange on the spot the walk of the assembly formed in that place. Neither did He allow him to isolate himself in his own convictions, but made him go up to Jerusalem and communicate to the chief apostles that which he taught, so that there should be community of testimony on this important point; and that they also should acknowledge Paul as taught of God independently of them, and at the same time recognise his ministry as sent of God, and that he was acting on the part of God as much as themselves. For, although God would have him communicate to them that which he had taught others, he received nothing from them. The effect of his communication was, that they owned the grace which God had granted him and the ministry he had received for the Gentiles, and they gave to him and to Barnabas the right hands of fellowship.

Had he gone up earlier, whatever his knowledge might have been, the proofs of his special and independent ministry would not have existed. But he had laboured fruitfully for many years without receiving any mission from

the other apostles, and they had to recognise his apostleship as the immediate gift of God, as well as the truths which God had imparted to him: the proofs were there; and God had owned this apostleship, as He had given it. The twelve had nothing to do but to acknowledge it, if they acknowledged God as the source of all these excellent gifts. Paul was an apostle from God without their intervention. They could acknowledge his ministry, and in it the God who had give them that which they themselves exercised.

Moreover Paul had always acted independently in the fulfilment of his mission. When Peter came to Antioch, he withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. He was not, as to Paul, as a superior before whom his subordinates must maintain a respectful silence. Although God had wrought mightily in Peter, yet his companion in apostleship (faithful to Him who had called him) could not allow the gospel to be falsified, which had been committed to his own care by the Lord Himself. Ardent as he was, poor Peter always cared too much about the opinion of others. Now the opinion that prevails in the world is always that which influences the heart of man; and this opinion is always one which gives a certain glory to man after the flesh. Paul, taught from above and full of the power of the Spirit, who, by revealing heavenly glory had made him feel that all which exalted the flesh obscured that glory and falsified the gospel that declared it Paul, who lived and moved morally in the new creation, of which a glorified Christ is the centre; and as firm as he was ardent, because he realised the things that are not seen; as clear-sighted as firm, because he lived in the realisation of spiritual and heavenly things in Christ Paul, for whom to win Christ thus glorified was everything, clearly sees the carnal walk of the apostle of the circumcision. He is not deterred by man; he is occupied with Christ who was his all, and with the truth. He does not spare one who overturned this truth, be his position in the assembly what it might.

It was dissimulation in Peter. While alone, where the influence of heavenly truth prevailed, he ate with the Gentiles, surrounding himself with the reputation of walking in the same liberty as others. But when certain persons came from James, from Jerusalem, where he himself habitually lived, the centre where religious flesh and its customs still had (under the

patient goodness of God) so much power, he no longer dared to use a liberty which was condemned by those Christians who were still Jewish in their sentiments; he withdrew himself. What a poor thing is man! And we are weak in proportion to our importance before men; when we are nothing, we can do all things, as far as human opinion is concerned. We exercise, at the same time, an unfavourable influence over others in the degree in which they influence us in which we yield to the influence which the desire of maintaining our reputation among them exercises over our hearts: and all the esteem in which we are held, even justly, becomes a means of evil. [See Note #2] Peter, who fears those that came from Jerusalem, draws away all the Jews and even Barnabas with him in his dissimulation.

Paul, energetic and faithful, through grace, alone remains upright: and he rebukes Peter before them all. Why compel Gentiles to live as Jews in order to enjoy full christian communion, when he, being a Jew, had felt himself free to live as the Gentiles? Themselves Jews by nature, and not poor sinners of the Gentiles, they had given up the law as a means of securing the favour of God, and had taken refuge in Christ. But if they sought to rebuild the edifice of legal obligations, in order to acquire righteousness, why had they overturned it? Thus acting, they made themselves transgressors in having overturned it. And more than that; since it was in order to come to Christ in exchange for the efficacy which they had formerly supposed to exist in the law as a means of justification that they had ceased to seek righteousness by the law, Christ was a minister of sin. His doctrine had made them transgressors! For in rebuilding the edifice of the law, they made it evident that they ought not to have overthrown it; and it was Christ who made them do so.

What a result from the weakness which, in order to please men, had returned to those things that were gratifying to the flesh! How little did Peter think of this! How little do many Christians suspect it! To rest upon ordinances is to rest upon the flesh; there are none in heaven. When Christ, who is there, is everything, it cannot be done. Christ has indeed established ordinances to distinguish His people from the world, by that which signified, on the one hand, that they were not of it, but dead with Him to it, and, on

the other hand, to gather them on the ground of that which alone can unite them all on the ground of the cross and of accomplished redemption, in the unity of His body. But if, instead of using them with thanksgiving according to His will, we rest upon them, we have forsaken the fulness, the sufficiency, of Christ, to build upon the flesh, which can thus occupy itself with these ordinances, and find in them its fatal sustenance and a veil to hide the perfect Saviour, of whose death, as in connection with this world and with man living in the flesh, these ordinances so plainly speak to us. To rest upon christian ordinances is exactly to deny the precious and solemn truth which they present to us, that there is no longer righteousness after the flesh, since Christ is dead and risen.

This the apostle deeply felt; this he had been called to set before the eyes and consciences of men by the power of the Holy Ghost. How many afflictions, how many conflicts, his task cost him! The flesh of man likes to have some credit; it cannot bear to be treated as vile and incapable of good, to be excluded and condemned to annihilation, not by efforts to annul itself, which would restore it all its importance, but by a work that leaves it in its true nothingness, and that has pronounced the absolute judgment of death upon it, so that, convicted of being nothing but sin, it has only to be silent. If it acts, it is only to do evil. Its place is to be dead, and not better. We have both right and power to hold it as such, because Christ has died, and we live in His risen life. He has Himself become our life. Alive in Him, I treat the flesh as dead; I am not a debtor to it. God has condemned sin in the flesh, in that His Son came in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin. It is this great principle of our being dead with Christ which the apostle sets forth at the end of the Chapter (only first recognising the force of the law to bring death into the conscience). He had discovered that to be under a law was to find himself condemned to death. He had undergone in spirit the whole force of this principle; his soul had realised death in all its power. He was dead; but, if so, he was dead to the law. The power of a law does not reach beyond life; and, its victim once dead, it has no more power over him. Now Paul had acknowledged this truth; and, attributing to the principle of law its whole force, he confessed himself to be dead by law dead then to law. But, how? Was it by undergoing the eternal consequences of its violation; for if the law killed, it condemned too? (see 2 Cor. 3). By no means. It is quite another

thing here. He did not deny the authority of the law, he acknowledged its force in his soul, but in death, in order that he might live to God.

But where could he find this life, since the law only slew him? This he explains. It was not himself in his own responsibility, exposed as he was to the final consequences of the violation of the law who could find life in it! Christ had been crucified He who could suffer the curse of the law of God, and death, and yet live in the mighty and holy life which nothing could take away; which made it impossible for death to hold Him, although in grace He tasted it. But the apostle (whom this same grace had reached) owning it according to the truth as a poor sinner in subjection to death, and blessing the God who granted him the grace of life and of free acceptance in Christ, had been associated with Christ in God's counsels in His death (now realised by faith, and become true practically by Christ, who had died and risen again, being his life). He was crucified with Him, so that the condemnation of it was gone for Paul. It is Christ whom death under the law had reached. The law had reached Saul the sinner, in the Person of Him who had given Himself for him, in fact, and now Saul himself in conscience, and brought death there but the death of the old man (see Rom 7:9-10) and it had now no more right over [See Note #3] Nevertheless he lived: yet not he, but Christ, in that life in which Christ rose from among the dead Christ lived in him. Thus the dominion of the law over him disappeared (while ascribing to the law all its force), because that dominion was connected with the life in regard to which he reckoned himself to be dead in Christ, who had really undergone death for this purpose. And Paul lived in that mighty and holy life, in the perfection and energy of which Christ was risen from among the dead, after having borne the curse of the law. He lived to God, and held the corrupt life of his flesh as dead. His life drew all its character, all its mode of being, from the source whence it flowed.

But the creature must have an object to live for, and so it was as to Paul's soul, it was by the faith of Jesus Christ. By faith in Jesus Christ Paul lived indeed. The Christ who was the source of his life, who was his life, was its object also. It is this which always characterises the life of Christ in us: He Himself is its object He alone. The fact, that it is by dying for us in love that He who was capable of it, the Son of God has given us thus freed from sin

this life as our own, being ever before the mind, in our eyes He is clothed with the love He has thus shewn us. We live by faith of the Son of God, who has loved us, and given Himself for us. And here it is personal life, the individual faith that attaches us to Christ, and makes Him precious to us as the object of the soul's intimate faith. Thus the grace of God is not frustrated: for, if righteousness were established on the principle of law, Christ died in vain, since it would be by keeping the law ourselves that we should, in our own persons, acquire righteousness.

Note #2

It is practically important to remark that worldliness or any allowance of what is not of God, by a godly man, gives the weight of his godliness to the evil he allows.

Note #3

Christ had also borne his sins; but this is not the subject here spoken of; it is the dominion of the law over him while living on earth.

Galatians Chapter 3

What a loss, dreadful and irreparable, to lose such a Christ, as we, under grace, have known Him; such a righteousness; such a love; the Son of God our portion, our life; the Son of God devoted for us, and to us! It is indeed this which awakens the strong feelings of the apostle: "O foolish Galatians," he continues, "who hath bewitched you?" Christ had been portrayed as crucified before their eyes. Thus their folly appeared still more surprising, in thinking of what they had received, of what in fact they were enjoying under the gospel, and of their sufferings for the sake of that gospel. Had they received the Spirit through works done on the principle of law, or through a testimony received by faith? Having begun by the power of the Spirit, would they carry the thing on to perfection by the wretched flesh? They had suffered for the gospel, for the pure gospel, unadulterated with Judaism and the law: was it then all in vain? Again, he who ministered to them the Spirit, and worked miracles among them, was it through works on the principle of law, or in connection with a testimony received by faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. It

was the principle established by God in the case of the father of the faithful. Therefore they who placed themselves by grace on the principle of faith, they were the "children of Abraham." And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles through faith, preached this gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In thee shall all nations be blessed."

The epistle is necessarily elementary, for the Galatians were forsaking the foundation, and the apostle insists on that. The great principles of the epistle are, connected with the known presence of the Spirit, promise according to grace in contrast with and before law, Christ the accomplishment of the promise, the law coming in by the bye meanwhile. The Gentiles were thus heirs in Christ, true and sole Heir of promise, and the Jews acquiring the position of sons.

We have then the principle on which Abraham stood before God, and the declaration that it was in him the Gentiles should be blessed. Thus they who are on the principle of faith are blessed with Abraham the believer; while the law pronounced an express curse on those who did not keep it in every point. This use of Deuteronomy 27 has been considered elsewhere. I would call to mind only that (the twelve tribes having been divided into two companies of six each, the one to announce the blessing and the other the curse) the curses alone are recited, the blessings entirely omitted a striking circumstance, used by the apostle to shew the true character of the law. At the same time the scripture plainly set forth that it was not the works of the law that justified; for it said, "The just shall live on the principle of faith." Now the law was not on the principle of faith, but he who has done these things shall live by them. But was not this authority of the law to be maintained, as being that of God? Assuredly. But Christ had borne its curse (having redeemed and thus delivered those who subject before to the sentence of the law had now believed in Him), in order that the blessing of Abraham might reach the Gentiles through Him, so that all believers, both Jew and Gentile, should receive the Spirit who had been promised.

Christ had exhausted for the believer who before was subject to the law and guilty of having broken it all the curse that it pronounced on the guilty: and the law which distinguished Israel had lost its power over the Jew who believed in Jesus, through the very act that bore the most striking testimony

to its authority. The barrier therefore no longer existed, and the former promise of blessing could flow freely (according to the terms in which it was made to Abraham) upon the Gentiles through the channel of Christ, who had put away the curse that the law brought upon the Jews; and both Jew and Gentile, believing in Him, could receive the Holy Ghost, the subject of God's promises, in the time of blessing.

Having thus touched on this point, the apostle now treats, not the effect of the law upon the conscience, but the mutual relationship that existed between the law and the promise. Now the promise had been given first, and not only given, but it had been confirmed; and, had it been but a human covenant solemnly confirmed, it could neither be added to nor annulled. But God had engaged Himself to Abraham by promise 430 years before the law, having deposited, so to say, the blessing of the Gentiles in his person (Gen. 12). This promise was confirmed to his seed [See Note #4] (Isaac: Gen. 22), and to only one; he does not say to the seeds, but "to the Seed," and it is Christ who is this Seed. A Jew would not deny this last point. Now the law, coming so long after, could not annul the promise that was made before and solemnly confirmed by God, so as to render it of no effect. For if the inheritance were on the principle of law, it was no more on that of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. "Wherefore then the law?" since the unchangeable promise was already given, and the inheritance must come to the object of that promise, the law having no power to change it in any way. It is because there is another question between the soul and God, or, if you will, between God and man, namely, that of righteousness. Grace, which chooses to bestow blessing, and which promises it beforehand, is not the only source of blessing for us. The question of righteousness must be settled with God, the question of sin and of the guilt of man.

Now the promise which was unconditional and made to Christ, did not raise the question of righteousness. It was necessary that it should be raised, and in the first place by requiring righteousness from man, who was responsible to produce it and to walk in it before God. Man ought to have been righteous before God. But sin had already come in, and it was in reality to make sin manifest that the law was brought in. Sin was indeed present, the will of man was in rebellion against God; but the law drew out the strength

of that evil will, and it manifested its thorough contempt of God by overleaping the barrier which the prohibition of God raised between it and its desires.

The law was added that there might be transgressions, not (as we have seen already, when meditating on the Romans, where this same subject is treated) that there might be sin, but that there might be transgressions, through which the consciences of men might be reached, and the sentence of death and condemnation made to be sensibly felt in their light and careless hearts. The law was therefore introduced between the promise and its fulfilment, in order that the real moral condition of man should be made manifest. Now the circumstances under which it was given rendered it very obvious that the law was in no wise the means of the fulfilment of the promise, but that on the contrary it placed man upon an altogether different ground, which made him know himself, and at the same time made him understand the impossibility of his standing before God on the ground of his own responsibility. God had made an unconditional promise to the seed of Abraham. He will infallibly perform it, for He is God. But in the communication of the law there is nothing immediate and direct from God simply. It is ordained by the hand of angels. It is not God who, in speaking, engages Himself simply by His own word to the person in whose favour the promise is to be fulfilled. The angels of glory, who had no part in the promises (for it was angels who shone in the glory of Sinai; see Psalm 68) invested, by the will of God, the proclamation of the law, with the splendour of their dignity. But the God of the angels and of Israel stood apart, hidden in His sanctuary of clouds and fire and thick darkness. He was encompassed with glory; He made Himself terrible in His magnificence; but He did not display Himself. He had given the promise in person; a mediator brought the law. And the existence of a mediator necessarily supposes two parties. But God was one; and it was the foundation of the whole Jewish religion. There was therefore another on whom the stedfastness of the covenant made at Sinai depended. And in fact Moses went up and down, and carried the words of Jehovah to Israel, and the answer of Israel who engaged themselves to perform that which Jehovah imposed on them as a condition of the enjoyment of the effect of His promise.

"If ye will indeed obey my voice," said Jehovah. "All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do," replied Israel intermediately through Moses. What were the consequences? The apostle, with touching tenderness, as it appears to me, does not answer this question does not deduce the necessary consequences of his argument. His object was to shew the difference between the promise and the law, without needlessly wounding the heart of a people whom he loved. On the contrary, he endeavours at once to prevent any offence that might arise from what he had said; further developing at the same time his thesis. Was the law against the promises of God? By no means. If a law had been given that was to impart life, then righteousness (for that is our subject in this passage) should have been by the law. Man, possessing divine life, would have been righteous in the righteousness that he had accomplished. The law promised the blessing of God on the terms of man's obedience: if it could have given life at the same time, this obedience would have taken place, righteousness would have been accomplished on the ground of law; they to whom the promise had been made would have enjoyed its fulfilment by virtue of their own righteousness. But it was the contrary which happened, for after all man, whether Jew or Gentile, is a sinner by nature; without law, he is the slave of his unbridled passions; under law, he shews their strength by breaking the law. The scripture has shut up all under sin, in order that this promise, by faith in Jesus Christ, should be accomplished in favour of those who believe.

Now before faith came (that is, christian faith, as the principle of relationship with God, before the existence of the positive objects of faith in the Person, the work, and the glory of Christ as man, had become the means of establishing the faith of the gospel), the Jews were kept under the law, shut up with a view to the enjoyment of this privilege which was to come. Thus the law had been to the Jews as a child's conductor up to Christ, in order that they might be justified on the principle of faith. Meanwhile they were not without restraint; they were kept apart from the nations, not less guilty than they, but kept separate for a justification, the necessity of which was made more evident by the law which they did not fulfil, but which demanded righteousness from man; thus shewing that God required this righteousness. But when once faith had come, those until then subject to the law were no longer under the tutelage of this law, which only bound

them until faith was come. For this faith, placing man immediately in the presence of God, and making the believer a son of the Father of glory, left no more place for the guidance of the tutor employed during the nonage of one who was now set free and in direct relationship with the Father.

The believer then is a son in immediate connection with his Father, with God (God Himself being manifested). He is a son, because all who have been baptised to have part in the privileges that are in Christ have put on Christ. They are not before God as Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, male or female; they are before God according to their position in Christ, all one thing in Him, Christ being for all the common and only measure of their relationship with God. But this Christ was, as we have seen, the one Seed of Abraham: and if the Gentiles were in Christ, they entered consequently into this privileged position; they were, in Christ, the seed of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise made to that seed.

Note #4

We must read, "It is to Abraham that the promise was made, and to his seed": not, "to Abraham and to his seed." The promises relating to the temporal blessings of Israel were made to Abraham and to his seed, with the addition that this seed should be as the stars in multitude. But here Paul is not speaking of the promises made to the Jews, but of the blessing granted to the Gentiles. And the promise of blessing for the Gentiles was made to Abraham alone, without mentioning his seed (Gen. 12), and, as the apostle says here, it was confirmed to his seed without naming Abraham (Chapter 22) in the alone person of Isaac, the type of the Lord Jesus offered up in sacrifice and raised from the dead, as Isaac was in a figure. Thus the promise was confirmed, not in Christ, but to Christ the true seed of Abraham. It is on this fact, that the promises were confirmed to Christ, that the whole argument of the apostle depends. The importance of the typical fact, that it is after the figurative sacrifice and resurrection of Isaac that the promise was confirmed to the latter, is evident. Doubtless that which realised this figure secured thus the promise to David; but at the same time the middle wall of partition was broken down, the blessing can flow to the Gentiles and, let us add, to the Jews also by virtue of the expiation made by Christ; the believer, made the righteousness of God in Him, can be sealed

with the Holy Ghost who had been promised. When once the import of Genesis 12 and 22 has been apprehended, in that which relates to the promises of blessing made to the Gentiles, one sees most clearly the foundation on which the apostle's argument rests.

Galatians Chapter 4

The relative position therefore of the Jew (even though he were godly) before the coming of Christ, and of the believing Jew or Gentile when Christ had been revealed, is clearly set forth; and in the commencement of Chapter 4 the apostle sums up that which he had said. He compares the believer before the coming of Christ to a child under age, who has no direct relation with his father as to his thoughts, but who receives his father's orders, without his accounting for them to him, as a servant would receive them. He is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Thus the Jews, although they were heirs of the promises, were not in connection with the Father and His counsels in Jesus, but were in tutelage to principles that appertained to the system of the present world, which is but a corrupt and fallen creation. Their walk was ordained of God in this system, but did not go beyond it. We speak of the system by which they were guided, whatever divine light they might receive from time to time to reveal heaven to them, to encourage them in hope, while making the system under the rule of which they were placed yet darker. Under the law then, heirs as they were, they were still in bondage. But when the time was fulfilled and ripe for it, God sent forth His Son an act flowing from His sovereign goodness for the accomplishment of His eternal counsels, and for the manifestation of all His character. It was God who did it. It was He who acted. The law required man to act, and it manifested man to be just the contrary of that which he ought to have been according to the law. But the Son of God comes from God. He requires nothing. He is manifested in the world in relation with men under the double aspect of a man born of woman, and a man under law.

If sin and death came in by the woman, Christ came into this world by the woman also. If through law man is under condemnation, Christ puts Himself under law also. Under this double aspect He takes the place in which man was found; He takes it in grace without sin, but with the responsibility that belonged to it a responsibility which He alone has met. But still the object of

His mission went much farther than the manifestation in His Person of man without sin, in the midst of evil, and having the knowledge of good and evil. He came to redeem those that were under the law, in order that believers (be they who they may) should receive the adoption. Now that the Gentile believers had been admitted to share the adoption was proved by the sending of the Spirit who made them cry, "Abba, Father." For it is because they are sons, that God sent the Spirit of His Son into their heart, as well as into that of the Jews without distinction. The Gentile, a stranger to the house, and the Jew, who under age differed in nothing from a servant, had each taken the position of a son in direct relation with the Father a relation of which the Holy Ghost was the power and the witness in consequence of the redemption wrought in their behalf by the Son; the Jew under the law needing it as much as the Gentile in his sins. But its efficacy was such that the believer was not a bondman but a son, and if a son, an heir also of God by Christ. Previously the Gentiles had been in bondage, not indeed to the law, but to that which, in its nature, was not God. They knew not God, and were the slaves of everything that boasted of the name of God, in order to blind the heart of man alienated from Him who is the true God and from His knowledge.

But what were these Gentiles, become Christians, now doing? They desired to be again in bondage to these wretched elements, worldly and carnal, to which they had formerly been in subjection; these things of which the carnal man could form his religion, without one moral or spiritual thought, and which placed the glory due to God, in outward observances which an unbeliever and a heathen ignorant of God could call his religion and glory in it.

As figures, which God used to bear testimony beforehand to the realities that are in Christ, they had their true value. God knew how to reconcile the employment of these figures, which are profitable to faith, with a religious system that tested man in the flesh, and that served to answer the question, whether, with every kind of help, man was able to stand before God and to serve Him. But to go back to these ordinances made for man in the flesh, now that God had shown man's incapability of becoming righteous before Him now that the substance of these shadows was come, was to go back to

the position of men in the flesh, and to take that standing without any command of God that sanctioned it. It was to go back to the ground of idolatry, that is to say, to a carnal religion, arranged by man without any authority from God, and which in no way brought man into connection with Him. For things done in the flesh had certainly not that effect. "Ye observe days and months and seasons and years." This the heathen did in their human religion. Judaism was a human religion ordained of God, but, by going back to it when the ordinance of God was no longer in force, they did but go back to the paganism out of which they had been called to have part with Christ in heavenly things.

Nothing can be more striking than this statement of what ritualism is after the cross. It is simply heathenism, going back to man's religion, when God is fully revealed: "I fear concerning you," said the apostle, "that I have laboured in vain." But they reproached the apostle with not being a faithful Jew according to the law, with freeing himself from its authority. "Be ye then," says he, "as I am; for I am as ye are" (namely, free from the law). Ye have done me no wrong in saying so. Would to God ye were as much so! He then reminds them of his thorn in the flesh. It was some circumstance adapted to make him contemptible in his ministry. Nevertheless they had received him as an angel of God, as Jesus Christ. What was become of that blessedness? Had he become their enemy because he had told them the truth? Zeal was good; but if it had a right thing for its object, they should have persevered in their zeal, and not merely have maintained it while he was with them. These new teachers were very zealous to have the Galatians for their partisans, and to exclude them from the apostle, that they might be attached to themselves. He laboured again, as though travailing in birth, in order that Christ should be formed as if anew in their hearts a touching testimony of the strength of his christian love. This love was divine in its character; it was not weakened by the disappointment of ingratitude, because its source was outside the attraction of its objects. Moses said, "Have I conceived all this people, that I should carry them in my bosom?" Paul is ready to travail in birth with them a second time.

He does not know what to say. He would like to be present with them, that he might, on seeing them adapt his words to their condition, for they had

really forsaken christian ground. Would they then, since they desired to be under the law, hear the law? In it they might see the two systems, in the type of Hagar and Sarah: that of law, gendering to bondage; and that of grace, to liberty; not that only, but the positive exclusion of the child of bondage from the inheritance. The two could not be united; the one shut out the other. The bond-child was born according to the flesh, the free-child according to promise. For the law and the covenant of Sinai were in connection with man in the flesh. The principle of man's relationship with God, according to the law (if such relations had been possible), was that of a relationship formed between man in the flesh and the righteous God. As to man, the law and the ordinances were only bondage. They aimed at bridling the will without its being changed. It is all-important to understand, that man under the law is man in the flesh. When born again, dead and risen again, he is no longer under law, which has only dominion over man in that he is alive here below. Read "Jerusalem which is above is our mother" not "the mother of us all." It is in contrast with Jerusalem on earth, which in its principle answered to Sinai. And observe that the apostle is not here speaking of the violation of the law, but of its principle. The law itself puts man in a state of bondage. It is imposed on man in the flesh, who is opposed to it. By the very fact that he has self-will, the law and that will are in conflict. Self-will is not obedience.

Verse 27 (Gal 4:27) presents some difficulty to many minds, because it is generally confounded with Hagar and Sarah. But it is a separate consideration, suggested by the idea of Jerusalem above. The Verse is a quotation from Isaiah 54, which celebrates the joy and glory of the earthly Jerusalem at the beginning of the millennium. The apostle quotes it to shew that Jerusalem had more children during the time of her desolation than when she had a husband. In the millennium Jehovah, the Lord, will be her husband. He had been so before. At present she is desolate, she bears not. Nevertheless there are more children than previously when she was married. Such were the marvellous ways of God. All Christians are reckoned, when earth takes its course again, as the children of Jerusalem, but of Jerusalem with no husband and desolate, so that the Galatians were not to own it as if God did still. Sarah was not without a husband. Here is a different order of thought. Without a husband and desolate (so that,

properly speaking, she has none) Jerusalem has more children now than in the best days of her career, when Jehovah was a husband to her. For, as regards the promise, the gospel came forth from her. The assembly is not of promise. It was a counsel hid in God, of which the promises had never spoken. Its position is a yet higher one; but in this place the apostle's instruction does not rise to that height. But we are also the children of promise, and not of the flesh. Israel after the flesh had no other pretension than to be the children of Abraham after the flesh; we are so only by promise. Now the word of God cast out the child of the bondwoman, born after the flesh, that he might not be heir with the child of promise. As to us, we are the children of promise.

Galatians Chapter 5

It is in this liberty, the liberty of Christ, alluding to the free woman and Jerusalem above, that they were to stand fast, and not put themselves again under the yoke of the law. If they took that ground they made themselves responsible to keep it personally and wholly, and Christ was of no effect to them. They could not rest upon the work of Christ for righteousness, and then hold themselves responsible to fulfil righteousness themselves according to the law. The two things contradict each other. Hence too it would be no longer grace on which they stood. They forsook grace, in order to satisfy the requirements of the law. This is not the Christian's position.

Here is the Christian's position. He does not seek for righteousness before God as a man who does not possess it; he is the righteousness of God in Christ, and Christ Himself is the measure of that righteousness. The Holy Ghost dwells in him. Faith rests in this righteousness, even as God rests in it, and this faith is sustained by the Holy Ghost, who turns the heart that is established in that righteousness towards the glory that is its recompense a recompense which Christ enjoys already, so that we know what that righteousness deserves. Christ is in the glory due to righteousness, to the work which He accomplished. We know this righteousness in virtue of that which He has wrought, because God has owned His work and set Him at His right hand on high. The glory in which He is is His just reward, and the proof of that righteousness. The Spirit reveals the glory, and seals to us that righteousness on which faith builds. It is thus that the apostle expresses it:

"We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope [the hoped-for glory] of righteousness by faith." To us it is faith, for we have not yet the thing hoped for the glory due to that righteousness which is ours. Christ possesses it, so that we know what we hope for. It is by the Spirit that we know it, and that we have the assurance of the righteousness which gives us the title to possess it. It is not righteousness we wait for, but, by the Spirit in faith, the hope that belongs to it. It is by faith; for in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working by love. There must be a moral reality.

The apostle's heart is oppressed at the thought of what they were rejecting, and the mischief this doctrine was doing. It overflows. In the midst of his argument he interrupts himself. "Ye did run well: who has hindered you from obeying the truth?" To be so easily persuaded of this Judaizing doctrine, which was but a fatal error, was not the work of Him who had called them. It was not thus that through grace they had become Christians. A little leaven corrupted the whole.

Nevertheless the apostle regains his confidence by looking higher. By resting on the grace which is in Christ towards His own, he can re-assure himself with regard to the Galatians. He stood in doubt when he thought of them; he had confidence when he thought of Christ, that they would surely not be otherwise minded. Thus delivered from the evil by grace, as in the moral case of the Corinthians, he was ready to punish all disobedience, when all that knew how to obey had been brought fully back to obedience; so here also, every heart that was susceptible of the influence of the truth would be brought back to the power of the truth of Christ; and those who, active in evil, troubled them by false doctrine, those whose will was engaged in propagating error, should bear their burden. It is very beautiful to see the apostle's uneasiness, when he thinks of men the fruit moreover of his love for them and the confidence which he regains as soon as he lifts up his heart to the Lord. But his abrupt style, his broken and unconnected words, shew how deeply his heart was engaged. The error that separated the soul from Christ was to him more terrible than the said fruits of practical separation. We do not find the same marks of agitation in the epistle to the Corinthians; here the foundation of everything was in question. In the case

of the Galatians the glory of Christ the Saviour was at stake, the only thing that could bring a soul into connection with God; and on the other hand it was a systematic work of Satan to overthrow the gospel of Christ as needed for the salvation of men.

Here, interrupting himself, he adds, "And I, if I preach circumcision, why am I persecuted?" It will in fact be seen that the Jews were habitually the instigators of the persecution which the apostle suffered from the Gentiles. The spirit of Judaism, as has been the case in all ages, the religious spirit of the natural man, has been Satan's great instrument in his opposition to the gospel. If Christ would put His sanction on the flesh, the world would come to terms and be as religious as you please, and would value itself upon its devotion. But in that case it would not be the true Christ. Christ came, a witness that the natural man is lost, wicked, and without hope, dead in his trespasses and sins; that redemption is necessary, and a new man. He came in grace, but it was because man was incapable of being restored; and consequently all must be pure grace and emanate from God. If Christ would have to do with the old man, all would be well; but, I repeat, He would no longer be Christ. The world then, the old man, does not endure Him. But there is a conscience, there is a felt need of religion, there is the prestige of an ancient religion held from one's fathers; true perhaps in its original foundations, although perverted. Thus the prince of the world will use carnal religion to excite the flesh, the ready enemy, when once awakened, of the spiritual religion which pronounces sentence upon it.

It is only to add something to Christ. But what? If it is not Christ and the new man, it is the old man, it is sinful man; and, instead of a needed and accomplished redemption, and an entirely new life from above, you have a testimony that agreement between the two is possible; that grace is not necessary, except at most as a little help; that man is not already lost and dead in his trespasses and sins, that the flesh is not essentially and absolutely evil. Thus the name of Christ is made subservient to the flesh, which willingly adorns itself with the credit of His name, in order to destroy the gospel from its very foundations. Only preach circumcision, accept the religion of the flesh, and all difficulty will cease; the world will accept your gospel, but it will not be the gospel of Christ. The cross in itself (that is, the

total ruin of man man proved to be the enemy of God), and perfect finished redemption by grace, will always be a stumbling-block to one who desires to maintain some credit for the flesh. "Would to God," says the apostle for he sees the whole gospel falling into ruin before this device, and souls destroyed "would to God that they who trouble you were cut off!" What have we seen since then? Where is the holy indignation of the apostle?

He then touches on the point of the practical consequences of this doctrine, and explains how the doctrine of perfect grace was connected, without the law, with a walk worthy of the people of God. Ye have then been called, he says, unto liberty: only use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh which the flesh would readily do. God gave the law to convince of sin; the flesh would use it to work out righteousness. He acts in grace, that we may be above sin and outside its dominion: the flesh would use grace as an occasion to sin without restraint. The Christian, truly free from the yoke of sin, as well as from its condemnation (for Christ risen is his life as well as his righteousness, and the Spirit is the power and guide of his walk towards glory, and according to Christ), instead of serving his lusts, seeks to serve others, as free to do it in love. Thus the law itself is fulfilled, without our being under its yoke: for the whole practical law is summed up in this word: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

If, yielding to the flesh, and attacking those who were not circumcised, they devoured one another, they were to take heed that they were not consumed one of another. But the apostle would give something more positive. "This I say then," he continues, after the interruption of his subject, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." It is not by putting oneself under the law that one has power against sin. It is the Spirit (given in virtue of the ascension of Christ our righteousness, to the right hand of God) who is the Christian's strength. Now the two powers, the flesh and the Spirit, are antagonistic. The flesh strives to hinder us when we would walk according to the Spirit, and the Spirit resists the working of the flesh to prevent it from accomplishing its will. [See Note #5] But if we are led of the Spirit, we are not under the law. Holiness, true holiness, is accomplished without the law, even as righteousness is not founded on it. 'Nor is there any difficulty in judging between what is of the flesh and what

is of the Spirit; the apostle enumerates the sad fruits of the former, adding the sure testimony that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. The fruits of the Spirit are equally evident in their character, and assuredly against such things there was no law. If we walk according to the Spirit, the law will find nothing to condemn in us. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh and its lusts. This is what they are, inasmuch as they are Christians; it is that which distinguishes them. If these Galatians really lived, it was in the Spirit: let them then walk in the Spirit.

Note #5

It is not "so that ye cannot," but "in order that ye might not."

Galatians Chapter 6

Here is the answer to those who then sought, and now seek, to bring in law for sanctification and as a guide: the strength and the rule for holiness are in the Spirit. The law does not give the Spirit. Moreover (for it is evident that these pretensions of observing the law had given liberty to the pride of the flesh) the Christian was not to be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another. If any one, through carelessness, committed some fault, the Christian's part was to restore this member of Christ, dear to Christ and to the Christian, according to the love of Christ, in a spirit of meekness, remembering that he himself might fall. If they wished for a law, here was one: to bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ (that is, the rule of all His own life here below). It is not by boasting, when one is nothing, that true glory was acquired. It is but deceiving oneself, says the apostle, in language which, by its simplicity, pours unspeakable contempt on those who did so. These legalists boasted much of themselves, imposed burdens on others; and investing themselves with their Judaic glory that which was a burden to others, and one which they did not help them to bear, was vain-glory to themselves they gloried in their Judaism, and in making others subject to it. But what was their work? Had they laboured really for the Lord? In no wise. Let them prove their own work; then they would have reason to glory in what they had done themselves, if there was any christian work of which they had been the instruments. It certainly would not be in what they were doing then, for it was another who

had done the work of Christ in Galatia. And after all, every one should bear his own burden.

The apostle adds a few practical words. He who was taught should, in temporal things, succour those who taught him. Furthermore, although grace was perfect and redemption complete, so that the believer received the Holy Ghost as a seal thereof, God had attached infallible consequences to a man's walk, be it after the flesh or after the Spirit. The effects followed the cause; and they could not mock God by making a profession of grace or Christianity, if they did not walk according to its spirit, as led, in a word, by the Holy Ghost, who is its practical power. Of the flesh they would reap corruption; of the Spirit, life everlasting. But, as Christians, they must have patience in order to reap, and not grow weary of well-doing: the harvest was sure. Let believers, then, do good to all, especially to those of the house of God.

Paul had written this letter with his own hand an unusual thing for him. He generally employed others (as Tertius for the epistle to the Romans), dictating to them that which he wished to say, adding the benediction with his own hand, as certifying the correctness of that which was written (Co1 16:21; Th2 3:17): a remarkable proof of the importance that the apostle attached to his writings, and that he did not send them forth as ordinary letters from man to man, but as being furnished with an authority that required the use of such precautions. They were carefully invested with the apostolic authority. In this case, full of sorrow, and feeling that the foundations had been overthrown, he wrote the whole with his own hand. Accordingly, in saying this, he returns immediately to the subject which had caused him to do so.

Those who desired to make a fair show after the flesh constrained the Gentiles to be circumcised, in order to avoid the persecution that attached to the doctrine of the cross to free salvation by Christ. The circumcised were Jews, of a religion known and received even in this world; but to become the disciples of a crucified man, a man who had been hung as a malefactor, and to confess Him as the only Saviour how could the world be expected to receive it? But the reproach of the cross was the life of Christianity; the world was judged, it was dead in its sin; the prince of the world was judged,

he had only the empire of death, he was (with his followers) the impotent enemy of God. In the presence of such a judgment, Judaism was honourable wisdom in the eyes of the world. Satan would make himself a partisan of the doctrine of one only God; and those who believed in it join themselves to their former adversaries, the worshippers of devils, in order to withstand this new enemy who cast reproach on the whole of fallen humanity, denouncing them as rebels against God, and as devoid of the life which was manifested in Jesus only. The cross was the sentence of death upon nature; and the Jew in the flesh was offended at it, even more than the Gentile, because he lost the glory with which he had been invested before others on account of his knowledge of the only true God.

The carnal heart did not like to suffer, and to lose the good opinion of the world, in which a certain measure of light was accepted or tolerated by people of sense (and by sincere persons when there was no greater light to be had), provided they did not set up pretensions that condemned everybody, and judged everything which the flesh desired and relied on for its importance. A compromise which more or less accepts the flesh which does not judge it as dead and lost, which, in however small a degree, will acknowledge that the world and the flesh are its basis the world will accept. It cannot hope to strive against the truth that judges the whole conscience, and it will accept a religion that tolerates its spirit and adapts itself to the flesh, which it desires to spare even when painful sacrifices must be made; provided only that the flesh itself be not entirely set aside. Man will make himself a fakeer sacrifice his life provided that it is self that does it, and that God shall not have done the whole in grace, condemning the flesh as incapable of well doing, having nothing good in itself.

The circumcised did not observe the law that would have been too wearisome, but they desired to glory in proselytes to their religion. In the world the apostle has seen nothing but vanity and sin and death; the spirit of the world, of the carnal man, was morally degraded, corrupt, and guilty, boasting in self, because ignorant of God. Elsewhere he had seen grace, love, purity, obedience, devotedness to the Father's glory and to the happiness of poor sinners. The cross declared the two things: it told what man was; it told what God was, and what holiness and love were. But it was

the utmost degradation in the eyes of the world, and put down all its pride. It was another who had accomplished it at the cost of His own life, bearing all possible sufferings; so that the apostle could give free course to all the affections of his heart without boasting himself of anything; on the contrary, forgetting himself. It is not self that we glory in when we look at the cross of Christ: one is stript of self. It was He who hung upon that cross who was great in Paul's eyes. The world which had crucified Him was thus seen by the apostle in its true character; the Christ who had suffered on the cross in His likewise. In that cross would the apostle glory, happy, by this means to be dead to the world, and to have the world ended, crucified, put to shame, as it deserved to be, for his heart. Faith in the crucified Son of God overcomes the world.

To the believer the world has its true character; for, in fact, in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value (all that has passed away with a dead Christ), but a new creature, according to which we estimate everything as God estimates it. It is to such, the true children of God, that the apostle wishes peace. It was not Israel circumcised after the flesh that was the Israel of God. If there were any of that people who were circumcised in heart, who gloried in the cross according to the sentiments of the new creature, those were the Israel of God. Moreover every true Christian was of them according to the spirit of his walk.

Finally, let no one trouble him with regard to his ministry. He bore the stigmata of the Lord. It is known that marks were printed on a slave with a hot iron to indicate the person to whom he belonged. The wounds which the apostle had received, fully shewed who was his Master. Let his right then to call himself the servant of Christ be no more questioned. Touching appeal from one whose heart was wounded at finding his service to the Master whom he had loved called in question! Moreover, Satan, who imprinted those marks, ought indeed to recognise them those beautiful initials of Jesus.

The apostle desires that grace be with them (according to the divine love that animated him) as souls dear to Christ, whatever their state might be. But there is no outpouring of heart in greetings affectionately addressed to Christians. It was a duty a duty of love which he fulfilled; but for the rest,

what bonds of affection could he have with persons who sought their glory in the flesh, and who accepted that which dishonoured Jesus and which weakened and even annulled the glory of His cross? Without any wish of his, the current of affection was checked. The heart turned to the dishonoured Christ, although loving those that were His in Him. This is the real feeling contained in the last Verses of this epistle.

In Galatians we have indeed Christ living in us, in contrast with the flesh, or I still living in flesh. But, as systematic truth, we have neither the believer in Christ nor Christ in the believer. We have the Christian's practical state at the end of Chapter 2. Otherwise the whole epistle is a judgment of all return to Judaism, as identical with heathen idolatry. The law and man in the flesh were correlative; law came in between the promise and Christ, the Seed; was a most useful testing of man, but when really known putting him to death, and condemning him. Now this was fully met in grace in the cross, the end in death of man in flesh, of sin, in Christ made sin. All return to law was giving up both promise and the work of grace in Christ, and going back again to flesh proved to be sin and lost, as if there could be relationship with God in it, denying grace, and denying even the true effect of law, and denying man's estate proved in the cross. It was heathenism. And days and years, etc., took man up as alive in flesh, was not the end of the old man in the cross in grace. We have Christ as our life thereupon, or death would leave us of course hopeless. But we have not the christian condition, we in Christ and Christ in us. It is the discussion of the work that brings us there, and where man is, and of vital importance in this respect. Man in the flesh is wholly gone from all relationship with God, and none can be formed: there must be a new creation.

EPHESIANS

Ephesians Introduction

Ephesians

eph 0:0

Introduction to Ephesians

The epistle to the Ephesians gives us the richest exposition of the blessings of the saints individually, and of the assembly, setting forth, at the same time, the counsels of God with regard to the glory of Christ. Christ Himself is viewed as the One who is to hold all things united in one under His hand, as Head of the assembly. We see the assembly placed in the most intimate relationship with Him, as those who compose it are with the Father Himself, and in the heavenly position dispensed to her by the sovereign grace of God. Now these ways of grace to her reveal God Himself, and in two distinct characters; as well in connection with Christ as with Christians. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the God of Christ, when Christ is looked at as man; the Father of Christ when Christ is looked at as the Son of His love. In the first character, the nature of God is revealed; in the second, we see the intimate relationship which we enjoy to Him who bears this character of Father, and that according to the excellence of Christ's own relationship to Him. It is this relationship to the Father, as well as that in which we stand to Christ as His body and His bride, that is the source of blessing to the saints and to the assembly of God, of which grace has made us members as a whole.

The form even of the epistle shews how much the apostle's mind was filled with the sense of the blessing that belongs to the assembly. After having wished grace and peace to the saints and the faithful [See Note #1] at Ephesus from God, the Father of true Christians, and from Jesus Christ their Lord, he begins at once to speak of the blessings in which all the members of Christ participate. His heart was full of the immensity of grace; and nothing in the state of the Ephesian Christians required any particular

remarks adapted to that state. It is nearness of heart to God that produces simplicity, and that enables us in simplicity to enjoy the blessings of God as God Himself bestows them, as they flow from His heart, in all their own excellence to enjoy them in connection with Him who imparts them, and not merely in a mode adapted to the state of those to whom they are imparted; or through a communication that only reveals a part of these blessings, because the soul would not be able to receive more. Yes, when near to God, we are in simplicity, and the whole extent of His grace and of our blessings unfolds itself as it is found in Him.

It is important to remark two things here in passing: first, that moral nearness to God, and communion with Him, is the only means of any true enlargement in the knowledge of His ways and of the blessings which He imparts to His children, because it is the only position in which we can perceive them, or be morally capable of so doing; and, also, that all conduct which is not suitable to this nearness to God, all levity of thought, which His presence does not admit of, makes us lose these communications from Him and renders us incapable of receiving them. (Compare Joh 14:21-23). Secondly, it is not that the Lord forsakes us on account of these faults or this carelessness; He intercedes for us, and we experience His grace, but it is no longer communion or intelligent progress in the riches of the revelation of Himself, of the fulness which is in Christ. It is grace adapted to our wants, an answer to our misery. Jesus stretches out His hand to us according to the need that we feel need produced in our hearts by the operation of the Holy Ghost. This is infinitely precious grace, a sweet experience of His faithfulness and love: we learn by this means to discern good and evil by judging self; but the grace had to be adapted to our wants, and to receive a character according to those wants, as an answer made to them; we have had to think of ourselves.

In a case like this the Holy Ghost occupies us with ourselves (in grace, no doubt), and when we have lost communion with God, we cannot neglect this turning back upon ourselves without deceiving and hardening ourselves. Alas! the dealings of many souls with Christ hardly go beyond this character. It is with all too often the case. In a word, when this happens the thought of sin having been admitted into the heart, our dealings with the

Lord to be true must be on the ground of this sad admission of sin (in thought, at least). It is grace alone which allows us again to have to do with God. The fact that He restores us enhances His grace in our eyes; but this is not communion. When we walk with God, when we walk after the Spirit without grieving Him, He maintains us in communion, in the enjoyment of God, the positive source of joy of an everlasting joy. This is a position in which He can occupy us as being ourselves interested in all that interests Him with all the development of His counsels, His glory, and His goodness, in the Person of Jesus the Christ, Jesus the Son of His love; and the heart is enlarged in the measure of the objects that occupy it. This is our normal condition. This, in the main, was the case with the Ephesians.

We have already remarked, that Paul was specially gifted of God to communicate His counsels and His ways in Christ; as John was gifted to reveal His character and life as it was manifested in Jesus. The result of this particular gift in our apostle is naturally found in the epistle we are considering. Nevertheless we, as being ourselves in Christ, find in it a remarkable development of our relationships with God, of the intimacy of those relationships, and of the effect of that intimacy. Christ is the foundation on which our blessings are built. It is as being in Him that we enjoy them. We thus become the actual and present object of the favour of God the Father, even as Christ Himself is its object. The Father has given us to Him; Christ has died for us, has redeemed, washed, and quickened us, and presents us, according to the efficacy of His work, and according to the acceptance of His Person, before God His Father. The secret of all the assembly's blessing is, that it is blessed with Jesus Himself; and thus like Him, viewed as a man is accepted before God; for the assembly is His body, and enjoys in Him and by Him all that His Father has bestowed on Him. Individually the Christian is loved as Christ on earth was loved; he will hereafter share in the glory of Christ before the eyes of the world, as a proof that he was so loved, in connection with the name of Father, which God maintains in regard to this (see Joh 17:23-26). Hence in general we have in this epistle the believer in Christ, not Christ in the believer, though that of course be true. It leads up to the privileges of the believer and of the assembly, more than to the fulness of Christ Himself, and we find more the contrast of this new position with what we were as of the world than

development of the life of Christ: this is more largely found in Colossians, which looks more at Christ in us. But this epistle, setting us in Christ's relationship with God and the Father, and sitting in heavenly places, gives the highest character of our testimony here.

Now Christ stands in two relationships with God, His Father. He is a perfect man before His God; He is a Son with His Father. We are to share both these relationships. This He announced to His disciples ere He went back to heaven: it is unfolded in all its extent by the words He spoke, "I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." This precious this inappreciable truth is the foundation of the apostle's teaching in this place. He considered God in this double aspect, as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and our blessings are in connection with these two titles.

But before attempting to set forth in detail the apostle's thought, let us remark that he begins here entirely with God, His thoughts and His counsels, not with what man is. We may lay hold of the truth, so to speak, by one or the other of two ends by that of the sinner's condition in connection with man's responsibility, or by that of the thoughts and eternal counsels of God in view of His own glory. The latter is that side of the truth on which the Spirit here makes us look. Even redemption, all glorious as it is in itself, is consigned to the second place, as the means by which we enjoy the effect of God's counsels.

It was necessary that the ways of God should be considered on this side, that is, His own thoughts, not merely the means of bringing man into the enjoyment of the fruit of them. It is the epistle to the Ephesians which thus presents them to us; as that to the Romans, after saying it is God's goodness, begins with man's end, demonstrating the evil and presenting grace as meeting and delivering from it.

Note #1:

The word translated "faithful" might be rendered "believers." It is used as a term of superscription both here and in the epistle to the Colossians. We must remember that the apostle was now in prison, and that Christianity had been established for some years, and was exposed to all kinds of attack.

To say that one was a believer as at the beginning, was to say that he was faithful. The word then does not merely express that they believed, nor that each individual walked faithfully, but that the apostle addressed himself to those who by grace faithfully maintained the faith they had received.

Ephesians Chapter 1

Ephesians 1:1

eph 1:1

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ, having chosen us in Him. Chapter 1 unfolds (Eph 1:4-7) these blessings, and the means of sharing them; Verses 8-10 (Eph 1:8-10), the settled purpose of God for the glory of Christ, in whom we possess them. Next, Verses 11-14 (Eph 1:11-14) set before us the inheritance, and the Holy Ghost given as a seal to our persons, and as the earnest of our inheritance. Then follows a prayer, in which the apostle asks that his dear children in the faith let us say that we may know our privileges and the power that has brought us into them, the same as that by which Christ was raised from the dead and set at the right hand of God to possess them, as the Head of the assembly, which is His body, which, with Him, shall be established over all things that were created by its Head as God and that He inherits as man, filling all things with His divine and redeeming glory. In a word, we have first the calling of God, what the saints are before Him in Christ; then, having stated the full purpose of God as to Christ, God's inheritance in the saints; then the prayer that we may know these two things, and the power by which we are brought into them, and the enjoyment of them.

But we must examine these things more closely. We have seen the establishment of the two relationships between man and God relationships in which Christ Himself stands. He ascended to His God and our God, to His Father and our Father. We share all the blessings that flow from these two relationships. He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings; not one is lacking. And they are of the highest order; they are not temporal, as was the case with the Jews. It is in the most exalted capacity of the renewed man that we enjoy these blessings: and they are adapted to that capacity, they

are spiritual. They are also in the highest sphere: it is not in Canaan or Emmanuel's land. These blessings are granted us in the heavenly places; they are granted us in the most excellent way one which leaves room for no comparison it is in Christ. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. But this flows from the heart of God Himself, from a thought outside the circumstances in which He finds us in time. Before the world was, this was our place in His heart. He purposed to give us a place in Christ. He chose us in Him.

What blessing, what a source of joy, what grace, to be thus the objects of God's favour, according to His sovereign love! If we would measure it, it is by Christ we must attempt to do so; or, at least, it is thus that we must feel what this love is. Take especial notice here of the way in which the Holy Ghost keeps it continually before our eyes, that all is in Christ in the heavenly places in Christ He had chosen us in Him unto the adoption by Jesus Christ made acceptable in the Beloved. This is one of the fundamental principles of the Spirit's instruction in this place. The other is that the blessing has its origin in God Himself. He is its source and author. His own heart, if we may so express it, His own mind, are its origin and its measure. Therefore it is in Christ alone that we can have any measure of that which cannot be measured. For He is, completely and adequately, the delight of God. The heart of God finds in Him a sufficient object on which to pour itself out entirely, towards which His infinite love can all be exercised.

The blessing then is of God; but moreover it is with Himself and before Him, to gratify Himself, to satisfy His love. It is He who has chosen us, He who has predestined us, He who has blessed us; but it is that we should be before Him, and adopted as sons unto Himself. Such is grace in these great foundations. This consequently is what grace was pleased to do for us.

But there is another thing we have to note here. We are chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. Now this expression is not simply that of the sovereignty of God. If God chose some out of men now, it would be as sovereign as if before the world: but this shews that we belong in the counsels of God to a system set up by Him in Christ before the world existed, which is not of the world when it does exist, and exists after the

fashion of this world has passed away. This is a very important aspect of the christian system. Responsibility came in (for man of course) with the creation of Adam in this world. Our place was given us in Christ before the world existed The development of all the characters of this responsibility went on up to the cross and there closed; innocent, a sinner without law, under law, and, when every way guilty, grace God Himself comes into the world of sinners in goodness and finds hatred for His love. The world stood judged and men lost, and this the individual now learns as to himself. But then redemption was accomplished, and the full purpose and counsel of God in the new creation in Christ risen, the last Adam, was brought out, "the mystery hidden from ages and generations," while the first man's responsibility was being tested. Compare Ti2 1:9-11; Tit 1:2, where this truth is very distinctly brought out.

This responsibility and grace cannot be reconciled really but in Christ. The two principles were in the two trees of the garden; then promise to Abraham unconditionally, that we might understand blessing was free grace; then the law again brought both forward, but put life consequent on responsibility. Christ came, is life, took on Himself for all who believe in Him the consequence of responsibility, and became, as the divine Son and withal as risen Head, the source of life, our sin being put away; and here, as risen with Him, we not only have received life, but are in a new position quickened out of death with Him, and have a portion according to the counsels which established all in Him before the world existed, and are established according to righteousness and redemption, as a new creation, of which the Second Man is the head. The following Chapter will explain our being brought into this place.

We have said that God reveals Himself in two characters, even in His relationship to Christ; He is God, and He is Father. And our blessings are connected with this; that is, with His perfect nature as God, and with the intimacy of positive relationship with Him as Father. The apostle does not yet touch on the inheritance, nor on the counsels of God, with regard to the glory of which Christ is to be the centre as a whole; but he speaks of our relationship with God, of that which we are with God and before Him, and not of our inheritance of that which He has made us to be, and not of that

which He has given us. In Verses 4-6 (Eph 1:4-6) our own portion in Christ before God is developed. Verse 4 (Eph 1:4) depends on the name of God; Verse 5 (Eph 1:5), on that of Father.

The character of God Himself is depicted in that which is ascribed to the saints (Eph 1:4). God could find His moral delight only in Himself and in that which morally resembles Him. Indeed this is a universal principle. An honest man can find no satisfaction in a man who does not resemble him in this respect. With still greater reason God could not endure that which is in opposition to His holiness, since, in the activity of His nature, He must surround Himself with that which He loves and delights in. But, before all, Christ is this in Himself. He is personally the image of the invisible God. Love, holiness, blameless perfection in all His ways, are united in Him. And God has chosen us in Him. In Verse 4 (Eph 1:4) we find our position in this respect. First, we are before Him: He brings us into His presence. The love of God must do this in order to satisfy itself. The love which is in us also must be found in this position to have its perfect object. It is there only that perfect happiness can be found. But this being so, it is needful that we should be like God. He could not bring us into His presence in order to take delight in us, and yet admit us there such as He could not find pleasure in. He has therefore chosen us in Christ, that we should be holy, without blame before Him in love. He Himself is holy in His character, unblamable in all His ways, love in His nature. It is a position of perfect happiness in the presence of God, like God; and that, in Christ, the object and the measure of divine affection. So God takes delight in us; and we, possessing a nature like His own as to its moral qualities, are capable of enjoying this nature fully and without hindrance, and of enjoying it in its perfection in Him. It is also His own choice, His own affection, which has placed us there, and which has placed us there in Him, who, being His eternal delight, is worthy of it; so that the heart finds its rest in this position, for there is agreement in our nature with that of God, and we were also chosen to it, which shews the personal affection that God has for us. There is also a perfect and supreme object with which we are occupied.

Remark here that, in the relationship of which we here speak, the blessing is in connection with the nature of God; therefore it is not said that we are

predestined to this according to the good pleasure of His will. We are chosen in Christ to be blessed in His presence; it is His infinite grace; but the joy of His nature could not (nor could ours in Him) be other than it is, because such is His nature. Happiness could not be found elsewhere or with another.

But in Verse 5 (Eph 1:5) we come to particular privileges, and we are predestined to those privileges. "He has predestined us unto the adoption, according to the good pleasure of his will." This Verse sets before us, not the nature of God, but the intimacy, as we have said, of a positive relationship. Hence it is according to the good pleasure of His will. He may have angels before Him as servants; it was His will to have sons.

Perhaps it might be said that, if admitted to take delight in the nature of God, one could hardly not be in an intimate relationship; but the form, the character of this relationship depends certainly on the sovereign will of God. Moreover, since we possess these things in Christ, the reflection of this divine nature and the relationship of son go together, for the two are united in us. Still, we must remember that our participation in these things depends on the sovereign will of God our Father; even as the means of sharing them, and the manner in which we share them, is that we are in Christ. God our Father, in His sovereign goodness, according to His counsels of love, chooses to have us near Himself. This purpose, which links us to Christ in grace, is strongly expressed in this Verse, as well as that which precedes it. It is not only our position which it characterises, but the Father introduces Himself in a peculiar way with regard to this relationship. The Holy Ghost is not satisfied with saying "He has predestined us unto the adoption," but He adds "unto himself." One might say this is implied in the word "adoption." But the Spirit would particularise this thought to our hearts, that the Father chooses to have us in an intimate relationship with Himself as sons. We are sons to Himself by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will. If Christ is the image of the invisible God, we bear that image, being chosen in Him. If Christ is a Son, we enter into that relationship.

These then are our relationships, so precious, so marvellous, with God our Father in Christ. These are the counsels of God. We find nothing yet of the previous condition of those who were to be called into this blessing. It is a

heavenly people, a heavenly family, according to the purposes and counsels of God, the fruit of His eternal thoughts, and of His nature of love that which is here called the "glory of his grace." We cannot glorify God by adding anything to Him. He glorifies Himself when He reveals Himself. All this is therefore to the praise of the glory of His grace, according to which He has acted towards us in grace in Christ; according to which Christ is the measure of this grace, its form towards us, He in whom we share it. All the fulness of this grace reveals itself in His ways towards us the original thoughts, so to speak, of God, which have no other source than Himself, and in and by which He reveals Himself, and by the accomplishment of which He glorifies Himself. And observe here, that the Spirit does not say "the Christ," at the end of Verse 6 (Eph 1:6). When He speaks of Him, He would put emphasis on the thoughts of God. He has acted towards us in grace in the Beloved in Him who is peculiarly the object of His affections. He brings this characteristic of Christ out into relief when He speaks of the grace bestowed upon us in Him. Was there an especial object of the love, of the affection of God? He has blessed us in that object.

And where is it that He found us when He would bring us into this glorious position? Who is it that He chooses to bless in this way? Poor sinners, dead in their trespasses and sins, the slaves of Satan and of the flesh.

If it is in Christ that we see our position according to the counsels of God, it is in Him also that we find the redemption that set us in it. We have redemption through His blood, the remission of our sins. Those whom He would bless were poor and miserable through sin. He has acted towards them according to the riches of His grace. We have already observed, that the Spirit brings out in this passage the eternal counsels of God with regard to the saints in Christ, before He enters on the subject of the state from which He drew them, when He found them in their condition of sinners here below. Now the whole mind of God respecting them is revealed in His counsels, in which He glorifies Himself. Therefore it is said, that that which He saw good to do with the saints was according to the glory of His grace. He makes Himself known in it. That which He has done for poor sinners is according to the riches of His grace. In His counsels He has revealed Himself; He is glorious in grace. In His work He thinks of our misery, of our wants,

according to the riches of His grace: we share in them, as being their object in our poverty, in our need. He is rich in grace. Thus our position is ordered and established according to the counsels of God, and by the efficacy of His work in Christ our position, that is, in reference to Him. If we are to think here, where God's thoughts and counsels are revealed, if remission and redemption come of this, we are to think not according to our need as its measure, but according to the riches of God's grace.

But there is more: God having placed us in this intimacy, reveals to us His thoughts respecting the glory of Christ Himself. This same grace has made us the depositaries of the settled purpose of His counsels, with regard to the universal glory of Christ, for the administration of the fulness of times. This is an immense favour granted us. We are interested in the glory of Christ as well as blessed in Him. Our nearness to God and our perfectness before Him enable us to be interested in the counsels of God as to the purposed glory of His Son. And this leads to the inheritance (compare Joh 14:28). Thus Abraham, though on lower ground, was the friend of God. God our Father has given us to enjoy all blessings in heavenly places ourselves; but He would unite all things in heaven and on the earth under Christ as Head, and our relationship with all that is put under Him, as well as our relationship with God His Father, depends on our position in Him; it is in Him that we have our inheritance.

The good pleasure of God was to unite all that is created under the hand of Christ. This is His purpose for the administration of the times in which the result of all His ways shall be manifested. [See Note #2] In Christ we inherit our part, heirs of God, as it is said elsewhere, joint-heirs of Christ. Here however the Spirit sets before us the position, in virtue of which the inheritance has fallen to us, rather than the inheritance itself. He ascribes it also to the sovereign will of God, as He did before with regard to the special relationship of sons unto God. Remark also here, that in the inheritance we shall be to the praise of His glory; as in our relationship to Him we are to the praise of the glory of His grace. Manifested in possession of the inheritance, we shall be the display of His glory made visible and seen in us; but our relationships with Him are the fruit, for our own souls, with Him and before

Him, of the infinite grace that has placed us in these relationships and made us capable of them.

Ephesians Chapter 2

In Chapter 2 [See Note #4] the operation of the power of God on earth, for the purpose of bringing souls into the enjoyment of their heavenly privileges, and thus of forming the assembly here below, is presented, rather than the unfolding of the privileges themselves, and consequently that of the counsels of God. It is not even these counsels; it is the grace and the power which work for their fulfilment, by leading souls to the result which this power will produce according to those counsels. Christ is first seen, not as God come down here and presented to sinners, but as dead, that is, where we were by sin, but raised from it by power. He for sin had died; God had raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand. We were dead in our trespasses and sins: He has quickened us together with Him. But as it is the earth that is in question, and the operation of power and grace on the earth, the Spirit naturally speaks of the condition of those in whom this grace works, in fact of the condition of all. At the same time, in the earthly forms of religion, in the system that existed on earth, there were those who were nigh and those who were far off. Now we have seen that in the full blessing of which the apostle speaks the nature of God Himself is concerned; in view of which, and to glorify which, all His counsels were settled. Therefore outward forms, although some of them had been established provisionally on the earth by God's own authority, could now have no value. They had served for the manifestation of the ways of God as shadows of things to come, and had been connected with the display of God's authority on earth among men, maintaining some knowledge of God important things in their place; but these figures could do nothing as to bringing souls into relationship with God, in order to enjoy the eternal manifestation of His nature, in hearts made capable of it by grace, through their participation in that nature and reflecting it. For this, these figures were utterly worthless; they were not the manifestation of these eternal principles. But the two classes of man, Jews and Gentles, were there; and the apostle speaks of them both. Grace takes up persons from both to form one body, one new man, by a new creation in Christ.

In the first two Verses of this Chapter (Eph 2:1-2) he speaks of those who were brought out from among the nations that knew not God Gentiles, as they are usually called. In Verse 3 (Eph 2:3) he speaks of the Jews "We all also," he says. He does not enter here into the dreadful details contained in Romans 3, [See Note #5] because his object is not to convince the individual, in order to shew him the means of justification, but to set forth the counsels of God in grace. Here then he speaks of the distance from God in which man is found under the power of darkness. With regard to the nations, he speaks of the universal condition of the world. The whole course of the world, the entire system, was according to the prince of the power of the air; the world itself was under the government of him who worked in the hearts of the children of disobedience, who in self-will evaded the government of God, although they could not evade His judgment.

If the Jews had external privileges; if they were not in a direct way under the government of the prince of this world (as was the case with the nations that were plunged in idolatry, and sunk in all the degradation of that system in which man wallowed, in the licentiousness into which demons delighted to plunge him in derision of his wisdom); if the Jews were not, like the Gentiles, under the government of demons, nevertheless in their nature they were led by the same desires as those by which demons influenced the poor heathen. The Jews led the same life as to the desires of the flesh; they were children of wrath, even as others, for that is the condition of men; they are in their nature the children of wrath. In their outward privileges the Israelites were the people of God; by nature they were men as others. And remark here these words, "by nature." The Spirit is not speaking here of a judgment pronounced on the part of God, nor of sins committed, nor of Israel having failed in their relationship to God through falling into idolatry and rebellion, nor even of their having rejected the Messiah and so deprived themselves of all resource all of which Israel had done. Neither does He speak of a positive judgment from God pronounced on the manifestation of sin. They were, even as all men, in their nature the children of wrath. This wrath was the natural consequence of the state in which they were [See Note #6] Man as he was, Jew or Gentile, and wrath, naturally went together, even as there is a natural link between good and righteousness. Now God, though in judgment taking cognisance of all that is contrary to His will and

glory, in His own nature is above all that. To those who are worthy of wrath He can be rich in mercy, for He is so in Himself. The apostle therefore presents Him here as acting according to His own nature towards the objects of His grace. We were dead, says the apostle dead in our trespasses and sins. God comes, in His love, to deliver us by His power "God, who is rich in mercy, according to his great love wherewith he loved us." There was no good working in us: we were dead in our trespasses and sins. The movement came from Him, praised be His name! He has quickened us; not only that He has quickened us together with Christ. He had not said in a direct way, that Christ had been quickened, although it may be said, where the power of the Spirit in Himself is spoken of. He was however raised from the dead; and, when we are in question, we are told that all the energy by which He came forth from death is employed also for our quickening; and not only that; even in being quickened we are associated with Him. He comes forth from death we come forth with Him. God has imparted this life to us. It is His pure grace, and a grace that has saved us, that found us dead in sins, and brought us out of death even as Christ came out of it, and by the same power, and brought us out with Him by the power of life in resurrection with Christ, [See Note #7] to set us in the light and in the favour of God, as a new creation, even as Christ Himself is there. Jews and Gentiles are found together in the same new position in Christ. Resurrection has put an end to all those distinctions; they have no place in a risen Christ. God has quickened the one and the other with Christ.

Ephesians Chapter 3

The whole of Chapter 3 is a parenthesis unfolding the mystery; and presenting at the same time, in the prayer that concludes it, the second character of God set before us at the beginning of the epistle, namely, that of Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and this is the way in which it is here introduced. Chapter 1 gives the counsels of God as they are in themselves, adding His raising Christ and setting Him above all on high at the end. Chapter 2, His work in quickening others with Him and forming the whole assembly of those who are risen in Christ, taken by grace from among Jews and Gentiles; these are God's thoughts and work. Chapter 3 is Paul's administration of it; it speaks especially of the bringing in of the Gentiles on

the same footing as the Jews. This was the entirely new part of the ways of God.

Paul was a prisoner for having preached the gospel to the Gentiles a circumstance that brought out his particular ministry very clearly. Thus ministry in the main is presented as in Colossians 1. Only in the latter epistle the whole subject is treated more briefly, and the essential principle and character of the mystery according to its place in the counsels of God is less explained, is viewed only on a special side of it, suited to the purpose of the epistle, that is, Christ and the Gentiles. Here the apostle assures us that he had received it by a special revelation, as he had already taught them in words which, though few, were suited to give a clear understanding of his knowledge of the mystery of Christ a mystery never made known in the past ages, but now revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets. Here it will be observed that the prophets are most evidently those of the New Testament, since the communications made to them are put in contrast with the degree of light granted in the previous ages. Now the mystery had been hidden in all former times; and in fact it needed so to be; for to have put the Gentiles on the same footing as the Jews would have been to demolish Judaism, such as God had Himself established it. In it He had carefully raised a middle wall of partition. The duty of the Jew was to respect this separation; he sinned, if he did not strictly observe it. The mystery set it aside. The Old Testament prophets, and Moses himself, had indeed shewn that the Gentiles should one day rejoice with the people: but the people remained a separate people. That they should be co-heirs, and of the same body, all distinction being lost, had indeed been entirely hid in God (part of His eternal purpose before the world was), but formed no part of the history of the world, nor of the ways of God respecting it, nor of the revealed promises of God.

It is a marvellous purpose of God which, uniting redeemed ones to Christ in heaven as a body to its head, gave them a place in heaven. For, although we are journeying on the earth, and although we are the habitation of God by the Spirit on the earth, yet in the mind of God our place is in heaven.

In the age to come the Gentiles will be blessed; but Israel will be a special and separate people.

In the assembly all earthly distinction is lost; we are all one in Christ, as risen with Him.

He made known to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, which gave them a portion in the counsels of God in grace. He enlightened all with regard, not precisely, to the mystery, but to the administration [See Note #14] of the mystery; that is to say, not only the counsel of God, but the accomplishment in time of that counsel by bringing the assembly together under Christ its head. He who had created all things, as the sphere of the development of His glory, had kept this secret in His own possession, in order that the administration of the mystery, now revealed by the establishment of the assembly on earth, should be in its time the means of making known to the most exalted of created beings the manifold and various wisdom of God. They had seen creation arise and expand before their eyes; they had seen the government of God, His providence, His judgment; His intervention in lovingkindness on the earth in Christ. Here was a kind of wisdom altogether new; a thing outside the world, hitherto shut up in the mind of God, hid in Himself so that there was no promise or prophecy of it, but the special object of His eternal purpose; connected in a peculiar way with the One who is the centre and the fulness of the mystery of godliness; which had its own place in union with Him; which, although it was manifested on earth and set with Christ at the head of creation, formed properly no part of it. It was a new part of it. It was a new creation, a distinct manifestation of the wisdom of God; a part of His thoughts which until then had been reserved in the secret of His counsels; the actual administration of which, on the earth in time by the apostle's work, made known the wisdom of God according to His settled purpose, according to His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus. "In whom," the apostle adds, "we draw nigh with all boldness by faith in him": and it is according to this relationship that we do so.

Therefore these Gentile believers were not to be discouraged on account of the imprisonment of him who had proclaimed to them this mystery; for it was the proof and the fruit of the glorious position which God had granted them, and of which the Jews were jealous.

This revelation of the ways of God does not, as the first Chapter, present Christ to us as man raised up by God from the dead, in order that we should

be raised up also to have part with Him, and that the administration of the counsels of God should thus be accomplished. It presents Him as the centre of all the ways of God, the Son of the Father, the Heir of all things as the Creator Son, and the centre of the counsels of God. It is to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that the apostle now addresses himself; as in Chapter 1 it was to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every family (not "the whole family") ranges itself under this name of Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Under the name of Jehovah there were only the Jews. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth," had Jehovah said to the Jews in Amos, "therefore will I punish you for your iniquities"; but under the name of Father of Jesus Christ all families the assembly, angels, Jews, Gentiles, all range themselves. All the ways of God in that which He had arranged for His glory were co-ordained under this name, and were in relation with it; and that which the apostle asked for the saints to whom he addressed himself was, that they should be enabled to apprehend the whole import of those counsels, and the love of Christ which formed the assured centre for their hearts.

For this purpose he desires that they should be strengthened with all might by the Spirit of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the Christ, who is the centre of all these things in the counsels of God the Father, should dwell also in their hearts, and thus be the intelligent centre of affection to all their knowledge a centre which found no circle to limit the view that lost itself in infinitude which God alone filled length, breadth, height, depth. [See Note #15] But this centre gave them at the same time a sure place, a support immovable and well known, in a love which was as infinite as the unknown extent of the glory of God in its display around Himself. "That Christ," says the apostle, "may dwell in your hearts." Thus He, who fills all things with His glory, fills the heart Himself, with a love more powerful than all the glory of which He is the centre. He is to us the strength which enables us in peace and love to contemplate all that He has done, the wisdom of His ways, and the universal glory of which He is the centre.

I repeat it He who fills all things fills above all our hearts. God strengthens us according to the riches of that glory which He displays before our wondering eyes as rightly belonging to Christ. He does it, in that Christ

dwells in us, with tenderest affection, and He is the strength of our heart. It is as rooted and grounded in love; and thus embracing as the first circle of our affections and thoughts, those who are so to Christ all the saints the objects of His love: it is as being filled with Him, and ourselves as the centre of all His affections, and thinking His thoughts, that we throw ourselves into the whole extent of God's glory; for it is the glory of Him whom we love. And what is its limit? It has none; it is the fulness of God. We find it in this revelation of Himself. In Christ He reveals Himself in all His glory. He is God over all things, blessed for ever.

But dwelling in love we dwell in God and God in us: and that in connection with the display of His glory, as He develops it in all that He has formed around Himself, to exhibit Himself in it, in order that Christ, and Christ in the assembly, His body, should be the centre of it, and the whole the manifestation of Himself in His entire glory. We are filled unto all the fulness of God; and it is in the assembly that He dwells for this purpose. He works in us by His Spirit with this object. Therefore Paul's desire and prayer is that glory may be unto God in the assembly throughout all ages by Jesus Christ: Amen. And note, it is here realisation of what is spoken of that is desired. It is not, as Chapter 1, objective, that they may know what is certainly true, but that it may be true for them, they being strengthened with might by His Spirit. It is very beautiful to see how, after launching us into the infinitude of God's glory, he brings us back to a known centre in Christ to know the love of Christ, but not to narrow us. It is more properly divine, though familiar to us, than the glory. It passes knowledge.

Observe too here, that the apostle does not now ask that God should act by a power, as it is often expressed, which works for us, but by a power that works in us. [See Note #16] He is able to do above all that we can ask or think according to His power that works in us. What a portion for us! What a place is this which is given us in Christ! But he returns thus to the thesis proposed at the end of Chapter 2, God dwelling in the assembly by the Spirit, and Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, united in one. He desires that the Ephesian Christians (and all of us) should walk worthy of this vocation. Their vocation was to be one, the body of Christ; but this body in fact manifested on earth in its true unity by the presence of the Holy Ghost.

We have seen (Chapter 1) the Christian brought into the presence of God Himself; but the fact that these Christians formed the body of Christ, and that they were the dwelling-place of God here below, the house of God on the earth in a word, their whole position is comprised in the expression, "their vocation." Chapter 1, note, gives the saints before God; the prayer of Chapter 3, Christ in them.

Chapter 4. Now the apostle was in prison for the testimony which he had borne to this truth, for having maintained and preached the privileges that God had granted to the Gentiles, and in particular that of forming by faith, together with the believing Jews, one body united to Christ. In his exhortation he makes use of this fact as a touching motive. Now the first thing that he looked for on the part of his beloved children in the faith, as befitting this unity and as a means of maintaining it in practice, was the spirit of humility and meekness, forbearance with one another in love. This is the individual state which he desired to be realised among the Ephesians. It is the true fruit of nearness to God, and of the possession of privileges; if they are enjoyed in His presence.

At the end of Chapter 2 the apostle had unfolded the result of the work of Christ in uniting the Jew and the Gentile, in making peace, and in thus forming the dwelling-place of God on the earth; Jew and Gentile having access to God by one Spirit through the mediation of Christ, both being reconciled to God in one body. To have access to God; to be the dwelling-place of God through His presence by the Holy Ghost; to be one body reconciled to God such is the vocation of Christians. Chapter 3 had developed this in its whole extent. The apostle applies it in Chapter 4.

Note #14

This appears to me to be the true word, and not "the fellowship."

Note #15

Christ is the centre of all the display of divine glory, but He thus dwells in our hearts so as to set them, so to speak, in this centre, and make them look out thence on all the glory displayed. Here we might lose ourselves; but he brings them back to the well-known love of Christ, yet not as anything

narrower, for He is God, and it passes knowledge, so that we are filled up to all the fulness of God.

Note #16

This fully distinguishes the prayer of Chapter I and this. There the calling and inheritance were in the sure purpose of God, and his prayer is that they may know them, and the power that brought them there. Here it is what is in us, and he prays that it may exist, and that as present power in the church.

Ephesians Chapter 4

The faithful were to seek in the dispositions mentioned above to maintain this unity of the Spirit by the bond of peace. There are three things in this exhortation: first, to walk worthy of their calling; second, the spirit in which they were to do so; third, diligence in maintaining the unity of the Spirit by the bond of peace. It is important to observe, that this unity of the Spirit is not similarity of sentiment, but the oneness of the members of the body of Christ established by the Holy Ghost, maintained practically by a walk according to the Spirit of grace. It is evident that the diligence required for the maintenance of the unity of the Spirit relates to the earth and to the manifestation of this unity on the earth.

The apostle now founds his exhortation on the different points of view under which this unity may be considered in connection with the Holy Ghost, with the Lord, and with God.

There is one body and one Spirit; not merely an effect produced in the heart of individuals, in order that they might mutually understand each other, but one body. The hope was one, of which this Spirit was the source and the power. This is the essential, real, and abiding unity.

There is also one Lord. With Him was connected "one faith" and "one baptism." This is the public profession and recognition of Christ as Lord. Compare the address in 1 Corinthians.

Finally there is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.

What mighty bonds of unity! The Spirit of God, the lordship of Christ, the universal ubiquity of God, even the Father, all tend to bring into unity those connected with each as a divine centre. All the religious relationships of the soul, all the points by which we are in contact with God, agree to form all believers into one in this world, in such a manner that no man can be a Christian without being one with all those who are so. We cannot exercise faith, nor enjoy hope, nor express christian life in any form whatever, without having the same faith and the same hope as the rest, without giving expression to that which exists in the rest. Only we are called on to maintain it practically.

We may remark, that the three spheres of unity presented in these three Verses have not the same extent. The circle of unity enlarges each time. With the Spirit we find linked the unity of the body, the essential and real unity produced by the power of the Spirit uniting to Christ all His members: with the Lord, that of faith and of baptism. Here each individual has the same faith, the same baptism: it is the outward profession, true and real perhaps, but a profession, in reference to Him who has rights over those that call themselves by His name. With regard to the third character of unity, it relates to claims that extend to all things, although to the believer it is a closer bond, because He who has a right over all things dwells in believers. [See Note #17] Observe here, that it is not only a unity of sentiment, of desire, and of heart. That unity is pressed upon them; but it is in order to maintain the realisation, and the manifestation here below, of a unity that belongs to the existence and to the eternal position of the assembly in Christ. There is one Spirit, but there is one body. The union of hearts in the bond of peace, which the apostle desires, is for the public maintenance of this unity; not that there might be patience with one another when that has disappeared, Christians contenting themselves with its absence. One does not accept that which is contrary to the word, although in certain cases those who are in it ought to be borne with. The consideration of the community of position and of privilege, enjoyed by all the children of God in the relationships of which we have now been speaking, served to unite them with each other in the sweet enjoyment of this most precious position, leading them also, each one, to rejoice in love at the part which every other member of the body had in this happiness.

But, on the other hand, the fact that Christ was exalted to be in heaven the Head over all things, brought in a difference which appertained to this supremacy of Christ a supremacy exercised with divine sovereignty and wisdom. "Unto every one of us is given grace [gift] according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (that is to say, as Christ sees fit to bestow). With regard to our position of joy and blessing in Christ, we are one. With regard to our service, we have each an individual place according to His divine wisdom, and according to His sovereign rights in the work. The foundation of this title, whatever may be the divine power that is exercised in it, is this: man was under the power of Satan miserable condition, the fruit of his sin, a condition to which his self-will had reduced him, but in which (according to the judgment of God who had pronounced on him the sentence of death) he was a slave in body and mind to the enemy who had the power of death with reservation of the sovereign rights and sovereign grace of God (see Eph 2:2). Now Christ has made Himself man, and began by going as man, led by the Spirit, to meet Satan. He overcame him. As to His personal power, He was able to drive him out everywhere, and to deliver man. But man would not have God with him; nor was it possible for men, in their sinful condition, to be united to Christ without redemption. The Lord however, carrying on His perfect work of love, suffered death, and overcame Satan in that his last stronghold, which God's righteous judgment maintained in force against sinful man a judgment which Christ therefore underwent, accomplishing a redemption that was complete, final, and eternal in its value; so that neither Satan, the prince of death and accuser of the children of God on earth, nor even the judgment of God, had anything more to say to the redeemed. The kingdom of Satan was taken from him; the just judgment of God was undergone and completely satisfied. All judgment is committed to the Son, and power over all men, because He is the Son of man. These two results are not yet manifested, although the Lord possesses all power in heaven and in earth. The thing here spoken of is another result which is accomplished meanwhile. The victory is complete. He has led the adversary captive. In ascending to heaven He has placed victorious man above all things, and has led captive all the power that previously had dominion over man.

Now before manifesting in person the power He had gained as man by binding Satan, before displaying it in the blessing of man on earth, He exhibits it in the assembly, His body, by imparting, as He had promised, to men delivered from the enemy's dominion gifts which are the proof of that power.

Chapter 1 had laid open to us the thoughts of God; Chapter 2 the fulfilment, in power, of His thoughts with regard to the redeemed Jews or Gentiles, all dead in their sins to form them into the assembly. Chapter 3 is the especial development of the mystery in that which concerned the Gentiles in Paul's administration of it on earth. Here (Chapter 4) the assembly is presented in its unity as a body, and in the varied functions of its members; that is to say, the positive effect of those counsels in the assembly here below. But this is founded on the exaltation of Christ, who, the conqueror of the enemy, has ascended to heaven as man.

Thus exalted, He has received gifts in man, that is, in His human character (compare Act 2:33). It is thus "in man," that it is expressed in Psalm 68, from whence the quotation is taken. Here, having received these gifts as the Head of the body, Christ is the channel of their communication to others. They are gifts for men.

Three things here characterise Him a man ascended on high a man who has led captive him who held man in captivity a man who has received for men, delivered from that enemy, the gifts of God, which bear witness to this exaltation of man in Christ, and serve as a means for the deliverance of others. For this Chapter does not speak of the more direct signs of the Spirit's power, such as tongues, miracles such as are usually termed miraculous gifts. But what the Lord as Head confers on individuals, they are the gifts, as His servants for forming the saints to be with Him, and for the edification of the body the fruit of His care over them. Hence, as already remarked, their continuance (till we all, one after another, grow up to the head) is stated as to power, by the Spirit; in 1 Corinthians 12 it is not.

But let us pause here for a moment, to contemplate the import of that which we have been considering.

What a complete and glorious work is that which the Lord has accomplished for us, and of which the communication of these gifts is the precious testimony! When we were the slaves of Satan and consequently of death, as well as the slaves of sin, we have seen that He was pleased to undergo for the glory of God that which hung over us. He went down into death of which Satan had the power. And so complete was the victory of man in Him, so entire our deliverance, that (exalted Himself as man to the right hand of God's throne He who had been under death) He has rescued us from the enemy's yoke, and uses the privilege which His position and His glory give Him to make those who were captives before, the vessels of His power for the deliverance of others also. He gives us the right, as under His jurisdiction, of acting in His holy war, moved by the same principles of love as Himself. Such is our deliverance that we are the instruments of His power against the enemy His fellow-labourers in love through His power. Hence the connection between practical godliness, the complete subjugation of the flesh, and the capacity to serve Christ as instruments in the hand of the Holy Ghost, and the vessels of His power.

Now the Lord's ascension has immense significancy in connection with His Person and work. He ascended indeed as man, but He first descended as man even into the darkness of the grave and of death; and from thence victorious over the power of the enemy who had the power of death, and having blotted out the sins of His redeemed ones, and accomplished the glory of God in obedience He takes His place as man above the heavens in order that He may fill all things; not only as being God, but according to the glory and the power of a position in which He was placed by the accomplishment of the work of redemption a work which led Him into the depths of the power of the enemy, and placed Him on the throne of God a position that He holds, not only by the title of Creator, which was already His, but by that of Redeemer, which shelters from evil all that is found within the sphere of the mighty efficacy of His work a sphere filled with blessing, with grace, and with Himself. Glorious truth, which belongs at the same time to the union of the divine and human natures in the Person of Christ, and to the work of redemption accomplished by suffering on the cross!

Love brought Him down from the throne of God, and, being found as a man, [See Note #18] through the same grace, into the darkness of death. Having died, bearing our sins, He has gone up again to that throne as man, filling all things. He went below the creature into death, and is gone above it.

But while filling all things by virtue of His glorious Person, and in connection with the work which He accomplished, He is also in immediate relation with that which in the counsels of God is closely united to Him who thus fills all things, with that which has been especially the object of His work of redemption. It is His body, His assembly, united to Him by the bond of the Holy Ghost to complete this mystical man, to be the bride of this second Man, who fills all in all-a body which, as manifested here below, is set in the midst of a creation that is not yet delivered, and in the presence of enemies that are in the heavenly places, until Christ shall exercise, on the part of God His Father, the power that has been committed to Him as man. When Christ shall thus exercise His power, He will take vengeance on those who have defiled His creation by seducing man, who had been its head down here and the image of Him who was to be its Head everywhere. He will also deliver creation from its subjection to evil. Meanwhile, personally exalted as the glorious man, and seated at God's right hand until God shall make His enemies His footstool, He communicates the gifts necessary for the gathering together of those who are to be the companions of His glory, who are the members of His body, and who shall be manifested with Him when His glory shines forth in the midst of this world of darkness.

The apostle shews us here an assembly already delivered, and exercising the power of the Spirit; which on the one side delivers souls, and on the other builds them up in Christ, that they may grow up to the measure of their Head in spite of all the power of Satan which still subsists.

But an important truth is connected with this fact. This spiritual power is not exercised in a manner simply divine. It is Christ ascended (He however who had previously descended into the lower parts of the earth) who, as man, has received these gifts of power. It is thus that Psalm 68 speaks as well as Act 2:33. The latter passage speaks also of the gifts bestowed on His members. In our Chapter it is only in the latter way that they are mentioned. He has given gifts unto men.

I would also remark, that these gifts are not here presented as gifts bestowed by the Holy Ghost come down to earth, and distributing to every one according to His will: nor are those gifts spoken of which are tokens of spiritual power suited to act as signs upon those that are outside: but they are ministrations for gathering together and for edification established by Christ as Head of the body by means of gifts with which He endows persons as His choice. Ascended on high, and having taken His place as man at the right hand of God, and filling all things, whatever may be the extent of His glory, Christ has first for His object to fulfil the ways of God in love in gathering souls, and in particular towards the saints and the assembly; to establish the manifestation of the divine nature, and to communicate to the assembly the riches of that grace which the ways of God display, and of which the divine nature is the source. It is in the assembly that the nature of God, the counsels of grace, and the efficacious work of Christ are concentrated in their object; and these gifts are the means of ministering, in the communication of these, in blessing to man.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers: apostles and prophets laying, or rather being laid, as the foundations of the heavenly building, and acting as coming directly from the Lord in an extraordinary manner; the two other classes (the last being sub-divided into two gifts, connected in their nature) belonging to ordinary ministry in all ages. It is important to remark also, that the apostle sees nothing existing before the exaltation of Christ save man the child of wrath, the power of Satan, the power which raised us up (dead in sins as we were) with Christ, and the efficacy of the cross, which had reconciled us to God, and abolished the distinction between Jew and Gentile in the assembly, to unite them in one body before God the cross in which Christ drank the cup and bore the curse, so that wrath has passed away for the believer, and in which a God of love, a Saviour God, is fully manifested.

So the existence of the apostles dates here only from the gifts that followed the exaltation of Jesus. The twelve as sent out by Jesus on earth have no place in the instruction of this epistle, which treats of the body of Christ, of the unity and the members of this body; and the body could not exist before the Head existed and had taken His place as such. Thus also we have seen

that, when the apostle speaks of the apostles and prophets, the latter are to him those exclusively of the New Testament, and those who have been made such by Christ after His ascension. It is the new heavenly man who, being the exalted Head in heaven, forms His body on the earth. He does it for heaven, putting the individuals who compose it spiritually and intelligently in connection with the Head by the power of the Holy Ghost acting in this body on the earth; the gifts, of which the apostle here speaks, being the channels by which His graces are communicated according to the bonds which the Holy Ghost forms with the Head.

The proper and immediate effect is the perfecting of individuals according to the grace that dwells in the Head. The shape which this divine action takes, further, is the work of the ministry, and the formation of the body of Christ, until all the members are grown up into the measure of the stature of Christ their Head. Christ has been revealed in all His fulness: it is according to this revelation that the members of the body are to be formed in the likeness of Christ, known as filling all things, and as the Head of His body, the revelation of the perfect love of God, of the excellency of man before Him according to His counsels, of man the vessel of all His grace, all His power, and all His gifts. Thus the assembly, and each one of the members of Christ, should be filled with the thoughts and the riches of a well-known Christ, instead of being tossed to and fro by all sort of doctrines brought forward by the enemy to deceive souls.

The Christian was to grow up according to all that was revealed in Christ, and to be ever increasing in likeness to his Head; using love and truth for his own soul the two things of which Christ is the perfect expression. Truth displays the real relation of all things with each other in connection with the centre of all things, which is God revealed now in Christ. Love is that which God is in the midst of all this. Now Christ, as the light, put everything precisely in its place man, Satan, sin, righteousness, holiness, all things, and that in every detail, and in connection with God. And Christ was love, the expression of the love of God in the midst of all this. And this is our pattern; and our pattern as having overcome, and, as having ascended into heaven, our Head, to which we are united as the members of His body.

There flows from this Head, by means of its members, the grace needed to accomplish the work of assimilation to Himself. His body, compacted together, increases by the working of His grace in each member, and edifies itself in love. [See Note #19] This is the position of the assembly according to God, until all the members of the body attain to the stature of Christ. The manifestation alas! of this unity is marred; but the grace, and the operation of the grace of its Head to nourish and cause its members to grow, is never impaired, any more than the love in the Lord's heart from which this grace springs. We do not glorify Him, we have not the joy of being ministers of joy to each other as we might be; but the Head does not cease to work for the good of His body. The wolf indeed comes and scatters the sheep, but he cannot pluck them out of the Shepherd's hands. His faithfulness is glorified in our unfaithfulness without excusing it.

With this precious object of the ministration of grace (namely, for the growth of each member individually unto the measure of the stature of the Head Himself), with the ministration of each member in its place to the edifying itself in love, ends this development of the counsels of God in the union of Christ and the assembly, in its double character of the body of Christ in heaven, and the habitation of the Holy Ghost on earth truths which cannot be separated, but each of which has its distinctive importance, and which reconcile the certain immutable operations of grace in the Head with the failures of the assembly responsible on the earth.

Exhortations to a walk befitting such a position follow, in order that the glory of God in us and by us, and His grace towards us, may be identified in our full blessing. We will notice the great principles of these exhortations.

The first is the contrast [See Note #20] between the ignorance of a heart that is blind, and a stranger to the life of God, and consequently walking in the vanity of its own understanding, that is, according to the desires of a heart given up to the impulses of the flesh without God the contrast, I say, between this state, and that of having learnt Christ, as the truth is in Jesus (which is the expression of the life of God in man, God Himself manifested in the flesh), the having put off this old man, which is corrupt itself according to its deceitful lusts, and put on this new man, Christ. It is not an amelioration of the old man; it is a putting it off, and a putting on of Christ.

Even here the apostle does not lose sight of the oneness of the body; we are to speak the truth, because we are members one of another. "Truth," the expression of simplicity and integrity of heart, is in connection with "the truth as it is in Jesus," whose life is transparent as the light, as falsehood is in connection with deceitful lusts.

Moreover, the old man is without God, alienated from the life of God. The new man is created, it is a new creation, and a creation [See Note #21] after the model of that which is the character of God righteousness and holiness of truth. The first Adam was not in that manner created after the image of God. By the fall the knowledge of good and evil entered into man. He can no longer be innocent. When innocent, he was ignorant of evil in itself. Now, fallen, he is a stranger to the life of God in his ignorance: but the knowledge of good and evil which he has acquired, the moral distinction between good and evil in itself, is a divine principle. "The man," said God, "is become as one of us, to know good and evil." But in order to possess this knowledge, and subsist in what is good before God, there must be divine energy, divine life.

Everything has its true nature, its true character, in the eyes of God. That is the truth. It is not that He is the truth. The truth is the right and perfect expression of that which a thing is (and, in an absolute way, of that which all things are), and of the relations in which it stands to other things, or in which all things stand towards each other. Thus God could not be the truth. He is not the expression of some other thing. Everything relates to Him. He is the centre of all true relationship, and of all moral obligation. Neither is God the measure of all things, for He is above all things; and nothing else can be so above them, or He would not be so. [See Note #22] It is God become man; it is Christ, who is the truth, and the measure of all things. But all things have their true character in the eyes of God: and He judges righteously of all, whether morally or in power. He acts according to that judgment. He is just. He also knows evil perfectly, being Himself goodness, that it may be perfectly an abomination to Him, that He may repel it by His own nature. He is holy. Now the new man, created after the divine nature, is so in righteousness and holiness of truth. What a privilege! What a blessing! It is, as another apostle has said, to be "partakers of the divine nature." Adam had nothing of this.

Adam was perfect as an innocent man. The breath of life in his nostrils was breathed into him by God, and he was responsible for obedience to God in a thing wherein neither good nor evil was to be known, but simply a commandment. The trial was that of obedience only, not the knowledge of good or evil in itself. At present, in Christ, the portion of the believer is a participation in the divine nature itself, in a being who knows good and evil, and who vitally participates in the sovereign good, morally in the nature of God Himself, although always thereby dependent on Him. It is our evil nature which is not so, or at least which refuses to be dependent on Him.

Now there is a prince of this world, a stranger to God; and, besides participation in the divine nature, there is the Spirit Himself who has been given to us. These solemn truths enter also as principles into these exhortations. "Give no place to the devil," on the one hand give him no room to come in and act on the flesh; and, on the other hand, "grieve not the Holy Spirit" who dwells in you. The redemption of the creature has not yet taken place, but ye have been sealed unto that day: respect and cherish this mighty and holy guest who graciously dwells in you. Let all bitterness and malice therefore cease even in word, and let meekness and kindness reign in you according to the pattern you have in the ways of God in Christ towards you. Be imitators of God: beautiful and magnificent privilege! but which flows naturally from the truth that we are made partakers of His nature, and that His Spirit dwells in us.

These are the two great subjective principles of the Christian the having put off the old man and put on the new, and the Holy Ghost's dwelling in him. Nor can anything be more blessed than the pattern of life here given to the Christian, founded on our being a new creation. It is perfect subjectively and objectively. First, subjectively, the truth in Jesus is the having put off the old man and put on the new, which has God for its pattern. It is created after God in the perfection of His moral character. But this is not all. The Holy Spirit of God by which we are sealed to the day of redemption dwells in us: we are not to grieve Him. These are the two elements of our state, the new man created after God, and the presence of the Holy Spirit of God; and He is emphatically here called the Spirit of God, as in connection with God's character.

And next objectively: created after God, and God dwelling in us, God is the pattern of our walk, and thus in respect of the two words which alone give God's essence love and light. We are to walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us a sacrifice to God. "For us" was divine love; "to God" is perfection of object and motive. Law takes up the love of self as the measure of love to others. Christ gives up self wholly and for us, but to God. Our worthlessness enhances the love but, on the other hand, an affection and a motive have their worth from the object (and with Christ that was God Himself), self wholly given up. For, so to speak, we may love up and love down. When we look upward in our affections, the nobler the object the nobler the affection; when it is downwards, the more unworthy the object, the more pure and absolute the love. Christ was perfect in both, and absolutely so. He gave Himself for us, and to God. Afterwards we are light in the Lord. We cannot say we are love, for love is sovereign goodness in God; we walk in it, like Christ. But we are light in the Lord. This is the second essential name of God and as partakers of the divine nature we are light in the Lord. Here again Christ is the pattern. "Christ shall give thee light." We are called on, then, as His dear children to imitate God.

This life, in which we participate and of which we live as partakers of the divine nature, has been objectively presented to us in Christ in all its perfection and in all its fulness; in man, and in man now brought to perfection on high, according to the counsels of God respecting Him. It is Christ, this eternal life, who was with the Father and has been manifested unto us He who, having then first descended, has ascended now into heaven to carry humanity thither, and display it in the glory the glory of God according to His eternal counsels. We have seen this life here in its earthly development: God manifest in flesh; man, perfectly heavenly, and obedient in all things to His Father, moved, in His conduct to others, by the motives that characterise God Himself in grace. Hereafter He will be manifested in judgment; and already, here below, He has gone through all the experiences of a man, understanding thus how grace adapts itself to our wants, and displaying it now, according to that knowledge, even as hereafter He will exercise judgment with a knowledge of man, not only divine, but which, having gone through this world in holiness, will leave the hearts of men without excuse and without escape.

But it is the image of God in Him, of which we are now speaking. It is in Him that the nature which we have to imitate is presented to us, and presented in man as it ought to be developed in us here below, in the circumstances through which we are passing. We see in Him the manifestation of God, and that in contrast with the old man. There we see "the truth as it is in Jesus," save that in us it involves the putting off of the old man and putting on the new, answering to Christ's death and resurrection (compare particularly as to His death, Pe1 3:18; Pe1 4:1). Thus, in order to attract and to lead on our hearts, to give us the model on which they are to be formed, the aim to which they should tend, God has given us an object in which He manifests Himself, and which is the object of all His own delight.

The reproduction of God in man is the object that God proposed to Himself in the new man; and that the new man proposes to himself, as he is himself the reproduction of the nature and the character of God. There are two principles for the Christian's path, according to the light in which he views himself. Running his race as man towards the object of his heavenly calling, in which he follows after Christ ascended on high: he is running the heavenward race; the excellency of Christ to be won there, his motive that is not the Ephesian aspect. In the Ephesians he is sitting in heavenly places in Christ, and he has to come out as from heaven, as Christ really did, and manifest God's character upon earth, of which, as we have seen, Christ is the pattern. We are called, as in the position of dear children, to shew our Father's ways.

We are not created anew according to that which the first Adam was, but according to that which God is: Christ is its manifestation. And He is the second Man, the last Adam. [See Note #23] In detail we shall find these characteristic features: truthfulness, the absence of all anger that has the nature of hatred (lying and hatred are the two characteristics of the enemy); practical righteousness connected with labour according to the will of God (man's true position); and the absence of corruption. It is man under the rule of God since the fall, delivered from the effect of the deceitful lusts. But it is more than this. A divine principle brings in the desire of doing good to others, to their body and their soul. I need not say how truly we find here the picture of the life of Christ, as in the preceding remarks it was the

putting off of the spirit of the enemy and of the old man. The spirit of peace and love (and that, in spite of evil in others and the wrongs they may do us) completes the picture, adding that which will be easily understood after what has been said, that, in "forgiving one another," we are to be imitators of God, and to walk in love as Christ has loved us, and has given Himself for us. Beautiful picture, precious privilege! May God grant us so to look at Jesus as to have His image stamped upon us, and in some sort to walk like Him.

Note #17

To recapitulate, there is, first, one body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling; second, one Lord, with whom are connected one faith and one baptism; third, one God and Father of all, who is above all things, everywhere, and in all Christians. Moreover, while insisting upon these three great relationships in which all Christians are placed, as being in their nature the foundations of unity, and the motives of its maintenance, these relationships extend successively in breadth. The direct relationship applies properly to the same persons; but the character of Him who is the basis of the relationship enlarges the idea connected with it. With regard to the Spirit, His presence unites the body is the bond between all the members of the body: none but the members of the body and they, as such are seen here. The Lord has wider claims. In this relationship it is not the members of the body that are spoken of; there is one faith and one baptism, one profession in the world: there could not be two. But although the persons who are in this outward relationship may stand also in the other relationships and be members of the body, yet the relationship here is one of individual profession; it is not a thing which cannot exist at all except in reality (one is a member of Christ's body, or one is not). God is the Father of these same members, as being His children, but He who maintains this relationship is necessarily and always above all things personally above all things, but divinely everywhere.

Note #18

The descent into the lower parts of the earth is viewed as from His place as man on earth; not His coming down from heaven to be a man. It is Christ who descended.

Note #19

Verse 11 (Eph 4:11) gives special and permanent gifts; Verse 16 (Eph 4:16), what every joint supplies in its place. Both have their place in the forming and growth of the body.

Note #20

I have already noticed, that contrast of the new state and the old characterises the Ephesians more than Colossians, where we find more development of life.

Note #21

In Colossians we have "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created us."

Note #22

There is a sense in which God is, morally, the measure of other beings a consideration that brings out the immense privilege of the child of God. It is the effect of grace, in that, being born of Him and partaking of His nature, the child of God is called to be the imitator of God, to be perfect as His Father is perfect. He who loves is born of God, and knows God, for God is love. He makes us partakers of His holiness, consequently we are called to be imitators of God, as His dear children. This shews the immense privileges of grace. It is the love of God in the midst of evil, and which, superior to all evil, walks in holiness, and rejoices also together, in a divine way, in the unity of the same joys and the same sentiments. Therefore Christ says (John 17), "as we are," and "in us."

Note #23

It is useful to note here the difference of Rom 12:1-2, and this epistle. The Romans, we have seen, contemplates a living man on earth; hence he is to give his body up as a living sacrifice alive in Christ, he is to yield his members up wholly to God. Here the saints are seen as sitting in heavenly places already, and they are to come out in testimony of God's character before men, walking as Christ did in love, and light.

Ephesians Chapter 5

Moreover, let us remark here, and it is an important feature in this picture of the fruits of grace and of the new man, that when the grace and love, which come down from God, act in man, they always go up again to God in devotedness. Walk, he says, in love, even as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. We see it in Christ. He is this love which comes down in grace, but this grace, acting in man, makes Him devote Himself to God, although it is on behalf of others. So it is in us; it is the touchstone of the christian heart's activity.

The apostle then speaks plainly as to sin, in order that no one may deceive himself; nor be occupied with deep truths, using them intellectually, to the neglect of ordinary morality one of the signs of heresy, properly so called. He has connected the profoundest doctrines in his teaching with daily practice. If Christ be glorified, the Head of the assembly, He is the model of the new man, the last Adam; the assembly being one with Him on high, and the habitation of God on earth by the Spirit, with whom every Christian is sealed. Every Christian, if indeed he has learned the truth as it is in Jesus, has learned that it consists in having put off the old man, and having put on the new man, created after God in righteousness and holiness (of which Christ is the model, according to the counsels of God in glory); and he is to grow up unto the measure of the stature of Christ, who is the Head, and not grieve the Holy Spirit wherewith he is sealed. The fullest revelation of grace does not weaken the immutable truth that God had a character proper to Himself; it unfolds that character to us by means of the most precious revelations of the gospel, and of the closest relationships with God, which were formed by these revelations: but this character could not alter, nor could the kingdom of God allow of, any characters contrary to it. The wrath of God therefore against evil, and against those who commit it, is plainly set forth.

Now we were that which is contrary to His character, we were darkness; not only in the dark, but darkness in our nature, the opposite of God who is light. Not one ray of that which He is was found in our will, our desires, our understanding. We were morally destitute of it. There was the corruptness of the first Adam, but no share in any feature of the divine character. We are

now partakers of the divine nature, we have the same desires, we know what it is that He loves, and we love what He loves, we enjoy that which He enjoys, we are light (poor and weak indeed, yet such by nature) in the Lord looked at as in Christ. They are the fruits of light [See Note #24] that are developed in the Christian; he is to avoid all association with the unfruitful works of darkness.

But, in speaking of motives, the apostle returns to the great subjects that pre-occupied him, and he returns to them, not only that we should put on the character set forth by that of which he speaks, but that we should realise all its extent, that we should experience all its force. He had told us that the truth in Christ was the having put on the new man, in contrast with the old man, and that we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit. Now he exhorts those that sleep to awake, and Christ should be their light. Light makes all things manifest; but he who sleeps, although not dead, does not profit by it. For hearing, seeing, and all mental reception and communication, he is in the state of a dead man. Alas, how apt this sleep is to overtake us! But in awaking, it was not that they should see the light dimly, but Christ Himself should be the light of the soul; they should have all the full revelation of that which is well-pleasing to God, that which He loves; they should have divine wisdom in Christ; they should be able to profit by opportunities, should find them, being thus enlightened, in the difficulties of a world governed by the enemy, and should act according to spiritual understanding in every case that presented itself. Further, if they were not to lose their senses through means of excitement used in the world, they were to be filled with the Spirit, that is, that He should take such possession of our affections, our thoughts, our understanding, that He should be their only source according to His proper and mighty energy to the exclusion of all else. Thus, full of joy, we should praise, we should sing for joy; and we should give thanks for all that might happen, because a God of love is the true source of all. We should be full of joy in the spiritual realisation of the objects of faith, and the heart continuing to be filled with the Spirit and sustained by this grace, the experience of the hand of God in everything here below will give rise only to thanksgiving. It comes from His hand whom we trust and whose love we know. But giving thanks in all things is a test of the state of the soul; because the consciousness that all things are from God's hand, full trust in

His love, and deadness as to any will of our own, must exist in order to give thanks in everything a single eye which delights in His will.

In entering into the details of relationships and particular duties, the apostle cannot give up the subject that is so dear to him. The command which he addresses to wives, that they are to submit themselves to their husbands, immediately suggests the relationship between Christ and the assembly, not now as a subject for knowledge, but to unfold His affection and tender care. We have seen that the apostle, having established the great principles displayed in the revelation of our relationship with God our vocation then deduces their practical consequences with regard to the life and conduct of Christians: they were to walk as having put on the new man, to have Christ for their light, not to grieve the Spirit, to be filled with the Spirit. Now all this, while the fruit of grace, was either knowledge or practical responsibility.

But here the subject is viewed in another aspect. It is the grace that acts in Christ Himself, His affections, His guardian care, His devotedness to the assembly. Nothing can be more precious, more tender, more intimate. He loved the assembly that is the source of all. And there are three steps in the work of this love. He gave Himself for it, He washes it, He presents it all glorious to Himself. This is not precisely the sovereign election of the individual by God; but the affection that displays itself in the relationship which Christ maintains with the assembly. [See Note #25] See also the extent of the gift, and how marvellous the ground of confidence that it contains. He gives Himself; it is not only His life, true as that is, but Himself. [See Note #26]

Ephesians Chapter 6

But it is not only that there is a line of conduct to follow, a model to imitate, a Spirit with whom one may be filled, it is not only relationships between oneself and God, and those in which we stand here below; this is not all that must occupy the Christian. He has enemies to fight. The people of Israel under Joshua in the land of Canaan were indeed in the promised land, but they were in conflict there with enemies who were in it before them, although not according to the rights by which Israel possessed the land

through the gift of God. God had set it apart for Israel (see Deu 32:8); Ham had taken possession of it.

Now, with regard to us, it is not with flesh and blood that we have to fight, as was the case With Israel. Our blessings are spiritual in the heavenly places. We are sitting in Christ in the heavenlies. We are a testimony to principalities and powers in the heavenlies; we have to wrestle with spiritual wickednesses in the heavenlies. Israel had passed through the wilderness had crossed the Jordan; the manna had ceased; they ate the corn of the land. They were settled in the land of Canaan as though it were all their own without striking a blow. They ate the produce of this good land in the plains of Jericho. So it is with regard to the Christian. Although we are in the wilderness, we are also in the heavenly places in Christ. We have crossed the Jordan, we have died and are risen again with Him. We are sitting in the heavenly places in Him, that we may enjoy the things of heaven as the fruit of our own country. But conflict is before us, if we desire to enjoy them practically. The promise is of every blessing, of all the promised land, but wheresoever we shall set our foot on it (Joshua 1). For this we need the Lord's strength, and of this the apostle now speaks. "Be strong," he says, "in the Lord." The enemy is subtle. We have to withstand his stratagems even more than his power. Neither the strength nor even the wisdom of man can do anything here. We must be armed with the panoply, that is, the whole armour, of God.

But observe first, that the Spirit turns our thoughts upon God Himself before speaking of that which has to be overcome. "Be strong in the Lord." It is not, first of all, a refuge from the face of the enemy; we are in it for ourselves before we use it against the wiles of the enemy. It is in the intimacy of the counsels and the grace of God that man fortifies himself for the warfare from which he cannot escape, if he would enjoy his christian privileges. And he must have the whole armour. To be wanting in one piece exposes us to Satan on that side. The armour must be that of God divine in its nature. Human armour will not ward off the attacks of Satan; confidence in that armour will engage us in the battle only to make us fall in combat with a spirit who is more mighty and more crafty than we are.

These enemies are thus characterised; they are principalities and powers beings possessing an energy of evil which has its source in a will that has mastery over those who do not know how to resist it; they have also strength to carry it out. Their energy they have from God, the will that uses it comes from themselves; they have forsaken God; the spring of their actions is in their own will. In this respect it is a source of action independent of God, and the energy and the qualities which they have from God are the instruments of that will a will which has no bridle except from outside itself. They are principalities and powers. There are good ones; but in them the will is only to do that which God wills, and to employ in His service the strength they have received from Him.

These rebellious principalities and powers rule over the darkness of this world. Light is the atmosphere in which God dwells, which He diffuses all around Himself. Wicked spirits deceive and reign in darkness. Now this world, not having the light of God, is entirely in darkness, and demons reign in it; for God is not there except in supreme power after all, turning everything to His glory, and, in the end, to the good of His children.

But if these principalities rule in the darkness of this world they do not possess merely an outward force; they are in the heavenlies, and are occupied with spiritual wickedness there. They exercise a spiritual influence, as having the place of gods. There is then, first, their intrinsic character, their mode of being, and the state in which they are found; second, their power in the world as governing it; and third, their religious and delusive ascendancy, as lodging in the heavens. They have also, as a sphere for the exercise of their power, the lusts of man, and even the terrors of his conscience.

To resist enemies like these we need the armour of God. The manifestations of this power, when God permits it, constitute the evil days. All this present period of Christ's absence is, in a certain sense, the evil day. Christ has been rejected by the world, of which, while in it, He was the light, and is hidden in God. This power, which the enemy displayed when he led the world to reject Christ, he still exercises over it: we oppose it by the action and the power of the Holy Ghost, who is here during the Lord's absence. But there are moments when this power is allowed to shew itself in a more especial manner, when the enemy uses the world against the saints, darkening the

light which shines in it from God, troubling and leading astray the minds of professors and even of believers days, in a word, in which his power makes itself felt. We have to wrestle with this power, to resist it all, to stand against everything in the confession of Christ, of the light; we have to do all that the confession of His name requires in spite of all and at whatever cost, and to be found standing when the storm and the evil day are past.

Thus we have not only to enjoy God and the counsels of God and their effect in peace; but, since these very counsels introduce us into heavenly places and make us the light of God on earth, we have also to encounter the spiritual wickednesses which are in the heavenly places, and which seek to make us falsify our high position, to mislead us, and to darken the light of Christ in us on the earth. We have to escape the snares of heavenly spiritual wickedness for ourselves, and to maintain the testimony here below incorrupt and pure. [See Note #28]

Now by the power of the Holy Ghost, who has been given to us for this purpose, we shall find that the armour of God relates first to that which, by setting the flesh aside, and by maintaining the existence of a good conscience, takes all hold from the enemy; then, to the preservation of complete objective trust in God; and next, to the active energy which stands with confidence in the presence of the enemy, and using the weapons of the Holy Ghost against him. The defensive armour our own state, comes first. The whole ends with the expression of the entire and continual dependence on God in which the christian warrior stands.

We will examine this armour of God, that we may know it. It is all practical founded on that which has been accomplished, but in itself practical. For it is not a question here of appearing before the bar of God, but of resisting the enemy, and of maintaining our ground against him.

Before God our righteousness is perfect, it is Christ Himself, and we are the righteousness of God in Him: but we do not need armour there, we are sitting in the heavenly places: all is peace, all is perfect. But here we need armour, real practical armour, and first of all to have the loins girt about with truth. The loins are the place of strength when duly girt, but represent the intimate affections and movements of the heart. If we allow our hearts

to wander where they will, instead of abiding in communion with God, Satan has easy hold upon us. This piece of armour is then the application of the truth to the most intimate movements, the first movements of the heart. We gird up the loins. This is done, not when Satan is present; it is a work with God, which is done by applying the truth to our souls in His presence, judging everything in us by this means, and putting a bridle on the heart that it may only move under His eye. This is true liberty and true joy, because the new man enjoys God in uninterrupted communion; but here the Spirit speaks of it with respect to the safeguard which it will be to us against the attacks of the enemy. At the same time it is not merely the repression of evil thoughts that is its consequence: it is the action of the truth, of the power of God, acting by the revelation of everything as it is of all that He Himself teaches, bringing the conscience into His presence, keeping it thus in His thoughts; all that God has said in His word, and the unseen realities having their true force and their application to the heart that stirs in us, so that its movements should have their character from God's own word and not from its own desires, everything going on in the presence of God. [See Note #29]

Satan has no hold on a heart thus kept in the truth, as revealed by God; there is nothing in its desires that answers to the suggestions of Satan. Take Jesus as an example. His safeguard was not in judging all that Satan said. In the wilderness at the beginning of His public service, except in the last temptation, it was in the perfect application of the word for Himself, for that which concerned His own conduct, to the circumstances around Him. The truth governed His heart, so that it only moved according to that truth in the circumstance that presented itself "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." No word has come forth He does nothing. There was no motive for acting. It would have been to act of His own accord, of His own will. That truth kept His heart in connection with God in the circumstance that met Him. When the circumstance arose, His heart was already in intercourse with God, so that it had no other impulse than that which the word of truth suggested. His conduct was purely negative, but it flowed from the light which truth threw upon the circumstance, because His heart was under the absolute government of the truth. The suggestion of Satan would have brought Him out of this position. That was enough. He will have nothing to do with it. He

does not yet drive away Satan: it was only a matter of conduct, not of flagrant opposition to the glory of God. In the latter case He drives him away; in the former He acts according to God without concerning Himself with anything farther. Satan's device totally failed of its effect. It simply produced nothing. It is absolutely powerless against the truth, because it is not the truth; and the hearth has truth for its rule. Wiles are not the truth: this is quite enough to prevent our being caught by them, that is, if the heart be thus governed.

In the second place there is the breastplate of righteousness a conscience that has nothing to reproach itself with. The natural man knows how a bad conscience robs him of strength before men. There is only to be added here the way in which Satan uses it to entrap man in his snares. By maintaining the truth we have Satan for our enemy. If we yield ourselves up to error, he will leave us in that respect at peace, except in using our faults and crimes to enslave us more, to bind us hand and foot in that which is false. How would a man who has the truth, who has perhaps even escaped error, if his conduct were bad, bear to have it exposed to the eyes of all? He is silent before the enemy. His own conscience even will make him silent, if he is upright, without thinking of consequences, unless a confession be necessary. Besides this the strength of God and spiritual understanding will fail him: where could he have gained them in a wrong walk? We go forward boldly when we have a good conscience. But it is when we are walking with God, for the love of God, for the love of righteousness itself, that we have this breastplate on, and thus we are fearless when called to go forward and face the enemy. We gain a good conscience before God by the blood of the Lamb. By walking with God we maintain it before men and for communion with God, in order to have strength and spiritual understanding, and to have them increasingly. This is the practical strength of good conduct, of a conscience without rebuke. "I exercise myself" always to this, said the apostle. What integrity in such a walk, what truthfulness of heart when no eye sees us! We are peremptory with ourselves, with our own hearts, and with regard to our conduct; we can therefore be peaceful in our ways. God also is there. So walk, says the apostle, and the God of peace shall be with you. If the fruits of righteousness are sown in peace, the path of peace is found in righteousness. If I have a bad conscience, I am vexed with myself, I

grow angry with others. When the heart is at peace with God and has nothing to reproach itself with, when the will is held in check, peace reigns in the soul. We walk on the earth, but the heart is above it in intercourse with better things; we walk in a peaceful spirit with others, and nothing troubles our relations with God. He is the God of peace. Peace, the peace of Jesus, fills the heart. The feet are shod with it; we walk in the spirit of peace.

But, together with all this, a piece of defensive armour is needed over all the rest, that we may be able to stand in spite of all the wiles of the enemy an armour, however, which is practically maintained in its soundness by the use of the preceding ones, so that, if the latter is essential, the others have the first place in practice. This is the shield, faith; that is to say, full and entire trust in God, the consciousness of grace and of His favour maintained in the heart. Here faith is not simply the reception of God's testimony (although it is founded on that testimony), but the present assurance of the heart with regard to that which God is for us, founded, as we have just said, on the testimony which He has given of Himself-trust in His love and in His faithfulness, as well as in His power. "If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." The work of the Spirit in us is to inspire this confidence. When it exists, all the attacks of the enemy, who seeks to make us believe that the goodness of God is not so sure-all his efforts to destroy or to weaken in our hearts this confidence in God and to hide Him from us, prove fruitless. His arrows fall to the ground without reaching us. We stand fast in the consciousness that God is for us: our communion is not interrupted. The fiery darts of the enemy are not the desires of the flesh, but spiritual attacks.

Thus we can hold up our heads: moral courage, the energy which goes forward, is maintained. Not that we have anything to boast of in ourselves, but the salvation and the deliverance of God are fresh in our minds. God has been for us; He is for us: who shall be against us? He was for us when we had no strength; it was salvation, when we could do nothing. This is our confidence God Himself not looking at ourselves. We have the helmet of salvation on our heads. The former parts of the armour give us freedom to enjoy the two latter.

Thus furnished with that which protects us in our walk, and in the practical confidence in God, and the knowledge of God that flows from it, we are in a state to use offensive weapons. We have but one against the enemy, but it is one that he cannot resist if we know how to handle it: witness the Lord's conflict in the wilderness with Satan. It is the word of God. There Jesus always answered with the word by the power of the Spirit. It sets man in his true position according to God as obedient man in the circumstances around him. Satan can do nothing there: we have but to maintain that position. If Satan openly tempts us to disobedience, there is no wile in that. Not being able to do anything else, Satan acted thus with the Lord, and manifested himself as he is. The Lord drove him away by the word. Satan has no power when he is manifested as Satan. We have to resist the wiles of the devil. Our business is to act according to the word, come what may; the result will shew that the wisdom of God was in it. But observe here, this sword is the sword of the Spirit. It is not the intelligence or the capacity of man, although it is man who uses the word. His sword is highly tempered, but he can neither draw it nor strike with it if the Holy Ghost is not acting in him. The weapons are spiritual; they are used by the power of the Spirit. God must speak, however weak the instrument may be.

The sword is also used actively in the spiritual warfare, in which it judges all that is opposed to us. In this sense it is both defensive and offensive. But, behind all this armour, there is a state, a disposition, a means of strength, which quickens and gives all the rest its power: this is a complete dependence on God, united to trust in Him, which expresses itself in prayer. "Praying always"; this dependence must be constant. When it is real, and I feel that I can do nothing without God, and that He wills my good in all things, it expresses itself. It seeks the strength which it has not: it seeks it from Him in whom it trusts. It is the motion of the Spirit in our hearts in their intercourse with God, so that our battles are fought in the communion of His strength and His favour, and in the consciousness that we can do nothing, and that He is all. "At all times"; "with supplication." This prayer is the expression of the man's need, of the heart's desire, in the strength that the Spirit gives him, as well as in confidence in God. Also since it is the Spirit's act, it embraces all saints, not one of whom can be forgotten by Jesus; and the Spirit in us answers the affections of Christ, and reproduces

them. We must be watchful and diligent in order to use this weapon; avoiding all that would turn us away from God, availing ourselves of every opportunity, and finding, by the grace of the Spirit, in everything that arises, an occasion (by means of this diligence) for prayer and not for distraction. [See Note #30] The apostle asks from his heart for this intercession on their part, in the sense of his own need and of that which he desires to be for Christ.

The mission of Tychicus expressed Paul's assurance of the interest which the love of the Ephesians made them take in having tidings of him, and that which he himself felt in ascertaining their welfare and spiritual state in Christ. It is a touching expression of his confidence in their affection an affection which his own devoted heart led him to expect in others.

He presents the Ephesians as enjoying the highest privileges in Christ, and as being able to appreciate them. He blames them in nothing. The armour of God by which to repel the assaults of the enemy, and to grow up in peace unto the Head in all things, the preservative armour of God was naturally the last thing that he had to set before them. It is to be noticed that he does not speak to them in this epistle of the Lord's coming. He supposes believers in the heavenly places in Christ; and not as on earth, going through the world, waiting till He should come to take them to Himself, and restore happiness to the world. That which is waited for in this epistle is the gathering together of all things under Christ, their true Head, according to the counsels of God. The blessings are in the heavens, the testimony is in the heavens, the church is sitting in the heavens, the warfare is in the heavens.

The apostle repeats his desire for them of peace, love, and faith; and concludes his epistle with the usual salutation by his own hand.

This epistle sets forth the position and the privileges of the children, and of the assembly in its union with Christ.

Note #28

Still what we have to overcome are the wiles of the devil. His power over us is broken. He may rouse the world in persecution and be a roaring lion; but as regards personal temptations, if we resist the devil he flees from us; he

knows he has met Christ, and Christ has overcome. But his wiles are ever there.

Note #29

Girding the loins is a common figure of scripture for a mind and heart kept in godly order as in God's presence by the word of God.

Note #30

Prayer is founded on the immense privilege of having common interests with God both as to ourselves and as to all that are His, yea, even as to Christ's glory. Wondrous thought! unspeakable grace!

PHILIPPIANS

Introduction to Philippians

In the epistle to the Philippians, we find much more of christian experience, and the development of the exercise of the heart, than in the generality of the epistles. It is in fact proper christian experience. Doctrine and practice are found in them all, but, with the exception of the second to Timothy which is of another nature, there is none that contains like this, the expression of the Christian's experience in this toilsome life, and the resources which are open to him in passing through it, and the motives which ought to govern him. We may even say that this epistle gives us the experience of christian life in its highest and most perfect expression say, rather, its normal condition under the power of the Spirit of God. God has condescended to furnish us with this beautiful picture of it, as well as with the truths that enlighten us, and the rules that direct our walk.

The occasion for it was quite natural. Paul was in prison, and the Philippians (who were very dear to him, and who, at the commencement of his labours, had testified their affection for him by similar gifts) had just sent assistance to the apostle by the hand of Epaphroditus at a moment when, as it appears, he had been for some time in need. A prison, need, the consciousness that the assembly of God was deprived of his watchful care, this expression on the part of the Philippians of the love that thought of him in his necessities, although at a distance what could be more adapted to open the apostle's heart, and lead to his expressing the confidence in God that animated him, as well as what he felt with regard to the assembly, unsupported now by his apostolic care, and having to trust God Himself without any intermediate help? And it was most natural that he should pour out his feelings into the bosom of these beloved Philippians, who had just given him this proof of their affection. The apostle therefore speaks more than once of the Philippians' fellowship with the gospel: that is to say, they took part in the labours, the trials, the necessities which the preaching of the gospel occasioned to those who devoted themselves to it. Their hearts

united them to it like those of whom the Lord speaks who received a prophet in the name of a prophet.

This brought the apostle into a peculiarly intimate connection with this assembly; and he and Timotheus, who had accompanied him in his labours in Macedonia, his true son in the faith and in the work, address themselves to the saints and to those who bore office in this particular assembly. This is not an epistle which soars to the height of God's counsels, like that to the Ephesians, or which regulates the godly order which becomes Christians everywhere, like the two to the Corinthians; nor is it one which lays the foundation for the relationship of a soul with God, like that to the Romans. Neither was it destined to guard Christians against the errors that were creeping in among them, like some of the others which were written by our apostle. It takes the ground of the precious inner life, of the common affection of Christians towards each other, but of that affection as experienced in the heart of Paul, animated and directed by the Holy Ghost. Hence also we find the ordinary relationships which existed within an assembly: there are bishops and deacons, and it was the more important to remember them, since the immediate care of the apostle was no longer possible. The absence of this immediate care forms the basis of the apostle's instructions here, and gives its peculiar importance to the epistle.

Philippians Chapter 1

Philippians 1:1

phi 1:1

The affection of the Philippians, which expressed itself by sending help to the apostle, reminded him of the spirit they had always shewn; they had cordially associated themselves with the labours and trials of the gospel. And this thought leads the apostle higher, to that which governs the current of thought (most precious to us) in the epistle. Who had wrought in the Philippians this spirit of love and of devotedness to the interests of the gospel? Truly it was the God of the glad tidings and of love; and this was a security that He who had begun the good work would fulfil it unto the day of Christ. Sweet thought! now that we have no longer the apostle, that we have no longer bishops and deacons, as the Philippians had in those days.

God cannot be taken from us; the true and living source of all blessing remains to us, unchangeable, and above the infirmities, and even the faults, which deprive Christians of all intermediate resources. The apostle had seen God acting in the Philippians. The fruits bore witness of the source. Hence he counted on the perpetuity of the blessing they were to enjoy. [See Note #1] But there must be faith in order to draw these conclusions. Christian love is clear sighted and full of trust with regard to its objects, because God Himself, and the energy of His grace, are in that love.

To return to the principle it is the same thing with the assembly of God. It may indeed lose much, as to outward means, and as to those manifestations of the presence of God, which are connected with man's responsibility; but the essential grace of God cannot be lost. Faith can always count upon it. It was the fruits of grace which gave the apostle this confidence, as in Heb 6:9-10; Th1 1:3-4. He counted indeed, in Co1 1:8, and in Galatians, on the faithfulness of Christ in spite of many painful things. The faithfulness of the Lord encouraged him with regard to Christians, whose condition in other respects was the cause of great anxiety. But here surely a much happier case the walk itself of the Christian led him to the source of confidence about them. He remembered with affection and tenderness the way in which they had always acted towards him, and he turned it into a desire for them that the God who had wrought it would produce for their own blessing the perfect and abundant fruits of that love.

He opens his own heart also to them. They took part, by the same grace acting in them, in the work of God's grace in him, and that with an affection that identified itself with him and his work; and his heart turned to them with an abundant return of affection and desire. God, who created these feelings, and to whom he presented all that passed in his heart, this same God who acted in the Philippians, was a witness between them (now that Paul could give no other by his labour among them) of his earnest desire for them all. He felt their love, but he desired moreover, that this love should be not only cordial and active, but that it should be guided also by wisdom and understanding from God, by a godly discernment of good and evil, wrought by the power of His Spirit; so that, while acting in love, they should also walk according to that wisdom, and should understand that which, in this world

of darkness, was truly according to divine light and perfection, so that they should be without reproach until the day of Christ. How different from the cold avoidance of positive sin with which many Christians content themselves! The earnest desire of every excellence and likeness to Christ which divine light can shew them is that which marks the life of Christ in us.

Now the fruits produced were already a sign that God was with them; and He would fulfil the work unto the end. But the apostle desired that they should walk throughout the whole of the way according to the light that God had given, so that when they came to the end there should be nothing with which they could be reproached: but that, on the contrary, set free from all that might weaken or lead them astray, they should abound in the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. A fine practical picture of the Christian's normal condition in his daily work towards the end; for, in the Philippians, we are always on the way towards our heavenly rest in which redemption has set us.

Such is the introduction to this epistle. After this expression of the wishes of his heart for them, reckoning on their affection, he speaks of his bonds, which they had remembered; but he does so in connection with Christ and the gospel, which he had most of all at heart. But, before I go beyond the introduction into the matter of the epistle, I would notice the thoughts which lie at the foundation of the sentiments expressed in it.

There are three great elements which stamp their character on it.

Firstly, it speaks of the Christian's pilgrimage in the wilderness; salvation is viewed as a result to be obtained at the end of the journey. Redemption accomplished by Christ is indeed established as the foundation of this pilgrimage (as was the case with Israel at their entrance into the wilderness), but the being presented risen and in glory before God, when victorious over every difficulty, is the subject in this epistle, and is that which is here called salvation.

In the second place, the position is characterised by the apostle's absence, the assembly having therefore itself to maintain the conflict. It had to overcome, instead of enjoying the victory gained over the enemy's power

by the apostle when he was with them and could make himself weak with all who were weak.

And, thirdly, the important truth, already mentioned, is set forth, that the assembly, in these circumstances, was cast more immediately on God the inexhaustible source for it of grace and strength, of which it was to avail itself in an immediate way by faith a resource which could never fail it. [See Note #2] I resume the consideration of the text with Verse 12 (Phi 1:12), which begins the epistle after the introductory portion. Paul was a prisoner at Rome. The enemy appeared to have gained a great victory in thus restraining his activity; but by the power of God, who orders all things and who acted in the apostle, even the devices of the adversary were turned to the furtherance of the gospel. In the first place, the imprisonment of the apostle made the gospel known, where it would not otherwise have been preached, in high places at Rome; and many other brethren, reassured as to the apostle's position, [See Note #3] became more bold to preach the gospel without fear. But there was another way in which this absence of the apostle had an effect. Many who, in the presence of his power and his gifts, were necessarily powerless and insignificant persons could make themselves of some importance, when, in the unsearchable but perfect ways of God, this mighty instrument of His grace was set aside. They could hope to shine and attract attention when the rays of this resplendent light were intercepted by the walls of a prison. Jealous but hidden when he was present, they availed themselves of his absence to bestir themselves; whether false brethren or jealous Christians, they sought in his absence to impair his authority in the assembly, and his happiness. They only added to both. God was with His servant; and, instead of the self-seeking which instigated these sorry preachers of the truth, there was found in Paul the pure desire for the proclamation of the good news of Christ, the whole value of which he deeply felt, and which he desired above all, be it in what way it might.

Already the apostle finds his resource for his own case, in God's operating independently of the spiritual order of His house with regard to the means that He uses. The normal condition of the assembly is that the Spirit of God acts in the members of the body, each one in its place, for the manifestation

of the unity of the body and of the reciprocal energy of its members. Christ, having overcome Satan, fills with His own Spirit those whom He has delivered out of the hand of that enemy, in order that they may exhibit at the same time the power of God and the truth of their deliverance from the power of the enemy, and exhibit them in a walk, which, being an expression of the mind and energy of God Himself, leaves no room for those of the enemy. They constituted the army and the testimony of God in this world against the enemy. But then, each member, from an apostle down to the weakest, acts efficaciously in his own place. The power of Satan is excluded. The exterior answers to the interior, and to the work of Christ. He who is in them is greater than he who is in the world. But everywhere power is needed for this, and the single eye. There is another state of things, in which, although all is not in activity in its place, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, yet the restoring energy of the Spirit in an instrument like the apostle defends the assembly, or brings it back into its normal condition, when it has partially failed. The epistle to the Ephesians, on the one side, and those to the Corinthians and Galatians, on the other, present these two phases of the history of the assembly.

The epistle to the Philippians treats but with the pen of a divinely inspired apostle of a state of things in which this last resource was wanting. The apostle could not labour now in the same manner as before, but he could give us the Spirit's view of the state of the assembly, when, according to the wisdom of God, it was deprived of these normal energies. It could not be deprived of God. Doubtless the assembly had not then departed so far from its normal condition as it has now done, but the evil was already springing up. All seek their own, says the apostle, not the things of Jesus Christ; and God allowed it to be so during the life of the apostles, in order that we might have the revelation of His thoughts respecting it, and that we might be directed to the true resources of His grace in these circumstances.

Paul himself had to experience this truth in the first place. The bonds that united him to the assembly and to the work of the gospel were the strongest that exist on earth; but he was obliged to resign the gospel and the assembly to the God to whom they belonged. This was painful; but its effect was to perfect obedience, trust, singleness of eye, and self-

renunciation, in the heart, that is, to perfect them according to the measure of the operation of faith. Nevertheless the pain caused by such an effort betrays the inability of man to maintain the work of God at its own height. But all this happens in order that God may have the whole glory of the work; and it is needed, in order that the creature may be manifested in every respect according to the truth. And it is most blessed to see how, both here and in 2 Timothy, the decay of individual life and ecclesiastical energy brings out a fuller development of personal grace on one hand and ministerial energy on the other, where there is faith, than is found anywhere else. Indeed it is always so. The Moseses, and Davids, and Elijahs are found in the time of the Pharaohs, and Sauls, and Ahabs.

The apostle could do nothing: he had to see the gospel preached without him by some through envy and in a spirit of contention, by others through love; encouraged as regards the apostle's bonds, these desired to alleviate them by continuing his work. Every way Christ was preached, and the apostle's mind rose above the motives which animated the preachers in the contemplation of the immense fact, that a Saviour, the deliverer sent of God, was preached to the world. Christ, and even souls were more precious to Paul than the work's being carried on by himself. God was carrying it on; and therefore it would be for the triumph of Paul, who linked himself with the purposes of God. [See Note #4] He understood the great conflict which was going on between Christ (in his members) and the enemy; and if the latter appeared to have gained a victory by putting Paul in prison, God was using this event for the advancement of the work of Christ by the gospel, and thus in reality for the gaining of fresh victories over Satan victories with which Paul was associated, since he was set for the defence of that gospel. Therefore all this turned to his salvation, his faith being confirmed by these ways of a faithful God, who directed the eyes of His faithful servant more entirely upon Himself. Sustained by the prayers of others and by the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, instead of being cast down and terrified by the enemy, he gloried more and more in the sure victory of Christ in which he shared. Accordingly he expresses his unchangeable conviction, that in nothing should he be made ashamed, but that it would be given him to use all boldness, and that Christ would be glorified in him, whether by his life or his death; and he had death before his eyes. Called to appear before Caesar,

his life might be taken from him by the emperor's judgment; humanly speaking the issue was quite uncertain. He alludes to this, Phi 1:22, Phi 1:30; Phi 2:17; Phi 3:10. But, living or dying, his eye was now more fixed on Christ than even on the work, high placed as that work might have been in the mind of one whose life could be expressed in this one word "Christ." To live was for him not the work in itself, nor only that the faithful should stand fast in the gospel, although this could not be separated from the thought of Christ, because they were members of His body Christ; to die was gain, for he should be with Christ.

Such was the purifying effect of the ways of God, who had made him pass through the ordeal, so terrible to him, of being separated for years, perhaps four, from his work for the Lord. The Lord Himself had taken the place of the work so far at least as it was connected with Paul individually; and the work was committed to the Lord Himself. Possibly the fact that he was so engrossed with the work had contributed to that which led to his imprisonment; for the thought of Christ alone keeps the soul in equilibrium, and gives everything its right place. God caused this imprisonment to be the means through which Christ became his all. Not that he lost his interest in the work, but that Christ alone held the first place; and he saw everything, and even the work, in Christ.

What consolation it is, when we are perhaps conscious that our weakness has been manifested, and that we have failed in acting according to the power of God, to feel that He, who alone has a right to be glorified, never fails!

Now, since Christ was everything to Paul, it was evident gain to die, for he would be with Him. Nevertheless it was worth while to live (for this is the force of the first part of Verse 21 (Phi 1:21)), because it was Christ and His service; and he did not know which to choose. Dying, he gained Christ for himself: it was far better. Living, he served Christ; he had more, as to the work, since to live was Christ, and death of course would put a stop to that. Thus he was in a strait between the two. But he had learnt to forget himself in Christ; and he saw Christ entirely occupied with the assembly according to His perfect wisdom. And this decided the question; for being thus taught of God, and not knowing for himself which to choose, Paul lost sight of himself,

and thought only of the need of the assembly according to the mind of Christ. It was good for the assembly that he should remain for one assembly even: thus he should remain. And see what peace this looking to Jesus, which destroyed selfishness in the work, gives to the servant of God. After all, Christ has all power in heaven and earth, and He orders all things according to His will. Thus when His will is known and His will is love for the assembly one can say that it will be done. Paul decides as to his own fate, without troubling himself as to either what the emperor would do, or the circumstances of the time. Christ loved the assembly. It was good for the assembly that Paul should remain; Paul shall then remain. How entirely Christ is everything here! What light, what rest, from a single eye, from a heart Versed in the Lord's love! How blessed to see self so totally gone, and Christ's love to the assembly seen thus to be the ground on which all is ordered!

Now if Christ is all this for Paul and for the assembly, Paul desires that the assembly should be that which it ought to be for Christ, and thereby for his own heart to which Christ was everything. To the assembly therefore the apostle's heart turns. The joy of the Philippians would be abundant through his return to them; only let their conduct, whether he came or not, be worthy of the gospel of Christ. Two thoughts possessed his mind, whether he should see them or hear tidings of them, that they might have constancy and firmness in unity of heart and mind among themselves; and be devoid of fear with regard to the enemy, in the conflict they had to maintain against him, with the strength that this unity would give them. This is the testimony of the presence and operation of the Spirit in the assembly, when the apostle is absent. He keeps Christians together by His presence; they have but one heart and one object. They act in common by the Spirit. And, since God is there, the fear with which the evil spirit and their enemies might inspire them (and it is what he ever seeks to do; compare Pe1 5:8) is not there. They walk in the spirit of love and power and of a sound mind. Their condition is thus an evident testimony of salvation entire and final deliverance since in their warfare with the enemy they feel no fear, the presence of God inspiring them with other thoughts. With regard to their adversaries, the discovery of the impotence of all their efforts produces the sense of the insufficiency of their resources. Although they had the whole

power of the world and of its prince, they had met with a power superior to their own the power of God, and they were its adversaries. A terrible conviction on the one side; profound joy on the other, where not only there was thus the assurance of deliverance and salvation, but they were proved to be salvation and deliverance from the hand of God Himself. Thus, that the assembly should be in conflict, and the apostle absent (himself wrestling with all the power of the enemy), was a gift. Joyful thought! unto them it was given to suffer for Christ, as well as to believe in Him. They had a further and a precious portion in suffering with Christ, and even for Christ; and communion with His faithful servant in suffering for His sake united them more closely in Him.

Note, here, how thus far we have the testimony of the Spirit to a life above the flesh, not of it. In nothing he had been ashamed, and fully trusted he never should be, but Christ magnified in his body, were his lot life or death, as He ever had been. He does not know whether to choose life or death, both were so blessed; to live, Christ; to die, gain, though then labour was over; such confidence in Christ's love to the assembly that he decides his case before Nero by what that love would produce. Envy and strife against himself leading some to preach Christ would only turn to victorious results for himself: he was content if Christ was preached. The superiority to the flesh, living above it so completely, was not that it was not there or its nature changed. He had, as we learn elsewhere, a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. But it is a glorious testimony to the power and working of the Spirit of God.

Note #1

Read in Verse 7 (Phi 1:7) as in the margin, "because ye have me in your hearts."

Note #3

We shall find the whole tenor of a life which was the expression of the power of the Spirit of God brought out in it. It marks this, that sin, or the flesh as working evilly in us, is not mentioned in the epistle. It gives the forms and features of the life of Christ; for if we live in the Spirit, we should walk in the Spirit. We shall find the graciousness of christian life (Chapter 2),

the energy of christian life (Chapter 3), and its superiority to all circumstances (Chapter 4). The first more opens the apostle's heart as to his actual circumstances and feelings, as was natural. Exhortation begins with Chapter 2. Still even in Chapter 1 we find the apostle entirely superior to circumstances in the power of spiritual life.

Note #3

In the first edition I had taken this as the effect of the apostle's imprisonment in arousing the faith of those inactive when he was active. And this would be the sense of the English translation and is a true principle. But it seems that the force of the words is "rather got confidence as to my bonds." They were in danger of being ashamed of him, as if he were a malefactor.

Note #4

There is blessed faith in this. But then a man must have made the work his life. "To me to live is Christ." If so, if the work prospers, he prospers; if Christ is glorified, he is content, even if the Lord has laid him aside.

Philippians Chapter 2

But this, too, produced its effects. The apostle desired that their joy should be full, and that unity among the Philippians should be perfect; for his absence had allowed some seeds of disunion and disaffection to germinate. Love had been sweetly and powerfully demonstrated by the gift they had sent to the apostle. Consolation in Christ, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, tender mercies were displayed in it, giving him great joy. Let them then make this joy perfect by the full establishment of this same bond of love among themselves, by being of one accord, of one mind, having the same love for each other, being all like-minded, allowing no rivalry or vainglory to display itself in any way. Such was the apostle's desire. Appreciating their love towards himself, he wished their happiness to be complete through the perfecting of that love among themselves: thus would his own joy be perfect. Beautiful and touching affection! It was love in him which, sensible to their love, thought only of them. How delicate the way in which a kindness, which precluded reproof, made a way for what really was one, and

which a heart that added charity to brotherly love could not leave unuttered!

Now the means of this union, of the maintenance of this love, was found in the abnegation of self, in humility, in the spirit that humbles itself in order to serve. It was this which perfectly displayed itself in Christ, in contrast with the first Adam. The latter sought to make himself like God by robbery, when he was in the form of a man, and strove to exalt himself at God's expense; being at the same time disobedient unto death. Christ, on the contrary, when He was in the form of God, emptied Himself, through love, of all His outward glory, of the form of God, and took the form of a man; and, even when He was in the form of a man, still humbled Himself. It was a second thing which He did in humbling Himself. As God, He emptied Himself; as man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. God has highly exalted Him; for he who exalts himself shall be humbled? but he who humbles himself shall be exalted. Perfect love, glorious truth, precious obedience! A man by the just judgment and act of God is exalted to the right hand of the throne of the divine Majesty. What a truth is the Person of Christ! What a truth is this descent and ascension by which He fills all things as Redeemer and Lord of glory! God come down in love, man ascended in righteousness; entire love in coming down, entire obedience by love also. Worthy from all eternity as to His Person to be there, He is now as man exalted by God to His right hand. It is an act of righteousness on God's part that He is there; and our hearts can take part in it, rejoicing in His glory rejoicing also that by grace we have part in it as to our own place.

His humiliation is a proof that He is God. God only could leave His first estate in the sovereign rights of His love; it is sin for any creature to do so. It is also a perfect love. But this proof is given, this love accomplished, in the fact that He is man. What a place has He acquired for us in Himself! But it is of Him, not of us who are its fruits, that the apostle thinks. He rejoices in the thought of Christ's exaltation. God has exalted Him to the highest place, and given Him a name which is above every name, so that everything in heaven and earth, and even in infernal regions, must bow before this exalted man,

and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

It will be remarked here, that it is the lordship of Christ that is presented in this passage, not His divinity in itself. His divinity is indeed the primary point of departure. All in fact has its origin there the love, the self-renunciation, the humiliation, the marvellous condescension. Nothing of all this could have been, or would have its value, without the former; but it is of the Lord, complete in His Person in the position which He took as man it is of Him who humbled Himself, who when He had gone down to the lowest possible place, was exalted by God; it is of Jesus, who could, without exalting Himself, be equal with God, but who emptied Himself, who went down even into death, that the apostle speaks: of Jesus, Lord of all, and who, thus exalted as man, shall be owned as Lord throughout the whole creation to the glory of God the Father. [See Note #5]

The apostle's heart enlarges whenever he speaks of the Lord Jesus; but he turns to the objects of his solicitude; and as he had spoken of the self-renunciation and the humiliation of Christ, as a means of union which would take all occasion from carnal rivalry, he has also been led to speak of the obedience of Christ in contrast with the first Adam and the flesh. He now applies this principle, also, for the instruction of the Philippians: "Wherefore," he says, "my beloved, as ye have always obeyed." And here the effect of his absence and removal from the work is introduced "not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for," he adds, "it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do." That is to say, while he was among them he had laboured; now they were themselves engaged with the enemy, without the aid of Paul's presence and spiritual energy; but God Himself wrought in them, and they ought to work so much the more earnestly in that they found themselves in such a warfare, God Himself being engaged for them as acting in them for this conflict, and they themselves striving in their own persons, directly with the power of the enemy. This was not the moment to boast in their little gifts, on account of the absence of that which had thrown them into the shade, nor to be at strife among themselves. On the other hand, if they were deprived of Paul, they were not deprived of God.

God Himself wrought in them. This is the great principle, and the great consolation of the epistle. The Christians, deprived of the important aid of the apostle, are cast more immediately on God. The apostle himself, separated from the assembly, finds his own consolation in God; and commits the assembly in its lack of his personal care, to God Himself, in whom he had himself found this consolation.

It is to be carefully remarked here, that it is the very opposite of an exhortation to our own working in contrast with God's effectual power. "Your own" is in contrast with Paul in his absence, who had laboured for them, because God did work in them to will and to do. They were to work, because, if Paul was absent, God wrought in them. I have noticed already that salvation, every blessing, is looked at everywhere in this epistle as at the end of the Christian's course, even the manifestation of their righteousness (Phi 3:9). This passage is an example. There are two ways the Christian is seen in the New Testament. In Christ here is no progress, no question: he is accepted in Him a complete, perfect, present state. But he is also a pilgrim upon earth, having to attain the goal: so always in Philippians. This gives occasion to every kind of exhortation, warning and "if." Thus he learns obedience and dependence the two characteristics of the new man. But with this he is led to the sure infallible faithfulness of God to bring him through to the end, and bound to reckon on it. See Co1 1:8, which I cite because they were going on very badly; but passages abound.

Diligence and earnestness ought to characterise the walk of Christians in these circumstances, in which immediate connection with God and personal conflict with the enemy have to be realised.

The apostle returns to the spirit of meekness and peace, in which the fruits of righteousness are sown. "Do all things," he says, "without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life": a very striking passage, because it will be found that in every member of the sentence it is an exact statement of what Christ was. Whatever may be the circumstances in which the assembly is found, such, as respects itself, should ever be its state and its walk. Grace sufficient for this is ever there in Christ.

Unity of spirit among themselves by grace, and a walk according to God, in order that they may be as heavenly lights amid the moral darkness of this world always carrying, and thus holding forth, the word of life: such was the apostle's desire. They would thus give proof by the constancy and practical effect of their faith, that the apostle had not run or laboured in vain; and they would themselves be his glory in the day of Christ. Oh, if the assembly had continued such! Be that as it may, Christ will be glorified. The apostle thus unites his work and the reward in the day of Christ with the blessing of the assembly. He would not be separated from it in his death. This union of heart and faith is very touching. He presents himself as capable of being poured out (that is to say, his life) upon the sacrifice and service of the Philippians' faith. They had shewn their devotedness to Christ in thinking even of His servant; and he looks upon all their faith as an offering to the Saviour and to God; looking at them, Christ's people, as the substance of the offering, the great thing, himself only as a libation his life poured out upon the offering. Perhaps his life would be poured out in the service of the gospel, to which they consecrated themselves on their part, and be a seal to this offering of theirs, which was dedicated to God by this sacred bond with the apostle. He rejoiced, if it were so, that his life was poured out: it would crown his work for the Gentiles. He desires too that they also in the same spirit should rejoice in the same thing. It was all one thing, their faith and his, and their common service, offered to God, and well-pleasing to Him; and the most exalted proof of it should be the source of the most sacred joy. This world was not the real scene of that which was going on: what we behold here in connection with the divine work is but the outside. The apostle speaks this language of faith, which ever sees things as before God.

Nevertheless his watchful care did not cease, although he committed the Philippians to God. It is always thus. The love and the faith which commit everything to God do not cease to think according to God of that which is dear to Him. Thus in 1 John, Chapter 2, the apostle, while saying that the little children in Christ needed not that any one should teach them, yet instructs them with all tenderness and foresight. Here also the apostle, full of holy solicitude for these souls who were dear to Christ, hopes soon to send Timotheus that he may know their state. But the condition of things is evident. He sends Timotheus because he had no one else in whose heart the

same feelings towards them flowed forth from the same spring of love. All sought their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. What an exercise for faith! But what an occasion for its exercise!

Still, with regard to Timotheus, these beloved Philippians should receive him with a heart that responded to the apostle's confidence. They knew how he had served Paul in the gospel. The bonds of love in the gospel are but the stronger God be praised when all grows cold. And observe, that God carried on His work, when as to the common testimony of the assembly, everything failed through a coldness which oppressed the apostle's heart; for God does not weary in His work. This bond however does not fail here with the Philippians either. As soon as Paul knew how it would go with himself, he would send Timotheus to them; but, as he had said, he had confidence in the Lord that he himself should come shortly.

But there was also Epaphroditus, who had come from the Philippians to carry their testimonial of affection to the apostle; and who, the faithful instrument and expression of their love, had risked his own life and suffered from dangerous sickness, in order to accomplish their service. This fine testimony of christian love breaks out here on every side. Epaphroditus so counts upon the love of the Philippians, that he is much troubled, because they had heard he was sick. He reckons on the feeling they had towards him the place he had in their affections. Would it not be thus with an affectionate son, who knew that his mother had heard such tidings of him? He would hasten to inform her of his recovery, in order to tranquillise a heart whose love he knew. Such is christian affection, tender and simple, confiding, because pure and unsuspecting, and walking in the light of God walking with Him and in the affections which Christ had consecrated as man. Divine love, no doubt, goes higher; but brotherly love, which acts before men and as the fruit among men of that divine love, displays itself thus in grace.

The apostle responds to this affection of the Philippians for him who taught them and laboured in the Lord for them (the Holy Ghost also remembers it here), and he sends back Epaphroditus, encouraging and seeking to sustain this feeling in the heart of the Philippians. He takes part in it himself, and brings into it God's own tender love. Paul would have had sorrow upon

sorrow (and he had much already), if the Philippians had lost their beloved servant and messenger by means of the services he had rendered them; but God had spared Epaphroditus and the apostle himself. He would however have them assured of it by the presence of Epaphroditus again among them; and thus the apostle's own heart freed from all anxiety, would be also relieved. What a picture of mutual love and kind solicitude!

And observe the ways in which God, according to the apostle, takes part in it. What are presented to us here are His compassions, not the counsels of His love, but compassions worthy of God, and affections of which He approves among men. These affections and this value for labourers are sometimes feared; and so much the more so, because the assembly has in fact to disentangle itself from all false dependence on man. But it is in the entire failure of manifested strength and outward organised bond, through the apostle's absence, that the Spirit of God develops the play of these inward affections and bonds for the instruction of the assembly; as he acknowledges all that remains of the ruins of its primitive position and its outward bonds. He does not create these anew; but he acknowledges that which still exists. It is only the first Verse of the epistle which speaks of this no more was needed; but the inward bonds he develops largely, not as doctrine, but as fact. God Himself, the apostle, his faithful Timotheus, the valued servant of the Philippians, who was so dear to them, and the fellow-labourer of Paul, the servant of the Lord, the Philippians themselves, all have their part in this precious and beautiful chain of love. The graciousness of the christian life is thus developed in every part of this Chapter; the delicacy of his reproof of the spirit of division; his sending Timothy when he can let them know how it went with him, but Epaphroditus at once because they had heard he had been sick. This graciousness, and consideration of others, note, connects itself with a Christ who humbles Himself. A lowly Christ humbling Himself from Godhead-form down to death, is the spring of lowly graciousness; an exalted One sought in glory, the spring of energy which counts all to be dross and dung to win Him.

After all it was in the Lord Himself that they had to rejoice, and the apostle now puts them on their guard against that which had eaten away the life of the assembly, and produced the painful fruits that filled his heart with

anguish, and the deplorable consequences of which we see at this day, even as he foretold consequences which will yet ripen for the judgment of God. Be this as it may, the Lord does not change. "Rejoice," he says, "in the Lord." There all is sure.

That which might prevent their thus rejoicing is developed, as well as the true knowledge of Christ, which preserves us from it: not here according to the doctrine and the practice that belong to the high position of the assembly's union with a glorified Christ as His body, nor according to the unity which flows from it. This is the subject of the Ephesians. Neither is it according to the urgent necessity of cleaving to the Head, because all fulness is in Him. This is the instruction of the epistle to the Colossians. But, in accordance with the general character of the epistle, the subject is here treated in connection with the personal experiences of the Christian, and, in particular, of the apostle. Accordingly as was seen in his personal combats and sorrow he finds himself on the road to the full enjoyment of this object whom he has learnt to know, and the state which his heart desires. This ought to be the Christian's experience, for, if I am united by the Spirit to the Head as a member of the body of Christ, and if by faith I apprehend this union, it is none the less true that my personal experience (although this faith is its basis) is necessarily in connection with the paths which I follow in order to reach the glory this entitles me to. Not that the sentiments awakened by that which I encounter on this path either falsify or contradict my position in Christ, or destroy the certainty of my starting-point. But, while possessing this certainty, and because I possess it, I know that I have not in fact reached the result of this position in glory. Now, in this epistle, we are on the road, we are individualised in our relations with God; for experience is always individual, although our union with each other as members of Christ forms a part of this experience.

Note #5

Observe also, that it is not with regard to that which He suffered, as the effect of His submission to the will of God in the position which He took, that Christ is here presented as our pattern. It is in His voluntary humiliation, the fact that in love He took the last the lowest-place, that we are called to follow Him. Love serves, love humbles itself-readily takes the meanest

position (meanest according to the pride of man) in order to serve, and delights in it. Christ acted from love; He chose to serve. Christ chose to take the low place He who was able to humble Himself-and we?

Philippians Chapter 3

In Chapter 3 Paul resumes his exhortation; but it was not burdensome to him, and it was safe for them (danger being present and his tender love watchful), to renew his warnings and instructions respecting the admixture of Judaising principles with the doctrine of a glorified Christ. It was in fact to destroy the latter and to reinstate the flesh (that is, sin and alienation from God) in its place. It was the first man, already rejected and condemned, and not the second Man. Yet it is not in the shape of sin that the flesh appears here, but in that of righteousness, of all that is respectable and religious, of ordinances which had the venerable weight of antiquity attached to them, and as to their origin, if all had not been done away in Christ, the authority of God Himself.

To the apostle, who knew Christ in heaven, all this was but a bait to draw the Christian away from Christ, and throw him back again into the ruin out of which Christ had drawn him. And this would be so much the worse, because it would be to abandon a known and glorified Christ, and to return to that which had been proved to be of no value through the flesh. The apostle therefore spares neither the doctrine nor those who taught it.

The glory which he had seen, his contests with these false teachers, the state into which they had thrown the assembly, Jerusalem and Rome, his liberty and his prison all, had gained him the experience of what Judaism was worth as to the assembly of God. They were dogs, evil workers, that is workers of malice and wickedness. It was not the circumcision. He treats it with profound contempt, and uses language, the harshness of which is justified by his love for the assembly; for love is severe towards those who, devoid of conscience, corrupt the object of that love. It was the concision.

When evil without shame, and labouring to produce evil under a disgraceful veil of religion, is manifested in its true character, mildness is a crime against the objects of the love of Christ. If we love Him, we shall in our intercourse with the assembly give the evil its true character, which it seeks to hide. This

is real love and faithfulness to Christ. The apostle had certainly not failed in condescension to the weak in this respect. He had carried it far; his prison testified it. And now the assembly, deprived of his energy and that spiritual decision which was full of love to all which is good, was more in danger than ever. The experience of a whole life of activity, of the greatest patience, of four years' reflection in prison, led to these forcible and urgent words, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." The doctrine of the epistle to the Ephesians, the exhortation of that to the Colossians, the affection of that to these Philippians, with the denunciation contained in Phi 3:2, date from the same epoch, and are marked with the same love.

But it sufficed to denounce them. Elsewhere, where they were not well known, he gave details, as in the case of Timotheus, who had still to watch over the assembly. It was sufficient now to point out their well-known character. Whatever Judaised, whatever sought to mingle law and gospel, trusting in ordinances and the Spirit, was shameless, malicious, and contemptible. But the apostle will rather occupy himself with the power that delivers from it. We are the circumcision (that which is really separate from the evil, that which is dead to sin and to the flesh), we who worship God, not in the false pretension of ordinances, but spiritually by the power of the Holy Ghost, who rejoice in Christ the Saviour and not in the flesh, but on the contrary have no confidence in it. We see here Christ and the Spirit in contrast with the flesh and self.

Paul might indeed boast, if needful, in that which belonged to the flesh. As to all Jewish privileges, he possessed them in the highest degree. He had outstript every one in holy zeal against innovators. One thing alone had changed it all—he had seen a glorified Christ. All that he had according to the flesh was thenceforth loss to him. It would place something between him and the Christ of his faith and of his desire the Christ whom he knew. And, observe, that here it is not the sins of the flesh which Christ expiates and abolishes that he rejects; it is its righteousness. It has none, we may say; but even if the apostle had possessed any righteousness of the flesh as, in fact, he did possess it outwardly he would not have it, because he had seen a better. In Christ, who had appeared to him on the way to Damascus, he had

seen divine righteousness for man, and divine glory in man. He had seen a glorified Christ, who acknowledged the poor feeble members of the assembly as a part of Himself. He would have nothing else. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord had eclipsed everything changed everything which was not that into loss. The stars, as well as the darkness of night, disappear before the sun. The righteousness of the law, the righteousness of Paul, all that distinguished him among men, disappeared before the righteousness of God and the glory of Christ.

It was a thorough change in his whole moral being. His gain was now loss to him. Christ was become all. It was not evil which disappeared everything that belonged to Paul as advantage to the flesh disappeared. It was another who was now precious to him. What a deep and radical change in the whole moral being of man, when he ceases to be the centre of his own importance; and another, a worthy of being so, becomes the centre of his moral existence! a divine person, a man who had glorified God, a man in whom the glory of God shone out, to the eye of faith; in whom His righteousness was realised, His love, His tender mercy, perfectly revealed towards men and known by men. This was He whom Paul desired to win, to possess for here we are still in the paths of the wilderness he desired to be found in Him: "That I may win Christ, and be found in him." Two things were present to his faith in this desire: to have the righteousness of God Himself as his (in Christ he should possess it); and then, to know Him and the power of His resurrection for he only knew Him as risen and, according to that power working in him now, to have part in the sufferings of Christ, and be made conformable to His death.

It was in His death that perfect love had been demonstrated, that the perfect ground of divine and eternal righteousness had been laid, that self-renunciation was practically, entirely, perfectly, manifested in Christ, the perfect object to the apostle of a faith that apprehended it and desired it according to the new man. Christ had passed through death in the perfection of that life, the power of which was manifested in resurrection.

Paul, having seen this perfection in glory, and being united (weak as he was in himself) to Christ the source of this power, desired to know the power of His resurrection, that he might follow Him in His sufferings. Circumstances

held this as a reality before his eyes. His heart only saw, or wished to see, Christ, that he might follow Him there. If death was on the way, he was only so much the more like Christ. He did not mind what it cost, if by any means he might attain. This gave undivided energy of purpose. This is indeed to know Him, as completely put to the test, and thus to know all that He was, His perfection of love, of obedience, of devotedness fully manifested; but the object is to win Him as He is.

Having seen Him in the glory, the apostle understood the path which had led Him there, and the perfection of Christ in that path. Participating in His life, he desired to realise its power according to His glory, that he might follow Him, in order to be where Jesus was, and in the glory with Him. This is what the Lord said in Joh 12:23-26. Who had apprehended Him like Paul by the grace of God? Observe here the difference between him and Peter. Peter calls himself "a witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed"; Paul, a witness of the glory as it is in heaven ("as he is," as John says), desires to share his sufferings. It is the special foundation of the assembly's place, of walking in the Spirit, according to the revelation of the glory of Christ. It is this, I doubt not, which makes Peter say, that in all Paul's epistles which he acknowledges moreover as a part of the scriptures there are some things hard to be understood. It took man clean out of the whole ancient order of things.

Having then seen Christ in glory, there were two things for Paul the righteousness of God in Christ, and the knowledge of Christ. The first entirely eclipsed everything of which the flesh could boast. This was "mine own," the righteousness of man according to the law. The other was the righteousness of God, which is by faith; that is, man is nothing in it. It is God's righteousness: man has part in it by believing, that is to say, by faith in Christ Jesus. The believer has his place before God in Christ, in the righteousness of God Himself, which He had manifested in glorifying Christ, having glorified Himself in Him. What a position! not only sin, but human righteousness, all that is of self, excluded; our place being according to the perfection in which Christ, as man, has perfectly glorified God. But this place is necessarily the place of Him who has accomplished this glorious work. Christ, in His Person and in His present position, [See Note #6] is the

expression of our place: to know Him is to know it. He is there according to divine righteousness. To be there, as He is, is that into which divine righteousness freely, but necessarily, introduces man introduces us in Christ. Thenceforth, having seen the righteousness of God in that Christ is there, I desire myself to know what it is to be there: and I desire to know Christ. But in truth this embraces all that He was in accomplishing it. The glory reveals the power and the result. That which He suffered is the work in which He glorified God; so that divine righteousness has been fulfilled in His exaltation, as man, to divine glory. And here divine love, perfect devotedness to His Father's glory, constant and perfect obedience, the endurance of all things in order to give testimony of His Father's love for men, perfect patience, unfathomable sufferings, in order that love might be both possible and perfect for sinners all in short that Christ was, being connected with His Person, makes Him an object which commands, possesses, delivers, and strengthens the heart, by the power of His grace acting in the new life, in which we are united to Him by the all-powerful link of the Spirit, and causes Him to be the alone object before our eyes.

Accordingly Paul desires to have that which Christ can give, His cup, and His baptism; and to leave to the Father, that which Christ left to Him, the disposal of places in the kingdom. He does not desire, like John and James, the right and left hand, that is, a good place for himself. He desires Christ, he would win Christ. He does not follow tremblingly, as the disciples did in that Chapter (Mark 10); he desires to suffer not, that is, for the sake of suffering, but to have part in the sufferings of Christ. Instead therefore of going away like the young man in the same Chapter, because he had much that could profit the flesh, instead of clinging like him to the law for his righteousness, he renounces that righteousness which he had in common with the young man; and all that he had he counted but as dung.

Here then we have the practical personal experience of the operation of this great principle, which the apostle has set forth in other epistles, that we have part with a glorified Christ. Also, in telling of the result as to himself, he speaks of his own resurrection according to the character of Christ's. It is not that of which Peter speaks, as we have seen, the simply participating in the glory that was to be revealed. It is that which precedes. Having seen

Christ in the glory, according to the power of His resurrection, he desires to participate in that: and this is the force of his word, "if by any means." He desired to have part in the resurrection from among the dead. If, in order to reach it, it was needful to pass through death (as Christ had done), he would go through it, cost what it might, be it in ever so painful a way and death was at that time before his eyes with its human terror: he desired fully to take part with Christ.

Now it is the character of this resurrection that it is from among the dead; it is not simply the resurrection of the dead. It is to come out, by the favour and the power of God (as it regards Christ, and indeed us too by Him, by the righteousness of God), from the condition of evil into which sin had plunged men to come out, after having been dead in sins, and now to sin, through the favour and power and righteousness of God. What grace! and what a difference! By following Christ according to the will of God, in the place where He has set us (and to be content with the lowest place, if God has given it us, is the same renunciation of self as to labour in the highest the secret of each is, that Christ is everything and ourselves nothing), we participate in His resurrection a thought full of peace and joy, and which fills the heart with love to Christ. Joyful and glorious hope, which shines before our eyes in Christ, and in that blessed Saviour glorified! The objects of divine favour in Him, we come forth because the eye of God is upon us, because we are His from the house of death, which cannot detain those who are His, because the glory and the love of God are concerned in them. Christ is the example and the pattern of our resurrection; the principle (Rom. 8) and the assurance of our resurrection is in Him. The road to it is that which the apostle here traces.

But since resurrection and likeness to Christ in glory were the objects of his hope, it is very evident that he had not attained it. If that was his perfection, he could not be yet perfect. He was, as has been said, on the road; but Christ had apprehended him for it, and he still pressed onward to lay hold of the prize, for the enjoyment of which Christ had laid hold of him. No, he repeats to his brethren, I count not myself to have attained. But one thing at least he could say he forgot all that was behind him, and pressed on ever towards the goal, keeping it always in sight to obtain the prize of the calling of God,

which is found in heaven. Happy Christian! It is a great thing never to lose sight of it, never to have a divided heart, to think but of one thing; to act, to think, always according to the positive energy wrought by the Holy Ghost in the new man, directing him to this only and heavenly object. It is not his sins properly which he here says he forgot it was his progress that he forgot, his advantages, all that was already behind. And this was not merely the energy that shewed itself at the first impulse; he still counted everything but as dung, because he had still Christ in view. This is true christian life. What a sad moment would it have been for Rebecca, if, in the midst of the desert with Eliezer, she had forgotten Isaac, and begun to think again of Bethuel and her father's house! What had she then in the desert with Eliezer?

Such is the true life and position of the Christian; even as the Israelites, although preserved by the blood from the messenger of judgment, were not in their true place till they were on the other side of the Red Sea, a freed people. Then he is on the road to Canaan, as belonging to God.

The Christian, until he understands this new position which Christ has taken as risen from the dead, is not spiritually in its true place, is not perfect or full-grown in Christ. But when he has attained this, it is not assuredly that he is to despise others. "If," says the apostle, "they were otherwise minded, God would reveal" to them the fulness of His truth; and all were to walk together with one mind in the things to which they had attained. Where the eye was single, it would be so: there were many with whom this was not the case; but the apostle was their example. This was saying much. While Jesus lived the peculiar power of this resurrection life could not be revealed in the same way; and moreover while on earth Christ walked in the consciousness of that which He was with His Father before the world existed, so that, although He endured for the joy that was set before Him, although His life was the perfect pattern of the heavenly man, there was in Him a repose, a communion, which had quite a peculiar character; instructive nevertheless to us, because the Father loves us as He loved Jesus, and Jesus also loves us as the Father loved Him. With Him it was not the energy of one who must run the race in order to attain that which he has never yet possessed; He spoke of that which He knew, and bore witness of that which He had seen,

of that which He had forsaken from love to us, the Son of man who is in heaven.

John enters farther into this character of Christ: in his epistle therefore we find more of that which He is in His nature and character, than of what we shall be with Him in the glory. Peter, building on the same foundation as the others, waits however for that which shall be revealed. His pilgrimage was indeed towards heaven, to obtain a treasure which was preserved there, which shall be revealed in the last time; but it is more connected with that which had been already revealed. From his point of view, the morning star on which Paul lived appeared only on the extreme horizon. For him practical life was that of Jesus among the Jews. He could not say with Paul, "Be ye followers of me." The effect of the revelation of the heavenly glory of Christ, between His going away and His reappearance, and that of the union of all Christians to Him in heaven, was fully realised in him only who received it. Faithful through grace to this revelation, having no other object which guided his steps, or to divide his heart, he gives himself as an example. He truly followed Christ, but the form of his life was peculiar, on account of the way in which God had called him; and it is thus that Christians possessing this revelation ought to walk.

Accordingly Paul speaks of a dispensation committed to him.

It was not to turn their eyes from Christ; it is on having the eyes constantly fixed upon Him that he insists. It was this which characterised the apostle, and in this he gives himself as an example. But the character of this looking to Jesus was special. It was not a Christ known on earth who was its object, but a Christ glorified whom he had seen in heaven. To press ever forward to this end formed the character of his life; even as this same glory of Christ, as a testimony to the bringing in divine righteousness and to the assembly's position, formed the basis of his teaching. Therefore he can say, "Be followers of me." His gaze was ever fixed on the heavenly Christ, who had shone before his eyes and still shone before his faith. The Philippians were thus to walk together, and to mark those who followed the apostle's example; because (for evidently it was a period in which the assembly as a whole had much departed from her first love and her normal condition) there were many who, while bearing the name of Christ and having once

given good hope, so that the apostle speaks of them with tears, were enemies of the cross of Christ. For the cross on earth, in our life, answers to the heavenly glory on high. It is not the assembly at Philippi which is the subject here, but the condition of the outward universal assembly. Many were already calling themselves Christians, who joined to that great name a life which had the earth and earthly things for its object. The apostle did not acknowledge them. They were there; it was not a matter of local discipline, but a condition of Christianity, in which even all were seeking their own interest; and, spirituality being thus lowered, the Christ of glory little realised, many who had no life at all might walk among them without being detected, by those who had so little life themselves and scarcely walked better than they did. For it does not appear that they who were minding earthly things committed any evil that required public discipline. The general low tone of spirituality among the real Christians left the others free to walk with them; and the presence of the latter debased still more the standard of godliness of life.

But this state of things did not escape the spiritual eye of the apostle, which, fixed on the glory, discerned readily and clearly all that had not that glory for its motive; and the Spirit has given us the divine judgment, most grave and solemn, with regard to this state of things. No doubt it has grown enormously worse since then, and its elements have developed and established themselves in a manner and in proportions that are very differently characterised; but the moral principles with regard to walk remain ever the same for the assembly. The same evil is present to be avoided, and the same efficacious means for avoiding it. There is the same blessed example to follow, the same heavenly Saviour to be the glorious object of our faith, the same life to live if we desire to be Christians indeed.

That which characterised these persons who professed the name of Christ was, that their hearts were set upon earthly things. Thus the cross had not its practical power it would have been a contradiction. Their end therefore was destruction. The true Christian was not such; his conversation was in heaven and not on the earth; his moral life was spent in heaven, his true relationships were there. From thence he expected Christ as a Saviour, that is to say, to deliver him from the earth, from this earthly system far from

God here below For salvation is always viewed in this epistle as the final result of the conflict, the result due to the almighty power of the Lord. Then, when Christ shall come to take the assembly to Himself-Christians, truly heavenly, shall be like Him in His heavenly glory, a likeness which is the object of their pursuit at all times (compare Jo1 3:2). Christ will accomplish it in them, conforming their bodies of humiliation to His glorious body according to the power whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself. Then the apostle and all Christians will have attained the end, the resurrection from among the dead.

Such is the tenor of this Chapter. Christ, seen in glory, is the spring of energy to christian life, to win Christ, so that all else is loss; as Christ making Himself of no reputation is the spring of christian graciousness of walk: the two parts of christian life which we are too apt to sacrifice one to another or at least to pursue one forgetful of the other. In both Paul singularly shines. In the following Chapter we have superiority to circumstances. This also is Paul's experience and state; for it will be remarked that it is the personal experience of Paul which runs all through his (humanly speaking) faultless experience not perfection. Likeness to Christ in glory is the only standard of that. As to this third Chapter, many have inquired whether the thing aimed at was a spiritual assimilation to Christ here, or a complete assimilation to Him in the glory. This is rather to forget the import of what the apostle says, namely, that the sight and the desire of the heavenly glory, the desire of possessing Christ Himself thus glorified, was that which formed the heart here below. An object here below to be attained in oneself could not be found, since Christ is on high; it would be to separate the heart from the object which forms it to its own likeness. But although we never reach the mark here below, since it is a glorified Christ and resurrection from among the dead, yet its pursuit assimilates us more and more to Him. The object in the glory forms the life which answers to it here below. Were a light at the end of a long straight alley, I never have the light itself till I am arrived there; but I have ever increasing light in proportion as I go forward; I know it better; I am more in the light myself. Thus it is with a glorified Christ, and such is christian life (compare 2 Cor. 3).

Note #6

Not, of course, as to being at the right hand of God this was personal.

Philippians Chapter 4

The Philippians were therefore to stand fast in the Lord. This is difficult when the general tone is lowered; painful also, for one's walk becomes much more solitary, and the hearts of others are straitened. But the Spirit has very plainly given us the example, the principle, the character, and the strength of this walk. With the eye on Christ all is easy; and communion with Him gives light and certainty; and is worth all the rest which perhaps we lose.

The apostle nevertheless spoke gently of those persons. They were not like the false judaizing teachers who corrupted the sources of life, and stopped up the path of communion with God in love. They had lost this life of communion, or had never had more than the appearance of it. He wept for them.

I think that the apostle sent his letter by Epaphroditus, who probably also wrote it from the apostle's dictation; as was done with regard to all the epistles, except that to the Galatians, which, as he tells us, he wrote with his own hand. When therefore he says (Phi 4:3), "true [or faithful] yokefellow," he speaks as I think, of Epaphroditus, and addresses him.

But he notices also two sisters even, who were not of one mind in resisting the enemy. In every way he desired unity of heart and mind. He entreats Epaphroditus (if indeed it be he) as the Lord's servant to help those faithful women who had laboured in concert with Paul to spread the gospel.

Euodias and Syntyche were perhaps of the number the connection of thought makes it probable. Their activity, having gone beyond the measure of their spiritual life, betrayed them into an exercise of self-will which set them at variance. Nevertheless they were not forgotten, together with Clement and others, who were fellow-labourers with the apostle himself, whose names were in the book of life. For love for the Lord remembers all that His grace does; and this grace has a place for each of His own.

The apostle returns to the practical exhortations addressed to the faithful, with regard to their ordinary life, that they might walk according to their

heavenly calling. "Rejoice in the Lord." If he even weeps over many who call themselves Christians, he rejoices always in the Lord; in Him is that which nothing can alter. This is not an indifference to sorrow which hinders weeping, but it is a spring of joy which enlarges when there is distress, because of its immutability, and which becomes even more pure in the heart the more it becomes the only one; and it is in itself the only spring that is infinitely pure. When it is our only spring, we thereby love others. If we love them besides Him, we lose something of Him. When through exercise of heart we are weaned from all other springs, His joy remains in all its purity, and our concern for others partakes of this same purity. Nothing moreover troubles this joy, because Christ never changes. The better we know Him, the better are we able to enjoy that which is ever enlarging through knowing Him. But he exhorts Christians to rejoice: it is a testimony to the worth of Christ, it is their true portion. Four years in prison chained to a soldier had not hindered his doing it, nor being able to exhort others more at ease than he.

Now this same thing will make them moderate and meek; their passions will not be excited by other things if Christ is enjoyed. Moreover He is at hand. A little while, and all for which men strive will give place to Him whose presence bridles the will (or rather puts it aside) and fills the heart. We are not to be moved by things here below until He shall come. When He comes, we shall be fully occupied with other things.

Not only are the will and the passions to be bridled and silenced, but anxieties also. We are in relationship with God; in all things He is our refuge; and events do not disturb Him. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows everything, He knows it beforehand; events shake neither His throne, nor His heart; they always accomplish His purposes. But to us He is love; we are through grace the objects of His tender care. He listens to us and bows down His ear to hear us. In all things therefore, instead of disquieting ourselves and weighing everything in our own hearts, we ought to present our requests to God with prayer, with supplication, with a heart that makes itself known (for we are human beings) but with the knowledge of the heart of God (for He loves us perfectly); so that, even while making our petition to Him, we can already give thanks, because we are sure of the answer of His

grace, be it what it may; and it is our requests that we are to present to Him. Nor is it a cold commandment to find out His will and then come: we are to go with our requests. Hence it does not say, you will have what you ask; but God's peace will keep your hearts. This is trust; and His peace, the peace of God Himself, shall keep our hearts. It does not say that our hearts shall keep the peace of God; but, having cast our burden on Him whose peace nothing can disturb, His peace keeps our hearts. Our trouble is before Him, and the constant peace of the God of love, who takes charge of everything and knows all beforehand, quiets our disburdened hearts, and imparts to us the peace which is in Himself and which is above all understanding (or at least keeps our hearts by it), even as He Himself is above all the circumstances that can disquiet us, and above the poor human heart that is troubled by them. Oh, what grace! that even our anxieties are a means of our being filled with this marvellous peace, if we know how to bring them to God, and true He is. May we learn indeed how to maintain this intercourse with God and its reality, in order that we may converse with Him and understand His ways with believers!

Moreover, the Christian, although walking (as we have seen) in the midst of evil and of trial, is to occupy himself with all that is good, and is able to do it when thus at peace, to live in this atmosphere, so that it shall pervade his heart, that he shall be habitually where God is to be found. This is an all-important command. We may be occupied with evil in order to condemn it; we may be right, but this is not communion with God in that which is good. But if occupied through His grace with that which is good, with that which comes from Himself, the God of peace is with us. In trouble we shall have the peace of God; in our ordinary life, if it be of this nature, we shall have the God of peace. Paul was the practical example of this; with regard to their walk, by following him in that which they had learnt and heard from him and seen in him, they should find that God was with them.

Nevertheless, although such was his experience, he rejoiced greatly that their loving care of him had flourished again. He could indeed take refuge in God; but it was sweet to him in the Lord to have this testimony on their part. It is evident that he had been in need; but it was the occasion of more entire trust in God. We can easily gather this from his language; but, he delicately

adds, he would not, by saying that their care of him had now at last flourished again, imply that they had forgotten him. The care for him was in their hearts; but they had not had the opportunity of giving expression to their love. Neither did he speak in regard of want; he had learnt for it is practical experience and its blessed result we find here to be content under all circumstances, and thus to depend on no one. He knew how to be abased: he knew how to abound; in every way he was instructed both to be full and to be hungry, to be in abundance and to suffer want. He could do all things through Him who strengthened him. Sweet and precious experience! not only because it gives ability to meet all circumstances, which is of great price, but because the Lord is known, the constant, faithful, mighty friend of the heart. It is not 'I can do all things,' but "I can do all through him who strengtheneth me." It is a strength which continually flows from a relationship with Christ, a connection with Him maintained in the heart. Neither is it only 'One can do all things.' This is true; but Paul had learnt it practically. He knew what he could be assured of and reckon on what ground he stood on. Christ had always been faithful to him, had brought him through so many difficulties and through so many seasons of prosperity, that he had learnt to trust in Him, and not in circumstances. And Christ was the same ever. Still the Philippians had done well, and it was not forgotten. From the first God had bestowed this grace upon them, and they had supplied the apostle's need, even when he was not with them. He remembered it with affection, not that he desired a gift, but fruit to their own account. "But," he says, "I have all," his heart turning back to the simple expression of his love He was in abundance, having received by Epaphroditus that which they had sent him, an acceptable sacrifice of sweet odour, well-pleasing to God.

His heart rested in God; his assurance with regard to the Philippians expresses it. My God, he says, shall richly supply all your need. He does not express a wish that God may do so. He had learnt what his God was by his own experience. My God, he says, He whom I have learnt to know in all the circumstances through which I have passed, shall fill you with all good things. And here he returns to His character as he had known Him. God would do it according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. There he had learnt to know Him at the beginning; and such he had known Him all along

his varied path, so full of trials here and of joys from above. Accordingly he thus concludes: "Now unto our God and Father" for such He was to the Philippians also "be glory for ever and ever." He applies his own experience of that which God was to him, and his experience of the faithfulness of Christ, to the Philippians. This satisfied his love, and gave him rest with regard to them. It is a comfort when we think of the assembly of God.

He sends the greeting of the brethren who were with him, and of the saints in general, especially those of Caesar's household; for even there God had found some who through grace had listened to His voice of love.

He ends with the salutation which was a token in all his epistles that they were from himself.

The present state of the assembly, of the children of God, dispersed anew, and often as sheep without a shepherd, is a very different condition of ruin from that in which the apostle wrote; but this only adds more value to the experience of the apostle which God has been pleased to give us; the experience of a heart which trusted in God alone, and which applies this experience to the condition of those who are deprived of the natural resources that belonged to the organised body, to the body of Christ as God had formed it on earth. As a whole, the epistle shews proper christian experience, that is, superiority, as walking in the Spirit, to everything through which we have to pass. It is remarkable to see that sin is not mentioned in it, nor flesh, save to say he had no confidence in it.

He had at this time a thorn in the flesh himself, but the proper experience of the Christian is walking in the Spirit above and out of the reach of all that may bring the flesh into activity.

The reader will remark that Chapter 3 sets the glory before the Christian and gives the energy of christian life; Chapter 2, the self-emptying and abasement of Christ, and founds thereon the graciousness of the christian life, and thoughtfulness of others: while the last Chapter gives a blessed superiority to all circumstances.

COLOSSIANS

Colossians Chapter 1

Colossians 1:1

col 1:1

The Epistle to the Colossians looks at the Christian as risen with Christ, but not, as in that to the Ephesians, as sitting in heavenly places in Christ. A hope is laid up for him in heaven; he is to set his affections on things above, not on things on the earth. He has died with Christ and he is risen with Him, but not sitting in heavenly places in Him yet. We have in it a proof of that which other epistles demonstrate, namely, the blessed way in which our God in His grace turns everything to the good of those that love Him.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians the Holy Ghost had developed the counsels of God with regard to the church its privileges. The Christians of Ephesus had nothing to be reproached with: [See Note #1] therefore the Holy Ghost could use the occasion furnished by that faithful flock to unfold all the privileges which God had ordained for the church at large, by virtue of its union with Jesus Christ its Head, as well as the individual privileges of the children of God.

It was not so with the Colossians. They had in some measure slipped away from this blessed portion, and lost the sense of their union with the Head of the body; at least, if it was not actually so, they were assailed by the danger, and liable to the influence of those who sought to draw them away from it, and subject them to the influence of philosophy and Judaism, so that the apostle had to occupy himself with the danger, and not merely with their privileges. This union with our Head (thank God!) cannot itself be lost; but as a truth in the church, or of realisation by individuals, it may. We know this but too well in the church of the day we live in. This however gives occasion to the Spirit of God to develop all the riches and all the perfection which are found in the Head and in His work, in order to recover the members of the body from their spiritual feebleness, or maintain them in the full practical

enjoyment of their union with Christ, and in the power of the position gained for them by that union. For us this is abiding instruction with regard to the riches that are in the Head.

If the Epistle to the Ephesians delineates the privileges of the body, that to the Colossians reveals the fullness that is in the head, and our completeness in Him. Thus in that to the Ephesians the church is the fullness of Him who filleth all in all; in that to the Colossians, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily, and we are complete in Him. There is another difference however, which it is important to remark. In the Epistle to the Colossians we do not save in the expression, "love in the Spirit " find any mention of the Holy Ghost. He is fully brought forward in the Ephesians. But on the other hand, we have Christ as our life far more fully developed, of equal importance in its place. In Ephesians we have more largely the contrast of heathenism with christian privilege and state. The formation of the soul in living likeness to Christ is largely developed in Colossians. It is more, in the well-known expressions, Christ in us than we in Christ, though these cannot be separated. A further important difference is that in Ephesians the unity of Jew and Gentile in one body holds a large place. In Colossians the Gentiles only are in view, though in connection with the doctrine of the body. These differences well noted, we may say that the two epistles have a great resemblance in their general character.

They commence in nearly the same way. [See Note #2] Both are written from Rome, while the apostle was a prisoner in that city, and sent by the same messenger and on the same occasion, as well probably as that to Philemon: so the names and salutations give us reason to believe. The address to the Ephesians places them perhaps more immediately in connection with God Himself, instead of presenting them as in brotherly communion on earth. They are not called brethren in Eph 1:1, only saints and faithful in Christ Jesus. They are viewed as walking on earth in Colossians, though risen. Hence there is a long prayer for their walk, though on high and holy ground as delivered. In Ephesians it begins with the full purpose and fruit of God's counsels. In that epistle the apostle's heart expands at once in the sense of the blessings enjoyed by the Ephesians. They were blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. For the Colossians

there was a hope laid up in heaven. And there is a preface of many Verses referring to the gospel they had heard, and introducing his prayer for their walk and state down here. This brings us where Eph 1:7 brings us, but with a much more enlarged development of the personal glory of Christ, and more in an historical way of God's actual dealings. It is also a more personal church address than the Ephesians.

But let us consider more closely that which is said to the Colossians. The blessed calling of which the apostle speaks (Eph 1:3-10), and the privileges of the inheritance (Eph 1:11-14), are wanting in Colossians; risen but on earth, they are not sitting in heavenly places, all things being thus their inheritance. It is not they in Christ there, but Christ in them the hope of glory, and the prayer referred to above fills up the Chapter till we come to the common ground of Christ's glory in Col 1:15; and even here the divine glory of Christ is brought out in Colossians, the simple fact of the purpose of God as to Christ in Ephesians. And not only we have not God's inheritance ours; but in Colossians the Spirit as earnest of it is not spoken of. This indeed we have seen is characteristic of Colossians. The Spirit is not spoken of, but life. We have the Person and divine glory of Christ, and our completeness in Him, more insisted on in Colossians; but not the saints' place with God in the same way. Further, as the saint is looked at as on earth, not in Christ on high, his responsibility is brought in. (Col 1:23.) Col 1:3 answers to Eph 1:16; only one feels that there is more fullness in the joy of Eph 1:16. Faith in Christ and love to all saints are found in each exordium, as the occasion of the writer's joy.

The subject of his prayer is quite different. In the Ephesians, where he develops the counsels of God with regard to the church, he prays that the saints may understand them, as well as the power by means of which they participated in them. Here he prays that their walk may be guided by divine intelligence. But this belongs to another cause, to the point of view from which, in his discourse, he looks at the saints. We have seen that in the Epistle to the Ephesians, he views them as sitting in the heavenlies. Their inheritance consequently is that of all things which are to be gathered together under Christ as Head. Here he prays for them in view of a hope laid up for them in heaven; his prayer therefore refers to their walk that it may

be in harmony with the object which they had set before them. As on earth and in danger of not adhering to the Head, the believers in Colosse were in danger of departing from that object. He prayed therefore in view of that heavenly hope. They had heard of this perfect and glorious hope. The gospel had proclaimed it everywhere.

It was this gospel preached in view of a hope laid up in heaven which had produced fruit among men, fruit that was characterised by its heavenly source. Their religion, that which governed their heart in these relationships with God, was heavenly. The Colossians were in danger of falling back into the current of ordinances, and of the religious customs of man living in the world, whose religion was in connection with the world in which he dwelt, and not enlightened, not filled with heavenly light. There is nothing but conscious union with Christ which can keep us securely there. Ordinances to reach Him can have no place where we are united to Him; the philosophy of human thoughts none, where we possess livingly divine ones in Christ.

Nevertheless how precious it is even if we are not in the full height of our calling to have an object set before our hearts which delivers us from this world, and from the influences which hide God from us! Such is the apostle's object in this scripture. He directs the eyes of the Colossians to heaven, in order that they may see Christ there, and regain that sense of their union with the Head which they had in some measure lost, or were in danger of losing. The ground work was however there faith in Christ and love to all saints. They only needed realising their union with the Head; which moreover could alone maintain them in the heavenly element above ordinances, above human and earthly religion.

The apostle, in order to raise them up, sets out as usual from the point where he found good in the saints to whom he wrote. This heavenly hope had reached them and had produced fruit. It is this which distinguishes Christianity from all other religions, and in particular from the Jewish system, which although individuals who were in it by grace sighed for heaven hid God behind the veil, and enveloped the conscience in a series of ordinances at a distance from Him.

Now, based upon this hope which placed the inner life of the Christians in connection with heaven, the apostle prays that the Colossians may be filled with the knowledge of the will of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. It is the fruit of a risen man's connection with God on the earth. This is very different from commandments and ordinances. It is the fruit of intimate communion with God, of knowledge of His character and of His nature by virtue of this communion; and, although it refers to practical life, as belonging to the inner life, it leaves ordinances completely behind. The apostle had to begin at this practical end, at christian life. Perhaps the Colossians did not at first understand the bearing of these instructions, but they contained a principle which, already planted in their heart and capable of being re-awakened, led them to the point which the apostle aimed at, and was at the same time a very precious privilege, the value of which they were in position to apprehend. Such is charity. The apostle develops their privileges in this respect with force and clearness, as one to whom such a walk was well known, and moreover with the power of the Spirit of God. They are not in heaven but on earth, and this is the path that suited those risen with Christ and looking to heaven from the earth. It is divine life on earth, not the Holy Ghost putting the soul of the believer at the centre of divine counsels, as in Ephesians 3 through Christ dwelling in the heart by faith.

The first principle of this practical heavenly life was the knowledge of the will of God to be filled with it, not to run after it as a thing without us, nor in indecision, in uncertainty, as to what it was, but to be filled with it by a principle of intelligence which comes from Him, and which forms the understanding and the wisdom of the Christian himself. The character of God was livingly translated in the appreciation of everything that the Christian did. And remark here that the knowledge of God's will is based on the spiritual state of the soul wisdom and spiritual understanding. And this is of all practical importance. No particular direction by man as to conduct meets this at all-rather saves us from the need of spiritual understanding. No doubt a more spiritual mind may help me in the discernment of Gods will ; [See Note #3] but God has connected the discovery of the path of His will, His way, with the inward state of the soul, and causes us to pass through circumstances human life here below to test and to discover to ourselves

what that state is, and to exercise us therein. The Christian has by his spiritual state to know God's ways. The word is the means. (Compare Joh 17:17, Joh 17:19.) God has a way of His own which the vulture's eye hath not seen, known only to the spiritual man, connected with, flowing from, and to, the knowledge of God. (Compare Exo 33:13.) Thus the Christian walks worthy of the Lord; he knows what becomes Him, [See Note #4] and walks accordingly, that he may please Him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the knowledge of God.

It was not then only the character of life: this life was productive; it bore fruit, and, as life grew up, by increasing knowledge of God. But this connection with God brings in another very precious consideration. Besides the character and the living energy which are in relationship with this knowledge, the strength of the Lord [See Note #5] is developed in it also. They draw strength from Him. He gives it that they might walk thus. "Strengthened," he says, "with all might, according to the power of his glory." Such is the measure of the Christian's strength for a life in harmony with the character of God. Thus the character of this life is revealed in the heavenly glory on high Jesus Christ. On earth its manifestation as it had been in Jesus Christ is realised in all patience and long-suffering with joy, in the midst of the sorrow and afflictions of the life of God in this world. This form of the life too is striking: all divine strength according to His glory given in order to be patient, to endure. What a character it gives to the Christian's life in this world ! And there is a generous bearing with others which it enables us to maintain. Nor is anything a more manifest fruit of power than this. Will too is here subdued. Thus, in spite of all we have to endure, we have with God constant joy. It is a blessed picture of the form in which divine life manifests itself.

And here the apostle connects this life of endurance with that which is its source, its aim, and its present possession by faith. Walking thus we are full of joy, and we give thanks to the Father who has made [See Note #6] us meet to share the portion of the saints in light. Here are the saints established in their proper relationship with God (their Father) in heaven in the light, that which God is, and in which He dwells. Thus we have the state of the soul, the character of the walk, and the strength in which we

accomplish it. As to meetness for God in light, we possess it. Moreover we are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

The means employed, and the practical character of the work which sets us in the light, are then presented, introducing us (as far as Colossians does) into the counsels of God, but in a practical way in their results future or present, not in counsel or as the mystery of His will.

The Father has delivered us from the power of darkness, and transported us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. It is not a Jewish rule for man; it is an operation of the power of God, who treats us as altogether by nature the slaves of Satan and of darkness; and places us by an act of that power in an entirely new position and relationship with Himself. We see indeed here, if we examine the principles in their origin, the same thing as in Eph 1:4-5; Eph 2:1-6, as to our position before. But it is evident that the fullness and definiteness of a new creation are wanting. [See Note #7] "The inheritance of the saints in light," "the kingdom of the Son of his love," remind us of Eph 1:4-5; but it is not the thing itself, as it is in God's mind, but our having been made meet for it when here; nor consequently the development of a position with which one is familiar as standing in it. The power and the love of the Father have made us meet for it, and although the character of God is necessarily there as light and love, according to His relationship to His Son, yet what we have here is not our own relationship with God Himself, outside the question of whence He took us, but the work in general which places us there in contrast with our previous position. He has delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son; we have part in the inheritance of the saints in light: but where is the saint "without blame before him in love?" where our relationship to Him, according to the counsels of Him who saw only the good which He purposed in His own heart? where the "children unto himself by Jesus Christ," through His predestination before the world was?

In Ephesians deliverance is brought in as a consequence of the position in which the heirs, the objects of the eternal counsels of God, are seen. [See Note #8] Here deliverance is the chief subject. How dangerous and disastrous it is to depart from the Head, and to lose the full consciousness, in the light, of our union with Him! How perfect and precious is that grace

which takes notice of our condition, and brings us out of it to God, to make us enjoy according to the power and grace of God the inestimable position which He has given us in Christ!

The means which the Spirit here employs to accomplish this work of grace is the development of the glory of the Lord, of the Son of His love.

Here alone, I believe, is the kingdom called the kingdom of the Son; and, I think, it is only as introducing His Person as the centre of everything and giving us the measure of the greatness of the blessing. It is the kingdom of One who has this place, the Son of His love, into which we are introduced. It is indeed His kingdom; and in order that we may apprehend the character of this kingdom as it is now for us, and our nearness to God as having part in it, it is called the kingdom of the Son of His love. It is this which is the present foundation and characteristic of the relationship with God of those who are truly in and of it. As the kingdom of the Son of man, it is His manifestation hereafter in glory and in government. Here it is characterised by the relationship of the Son Himself to the Father, in His Person, with the addition of that which gives us a full title to share it redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

The apostle, having thus introduced the Son in His relationship to the Father, as the central and mighty object which was to attract the heart of the Colossians and set them free from the yoke of ordinances sketches now the different parts of the glory of that Person. If therefore the assembly's own glory is wanting, that of Jesus is so much the rather set in stronger relief before us. Thus God brings good out of evil, and in every way feeds His beloved people.

The Lord Jesus is the image of the invisible God. It is in the Son of His love that we see what God is. (Compare Joh 1:18; and also Jo1 1:2.) This is the first character of His personal glory, the essential centre of all the rest. Now, in consequence of this proper character of His Person, He takes by right the position of representing God in the creation. Adam was created in some sort in the image of God, and placed as centre in a creation that was subjected to him. But, after all, he was only a figure of the Christ, of Him who was to come. The Son, in His very Person, in His nature (and for us as in the bosom

of the Father), is He who makes God known, because He presents Him in His own Person and in a full revelation of His being and of His character before men and in the whole universe; for all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Him. Nevertheless He is a man. He is thus seen of angels. We have seen Him with our eyes or by faith. Thus He is the image of the invisible God. The perfect character and living representation of the invisible God have been seen in Him. Wonderful truth for us with regard to the Person of our Saviour!

But then what place can He have in creation when He has come into it according to the eternal counsels of God? He could have but one, namely, that of supremacy without contestation and without controversy. He is the firstborn of all creation; this is a relative name, not one of date with regard to time. It is said of Solomon, "I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." Thus the Creator, when He takes a place in creation, is necessarily its Head. He has not yet made good His rights, because in grace He would accomplish redemption. We are speaking of His rights which faith recognises.

He is then the image of the invisible God, and, when He takes His place in it, the firstborn of all creation. The reason of this is worthy of our attention simple, yet marvelous: He created it. It was in the Person of the Son that God acted, when by His power He created all things, whether in heaven or in the earth, visible and invisible. All that is great and exalted is but the work of His hand; all has been created by Him (the Son) and for Him. Thus, when He takes possession of it, He takes it as His inheritance by right. Wonderful truth, that He who has redeemed us, who made Himself man, one of us as to nature, in order to do so, is the Creator. But such is the truth.

In connection with this admirable truth, it was a part of God's counsels that man should have dominion over all the works of His hands. Thus Christ, as man, has it by right, and will take possession of it in fact. This part of the truth of which we are speaking is treated in Hebrews 2; we shall consider it in its place. I introduce it here merely that we may understand the circumstances under which the Son takes possession. The Spirit speaks of the One who is Man but the One who is at the same time Creator of all

things, the Son of God. They were created by Him, they were necessarily then created also for Him.

Thus we have hitherto the glory of the Person of Christ and His glory in creation connected with His Person. In Him is seen the image of the invisible God. He has created all things: all is for Him; and He is the firstborn of all that is created.

Another category of glory, another supremacy, is now presented. He takes a special place in relation to the assembly in the power of resurrection. It is the introduction of divine power, not in creation but in the empire of death; in order that others may participate in His glory by redemption, and by the power of life in Him. The first glory was, so to speak natural the latter special and acquired (although in virtue of the glory of His Person) by undergoing death, and all the power of the enemy in it. Accordingly it is connected, as we have just said, with redemption, and with the introduction of others into the participation of the same privileges. He is the Head of the body which is the assembly, the Beginning, the Firstborn from among the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence. He is the Firstborn of creation, He is the Firstborn [See Note #9] according to the power of resurrection, in this new order of things in which man is predestined to an entirely new position, gained by redemption, and in which he participates in the glory of God (as far as that which is created can do so), and that by participating in divine life in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and everlasting life; and, as regards the assembly, as members of His body. He is the First born of creation, the Firstborn from among the dead; the Creator and the conqueror of death and the enemy's power. These are the two spheres of the display of the glory of God. The special position of the assembly, the body of Christ, forms a part of the latter. He must have this resurrection-glory, this universal preeminence and superiority also, as being man, for all the fullness (namely, of the Godhead, see Col 2:9) was pleased to dwell in Him. What place could He have except that of first in all things! But, before speaking of that which follows, some important remarks are yet to be made on that which we have been considering.

The Son is here presented to us as Creator, not to the exclusion of the Father's power, nor of the operation of the Spirit. They are one, but it is the

Son who is here set before us. In John 1 it is the Word who creates all things. Here, and in Hebrews 1, it is under the name of Son, that He, who is also the Word, is revealed to us. He is the Word of God, the expression of His thought and of His power. It is by Him that God works and reveals Himself. He is also the Son of God; and, in particular, the Son of the Father. He reveals God, and he who has seen Him has seen the Father. Inasmuch as born in this world by the operation of God through the Holy Ghost, He is the Son of God. (Psa 2:7; Luk 1:35.) But this is in time, when creation is already the scene of the manifestation of the ways and counsels of God. But the Son is also the name of the proper relationship of His glorious Person to the Father before the world was. It is in this character that He created all things. The Son is to be glorified even as the Father. If He humble Himself, as He did for us, all things are put into His hands, in order that His glory may be manifested in the same nature in the assumption of which He humbled Himself. And already the power of life and of God in Him is manifested by resurrection, so that He is declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection. This is the proof of it.

In the Epistle to the Colossians that which is set before us is the proper glory of His Person as the Son before the world was. He is the Creator as Son. It is important to observe this. But the persons are not separated in their manifestation. If the Son wrought miracles on earth, He cast out devils by the Spirit; and the Father who dwells in Him (Christ) did the works. Also it must be remembered, that that which is said is said, when He was manifested in the flesh, of His complete Person, man upon earth. Not that we do not in our minds separate between the divinity and the humanity; but even in separating them we think of the one Person with regard to whom we do so. We say, Christ is God, Christ is man; but it is Christ who is the two. I do not say this theologically, but to draw the reader's attention to the remarkable expression, "All the fullness was pleased to dwell in him." All the fullness of the Godhead was found in Christ. The Gnostics, who in later years so much harassed the assembly, used this word "fullness" in a mystical and peculiar sense for the sum and source (and yet after all, in the sense of a locality; for it had a "oros", limits which separated it from everything else) of divinity which developed itself in four pairs of beings syzygies Christ being only one of a pair. [See Note #10]

It is not necessary to go further into their reveries, except to observe that, with different shades of thought, they attribute creation to a god either inferior or evil, who also was the author of the Old Testament. Matter, they said, did not proceed from the supreme God. They did not eat meat; they did not marry; at the same time they gave themselves up to all sorts of horrors and dissoluteness; and, strange to say, associated themselves with Judaism, worshiped angels, and etc.

The apostle was often in conflict with these tools of Satan. Peter also mentions them. Here Paul sets forth, by the word of God, the whole fullness of the divinity of Christ. Far from being something inferior, an emanation, or having a place however exalted in those endless genealogies, all the fullness itself dwelt in Him. Glorious truth with regard to the Person of the Lord our Saviour! We may leave all the foolish imaginations of man in the shade, in order to enjoy the perfect light of this glorious fullness of God in our Head and Lord. All the fullness was in Him. We know indeed the Father, but revealed by Him. We possess indeed the Spirit, but the fullness of the Spirit was in Him, and because, having accomplished our redemption and our purification, He then received that Spirit for us. And God Himself in all His fullness was revealed, without any reservation, in the Person of Christ; and this Christ is ours, our Saviour, our Lord. He has been manifested to us and for us. What a glorious truth for us! It is for His own glory, no doubt, that He should be known as He is, as love; but it is not the less true that this revelation was in connection with us. It is not only the Son revealing the Father, sweet and precious as that fact is; it is the fullness of the Godhead as such that is revealed and shewn forth in Christ. It was the good pleasure of the fullness to dwell there. But Christ was not only the Head of creation in virtue of the divine glory of His Person, and the Head of the assembly as risen from among the dead and victorious over the power of the enemy; creation, and all those who were to form the assembly, were alike far from God, and the latter were so even in their will; to be in relationship with God they must be reconciled to Him. This is the second part of the glory of Christ. Not only was it the good pleasure of the fullness of the Godhead to dwell in Him, but by Him to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of the cross. This reconciliation of things in heaven as well as on the earth is not yet accomplished. Peace is indeed made by the blood, but the

power has not yet come in to bring back the whole into actual relationship with God according to the value of that blood.

Thus, in Israel, the blood was put upon the mercy seat, and expiation peace, was made; but besides this everything was sprinkled, and the sins of the people were confessed. This, with regard to Israel and to creation, has not yet been done. As to that which is outward, it remains still at a distance from God, although peace is made. We know that it is the good pleasure of God to reconcile all things in heaven, and on the earth, by virtue of this blood. All things shall be restored to order under a new rule. The guilty, remaining in their sins, will be outside this scene of blessing; but heaven and earth will be completely freed from the power of evil (and even from its presence during the millennium, as regards manifestation still later, absolutely from its presence itself), according to the virtue of that blood which has separated between good and evil, according to the character of God Himself, and so glorified God that peace is made. God can act freely for blessing; but here the work is twofold, like the glory of the Person of Christ, and refers to the same objects as His glory. It is in the counsels of God to reconcile unto Himself all things in Heaven and on the earth through Christ. But Christians He has already reconciled. Once not only defiled, like the creature, but enemies in their minds, He has already reconciled them in the body of His flesh by means of death. The perfect work which Christ accomplished in His body, blotting out our sins and perfectly glorifying God His Father, has brought us into relationship with God in His holiness according to the efficacy of that work; that is to say, it is efficacious to present us, perfectly reconciled, holy, without blemish and without blame, before His face; and with the consciousness of it, and of the love that has wrought it, and the favour into which we are brought, so that in the sense of this the heart is brought back to God: we are reconciled to God. This supposes that we continue steadfast in the faith unto the end.

The position of the Colossians gave room for this warning, being viewed as walking on earth. [See Note #11] We have seen that they had a little departed, or were in danger of departing, from the realisation of their union with Christ.

It will be noticed also, that the apostle speaks of his gospel as spread abroad in all the world. Grace had overstepped the narrow limits of Judaism and the expectation of the Messiah, in order to make known the testimony of the perfect love of God in the whole creation under heaven, of which Paul was the instrument as the apostle of the Gentiles. [See Note #12] Hitherto, then, the Spirit of God has set before us the two preeminences of Christ, that over creation and that over the assembly, and the two reconciliations which answer to them, namely, first, that of the things over which Christ is set as Head, that is, of all things in heaven and earth; and second, that of Christians themselves: the latter already accomplished, the former yet to come. The ministry of the apostle had now the same double character. He has not undoubtedly to preach in heaven; but his ministry is exercised in every place under heaven where there is a soul to hearken. He is a minister of that gospel; and then he is a minister of the assembly, a distinct service or ministry, making known its true position and its privileges, connected indeed with the other, in that the gospel went out also to the Gentiles to bring them in. (Vers. 23, 25) By this last instruction he completed the word of God: an important principle with regard to the exclusive authority of the written word, which shews that its totality already exists, demonstrated by the subjects which it comprises; subjects which are entirely completed, to the exclusion of others which people may seek to introduce. The circle of truths which God had to treat, in order to reveal to us the glory of Christ and to give us complete instruction according to His wisdom, is entire, when the doctrine of the assembly is revealed. There were no others to be added. [See Note #13] It is not a question here as to the dates of the books, but of the circle of subjects. The law, the kingdom, the Person of Christ, redemption and the ways of God, had already been brought out; the doctrine of the assembly was then to be revealed, in order to make the communications of God complete as to their subjects.

But this doctrine in particular exposed the apostle to persecution and sufferings, which the Jews especially, and the enemy sought in every way to inflict upon him. But he rejoiced in this as a privilege, because Christ had suffered on account of His love for the assembly for His own. The apostle speaks here, not of the efficacy of this death, but of the love which led Him to suffer. Looked at in this point of view, the apostle could participate in His

sufferings, and we also in our little measure; but the apostle in a peculiar manner, as the special witness-bearer to this truth. If Christ had been content to accept the position of Messiah according to man, He would have been well received. If Paul had preached circumcision, the offence of the cross would have ceased: man could have taken part in the religion of God, if His religion had recognised man in the flesh. But if God is revealed, if His grace extends to the gentiles, if by this grace, and without having respect to the Jew more than to the Gentile, He forms an assembly, which is the body of Christ, sharing the heavenly glory of His Son this is what the flesh cannot endure. To be thus shut out as nothing worth before God, even in its religion, take what pains it might this is unbearable. This is the source of the enmity of the Judaizing spirit, which is founded on the flesh, on man, and which is constantly reappearing in the apostle's history, whether as exciting the hatred of the heathen, or as corrupting the doctrine of Christ and the simplicity of the gospel. Religion in the flesh boasts its own peculiar privileges. (See Phil 3).

Note #1

How painful it is to see this beloved church taken afterwards as an example of the first love being lost! But all tends to the end.

Note #2

The name of Timotheus is not found in the address to the saints at Ephesus.

Note #3

It is one of the deceits of the heart that, when we really know God's will quite well, we go to ask advice of one no more spiritual than ourselves.

Note #4

There are three measures given of the Christian's walk in this form: worthy of God who has called us to His own kingdom and glory; worthy of the Lord, here; and worthy of the vocation with which we are called, that is, the Holy Ghost dwelling in the church, Ephesians 2; developed as it is in the end of Chapter 3.

Note #5

The antecedent is, I think, here the Lord; but the Lord and God are greatly merged in one thought.

Note #6

Take especial notice here, that it is not said "will make us meet," as a thing yet to be done, and in which we make progress.

Note #7

We shall also see, further on, that the starting-point is somewhat different, and, though Ephesians ground is partially referred to, brings in man as he is found living in sin, and less absolutely to God, who finds him already dead in sins, and creates him according to His own counsels. But of this hereafter. Further, in Eph 1:6 our place is full grace in Christ; in Colossians 1 it is present actual deliverance from the power of darkness and translation into the kingdom of the Son of His love not 'charis' or 'charitosis en to egapenenoo'.

Note #8

This belongs to the principle mentioned above. In Ephesians, all is seen from the point of view of God's eternal counsels before evil existed, the good which He purposed in Himself although redemption was necessary when evil had come in, and the glory of God Himself and the basis of our glory in the accomplishment of them, was made good in it. In Colossians man in evil is the object of grace.

Note #9

One of these preeminences depends on His divine rights as Creator, the other on His work and on the power displayed in His humanity in the act of resurrection. He holds all as man and all by divine power, but in some sort it may be said that one part of His glory depends on His divinity, the other on His victory as man.

Note #10

Indeed added to the four as supplementary.

Note #11

When the Christian is viewed as in Christ, there is no "if:" we are in Him. When he is viewed as a pilgrim here, we are on the road to actual glory, and have to reach the goal, and here "if" comes in, and danger, and the need of being kept. But then we have the fullest assurance that we shall be kept and never perish, and be confirmed to the end, and the good work completed. Thus dependence on God is maintained in the saved, and confidence in His faithfulness.

Note #12

Note here how clear and full the statement is: Verse 14, redemption and forgiveness, Verse 21 (Col 1:21), reconciliation with God; Verse 13 (Col 1:12), deliverance and introduction into the kingdom; Verse 12 (Col 1:12), we are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. All this we have, and so are called to walk worthy of the Lord.

Note #13

It is not a question here as to the dates of the books, but of the circle of subjects. The law, the kingdom, the Person of Christ, redemption and the ways of God, had already been brought out; the doctrine of the assembly was then to be revealed, in order to make the communications of God complete as to their subjects.

Colossians Chapter 2

Thus we have a double ministry, as well as a double preeminence of Christ, and a double reconciliation; and each having a similar relationship the one to the other: Christ, the Head of all things in heaven and earth, the Head of the assembly; all things in heaven and earth are to be reconciled, Christians are reconciled; Paul exercises his ministry in the whole creation under heaven, he is the minister of the assembly. Naturally his ministry was limited to the earth. In every respect the extent and bearing of the glory of Christ, and of the ministry, went beyond the limits of Judaism, and were in contrast with the whole system.

The apostle then insists on the second part of his ministry, of which he had been just speaking; dwelling however particularly on that which met the need of the Colossians, and developing it, in order to secure them in the

enjoyment of the whole circle of these precious truths. He completed the word of God by announcing this mystery, which had been hidden from all ages and generations, but was now manifested to the saints. No display of the ways of God since the creation had (in the truths on which it was founded, in the revelation of God of His power, or of His thoughts, which formed its basis and gave it its character) contained the mystery contained in the doctrine of the assembly. It had not been communicated to any of those who formed part of the system which preceded it, or who were the medium of light to others, as instrumental in the revelation of the light of God. Angels, men, Israel, the prophets all were alike in ignorance of it. The assembly (this body united to the Son of God become man and glorified) and the calling of the Gentiles into that unity was hidden from them all.

Now that Christ the Head of the assembly, the Head of the body, was glorified, the mystery of this body was made known. The apostle here dwells on one particular side of this subject, which, after the Person of Christ, forms the centre of all God's ways. This side is Christ in us, especially as Gentiles, the hope of glory. And in this again we see how the saints are viewed as on earth, though in the power of resurrection. The aspect here given of the mystery is, Christ in us down here, not union with Him actually in glory, though inseparable from that. In fact this mystery was in every way a new thought, a new truth. That which was known was a Messiah who should be manifested among the Jews, the accomplishment of glory in their midst; the Gentiles at most having part in it, as subordinate to the people of God. But according to the doctrine of the assembly, Christ invisibly dwelt in the midst of the Gentiles, [See Note #14] and even in them; and as to the glory He was only the hope of it. A Christ dwelling in the hearts of men, and of men formerly rejected and outside the promises, and filling their hearts with joy and glory in the consciousness of union with Himself-this was the wondrous mystery prepared of God for the blessing of the Gentiles. It was this Christ, a Christ such as this, whom Paul preached, warning every man, and teaching every man according to the full development of the wisdom of God, which wrought mightily in the apostle by the Spirit, in order that he might present every man in a spiritual state answering to this revelation of Christ, as being also its fruit. Not that every man would receive it; but there was no longer any limit. All distinction between them was blotted out, alike

by sin and by grace, and there was but one thing to do; that is, to seek that every man, by the power of the word and the Spirit, should reflect Christ and grow up unto the stature of His fullness as revealed in the doctrine committed to the apostle. He laboured for this according to the working of Christ in him; for Christ was not only the object, but the power that wrought to form souls after His own image.

Now this power wrought in the apostle's weakness; in a human heart, that felt the necessities of men and the difficulties that occurred by the way that felt them as a man, although according to God, and was the fruit of His love. He desired that the Colossians should understand the conflict he had for them, and for all those who had never seen him, in order that they might be encouraged and be thoroughly united in love; so that they might understand, in all the riches of a full assurance, the mystery of God.

The apostle felt that it was this which they needed and which would be a blessing to them. He knew that union with Christ, realised in the heart, was a safeguard from the wiles of the enemy, to which the Colossians were exposed. He knew the unutterable value of this union, and even of its realisation by faith. He laboured, he wrestled in prayer for it is indeed a conflict in order that the full sense of this union with the glorious Head might be wrought in their hearts, so that the Christ on high should be in them by faith. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were found in the mystery, of which this was to their souls the centre and the power. They had not to seek elsewhere. Science, falsely so called, might pretend to furnish them with heights to which the simplicity of the doctrines of Christ did not reach but in fact the wisdom of God and the depths of His counsels left these cloudy efforts of the human mind at an infinite distance. Moreover they were truth reality instead of being but the creatures of imagination inspired by the enemy.

For this reason the apostle had brought forward these marvelous revelations of God respecting the double glory of Christ, and with regard to His Person. He declared them in order that no one should beguile the Colossians with enticing words. He avails himself of the order that existed among them, and of their faith to guard them against the danger they were in from these thoughts which might glide unperceived into their minds,

while all was yet going on well, and the consciousness of their faith was not touched. This often happens. People have faith in Christ, they walk well, they do not perceive that certain ideas overthrow that faith; they admit them, while still maintaining the profession of faith together with these ideas; but the force of the truth and the sense of union with Christ and the simplicity that is in Him are lost. The enemy has so far attained his end. That which is received is not the development of Christ, but something outside Him.

Therefore the apostle says, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him; rooted and built up in him, and confirmed in the faith, even as ye have been taught." When we have received Christ, all the rest is but a development of that which He is, and of the glory which the counsels of God have connected with His Person. Knowledge, or pretended knowledge, outside this, does but turn us away from Him, withdraw our hearts from the influence of His glory, throw us into that which is false, and lead our souls into connection with the creation apart from God, and without possessing the key to His purposes. Thus, since man is incapable of fathoming that which exists, and of explaining it to himself, his efforts to do so cause him to invent a mass of ideas that have no foundation, and to endeavor to fill up the void that is found in his knowledge through his ignorance of God by speculations, in which (because he is at a distance from God) Satan plays the chief part without man's suspecting it.

Man, as a child of Adam, is not at the centre of the immense system of God's ways. Out of Christ and without Christ, he does not know the centre; he speculates, without foundation and without end, only to lose himself more and more. His knowledge of good and evil and the energy of his moral faculties, do but lead him astray the more, because he employs them on higher questions than those which simply relate to physical things; and they produce in him the need of reconciling apparently inconsistent principles, which cannot be reconciled without Christ. Moreover the tendency of man is always to make himself, as he is, the centre of everything; and this renders everything false.

Christians then ought to walk with simplicity in the ways of the Lord, even as they have received Him; and their progress ought to be in the knowledge of Christ, the true center and fullness of all things.

When man occupies himself philosophically with all things, the insufficiency of his own resources always throws him into the hands of an intellectual leader, and into tradition; and, when religion is the subject, into traditions which develop the religion of the flesh, and are suited to its powers and tendencies.

In those days Judaism had the highest pretensions to this kind of religion, allied itself with human speculations and adopted them, and even pursued them assiduously; offering at the same time proofs of divine origin, and a testimony to the unity of the Godhead, which the absence of the grossness of Pagan mythology and the meeting of human consciousness of the divine rendered credible. This relative purity tended to remove for enlightened minds that which was disgusting in the Pagan system. The Jewish system had, by the death of Jesus, lost all pretension to be the true worship of God; and was therefore suited (by the advantages it offered in the comparative purity of its dogmas) to be an instrument of Satan in opposing the truth. At all times it was adapted to the flesh, was founded on the elements of this world, because by its means, when owned of God, God was proving man in the position man stood in. But now God was no longer in it; and the Jews, moved by envy, urged the Gentiles to persecution; and Judaism allied itself to Pagan speculations, in order to corrupt and sap the foundations of Christianity, and destroy its testimony.

In principle it is always thus. The flesh may appear for a time to despise tradition, but that which is purely intellectual cannot stand in the midst of humanity without something religious. It has not the truth nor the world which belongs to faith, and for an immense majority superstition and tradition are needed; that is to say, a religion which the flesh can lay hold of, and which suits the flesh. God by His power may preserve a portion of the truth, or allow the whole to be corrupted; but in either case true christian position and the doctrine of the assembly are lost. [See Note #15] We may indeed find philosophy apart from the religion of the flesh, and the latter apart from the former; but in this case philosophy is impotent and atheistic,

the religion of the flesh narrow, legal, superstitious, and, if it can be so, persecuting.

In our Chapter we find philosophy and the emptiness of human wisdom united with the traditions of men, characteristic as "the elements of this world," in opposition to Christ: for we have a heavenly Christ who is a perfect contrast to the flesh in man living on earth, a Christ in whom is all wisdom and fullness, and the reality of all that which the law pretended to give, or which it presented in figure: and who is at the same time an answer to all our wants. This the apostle develops here, shewing death and resurrection with Him as the means of participating in it.

And first all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. Instead of the misty speculations of men and fantastic aeons, we have the fullness of God bodily, in a real human body, and thus efficaciously for us, in the Person of Jesus Christ. In the second place we are complete in Him; we need nothing out of Christ. [See Note #16] On the one side, we have, in Him, God perfectly presented in all His fullness; on the other side, we possess in Him perfection and completeness before God. We are wanting in nothing as to our position before God. What a truth! What a position! God, in His perfect fullness, in Christ as man, we in Him before God, in the perfection of what He is in Him who is head of all principality and power, before which man in his ignorance would incline to bend the knee! We are in Him, in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells as to His Person; in Him, who is above all principality as to His position and His rights as Christ, man exalted on high.

The apostle then enters into some details of application to demonstrate that the faithful have all in Christ, viewed according to the position which He has taken without having anything to seek elsewhere here below.

Circumcision (the divine token of the covenant with the Jews, and of the putting off the flesh, which was required in order to form part of God's people) had its reality in Him. By the power of the life which is in Him, and which is theirs being made partakers of the efficacy of His death Christians account themselves to be dead, and have put off this body of sin by faith. This is the true circumcision of Christ made without hands. Circumcision made by hands was but the sign of this putting off the body of the flesh the

privilege of the Christian in Christ. Having a new life in Christ, he has efficaciously put off the old man.

We are buried with Christ by baptism (this is its meaning), in which also we are risen with Him by faith in this operation of the power of God whereby He was raised from among the dead. Baptism was the sign and expression of this ; [See Note #17] faith in the operation of God which raised Him, the means by which is effected in us this marvelous resurrection with Christ into a new state and scene this happy death, or rather this precious participation in the death of Him who has accomplished all for us. And when I say "faith," it is the power of God's Spirit working in us. But it is the power of God Himself, as it wrought in Christ, which works in us to give us the new standing in life. Viewed in connection with our resurrection with Christ it implies by the very fact of our receiving it that we are forgiven perfectly and for ever. We were under the burden of our sins, and dead in them. This burden Christ took upon Himself, and died for us, accomplishing what put away our sins in going down into death. Raised up with Him, inasmuch as partaking of that life which He possesses as risen from the dead, we have like Him and with Him left all that burden of sin and condemnation behind us with the death from which we have been delivered. Therefore He says, "Having forgiven you all trespasses."

Christ, when He arose, left death and the weight of condemnation under which we were lying, behind Him we also being raised up with Him. Naturally God, in thus raising us up from the state in which we were, has not raised us up to condemn us, or with condemnation attached to this new life, which is Christ Himself. For He had already borne the condemnation, and satisfied the justice of God, and died for the putting away of sin, before He communicated this life to us. God brought us out of death and condemnation with Christ who had borne it for us. But this is connected with another aspect of this work of grace, spoken of here, and also in Ephesians, and even in John 5 and 2 Corinthians 5. He who is alive in sins is dead in them towards God. If I look at him as alive in them, death must come in and has come in on the cross. (See Rom. 6) This side is not brought forward in Ephesians; only death in Romans; in Colossians death and resurrection in Christ, of which we have spoken. In Ephesians this is not

spoken of at all. We are viewed as dead in sins, dead towards God, and all good is a new creation according to God's counsels. We are quickened together with Christ when dead in sins. This also is taken up in Colossians: only it is not spoken of as a new creation. But in both a new life is given when we are dead; only Ephesians begins with this in Christ raised and exalted, and by the same power in us. In Colossians it is introduced as completing what is taught of the administration of this doctrine of death in baptism and our resurrection by faith of God's operation in Christ. In Ephesians grace finds us dead and quickened with Christ. In Colossians it finds us alive in sins and brings in death and resurrection, and completes this by quickening with Christ.

All the ordinances likewise, which belonged to the rudiments of this world and which applied to man in the flesh, and weighed as an insupportable yoke upon the Jews (and to which they endeavoured to bring others into subjection), which put the conscience always under the burden of a service unaccomplished by man, and a righteousness, unsatisfied in God these ordinances were blotted out. In them the Jew had put his signature, so to speak, to his guiltiness; but the obligation was destroyed and nailed to the cross of Christ. We receive liberty as well as life and pardon.

This is not all. There was, the strength of principalities and powers against us the might of spiritual wickedness. Christ has vanquished and despoiled them on the cross, having triumphed over them in it. All that was against us He has put aside, in order to introduce us, entirely delivered from it all, into our new position. It will be seen here, that what the apostle says of the work of Christ does not go beyond that which He did for our deliverance, in order to set us in the heavenly places. He speaks (Col 2:10) of the rights of Christ, but not as sitting in the heavenly places, nor as, leading the enemy captive; neither does he speak of us as sitting in Him in the heavenlies. He has done all that is necessary to bring us into them; but the Colossians are viewed as on earth though risen, and in danger at least of losing the sense of the position which was theirs in virtue of their union with Christ, and were in danger of slipping back into the elements of the world and of flesh, of the man alive in the flesh, not dead, not risen with Christ; and the apostle seeks to bring them back to it, by shewing how Christ had accomplished all that

was requisite had taken out of the way all that prevented their attaining it. But he cannot speak of the position itself: they were not consciously in it. In the things of God we cannot comprehend a position without being in it. God may reveal it. God may shew us the way to it. The apostle does so here with regard to the Person of Christ, which alone could bring them back to it; and at the same time he develops the efficacy of His work in this respect, in order to set them free from the shackles that kept them back, and to shew them that all obstacles had been removed. But in detail he has to apply it to the dangers that beset them rather than to display its glorious results in heaven.

Jewish ordinances were but shadows, Christ is the substance. By bringing in angels as objects of homage, and thus putting them between themselves and Christ, they would separate themselves from the Head of the body, who was above all principalities. The simplicity of christian faith held fast the Head, from which the whole body directly drew its nourishment and thus increased with the increase of God. It looked like humility, thus to bring themselves into relation with angels, as superior and exalted beings who might serve as mediators. But there were two faults of immense importance in this apparent humility. First, it really was thorough pride this pretension to penetrate into the secrets of heaven of which they were ignorant. What did they know of any position held by angels, which would make them the objects of such homage? It was pretending to mount up into heaven for and by themselves, and to measure their relations with God's creatures without Christ, and at their own will to connect themselves with them. Secondly, it was to deny their union with Christ. One with Him, there could be nothing between Him and them; if there were anything, then they were dead and twice dead. Besides by this union they were one with Him who was above the angels. United to Him, they received, as we have seen, a communication, through all the members of the body, of the treasures of grace and life which were in the Head. The mutual links between the members of the body itself were thereby strengthened, and thus the body had its increase.

Two applications of the doctrine that they are dead with Christ and risen with Him follow. (Col 2:20.) He applies the principle of death to all the ordinances, and to the asceticism which treated the body as a thing vile in

itself which ought to be rejected; and (Col 3:1) he uses the resurrection to raise their hearts into a higher sphere and to bring them back to Christ by looking up; they being dead as regards the old man. [See Note #18] To make these instructions more plain by shewing their connection, we may remark that the apostle points out the double danger, namely, philosophy, and human tradition, in contrast with Christ. (Col 2:3; see Verses 9-15 (Col 2:9-15).) While identifying us with Christ, he speaks of the bearing of the work of Christ Himself rather than of this identification. In Verses 16-19 (Col 2:16-19) he applies it first (Verse 16 Col 2_16:) to subjection to ordinances, that is, to the Jewish side of their danger; and then (Col 2:18) to the Gnostic philosophy, [See Note #19] science falsely so called, which linked itself with Judaism (or to which Judaism linked itself), reproducing itself under a new form. From Verse 20 (Col 2:20) the apostle applies our death and resurrection with Christ to the same points, or to the deliverance of the Colossians by raising their thoughts on high.

But the Colossians are not the only ones who may have been in this danger. In the main these principles have been the ruin of the church at all times. They are those of the mystery of iniquity, [See Note #20] which has so much ripened since then, and produced effects so various, and under such different modifications, on account of other principles which have also acted, and under the sovereign providence of God. We shall see the deep, simple, and decisive principle which is involved in it in the Verses that follow.

The Verses already quoted, as far as the twentieth, had judged this whole Judeo-philosophic system from the point of view of Christ's work, of His resurrection, and of union with Him in His heavenly position.

That which follows judges it after our position. The preceding Verses had demonstrated that the system was false because Christ and His work were such as is declared in them. The passage we are going to consider shews that this system is absurd, cannot be applied to us, has no possible application, because of our position. On the one hand it is a false system, null and void in all its parts, if Christ is true and is in heaven; and, on the other hand, it is an absurd system in its application to us, if we are Christians. And for this reason: it is a system which supposes life in this world, and relationships to be acquired with God, having their foundation in that life,

while it pretends to mortify flesh; and yet it addresses itself to persons who, for faith, are dead. The apostle says, that we are dead to the rudiments of this world, to all the principles on which its life acts. Why then as though we were still living (alive) in it, as though we were still alive in this world, do we subject ourselves to ordinances which have to do with this life, and which suppose its existence? ordinances which apply to things which perish in the use of them, and which have no connection with that which is heavenly and eternal. They have indeed a semblance of humility and self-denial as regards the body, but they have no link with heaven, which is the sphere of the new life of all its motives, and all its development; and they do not recognize the honour of the creature, as a creature come out of the hand of God, which, as such, has always its place and its honour. They put a man in and under the flesh, while pretending to deliver us from it, and they separate the believer from Christ by putting angels between the soul and the heavenly place and blessing; whereas we are united to Christ, who is above all these powers, and we in Him.

These ordinances had to do with merely corruptible things were not connected with the new life, but with man living in his life of flesh on the earth, to which life the christian is morally dead; and as far as regarded this life, they did not recognize the body as a creature of God, as it ought to be recognised.

Thus this system of ordinances had lost Christ, who was their substance. It was connected with the pride that pretended to penetrate heaven, in order to put itself in relation with beings whom we do not know in such a manner as to have any relations with them pride which in so doing separated from the Head of the body, Christ, and thus disowned all connection with the source of life, and with the only true position of the soul before God. This system falsified equally our position on earth by treating us as though still alive after the old man, whereas we are dead; and dishonoured the creature as such, instead of recognizing it as coming from the hand of God.

That which was a danger to Christians in the apostle's days characterises Christianity at the present time.

The Christian's position was thus set forth, but in its application thus far rather to the danger of Christians than to their heavenly privileges. Thus grace has provided us with all we need, using every privilege, using the faith of some, giving warnings and instruction above all price, and turning the faults of others to account.

Note #14

I have already remarked that the Gentiles are especially in view in the Colossians, not the union of Jew and Gentiles in one.

Note #15

There were some very beautiful legends, embracing partial truths, in the Gnostic system; but they had lost God and truth, and reality of conscience before God.

Note #16

These expressions relate to the double character of Christ already set before us in Chapter 1. They shew us what we have in Christ in a positive way as that which follows applies it to everything here below which would prevent our enjoying it. In Christ is the fullness of the Godhead, the object of our delight, in whom we possess all things. We have also in Him a position above all creation, in the perfection which has placed Christ there. We are complete in Him who is the Head of all principalities and of all power. As regards the phraseology, the change of a word, to one not however better in itself, shews the mind of the apostle. In Him dwelleth all the completeness of the Godhead bodily; and we are complete in Him.

Note #17

Some do not connect "risen" with baptism. If so, I apprehend the passage must be read thus: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism; in whom also ye are risen together [meaning with Christ] through faith,". Baptism clearly signifies death, and it is not the baptizing but the coming out of the water which can be applied to resurrection. The giving of life is in no way the sense of

baptism even as a figure, but leaving the life of Adam by death (the death of Christ) and entrance through that gate into a wholly new place and position.

Note #18

These applications flow from Col 2:11-12. It is to be remarked that Romans from Rom 5:12 treats of death to sin, in which man (as child of Adam) was alive. In Ephesians man is reckoned as dead in sins as towards God. Colossians takes up both: Col 2:11-12 follows them out, adding resurrection with Christ. Verse 18 (Col 2:18) follows Ephesians doctrine. Col 2:20, Col 3:1, follow on Col 2:11-12. and we have the putting off of the old and putting on of the new man.

Note #19

Although this word has the appearance of learning and of not being scriptural, this is not the case. Science, falsely so called, of which the apostle speaks elsewhere, is in Greek "gnosis", whence this presumptuous and corrupting philosophy was called "Gnosticism," and its votaries "Gnostics." It plays an immense part in the history of the church, with which I have nothing to do here. But its principles are frequently formed in the New Testament, brought forward by the apostles in order to combat them. The Jews had largely fallen into the notion of a mediatorial work of angels, though not in the form exactly of Gnostic philosophy.

Note #20

This was working in the apostles' days; Paul withstood it in the energy of the Holy Ghost. After his departure that power was gone. The historical church never had the two great fundamental principles of Christianity, perfection in Christ ("by one offering he hath perfected for ever"), and the presence and leading power of the Holy Ghost down here. These were supplanted by sacraments and the clergy.

Colossians Chapter 3

Now begins the direct exhortations founded on the truth that has been developed, and adapted to the state in which the Colossians were; that is, viewed as risen with Christ, but not sitting in heavenly places.

Risen with Christ, they were to set their affections on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and not on things on the earth. The two could not go together. To look, to have one's motives, above and below at the same time is impossible. Be tempted by things, have to resist them, we may; but this is not to have them as our object. The reason for this is however found in our position: we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. It does not say, "we must die." Man cannot do this by will: we cannot deny will by will. Nor would the will of the flesh ever do it. If it acts, it does not abdicate. We are dead: this is the precious comforting truth with regard to the Christian by virtue of Christ having died for him. He has received the life of Christ, and all that Christ did for him in that life belongs to him. Thus he is dead, because Christ died for him. The life with which the power of temptation, guilt, the attacks of sin, are connected, exists no longer to faith. By death all that was connected with it has come to an end. Now that which was connected with the life of the old man was sin, condemnation, weakness, fear, powerlessness against the assaults of the enemy all that is past. We have a life, but it is in Christ; it is hidden with Him in God. We are not yet manifested in its glory, as we shall be manifested before the eyes of all in heaven and earth. Our life is hidden, but safe in its eternal source. It has the portion of Christ, in whom we possess it. He is hid in God, so also is our life: when Christ shall appear, we shall also appear with Him. It will be remarked, that the apostle does not speak here of our union with Christ, but of our life, of the fact that we are dead, and that our life is hid with Him in God. He does not speak of the assembly with regard to our position; he speaks, no doubt, of Christ as being its Head, as to His personal glory, but not of it as to us. He speaks of us individually. Each one has his own life in Christ truly, but as his own; it is not union with other Christians. We have this life in Christ, but it is not here our union as one body with Him. It is the individual character of the Christian, to whom Christ, the Head, is everything.

That which is also highly important to observe in connection with this truth is that in this epistle there is nothing said of the Holy Ghost. The apostle speaks practically of their love in the Spirit, but in the instruction of the epistle he does not name Him. Even when he says, "here is neither Jew, nor Greek," &c., it is in the new man, not because we are one in Christ. The

individual was to cleave to the Head. He was no longer living in this world; he was dead, and his life hid with Christ in God. But this was for himself; he was to know it, and hold it fast for himself, as necessary truth, that he might be preserved from the wiles of the enemy. In a word, it is life in Christ. Elsewhere we see many of the things which the apostle here mentions spoken of as the fruit of the Spirit, by which communion and union are maintained; but here it is simply in the nature of the life that these fruits have their source. It is quite natural consequently, that the compass and the assemblage of all spiritual relationships in one, in Christ, which we find in the divine instruction when the Holy Ghost is introduced, are wanting here.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians this operation of the Holy Ghost is found everywhere, and characterises the whole of that which is developed in communion with the Head, Christ, with whom we are united in one body by the Spirit. Thus we are individually sealed by the Spirit of promise, the earnest of our inheritance; we all have access to the Father by one Spirit; we are also builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit; the union of the Gentiles in one body is now revealed by the Spirit; saints are strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man; there is one body and one Spirit; we are not to grieve the Spirit; we are to be filled with Him; the word itself is the sword of the Spirit. The union of the body with Christ, our resurrection with Him, that we are sitting in the heavenlies in Him all that flows from this union, is fully developed; but at the same time the Holy Ghost, who unites us to Him, and unites us all together as one body, and who here below characterises the presence of God in the church, who acts in us, secures our future, and becomes our strength in the present the Holy Ghost, I repeat, is found every where, to complete the truth and to give it its present force for us here below.

Many of the exhortations in the Epistle to the Ephesians are nearly the same as those to the Colossians. But in the Epistle to the Ephesians they are connected with the Spirit; in that to the Colossians with the action of the word and of grace in the heart. This gives an immense range and a connectedness to the doctrine of the Epistle to the Ephesians, in that which regards our position here below, because it brings in God Himself, and as

dwelling in us by the Spirit, and filling us, whether as in the individual or in the oneness of the body; and gives the full scope of the counsels of God.

Yet the possession of life is in its way as important as the presence and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. It makes the blessing ourselves, not merely an operation in us, and, as we have seen, the character of divine life is far more fully developed; whereas in Ephesians it is more contrast with the previous state.

In the Epistle to the Romans we have (Chapter 8) this action and presence of the Holy Ghost presented in a very remarkable way as to the individual. He characterises us vitally in the principle of our resurrection, is the witness in us that we are children filling us with joy and with the hope of glory as heirs, the support of our weakness and the source of our petitions and our groans. In the Epistle to the Romans it is in connection with our personal relationship to God; in that to the Ephesians, as the presence of God in us in connection with our union to Christ as one body.

There is another thing to be noticed here which throws light on the purpose of the Holy Ghost in these epistles. The starting-point in that to the Ephesians is the counsels of God. Man is looked at as he is, without one pulse of life as regards God; he is dead in trespasses and sins, by nature the child of wrath. God is rich in mercy; He raises him up with Christ who in grace went down into death, and places him according to His counsels in the same position as that Christ is in. We are His workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus. God is pleased to bring us into His presence according to His own counsels and His nature. It is not said that we are dead with Christ. Man is not viewed as living in the flesh, so that in one way or in another he had to die. This was not necessary. The Ephesians were to apprehend, on the one hand, the full contrast between God and man according to His counsels; and, on the other, man's sinful state according to nature. In their epistle all is the work of God Himself according to the original purpose of His own heart, of His nature, and of His will, [See Note #21] man is already dead, and even Christ is not brought in as to His place till viewed as dead, and thereon risen and exalted on high.

The Colossians were in danger of subjecting themselves to ordinances, and thereby were in a position to consider man as living in the world; and the apostle makes them feel that they are dead with Christ. He was obliged in grace to follow them where they were, for their danger was to take man into consideration as living on the earth; in order, nevertheless, to shew that the Christian had already died with Christ, and his life on earth was as risen with Him.

In the letter to the Ephesians man is not said to die with Christ. He is dead in his sins when God begins to act towards him. No man is alive to God. The Christian is quickened together with Christ, Christ Himself first viewed as dead.

This character of the Colossians however, the dwelling on life or the new man, has its value for us all, and a great value, because the life, the new nature, and grace working in it, are much less brought forward in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the subject is the energy of God, who creates men in Christ and unites them to Him, fills the believer and the assembly here with the nature and the character of the new man, and thereby of Christ, yea, of God Himself. [See Note #22] I may add here to that which I have said of the Holy Ghost, that, when the apostle speaks in Colossians of the power of hope in us, he does not mention the earnest of the Spirit. It is still in us, the hope of glory. Throughout it is Christ, and Christ as life.

One might suppose that there was only the Holy Ghost acting in the fullness of His power, and filling the individual and the assembly. But in this Epistle to the Colossians we find that there is a new nature, an intrinsic change, not of the flesh indeed, but of the man. For we are viewed, not merely as quickened by the Son, but as dead and risen with Christ, the Man who had died, so as to have passed out of put off the old standing of a child of Adam, and into a risen one with Christ put on the new man. This is at once a standing and a state before God, a source of tastes, of sentiments, of desires, of arguments, and of moral capacities, which are in connection with the very nature of God, who has caused it to spring up in the heart. We are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created us. But this source is a life, which needs that the Holy Ghost should reveal to it the objects that are suited to it, and that awaken these tastes and feelings,

which satisfy them and cause them to grow. It needs that the Spirit of God should act in it to give it strength; but it is a real life, a nature which has its tastes attached to its very existence; [See Note #23] which, being enlightened by the Holy Ghost, is conscious of its own existence; and in which we are the children of God, being born of Him.

Neither is it unimportant that we should learn, with regard to the life of the flesh, and when thinking of it, although it be on the negative side, that we are dead; that God recognises nothing belonging to the old man; that He takes pleasure in a new nature, which is indeed ours by grace, but which is of God Himself, and which is the moral reflection of His own. We are dead then, and our life is hid with Christ in God. We have members on earth no recognised life; and we have to put to death [See Note #24] all these members of the old man. The Christian has to deny them practically as belonging to the old man, while his life is there where Christ is. They bring down the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Christians walked in these things when they had their life in them; but this is no longer the case: and they deny not only gross sins, the fruit of positive lusts (Col 3:5-6), but all the workings of an unbroken will and an unsubdued heart, every indication of the actings of the will of that nature which knows not God, and is not ruled by His fear, all anger and malice and falsehood flowing from selfishness or the fear of man. (Col 3:8.) Truth reigns in the heart which has put off the old man, according to the simplicity of the new man, [See Note #25] which is renewed also in knowledge after the image of Him who created it. (Col 3:9-10) The new man walks in the light. It is not only that there is a conscience which judges good and evil according to that which man ought to be according to his nature as a responsible being; there is a new man who judges the old man altogether, judging good and evil according to the knowledge of God. Such is the putting off.

Before Christianity, which is the full revelation of God, there were indeed, as need not be said, souls born anew; but their rule, when a rule was definitely given, was man's responsibility (whatever piety and grace might inspire), and the law, which was the perfect measure of that which man, as a being responsible to God, ought to be. Saints then did not distinguish between a new and an old man, although of necessity they had the conscience of the

old man and the tastes of the new in measure in many respects. The sense, for instance, of the evil of falsehood had not at all the same place as with the Christian. Now the new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him. [See Note #26] God Himself in His nature is the standard of good and evil, because the new man has the knowledge of what that nature is: he is made a partaker of it, and he has the light of God. It is an intelligent participation by grace in the nature of God, which is the marvelous and precious privilege of the Christian. God works in this nature; but by communicating it He has placed man in this position. Christ is the perfect model of this image, the type of the new man.

Other differences have disappeared: there remains but the old man, which we only acknowledge as dead, and the new man. To the latter Christ is all; so that there is none but He whom they see and whom they acknowledge, and He is in all believers. They put on therefore as such, as elect, holy, beloved (Christ being their life), the character of Christ, mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another if offence has been given, even as Christ has done to us. [See Note #27] Finally they put on love, the bond of perfectness, that which gives a divine character to all the qualities that have been enumerated, and that were manifested in Christ, and a divine check on taking amiable nature for divine grace, for divine love is holy.

And note here, that the putting on of these qualities is in the consciousness of the blessed place before God expressed in the words "elect of God, holy and beloved." It is as such. Nor can we do it otherwise. It is in the sense of this wondrous favour that grace develops itself in our hearts. So in Ephesians, "as dear children."

Several of these qualities may be resembled by things in nature; but the energy, the features, the bond of divine love, which acts in the sense of communion with God, are totally wanting in the latter; and this gives a character, a completeness, a righteousness of application, a perfection, a propriety, and an energy to the manifestation of these qualities, which love alone can give. For it is indeed God Himself who is there, acting in His nature which He has imparted to us. For He who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him. With regard to the state of the soul, there is a crown to this

walk, wherewith they who follow it constantly are adorned. The peace of Christ reigns in the heart, that sweet and ineffable peace which nothing could disturb, though His spirit passed through everything to try it, for He walked ever with God. God has also called us to this; He is the God of peace. And here the apostle introduces the oneness of the body, not as to its privileges in Christ, but as to the fact that Christians are called to be together in the unity of which peace is the seal and the bond. And then there will be thanksgiving; for the soul is conscious of the love and the activity of God, and everything flows to it from that love.

But, besides peace and thanksgiving towards God, there is the development of life in the knowledge of what is revealed, its food and joy. This too is enjoyed in the activity of life and love towards others. The enjoyment of God and of that which is in His presence leads to this activity of the soul. When the latter is real, it is the joyful liberty of a nature that is itself in health, the activity of love that is natural to it, and which receives its energy from communion with God, according to His nature. The word of Christ unfolds all that is revealed to the soul as that in which it lives, and in which it expands itself, and is thus the rule, and active and directing power, because it is the expression of that nature, and the revelation of all its ways, and of its active energy in love in Him.

The apostle therefore exhorts that the word of Christ may dwell in them richly. This is the development, according to the perfection of God, of the new man, and the wisdom of God to form and direct him. Paul desires that Christians may fully realise this. It is by communion with the Lord, holding intercourse with Him, that it is done. The word being that in which the wisdom is found; also according to this development the saints can teach and admonish each other. [See Note #28] But in this case it is not only wisdom that we learn, and that is displayed in us, but affections in connection with Him in whom we have found this wisdom, so that these expressions of the life of Christ, as true wisdom in the world, find their voice in our hearts in praise, in thanksgiving, in singing His excellency. All the intimate affections in which spiritual life develops itself express themselves, according to what we have learned: they flow from the Spirit of Christ, and are the expression of the soul's connection with Him and of the feelings this

produces in the heart. Christ in His Person, in the consciousness of His presence, as the object of our thoughts, and in the moral fruits proceeding thence, sustains the intercourse and the communications of the soul that is occupied with His praises.

But this consciousness of relationship with Christ, in the life which is of Him in us, applies to everything. Nothing is done without Him. If He is the life, all which that life does has Him for its end and object, as far as the heart is concerned. He is present as that which is the governing motive, and gives its character to our actions, and which preoccupies our heart in performing them. Everything relates to Him: we do not eat without Him; (how can we when He is our very life?) we do not drink with out Him; what we say, what we do, is said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus. There is the sense of His presence; the consciousness that everything relates to Him, that we can do nothing unless carnally with out Him, because the life which we have of Him acts with Him and in Him, does not separate from Him, and has Him for its aim in all things, even as water rises to the height from which it descended. This is what characterises the life of the Christian. And what a life! Through Him, dwelling in the consciousness of divine love, we give thanks to our God and Father.

Observe here that the christian life is not only characterised by certain subjective qualities which flow from Christ, but by its having Christ Himself for the aim and object of the heart and mind in all that we do in every respect. Christ personally reigns in, and is pleasant to, the heart in everything.

To the inexperienced eye of man nature is often confounded with grace; but the intelligent consciousness of Christ as the heart's object, of His presence, of the seal of His approval when one thinks of Him cannot be confounded with anything. There is nothing, that resembles it, nothing that can appear to take its place. When He reveals Himself to our heart, and the heart walks with Him, and communes with Him in all things, and seeks only the light of His countenance, the seal of His favour on the soul in all things, then He is known, well known. There is none but He who thus communicates Himself to the soul when it walks in the way of His will, as expressed in the word.

After these great and important principles of the new life the apostle enters into the diverse relations of life, giving warnings against that which would endanger them, by shewing what the christian character of each one of them is. To the wife, obedience affection was natural to her. "Thy desire shall be to thy husband." To the husband, affection and kindness his heart may be indifferent and hard. Children are to be obedient; fathers, gentle, in order that the children's affections may not be estranged from them, and that they may not be induced to seek that happiness in the world which they ought to find in the sanctuary of the domestic circle, which God has formed as a safeguard for those who are growing up in weakness; the precious home (if Christ is acknowledged) of kind affections, in which the heart is trained in the ties which God Himself has formed; and that in connection with the Lord, and which, by cherishing the affections, preserves from the passions and from self-will; and which, where its strength is rightly developed, has a power that, in spite of sin and disorder, awakens the conscience and engages the heart, keeping it away from evil and the direct power of Satan. For it is God's appointment.

I know indeed that another power is required to deliver the heart from sin and to keep it from sin. Nature, even as God created it, does not give eternal life, nor does it restore innocence or purify the conscience. We may, by the energy of the Spirit, consecrate ourselves to God outside these relationships, renounce them even, if God should call us by more powerful obligations, as Christ teaches us in the gospel. The rights of Christ over man lost by sin are sovereign, absolute, and complete. He has redeemed him; and the redeemed one is no longer his own, but belongs to Him who gave Himself for him. Where relationships exist, sin indeed has perverted every thing, and corrupted the will; passions come in; but the relationships themselves are of God: woe to him who despises them as such! If grace has wrought and the new life exists, it acknowledges that which God has formed. It well knows that there is no good in man, it knows that sin has marred everything, but that which sin has marred is not itself sin. And where these relationships exist, the renunciation of self-will, death to sin, the bringing in of Christ, the operation of life in Him, restore their power; and if they cannot give back the character of innocence (lost for ever), they can make them a scene for the operations of grace, in which meekness,

tenderness, mutual help, and self-denial, in the midst of the difficulties and sorrows which sin has introduced, lend them a charm and a depth (even as Christ did in every relationship) which innocence itself could not have presented. It is grace acting in the life of Christ in us which develops itself in them.

To be without natural affection is a sin of hopeless apostacy and estrangement from God, of the complete selfishness of the last days.

I am not drawing a false picture, or speaking poetically, as though the bright side were all; I only say that God has formed these relationships, and that whosoever fears God will respect them. Grace is requisite. They give occasion, through their intimacy itself, to all that is most painful, if grace do not act in them. The apostle warns us here of this danger. If the Lord is the bond in them, if our still closer union with Him forms the strength of our natural relationships, then grace reigns here as elsewhere; and, to those who stand in these relationships, they become a scene for the lovely display of the life of Christ.

Note #21

Hence we have no justification in Ephesians. It treats of a new creation.

Note #22

This difference is of deep interest, and brings out the character of the Epistle to the Ephesians in a remarkable way an epistle in which everything is influenced by the high point of view taken by the Spirit, and flows from the original and eternal counsels of God, and from His operation to bring those counsels to perfection the settled purposes of His own heart. He desires to have He creates something in order to shew forth the immense riches of His grace. He has taken the dead and the lost: but they are only the objects of His operations, suited to make these manifest on account of their own condition. He does not work upon the nature of man, because it is contrary to His own, in order to destroy this contrariety. He quickens from the dead, and creates. In Colossians the death of the old man is spoken of, which it was necessary to take into consideration. God be praised, we are entitled to view it as already dead, because Christ has died for us.

Note #23

With this difference between the actings of the Spirit, and the existence of the new life, is connected the liberty of the soul. When we are born of God, we have necessarily a taste for holiness love acts in us we take pleasure in the righteousness of God. But, by virtue of these sentiments, although my heart appreciates love in God, and this love attracts me and inspires me with a measure of confidence, yet my conscience condemns me, I feel that I am not that which I love. I am under the law, and uncertain of my relationship with God. When I have learnt the value of Christ's blood, that He is my righteousness, the Holy Ghost dwelling and acting in me gives me the sense of my relationship with God. I have the consciousness of it in my soul, and the Holy Ghost bears witness of it. There is liberty.

Note #24

It is a very different thing from dying to sin. This supposes evil in the thing that dies (save of course in the case of Christ who did it for those who had), whereas putting to death is an act of power in that which is good the new man.

Note #25

These three form the whole character of evil in man: generally, violence and corruption, the last taking the twofold form of lust and falsehood. So, before the flood, the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. Falsehood is Satan's form of corruption, and violence also characterises Him. The Lord declares him to be a liar and a murderer. (Joh 8:44) Man adds the lust because of flesh.

Note #26

Note here the difference of the corresponding phrase in Ephesians. There the Christian is created after God in righteousness and true holiness. Here it is the new apprehensions of the divine life which knows God. It is our state, not Gods creative act. Not that this contradicts the Ephesian view; on the contrary, " renewed " here is another word from Ephesians. It is that which is wholly new, never was there before (anakainoumenoi). In Ephesians " renewed " is what is kept fresh and new.

Note #27

Remark here how patience and graciousness and long suffering characterise the Christian. It is remarkable how this is the case everywhere. So must it be in a world like this. So was it in Christ. So in 1 Corinthians 13. the traits of charity are all subjective and of this character. Not that that is a definition of charity, but it is characteristic of it. Where these traits are wanting, charity is.

Note #28

It is simpler to put the stop after "one another", and only a comma before "teaching".

Colossians Chapter 4

It will be observed how the apostle consequently introduces Christ into them, and especially in regard to those who are subject in them, wives and children; in order to sanctify, by so exalted a motive, the obediencesuited to their position. He does this still more where the tie is not of nature but one which has its origin in a sinful world and from sin itself-that between slaves and their masters. Grace does not set itself to change the state of the world and of society, but to lead souls to heaven by renewing them after the image of God. I doubt not that it has very much altered for the better the social condition of man; because, through bringing the conscience immediately before the only true God whom it has revealed in His own perfections, and establishing by its authority that of the natural relationships in the human family, grace has had its effect upon that conscience even where the heart was not converted, and has furnished it with a rule in that which regards morality. But Christianity, as to its own doctrine, treats the world as alienated from God, and lying in evil man as the child of wrath, and lost.

Christ, the Son of God (who if He had been received could have put all things right, and who will hereafter by His kingdom establish righteousness and peace), was rejected by the world, and the friendship of the world is enmity against God. The state of man is treated in the gospel in a deeper way than in regard to his social condition. It is viewed with reference to the soul's connection with God, and consequently with that which is eternal. God

imparts a new life unto us, in order that we may enjoy those new relationships with Himself which redemption has gained for us. Now as Christ, while living, was the expression of the love and the omnipotent goodness of God in the midst of a fallen creation, so, being now rejected by the world (which thus condemned itself), Christ, who dwells by His grace in the heart of one who has received life, becomes to that heart a source of happiness in communion with the love of God, which lifts it up and sets it above circumstances, be they what they may. The slave, in possessing Christ, is free in heart; he is the freed man of God Himself. The master knows that he himself has a Master, and the relationship in which he finds himself takes the form of the grace and love that reigns in the heart of him who in it exercises his authority.

But, as I have said, to the poor slave Christ is especially presented as a resource. He may serve his master, whether a good or bad one, with faithfulness, meekness, and devotedness; because in so doing he serves the Lord Himself, and is conscious that he does so. He will have his reward there where nothing is forgotten that is done to glorify Christ, and where masters and slaves are all before Him who has no respect of persons.

Two principles act in the heart of the Christian slave: his conscience in all his conduct is before God; the fear of God governs him, and not his master's eye. And he is conscious of his relationship to Christ, of the presence of Christ, which sustains and lifts him above everything. It is a secret which nothing can take from him, and which has power over everything because it is within and on high Christ in him, the hope of glory. Yes, how admirably does the knowledge of Christ exalt everything that it pervades; and with what consoling power does it descend into all that is desolate and cast down, all that groans, all that is humbled in this world of sin!

Three times in these two Verses, while holding their conscience in the presence of God the apostle brings in the Lord, the Lord Christ, to fill the hearts of these poor slaves, and make them feel who it was to whom they rendered service. Such is Christianity.

The apostle ends his epistle with some important general exhortations.

He desires that the saints should continue through prayer in communion with God, and in the sense of their dependence on Him, conscious of His nearness to them, and of His readiness to hear them. For that which speaks to the heart for our walk is not enough; the soul must know it's own relations with God exercising itself in those relations; and it must receive directly from Him that which assures it of His love. There must be perseverance in this. We are in conflict with evil, which has a hold upon our own hearts if we are without the strength of God. We must therefore commune with God. We must watch therein with settled purpose of heart, not merely as an occasional thing: any one can cry out when he is in need. But the heart separated from the world and all that is of it occupies itself with God, with all that regards the glory of His name, according to the measure in which we are concerned in it. The conflict is carried on with a tender and freed spirit, having only His glory as the object, both in the assembly and in the individual walk. But thus one understands that God works and that He does not forsake us, and thanksgiving is always mingled with the prayers we address to Him.

Paul felt his dependence on this blessing, and he asked for a share also in their prayers, that God might open his mouth, and that he might proclaim the gospel as he ought to do.

Now we are in a hostile world, in which hostility is easily awakened where it does not already exist openly, and in which offence is quickly taken at things wherein perhaps we neither saw nor intended evil. We must take away the occasion even from those that seek it, and walk in wisdom with respect to them that are without.

How clearly the within and the without are here distinguished! Those within, whom God acknowledges, His family, His assembly they are His own. Those without, they are the world, those who are not joined to the Lord. The distinction is plainly marked, but love is active towards them that are without, and, being itself in the enjoyment of communion with God, it is careful to do nothing that might prevent others from enjoying it.

But there was something more: they were to redeem the time. The natural man, taken up with his own affairs, and disinclined to serious things, gave

Christian love little opportunity to set grace and truth before him and make him care for his own soul, thus serving the Lord and using time in His name. The heart of man cannot always escape the influence of surrounding circumstances, which bear witness to his heart and conscience that he is under the dominion of sin, and already eating its bitter fruits here below circumstances which bring to his conscience the remembrance of a too-much forgotten God, which speak with the mighty voice of sorrow to a broken heart, glad at least to have a resource in God when his hand is pierced by the broken reed on which he leaned. God Himself acts upon man by these circumstances, and by every circumstance of life. One who is walking with the Lord knows how to avail himself of them. Satan may indeed deceive a man, but he cannot prevent God at all times from speaking to the heart. It is a happy thing so to walk with God that He can use us as His voice, when He would thus speak to poor sinners. Our speech ought always to be the expression of the separation from evil, this power of the presence of God which keeps us inwardly apart from it, so as to make that power felt by others; and that, in all the questionings which arise in the heart of man, wandering out of the way in confusion and darkness, and even leading others astray thereby, we may know how to give an answer which comes from the light and conveys light.

Tychicus was to carry the testimony of the interest which the apostle took in the welfare of the Colossians, and of his confidence in their interest in him, Paul bears witness to the love of others, and to their concern also in the progress of the gospel and the prosperity of the faithful.

Marcus, who had formerly drawn back from the toils of the work, receives a testimony here on the apostle's part and a still better one later (Ti2 4:11), for he had made himself useful to the apostles himself. Such is grace, The secret of the interest Barnabas took in him comes out here: he was nearly related to him, This dear servant of God was from Cyprus too. He went there and took Mark with him, The flesh and Judaism find their way everywhere. The power of the Spirit of God is requisite to raise us above, and set us beyond, their influence.

Demas receives no especial testimony. The apostle conveys his greetings, but is silent as to himself. Only in the Epistle to Philemon is he named as a

fellow-laborer of the apostle. Afterwards he forsook Paul. He was a brother: the apostles admits his claim but says nothing; had had nothing to say. "And Demas," for Paul's style is terribly cold.

We may observe that the Epistle to the Ephesians was written at the same time, and sent by this same Tychicus. The one "from Laodicea" is, I doubt not, one that they were to receive from that assembly, written by Paul, and by which the saints at Colosse were to profit; possibly the Epistle to the Ephesians, which he may have had communicated to the Laodiceans. Be this as it may, all that is said is that it was one of which the assembly at Laodicea were in possession and by no means that it was directly addressed to them; rather the contrary. It is very possible that a letter, or a hundred letters, may have been written by Paul to others, which it was not in the purposes of God to preserve for the universal assembly: but here there is no proof that a letter had been written to the Laodiceans. Tychicus was the bearer of two; he may have been the bearer of three, one of which differed only in some details of application which might serve to confirm the Colossians without being in the main another Divine communication for other days; but, I repeat, it does not appear to be so from that which is said here. It might be said, a letter "from Laodicea," because it was there instead of a letter to Laodicea; but it is not the usual mode of expression. We have seen that the letter to the Ephesians is another communication of the Spirit of God. It has been preserved for us. We do not know whether that from Laodicea was the same communicated by them to the Christians of that city; or another, which they were to send to the Colossians (an assembly in their vicinity), and which adding nothing to the divine relations has not been preserved for us.

It appears that Christians were not very numerous at Laodicea. The apostle salutes the brethren there. There were some who assembled in the house of one Nymphas; they were not in a case to have a letter addressed to them in particular: still the apostle does not forget them. But that which he says here is an almost certain proof that the apostle had not addressed any epistle to them. He would not have sent greetings through the Colossians to the brethren in Laodicea, if at the same time he had written a special epistle to the latter. The case is plain enough: there were brethren at Laodicea, but not in great numbers and not in that distinct position which gave rise to an

epistle. But this little assembly in the house of Nymphas was not to be forgotten; it should profit by the epistles addressed to other assemblies more considerable than itself, and whose condition required an epistle, or gave occasion to write one, which epistles were transmitted to Laodicea, according to the apostle's order.

With regard to the Epistle to the Colossians, it is not a supposition. The apostle commands them expressly to have it read in the assembly at Laodicea. The latter had also received another epistle from some other assembly, and the Colossians were to profit by it in the same manner. The two assemblies, which were near each other, were mutually to enjoy the spiritual favors that were granted them.

The apostle does not forget individuals even. Archippus receives a solemn exhortation to take heed to the ministry which the Lord had committed to him, and to fulfill his service. The apostle had not seen these assemblies.
(Col 2:1)

1 THESSALONIANS

Introduction to I Thessalonians

We find in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, and especially in the first (for in the second it was already needful to guard that freshness from the perfidious attacks of the enemy), the condition and the hope of the Christian as such in this world in all its freshness. These two epistles are the first that Paul wrote, unless we except that to the Galatians, the date of which is uncertain. Already long occupied with the work, it is only when this work was considerably advanced that in watching over it he guards it by means of his writings, as we have seen, various in character, according to the state of the churches, and according to the divine wisdom which, by this means, deposited in the scriptures that which would be necessary for all ages.

Newly converted, the Christians at Thessalonica suffered much from the persecution of the world a persecution which the Jews of that place had already previously stirred up against Paul himself. Happy at the gracious work there, and rejoicing in the state of his dear children in the faith (a testimony to which was borne everywhere, even by the world), the apostle opens his heart; and the Holy Ghost sets forth by his mouth what that christian condition was upon the earth which was the source of his joy in the case of the Thessalonians; and what the hope which threw its light upon the believer's existence, shining around him through his whole life, and illumining his path in the wilderness. In a word the christian character is unfolded to our eyes with all its motives and its joys and that in connection with the testimony of God and the hope which is our strength in bearing it.

We all know that the doctrine of the coming of Christ, which universally accompanies the work of the Spirit that attaches our hearts to Him in the first spring of a new life, is specially presented to us in these two epistles. And it is not merely formally taught as a doctrine; it is linked with every spiritual relationship of our souls, it is displayed in all the circumstances of the Christian's life. We are converted in order to wait for Him. The joy of the

saints in the fruits of their labors is realised in His presence. It is at the coming of Christ that holiness has all its value, its measure being seen in that which is then manifested. It is the consolation when Christians die. It is the unexpected judgment of the world. It is unto the coming of Christ that God preserves His own in holiness, and blameless. We shall see these points set forth in detail in the different Chapters of the first epistle. We only point them out here. In general we shall find that personal relationships, and the expectation of His appearing, have a remarkable and enlivening freshness in this epistle in every respect. The Lord is present to the heart is its object; and christian affections spring up in the soul, causing the fruits of the Spirit to abound.

In these two epistles only is an assembly said to be "in God the Father," that is to say, planted in this relationship having its moral existence its mode of being in it. The life of the assembly developed itself in the communion that flowed from this relationship. The Spirit of adoption characterises it. With the affection of little children the Thessalonians knew the Father. Thus John says, when speaking of the little children in Christ, " I write unto you because ye have known the Father." It is the first introduction into the position of liberty in which Christ has placed us liberty before God and in communion with Him. Precious position! to be as children to One who loves as a Father, with all the liberty and tender affection of that relationship, according to divine perfection. For here it is not the adaptation of Christ's human experience to the wants in which He acquired it (precious as that grace is); it is our introduction into the unmingled enjoyment of the light, and of the divine affections displayed in the character of the Father. It is our communion, tender and confiding but pure, with Him whose love is the source of all blessing. Nor do I doubt that, freshly brought out of heathenism as the Thessalonians were, the apostle refers to their knowledge of the one true God the Father in contrast with their idols.

1 Thessalonians Chapter 1

1 Thessalonians 1:1

th1 1:1

The apostle, in declaring (as was his custom) that which he felt respecting them the aspect in which they appeared to his heart and mind, speaks neither of gifts, as to the Corinthians, nor of the grand features of an exaltation that embraced the Lord and all saints, as to the Ephesians and even to the Colossians (with the addition of that which their state required); nor of the brotherly affection and fellowship of love which the Philippians had manifested in their connection with himself; nor of a faith that existed apart from his labors, and in communion with which he hoped to refresh himself, adding to it that which his abundant gifts enabled him to impart to them, as he writes to the Romans whom he had not yet seen.

Here it is the life itself of the Christian in its first fresh impressions, in its intrinsic qualities, as it developed itself by the energy of the Holy Ghost on earth, the life of God here below in them, which he remembers in his prayers with so much satisfaction and joy. Three great principles, he tells the Corinthians (I Cor.13) form the basis, and ever abide as the foundation of this life faith, hope, and love. Now these three were the powerful and divine motives of the life of the Thessalonians. This life was not merely a habit; it flowed, in its outward activities, from immediate communion with its source. These activities were quickened and maintained by divine life, and by keeping the eye constantly fixed upon the object of faith. There was work, and labour, and endurance. There were the same in Ephesus, as we see it in Revelation 2. But here it was a work of faith, labour undertaken by love, endurance fed by hope. Faith, hope, and love are, we have seen, the springs of Christianity in this world. The work, the labour, the endurance continued at Ephesus, but ceased to be characterised by these great and mighty principles. The habit continued, but the communion was wanting They had forsaken their first love.

The first to the Thessalonians is the expression of the living power in which the assembly is planted: Ephesus, in Revelation 2, of its first departure from that state.

May our work be a work of faith, drawing its strength, its existence even, from our communion with God our Father! May it be, each moment, the fruit of the realisation of that which is invisible, of the life which lives in the

certainty, the immutable certainty, of the word! May it thus bear the impress of the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ, and be a testimony to it.

May our labour in service be the fruit of love, not performed merely as duty and obligation, although it was this, if we know that it is before us to be done!

May the patience that we must have, in order to go through this wilderness, be, not the necessity we feel because the path is before us, but an endurance sustained by the hope that belongs to our view of Jesus by faith, and that is waiting for Him !

These principles, faith, hope, and love, form our character as Christians: [See Note #1] but it cannot, and ought not to, be formed in us without having objects. Accordingly the Spirit presents them here. They have a twofold character. The heart rests by faith on Jesus, waits for Him, counts upon Him, links itself with Him in its walk. He has walked here below, He represents us in heaven, He watches over us as the good Shepherd. He loves His own; He nourishes and cherishes them: our faith and our hope keep Him always in view. The conscience is before God our Father; it is not in the spirit of fear: there is no uncertainty as to our relationship. We are the children of a Father who loves us perfectly; but we are before God. His light has authority and power in the conscience: we walk in the sense that His eye is upon us, in love but upon us. And light makes everything manifest. It judges all that might weaken the sweet and peaceful realisation of the presence of God, and our communion with Jesus, and our confidence in Him, the intimacy of the intercourse between our souls and the Lord. These two principles are of all importance for abiding peace, for the progress of our souls. Without them the soul flags. The one sustains confidence, the other keeps us in the light with a good conscience. Without the latter, faith (not to say more) loses its liveliness; without the former, the conscience becomes legal, and we lose spiritual strength, light and ardour.

The apostle reminds them also of the means used by God to produce this condition, that is, the gospel, the word, brought in power and in much assurance to the soul by the Holy Ghost. The word had power in their heart came to it as the word of God; the Spirit Himself revealed Himself in it, giving

the consciousness of His presence; and the consequence of this was the full assurance of the truth in all its power, in all its reality. The apostle's life, his whole conduct, confirmed the testimony which he bore formed a part of it. Accordingly (it is always the case) the fruit of his labors answered in character to him who laboured; the Christianity of the Thessalonians resembled that of Paul. It was like the walk of the Lord Himself whom Paul followed so closely. It was "in much affliction," for the enemy could not bear so plain a testimony, and God granted this grace to such a testimony, and "with joy of the Holy Ghost."

Happy testimony to the power of the Spirit working in the heart! When this is so, everything becomes testimony to others. They see that there is in Christians a power of which they are ignorant, motives which they have not experienced, a joy which they may scoff at but which they do not possess; a conduct which strikes them, and which they admire, although they do not follow it; a patience which shews the impotence of the enemy in striving against a power that endures everything, and that rejoices in spite of all his efforts. What can we do with those who allow themselves to be killed without becoming less joyful, nay, whom it makes more so; who are above all our motives when left to themselves, and who, if oppressed, possess their souls in perfect joy in spite of all our opposition; and who are unconquered by torments, finding in these only an occasion for bearing a stronger testimony that Christians are beyond our power? At peace, life is all of it a testimony; death even in torture, is still more so. Such is the Christian, where Christianity exists in its true power, in its normal condition according to God the word (of the gospel) and the presence of the Spirit, reproduced in the life, in a world estranged from God.

Thus it was with the Thessalonians; and the world, in spite of itself, became an additional witness to the power of the gospel. An ensample to believers in other places, they were the subject of report and conversation to the world, which was never weary of discussing this phenomenon, so new and so strange, of people who had given up all that governed the human heart, all to which it was subject, and worshiped one only living and true God, to whom even the natural conscience bore testimony. The gods of the heathen were the gods of the passions, not of the conscience. And this gave a living

reality, an actuality, to the position of Christians and to their religion. They waited for His Son from heaven.

Happy indeed were those Christians whose walk and whole existence made of the world itself a witness for the truth, who were so distinct in their confession, so consistent in their life, that an apostle did not need to speak of that which he had preached, of that which he had been among them. The world spoke of it for him and for them.

A few words on the testimony itself, which, simple as it may be, is of great importance, and contains principles of great moral depth. It forms the basis of the whole life, and of all the christian affections also, that are unfolded in the Epistle, which, besides this development, contains only a special revelation of the circumstances and the order of the coming of Christ to call His people to Himself, and of the difference between that event and the day of the Lord to judge the world, although this latter follows on the former.

That which the apostle points out, as the testimony borne by the faithful walk of the Thessalonians, contained three principal subjects: 1st, they had forsaken their idols to serve the living and true God; 2nd, they were waiting for His Son from heaven, whom He had raised from among the dead; 3rd, the Son was a safeguard from the wrath which was to be revealed.

An immense fact simple but of vast import characterises Christianity. It gives us a positive object; and this object is nothing less than God Himself. Human nature may discover the folly of that which is false. We scorn false gods and graven images; but we cannot get beyond ourselves, we cannot reveal anything to ourselves. One of the most renowned names of antiquity is pleased to tell us, that all would go well if men followed nature (it is manifest that they could not rise above it); and, in fact, he would be in the right if man were not fallen. But to require man to follow nature is a proof that he is fallen, that he has degraded himself below the normal state of that nature. He does not follow it in the walk that suits its constitution. All is in disorder. Self-will carries him away, and acts in his passions. Man has forsaken God, and has lost the power and centre of attraction that kept him in his place and everything in his own nature in its place. Man cannot recover himself, he cannot direct himself; for, apart from God, there is nothing but

self-will that guides man. There are many objects that furnish occasion for the acting of the passions and the will; but there is no object which, as a centre, gives him a regular, constant, and durable moral position in relationship with that object, so that his character should bear its stamp and value. Man must either have a moral centre, capable of forming him as a moral being, by attracting him to itself and filling his affections, so that he shall be the reflex of that object; or he must act in self-will, and then he is the sport of his passions; or, which is the necessary consequence, he is the slave of any object that takes possession of his will. A creature, who is a moral being, cannot subsist without an object. To be self-sufficing is the characteristic of God.

The equilibrium which subsisted in the unconsciousness of good and evil is lost. Man no longer walks as man, having nothing in his mind outside his normal condition, outside that which he possessed; not having a will, or, which comes to the same thing, having a will that desired nothing more than it possessed, but that gratefully enjoyed all that was, already appropriated to its nature, and especially the companionship of a being like himself, a help who had his own nature, and who answered to his heart blessing God for everything.

Now man wills. While he has lost that which formed the sphere of his enjoyment, there is in him an activity which seeks, which is become unable to rest without aiming at, something farther; which has already, as will, thrown itself into a sphere that it does not fill, in which it lacks intelligence to apprehend all that is there and power to realise even that which it desires. Man, and all that has been his, no longer suffices man as enjoyment. He still needs an object. This object will either be above or below the man. If it be below, he degrades himself below himself; and it is this indeed which has taken place. He no longer lives according even to nature (as he to whom I have alluded says), a state which the apostle has described in the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans with all the horrors of the plain truth. If this object be above himself and below God, there is still nothing to govern his nature, nothing that puts him morally in his place. A good being could not take this place to exclude God from it. If a bad object gains it, he becomes to the man, a god, who shuts out the true God, and degrades man

in his highest relationship the worst of all degradations. This too has taken place. And since these beings are but creatures, they only can govern man by that which exists, and by that which acts upon him. This is to say, they are the gods of his passions. They degrade the idea of the Divinity: they degrade the practical life of humanity into slavery to the passions (which are never satisfied, and which invent evil when they are surfeited with excess in that which is natural to them) and are thus left without resource. Such in fact was the condition of man under Paganism.

Man, and above all, man having knowledge of good and evil, should have God for his object; and as an object that his heart can entertain with pleasure, and on which his affections can be exercised: other wise he is lost. The gospel Christianity has given him this, God, who fills all things, who is the source of, in whom is centered, all blessing, all good God, who is all love, who has all power, who embraces everything in His knowledge, because everything (except the forsaking of Himself) is but the fruit of His mind and will God has revealed Himself in Christ to man, in order that his heart, occupied with with Him, with perfect confidence in His goodness, may know Him, may enjoy His presence, and reflect His character.

The sin and misery of man have but lent occasion to an infinitely more complete development of what this God is, and of the perfection of His nature, in love, in wisdom, and in power. But we are here considering only the fact, that He has given Himself to man for an object. Nevertheless, although the misery of man has but given room for a much more admirable revelation of God, yet God Himself must have an object worthy of Himself to be the subject of His purposes, and in order to unfold all His affections. This object is the glory of His Son His Son Himself. A being of an inferior nature could not have been this to Him, although God can glorify Himself in His grace to such and one. The object of the affections, and the affections that are exercised with regard to it, are necessarily correlative. Thus God has displayed His sovereign and immense grace with regard to that which was the most wretched, the most unworthy, the most necessitous; and He has displayed all the majesty of His being, all the excellence of His nature, in connection with an object in whom He could find all His delight, and exhibit all that He is in the glory of His nature. But it is as man marvelous truth in the

eternal counsels of God! that this object of God the Father's delight has taken His place in this glorious revelation by which God makes Himself known to His creatures. God has ordained and prepared man for this, Thus the heart that is taught by the Spirit knows God as revealed in this immense grace, in the love that comes down from the throne of God to the ruin and misery of the sinner; he finds himself, in Christ, in the knowledge and in the enjoyment of the love which God has for the object of His eternal delight, who also is worthy of being so; of the communications by which He testifies that love (Joh 17:7,8); and, finally, of the glory which is its public demonstration before the uniVerse. This latter part of our ineffable blessedness is the subject of Christ's communications at the end of John's Gospel. (Chaps 14, 16, and, in particular 17) [See Note #2] From the moment that the sinner is converted and believes the gospel, and (to complete his state, I must add) is sealed with the Holy Ghost, now that the blessed Lord has wrought redemption, he is introduced as to the principle of his life into this position, into these relationships with God. He is perhaps but a child; but the Father whom he knows, the love into which he has entered, the Saviour on whom his eyes are opened, are the same whom he will enjoy when he shall know as he is known. He is a Christian; he is turned from idols to God, and to wait for His Son from heaven.

We may observe, that the subject here is not the power which converts, nor the source of life. Of these other passages speak clearly. Here it is the character of the life in its manifestation. Now this depends on its objects. Life is exercised and unfolded in connection with its objects, and thus characterises itself. The source from which it flows makes it capable of enjoying it; but an intrinsic life which has no object on which it depends is not the life of a creature. Such life as that is the prerogative of God. This shews the folly of those who would have a subjective life, as they say, without its having a positively objective character; for this subjective state depends on the object with which it is occupied. It is the characteristic of God to be the source of His own thoughts without an object to be, and to be self-sufficing (because He is perfection, and the centre and source of everything), and to create objects unto Himself, if He would have any without Himself. In a word, although receiving a life from God which is

capable of enjoying Him, the moral character of man cannot be formed in him without an object that imparts it to him.

Now God has given Himself to us for an object, and has revealed Himself in Christ. If we occupy ourselves with God in Himself (supposing always that He had thus revealed Himself), the subject is too vast. It is an infinite joy; but in that which is simply infinite there is something wanting to a creature, although it is his highest prerogative to enjoy it. It is necessary to him on the one hand, in order that he may be in his place, and that God may have His place in regard to him, and on the other hand that which exalts him so admirably. It must be so; and it is the privilege given unto us, and given unto us in a priceless intimacy, for we are children, and we dwell in God, and God in us; but with this in itself there is a certain weight upon the heart in the sense of God alone. We read of "a far more exceeding and abundant weight [See Note #3] of glory." It must be so: His majesty must be maintained when we think of Him as God, His authority over the conscience. The heart God has so formed it needs something which will not lower its affections, but which may have the character of companion and friend, at least to which it has access in that character.

It is this which we have in Christ, our precious Saviour. He is an object near to us. He is not ashamed to call us brethren. He has called us friends; all that He has heard from His Father He has made known to us. Is He then a means of our eyes being turned away from God? On the contrary, it is in Him that God is manifested, in Him that even the angels see God. It is He who, being in the bosom of the Father, reveals to us His God and Father in this sweet relationship, and as He knows Him Himself. And not only this, but He is in the Father, and the Father in Him, so that He who has seen Him has seen the Father. He reveals God to us, instead of turning us away from Him. In grace He has already revealed Him, and we wait for the revelation of glory in Him. Already also on the earth, from the moment that He was born, the angels celebrated the good pleasure of God in man, for the object of His eternal delight had become a man. And now He has accomplished the work which makes possible the introduction of others, of sinners, into the enjoyment with Himself of this favour of God. Once enemies, "we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son."

It is thus that God has reconciled us to Himself. By faith thus knowing God, we " turn from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." The living and true God is the object of our joyful service. His Son, whom we know, who knows us, who will have us to be where He is, who has identified us with His own glory and His glory with us, He who is a glorified man for ever and firstborn among many brethren, is the object of our expectation. We expect Him from heaven, for our hopes are there, and there the seat of our joy.

We have the infinity of a God of love, the intimacy and the glory of Him who has taken part in all our infirmities, and, without sin, has borne all our sins. What a portion is ours !

But there was another side of the truth. Creatures are responsible; and, however great His love and His patience, God cannot allow evil nor contempt of His authority: if He did, all would be confusion and misery. God Himself would lose His place. There is a judgment; there is wrath to come. We were responsible; we have failed. How then shall we enjoy God and the Son in the way that I have spoken of?

Here comes in the application of the third truth of which the apostle speaks: "Which delivered us from the wrath to come." The work of Christ has perfectly sheltered us from this wrath; He took our place in responsibility on the cross to put away sin for us by the sacrifice of Himself.

These then are the three great elements of christian life. We serve the living and the true God, having forsaken our idols outward or inward. We expect Jesus for glory; for this sight of God makes us feel what this world is, and we know Jesus. As to our sins and our conscience, we are perfectly cleansed; we fear nothing. The life and walk of the Thessalonians was a testimony to these truths.

Note #1

They are found oftener in Paul's writings than is thought; as Th1 5:8 and Col 1:4-5. In Th2 1:3 we have faith and love, but he has to clear up their thoughts as to hope.

Note #2

Compare Pro 8:30,31, and Luk 2:14, where read, "good pleasure in men." It is beautiful to see the angels unjealously celebrating it. Love downwards in grace is great according to the misery and unworthiness of the object; upwards as the affection of the soul according to the worthiness; see both in Christ, Eph 5:2 In both in Christ self is wholly given up. He gave, not sought, Himself. The law takes self as measure as to the neighbor, and supposes him on the same footing. There is no love downwards.

Note #3

Weight and glory are the same word in Hebrew "Cabod".

1 Thessalonians Chapter 2

Having established these great principles, the apostle, with an open and overflowing heart, appeals to his whole walk among them as a proof of his having walked in the same spirit as in their own case he was rejoicing in. It was not that he exhorted others, while availing himself of their affection, for his own advantage. It was not that he encouraged them to endure afflictions, without having courage himself to undergo the same. Ill-treated and insulted at Philippi, he was bold in God to renew his attacks on the kingdom of darkness at Thessalonica, and that with great energy. He had not used flattering words to win them; he had set the truth before them, as being himself the servant of God. He had worked with his own hands, that he might not be burdensome to them. All was before God in the light and by the energy of the Holy Ghost, and in a spirit of devotedness; even as he desired that they should walk as they knew he had walked among them, as holily, justly, and unblamably; as also he had exhorted them, with all affection and tenderness, to walk worthy of God, who had called them unto His own kingdom and glory.

We see again in this expression the close relationship of the Christian, in his individual character, with God. He has his portion in God's own kingdom and glory, and his conduct should become such a position. Here it is his own position in relationship with God, as before it was his relationship with God and the Lord Jesus.

The apostle then speaks of the means by which this world of new thoughts was acquired by the Christian. It was that God had spoken to reveal Himself and His counsels. God had committed the gospel to Paul (Th1 2:4), and he had acted as being in the presence of God, and responsible to Him.

The Thessalonians also, on their part, had received the word, not as the word of Paul, but as the word of God Himself addressed to them by the mouth of Paul. It is interesting, as for us also a serious thought, to observe that (with regard to the manifestation of the power of God down here), although the work is of God, the fruit of His servants' labors answers to the character and depth of that labour itself. Thus the bonds of grace are established, and communion; there is mutual understanding. The work manifests the workman. The labourer rejoices in that which his heart had desired for the souls that are the fruit of his labour; and these know how to appreciate the walk and the work of the labourer, acknowledging the power of grace in him who was the means of bringing them into this position; and the one and the others, knowing God, rejoice in the fellowship of His grace.

Paul was very largely with God in his own soul and in his work. The Thessalonians had in consequence received the word in the same power; and they with him, were thus in communion with God according to that power and that intimacy.

We see here, in passing, the Jews deprived of this relationship with God, the remnant of that people received, and suffering from the enmity of the mass. The elect from among the Gentiles awakened, on their part, the hostility of their fellow-countrymen by the testimony which they bore against the prince of this world in their christian walk, and by their confession of a heavenly Christ a Christ whom the world had rejected.

The religion of the Jews had become pure jealousy of others. The pretension to the exclusive possession of religious privileges very precious when they enjoyed it with God as a testimony of His favour was nothing but a spring of hatred, when God in the fullness of His sovereign grace chose to bless others who had a right to nothing. By this exclusive pretension they denied the rights of God, who had formerly chosen them as a people; they denied His grace, according to which He acted towards sinners, and which would

have been the source of better blessings for themselves. But meantime their refusal to come in had transferred the scene of our hopes and our joys from earth to heaven, where we know the Lord, and where He will remain until He comes to assert His claims over the earth. Before He asserts them, He will take us to Himself.

Meanwhile the word of God is the source of our confidence the revelation of glory, of truth, and of love. It is mighty in them that believe. The Jews are set aside. By their opposition to grace towards the Gentiles, they had taken the position of enmity against God in grace, and wrath was come upon them to the uttermost. It was not yet executed; but they had put themselves in this position. It was not only that they had broken the law, they had already killed their prophets who were sent to them in grace; they had already slain the Christ, Jesus the Lord. Sovereign grace alone could bring in a remedy. This they resisted; because, according to that grace, God was good to the Gentiles, and granted to them, at the same time as to themselves, better privileges than those which they had forfeited. Wrath therefore was finally come upon them as a nation. Christians were now in the enjoyment of better privileges in place of the Jews.

It is not here the moment for explaining the future dealings of God with the remnant of that people. The apostle speaks here of the people, in order to shew that the only ones in relation with God were Christians those who had received the word. It was the reception of the word by faith, and nothing else, which brought souls really into relationship with God. Hereditary privileges were found to be, in their nature, opposition to grace and sovereignty, and thus to the character and rights of God Himself; for God is sovereign, and God is love.

The word reveals grace; it is obeyed by believing it. And, brought into relationship with God, the Christian walks in His communion and in His ways, and waits for the Son, in whom He has revealed Himself to men. This is the fruit of that which the Christian has received through believing an efficacious principle of life, and a light from God for the way.

The apostle blessed God that it was thus with the Thessalonians; and, having made this point clear, he returns to the joy of his communion with them in

the positive blessing which the revelation of God in their hearts by the word had brought them, He would gladly have seen them to enjoy this communion in intercourse with them face to face; but as long as it was by the word only that the knowledge of God was obtained in a word by faith as long as the Lord was absent, another result flowed from this fact; namely, that these joys were mingled with conflict conflict however, which, although to the eye of man interrupting enjoyment, made it more sweet, more real, preserved its heavenly character, and made the Lord Himself, from whom they could not be separated, the center, the common point in which hearts were united, with the consciousness that they were in the wilderness, and that they were awaiting a scene and a time in which evil and the enemy's power would no longer be, but where Christ would be all. Joyful hope, holy happiness, powerful link of the heart to Christ! When He shall be all, our joy will be complete, and all saints will possess it. Paul wished to have seen them again, and had so even twice, but Satan hindered it. The time should come when he would fully enjoy both them and his labour among them, by seeing them in full possession of glory at the coming of Christ.

In the apostle himself, when at Thessalonica, christian life was fully developed in love and in holiness. He had been among them in tenderness, as a mother cherishes her children; ready to impart not only the gospel to them but even his own life, so dear were they to him. He had been at the same time holy and without blame in all his conduct. What energy of life and love springing up by the power of God, regardless of all the consequences save the blessing of the elect and the glory of God! This is true christian life. The heart, not filled with questionings through unbelief but strong in faith, counts on God in order to serve God. Thus love is free, beside oneself for God, prudent and full of consideration only for the good of others. And what bonds this creates! Persecution only hastens the work by compelling to go elsewhere, when perhaps the labourer would be tempted to enjoy the fruits of his labour in the society of those who had been blessed through him. (Compare Th1 2:2) Though absent, the apostle's heart was still bound to them; he remembered his beloved ones; he prayed for them; he blessed God for the grace bestowed on them; assuring himself with joy, when he thought of it, of their portion in glory as the elect of God. (Th1 1:3-4; Th1 2:13)

The bond remained firm; and, the way to present enjoyment of personal communion being obstructed by the devices of Satan (by permission of God), his heart rose higher, and sought the full satisfaction of the want produced in it by love, in the moment when a Christ present in His power should have removed all obstacles and accomplished the purposes of God with respect to the saints; when His love should have borne all its precious fruits in them; and when Paul and his dear children in the faith should enjoy together all that grace and the power of the Spirit should have wrought in them. Unable for the moment to satisfy the desires of his heart by seeing them, it was to that hour that Paul looked. And observe that, if he does so, it is because his heart was already filled with it for himself. The power of the Spirit, acting in accordance with the truth, always leads the heart to that hour. It impels the heart to labour in love in the midst of this world, causes thus the opposition of the darkness of this world to the light (whether on the part of man or of the prince of darkness) to be realised, and makes us always feel the need of that day of light, when evil shall no longer be present to hinder the happiness of the new man in his enjoyment of that which is good, in his communion with those dear to God, and above all, in the enjoyment of the presence of his glorified Saviour, who has loved him, and who (for the exercise of his faith) is at present hidden from him.

It is He who is the source and object of all these affections, who sustains and nourishes them, who attracts them ever to Himself by His perfections and by His love, and, in the sorrows of the christian life, carries the heart onward thus to the day of our being with Himself, to the day of His coming, when the heart will be free to occupy itself with all that binds us to Him without interruption. This thought of His presence has the mastery, when the heart is fresh in the divine joy of redemption. We find this here. We are converted to wait for Him (chap 1); we shall enjoy the communion of saints, and the fruit of our labors when He returns (chap 2); that day gives its force and its measure to our thoughts respecting holiness (chap 3); it destroys the anguish of heart which would otherwise accompany the death of the saints (chap 4); it is for that day we are kept. (chap 5) The coming of the Lord, the presence of Jesus, fills therefore the believer's heart, when life is springing up in its freshness fills it with a joyous hope, the fulfillment of which shines bright before our eyes, there where all our desires will be accomplished.

To return to the end of Chapter 2, the link which Satan sought to break by interrupting its enjoyment was but the rather strengthened by being connected with the coming of the Lord. The current of the Spirit, against which he had been allowed to set up this dike, though turned from its natural bed, could not be stopped, for its waters ever flow; they gushed out in waves that enriched all around them, taking their course towards that sea which contained the fullness of those waters and fed the source from which they sprang.

It should be observed here, that the special fruits of our labors are not lost; they are found again at the coming of Christ. Our chief personal joy is to see the Lord Himself and to be like Him. This is the portion of all saints; but there are particular fruits in connection with the work of the Spirit in us and by us. At Thessalonica the spiritual energy of the apostle had brought a number of souls to God and to wait for Jesus, and into a close union in the truth with Himself. This energy would be crowned at the coming of Christ by the presence of these believers in the glory as the fruit of his labors. God would thus crown the apostle's work by bearing a striking testimony to its faithfulness in the presence of all these saints in glory; and the love which had wrought in Paul's heart would be satisfied by seeing its object in glory and in the presence of Jesus. They would be his glory and joy. This thought drew yet closer the bonds that united them, and comforted the apostle in the midst of his toils and sufferings.

1 Thessalonians Chapter 3

Now this forced removal of the apostle as the chief labourer, without weakening the bond between him and the disciples, formed other links which would consolidate and strengthen the assembly, knitting it together by that which every joint supplied. This is connected (all things are but the instruments of the power and wisdom of God) with the circumstances of which the Acts of the Apostles give us the principal details.

After the persecutions excited by the Jews the apostle made a short stay at Thessalonica, and was then obliged to leave that city and go to Berea. Even there the Jews of Thessalonica followed him, and influenced those of Berea, so that the Berean brethren had to provide for his safety. The person to

whom they committed him brought him to Athens; Silas and Timotheus remained at Berea for the moment, but soon at his command rejoined him at Athens. Meantime a violent persecution raged against the Christians at Thessalonica, a city of importance, in which, as it appears, the Jews had already exercised a considerable measure of influence over the heathen population an influence that was undermined by the progress of Christianity, which the Jews in their blindness rejected.

The apostle, learning this state of things from Silas and Timotheus, was concerned at the danger his new converts ran in being shaken in faith by the difficulties that beset their path while they were still young in the faith. His affection would not allow him to rest without putting himself in communication with them, and already from Athens he had sent Timotheus to inquire into their condition, and to establish their hearts by reminding them that while yet with them he had told them these things would happen. During his absence Paul left Athens and went to Corinth, where Timotheus again comforted him by the good tidings he brought from Thessalonica, and the apostle resumed his labors at Corinth with renewed energy and courage. (See Act 18:5)

On the arrival of Timotheus Paul wrote this letter. Timotheus had informed him of the good state of the Thessalonian Christians that they held fast the faith, that they greatly desired to see the apostle, and that they walked together in love. In the midst of his sorrows, and of the opposition of men in a word, of the afflictions of the gospel the apostle's spirit is refreshed by these tidings. He is himself strengthened, for if the faith of the labourer is the means of blessing to souls, and in general the measure of the outward character of the work, the faith of the Christians who are the fruit of his labors, and who correspond to it is in return a source of strength and encouragement to the labourer; even as their prayers are a great means of blessing to him.

Love finds in their spiritual welfare both its food and its joy; faith, that which sustains and strengthens it. The word of God is felt in it. "I live," says the apostle, "if ye stand fast in the Lord. "What thanks," he adds, "can we render to God for you, for all the joy wherewith we rejoice for your sakes before God?" Beautiful and affecting picture of the effect of the operation

of the Spirit of God, delivering souls from the corruption of the world, and producing the purest affections, the greatest self-renunciation for the sake of others, the greatest joy in their happiness divine joy, realised before God Himself, and the value of which was appreciated in His presence by the spiritual heart that abode in it, the heart which, on the part of that God of love, had been the means of its existence.

What a bond is the bond of the Spirit! How selfishness is forgotten, and disappears in the joy of such affections! The apostle, animated by this affection, which increased instead of growing weary by its exercise, and by the satisfaction it received in the happiness of others, desires so much the more, from the Thessalonians being thus sustained, to see them again; not now for the purpose of strengthening them, but to build upon that which was already so established, and to complete their spiritual instruction by imparting that which was yet lacking to their faith. But he is, and he ought to be, a labourer and not a master (God makes us feel this), and he depends entirely on God for his work, and for the edification of others. In fact years passed away before he saw the Thessalonians again. He remained a long time at Corinth, where the Lord had much people; he re-visited Jerusalem, then all Asia Minor where he had laboured earlier; thence he went to Ephesus, where he abode nearly three years; and after that he saw the Thessalonians again, when he left that city to go to Corinth, taking his journey by the way of Macedonia, in order not to visit Corinth before the restoration of the Christians there to order.

"God himself " it is thus that the apostle's desire and his submission to the will of God expresses itself "God himself direct our way unto you." His desire is not vague. He refers to God as to his Father, the source of all these holy affections, Him who holds the place of Father to us, and orders all things with a view to the good of His children, according to that perfect wisdom which embraces all things and all His children at once. "Our God and Father himself," the apostle says. But there is another consideration not, assuredly, in opposition to this, for God is one, but which has another and less individual character: and he adds "And our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ is Son over God's house, and besides joy and blessing and individual affection, there was the progress, the welfare, and the development of the whole

assembly to be considered. These two parts of Christianity act assuredly upon each other.

Where the operation of the Spirit is full and unhindered, the well-being of the assembly and the individual affections are in harmony. If anything is lacking in the one, God uses the failure itself to act powerfully on the other. If the assembly as a whole is weak, individual faith is exercised in a special manner, and more immediately upon God Himself. There are no Elijahs and Elishas in the reign of Solomon. On the other hand the watchful care of the assembly by those divinely engaged in it is the true energy of its spiritual organization, strengthens the life, and re-awakens the spiritual affections of its slumbering members. But the two things are different. Therefore the apostle adds to "our God and Father," "and our Lord Jesus Christ," who, as we have said according to Hebrews 3, is a Son over His house. It is a blessing that our path depends on the love of a Father, who is God Himself, acting according to the tender affections expressed by that name; and, as to the well-being of the assembly, that it depends on the government of a Lord like Jesus, who loves it with a perfect love: and who, although He took such a place, is the God who created all things, the Man who has all power in heaven and on earth, to whom Christians are the objects of incessant and faithful care which He expends in order to bring the assembly finally unto Himself in glory according to the counsels of God. [See Note #4] Such then was the apostle's first wish, and such were they with regard to whom he formed it, Meanwhile he must leave his beloved Thessalonians to the immediate care of the Lord on whom he depended (compare Act 20:32) To that his heart turns May God "direct my way to come to you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all." And his heart could present its affection for them, as the pattern of that which they ought to feel for others. This power of love maintains the heart in the presence of God and makes it find its joy in the light of His presence and earnestly desire that all saints may be in His presence, their hearts fitted for it and there. For God is love, and the exercise of love in the Christian's heart (fruit of the presence and the operation of the Spirit) is in fact the effect of the presence of God; and at the same time it makes us feel His presence, so that it keeps us before Him and maintains sensible communion in the heart. Love may suffer and thereby prove its strength, but we are

speaking of the spontaneous exercise of love towards the objects which God presents to it.

Now, being thus the development of the divine nature in us, and the sustainment of our hearts in communion with God Himself, love is the bond of perfectness, the true means of holiness, when it is real. The heart is kept, far away from the flesh and its thoughts, in the pure light of the presence of God which the soul thus enjoys. For this reason the apostle prays, while waiting to give them more light, that the Lord would increase love in them in order to establish their hearts unblamable in holiness before God even our Father in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. Here we find again the two great principles of which I spoke at the end of Chapter 1: God in the perfection of His nature; and the Lord Jesus in the intimacy of His connection with us God however as Father, and Jesus as Lord. We are before God, and Jesus comes with His saints. He has brought them to perfection: they are with Him and thus before God known in the relationship of Father.

Observe also that everything refers to this hope: it was an actual and present expectation. If they were converted it was to serve God and to wait for His Son from heaven. Everything related to that wondrous moment when He should come. That which holiness was would be demonstrated when they should be before God, and the saints would be with their Head; moreover manifested with Him in glory, even as then they should also fully enjoy the fruit of their labour, and the reward of love in the joy of all those whom they had loved. [See Note #5] The scene which would be the consummation of the work is presented here in all its moral bearing. We are before God, in His presence, where holiness is demonstrated in its true character; we are there for perfect communion with God in the light, where the connection of holiness with His nature and with the manifestation of Himself is apparent; even as this manifestation is in connection with the development of a nature in us, which by grace sets us in relationship with Him.

"Unblamable," he says, "in holiness," and in holiness "before God." He is light. What immense joy, what power, through grace, in this thought, for the

time present, to keep ourselves manifested before Him! But only love, known in Him, can do this.

But also we add "Our Father." It is a known and real relationship, which has its own peculiar character, a relationship of love. It is not a thing to be acquired, and holiness is not the means of acquiring it. Holiness is the character of our relationship with God, inasmuch as we have received His nature as His children, and it is the revelation of the perfection of that nature in Him in love. Love itself has given us that nature, and has placed us in that relationship; practical holiness is its exercise in communion with God, having fellowship with Him in His presence according to the love which we thus know, that is, God Himself as He has revealed Himself towards us.

But the heart is not alone: there is companionship in this joy and in this perfection; and above all it is with Jesus Himself. He will come, He will be present, and not only He who is the Head, but all the saints with Him will be there also. It will be the accomplishment of the ways of God respecting those whom He had given to Jesus. We shall see Him in His glory, the glory which He has taken in connection with His coming for us. We shall see all the saints in whom He will be admired, and see them in the perfection which our hearts desire for them now.

Observe also that love makes us rise above the difficulties, the persecutions, the fears, which the enemy seeks to produce. Occupied with God, happy in Him, this weight of affliction is not felt. The strength of God is in the heart; the walk is sensibly connected with the eternal happiness possessed with Him, and the affliction is felt to be but light and for a moment. Nor this only; we suffer for Christ's sake: it is joy with Him, it is intimacy of communion, if we know how to appreciate it, and all is invested with the glory and salvation that are found at the end "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."

In reading this passage one cannot but observe the immediate and living way in which the Lord's coming is linked with daily practical life, so that the perfect light of that day is thrown upon the hourly path of the present time. By the exercise of love they were to be established in holiness before God at the coming of Christ. From one day to another, that day was looked for as

the consummation and the only term they contemplated to the ordinary life of each day here below. How this brought the soul into the presence of God! Moreover, as I have already in part observed, they lived in a known relationship with God which gave room for this confidence. He was their Father; He is ours. The relationship of the saints to Jesus was equally known. The saints were "his saints." They were all to come with Him. They were associated with His glory. There is nothing equivocal in the expression. Jesus, the Lord, coming with all His saints, allows us to think of no other event than His return in glory. Then also will He be glorified in His saints, who will already have rejoined Him to be for ever with Him. It will be the day of their manifestation as of His.

Note #5

It is very striking how holiness here, and manifestation in glory, are brought together as one thing in scripture, only the veil drawn aside when the glory is there. Even Christ was declared Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection. We beholding the glory with unveiled face are changed into the same image from glory to glory. So here; we are to walk in love, to be unblamable in holiness. We should have said here; but no, the veil is drawn at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. In Ephesians 5 He washes us with the word, to present us a glorious body without spot to Himself.

1 Thessalonians Chapter 4

The apostle then turns to the dangers that beset the Thessalonians in consequence of their former habits (and which were still those of the persons that surrounded them), habits in direct contradiction to the holy and heavenly joy of which he spoke. He had already shewn them how they were to walk and to please God. In this way he had himself walked among them. (Th1 2:10) He would exhort them to a similar conduct with all the weight that his own walk gave him, even as he would desire their growth in love according to the affection he had for them. (Compare Act 26:29) It is this which gives authority to the exhortation, and to all the words of a servant of the Lord.

The apostle takes up especially the subject of purity, for the pagan morals were so corrupt that impurity was not even accounted to be sin. It appears strange to us that such an exhortation should have been needful to such lively Christians as the Thessalonians; but we do not make allowance enough for the power of those habits in which persons have been brought up, and which become as it were a part of our nature and of the current of our thoughts, and for the action of two distinct natures under the influence of these, though the allowance or cultivation of one soon deadens the other. But the motives given here shew upon what entirely new ground, as regards the commonest morality, Christianity places us. The body was but as a vessel to be used at will for whatever service they chose. They were to possess this vessel instead of allowing themselves to be carried away by the desires of the flesh; because they knew God. They were not to deceive their brethren in these things, [See Note #6] for the Lord would take vengeance. God has called us to holiness: it is with Him that we have to do; and if any one despised his brother, taking advantage of his feebleness of mind to encroach upon his rights in this respect, it would be to despise not man but God, who would Himself remember it, and who has given us His Spirit; and to act thus would be to despise that Spirit, both in one's self and in one's brother in whom He also dwells. He who was wronged in this way was not only the husband of a wife, he was the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost and ought to be respected as such. On what high ground Christianity places a man, and that in connection with our best affections !

As touching brotherly love that new mainspring of their life it was not necessary to exhort them: God Himself had taught them, and they were an example of love to all. Only let them abound in it even more and more; walking quietly, working with their own hands, so as to be in no man's debt, that in this respect also the Lord might be glorified.

Such were the apostle's exhortations. That which follows is an absolutely new revelation for their encouragement and consolation.

We have seen that the Thessalonians were always expecting the Lord. It was their near and immediate hope in connection with their daily life. They were constantly expecting Him to take them to Himself They had been converted to wait for the Son of God from heaven. Now (from want of instruction) it

appeared to them that the saints who had recently died would not be with them to be caught up. The apostle clears up this point, and distinguishes between the coming of Christ to take up His own, and His day, which was a day of judgment to the world. They were not to be troubled with regard to those who had died in Christ [See Note #7] as those who had no hope were troubled. And the reason which he gives for this is a proof of the strict connection of their entire spiritual life with the expectation of Christ's personal return to bring them into heavenly glory. The apostle, in comforting them with regard to their brethren who had lately died, does not say a word of the survivors rejoining them in heaven. They are maintained in the thought that they were still to look for the Lord during their lifetime to transform them into His glorious image. (Compare 2 Cor. 5 and 1 Cor. 15) An especial revelation was required to make them understand that those who had previously died would equally have their part in that event. Their part, so to speak, would resemble that of Christ. He has died, and He has risen again. And so will it be with them. And when He should return in glory, God would bring them even as He would bring the others, that is, the living with Him.

Upon this the apostle gives some more detailed explanation of the Lord's coming in the form of express revelation, shewing how they would be with Him so as to come with Him when He appears. The living will not take precedence of those who sleep in Jesus. The Lord Himself will come as the Head of His heavenly army, dispersed for a time, to gather them to Himself. He gives the word. The voice of the archangel passes it on, and the trumpet of God is sounded. The dead in Christ will rise first, that is to say, before the living go up. Then we who shall be alive and remain shall go with them, all together, in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. So shall we be for ever with the Lord.

It was that that the Lord Himself ascended; for in all things we are to be like Him an important circumstance here. Whether transformed or raised from the dead, we shall all go up in the clouds. It was in the clouds that He ascended, and thus we shall be ever with Him.

In this part of the passage, where he explains the details of our ascension to the Lord in the air nothing is said of His coming down to the earth; it is our

going up (as He went up) to be with Him. [See Note #8] Neither, as far as concerns us, does the apostle go farther than our gathering together to be for ever with Him. Nothing is said either of judgment or of manifestation; but only the fact of our heavenly association with Him in that we leave the earth precisely as He left it. This is very precious. There is this difference: He went up in His own full right, He ascended; as to us, His voice calls the dead, and they come forth from the grave, and, the living being changed, all are caught up together. It is a solemn act of God's power, which seals the Christians' life and the work of God, and brings the former into the glory of Christ as His heavenly companions. Glorious privilege! Precious grace! To lose sight of it destroys the proper character of our joy and of our hope.

Other consequences follow, which are the result of His manifestation; but that is our portion, our hope. We leave the earth as He did, we shall for ever be with Him.

It is with these words that we are to comfort our selves if believers die fall asleep in Jesus. They shall return with Him when He shall be manifested; but, as regards their own portion, they will go away as He went, whether raised from the dead or transformed, to be for ever with the Lord.

All the rest refers to His government of the earth: an important subject, a part of His glory; and we also take part in it. But it is not our own peculiar portion. This is, to be with Him, to be like Him, and even (when the time shall come) to quit in the same manner as Himself the world which rejected Him, and which has rejected us, and which is to be judged.

I repeat it: to lose sight of this is to lose our essential portion. All lies in the words, "so shall we ever be with the Lord." The apostle has here explained how this will take place. [See Note #9] Remark here, that Verses 15-18 (Th1 4:15-18) are a parenthesis, and that Th1 5:1 follows on Th1 4:14; Chapter 5 shewing what He will do when He brings the saints with Him according to Th1 4:14.

In this important passage then we find the Christian living in an expectation of the Lord, which is connected with his daily life and which completes it. Death then is only an accessory which may take place, and which does not deprive the Christian of his portion when his Master shall return. The proper

expectation of the Christian is entirely separated from all which follows the manifestation of Christ, and which is in connection with the government of this world.

The Lord comes in Person to receive us to Himself; He does not send. With full authority over death, which He has conquered, and with the trump of God, He calls together His own from the grave; and these, with the living (transformed), go to meet Him in the air. Our departure from the world exactly resembles His own: we leave the world, to which we do not belong, to go to heaven. Once there, we have attained our portion. We are like Christ, we are forever with Him, but He will bring His own with Him, when He shall appear. This then was the true comfort in the case of a Christian's death, and by no means put aside the daily expectation of the Lord from heaven. On the contrary this way of viewing the subject confirmed it. The dead saint did not lose his rights by dying by sleeping in Jesus; he should be the first object of his Lord's attention when He came to assemble His own. Nevertheless the place from which they go forth to meet Him is the earth. The dead should be raised this was the first thing that they might be ready to go with the others; and then from this earth all would depart together to be with Christ in heaven. This point of view is all important, in order to apprehend the true character of that moment when all our hopes will be consummated.

Note #4

It is well here to recall that, though Christ is Son over God's house, as Lord He is not Lord over the assembly but over individuals. Besides this, He is in a general sense Lord of all. But His action towards individuals ministers to the well-being of the assembly.

Note #6

"pas touton" is a euphemism for "these things".

Note #7

It has been thought that the apostle speaks here of those who had died for His name's sake as martyrs. It may have been so in consequence of the persecutions, but "dia tov Iesous" would be a singular way of expressing it;

"dia" with a genitive is used for a state of things, a condition that we are in, that characterises us. Being in Christ, their removal was but falling asleep, not dying. They had this position by means of Jesus, not for His name's sake. (Compare, however, Co2 4:14).

Note #8

In order that we may all return be brought back with Him together.

Note #9

Compare Co2 5:1, &c. We have already remarked as a fact that this passage is a new distinct revelation. But the bearing of this fact appears here and proves that it has much importance. The Christian's life is so connected with the day (that is to say, with the power of the life of light of which Christ lives), and Christ who is already in glory is so truly the believer's life, that he has no other thought than to pass into it by this power of Christ's, which will transform him. (See Co2 5:4) It required a new and accessory revelation to explain that which was wanting to the intelligence of the Thessalonians, how the dead saints should not lose their part in it. The same power would be applied to their dead bodies as to the mortal bodies of the living saints, and all would be caught up together. But the victory over death was already gained, and Christ, according to the power of resurrection, being already the believer's life, it was but natural, according to that power, that he should pass without dying into the fullness of life with Christ. This was so much the natural thought of faith that it required an express, and as I have said, an accessory revelation to explain how the dead should have their part in it. To us now it presents no difficulty. It is the other side of this truth which we lack, which belongs to a much more lively faith, and which realises much more the power of the life of Christ and His victory over death. No doubt the Thessalonians should have considered that Christ had died and risen again, and not have allowed the abundant power of their joy in realising their own portion in Christ to hide from them the certainty of the portion of those who slept in Him. But we see (and God allowed it that we might see) how the life which they possessed was connected with the position of the Head triumphant over death. The apostle does not weaken this faith and hope, but he adds (that they may be comforted by the thought that the triumph of

Christ would have the same power over the sleeping as over the living saints; and that God would bring back the former as well as the latter with Jesus in glory, having caught them up together as their common portion to be for ever with Him. To us also God gives this truth, this revelation of His power. He has permitted thousands to fall asleep, because (blessed be His name) He had other thousands to call in, but the life of Christ has not lost its power, nor the truth its certainty. We as living ones wait for Him because He is our life. We shall see Him in resurrection, if haply we die before He comes to seek us; and the time draws near. Observe, also, that this revelation gives another direction to the hope of the Thessalonians, because it distinguishes with much precision between our departure hence to join the Lord in the air, and our return to the earth with Him. Nor this only, but it shews the first to be the principal thing for Christians, while at the same time confirming and elucidating the other point. I question whether the Thessalonians would not better have understood this return with Christ than our departure hence all together to rejoin Him. Even at their conversion they had been brought to wait for Jesus from heaven. From the first the great and essential principle was established in their hearts the Person of Christ was the object of their hearts' expectation, and they were separated thereby from the world. Perhaps they had some vague idea that they were to appear with Him in glory, but how it was to be accomplished they knew not. They were to be ready at any moment for His coming, and He and they were to be glorified together before the uniVerse. This they knew. It is a summary of the truth. Now the apostle develops more than one point here in connection with this general truth. 1st, they would be with Christ at His coming. This, I think, is but a happy application of a truth which they already possessed, giving a little more precision to one of its precious details. At the end of Chapter 3 we have the truth plainly stated (although it was still indistinct in their hearts, since they thought the dead in Christ would be deprived of it) that all the saints should come with Jesus an essential point as to the character of our relationship to Him. So that Jesus was expected the saints should be together with Jesus at the time of His coming all the saints should come with Him. This fixed and gave precision to their ideas on a point already more or less known. 2nd, That which follows is a new revelation on the occasion of their mistake with regard to those who slept. They thought

indeed that the Christians who were ready should be glorified with Christ when He came back to this world; but the dead were they ready? They were not present to share the glorious manifestation of Christ on the earth. For, I doubt not, the vague idea that possessed the mind of the Thessalonians was this: Jesus would return to this world, and they who were waiting for Him would share His glorious manifestation on the earth. Now the apostle declares that the dead saints were in the same position as Jesus who had died. God had not left Him in the grave; nor would He those who had, like Him, been there. God would also bring them with Him when He should return in glory to this earth. But this was not all. The coming of Christ in glory to the earth was not the principal thing. The dead in Christ should be raised, and then, with the living, should go to meet the Lord in the air, before His manifestation, and return with Him to the earth in glory; and thus should they be ever with the Lord. This was the principal thing, the Christian's portion; namely, to dwell eternally with Christ and in heaven. The portion of the faithful was on high was Christ Himself, although they would appear with Him in the glory. For this world it would then be the judgment.

1 Thessalonians Chapter 5

The Lord's coming again into this world assumes therefore a very different character from that of a vague object of hope to a believer as a period of glory. In Chapter 5 the apostle speaks of it, but in order to distinguish between the position of Christians and that of the careless and unbelieving inhabitants of the earth. The Christian, alive and taught of the Lord, ever expects the Master. There are times and seasons; it is not needful to speak to him concerning them. But (and he knows it) the day of the Lord will come and like a thief in the night, but not for him: he is of the day; he has part in the glory which will appear in order to execute judgment on the unbelieving world. Believers are the children of light; and this light which is the judgment of unbelievers, is the expression of the glory of God a glory which cannot endure evil, and which, when it shall appear, will banish it from the earth. The Christian is of the day that will judge and destroy the wicked and wickedness itself from off the face of the earth. Christ is the Sun of righteousness, and the faithful will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

The world will say, "Peace and safety," and in all security will believe in the continuance of its prosperity and the success of its designs, and the day will come suddenly upon them. (Compare Pe2 3:3.) The Lord Himself has often declared it. (Mat 14:36-44; Mar 13:33-36; Luk 12:40, &c.; Luk 17:26, &c.; Luk 21:35, &c.)

It is a very solemn thing to see that the professing church (Rev 3:3) which says that it lives and is in the truth, which has not Thyatira's character of corruption, is yet to be treated as the world at least, unless it repents.

We may perhaps wonder to find the Lord saying of a time like this, that men's hearts will be failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth. (Luk 21:26) But we see the two principles both security and fear already existing. Progress, success, the long continuance of a new development of human nature this is the language of those who mock at the Lord's coming; and yet beneath it all, what fears for the future are at the same time possessing and weighing down the heart! I use the word "principles," because I do not believe that the moment of which the Lord speaks is yet come. But the shadow of coming events falls upon the heart. Blessed are they that belong to another world!

The apostle applies this difference of position namely, that we belong to the day, and that it cannot therefore come upon us as a thief to the character and walk of the Christian. Being a child of the light he is to walk as such. He lives in the clay, though all is night and darkness around him. One does not sleep in the day. They that sleep sleep in the night: they that are drunken are drunken in the night; these are the works of darkness. A Christian, the child of the day, must watch and be sober, clothing himself with all that constitutes the perfection of that mode of being which belongs to his position namely, with faith and love and hope principles which impart courage and give him confidence for pressing onwards. He has the breastplate of faith and love; he goes straight forward therefore against the enemy. He has the hope of this glorious salvation, which will bring him entire deliverance, as his helmet; so that he can lift up his head without fear in the midst of danger. We see that the apostle here brings to mind the three great principles of 1 Corinthians 13 to characterise the courage and

steadfastness of the Christian, as at the beginning he shewed that they were the mainspring of daily walk.

Faith and love naturally connect us with God, revealed as He is in Jesus as the principle of communion; so that we walk with confidence in Him: His presence gives us strength. By faith He is the glorious object before our eyes. By love He dwells in us, and we realise what He is. Hope fixes our eyes especially on Christ, who is coming to bring us into the enjoyment of glory with Himself.

Consequently the apostle speaks thus: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath " (love is understood by faith, that which God wills His mind respecting us) "but to obtain salvation." It is this which we hope for; and he speaks of salvation as the final deliverance "by our Lord Jesus Christ :'" and he naturally adds, "who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep" (have died before His coming or be then alive), " we should live together with Him." Death does not deprive us of this deliverance and glory; for Jesus died. Death became the means of obtaining them for us; and if we die, we shall equally live with Him. He died for us, in our stead, in order that, happen what may, we should live with Him. Everything that hindered it is put out of our way and has lost its power; and, more than lost its power, has become a guarantee of our unhindered enjoyment of the full life of Christ in glory; so that we may comfort ourselves and more than that, we may build ourselves up with these glorious truths, through which God meets all our wants and all our necessities. This (Th1 5:10) is the end of the special revelation with regard to those who sleep before the coming of the Lord Jesus, beginning with Th1 4:13.

I would here call the reader's attention to the way in which the apostle speaks of the Lord's coming in the different Chapters of this epistle. It will be noticed that the Spirit does not present the church here as a body. Life is the subject that of each Christian therefore individually: a very important point assuredly.

In Chapter 1 the expectation of the Lord is presented in a general way as characterising the Christian. They are converted to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. Here it is the object itself that is

presented, the Person of the Lord. God's own Son shall come, and shall satisfy all the heart's desire. This is neither His kingdom, nor the judgment, nor even rest; it is the Son of God; and this Son of God is Jesus, risen from among the dead, and who has delivered us from the wrath to come; for wrath is coming. Each believer therefore expects for himself the Son of God expects Him from heaven.

In Chapter 2 it is association with the saints, joy in the saints at the coming of Christ.

In Chapter 3 responsibility is more the subject responsibility in liberty and in joy; but still a position before God in connection with the Christian's walk and life here below. The Lord's appearing is the measure and test time of holiness. The testimony rendered by God to this life, by giving it its natural place, takes place when Christ is manifested with all His saints. It is not here His coming for us, but His coming with us. This distinction between the two events always exists. For Christians even and for the church, that which refers to responsibility is always found in connection with the appearing of the Lord; our joy, with His coming to take us to Himself.

Thus far then, we have the general expectation of the Lord in Person, His Son from heaven; love satisfied at His coming as regards others; holiness in its full value and full development. In Chapter 4 it is not the connection of life with its full development in our being actually with Christ, but victory over death (which is no barrier to this); and, at the same time, the strengthening and establishment of hope in our common departure hence, similarly to that of Jesus, to be for ever with Him.

The exhortations that conclude the epistle are brief; the mighty action of the life of God in these dear disciples made them comparatively little needed. Exhortation is always good. There was nothing among them to blame. Happy condition! They were perhaps not sufficiently instructed for a large development of doctrine (the apostle hoped to see them for that purpose); but there was enough of life, a personal relationship with God sufficiently true and real, to build them up on that ground. To him that hath shall more be given. The apostle could rejoice with them and confirm their

hope and add to it some details as a revelation from God. The assembly in all ages is profited by it.

In the Epistle to the Philippians we see life in the Spirit rising above all circumstances, as the fruit of long experience of the goodness and faithfulness of God; and thus shewing its remarkable power when the help of the saints had failed, and the apostle was in distress, his life in danger, after four years' imprisonment, by a merciless tyrant. It is then that he decides his case by the interests of the assembly. It is then that he can proclaim, that we ought always to rejoice in the Lord, and that Christ is all things to him, to live is Christ, death a gain to him. It is then that he can do all things through Him who strengthens him. This he has learnt. In Thessalonians we have the freshness of the fountain near to its source; the energy of the first spring of life in the believer's soul, presenting all the beauty and purity and vigour of its first verdure under the influence of the sun that had risen upon them and made the sap of life rise, the first manifestations of which had not been deteriorated by contact with the world or by an enfeebled view of invisible things.

The apostle desired that the disciples should acknowledge those who laboured among them and guided them in grace and admonished them, and esteem them greatly for their work's sake. The operation of God always attracts a soul that is moved by the Holy Ghost, and commands its attention and its respect: on this foundation the apostle builds his exhortation. It is not office which is in question here (if such existed), but the work which attracted and attached the heart. They ought to be known: spirituality acknowledged this operation of God. Love, devotedness, the answer to the need of souls, patience in dealing with them on the part of God all this commended itself to the believer's heart: and it blessed God for the care He bestowed upon His children. God acted in the labourer and in the hearts of the faithful. Blessed be God, it is an ever existing principle, and one that never grows weaker !

The same Spirit produced peace among themselves. This grace was of great value. If love appreciated the work of God in the labourer, it would esteem the bother as in the presence of God: self-will would not act.

Now this renunciation of self-will, and this practical sense of the operation and presence of God, gives power to warn the unruly, to comfort the fearful, to help the weak, and to be patient towards all. The apostle exhorts them to it. Communion with God is the power and His word the guide in so doing. In no case were they to render evil for evil, but to follow that which was good among themselves and towards all. All this conduct depends on communion with God, on His presence with us, which makes us superior to evil. He is this in love; and we can be so by walking with Him.

Such were the apostle's exhortations to guide their walk with others. As regards their personal state, joy, prayer, thanksgiving in all things, these should be their characteristics. With respect to the public actings of the Spirit in their midst, the apostle's exhortations to these simple and happy Christians were equally brief. They were not to hinder the action of the Spirit in their midst (for this is the meaning of quenching the Spirit); nor to despise that which He might say to them, even by the mouth of the most simple, if He were pleased to use it. Being spiritual they could judge all things. They were therefore not to receive everything that presented itself, even in the name of the Spirit, but to prove all things. They were to hold fast that which was good; those who by faith have received the truth of the word do not waver. One is not ever learning the truth of that which one has learnt from God. As to evil, they were to abstain from it in all its forms. Such were the apostle's brief exhortations to these Christians who indeed rejoiced his heart. And in truth it is a fine picture of christian walk, which we find here so livingly portrayed in the apostle's communications.

He concludes his epistle by commending them to the God of peace, that they might be preserved blameless until the coming of the Lord Jesus.

After an epistle like this his heart turned readily to the God of peace; for we enjoy peace in the presence of God not only peace of conscience but peace of heart.

In the previous part we found the activity of love in the heart; that is to say, God present and acting in us, who are viewed as partaking, at the same time, of the divine nature, which is the spring of that holiness which will be manifested in all its perfection before God at the coming of Jesus with all His

saints. Here it is the God of peace, to whom the apostle looks for the accomplishment of this work. There it was the activity of a divine principle in us a principle connected with the presence of God and our communion with Him. Here it is the perfect rest of heart in which holiness develops itself. The absence of peace in the heart arises from the activity of the passions and the will, increased by the sense of powerlessness to satisfy or even to gratify them.

But in God all is peace. He can be active in love; He can glorify Himself by creating what He will; He can act in judgment to cast out the evil that is before His eyes. But He rests ever in Himself, and both in good and in evil He knows the end from the beginning and is undisturbed. When He fills the heart, He imparts this rest to us: we cannot rest in ourselves; we cannot find rest of heart in the actings of our passions, either without an object or upon an object, nor in the rending and destructive energy of our own will. We find our rest in God not the rest that implies weariness, but rest of heart in the possession of all that we desire, and of that which even forms our desires and fully satisfies them, in the possession of an object in which conscience has nothing to reproach us and has but to be silent, in the certainty that it is the Supreme Good which the heart is enjoying, the supreme and only authority to whose will it responds and that will is love towards us. God bestows rest, peace. He is never called the God of joy. He gives us joy truly, and we ought to rejoice; but joy implies something surprising, unexpected, exceptional, at least in contrast with, and in consequence of, evil. The peace that we possess, that which satisfies us, has no element of this kind, nothing which is in contrast, nothing which disturbs. It is more deep, more perfect, than joy. It is more the satisfaction of a nature in that which perfectly answers to it, and in which it develops itself, without any contrast being necessary to enhance the satisfaction of a heart that has not all which it desires, or of which it is capable.

God, as we have said, rests thus in Himself-is this rest for Himself. He gives us, and is for us, this entire peace. The conscience being perfect through the work of Christ who has made peace and reconciled us to God, the new nature-and consequently the heart finds its perfect satisfaction in God, and the will is silent; moreover, it has nothing further to desire. It is not only that

God meets the desires that we have: He is the source of new desires to the new man by the revelation of Himself in love. [See Note #10] He is both the source of the nature and its infinite object; and that, in love. It is His part to be so. It is more than creation; it is reconciliation, which is more than creation, because there is in it more development of love, that is to say, of God: and it is thus that we know God. It is that which He is essentially in Christ.

In the angels He glorifies Himself in creation: they excel us in strength. In Christians He glorifies Himself in reconciliation, to make them the first fruits of His new creation, when He shall have reconciled all things in heaven and on earth by Christ. Therefore it is written "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children sons of God" They have His nature and His character.

It is in these relationships with God or rather it is God in these relationships with us in peace, in His communion, who develops sanctification, our inward conformity of affection and intelligence (and consequently of outward conduct) with Him and His will. "The God of peace himself sanctify you wholly." May there be nothing in us that does not yield to this benignant influence of peace which we enjoy in communion with God! May no power or force in us own anything but Himself! In all things may He be our all, so that He only may rule in our hearts! He has brought us perfectly into this place of blessedness in Christ and by His work. There is nothing between us and God but the exercise of His love, the enjoyment of our happiness, and the worship of our hearts. We are the proof before Him, the testimony, the fruit, of the accomplishment of all that He holds most precious, of that which has perfectly glorified Him, of that in which He delights, and of the glory of the One who has accomplished it, namely, of Christ, and of His work. We are the fruit of the redemption that Christ has accomplished, and the objects of the satisfaction which God must feel in the exercise of His love.

God in grace is the God of peace for us; for here divine righteousness finds its satisfaction, and love its perfect exercise.

The apostle now prays that, in this character, God may work in us to make everything respond to Himself thus revealed. Here only is this development of humanity given "body, soul, and spirit." The object is assuredly not metaphysical, but to express man in all the parts of his being; the vessel by which he expresses that which he is, the natural affections of his soul, the elevated workings of his mind, through which he is above the animals and in intelligent relationship with God. May God be found in each, as the mover, spring, and guide!

In general the words "soul and spirit" are used without making any distinction between them, for the soul of man was formed very differently from that of animals in that God breathed into his nostrils the breath (spirit) of life, and it was thus that man became a living soul. Therefore it suffices to say soul as to man, and the other is supposed. Or, in saying spirit, in this sense the elevated character of his soul is expressed. The animal has also its natural affections, has a living soul, attaches itself, knows the persons who do it good, devotes itself to its master, loves him, will even give its life for him; but it has not that which can be in relationship with God (alas ! which can set itself at enmity against Him), which can occupy itself with things outside its own nature as the master of others.

The Spirit then wills that man, reconciled with God, should be consecrated, in every part of his being to the God who has brought him into relationship with Himself by the revelation of His love, and by the work of His grace, and that nothing in the man should admit an object beneath the divine nature of which he is partaker; so that he should thus be preserved blameless unto the coming of Christ.

Let us observe here, that it is in no wise beneath the new nature in us to perform our duties faithfully in all the various relationships in which God has placed us; but quite the contrary. That which is required is to bring God into them, His authority, and the intelligence which that imparts. Therefore it is said to husbands to live with their wives according to knowledge," or intelligence; that is to say, not only with human and natural affections (which, as things are, do not by themselves even maintain their place), but as before God and conscious of His will. It may be that God may call us, in connection with the extraordinary work of His grace, to consecrate

ourselves entirely to it; but otherwise the will of God is accomplished in the relationships in which He has placed us, and divine intelligence and obedience to God are developed in them. Finally God has called us to this life of holiness with Himself; He is faithful, and He will accomplish it. May He enable us to cleave to Him, that we may realise it! Observe again here, how the coming of Christ is introduced, and the expectation of this coming, as an integral part of christian life. "Blameless," it says, "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The life which had developed itself in obedience and holiness meets the Lord at His coming. Death is not in question. The life which we have found is to be such when He appears. The man, in every part of his being, moved by this life, is found there blameless when Jesus comes. Death was overcome (not yet destroyed): a new life is ours. This life, and the man living of this life, are found, with their Head and Source, in the glory. Then will the weakness disappear which is connected with his present condition. That which is mortal shall be swallowed up of life: that is all. We are Christ's: He is our life. We wait for Him, that we may be with Him, and that He may perfect all things in the glory.

Let us also here examine a little into that which this passage teaches us with regard to sanctification. It is connected indeed with a nature, but it is linked with an object; and it depends for its realisation on the operation of another, namely, of God Himself; and it is founded on a perfect work of reconciliation with God already accomplished. Inasmuch as it is founded on an accomplished reconciliation, into which we enter by the reception of a new nature, the scriptures consider Christians as already perfectly sanctified in Christ. It is practically carried out by the operation of the Holy Ghost, who, in imparting this nature, separates us as thus born again entirely from the world. It is important to maintain this truth, and to stand very clearly and distinctly on this ground: otherwise practical sanctification soon becomes detached from a new nature received, and is but the amelioration of the natural man and then it is quite legal, a return after reconciliation into doubt and uncertainty, because, though justified, the man is not accounted meet for heaven this depends on progress so that justification does not give peace with God. Scripture says, "Giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Progress there is, but it is not in scripture connected with meetness. The thief was meet for

Paradise and went there. Such views are an enfeebling, not to say destructive, of the work of redemption, that is, of its appreciation in our hearts by faith.

We are then sanctified (it is thus the scripture most frequently speaks) by God the Father, by the blood and the offering of Christ, and by the Spirit that is to say, we are set apart for God personally and for ever. In this point of view justification is presented in the word as consequent upon sanctification, a thing into which we enter through it. Taken up as sinners in the world, we are set apart by the Holy Ghost to enjoy all the efficacy of the work of Christ according to the counsels of the Father: set apart by the communication of a new life, no doubt, but placed by this setting apart in the enjoyment of all that Christ has gained for us. I say again, It is very important to hold fast this truth both for the glory of God and for our own peace: but the Spirit of God in this epistle does not speak of it in this point of view, but of the practical realisation of the development of this life of separation from the world and from evil. He speaks of this divine development in the inner man, which makes sanctification a real and intelligent condition of soul, a state of practical communion with God, according to that nature and to the revelation of God with which it is connected.

In this respect we find indeed a principle of life which works in us that which is called a subjective state: but it is impossible to separate this operation in us from an object (man would be God if it were so), nor consequently from a continual work of God in us that holds us in communion with that object, which is God Himself. Accordingly it is through the truth by the word, whether at first in the communication of life, or in detail all along our path. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth."

Man, we know, has degraded himself. He has enslaved himself to the lusts of the animal part of his being. But how? By departing from God. God does not sanctify man apart from the knowledge of Himself, leaving man still at a distance from Him; but, while giving him a new nature which is capable of it, by giving to this nature (which cannot even exist without it) an object Himself, He does not make man independent, as he wished to be: the new man is the dependent man; it is his perfection Jesus Christ exemplified this

in His life. The new man is a man dependent in his affections, who desires to be so, who delights in, and cannot be happy without being so, and whose dependence is on love, while still obedient as a dependent being ought to be.

Thus they who are sanctified possess a nature that is holy in its desires and its tastes. It is the divine nature in them, the life of Christ. But they do not cease to be men. They have God revealed in Christ for their object.

Sanctification is developed in communion with God, and in affections which go back to Christ, and which wait for Him. But the new nature cannot reveal an object to itself; and still less, could it have its object by setting God aside at its will. It is dependent on God for the revelation of Himself. His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost whom He has given us; and the same Spirit takes of the things of Christ and communicates them to us. Thus we grow in the knowledge of God, being strengthened mightily by His Spirit in the inner man, that we may "comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," and be filled unto the fullness of God. Thus, "we all with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth."

We see by these passages, which might be multiplied, that we are dependent on an object, and that we are dependent on the strength of another. Love acts in order to work in us according to this need.

Our setting apart for God, which is complete (for it is by means of a nature that is purely of Himself, and in absolute responsibility to Him, for we are no longer our own, but are bought with a price, and sanctified by the blood of Christ according to the will of God who will have us for His own), places us in a relationship, the development of which (by an increasing knowledge of God, who is the object of our new nature) is practical sanctification, wrought in us by the power of the Holy Ghost, the witness in us of the love of God. He attaches the heart to God, ever revealing Him more and more, and at the same time unfolding the glory of Christ and all the divine qualities that were displayed in Him in human nature, thus forming ours as born of God.

Therefore it is, as we have seen in this epistle, that love, working in us, is the means of sanctification. (Th1 3:12-13) It is the activity of the new nature, of the divine nature in us; and that connected with the presence of God; for he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God. And in this Chapter 5 the saints are commended to God Himself, that He may work it in them; while we are always set in view of the glorious objects of our faith in order to accomplish it.

We may here more particularly call the reader's attention to these objects. They are, God Himself, and the coming of Christ: on the one hand, communion with God; on the other, waiting for Christ. It is most evident that communion with God is the practical position of the highest sanctification. He who knows that we shall see Jesus as He now is, and be like Him, purifies himself even as He is pure. By our communion with the God of peace we are wholly sanctified. If God is practically our all, we are altogether holy. (We are not speaking of any change in the flesh, which can neither be subjected to God nor please Him.) The thought of Christ and His coming preserves us practically, and in detail, and intelligently, blameless. It is God Himself who thus preserves us, and who works in us to occupy our hearts and cause us continually to grow.

But this point deserves yet a few more words. The freshness of christian life in the Thessalonians made it, as it were, more objective; so that these objects are prominent, and very distinctly recognised by the heart. We have already said that they are God the Father, and the Lord Jesus. With reference to the communion of love with the saints as his crown and glory, he speaks only of the Lord Jesus. This has a special character of reward, although a reward in which love reigns. Jesus Himself had the joy that was set before Him as sustainment in His sufferings, a joy which thus was personal to Himself. The apostle also, as regarded his work and labour, waited with Christ for its fruit. Besides this case of the apostle (Chapter 2), we find God Himself and Jesus as the object before us, and the joy of communion with God and this, in the relationship of Father and with Christ, whose glory and position we share through grace.

Thus it is only in the two epistles to the Thessalonians that we find the expression "to the church which is in God the Father." [See Note #11] The

sphere of their communion is thus shewn, founded on the relationship in which they found themselves with God Himself in the character of Father. (Th1 1:3, Th1 1:9-10; Th1 3:13; Th1 4:15-16; and here Th1 5:23.) It is important to remark, that the more vigorous and living Christianity is, the more objective it is. It is but saying that God and the Lord Jesus have a greater place in our thoughts; and that we rest more really upon them. This Epistle to the Thessalonians is the part of scripture which instructs on this point; and it is a means of judging many a fallacy in the heart, and of giving a great simplicity to our Christianity.

The apostle closes his epistle by asking for the prayers of the brethren, saluting them with the confidence of affection, and conjuring them to have his epistle read to all the holy brethren. His heart forgot none of them. He would be in relationship with all according to this spiritual affection and personal bond. Apostle towards all of them, he would have them recognize those who laboured among them, but he maintained withal his own relationship. His was a heart which embraced all the revealed counsels of God on the one hand, and did not lose sight of the least of His saints on the other.

It remains to take notice of one interesting circumstance as to the manner in which the apostle instructs them. He takes, in the first Chapter, the truths which were precious to their heart, but were still somewhat vaguely seized by their intelligence, and as to which they were indeed fallen into mistakes, and employs them (in the clearness in which he possessed them himself) in his practical instructions, and applies them to known and experienced relationships, that their souls might be well established on positive truth, and clear as to its use, before he touched on their error and the mistakes they had made. They waited for His Son from heaven. This they already possessed clearly in their hearts; but they would be in the presence of God when Jesus comes with all His saints. This was clearing up a very important point without directly touching the error. Their heart got straight as to the truth in its practical application to what the heart possessed. They understood what it was to be before God the Father. It was much more intimate and real than a manifestation of terrestrial and finite glory. Further they would be before God when Jesus came with all His saints: a simple

truth which demonstrated itself to the heart by the simple fact that Jesus could not have some only of His assembly. The heart seized this truth without an effort; yet in doing so it was established, as was the understanding also, in what made the whole truth clear, and that in way of the relationship of the Thessalonians to Christ and those that were His. The joy even of the apostle in meeting them all (those who had died consequently, as well as the living) at the coming of Jesus, placed the soul on an entirely different ground from that of being found here, and blessed by the arrival of Jesus when they were here below.

Thus enlightened, confirmed, established, in the real bearing of the truth which they possessed already by a development of it which connected itself with their best affections and with their most intimate spiritual knowledge, founded on their communion with God they were ready with certain fixed basis of truth to enter on and set aside without difficulty an error which was not in accord with what they now knew how to appreciate at its just value, as forming part of their moral possessions. Special revelation made all clear as to details. This manner of proceeding is very instructive.

Note #10

Hence there is the opposite to weariness in the heavenly enjoyment of God; because He who is the infinite object of enjoyment is the infinite source and strength of capacity to enjoy, though we enjoy as recipient creatures.

Note #11

Perhaps too in connection with their recent deliverance from idols to the one true God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 THESSALONIANS

2 Thessalonians Chapter 1

2 Thessalonians 1:1

th2 1:1

In the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, the apostle corrects some errors into which these disciples had fallen with regard to the day of the Lord through certain false teachers; as in part of the first epistle he had enlightened the ignorance of the believers themselves respecting the portion of the saints at the coming of Christ to take them to Himself—a point on which they were evidently but little instructed.

A measure of Jewish darkness was on their minds; and they were, in some points, still subjected to the influence of that unhappy nation, which was ever struggling to maintain a position lost through its unbelief.

This Jewish influence enables us to understand why the apostle spoke as he did in Th2 2:15-16 of the first Epistle. At that time this influence shewed itself in the tendency of the Thessalonians to lose sight of the heavenly side of the Lord's coming, to think that He would return to the earth and that they should then be glorified with Him as a Jew might have believed and that the dead saints would therefore not be present to share this glory. I do not say that this thought had assumed a definite form in the minds of the Thessalonians. To them the principal and living object was the Lord Himself, and they were awaiting His return with hearts full of joy and life; but the heavenly side of this expectation had not its place clearly marked in their minds, and they connected the coming too much with the manifestation, so that the earthly character predominated, and the dead seemed to be shut out from it.

When the Second Epistle was written, this Jewish influence had another character; and the false teachers were more directly concerned in it.

The faithful at Thessalonica had learnt to contemplate "the day of the Lord" as a day of judgment. The Old Testament had spoken much of this day of the Lord, a day of darkness and unparalleled judgment, a day of trial to men. (Compare Isaiah 13, Joel 2, Amos 5:18) Now the Thessalonians were undergoing dreadful persecution. Perhaps their hope of an earthly intervention of the Lord, during their lifetime, was weakened. The apostle at least rejoiced at the increase of their faith, and the abundant exercise of their love, while he is silent with regard to their hope; and the joy of christian life is not found here as it was manifested in the First Epistle. Nevertheless they were walking well, and the apostle gloried in them [See Note #1] in the churches of God. But the false teachers profited by their condition to mislead them by means of their sufferings, which weighed more heavily on their hearts from the joy of hope being a little weakened; and at the same time the remains of the influence of Judaising thoughts or of habits of mind formed through them, furnished occasion to the assaults of the enemy. The instrument of the subtle malice told them that the day of the Lord, that fearful time, was already come the word (Th2 2:2) is not "at hand," but "come," "present" [See Note #2] and all that the Thessalonians were suffering, and by which their hearts were shaken, appeared like a testimony to prove it and to confirm the words of the false teachers. Was it not written that it should be a day of trial and anguish?

The words of these teachers, moreover, had the pretension of being more than human reasoning; it was a word of the Lord, it was the Spirit who spoke, it was a letter from an inspired channel: and so bold and wicked were they in regard to this matter, that they did not fear to adduce the apostle's own name as their authority for declaring that the day was come. Now the dominion of fear, which Satan can exercise over the mind, when it is not kept of God in peace and joy, is astonishing. "In nothing terrified by your adversaries," is the apostle's word to the Philippians, "which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God." In such a state of mind as this everything is believed; or rather everything is feared, and nothing is believed. The heart gives itself up to this fear, and is ready to believe anything; for it is in darkness and knows not what to believe. Thus the apostle exhorts the Thessalonians (Chapter 2) not to be soon shaken in mind so as to lose their stability in the truth, and not to be troubled.

The apostle deals with the case in the same manner as in the First Epistle. Before entering on the error he treats the same subject in its true light, building upon the knowledge which the Thessalonians already possessed. Only he sets it forth with clearness in its application to the circumstances of the moment. By this means they were delivered from the influence of the error, and from the disturbance of mind which it had caused; and were rendered capable of looking at the error, as being themselves outside it, and of judging it according to the instruction that the apostle gave them.

They were persecuted and were in distress and suffering, and the enemy took advantage of it. The apostle puts that fact in its right place. He encourages them with the thought that it was a kind of seal upon them of their being worthy of the kingdom for which they were suffering. But more, the "day of the Lord" was the coming of the Lord in judgment; but it was not to make His own suffer that He was coming it was to punish the wicked. Persecution therefore could not be the day of the Lord; for in persecution the wicked had the upper hand and did their own will and inflicted suffering on those whom the Lord loved. Could that be His day! The apostle does not apply this argument to the question, but he puts the facts in their place; so that all the use which the enemy made of them fell of itself to the ground. The truth of the facts was there in its simplicity, giving them their evident and natural character. When God should take the thing in hand, He would recompense tribulation to those who troubled His children, and these should have rest should be in peace. The moment of their entering into this rest is not at all the subject here, but the contrast between their actual condition and that which it would be if Jesus were come. It was not to persecute and harass His own that He was coming. In His day they should be at rest, and the wicked in distress; for He was coming to punish the latter by driving them away for ever from the glory of His presence. When we understand that the Thessalonians had been induced to believe that the day of the Lord was already come, the import of this first Chapter is very plain.

Two principles are here established. First, the righteous judgment of God: it is righteous in His eyes, on the one hand, to reward those who suffer for His kingdom's sake: and, on the other, to requite those who persecute His children. In the second place, the glorious manifestation of the Lord Jesus:

His own should be in rest and happiness with Him, when His power should be in exercise.

We see also here two reasons for judgment they did not know God, and they did not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. All being without excuse as to the testimony that God had ever given concerning Himself, some among them had added the rejection of the positive revelation of His grace in the gospel of Christ to their abuse of their natural relationship with God and their forgetfulness of His majesty.

Meanwhile the apostle presents the positive result in blessing of the manifestation of Jesus in glory. He will come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed in Him, and therefore in the Thessalonians: a thorough proof, at least that they were not to view their persecuted condition as a demonstration that the day was come. With regard to themselves, they werethus entirely delivered from the confusion by which the enemy sought to disquiet them; and the apostle could treat the question of this error with hearts which, as to their own condition, were set free from it and at rest.

These considerations characterised his prayers on their behalf. He sought from God that they might always be worthy of this vocation, and that the Lord might be glorified in them by the power of faith, which would shine the brighter through their persecutions; and that afterwards they might be glorified in Him at the manifestation of His glory according to the grace of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that the apostle has placed their souls on the ground of truth, he enters upon the subject of the error, shewing that which had occasioned his remarks. Of this we have already spoken.

Note #1

In the First Epistle he says he needed not to speak of them, seeing that the world itself recounted everywhere the principles by which they were governed. We shall see a similar difference all through. It is no longer the same fresh energy of life.

Note #2

See Rom 8:38;Co1 3:22; where it (enistemi) is translated "present," in contrast with " things to come."

2 Thessalonians Chapter 2

In answering this error, and in guarding them from the wily efforts of seducers, he puts everything in its place here by appealing to precious truths of which he had already spoken. Their gathering together unto Christ in the air was a demonstration of the impossibility of the day of the Lord being already come.

Moreover with regard to this last he presents two considerations: first, the day could not be already come, since Christians were not yet gathered to the Lord, and they were to come with Him; second, the wicked one who has then to be judged had not yet appeared, so that the judgment could not be executed.

The apostle had already instructed the Thessalonians with regard to this wicked one, when at Thessalonica; and in the former epistle he had taught them concerning the rapture of the church. In order that the Lord should come in judgment, iniquity must have reached its height, and open opposition to God have been manifested. But the truth had another and more precious side: the saints were to be in the same position as Christ, to be gathered together unto Him, before He could manifest Himself in glory to those outside. But these truths require a more connected examination.

Their gathering together unto Christ before the manifestation was a truth known to the Thessalonians; it is not revealed here, it is used as an argument. The Lord Jesus was coming, but it was impossible that He should be without His church in the glory. The King would indeed punish His rebellious subjects; but, before doing so, He would bring to Himself those who had been faithful to Him amid the unfaithful, in order to bring them back with Him and publicly to honour them in the midst of the rebels. But the apostle here speaks only of the rapture itself, and he adjures them only by that truth not to allow themselves to be shaken in mind as though the day were come. What an assured truth must this have been to Christians, since the apostle could appeal to it as to a known point, on which the heart could rest! The relationship of the church to Christ, its being necessarily in

the same position with Him rendered the idea that the day was already come a mere folly.

In the second place, the already known fact is asserted, that the apostacy must previously take place, and then the man of sin be revealed. Solemn truth! Everything takes its place. The forms and the name of Christianity have long been maintained; true Christians have been disowned; but now there should be a public renunciation of the faith an apostacy. True Christians should have their true place in heaven. But, besides this, there should be a person who would fully realise in sin the character of man without God. He is the man of sin. He does his own will it is but Adam fully developed; and incited by the enemy, he opposes himself to God (it is open enmity against God), and he exalts himself above all that bears the name of God; he assumes the place of God in His temple. So that there is apostacy, that is, the open renunciation of Christianity in general, and an individual who concentrates in his own person (as to the principles of iniquity) the opposition that is made against God.

It will be noticed that the character of the wicked one is religious here, or rather anti-religious. The apostle does not speak of a secular power of the world, whatever its iniquity may be. The man of sin assumes a religious character. He exalts himself against the true God, but he shews himself as God [See Note #3] in the temple of God. Observe here that the sphere is on earth. It is not a god for faith. He shews himself as a god for the earth. The profession of Christianity has been abandoned. Sin then characterises an individual, a man, who fills up the measure of the apostacy of human nature, and, as a man, proclaims his independence of God. The principle of sin in man is his own will. He arises, as we have already seen, out of the rejection of Christianity. In this respect also evil is at its height.

This man of sin exalts himself above God, and, sitting as God in the temple of God, he defies the God of Israel. This last feature gives his formal character. He is in conflict with God, as placing himself publicly in this position shewing himself as God in the temple of God. It is the God of Israel who will take vengeance on him.

Christianity, Judaism, natural religion, all are rejected. Man takes a place there on earth, exalting himself above it all, in opposition to God; and, in particular, arrogating to himself (for man needs a God, needs something to worship) the place and the honours of God, and of the God of Israel. [See Note #4] These Verses present the wicked one in connection with the state of man, and with the different relationships in which man has stood towards God. In them all he shews himself as apostate, and then he assumes the place of God Himself-the first object of human ambition, as its attainment was the first suggestion of Satan.

In that which follows, we see not the condition itself of apostacy with regard to the different positions in which God had placed man, but simply man unrestrained, and the work of Satan. The man is but the vessel of the enemy's power.

Man in whom is the fullness of the Godhead, the Lord Jesus, and man filled with the energy of Satan, are opposed to each other. Before, it was man forsaking God, wicked, and exalting himself. Here, it is opposition against God on the part of man, unrestrained, and inspired by Satan himself. Consequently we have (not the wicked one, but) the lawless the unbridled one. The principle is the same, for sin is lawlessness. (See Jo1 3:4.) But in this first case man is viewed in his departure from God, and in his guiltiness; in the second, as acknowledging none but himself.

To this condition in which all restraint will be removed, a barrier has yet existed.

The apostle had already told them of the apostacy, and of the manifestation of the man of sin. He now says that the Thessalonians ought to know the hindrance that existed to his progress and his manifestation before the appointed time. He does not say that he had told them, but they ought to know it. Knowing the character of the wicked one, the barrier revealed itself. The main point here is that it was a barrier. The principle of the evil was already at work: a barrier alone prevented its development. Its character when developed, would be unbridled will which exalts and opposes itself. [See Note #5] Unbridled self-will being the principle of the evil, that which bridles this will is the barrier. Now it exalts itself above all

that bears the name of God, or to which homage is paid: that which hinders it therefore is the power of God acting in government here below as authorized by Him. The grossest abuse of power still bears this last character. Christ could say to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power against me, except it were given thee from above." Wicked as he might be, his power is owned as coming from God. Thus, although men had rejected and crucified the Son of God, so that their iniquity appeared to be at its height, the hindrance still existed in full. Afterwards God, having sent His Spirit, gathers out the church, and, although the mystery of iniquity began immediately to work mingling the will of men with the worship of God in Spirit, God had always (He still has) the object of His loving care upon the earth. The Holy Ghost was here below; the assembly, be its condition what it might, was still on earth, and God maintained the barrier. And as the porter had opened the door to Jesus in spite of all obstacles, so He sustains everything, however great the energy and progress of evil. The evil is bridled: God is the source of authority on earth. There is one who hinders until he be taken out of the way. Now when the assembly (the assembly, that is, as composed of the true members of Christ) is gone, and consequently the Holy Ghost as the Comforter is no longer dwelling here below, then the apostacy takes place, [See Note #6] the time to remove the hindrance is come, the evil is unbridled, and at length (without saying how much time it will take) the evil assumes a definite shape in him who is its head. The beast comes up from the abyss. Satan not God gives him his authority; and in the second beast all the energy of Satan is present. The man of sin is there.

Here it is an outward and secular power that is spoken of, but the religious side of Satan's energy.

With regard to the individual instruments who compose the barrier, they may change every moment, and it was not the object of the Holy Ghost to name them. He who was the one of them that existed when this epistle was written would not be so at the present time; to have named him then would have been of no use to us in the present day. The object was to declare that the evil which should be judged was already working, that there was no remedy for it, that it was only a hindrance on God's part which prevented its

full development: a principle of the highest importance with regard to the history of Christianity.

Whatever form it might take, the apostacy of the men who would renounce grace would necessarily be more absolute than any other. It is opposition to the Lord. It has the character of an adversary. The other principle of human iniquity enters into it, but this is the source of the "perdition." It is, the rejection of goodness; it is direct enmity.

"That which hinders" is in general only an instrument, a means, which prevents the manifestation of the man of sin the wicked one. So long as the assembly is on earth, the pretension to be God in His temple cannot take place or at least would have no influence. Satan has his sphere, and must needs have it, in the mystery of iniquity; but there is no longer a mystery when the place of God in His temple is openly taken. That which hinders is therefore still present. But there is a person active in maintaining this hindrance. Here I think indeed that it is God in the Person of the Holy Ghost, who, during the time called "the things that are," restrains the evil and guards divine authority in the world. As long as that subsists, the unrestrained exaltation of wickedness cannot take place. Consequently I do not doubt but that the rapture of the saints is the occasion of the hindrance being removed and all restraint loosed, although some of the ways of God are developed before the full manifestation of the evil.

This thought does not rest upon great principles only: the passage itself supplies elements which shew the state of things when the power of evil develops itself. 1st, The apostacy has already taken place. This could hardly be said if the testimony of the assembly still subsisted, as it had in time past, or even yet more distinctly as being freed from all false and corrupting elements. 2nd, Authority as established of God, so far as exercising a restraint on man's will in God's name has disappeared from the scene, for the wicked one exalts himself against all that is called God and to which homage is paid, and presents himself as God in the temple of God. Compare Psalm 82, where God stands among the gods (the judges) to judge them before He inherits the nations. Before that solemn hour when God will judge the judges of the earth, this wicked one, despising all authority that comes from Him, sets himself up as God: and that on the earth, where the

judgment will be manifested. And then, 3rdly, in place of the Holy Ghost and His power manifested on the earth, we find the power of Satan, and with precisely the same tokens that bore witness to the Person of Christ. So that the passage itself, whether as to man or as to the enemy, gives us (in the three points of which we have spoken) the full confirmation of that which we have ventured to set forth.

The assembly, the powers ordained by God upon the earth, the Holy Ghost present here as the Comforter in lieu of Christ, have all (as regards the manifestation of the government and the work of God) given place to the self-willed unbridled man, and to the power of the enemy. In saying this we speak of the sphere of this prophecy, which moreover embraces that of the public testimony of God on earth.

Definitively then we have man here in his own nature-as it has displayed itself by forsaking God in the full pursuit of his own will in rebellion against God; the willful man, developed as the result of apostacy from the position of grace in which the assembly stood, and in contempt of all the governmental authority of God on the earth. And since that authority had shewn itself directly and properly in Judea, this contempt and the spirit of rebellion in man, who exalts himself above everything, but who cannot be heavenly (heaven, and all pretension to heaven, is given up by man, and lost by Satan), display themselves by man taking the place of God in His temple under the most advanced form of Jewish apostacy and blasphemy. At the same time Satan acts God having loosed his bridle with a power (a lying power indeed, but) which gives the same testimony before men as that which the works of Christ did to the Saviour; and also with all the skill that iniquity possesses to deceive. It is in the wicked, the lawless one, that Satan works these things. Our consideration of the development of the latter part of this solemn scene will come (God willing) in the Book of Revelation. We may add, that there we have this wicked one as the false Messiah, and as prophet, in the form of his kingdom two horns like a lamb. He had been cast down from heaven where he had been anti-priest, and now takes up Christ's titles on earth of king and prophet. In Daniel 11 he is seen as king; here, as the unbridled man, and in particular as the result of the apostacy [See Note #7] and the manifestation of Satan's power. In a word, instead of the

assembly, the apostacy; instead of the Holy Ghost, Satan; and, instead of the authority of God as a restraint upon evil, the unbridled man setting himself up as God on the earth.

Another circumstance, already mentioned, demands particular attention. I have said that he presents himself as the Messiah (that is to say, in His two characters as king and prophet, which are His earthly characters). In heaven Satan has then nothing more to do; he has been cast out from thence, so that there is no imitation of the Lord's high-priesthood. In that respect Satan had, in his own person, acted another part. He was previously in heaven the accuser of the brethren. But, at the time of which we are speaking, the assembly is on high, and the accuser of the brethren is cast out never to return there. In a man inspired by him he makes himself prophet and king. And in this character he does the same things (in falsehood) as those by which God had sanctioned the mission of Christ before men. (Compare Act 2:22) In a Greek the words are identical. [See Note #8] I would also recall here another solemn fact in order to complete this picture. In the history of Elijah we find that the proof of the divinity of Baal, or that of Jehovah, is made to rest upon the fact of their respective servants bringing down fire from heaven. Now in Revelation 3 we learn that the second beast brings down fire from heaven in the sight of men. So that we find here the marvelous works that sanctioned the Lord's mission, and there that which proved Jehovah to be the true and only God. And Satan performs both in order to deceive men.

This may give us an idea of the state in which they will be; and it indicates also that these things will take place in relation with the Jews, under the double aspect of their connection with Jehovah and their rejection of Christ and reception of Antichrist.

Thus, thank God, the truth is abundantly confirmed, that these things do not relate to the assembly, but to those who, having had opportunity to profit by the truth, have rejected it, and loved iniquity. Neither does it relate to the heathen, but only to those among whom the truth has been set forth. [See Note #9] They refused it and God sends a lie, and an efficacious lie, that they may believe it. He does this in judgment: He did the same thing with the nations (Rom 1:24, Rom 1:26, Rom 1:28); He did it also with the Jews (Isa 6:9-

10); He does it here with nominal Christians. But it does relate to the Jews as a nation that rejected the truth the testimony of the Holy Ghost (Acts 7) but still more to Christians (in name); in short to all those who will have had the truth presented to them.

With nominal Christians this has necessarily the character of apostacy, or at least it is connected with this apostacy, and is consequent upon it; as Verse 3 (Th2 2:3) teaches us, the apostacy takes place, and then the man of sin is revealed.

In connection with his character of the man of sin he presents himself without restraint in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. [See Note #10] In relation to the lying power of Satan and his efficient work, he presents himself in the character of Christ he is the Antichrist, assuming consequently a Jewish character. It is not only the pride of man exalting itself against God, but the power of Satan in man deceiving men and the Jews in particular, by a false Christ; so that it it were possible, the very elect would be deceived. We may remark that all these characters are precisely the opposite of Christ falsehood instead of truth, iniquity instead of righteousness, perdition instead of salvation.

It is to a power like this, of lies and destruction that man having forsaken Christianity and exalted himself in pride against God will be given up. The apostacy (that is to say, the renunciation of Christianity) will be the occasion of this evil; Judea and the Jews, the scene in which it ripens and develops itself in a positive way.

The Antichrist will deny the Father and the Son (that is, Christianity); he will deny that Jesus is the Christ (that is, Jewish unbelief). With the burden upon him of sin against Christianity, grace, and the presence of the Holy Ghost, he will ally himself with Jewish unbelief, in order that there may be not only the full expression of human pride, but also for a time the Satanic influence of a false Christ, who will strengthen the throne of Satan among the Gentiles occupied by the first beast to whom the authority of the dragon has been given. He will also set up his own subordinate throne over the Jews, as being the Messiah, whom their unbelief is expecting; while at the same time

he will bring in idolatry, the unclean spirit long gone out who then returns to his house which is devoid of God.

And now, with regard to his destruction (whom the Lord Jesus will consume with the spirit of His mouth and destroy with the manifestation of His presence, or of His coming), the first of these means characterises the judgment; it is the word of truth applied in judgment according to the power of God. In the Revelation, it says that the sword proceeds out of His mouth. Here He is not spoken of in the character of a man of war, as in Revelation 19. The spirit of His mouth is that inward and divine power which kindles and executes the judgment. It is not an instrument, it is the divine source of power which executes its purpose by a word. (compare Isa 33:33) But there is another aspect of this judgment. The Lord, the man Jesus, will return. His return has two parts the return into the air to take His assembly to Himself, and the public manifestation in glory of His return.

In the first Verse of our Chapter (Th2 2:1) we have read of His return and our gathering together unto Him. Here, Verse 8 (Th2 2:8), is the manifestation of His presence publicly in creation. At the time of this public manifestation of His coming He destroys the whole work and power of the wicked one. It is the Man formerly obedient and humbling Himself on the earth, exalted of God, and become Lord of all, who destroys the lawless man that has exalted himself above everything and made himself as God, instead of being, obedient to God.

This evil on the side of Satan's influence was already working in the apostle's time; only it was bridled and kept back, until that which restrained it should no longer be on the scene. Then should the wicked one be revealed. To sum up, the taking away of the assembly, and the apostacy, were first necessary; and then this man should present himself as an unbelieving Jew, [See Note #11] and the power of Satan would be displayed in him.

Now this Satanic influence was for those who had rejected the truth. Of the Thessalonians to whom he had given these explanations respecting the day which they fancied was come the apostle thought very differently. God had chosen these "brethren beloved of the Lord " from the beginning for salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, to

which He had called them by Paul's gospel (and that of His companions), and to the obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus. How different was this from the visitations of the day of the Lord, and the circumstances of which the apostle had spoken! They were numbered among those who should be the companions in that day of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Note #3

"As God" is to be left out before "sitteth," in Th2 2:4.

Note #4

In 1 John 2 we find the double character of the Antichrist as regards Christianity and Judaism. He denies the Father and the Son, rejects Christianity; he denies that Jesus is the Christ, which is Jewish unbelief. His power is the working of Satan, as we find here. As man he sets up to be God. So that his impiousness is manifested in every way. As the question is more upon the earth, it is the God of the earth, the man withal from heaven, who judges him.

Note #5

Note this point. All was ready and complete in the apostle's time, only restrained. So Christ was ready to judge. Only the patience of God waits, in the accepted time.

Note #6

The principle of this may be widely at work individually, as in 1 John 2, it had begun, but the open public manifestation was to come. Jude gives the creeping in to produce corruption John, the going out which characterises the Antichrist.

Note #7

We may remark that the apostacy develops itself under the three forms in which man has been in relationship with God; Nature it is the man of sin unrestrained, who exalts himself; Judaism he sits as God in the temple of God; Christianity it is to this that the term apostacy is directly applied in the passage before us.

Note #8

Only the word for "miracle" or "power" is plural in Acts 2.

Note #9

I only allude here to the connection between the renunciation of Christianity and the development of apostate Judaism, which are linked together in the rejection of the true Christ, and the denial of the Father and the Son features given in 1 John as characteristic of the Antichrist. But I am persuaded that the more we examine the word, the more we shall see (perhaps with surprise) that this fact is confirmed. Moreover the turning back to Judaism, and the tendency to idolatry by the introduction of other mediators and patrons, and the losing sight of our union with the Head, and thus of the perfection and deliverance from the law which are ours in Christ, have, at all times, characterised the mystery of iniquity and the principle of apostacy. The apostle had incessantly to combat this. That of which we spoke above is but its full manifestation.

Note #10

This is the culminating point in his character as an apostate who has renounced grace. The ninth and following Verses (Th2 2:9-17) develop his positive and deceitful activity by which he seeks to win men. This explains the mixture (which, moreover, generally resists) of atheism in will, and superstition.

Note #11

I do not say that his first appearance will be the apostacy of Judaism; I do not think it will be. He will present himself to them as being the Christ, but according to the hopes and passions of the Jews. But afterwards it will be an apostacy even from Judaism, as had partially been the case in the days of the Maccabees a fact which the Spirit uses in Daniel 11, as a figure precursive of the time of Antichrist. He is from his first appearance an unbeliever and the enemy of God, an apostate as to the assembly, and denying that Jesus is the Christ. We are taught positively by John, that the rejection of Christianity and Jewish unbelief are united in the Antichrist. It appears that apostacy with regard to Christianity and Jewish unbelief are connected and go

together; and afterwards Jewish apostacy and open rebellion against God, which, causing the cry of the remnant, brings in the Lord, and all is ended. Now the apostle (Th2 2:3-4) presents the complete picture of man's iniquity, developed when apostacy from the grace of the gospel had taken place (he exalts himself even to the making himself God), without touching the Jewish side or the manifested power of Satan. These Verses shew us the man of sin is the result of the apostacy which will break out in the midst of Christendom. Verse 9 (Th2 2:9) begins to teach us in addition, that the coming of this wicked one is also in immediate connection with a mighty display of the energy of Satan, who deceives by means of marvelous works and a strong delusion to which God gives men up, and of which we have spoken in the text. It is man and Satan here, with enough to shew its connection with Judaism in the last days (even as the mystery of iniquity was linked with Judaism in the days of the apostles, although it is not the occasion of giving the details of the Jewish development of the evil. We must look for these details elsewhere, where they are in their place, as in Daniel. The Apocalypse and 1 John furnish us with the means of connecting them: we do but allude here to this connection.

2 Thessalonians Chapter 3

There is nothing very particular in the apostle's exhortations. His great concern was the explanation which we have been considering. He prays that God and the Lord Jesus Himself, who had given them the sure and everlasting consolations of the gospel, would comfort their hearts and establish them in every good word and work. He asks for their prayers that he may be preserved in his labors. He could not but expect to find men unreasonable and animated with enmity, for faith was not the portion of all. It was only a case for the protecting hand of God. With regard to them he counted for this end on the faith fullness of the Lord. He reckoned also on their obedience, and prays God to direct their hearts to wards these two points, of which we have spoken when studying the First Epistle, the love of God and the patient waiting with which the Christ waited the two points in which the whole of christian life is summed up with regard to its objects, its moral springs. Christ Himself was waiting sweet thought! They were to wait

with Him, until the moment when His heart and the hearts of His own should rejoice together in their meeting.

It was this which they needed. On the one hand, they had believed that the dead saints would not be ready to go and meet the Lord; on the other, they had thought the day of the Lord already come. The enjoyment of the love of God, and peace of heart in waiting for Christ, was necessary for them.

This excitement into which they had been led had also betrayed itself in some among them by their neglect of their ordinary labors, " working not at all but being busybodies," intermeddling in the affairs of others. The apostle had set them a very different example. He exhorts them to be firm, and to withdraw from those who would not hearken to his admonitions, but continued to walk disorderly and in idleness; not however in such a manner as to treat them as enemies, but to admonish them as brethren.

It will be observed here, that there is no longer the same expression of the energy of communion and of life as previously. (compare Th2 3:16 with Th1 5:23.) Nevertheless the Lord was still the Lord of peace; but the beauty of that entire consecration to God, which would shine forth in the day of Christ, does not present itself to the apostle's mind and heart as in the First Epistle. He prays for them, however, that they may have peace always and by all means.

The apostle points out the method by which he assured the faithful of the authenticity of his letters. With the exception of that to the Galatians he employed other persons to write them, but he attached his own signature in order to verify their contents to the church, adding the prayer or blessing.

1 TIMOTHY

1 Timothy Chapter 1

1 Timothy 1:1

ti1 1:1

The Epistles to Timothy and Titus have naturally a peculiar bearing and character, being addressed to persons deputed by the apostle to act in his name, or to care for the churches during his absence. Their application to us is none the less direct on this account, because they not only instruct us with regard to the state of the church, and the pastoral care which the apostle bestowed on it, but the line of conduct in which Timothy is charged to lead the faithful is that which the faithful ought always themselves to follow. Nevertheless to confound the directions given to Timothy and Titus with the words addressed immediately to the faithful, would be to cast confusion upon ministry in its best sense.

A great part of this First Epistle to Timothy requires but little development; not because it is without importance but because it contains directions so plain and simple that explanation would be superfluous and practical exhortations which would only be obscured and their force and point taken away by attempting to enlarge upon them.

On the other hand, some general principles of great importance for the position of the assembly in general are contained in this epistle.

God assumes here, in a peculiar way, the character of a Saviour-God with regard to the world: a principle of great importance in all that concerns our conversation in the world and our intercourse with men. We represent in our religious character a God of love. This was not the case in Judaism. He was indeed the same God; but there He took the character of a Lawgiver. All were indeed to come to His temple according to the declaration of the prophets, and His temple was open to them; but He did not characterise Himself as a Saviour-God for all. In Titus we find the same expression.

In these confidential communications to his dear children in the faith and companions in the work, we can understand that the apostle would clearly establish the great principles on which the administration committed to him rested. That all men were the objects of God's dealings in grace was the general basis on which this administration was founded that the character of God towards the world was that of a Saviour. (Compare 2 Cor. 5) The law has its place and it still has it, as the apostle shews the conviction of unrighteous men. [See Note #1] But the sovereign mercy of God was the starting-point of all that the apostle had to declare. This thought, this spirit, was to govern the worship even of believers. Details follow. Notwithstanding this love to the world, there was upon the earth an assembly of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth, and the witness to it on earth. The Person of Christ, and all that concerns Him, is the subject of its confession, the foundation of its existence, and the object of its faith. This faith would be assailed in the last days by the enemy, who, under the pretense of sanctity, would set himself up against God the Creator and Preserver of all men and of believers in particular. Directions for the walk of the assembly compose the remainder of the epistle. Conduct suitable to all is set before Timothy to make him, as well as ourselves, understand that which befits the assembly of God. We will now look more closely into the contents of this epistle.

From its commencement the apostle designates God as the Saviour-God. Paul is the apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ is the confidence and the hope of the soul.

We observe also that the apostle's wish differs from that which he expresses when addressing an assembly; "Grace, mercy," he says, " and peace." He does not say "mercy" to the assemblies, which stand before God as such, in consequence of the mercy shewn them, and which (however low their condition might be) are viewed as assemblies according to the nature in which they live by the Spirit, in which there is no question of mercy, because that nature is itself of God. Grace and peace are that which they are to enjoy on the part of God. But when an individual is in question, whatever his piety or faithfulness may be, he is both flesh and spirit, his career has yet in part at least to be provided for, having always need of mercy. Therefore

the apostle wishes it to Timothy as well as to Titus. [See Note #2] In the case of Philemon he adds "the church in thy house," and his wish has therefore no longer the personal form. But with Timothy and Titus it is the apostle's intimacy with his beloved fellow-labourers He knew how much they needed mercy. It was his own resource, that which he had experienced for the comfort of his own soul.

The special object for which Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus, when he went into Macedonia, was that he might watch over the doctrine which was taught; but being there, he gives him directions for the interior order of the assembly. The evil which the enemy sought to introduce, with regard to doctrine, had a twofold character; fables of human imagination, and the introduction of the law into Christianity. As to the former, it was pure evil and edified no one. The apostle does not here say much about it; he forewarned them of the evil; and the faith of the assembly at Ephesus was solid enough to allow him to treat the whole system as mere fables and genealogies. The Spirit gave warning, that in later times it would have more disastrous consequences; but at present there was only need to guard the faithful from it as that which was worthless. Timothy was charged by the apostle to attend to this.

But that which is committed to us in Christianity as service, is always, both in its object and its character, at the height of the eternal principles of God, and belongs to the foundation of our moral relations with Him.

The object of Paul's mandate is the love of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned, and never the subtleties of argument or of human imagination. This is a sure token for souls that are sound in the faith and guided by the Spirit of God. Speculative questions do not act on the conscience, nor bring into the presence of God. Some had forsaken these great landmarks of Christianity, turning aside to vain discussions. And here we again find those same corrupters of Christianity, who, after having rejected the Saviour, sowed the apostle's path with thorns Judaizing teachers. They desired to inculcate the law. The human mind is adequate to this.

Now we see here the way in which one who is at the height of the truth of God can put everything in its true place. Paul treats the produce of human imagination as mere fables; but the law was of God and could be made useful if rightly employed. It was of great service to condemn, to judge evil, to slay to shew the judgment of God against every wrong thing forbidden by the gospel which revealed the glory of the blessed God a glory which tolerated no evil and which had been committed to the apostle. It could be used to act upon the conscience in this way, but it did not build up the righteous; and, if any were under the law, they were under the curse. As a sword for the conscience, it may be used. But grace alone is the source of our preaching and the stay of our souls.

These two systems and their respective places are presented in Verses 6-17 (Ti1 1:6-17), which form a kind of parenthesis, the apostle resuming his address to Timothy in Verse 18 (Ti1 1:18). The use of the law is explained in Verses 8-13 (Ti1 1:8-13). The apostle in a certain sense lowers it here, while acknowledging its utility in its place, as the weapon of righteousness for condemnation, and contrasts it with the gospel which is connected with the glory of God Himself which this gospel proclaims, as the law is connected with the wickedness which it condemns.

Having spoken of the gospel of the glory which had been committed to him, the apostle turns to the sovereign grace that brought him into the knowledge of this glory which is the testimony to the accomplishment of the work of grace.

"I give thanks," he says, "to Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer and persecutor and injurious". This indeed was grace.

The apostle speaks of two things in his conversion: the one, how God could have compassion on him in such a state he was in ignorance; the other, the purpose of God that the apostle should be a pattern of grace to all. That he was in ignorance and unbelief although a condition which made mercy possible (for had he been an enemy, knowing and willing it, while acquainted with the grace of the gospel, it would have been impossible), yet that condition was no excuse for his sin; he puts pure and perfect grace

forward, as having abounded in his case he was the chief of sinners. This indeed was true. The high priests had resisted the Holy Ghost to the uttermost. Paul had joined them in it: but he was not satisfied with that. He desired to be the active enemy of the faith wherever it existed, and to destroy the name of Jesus. He had done much at Jerusalem, but he wished to satiate his hatred even in foreign cities. We know his history in the Acts. The living expression of Jewish resistance to grace, he was also among men the expression of the most active human enmity to Him whom God would glorify. Grace was greater than the sin, the patience of God more perfect than the perseverance of man's hostility. The latter was limited by man's importance, the former has no limit in the nature of God but that of His own sovereign will. Guilty as man may be, his sin cannot so reach God as to disturb the independent action of His nature or change His purposes. He was pleased to shew forth in Paul a pattern of the sovereignty of that grace and perfect goodness to the Jews hereafter, who as a nation will be in Saul's condition to all men as the enemies of God and by nature children of wrath. The chief, the most active, the most inveterate of enemies was the best and most powerful of witnesses that the grace of God abounded over sin, and that the work of Christ was perfect to put it away. "Unto God" being such in His nature, and having the development of all the ages in His counsels "unto the only God, invisible, incorruptible," he ascribes all praise and all glory. Such was the foundation of Paul's ministry in contrast with the law. It was founded on the revelation of grace; but it was a revelation connected with the experience of its application to his own case. Peter, guilty of denying a living Saviour, could speak to the Jews of grace that met their case, which was his own; Paul, formerly the enemy of a glorified Saviour and the resister of the Holy Ghost, could proclaim grace that rose above even that state of sinfulness, above all that could flow from human nature grace that opened the door to the Gentiles according to God's own counsels, when the Jews had rejected everything, substituting the heavenly assembly for them grace that sufficed for the future admission of that guilty nation to better privileges than those which they had forfeited.

Such was the call of this apostle, such his ministry. Having shewn the opposition between that which was committed to him and the law (while affirming the usefulness of the latter, not as a rule to the righteous or a

guide to God's people, but as judging wrong), he resumes his address to Timothy in that which refers to the details of his mission among the Ephesians.

At the end of Chapter 1 he commits the charge to him sends him his mandate. The term he employs relates to Verses 3 and 5 (Ti1 1:3; Ti1 1:5). He had left Timothy at Ephesus in order to command some persons there not to teach other doctrines than the truths of the gospel. Now the end of the command, of this evangelical commission, was love flowing from a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned. For the gospel, while revealing the marvelous counsels of God, maintains the great eternal principles of His nature. It is this which distinguishes truth from the lofty pretensions of heretical imaginations; it requires that man should be in relationship with God really in heart and in truth according to those principles. And this commission the apostle now entrusted to Timothy, his own son in the faith. He was to maintain it with an authority that had its basis in divine testimony but which he held formally from the apostle who appointed him to it; not merely of his own accord, but according to prophecies which had pointed him out for this purpose, and which were a means of strength to him in the conflict he was thus brought into. The conditions of victory were in accordance with the nature of the commission. He was to keep the faith and a good conscience. Now faith here is the doctrine of Christianity; yet not merely as doctrine, but as that which the soul held between itself and God as coming from Him. He had to maintain the truth, the christian doctrine, but to hold it as so revealed by God Himself to the soul that it should be the truth. The light should possess, with well-defined outlines, the authority of God.

It was the faith, that which God had revealed, received with certainty as such as the truth.

But, to be in communion with God, the conscience must be good, must be pure; and if we are not in communion with God, we cannot have the strength that would maintain us in the faith, that would enable us to persevere in the profession of the truth, as God gives it to us. Satan has then a hold upon us, and if the intellect of one in this state is active, he falls into heresy. The loss of a good conscience opens the door to Satan, because it

deprives us of communion with God; and the active mind, under Satan's influence, invents ideas instead of confessing the truth of God. The apostle treats the fruit of this state as "blasphemies;" the will of man is at work, and the higher the subject, the more an unbridled will, possessed by the enemy, goes astray, and exalts itself against God, and against the subjection of the whole mind to the obedience of Christ, to the authority of the revelation of God.

The apostle had delivered up two persons of this character to Satan that is to say, outwardly. Though already deceived by him, they were not under his dominion as having power to torment and make them suffer. For in the assembly (when in its normal state) Satan has no power of that kind. It is guarded from it, being the dwelling place of the Holy Ghost and protected by God and by the power of Christ. Satan can tempt us individually; but he has no right over the members of the assembly as such. They are within, and, weak as they may be, Satan cannot enter there. They may be delivered to him for their good. This may take place at all times witness the history of Job. But the assembly ought to have the knowledge, and be the guardian and instrument, of the accomplishment of the dealings of God with His own. Within the assembly is the Holy Ghost; God dwells in it as His house by the Spirit. Without is the world of which Satan is the prince. The apostle (by the power bestowed on him, [See Note #3] for it is an act of positive power) delivered these two men into the power of the enemy deprived them of the shelter they had enjoyed. They had listened to the enemy had been his instruments. It was not in the assembly, with members of Christ, that this should have taken place. They must be made to feel what he was to whom they had given ear. God thus made use of Satan himself as a rod for the good of His rebellious children. Satan should instruct them, through the pains he would make them suffer, of whatever kind it might be, whether anguish of soul or of body, and the latter is the immediate effect, in order that their will might be broken and brought into subjection to God. Solemn discipline! Marvelous power in the hands of man! but a proof that the love of God can order all things for the purpose of delivering a soul and bringing it to Himself.

Note #1

Not here, specially, that any one is under it, or that it is a rule of life for a people of God, but a rule of right and wrong to demonstrate evil to any conscience. In Verse 5 (Ti1 1:5) we have the end of the commission of the gospel on the other hand, partaking of the divine nature love and holiness, acting up to responsibility, a good conscience and the heart fully devoted to God, receiving His word and trusting Him.

Note #2

There is, however, some question as to the reading in Titus.

Note #3

We must not confound this act of power with discipline which is the act of the assembly and its formal duty. In 1 Corinthians 5 the apostle joins the assembly to himself in this act of power, but he delivered with the power of Christ. The duty of the assembly is stated there in Verse 13 (Ti1 1:13). As to the saints' or assembly's part, when God has exercised discipline see Jo1 5:16; Jam 5:14-15.

1 Timothy Chapter 2

The apostle proceeds to give instructions founded on the great principles which he had established on grace. The Jewish spirit might look on Gentile kings as enemies, and on Gentiles in general as unworthy of divine favour. The persecution of which Christians were the object gave the flesh occasion to nourish these dispositions and to enter into the spirit of the law. Grace rises above all these thoughts all these feelings of the heart. It teaches us to think of all men with love. We belong to a Saviour-God, who acts in the gospel towards all men with love. Especially were they to pray for kings and those who had places in the world, that God would dispose their hearts to allow us to live in peace and quietness in all honesty. This was well-pleasing to a Saviour-God, who was willing that all men should be saved and be brought to know the truth. The subject here is not the counsels of God, but His dealings with men under the gospel. He acts in grace. It is the acceptable time the day of salvation. He opens the door through the blood of Christ, and proclaims peace and a sure reception to all who come. The work is done; His character fully glorified with regard to sin. If they refuse to come,

that is the will of man. That God will fulfill His counsels after all makes no change in His dealings, nor in the responsibility of men. We have love to proclaim to all-in the spirit of love in our ways towards them. The distinction between Jew and Gentile totally disappears here. There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, a Man, Christ Jesus. These are the two great truths which form the basis of all true religion. Judaism had already been the revelation and testimony in the world of the first: there was one only God. This remains eternally true, but did not suffice to bring men into relationship with God. With regard to men He abode within the veil in the darkness which shrouded His majesty. Christianity, while fully revealing the one God, presents the second truth: there is one mediator between God and men. There is one, and there is but one. It is as true that there is but one Mediator as that there is but one God. This is the great and distinctive truth of Christianity.

Two things here characterise the Mediator. He is a man; He gave Himself a ransom for all. The time for this testimony was ordered of God.

Precious truth! We are in weakness, we are guilty, we could not bring ourselves near to God. We needed a Mediator, who, while maintaining the glory of God, should put us into such a position that He could present us to God in righteousness according to that glory. Christ gave Himself as a ransom. But He must be a man in order to suffer for men, and to represent men. And this He was. But this is not all. We are weak here, where we are to receive the revelation of God; and weak, with regard to the use of our resources in God and our communion with Him even when our guilt is blotted out. And, in our weakness to receive the revelation of God, Christ has revealed God, and all that He is in His own Person, in all the circumstances wherein man could have need either in body or in soul. He came down into the lowest depths in order that there should be none, even of the most wretched, who could not feel that God in His goodness was near him and was entirely accessible to him come down to Him His love finding its occasion in misery; and that there was no need to which He was not present, which He could not meet.

It is thus that He made himself known on earth; and, now that He is on high, He is still the same. He does not forget His human experiences: they are

perpetuated by His divine power in the sympathizing feelings of His humanity, according to the energy of that divine love which was their source and their motive power. He is still a man in glory, and in divine perfection. His divinity imparts the strength of its love to His humanity, but does not set aside the latter. Nothing could resemble such a Mediator as this; nothing could equal the tenderness, the knowledge of the human heart, the sympathy, the experience of need. In the measure which divinity could give to what He did, and in the strength of its love, He came down, took part in all the sorrows of humanity, and entered into all the circumstances in which the human heart could be, and was wounded, oppressed, and discouraged, bowing down under the evil. No tenderness, no power of sympathy, no humanity like His; no human heart that can so understand, so feel with us, whatever the burden may be that oppresses the heart of man. It is the Man, the Christ Jesus, who is our Mediator; none so near, none who has come down so low, and entered with divine power into the need, and all the need, of man. The conscience is purified by His work, the heart relieved by that which He was, and which He is for ever.

There is but One: to think of another would be to snatch from Him His glory and from us our perfect consolation. His coming from on high, His divine nature, His death, His life as man in heaven, all point Him out as the one and only Mediator.

But there is another aspect of this truth, and of the fact that He is a Man. It is, that He is not merely a mediator as a Priest upon His throne, between Israel and the Lord; not simply the Messiah, in order to place Israel in relationship with their God, but a Man between God and men. It is according to the eternal nature of God Himself and to the need of men in His presence. It was of these truths, eternal and of universal bearing, that Paul was the herald and the apostle.

Possessing a character that belongs to all ages and that goes beyond them, all these facts had their time to be revealed.

All means dependent on man's use of them had been tried with men and in vain, as to recalling him to God; and now the necessary foundations of their relationship with God had to be set forth, laid by God Himself, and the

Gentiles were to hear the testimony of grace. And such was the apostle's testimony, "a teacher of the Gentiles in the faith and in the truth."

Paul has plainly now laid the foundations, and he proceeds therefore to details. Men were to pray everywhere, lifting up pure hands, without wrath, and without vain human reasonings. Women were to walk in modesty, adorned with good works, and to learn in silence. A woman was forbidden to teach or to exercise authority over men; she was to abide in quietness and silence. The reason given for this is remarkable, and shews how, in our relations with God, everything depends on the original starting-point. In innocence Adam had the first place; in sin, Eve It was she who, being deceived, brought in transgression. Adam was not deceived, guilty as he was of disobeying God. United to his wife, he followed her, not deceived by the enemy but weak through his affection. Without the weakness, it was this which the second Adam did in grace; He followed His deceived and guilty bride, but in order to redeem and deliver her by taking her faults upon Himself. Eve suffered on earth the penalty of her fault in a way which is a mark of the judgment of God; but walking in modesty, with faith and love and holiness, she shall be delivered in the hour of her trial; and that which bears the stamp of judgment shall be an occasion of the mercy and succour of God.

1 Timothy Chapter 3

The apostle next points out to Timothy the qualities necessary for a bishop or a deacon, as well as for the wife of the latter. [See Note #4] He supposes here that there were some who desired to undertake this work. It was a good work. To care for souls and have a vigilant eye upon the walk of believers; to watch over them in order that the members of Christ should answer to His love and lose no christian privilege; to do this by maintaining that happy order and that precious unity which were realised at that time, and to protect the flock of the Lord against the ravaging wolves that were seeking to invade it: this indeed was valuable work, and he on whose heart the Lord had thus laid the souls of His people might well desire to undertake it. The apostle felt this: it was a true and faithful saying; but certain qualities were needed to make any one fit for such a charge. Gifts are not included among them, unless the being "apt to teach" might be so considered; but

even this is presented as a quality the man must have 'aptness' [See Note #5] for it not as a gift. Power to use such truth with others was very useful in fulfilling his charge, without saying at all that he taught publicly in the assembly. The essential thing was that which gave moral weight.

Timothy was not left at Ephesus to appoint elders; but these were the qualities necessary to a bishop, and Paul exhorts him to be watchful on this point.

It is not needful to enter into the details of these qualities; they are plain enough, as well as those required for a deacon.

We see what was the subject of " the condemnation of the devil : " he exalted himself at the thought of his own importance. (Compare Ezek. 28) "The snare of the devil" is another thing. If a man is not of good report, he will yield somewhere to the enemy, because he will not dare to withstand him boldly.

It will be noticed that the apostle speaks of the wives of deacons, not those of bishops (except to say that these must be the husbands of one wife only). Bishops had a charge, in which they were occupied with souls and exercised authority in the church, in which women were not to act. Deacons were necessarily occupied with family details and circumstances. In these women might well be concerned and often very useful. In the spiritual cares of elders they had nothing to do. It was requisite therefore that the wives of deacons should possess qualities which would cause their husbands to be respected, and at the same time guard themselves from becoming busybodies and tale-bearers.

Faithfulness in the charge of a deacon the exercise of which in fact is a matter of the greatest delicacy, and requires much christian love and patience was a means of acquiring strength in the work of God. Stephen and Philip are examples of this: their spiritual powers soon carried them beyond their services as deacons.

What was the assembly in those happy days ? That which surely it always is in the sight of God, but then in fact, when love displayed itself in an order maintained by the energy of the Holy Ghost, and when the oneness of the

entire body developed itself in the action of all its members, it was the house of God. Thank God, it is so always; yet what a difference since then in its practical condition!

But let us here examine the character which the apostle gives to the assembly on earth. He wrote hoping soon to come, but in order that, in case he might tarry long, Timothy should know how to conduct himself. He then tells us what the assembly is.

In the first place it is the 'house of God'. God dwells in it upon the earth. (Compare Eph 2:22) We understand that it is here viewed as on the earth, because the apostle is speaking of how to behave in it. But this truth is important. It gives a character to the assembly of the highest importance for us with regard to our responsibility. It is not a vague thing, composed of the dead, of the living a thing which we know not where to find, because one part of it is alive on the earth and another part consists of souls in heaven. It is the house of God here below, in which we have to behave (whatever other position we may hold) in a manner that becomes the house of God. God dwells in the assembly upon earth. We cannot too earnestly remember this fact. Whatever would bring confusion into the presentation of the truth, through the idea that some are dead and that the whole assembly is not here, comes from the enemy and is in opposition to the word. The assembly viewed as subsisting on earth, is the house of God.

1 Timothy Chapter 4

But there would be some who departed from the faith, from this knowledge of the one Creator and Saviour-God Him who was manifested in the flesh. They would attack precisely these points which we have named. It might be that they would pretend to carry the idea of christian privileges farther than all others had done, as well as that of profound knowledge of God; but they would sin against first principles, against the faith which connected the Saviour God revealed in Christianity with the one only Creator-God. According to Christianity, the eternal God had not only created the world but had revealed Himself in Christ. These apostates, bringing in doctrines of demons, would seek to deny that it was this one and only God of nature who had manifested Himself in grace. Seduced by demons, and their

conscience being seared, they forbade that which God had established in creation, that which He had given to man in full right after the flood: as though the superior holiness which they preached, and relationship with a more exalted God, were not consistent with such customs. Forsaking the real and practical holiness of communion with God, and of His commandments by Christ, they created a false sanctity for themselves, which denied that which God had ordained from the beginning and thus exalted themselves against the authority of Him who had ordained it, as though He was an imperfect or perhaps evil being.

Thus the restraint of the fear of God was lost, and the door opened to license and dissoluteness. The Spirit of God warned the assembly of this, and the faithful apostle communicates it to Timothy and through him puts the faithful on their guard. He does not therefore speak of privilege. Faithful to the glory of God, he returns to the first principles of His glory, and maintains the incontestable rights of the one and only God; faithful to God, not making boast of his knowledge, but seeking in love to guard the assembly from all departure from God.

We must not confound the few here who forsake the faith with the general apostacy of 2 Thessalonians. Here a few depart from the truth, seduced by demons; and the assembly still subsists to be guarded from the invasion of these hurtful principles. Quite another thing is the general apostacy, and the manifestation of the man of sin, which is not mentioned here at all. Here we have the faithfulness which repels error by truth, reminding the brethren of the latter, in order that they may not be seduced. There it is the manifestation of the one who sits in the temple of God, and who is destroyed by the brightness of the Lord's presence. Here all that had to be done was to recall in simplicity the goodness of the Creator, and that His gifts, received with thanksgiving, were always good, and not to be refused: assuredly not that they were to use them for the gratification of their lusts, but as sanctified by the word of God, which brought them to us as God's gifts, and by prayer, which connects us with God in using them. They were to be received as from Him, as the gift of His hand; and they were sanctified, as is the case with everything that comes from Him and bears the stamp of His will and His goodness. Man had forfeited everything in forsaking God:

what he had he had not now with God, would eat merely as an animal, and worse as having left God. The word of God replaced the relationship in grace, and prayer used it on this footing. Here (although in other circumstances it has gone much farther) the monastic principle, in the heart and in form, is fully judged; however sincere any individual may be who seeks to follow it in order to honour God. God does not withdraw the gifts on which man, so to speak, has seized by his will; but his use of them, instead of being the gratification of his will and lusts, is now as received from God by His will in thankfulness, and owning Him.

This in fact the apostle shews in that which follows. By teaching thus Timothy would be a good servant of Jesus Christ, nourished in the truth: bodily exercise profited little, but godliness much both here below and for eternity; warning him again against the idle and profitless speculation of the human mind, to the danger of which he continually recurs. It is for this doctrine of God true and worthy of all acceptation that the apostle laboured and suffered reproach; because he had faith in the living God, who, by His providence and by His supreme power, [See Note #7] governed, preserved, and took care of all men, and especially of those that believed. It was this same only God, Creator and Saviour, in whom he trusted while laboring for the Lord. Timothy was to teach this and enforce it with authority.

Afterwards, in connection with this authoritative instruction, the apostle speaks of the person and position of Timothy himself. He was young, but he was to maintain his place, and gain by his conduct that weight which years did not yet give him. He was to be an example to the believers, and occupy himself, till Paul came, with reading, exhortation, and instruction. Moreover, in his case God had given a special preparation for his work; he was not to forget or neglect it. A gift had been imparted to him: God had pointed him out to this end by prophecy; and this immediate testimony from God, to which the operation of His power was united, had been accompanied by the seal of testimony from man, that is, that of the elders among the Christians. (Compare Act 13:1-3.)

Thus all things concurred to strengthen Timothy in his service, and in the authority that he exercised at that moment in place of the apostle. He should always present the weight of an irreproachable conduct, which

would have its influence over hearts and consciences; but he was inwardly strengthened by the consciousness of having been formally set apart by God for the work; the gift of God had been imparted to him, and the sanction of all that had weight in the assembly had been laid, as a seal, upon him. Thus strengthened, he was to devote himself to the things of the Lord in such a manner, that his progress should be evident to all men a demonstration of his communion with the Lord. At the same time he was to take heed to himself and to the doctrine, and that continually, which should be the means of salvation both to himself and to those who heard him.

Note #7

Compare Mat 10:29 .

1 Timothy Chapter 5

Having thus considered the labourer, the apostle returns to the details of the work, in which Timothy was to display his diligence and watchful care. Everywhere here the subject is that which is suitable outwardly to an upright walk, that which is seemly, whether with regard to the position of individuals, or with respect to the world. The apostle speaks of elders; of widows, of that which is becoming for younger widows; of the honour due to faithful elders those among them especially who were teachers also. There is nothing inward, nothing of the soul's relationships to God; but everything refers to the public testimony which suited the position of men in this world before God. It is important to remark this that although our joy lies in our heavenly privileges in our communion, yet we can never with impunity neglect ordinary duties or moral proprieties; we must take knowledge of the practical dangers that would beset us, owing to that which the flesh is.

We may notice that provision was made for all widows who had no relatives able to maintain them; and also that there were elders who did not teach.

Against an elder, Timothy was not to receive an accusation, unless there were two or three witnesses.

All this bears testimony to the fact, that the apostle gives these directions with a view to outward order; for the maintenance of that which is

respectable in the eyes of all, and of respect for all that ought to be respected. At the same time, Timothy was to be careful not to give by the laying on of hands his sanction to any one who did not offer moral guarantees that, in the position he had taken, he deserved this mark of respect from others. It would be, on Timothy's part, to become a partaker in the sins of which such a one might be guilty. He was not to lay hands hastily on any one.

Some men's sins were open, and proclaimed before hand the judgment that awaited them. The sins of others were hidden: they would find them again at the great day. But this was a reason why he should do nothing in his charge with precipitation; he was also to keep himself pure.

Timothy's habitual temperance is here seen: weak in body, the apostle recommends him to use his liberty by taking a little wine a pleasing instance of grace. We have here a proof of the habits of this faithful servant. The Spirit shews us how carefully he kept himself from exciting or satisfying his passions in the least thing (at the same time that there is perfect liberty to use everything that is good when there is a true reason for it) and also the apostle's tender interest in his fellow-labourer in the gospel. It is a little parenthesis attached to the expression, " be not a partaker of other men's sins," but it has great beauty. This affectionate watchfulness became the apostle; he desired holiness in his representative, but he well knew how to respect Timothy, and to maintain the decorum which he had enjoined, and to exhibit his heartfelt tenderness. The 24th Verse (Ti1 5:24) is connected with the 22nd (Ti1 5:22).

1 Timothy Chapter 6

The apostle then goes equally into detail with regard to servants, that is, slaves. They were to respect their masters, in order that the doctrine of the Lord should not be blasphemed. When the masters were believers, there was naturally more familiarity, for they were one in Christ, and thence the danger (for the flesh is crafty) that the servants might not treat their masters with the respect due to them. The apostle guards against this abuse of christian love, and of the just intimacy and confidence which ought to exist between brethren; but which, on the contrary, was a motive for the

servant to render all honour to his master, by treating him with more love and with the same respect.

It was necessary that the apostle should be firm. All other instruction all refusal to receive the wholesome words of christian doctrine, the words of Christ and the doctrine which is according to practical godliness proceeded from the flesh, from human pride in those who wished to take advantage of godliness, and make it a means of gain. From such persons Timothy was to turn away. Godliness was indeed gain, if they were contented with what they had; and the Christian, who does not belong to this world, if he has food and raiment, ought to be content therewith. He brought nothing into this world, and will certainly carry nothing out of it. And the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil. Seduced by this covetousness, some had wandered away from christian faith and had pierced their hearts with sorrow. The desire to be rich was the path of snares and temptation, of foolish and hurtful lusts. Timothy was to flee these things, as a man of God. This is always the thought here: he was in the world on the part of God; he represented Him for his part in the work. He was therefore to follow after other things than earthly riches the character of a man of God righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness: these were the things which, in man, presented God to the world and glorified Him.

Meanwhile there was conflict: he must fight the good fight of faith. If any one represents God in the world, there must be warfare, because the enemy is there. The energy of faith was also necessary, in order to lay hold of eternal life in the midst of the seduction and difficulties which the " things that are seen " presented. God, moreover, had called Timothy to this, and he had made a good confession before many witnesses.

Finally, the apostle charges him most solemnly in the presence of God, the Source of life for all things and of Christ Jesus who had Himself borne witness without wavering before the powers of this world, placing him under the responsibility of keeping the commandment without spot, unrebukable until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It will be noticed here that, as Paul had not spoken in the epistle of the privileges of the assembly, but of its responsibility, so neither does he here

speak of its being caught up but of its manifestation, when the fruits of faithfulness (or of failure in it) will be gathered, and every one be in his place in the visible glory according to his work. All are like Christ, all enter into His joy; but to sit at His right and left hand in His kingdom is the portion of those for whom it is prepared by His Father, who bestows it according to the work which He has granted each to perform, giving him power to accomplish it, although in grace He reckons it as our own.

Christ Himself is here viewed as the faithful man (Ti1 6:13), whom God will manifest in glory before all creatures at the time ordained in His counsels.

All here is responsibility before the world, or glory as the result of that responsibility. The supreme, invisible God is maintained in His majesty; and He presents the Lord Jesus Christ in the creation as its centre, and repository of His glory He who dwells in light inaccessible, whom, in His divine essence, man has not seen and cannot see.

This character of the epistle is very remarkable. Nowhere else is the inaccessible majesty of God, as God, thus presented. His character is often the subject of instruction and manifestation. Here He alone has essential immortality. He dwells in inaccessible light. He is ever invisible to the eyes of men. He alone has power. He has dominion over all who reign. It is God in the abstraction of His essence, in the proper immutability of His being, in the rights of His majesty, veiled to all men.

Now Christ will be the centre of the visible glory. Having part in the divine glory before the world was, He displays, in the human nature in which He took part, this glory, which is rendered visible in Him, causing His own to participate in His joy and in all that He has in this character; but here, He is manifested by God, and in order that all should acknowledge Him. [See Note #8] And it is our responsibility, faithfulness to which will be manifested in that day, which is here set before us. However small may be our share of responsibility, it is of such a God as this that we are the representatives on earth. Such is the God before whom we are to walk, and whose majesty we are to respect immediately in our conduct, and also in our relations to all that He has made.

The apostle concludes his exhortation to Timothy by engaging him to warn the rich not to rest on the uncertainty of riches, but on the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy. It is still the supreme and Creator-God who is before our eyes. Moreover, they were to be rich in good works, and ready to give; to be rich in those dispositions which would be of value, which would lay up a store (this is but a figure) against the time to come; and to lay hold of that which really is life. The apostle repeats his urgent exhortation to Timothy to keep that which had been committed to him, to avoid profane and vain babblings, holding fast the sound and sanctifying truth, and to have nothing to do with oppositions of human science, which pretended to penetrate into divine things as though they were subject to its knowledge. This was the origin of the fall of many with regard to christian faith.

I do not doubt that, in the manner in which the apostle here sets God before us, he refers to the foolish imaginations to which, under the influence of the enemy, men were abandoning themselves. Thus he speaks of these with relation to the majesty of His Being as the one only God in whom is all fullness, and with regard to the sobriety of practical morality, which keeps the heart under the influence of that truth, and apart from the false and vain speculations in which the pride of man indulged itself. He maintained souls by the majesty of the only God in the practical sobriety in which peace dwells.

Soon will the veil be drawn aside by the appearing of Jesus, whom the Almighty God will display to the world.

Note #8

In Revelation 19 He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Here He who is so manifests Him. So in Daniel 7. The Son of man is brought to the Ancient of days, but in the same Chapter the Ancient of days comes.

2 TIMOTHY

2 Timothy Chapter 1

2 Timothy 1:1

ti2 1:1

The Second Epistle to Timothy has a very peculiar character. It is the expression of his heart, who out side Palestine had, under God, founded and built the assembly of God on earth, and it was written in sight of its failure, and its departure from the principles on which he had established it. God remained faithful; His foundation was sure and immovable; but the work committed into the hands of men was already enfeebled and decaying. The consciousness of this state of things, which moreover betrayed itself in the way in which the apostle himself was then forsaken oppressed his heart; and he pours it out into the bosom of his faithful Timothy. By this means the Spirit instructs us in the solemn truth, that the church has not kept its first estate, and sets before us the ways of safety for those who seek God, and desire to please Him, in such a state of things as this.

The apostle John gives the history of the fall of the assembly here below, and of its judgment, and that of the world likewise. He also sets before us a life which, apart from all questions of the assembly's condition, abides ever the same, which renders us capable of enjoying God, and makes us resemble Him in His nature and character.

As a witness John was to remain until the Lord came: but Paul sees for himself the ruin of that which he had built and watched over so faithfully. He had spent himself for the assembly, accomplishing that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ; and he had to see that which he had so much loved (which he had cared for even as a mother cherishes her nursling which he had planted as God's plant on the earth) grow feeble as to its condition and testimony in the world, depart from the source of strength, and become corrupt. What a painful experience! But it is that of the servant of God in all ages and in all dispensations. He sees indeed the power of God acting to

plant the testimony on earth, but he sees that men soon fail in it. The house inhabited by the Holy Ghost becomes dilapidated and in disorder.

Nevertheless (and we love to repeat it with the apostle) the sure foundation of the Lord abides for ever. Whatever may be the condition of the whole company, the individual is always to depart from all iniquity, and to maintain, by himself if need be, the true testimony of the name of the Lord. This can never fail the faithful soul.

In view of the mixture and confusion which began to shew itself in the assembly, the apostle's comfort was founded on these two principles, while remembering and joyfully availing himself of the communion and faithfulness of some precious souls. He had such as Timothy and Onesiphorus, amid the afflictions of the gospel and the sorrow of being forsaken by so many who were seals to his testimony before the Lord.

The apostle begins by taking the ground of grace and of individual life which never changes in essential character outside church privileges. Not that these had changed; but he could no longer connect them with the general body on earth. He calls himself here an apostle according to the promise of eternal life which is in Christ Jesus. It is not merely the Messiah, it is not the head of the body, it is the promise of life which is in Him.

Paul addresses his dearly beloved son Timothy, whose affection he remembers. He desired greatly to see him, being mindful of his tears, shed probably at the time when Paul was made prisoner, or when he was separated from him on that occasion, or when he heard of it. It is the confidence of a friend that is speaking to one whose heart he knew. We see something of this, but in the perfection that was peculiar to Himself, in Jesus on the cross, in that which He said to John and to His mother. A similar form would have been unsuitable in Paul. The affections of men shew themselves in and by their wants, the wants of their hearts; those of the Lord by His condescension. With Him all is in itself perfect. With us it is only by grace that all is in its right place. But when separation to service in power, which knows but that, is over, nature according to God has its right place. In the consecrated meat offering that was to be made with fire, honey had no place.

Verse 3 (Ti2 1:3). The apostle does not speak any longer of the high character of his work, but of his personal position rightly felt according to the Spirit. He had served God, following in the steps of his forefathers, with a pure conscience. In every way he was a vessel made unto honour. For more than one generation his ancestors were distinguished for a good conscience; and personal piety, founded on the truth, shewed itself in the service of God. Paul was not here pressing a judgment as to the inward condition of each generation: it was their character. He calls to mind a similar fact with regard to Timothy, in whose case however personal faith is referred to, known to Paul himself, so that the bond, though of personal feeling, was christian. [See Note #1] Judaism, as to its outward obligations, is totally absent; for the father of Timothy was a Greek, and the marriage of his Jewish mother was unclean according to the law, and would have rendered Timothy also unclean and deprived him of Jewish rights; and in fact he had not been circumcised when an infant. Paul did it, which was also not according to the law, unless Timothy had become a proselyte. Both heathens and their children were excluded, as we read in Nehemiah. Paul's act was above the law. Here he takes no notice of it; he leaves the Gentile father out of sight, and speaks only of the personal unfeigned faith of Timothy's mother and grandmother, and that of his beloved disciple himself.

The state of the assembly was only an additional occasion for the exercise of his faith, and for his zealous activity of heart and courage. Difficulties and dangers multiplied on every hand; the unfaithfulness of Christians was added to all the rest. But God is none the less with His people. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind, so that the Lord's labourer, the man of God, he who kept himself in communion with God in order to represent Him on the earth, was to stir up the gift that was in him, and (as the apostle expresses it with admirable and touching force and clearness) to endure the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. Here, in the case of Timothy, the apostle could make mention of a special gift of the Spirit, which had been conferred upon Timothy through the laying on of hands. In the First Epistle he had spoken of the prophecy which had called him or pointed him out for the possession of this gift, and told us that it had been accompanied by the

laying on of the hands of the elders; here he tells us that the laying on of his own hands was the means of bestowing it upon him.

The apostle reminds him of this proof of power and reality in his ministry (and in that of Paul himself), in view of this period when its exercise was more difficult. When all is prosperous, and the progress of the gospel is remarkable, so that even the world is struck with it, the work is found to be easy, in spite of difficulties and opposition; and such is man even in consequence of this opposition one is bold and persevering. But when others, Christians even, forsake the labourer, when evil and the deceptions of the enemy come in, when love has grown cold, and, because one is faithful, prudence takes alarm, and desires a less forward walk, to stand firm in circumstances like these, to persevere in the work, and maintain one's courage, is not an easy thing. We must possess Christianity with God, so that we know why we stand fast: we must be ourselves in communion with Him, in order to have the strength necessary to continue laboring in His name, and the sustainment of His grace at all times.

God then has given us the Spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind; the apostle had received such a position from God, that he had been able to bestow on Timothy the gift needed for his service but the state of spirit and soul which could use it was part of the inheritance of every Christian who leaned really on God. Nor was he to be ashamed either of the testimony, which was losing outwardly its onward current in the world, nor of Paul who was now a prisoner. How precious to possess that which is eternal, that which is founded on the power and on the work of God Himself! There were indeed the afflictions of the gospel, but he should take part in them and not shrink, enduring according to the power of God. God has saved us, has called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, as though any thing depended on man, but according to His own purpose and His grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. This is the sure and immovable foundation, a rock for our souls, against which the waves of difficulty break in vain, shewing a strength which we could not resist for a moment, but shewing also their total powerlessness against the purpose and work of God. The efforts of the enemy only prove that he is without strength, in the presence of that which God is, and of that which He has done for us. And the

apostle identifies his ministry with this, and the sufferings he was undergoing. But he knew whom he had believed and his happiness was safe laid up with Him.

That which we have to seek is the power of the Spirit, in order that we may realise this gift of God by faith, and that we may abide, as to our hearts, as to our practical faith, in the sense of our union with Christ, upon this immutable foundation, which is nothing less than the immutability and the glory of God Himself. For His purpose has been manifested; that purpose, which gave us a place and a portion in Christ Himself, was now manifested through the appearance of that very Christ.

It is no longer a nation chosen in the world to display in it the principles of the government of God, and of His ways in righteousness, in patience, in kindness, and in power, on the earth (however unchangeable His counsels, however sure His calling), as manifested in His dealings with regard to the people whom He called.

It is a counsel of God, formed and established in Christ before the world existed, which has its place in the ways of God, outside and above the world, in union with the Person of His Son, and in order to manifest a people united with Him in glory. Thus is it a grace which was given us in Him, before the world was. Hidden in the counsels of God, this purpose of God was manifested with the manifestation of Him in whom it had its accomplishment. It was not merely blessings and dealings of God with regard to men it was life, eternal life in the soul, and incorruptibility in the body. Thus Paul was apostle according to the promise of life.

While Christ Himself was alive, although life was in Him, this purpose of God was not accomplished with respect to us. The power of life, divine power in life, was to manifest itself in the destruction of the power of death brought in by sin and in which Satan reigned over sinners. Christ then in His resurrection has annulled death, and by the gospel has brought to light both life and incorruptibility, that is to say, that condition of eternal life which puts the soul and the body beyond death and its power. Thus the glad tidings of this work were addressed to all men. Founded in the eternal counsels of God, established in the Person of Christ, the work necessary for

its fulfillment being accomplished by Him, possessing a character altogether outside Judaism, and the mere government of God in the earth, Paul's gospel was unto all men. Being the manifestation of the eternal counsels and power of God, having to do with man as lying under the power of death, and with the accomplishment of a victory that placed man beyond that power, and in an entirely new condition which depended on the power of God and His purposes, it addressed itself to man, to all men, Jews or Gentiles without distinction. Knowing Adam dead by sin and Christ alive in the power of divine life, he announced this good news to man deliverance, and a totally new state of things.

It was to proclaim this gospel that the apostle had been called as a herald. It was for this he suffered, and, in the sense of what had caused it, was not ashamed to suffer. For he knew whom he had believed; he knew His power. He believed in the gospel that he preached, and therefore in the victorious power of Him in whom he believed. He could die with regard to the life that he had received from the first Adam, he could be dishonoured and put to shame in the world and by the world: life in Christ, the power by which Christ had won a place for man outside the condition of the first Adam, life as Christ now possesses it was not touched thereby. Not that life had not been there before, but death and he that had the power of death were not overcome, and all was dark beyond the closing tomb: a lightning flash might pass across the gloom, adequate ground be laid for the just conclusion of the Pharisee, but life and incorruptibility were not brought to light but in Christ and His resurrection.

But this is not all which is here expressed. The apostle does not say "in what I have believed," but "whom:" an important difference, which places us (as to our confidence) in connection with the Person of Christ Himself. The apostle had spoken of the truth, but truth is allied to the Person of Christ. He is the truth; and in Him truth has life, has power, is linked with the love which applies it, which maintains it in the heart and the heart by it. "I know," says the apostle, "whom I have believed." He had committed his happiness to Christ. In Him was that life in which the apostle participated; in Him, the power that sustained it, and that preserved in heaven the inheritance of glory which was his portion where this life was developed.

Encouraged by this hope and committing himself to Jesus, he had endured all things for Him, and for those who were His; he had accepted all suffering here, he was ready to die daily. His happiness, in the glory of that new life, he had committed to Jesus; he laboured meanwhile in affliction, sure of finding again, without being deceived, that which he had committed to the Lord, in the day when he should see Him and all his sorrows ended. It was in the expectation of that day, in order to find it again at that day, that he had committed to Him his happiness and his joy.

Moreover, his own career would soon be finished; his eyes therefore turn towards Timothy for the welfare of the assembly here below. He exhorts him to be steadfast, to hold fast the truth, as he had taught it to him (it was the testimony of the Lord), but the truth in its realisation by faith in Christ, and according to the power of love that is found in communion with Him. It is this which, as we have seen, the apostle had realised. The truth, and living grace in Jesus, in faith and in love, which gave it its power and its value these are, as it were, the pivots of strength and faithfulness at all times, and especially for the man of God, when the assembly in general is unfaithful.

Truth as it was taught by the apostles and expressed by them, the manner in which they presented the truth, "the form of sound words," is the inspired expression of that which God was pleased to reveal; and that, in all the relationships in which the truth is linked together, in all its different parts, according to the living nature and power of God, who is necessarily its centre as He is its source. Nothing except revelation could be this expression. God expresses everything as it is, and in a living way; and by His word all exists. He is the source and the centre of all things. All flow from Him are in relation with a living Person, namely Himself, who is their source, from whom all hold their existence. This existence only subsists in connection with Him; and the relationship of all things to Him, and between themselves, is found in the expression of His mind in that measure at least in which He puts Himself in relation with man in all these things. If evil comes in, as regards will or its consequences in judgment, it is because this relationship is broken; and the relationship that is broken is the measure of the evil.

Thus we see the immense importance of the word of God. It is the expression of the relationship of all things to God; whether as regards their existence that is, creation or with respect to His counsels; or even as to His own nature, and the relationship of man with Him, and the communication of life received from Him, and the maintenance of His true character. It comes from heaven as did the living Word, reveals what is there, but adapts itself, as the living Word did, to man here, directs him where there is faith here, but leads him up there where the living Word is gone as man.

The more we consider the word, the more we shall see its importance. Analogously to Christ the living Word, it has its source on high, and reveals what is there, and is perfectly adapted to man down here, giving a perfect rule according to what is up there, and, if we are spiritual, leading us up there: our conversation is in heaven. We must distinguish between the relationship in which man stood as child of Adam, and as child of God. The law is the perfect expression of the requirements of the former, the rule of life to him; it is found to be to death. Once we are sons of God, the life of the Son of God as man down here becomes our rule of life. "Be ye imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ hath loved us."

In His nature, as the author of all existence, and the centre of all authority and subsistence outside Himself, God is the centre of all, and the upholder of all. As to His counsels, Christ is the centre, and here man has a peculiar place; wisdom's good pleasure was eternally in Him, and all is to be under His feet. In order that the nature and the counsels of God should not be separated (which indeed is impossible, but what was in His counsels in order that it might not be), God became man. Christ is God made manifest in flesh, the Word made flesh. Thus the divine nature, the expression of that nature, is found in that which is the object of His counsels, that which forms their centre. Thus Christ is the truth is the centre of all existing relationships: all have reference to Him. We are, through Him, for Him, or we are against Him: all subsist by Him. If we are judged, it is as His enemies. He is the life (spiritually) of all that enjoy the communication of the divine nature; even as He sustains all that exists. His manifestation brings to light the true position of all things. Thus He is the truth. All that He says, being the words of God,

are spirit and life; quickening, acting according to grace, judging with regard to the responsibility of His creatures.

But there is yet more than this. He is the revelation of love. God is love, and in Jesus love is in action and is known by the heart that knows Him. The heart that knows Him lives in love, and knows love in God. But He is also the object in whom God is revealed to us, and has become the object of entire reliance. Faith is born by His manifestation. It existed indeed through partial revelation of this same object, by means of which God made Himself known; but these were only partial anticipations of that which has been fully accomplished in the manifestation of Christ, of the Son of God. The object is the same: formerly, the subject of promise and prophecy; now, the personal revelation of all that God is, the image of the invisible God, the One in whom the Father also is known.

Thus faith and love have their birth, their source, in the object which by grace has created them in the soul: the object in which it has learnt what love is, and with regard to which faith is exercised. By Him we believe in God. No one has ever seen God: the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has revealed Him.

Truth is thus revealed, for Jesus is the Truth, the expression of that which God is, so as to put all things perfectly in their place, in their true relationships with God and with each other. Faith and love find the occasion of their existence in the revelation of the Son of God, of God as a Saviour in Christ.

But there is another aspect of the accomplishment of the work and of the counsels of God, which we have not yet spoken of: that is, the communication of the truth and of the knowledge of God. This is the work of the Holy Ghost, in which the truth and the life are united, for we are begotten by the word. It is divine energy in the Deity, acting in all that connects God with the creature or the creature with God. Acting in divine perfection as God, in union with the Father and the Son, the Holy Ghost reveals the counsels of which we have spoken, and makes them effectual in the heart, according to the purpose of the Father, and by the revelation of the Person and work of the Son. I have said, divine energy, not as a

theological definition which is not my object here but as a practical truth, for while attributing all that regards the creature to the Father (except judgment, which is entirely committed to the Son, because He is the Son of man) and to the Son the immediate action in creation and on the creature, wherever it takes place, is attributed to the Spirit.

The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters when this earth was formed; by His Spirit the heavens were garnished; we are born of the Spirit; sealed with the Spirit; holy men of God spake by the Spirit; gifts were the operation of the Spirit distributing to whom He would; He bears witness with our spirits; He groans in us; we pray by the Holy Ghost, if that grace is bestowed upon us. The Lord Himself, born as man in this world was conceived by the Holy Ghost; by the Spirit of God He cast out devils. The Spirit bears witness of all things, that is to say, of all truth in the word: the love of the Father, the nature and the glory of God Himself, His character, the Person and glory and love of the Son, His work, form the substance of His testimony, with all that relates to man in connection with these truths. The Spirit's witness to these things is the word, and produced by means of men takes the shape of the truth formally set forth by revelation. Christ is the truth, as we have seen, the centre of all the ways of God; but what we are now speaking of is the divine communication of this truth; and in this way it can be said that the word is the truth. [See Note #2] But, although communicated by means of men, so that it takes a form adapted to man, its source is divine; and He who has communicated it is divine: He of whom it is said, he shall not speak of himself (that is to say, from Himself-apart from the Father and the Son). Consequently the revelation of the truth has all the depth, the universality of relationship, the inseparable connection with God (without which it would not be truth, for all that is separate from God is falsehood) which truth itself necessarily possesses because it is the expression of the relationships which all things have to God in Christ; that is to say, of God's own thoughts, of which all these relationships are but the expression. It is true that this revelation also judges all that is not in accordance with these relationships, and judges according to the value of the relationship that is broken with regard to God Himself, and the place which this relationship has in His mind. [See Note #3] When this word is received through the quickening work of the Holy Ghost in the heart it is

efficacious; there is faith, the soul is in real living practical relationship with God according to that which is expressed in the revelation it has received. The truth which speaks of the love of God, of holiness, of cleansing from all sin, of eternal life, of the relationship of children being received into the heart, places us in real present living relationship with God, according to the force of all these truths, as God conceives them and as He has revealed them to the soul. Thus they are vital and efficacious by the Holy Ghost; and the consciousness of this revelation of the truth, and of the truth of that which is revealed, and of really hearing the voice of God in His word, is faith.

But all this is true in the revealed word before I believe in it, and in order that I may believe in it may believe in the truth although the Holy Ghost alone makes us hear the voice of God in it, and so produces faith. And that which is revealed in it is the divine expression of that which belongs to the infinite on the one side, and is expressed in the finite on the other; of that which has the profoundness of the nature of God, from whom all proceeds, with whom and with whose rights all is in relationship but which is developed since it is outside God in creation and in the finite.

The union of God and man in the Person of Christ is the centre we may say (now that we know it) the necessary centre of all this, as we have seen. And the inspired word is its expression according to the perfection of God, and (we bless God for it, as the Saviour is the grand subject of the scriptures, "for," said He, "they testify of me") in human forms.

But this word, being divine, being inspired, is the divine expression of the divine nature, persons, and counsels. Nothing that is not inspired in this way can have this place for none but God can perfectly express or reveal what God is hence infinite in what flows in it; because it is the expression of, and connected with, the depths of the divine nature and so in its connection infinite, though expressed in a finite sense, and so far finite in expression, and thus adapted to finite man. Nothing else is the divine expression of the divine mind and truth, or is in direct union with the unmixed source, even though it sprang from the same source. The immediate connection is broken; that which is said is no longer divine. It may contain many truths, but the living derivation, the infinite the union with God, the immediate and uninterrupted derivation from God, are wanting. The infinite is no longer

there. The tree grows from its root, and forms one whole; the energy of life pervades it the sap which flows from the root. We may consider one part, as God has set it there, as a part of the tree; we may see the importance of the trunk; the beauty of the development in its smallest details, the stateliness of the whole, in which the vital energy combines liberty and harmony of form. We see that it is a whole, united in one by the same life that produced it. The leaves, the flowers, the fruit, all tell us of the warmth of that divine Sun which developed them, of the gushing inexhaustible stream which nourishes them. But we cannot separate one part, be it ever so beautiful, from the tree, without depriving it of the energy of life and its relationship with the whole.

When the power of the Spirit of God produces the truth, it develops itself in union with its source, whether in revelation or even in the life and in the service of the individual; although in the two latter cases there is a mixture of other elements, owing to the weakness of the man. When a man's mind apprehends the truth, and he seeks to give it a form, he does it according to the capacity of man, which is not its source; the truth as he expresses it, even were it pure, is separated in him from its source and its totality; but, besides this, the shape that a man gives it always bears the stamp of the man's weakness. He has only apprehended it partially, and he only produces a part of it. Accordingly it is no longer the truth. Moreover, when he separates it from the whole circle of truth in which God has placed it, he must necessarily clothe it in a new form, in a garment which proceeds from man: at once error mixes with it. Thus it is no longer a vital part of the whole, it is partial, and thereby not the truth; and it is in fact mixed with error. That is theology.

In the truth there is, when God expresses it, love, holiness, authority, as they are in Him the expression of His own relationships with man, and of the glory of His being. When man gives it a shape, all this is wanting and cannot be in it, because it is man who shapes it. It is no longer God speaking. God gives it a perfect form; that is to say, He expresses the truth in words of certainty. If man gives it a form, it is no longer the truth given of God. Therefore to hold fast the truth in the form God has given it, the type, the shape in which He has expressed it, is of all importance: we are in

relationship with God in it according to the certainty of that which He has revealed. This is the sure resource of the soul, when the assembly has lost its power and its energy, and is no longer a sustainment to feeble souls; and that which bears its name no longer answers to the character given it, in the First Epistle, "the pillar and support of the truth." [See Note #4] The truth, clear and positive truth, given as a revelation from God in the words clothed with His authority by which He has given the truth a form, communicating the facts and the divine thoughts which are necessary for the salvation of men, and for their participation in divine life this it is which we are to hold fast.

We are only sure of the truth when we retain the very language of God which contains it. By grace I may speak of the truth in all liberty, I may seek to explain it, to communicate it, to urge it on the conscience, according to the measure of light and spiritual power bestowed upon me; I may endeavor to demonstrate its beauty, and the connection between its various parts. Every Christian, and especially those who have a gift from God for the purpose, may do this. But the truth which I explain and propose is the truth as God has given it, and in His own words in the revelation He has made. I hold fast the form of sound words, which I have received from a divine source and authority: it gives me certainty in the truth.

And here it is important to remark the assembly's part when faithful. She receives, she maintains the truth in her own faith; she guards it, she is faithful to it, she is subject to it, as a truth, a revelation, which comes from God Himself. She is not the source of the truth. As an assembly she does not propagate it does not teach it. She says "I believe," not "believe." This last is the function of ministry, in which man is always individually in relationship with God by means of a gift which he holds from God, and for the exercise of which he is responsible to God. This is all-important. Those who possess these gifts are members of the body. The assembly exercises her discipline with regard to all that is of the flesh in them, in the exercise or apparent exercise of a gift, as in all else. She preserves her own purity without respect of persons as to their outward appearance, being guided therein by the word (for this is her responsibility); but she does not teach, she does not preach.

The word goes before the assembly, for she has been gathered together by the word. The apostles, a Paul, those who were scattered abroad by the persecution, a thousand faithful souls, have proclaimed the word, and thus the assembly has been gathered out. It has been said that the assembly was before the scriptures. As regards the written contents of the New Testament, this is true; but the preached word was before the assembly. The assembly is its fruit but is never its source. The edification even of the assembly, when it has been gathered together, comes direct from God, through the gifts which He has bestowed; the Holy Ghost distributing to each according to His will.

The scriptures are the means which God has used to preserve the truth, to give us certainty in it; seeing the fallibility of the instruments by whom it is propagated, since revelation has ceased.

If at the beginning He filled certain persons with His Spirit in such a way that error was excluded from their preaching, if besides this He then gave revelations in which there was nothing but His own word, yet as a general rule preaching is the fruit of the Holy Ghost in the heart, and its spirituality is only in measure, and there is the possibility of error. Here, whatever may be the power of the Spirit's work, we have to judge. (See Act 17:11; Co1 14:29) Farther on we shall see that in forming this judgment, it is the scriptures which assure those who are led of God.

We have thus in the ways of God respecting this subject three things closely united, yet different: ministry, the assembly, and the word of God, that is, the written word; when it is not written, it belongs to the order of ministry.

Ministry as regards the word, for this is not the only service preaches to the world, and teaches or exhorts the members of the assembly.

The assembly enjoys communion with God, is fed, and grows by means of that with which its different members supply it. It preserves, and, in its confession, bears witness to the truth. It maintains holiness, and, by the grace and presence of the Holy Ghost, enjoys mutual communion; and, in love, cares for the temporal need of all its members.

The written word is the rule which God has given, containing all that He has revealed. It is complete. (Col 1:25) It can, because it is the truth, be the means of communicating the truth to a soul: the Holy Ghost can use it as a means; but at all events it is the perfect rule, the authoritative communication of the will and the mind of God, for the assembly.

The assembly is subject, is to be faithful, to have no will. It does not reveal, it maintains by its confession, it watches over that which it has, it does not communicate; it has received and is faithfully to keep. The man directs, that is, Christ: the woman obeys, and is faithful to her husband's thoughts at least ought to be so (1 Cor. 2): this is the assembly. The oracles of God are committed to her. She does not give them; she obeys them.

The minister is bound individually to the same faithfulness. This we understand; and in our epistle we have especially to do with this individual responsibility. That which the assembly is in this respect is revealed in the first epistle. (Ti2 3:15) Here it is the individual who is to hold fast this form of sound words which he has received from a divine source, for such the apostle was, in his apostolic function, as an instrument. Neither Timothy nor the assembly could frame such a form of sound words; their part was to hold it fast, having received it. And here, as we have said, however unfaithful the assembly may be, the individual is bound to be faithful and always to be so.

This therefore is what we have to do: the truth which is set before us is the inspired word we are (and I am) to hold fast, in the form in which it is presented to us. I am to hold it fast, not merely as a proposition, but in union with the Head, in faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus. Strength to fulfill comes from above. For here another point is brought before us. The Holy Ghost has been given indeed to the assembly; but a period of unfaithfulness is here contemplated. (Ver. 15) He has been given to the man of God, to each Christian, and to each servant with reference to the service appointed him. By the Holy Ghost we are to keep the good thing that has been committed to us. In days like those, this was the duty of the man of God; and in our day, things have gone much farther. Possessing the promise of life, and forsaken by the mass of Christians, he is to hold fast the truth in the words in which it has been expressed by divine authority (this is what

we have in the word, and not merely doctrine: people may say that they have the doctrine of Peter and Paul, but they cannot say that they have their words, the form of the truth as Paul and Peter gave it, elsewhere than in their writings); and he is to hold it fast in faith and love, which are in Christ. Moreover he is to keep, by the power of the Holy Ghost, the substance of the truth, that which has been given us as a treasure the deposit of divine truth and riches, which has been given us as our portion here below.

In Verses 15-18 (Ti2 1:15-18) we find that the mass had quite turned away from the apostle, so that the affection and faithfulness of one became very precious to him. What a change already since the beginning of the gospel! Compare the Thessalonians, the Ephesians: they were the same people (for Ephesus was the capital of what is here called Asia) among whom Paul had preached, so that all Asia had heard the gospel; and see how they had all now forsaken him ! We must not however suppose that they had all abandoned the profession of Christianity; but their faith had become weak, and they did not like to identify themselves with a man who was in disgrace with the authorities, who was despised and persecuted, a prisoner a man whose energy brought reproach and personal difficulties upon himself. They withdrew from him, and left him to answer alone for himself. Sad result of spiritual decline! But what sentiments should animate the man of God at such a moment? He must be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Christ was not changed, whatever the case might be with men; and he who suffered from their desertion could, without being discouraged, exhort his beloved Timothy to persevere steadily in the word. Nor do we find anywhere the man of God called to more full and unhesitating courage than in this epistle, which is the testimony of the failure and ruin of the assembly.

Note #1

It is indeed the basis of the exhortation of Verse 6 (Ti2 1:6). When the faith of so many is giving way, he turns to the personal confidence which his heart had in Timothy, nourished up through grace by the atmosphere he had lived in.

Note #2

Hence also it is said (1 John 5), " the Spirit is truth."

Note #3

This is true as regards guilt. But God, being perfectly revealed, and that in grace as the Father and the Son, our apprehension of the ruin in which we are, goes deeper far than the sense of guilt as the breach of previously existing relationships. We were guilty according to our place as men. But we were "atheos", without God in the world, and (when God is known) this is awful. The beginning of Romans treats the question of guilt; Ephesians 2, the state we were in; Joh 5:24 briefly resumes grace as to both. The relationship now is an entirely new one, founded on purpose, redemption, and our being children of God.

Note #4

The doctrines or dogmas of scripture have their importance and their adaptation to the simplest soul in this, that they are facts, and so objects of faith, not notions. Thus Christ is God, Christ is man, the Holy Ghost is a Person, and the like, are facts for faith realized in the simplest soul.

2 Timothy Chapter 2

The truth was the especial treasure committed to him; and he has not only to keep it, as we have seen, but to take care that it was propagated and communicated to others after him, and perhaps still farther. That which he had heard from Paul in the presence of many witnesses (who could confirm Timothy in his convictions respecting the truth, and certify others that it was indeed what he had received from Paul) he was to communicate to faithful men, who were capable of teaching others. This was the ordinary means. It is not the Spirit in the assembly, so that the assembly was an authority; it is no longer revelation. Timothy, well instructed in the doctrine preached by the apostle, and confirmed in his views by many other witnesses who had likewise learned of Paul, so that it was common to all as known, received truth, was to take care that it should be communicated to other faithful men. Neither had this anything to do with giving them authority, with consecrating them, as has been said. It is the communication to them of the truth which he had received from Paul.

This procedure shuts out the idea of the assembly as the propagator of the truth. It was the business of the faithful son in the faith of the apostle, of the ministry.

Timothy himself was not an authority either. He was an instrument for the communication of the truth and was to enable others to be so likewise: a very different thing from being the rule of the truth. That which he had heard and the other witnesses served as a guarantee against the introduction of anything false, or even of his own opinions, if he had been inclined to entertain them that he was to communicate.

It is thus that, in the ordinary sense, ministry is continued; care is taken by competent persons for the communication, not of authority, but of the truth, to other faithful persons. God can raise up any one whom He chooses, and give him the energy of His Spirit; and where this is found, there is power and an effectual work: but the passage we are considering supposes the careful communication of the truth to persons fit for this work. Both principles equally shut out the idea of the communication of official authority, and the idea of the assembly being either an authority with regard to the faith or the propagator of the truth. If God raised up whom He pleased, in whatever way He pleased, the means which He employed (when there was no special operation on His part) was to cause the truth to be communicated to individuals capable of propagating it. This is a widely different thing from bestowing authority, or the exclusive or official right to preach. And it was known, revealed truth he was to communicate, that had the direct authority of revelation what Paul's writings can alone furnish us now, or of course other inspired writings.

The apostle goes on to shew the qualities that Timothy ought to possess, in order to carry on the work amid the circumstances that surrounded him, and in which the assembly itself was found. He must know how to endure hardships, vexations, difficulties, sorrows, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; he must beware of entangling himself with the affairs of life. A soldier, when in service, could not do so, but must be free from every hindrance, that he may please the one who had called him to arms. So also, as in the lists, he must fight according to rule, according to that which became the Lord's servant and was conformable to the Lord's will. And he must labour first,

that he may have a right to enjoy the fruit of his labour. These are the practical conditions of divine service for whosoever engages in it. He must endure, be unentangled in the world, fight lawfully and labour on first [See Note #5] before he looked for fruits. The apostle returns to the elementary but fundamental principles of the truth, and to the sufferings of ministry, which moreover were in nowise a hindrance to the operations of the Spirit of God in extending the sphere in which the truth was propagated, and the word of God made known. Nothing could restrain the power of that instrument of the work of God.

The truth of the gospel (dogma is not the subject here) was divided into two parts, of which the apostle speaks also in the Epistle to the Romans: the fulfillment of the promises; and the power of God in resurrection. "Jesus Christ, of the seed of David; raised from the dead." These, in fact, are, as it were, the two pivots of the truth: God faithful to His promises (shewn especially in connection with the Jews); and God mighty to produce an entirely new thing by His creative and quickening power, as manifested in the resurrection, which also put the seal of God upon the Person and the work of Christ.

The afflictions found in the path of service in the gospel assume here a high and peculiar character in the mind of the suffering and blessed apostle. It is participation in the sufferings of Christ, and, in the case of Paul, to a very remarkable degree. The expressions he uses are such as might be employed in speaking of Christ Himself as regards His love. As to the propitiation, naturally no other could take part in that: but in devotedness, and in suffering for love and for righteousness, we have the privilege of suffering with Him. And here what part had the apostle with those sufferings? "I endure," He says, "all things for the elect's sakes." This is truly what the Lord did. The apostle trod closely on His footsteps, and with the same purpose of love "that they might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." Here of course the apostle has to add, "which is in Christ Jesus ;" still, the language is marvelous in the lips of any other person than the Lord Himself. For it is what Christ did. Observe also here, that the greater the sufferings are (how small are ours on this account!) as the fruits of this love for the objects of the counsels of God, the greater is

our privilege, the more do we participate in that which was the glory of Christ here below.

This thought sustains the soul in affliction of this kind: one has the same object as the Lord Himself. The energy of love in preaching the gospel addresses itself to the whole world. Perseverance, in the midst of affliction and difficulties and desertion, is sustained by the feeling that one is laboring for the accomplishment of God's counsels. One endures all things for the elect, for God's elect, in order that they may have salvation and eternal glory. This feeling was in Paul's heart. He knew the love of God, and he sought at the cost of whatever suffering it might be in the tumultuous sea of this world that they who were the objects of the same love should enjoy the salvation and the glory which God bestowed. This was a faithful saying, that is, that which he had just declared; for if we should die with Christ, we should also live with Him; if we should suffer, we should also reign with Him. If any denied Him, He would also deny them; the consequences of such an act remained in all their force, they were linked with the immutability of His nature and His being, and were displayed in the authority of His judgment; He could not deny Himself because others were unfaithful. Timothy was strengthened to maintain these great principles, which belonged to the moral nature of the Lord, and not allow himself to be drawn aside by speculations which only subverted souls and corrupted the faith. He was to shew himself a workman approved of God, one who, being filled with the truth, and knowing how to unfold it in its various parts, according to the mind and purpose of God would not be ashamed of his work in the presence of those who might judge it. The profane and useless thoughts of human speculation he was to avoid. They could not but go on to produce ungodliness. They might have a great show of depth and height (as in the case of the assertion, that the resurrection had already taken place, which in a fleshly way went beyond all bounds with regard to our position in Christ) these doctrines which eat like a canker. Those of whom the apostle spoke had already overthrown the faith of some, that is, their conviction as to the truth and profession of the truth. But here the soul of the apostle found its refuge in that which is immutable, be the failure of the assembly or man's unfaithfulness ever so great. The sure foundation of God remained. It had this seal: the Lord knew them that were His. This was God's side, which

nothing could touch. [See Note #6] The other was man's he who professed the name of the Lord was to depart from all iniquity. This was man's responsibility, but it characterised the work and fruit of grace wherever that work was genuine and the true fruit borne.

But here we have distinct evidence of the state of things which this epistle contemplates; namely that the outward assembly had taken quite a new character, very different from that which it had at the beginning; and that now the individual was thrown upon his personal faithfulness as a resource, and as a means of escape from the general corruption. The sure foundation of God remained His divine knowledge of those that are His; and individual separation from all evil; but the outward assembly assumes, in the eyes of the apostle, the character of a great house. All kinds of things are found in it, vessels of honour and vessels of dishonour, precious and vile. The man of God was to purge himself from the latter, to stand apart and not defile himself with that which was false and corrupt. This is a principle of all-importance, which the Lord has given us in His word. He allowed the evil to display itself in apostolic times, so far as to give occasion for the establishment of this principle by revelation, as that which was to govern the Christian. The unity of the assembly is so precious, it has such authority over the heart of man, that there was danger, when failure had set in, lest the desire for outward unity should induce even the faithful to accept evil and walk in fellowship with it, rather than break this unity. The principle therefore of individual faithfulness, of individual responsibility to God, is established, and set above all other considerations; for it has to do with the nature of God Himself, and His own authority over the conscience of the individual. God knoweth them that are His: here is the ground of confidence. I do not say who are. And let those that name the name of Jesus separate themselves from all evil. Here I get what I can recognize. To maintain in practice the possibility of union between that name and evil is to blaspheme it.

The whole of that which calls itself christian is looked at here as a great house. The Christian is of it outwardly, in spite of himself; for he calls himself a Christian, and the great house is all that calls itself christian. But he cleanses himself personally from every vessel which is not to the Lord's

honour. This is the rule of christian faithfulness; and thus personally cleansed from fellowship with evil, he shall be a vessel unto honour fit for the Master's use. Whatsoever is contrary to the honour of Christ, in those who bear His name, is that from which he is to separate himself.

Discipline for individual faults is not the subject here, nor the restoration of souls in an assembly that has in part lost its spirituality; but a line of conduct for the individual Christian in respect of that which dishonors the Lord in any way.

These instructions are solemn and important. That which makes them needful is sorrowful in its nature; but it all helps to exhibit the faithfulness and grace of God. The direction is plain, and precious when we find ourselves in similar circumstances. Individual responsibility can never cease.

When the Holy Ghost acts energetically and triumphs over the power of the enemy, these individuals who are gathered together in the assembly develop their life in it according to God and His presence, and the spiritual power which exists in the whole body acts upon the conscience, if needed, and guides the heart of the believer: so that the individual and the assembly flow on together under the same influence. The Holy Ghost, who is present in the assembly, sustains the individual at the height of God's own presence. Strangers even are obliged to confess that God is there. Love and holiness reign. When the effect of this power is no longer found in the assembly, and by degrees Christendom no longer answers to the character of the assembly as God formed it, yet the responsibility of the individual to God has not ceased on that account. It can never either cease or diminish, for the authority and the rights of God Himself over the soul are at stake.

But in a case like this, that which calls itself Christian is no longer a guide, and the individual is bound to conform himself to the will of God, by the power of the Spirit, according to the light he has from God.

God may gather the faithful together. It is grace on His part; it is also His mind. But individual responsibility remains responsibility not to break the unity, feeble as it may be, wherever it is possible according to God: but responsibility to preserve the divine character of Christianity in our walk, and to respond to the revelation we have received of His nature and of His will.

By purging himself from all those who are unto dishonour, the servant of God shall be unto honour, sanctified and prepared for every good work. For this separation from evil is not merely negative; it is the effect of the realisation of the word of God in the heart. I then understand what the holiness of God is, His rights over my heart, the incompatibility of His nature with evil. I feel that I dwell in Him and He in me; that Christ must be honoured at all costs; that that which is like Him alone honours Him; that His nature and His rights over me are the only rule of my life. That which thus separates me unto Him, and according to what He is, separates me thereby from evil. One cannot walk with those who dishonour Him, and, at the same time, honour Him in one's own walk.

That which follows shews the sanctifying character of this exhortation. The apostle says, "Flee also youthful lusts; but seek righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." This is to breathe the pure atmosphere which is found in the Lord's presence; in which the soul enjoys health and strength. All that corrupts is far away. And, further, we find, what is so often contested, that we can and are to distinguish those who call on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart. We do not decide who are the Lord's: He knows them. But we are to associate ourselves with those who manifest themselves, such as call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Those I am to know, own, and walk with. The statement that I cannot know who these are, is in defiance of an express rule of scripture, applicable to a state where, through corruption, many who may possess Christianity are not so manifested. As we find throughout these epistles, the apostle exhorts to avoid vain questions, in which there is no divine instruction. They only produce barren discussions and strife; and the servant of the Lord is not to strive. He comes, on God's part, to bring the truth in peace and love. He is to maintain this character in the expectation that God, in His grace, will give repentance to those who oppose (for it is the heart and conscience that are in question), that they may acknowledge the truth.

The truth of God is not a thing of human understanding; it is the revelation of that which God is, and of His counsels. Now we cannot have to do with God without the heart and conscience being engaged. It is not the

revelation to us of God, if this is not the case. Christians are brought into connection with the divine Being Himself, and in acts which ought to have the most powerful effect on the heart and conscience; if they do not, both the one and the other are in a bad state and hardened. The Spirit of God, no doubt acts on the understanding and by it; but the truth lodged in it is addressed to the conscience and to the heart, and if these are not reached by the truth, nothing is done. Nor indeed is anything really understood till they are. For in divine truth things are understood before words, as "born again." (compare Joh 8:43) On the other hand, by means of error, by occupying the mind with the error, Satan shuts God out of it, and leads the whole man captive, so that he does the will of that enemy to the soul.

Note #5

Read "laboring first."

Note #6

This, while a profound source of comfort, is a proof of decline; for men ought to know who are the Lord's too. It is not, "The Lord added daily to the assembly such as should be saved."

2 Timothy Chapter 3

Now this evil influence would too surely be exercised. The power of the holy truth of God would be lost in the assembly and among Christians; and those who bore this name would become (under the influence of the enemy) the expression of the will and passions of man, while still maintaining the forms of godliness; a peculiar condition, which betrays in a remarkable way the influence and the work of the enemy. This was to be expected; and they would be perilous days.

The open opposition of the enemy is doubtless a painful thing, but he deceives souls by the specious appearances of which the apostle here speaks that which bears the name of Christianity, that which before men has the character of godliness, and which the flesh will accept as such much more readily than that which, because it is true godliness, is contrary to the flesh. Nevertheless all the worst features of the human heart are linked with

the name of Christianity. What then does the testimony become? It is, so to speak, an individual prophecy, clothed in sackcloth.

There is activity in this perilous evil of the last days: these deceivers would creep into houses, and gain the ear of feeble souls, who, governed by their passions, are ever learning yet never learn. Teachers like these resist the truth, they are men of corrupt minds, reprobate as to the faith; but they shall proceed no farther. God will make manifest their folly and their falseness by means even of their own pretensions, which they can no longer maintain.

The man of God is to turn away from such men while they are yet deceiving and exercising their influence. God will expose them in due time. All will then judge them, and condemn their pretensions; the spiritual man does so while they are deceiving the others in security.

We may remark here that which evidences the sad and dangerous character of the days of which the apostle is speaking. If we compare the lists of sins and abominations, which Paul gives at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, as characterising heathen life and the moral degradation of men during those times of darkness and demon-worship, with the catalog of sins that characterise those who have the form of godliness, we shall find that it is nearly the same, and morally quite the same; only that some of the open sins which mark the man who has no outward restraint are wanting here, the form of godliness precluding them and taking their place.

It is a solemn thought, that the same degradation which existed among heathens is reproduced under Christianity, covering itself with that name, and even assuming the form of godliness. But in fact it is the same nature, the same passions, the same power of the enemy, with but the addition of hypocrisy. It is only the departure from, and corruption of, the true doctrine of the Mediator; as Paganism was that of the true doctrine of the only God.

Different directions are given for the conduct of the man of God, with regard to the vessels unto dishonour, and the men who act in the spirit of the last days. From the former he is to purge himself: he is to think of faithfulness in his own walk; and by cleansing himself from those vessels which do not honour the name of Christ, which (although in the great

house) do not bear the stamp of a pure desire for His glory, he shall be a vessel unto honour, fit for the Master's use. By keeping apart from such vessels, he is sheltered from the influences that impoverish and degrade the testimony he has to render to Christ; he is pure from that which deteriorates and falsifies that testimony.

In the other case that of the men who gave the character of "perilous" to the last days, the corrupt opposers of the truth, bearing the name of godliness with regard to these his testimony is to be distinct and plain. Here he is not merely to cleanse himself; he testifies his moral abhorrence, his loathing, of those who, being, the instruments of the enemy, bear this character of formal piety. He turns away from them, and leaves them to the judgment of God.

Timothy had the walk and spirit of the apostle for his pattern. He had been much with him; he had seen, in times of trial, his patience and his sufferings, the persecutions he had endured; but the Lord had delivered him out of all. It would be the same with all who sought to live according to godliness, which is in Christ Jesus: [See Note #7] they should endure persecution. Evil men and seducers would wax worse and worse, deceiving others, and being, at the same time, deceived themselves.

The character of the last days is strongly marked here, and gives no hope for Christianity as a whole. The progress of evil is described as developing itself in two distinct characters, to which we have already alluded. The great house Christendom as a whole in which there are vessels to dishonour, from which we are to purge ourselves, and the positive activity of corruption, and of the instruments who propagate it and resist the truth, although they who corrupt themselves assume the form of godliness. Under this last aspect the wicked will go on growing worse and worse; nevertheless the hand of God in power will demonstrate their folly.

We may distinguish, in this second category, the general character of pride and corruptness in all who submit to this malignant influence, and those who themselves labour to extend it. Of the latter of this class, the apostle says, are they who creep into houses. The character is that of the mass who are seduced but there are seducers. These resist the truth, and their folly

shall be manifested. It may be that God may demonstrate it, wherever there is faithfulness, in order to save His own from it; but, in general, their evil work will go on, and the seduction grow worse and worse, until the end, when God will make manifest the folly of those who have departed from Him and given themselves up to the errors of the human mind, and laboured to maintain and propagate them.

The apostle then tells Timothy of the safeguard on which he may rely to preserve himself, through grace, steadfast in the truth, and in the enjoyment of the salvation of God. Security rests upon the certainty of the immediate origin of the doctrine which he had received; and upon the scriptures received, as authentic and inspired documents, which announced the will, the acts, the counsels, and even the nature of God. We abide in that which we have learnt, because we know from whom we have learnt it. The principle is simple and very important. We advance in divine knowledge, but (so far as we are taught of God) we never give up, for new opinions, that which we have learnt from an immediately divine source, knowing that it is so. By a source immediately divine, I mean, a person to whom God Himself has communicated the truth by revelation with authority to promulgate it. In this case I receive what he says (when I know him to be such) as a divine communication. It is true that the scriptures always remain as a counter proof, but when as in the case of the apostles a man is proved to be the minister of God, gifted by Him for the purpose of communicating His mind, I receive what he says in the exercise of his ministry as coming from God. It is not the assembly that is in view in this case. It cannot be the vessel of divine truth directly communicated to it from God. Individuals are always that. We have seen that its part is to confess the truth when communicated, not to communicate it. But we here speak of a person to whom and by whom God immediately reveals the truth such as the apostles and prophets. God has communicated to them, as elect vessels for this purpose, that which He desired to communicate to the world, and they have so communicated. None could do it who had not received it himself from God as a revelation: if this is not the case, the man himself has some part in it. I could not then say, "I know of whom I have learnt it," as knowing that it came immediately from God and by divine revelation.

When God had something to communicate to the assembly itself, He did it by means of such persons as Paul, Peter, and etc. The assembly is composed of individuals; it cannot receive a divine revelation in a mass, as the assembly, except it be by hearing in common a divine voice, which is not God's way. The Holy Ghost distributes to every one, severally as He will. There are prophets, and the Spirit says, "Separate unto me Barnabas and Paul." Christ has given gifts to men, some apostles, some prophets, and etc. Accordingly the apostle says here, not "where," but "of whom" thou hast learnt these things.

Here, then, is the first foundation of certainty, strength and assurance for the man of God with regard to divine truth. It has not been revealed to him immediately. It was Paul and other instruments, whom God chose for this special favour. But he knows of whom he has learnt it; even of one (here it was Paul) to whom it had been directly made known by inspiration, and who has authority from God to impart; so that they who learn of him know that it is divine truth, exactly as God communicated it (compare 1 Cor. 2), and in the form in which He was pleased to communicate it.

There is another means, which has a character of its own; the scriptures, which are as such the foundation of faith to the man of God, and which direct him in all his ways. The Lord Jesus Himself said (speaking of Moses), "If ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" His words were the words of God; He does not contrast the authority of what He said with that of the written word, but the means of communication. God has been pleased to employ that means as a permanent authority. Peter says "No prophecy of scripture". There have been many prophecies which are not written; they had the authority of God for those persons to whom they were addressed. For the word speaks more than once of prophets who must therefore have prophesied with out communicating their prophecies to us. They were instruments for making known the will of God, at the moment, in order to guide His people in their actual circumstances, without its being a revelation necessary to the people of God at all times, or applicable either to the world, to Israel, or to the assembly in all ages. It was not a general and permanent revelation from God for the instruction of the soul at all periods.

A multitude of things, spoken by Jesus Himself are not reproduced in the scriptures; so that it is not only a question of from whom we have heard a truth, but also of the character of that which has been communicated.

When it is for the permanent profit of the people or the assembly of God, God caused it to be written in the scriptures, and it abides for the instruction and the food of His children in all ages.

The expression, "knowing of whom thou hast learned them," establishes us on personal apostolic authority, viewing the apostles as teachers authorized by the Lord. John says, "They who are of God hear us." It is not necessary that scripture should be written by apostles; God has made known therein His will and the truth, and has committed the sacred deposit to His people for the profit of all ages. The scriptures have authority as such. And it is not that which, as a spiritual man, one may receive from them, that by which we have profited (as to application to one's soul that is indeed all); but it is the entire holy scripture, such as we possess it, which has this authority.

From his childhood Timothy had read the holy scriptures; and these writings, such as he had read them as a child, guarded him as divine authority against error, and furnished him with the divine truths needful for his instruction. To use them aright, faith in Christ was requisite: but that which he used was the scripture known from his youth. The important thing to observe here is that the apostle is speaking of the scriptures, as they are in themselves, such as a child reads them; not even of that which a converted or spiritual man finds in them, but simply the holy writings themselves.

It may perhaps be said, that Timothy as a child possessed only the Old Testament. Agreed: but what we have here is the character of all that has a right to be called holy scripture. As Peter says as to the writings of Paul, these, "They wrest, as they do also THE OTHER SCRIPTURES." [See Note #8] title to that name, its writings possess the same character and have the same authority as the Old Testament.

The scriptures are the permanent expression of the mind and will of God furnished as such with His authority. They are His expression of His own thoughts. They edify, they are profitable: but this is not all—they are inspired.

It is not only that the truth is given in them by inspiration. It is not this which is here stated. They are inspired.

The greater part of the New Testament is comprised in the first source of authority, "knowing of whom thou hast learnt them," namely, all that which the apostles have written; because, in learning the truth therein, I can say I know from whom I have learnt it I have learnt it from Paul, or from John, or from Peter, and etc. But, besides this, being received as scriptures, they have the authority of divine writings, to which, as a form of communication, God has given the preference above the spoken word. They are the permanent rule by which every spoken word is to be judged.

In a word the scriptures are inspired. They teach, they judge the heart, they correct, they discipline according to righteousness, in order that the man of God may be perfect, that is, thoroughly instructed in the will of God, his mind formed after that will and completely furnished for every good work. The power for performing these comes from the actings of the Spirit. Safeguard from error, wisdom unto salvation, flow from the scriptures j they are capable of supplying them. We are to abide in that which we have learnt from the apostles, and to be governed by the writings of God.

Note #7

We get the difference of the state of things in this case also., It is not all Christians who will be persecuted, but all who will live godly in Christ Jesus.

Note #8

This too is the real sense of Rom 16:26, where we should read, "by prophetic writings.

2 Timothy Chapter 4

Does this perfect and supreme authority of the scriptures set aside ministry ? By no means; it is the foundation of the ministry of the word. One is a minister of the word; one proclaims the word resting on the written word which is authority for all, and the warrant for all that a minister says, and imparting to his words the authority of God over the conscience of those whom he teaches or exhorts. There is, in addition to this, the activity of love

in the heart of him who exercises this ministry (if it be real), and the powerful action of the Spirit, if he be filled with the Holy Ghost. But that which the word says silences all opposition in the heart or mind of the believer.

It was thus that the Lord answered Satan, and Satan himself was reduced to silence. He who does not submit to the words of God thereby shews himself to be a rebel against God. The rule given of God is in the scriptures; the energetic action of His Spirit is in ministry, although God can equally act upon the heart immediately by the word itself. Nevertheless ministry, since the revelations of God were completed, could not be an authority, or there would be two authorities; and if two, one must be a needless repetition of the other, or else, if they differed, no authority at all.

If the revelations were not complete, no doubt there might be more. The Old Testament left untold the history of Christ, the mission of the Holy Ghost, the formation of the assembly; because these facts not being yet accomplished could not be the subject of its historical and doctrinal instructions, and the assembly was not even the subject of prophecy. But all is now complete, as Paul tells us that he was a minister of the assembly to complete the word of God. (Col 1:25) The subjects of revelation were then completed.

Observe, that the apostle insists, as a matter of responsibility, that Timothy should devote himself to his ministry with so much the more energy that the assembly was declining, and self-will in Christians was gaining the ascendancy; not that he throws any doubt upon its being a constant duty to do so at all times, whether happy or unhappy. The apostle, as we have seen, has two different periods in view; the decline of the assembly, which had already begun, and the still worse condition that was yet future. The special application of the exhortation here is to the first period. "Be instant," he says, "in season, out of season . . . for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine . . . and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

In how positive and distinct a way the apostle sets the fall of the assembly before us! Its impaired condition in his day was to him but a point of

progress (according to his judgment in the Spirit) towards a yet more entire fall; when, although still calling itself christian, the mass of those who assumed the name of Christ would no longer endure the sound doctrine of the Holy Ghost. But, come what might, laboring with patience and diligence and energy as long as they would hearken, he was to be watchful, to endure afflictions, to seek after souls still unconverted (a great proof of faith when the heart is burdened with the unfaithfulness of those within), and fully to exercise his ministry; with this additional motive, that apostolic energy was disappearing from the scene. (Ti2 4:6)

But there is yet something to notice at the beginning of this Chapter. Fullness of grace, it is apparent, does not here characterise the epistle. His exhortation to Timothy is "before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the quick and dead at his appearing and his kingdom." We have already spoken of this: the appearing of Jesus is in connection with responsibility, His coming is with the object of calling us to Himself in connection with our privileges. Here it is the first of these two cases; not the assembly, or the Father's house, but God, the appearing, and the kingdom. All that is in relation to responsibility, government, judgment, is gathered together in one point of view. The apostle however is not speaking, of the assembly, nor does he throughout the epistle. The assembly moreover as such is not judged; she is the bride of the Lamb. Individuals are judged. Christendom which bears its name and responsibility, and necessarily so while the Holy Ghost is here below, is judged. We are warned of it in Ephesus. (Rev. 2) Nay, judgment begins there. This is the assembly viewed as the house, not the body.

The portion of the assembly, and even of its members as such, is grace and not judgment. She goes to meet the Lord before His appearing. Here the apostle speaks of His appearing and His kingdom. It is as appearing in glory and clothed with the authority of the kingdom that He exercises judgment. The presentation of the assembly to Himself completes the work of grace with regard to that assembly. When the Lord appears, we shall appear with Him in glory; but it will be the glory of the kingdom (as we see in the transfiguration), and He will judge the living.

He will maintain the authority of His kingdom, as a new order of things, for a long period; and judgment will be exercised, if the occasion for it arises, during its whole continuance, for a king shall reign in righteousness; judgment and righteousness will be united. Before giving back this kingdom to God the Father, He judges the dead, for all judgment is committed to the Son. So that the kingdom is a new order of things founded on His appearing, in which judgment is exercised. The kingdom is founded by the exclusion of Satan from heaven. It is established and its authority put in exercise at the appearing of the Lord.

The consciousness that this judgment is going to be exercised gives an impulse to love in the carrying out of ministry, gives it earnestness, and strengthens the hands by the sense of union with Him who will exercise it and also by the sense of personal responsibility.

The apostle uses his near departure as a fresh motive to exhort Timothy to the full exercise of his ministry. His own heart expands at the thought of that departure.

The absence therefore of apostolic ministry, so serious a fact with regard to the assembly's position, makes the duty of the man of God the more urgent. As Paul's absence is a motive for working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, so is it also a motive for him who is engaged in the work of the gospel to devote himself more than ever to his ministry, in order to supply as far as possible the lack of apostolic service by earnest care for souls, and by instructing them in the truth that he has learnt.

We cannot be apostles, or lay the foundation of the assembly. This is already done. But we may build upon that foundation by the truth which we have received from the apostle, by the scriptures which God has given us, by an unwearied love in the truth for souls. The foundation is not to be laid a second time. We give its value to the foundation, we give it its place, by building upon it, and by caring for the souls and the assembly, to which apostleship has given an ever-abiding place and foundation before God. This is what we have to do in the absence of the gift that lays the foundation.

The character that God appointed has already been stamped on the work: the one foundation has been laid. The assembly has its one and sole place

according to the counsels of God. The rule given of God is in the word. We have but to act as the apostle leads according to the impulse already given by the Spirit. We cannot have apostolic authority: no one is an apostle in any such sense. This could not be, because we do not lay the foundation; it would be to deny that which has already been done. The foundation has been laid. We can labour according to the measure of our gift; and so much the more devotedly, in proportion as we love the work which the apostle wrought, and because he is no longer here to sustain it.

As to the apostle, he had finished his work; if others were unfaithful, he had been faithful. In the good fight of the gospel of God he had fought to the end, and successfully resisted all the attacks of the enemy. He had finished his course: it only remained for him to be crowned. He had kept the faith committed to him. The crown of righteousness, that is to say, the one bestowed by the righteous Judge who acknowledged his faithfulness, was laid up and kept for him. It was not till the day of retribution that he would receive it. We see plainly, that it is reward for labour and for faithfulness that is here meant. This or its opposite characterises the whole epistle, and not the privileges of grace.

The work of the Spirit through us is rewarded by the crown of righteousness, and every one will have a reward according to his labour. Christ brings us all according to the grace of God into the enjoyment of His own glory to be with Him and like Him. This is our common portion according to the eternal counsels of God; but a place is prepared by the Father and given by the Son according to the work wrought by the power of the Spirit in each believer in his particular position. It is not Paul only who will receive this crown from the righteous Judge; all who love the Lord's appearing will appear with Him in the glory that is personally destined to each, and that is adjudged to him when the Lord appears. Detached from this world, sensible that it is a perverse and rebellious one, feeling how much the dominion of Satan burdens the heart, the faithful long for the appearance of Him who will put an end to that dominion, to rebellion, oppression and misery, by bringing in in His goodness although by judgment deliverance, peace, and freedom of heart, on the earth.

The Christian will share the Lord's glory when He shall appear: but this world also will be delivered.

We see here too that the privileges of the assembly as such are not the subject, but the public retribution manifested when Jesus shall appear to all; and the public establishment of His glory. The heart loves His appearing; not only the removal of evil, but the appearance of Him who removes it.

In that which follows we see what progress the evil had already made, and how the apostle counts upon the individual affection of his dear son in the faith. Probably there were good reasons for the departure of many, certainly for that of some; nevertheless it is true that the first thing that presents itself to the apostle's mind is the departure of Demas from purely worldly motives. The apostle felt himself isolated. Not only had the mass of Christians abandoned him, but his companions in labour had gone away. In the providence of God he was to be alone. He begs Timothy to come soon. Demas had forsaken him. The rest, from various motives, had quitted him; some he had sent away in connection with the work. It is not said that Demas had ceased to be a Christian had publicly renounced the Lord; but it was not in his heart to bear the cross with the apostle.

In the midst of these sorrows a ray of grace and light shines through the darkness. The presence of Mark whose service Paul had formerly refused, because he had shrunk from the perils of laboring among the Gentiles and had turned back to Jerusalem is now desired by him, because he was useful for the ministry. It is most interesting to see, and a touching proof of the grace of God, that the afflictions of the apostle and the work of grace in Mark combine to set before us, as faithful and useful to Paul, the one who once had failed, and with whom the apostle would then have nothing to do. We also see the affections and confidence displayed in the smallest detail of life. Full of power by the Spirit of God, the apostle is gentle, intimate, and confiding, with those who are upright and devoted. We see too that at the close of his life, devoted as he was, the occasion had presented itself for study (in connection assuredly with his work), and for writing that which he wished carefully to preserve possibly his epistles.

This has an important place in scriptural instruction with regard to the life of the apostle. Paul was lost, so to speak, for the greater part, in the power of the Spirit; but when alone, with sober mind, he occupies himself intelligently and carefully about the things of God.

He warns Timothy with regard to a man who had shewn his enmity, and puts him on his guard against him.

We see here also that the epistle bears the character of righteousness, grace having had its course. "The Lord," he says, "reward him according to his deeds." As for those who had not courage to stand by him, when he had to answer as a prisoner, he only prays for them. He had not been discouraged. His heart, broken by the unfaithfulness of the assembly, was strong in confessing the Lord before the world, and he can testify that, if forsaken by men, the Lord Himself stood with him and strengthened him. That he had to answer before the authorities was but an occasion to proclaim again in public that for which he was made a prisoner. Glorious power of the gospel where faith is in exercise! All that the enemy can do becomes a testimony, in order that the great, kings, those who were otherwise inaccessible, should hear the word of truth, the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The faithful witness was also delivered out of the lion's mouth. His strong and simple confidence counted on the Lord to the end. He would preserve him from every evil work unto His heavenly kingdom.

If the time of his departure was at hand, if he had to fall asleep instead of being changed, he had not ceased to be among those who looked for the Lord's appearing. Meanwhile he was going to be with Him, to have a place in the heavenly kingdom.

He salutes the brethren with whom Timothy was connected, and begs him to come before the winter. We also learn here, that the miraculous power granted to the apostles was exercised in the Lord's service, and not for their private interests, nor as their personal affection might suggest; for Paul had left Trophimus sick at Miletus.

It is evident that this epistle was written when the apostle thought his departure near at hand and when the faith of Christians had grievously

declined, which was proved by their having forsaken the apostle. His faith was sustained by grace. He did not hide from himself that all was going wrong: his heart felt it was broken by it; he saw that it would grow worse and worse. But his own testimony stood firm; he was strong for the Lord through grace. The strength of the Lord was with him to confess Christ and to exhort Timothy to so much the more diligent and devoted an exercise of his ministry, because the days were evil.

This is very important. If we love the Lord, if we feel what He is to the assembly, we feel that in the latter all is in ruin. Personal courage is not weakened for the Lord remains ever the same, faithful, and using His power for us: if not in the assembly which rejects it, it is in those who stand fast that He will exercise His power according to the individual need created by this state of things.

May we remember this. Insensibility to the state of the assembly is not a proof that we are near the Lord, or that we have confidence in Him; but in the consciousness of this ruin, faith, the sense of what Christ is, will give confidence in Him amidst the ruin which we mourn. Nevertheless it will be observed, that the apostle speaks here of the individual, of righteousness, of judgement, and now of the assembly. If the latter is spoken of outwardly as the great house, it contains vessels to dishonour from which we are to purge ourselves. Yet the apostle foresaw a still worse state of things which has now set in. But the Lord can never fail in His faithfulness.

The first of Timothy gives directions for the order of the assembly; the second, for the path of the servant of God when it is in disorder and failure.

TITUS

Titus Chapter 1

Titus 1:1

tit 1:1

The Epistle to Titus is occupied with the maintenance of order in the churches of God.

The especial object of those written to Timothy as the maintenance of sound doctrine, although speaking of other things with regard to which the apostle gives directions for the conduct of Timothy. This the apostle himself tells us. In the First Epistle to Timothy we see that Paul had left his beloved son in the faith at Ephesus, in order to watch that no other doctrine was preached there; the assembly is the pillar and support of the truth. In the Second Epistle we find the means by which Christians are to be strengthened in the truth, when the mass have departed from it.

Here, in Titus, the apostle says expressly that he had left him in Crete to set in order things that were yet wanting, and to establish elders in every city. Although more or less the same dangers presented themselves to the mind of Paul as when writing to Timothy, yet we find that the apostle enters at once upon his subject with a calmness which shews that his mind was not pre-occupied in the same way with those dangers, and that the Spirit could engage him more entirely with the ordinary walk of the assembly; so that this epistle is much more simple in its character. The walk that becomes Christians, with regard to the maintenance of order in their relationships of each other, and the great principles on which this walk is founded, form the subject of the book. The state of the assembly comes but little before us. Truths that flow more entirely from the Christian revelation, and that characterize it, have more place in this epistle than in those addressed to Timothy. On the other hand, prophecies concerning the future condition of Christianity, and the development of the decline that had already commenced, are not repeated here. While stating in a remarkable way

certain truths with respect to Christianity, the tone of the epistle is more calm, more ordinary.

Titus Chapter 2

"Sound doctrine" takes account of all this, and, in its warnings and exhortations, maintains all these proprieties. This is the instruction which the apostle here gives to Titus, with regard to aged men, aged women, young women (relatively to their husbands, their children, and their whole life, which should be domestic and modest); young men, to whom Titus was to be always a pattern; slaves, with their masters; and then the duties of all towards magistrates, and indeed towards all men. But, before taking up this last point, he establishes the great principles which are the foundation of the conduct of the saints amongst themselves in this world. Their conduct towards magistrates and the world has a different motive.

The conduct of Christians as such, in the assembly has for its basis and motive the special doctrines of Christianity. We find these doctrines and motives in Tit 2:11-15, which speaks of that conduct.

Tit 2:11-15 contains a remarkable summary of Christianity, not exactly of its dogmas, but as a practical reality for men. Grace has appeared. It has appeared, not limited to a particular people, but to all men; not charged with temporal promises and blessings but bringing salvation. It comes from God to men with salvation. It does not expect righteousness from men, it brings salvation to those that need it. Precious and simple truth, which makes us know God, which puts us in our place, but according to the grace which as overleaped every barrier in order to address itself, in the sovereign goodness of God, to every man on the earth!

Having brought this salvation, it instructs us perfectly with regard to our walk in this world; and that in relation to ourselves, and to other men, and to God. Renouncing all ungodliness, and all lusts that find their gratification in this world, we are to bridle the will of the flesh in every respect and to live soberly; we are to acknowledge the claims of others and to live righteously; we are to win the rights of God over our hearts and to exercise godliness.

But our future also is enlightened by grace. It teaches us to wait for the blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Grace has appeared. It teaches us how to walk here below, and to expect the appearing of the glory in the Person of Jesus Christ Himself. And our hope is well founded. Christ is justly precious to us. We can have full confidence of heart in thinking of His appearing in glory, as well as the most powerful motive for a life devoted to His glory. He gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify for Himself a people who would belong to Him in His own right and be zealous according to His will and His nature of good works.

This is what Christianity is. It has provided for all, the past, the present, and the future, according to God. It delivers us from this world, making of us a people set apart for Christ Himself, according to the love in which He gave Himself for us. It is purification, but a purification which consecrates us to Christ. We belong to Him as His peculiar portion, His possession in the world; animated with the love that is in Him, in order to do good to others and bear testimony to His grace. This is a precious testimony to that which Christianity is, in its practical reality, as the work of the grace of God.

Titus Chapter 3

With respect to the conduct of Christians towards the world, grace has banished violence, and the spirit of rebellion and resistance which agitates the heart of those who believe not, and which has its source in the self-will that strives to maintain its own rights relatively to others.

The Christian has his portion, his inheritance, elsewhere; he is tranquil and submissive here and ready to do good. Even when others are violent and unjust towards him, he bears it in remembrance that once it was no otherwise with himself: a difficult lesson, for violence and injustice stir up the heart; but the thought that it is sin, and that we also were formerly its slaves, produces patience and piety. Grace alone has made the difference, and according to that grace are we to act towards others.

The apostle gives a grievous summary of the characteristics of man after the flesh that which we once were. Sin was foolishness was disobedience; the sinner was deceived was the slave of lusts, filled with malice and envy, hateful, and hating others. Such is man characterized by sin. But the kindness of God, of a Saviour-God, His good-will and charity towards men (sweet and precious character of God!) [See Note #2] has appeared. The character that He assumed is that of Saviour, a name especially given Him in these three epistles, in order that we should bear its stamp in our walk, that it should pervade our spirit. Our walk in the world and our conduct towards others depend on the principles of our relationships with God. That which has made us different from others is not some merit in ourselves, some personal superiority: we were sometime even as they. It is the tender love and grace of the God of mercy. He has been kind and merciful to us: we have known what it is, and are so to others. It is true that in cleansing and renewing us this mercy has wrought by a principle, and in a sphere of a life, that are entirely new,, so that we cannot walk with the world as we did before; but we act towards others who are still in the mire of this world, as God has acted towards us to bring us out of it, that we might enjoy those things which, according to the same principle of grace, we desire that others also should enjoy. The sense of what we once were, and of the way in which God has acted towards us, combine to govern our conduct towards others.

Now when the kindness of a Saviour-God appeared, it was not something vague and uncertain; He has saved us, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy by washing and renewing us. This is the double character of the work in us, the same two points which we find in John 3 in the Lords' discourse with Nicodemus; except that here is added that which has now its place because of the work of Christ, namely, that the Holy Ghost is also shed on us abundantly to be the strength of that new life of which He is the source. The man is washed, cleansed. He is washed from his former habits, thoughts, desires, in the practical sense. We wash a thing that exists. The man was morally bad and defiled in his inward and outward life. God has saved us by purifying us; He could not do it otherwise. To be in relationship with Himself there must be practical purity.

But this purification was thorough. It was not the outside of the vessel. It was purification by means of regeneration; identified with the communication of a new life no doubt, which is the source of new thoughts, in connection with God's new creation, and capable of enjoying His presence and in the light of His countenance, but which in itself is a passage from the state we were in into a wholly new one, from flesh by death into the status of a risen Christ.

But there was a power which acted in this new life and accompanies it in the Christian. It is not merely a subjective change, as they say. There is an active divine Agent who imparts something new, of which He is Himself the source the Holy Ghost Himself. It is God acting in the creature (for it is by the Spirit that God always acts immediately on the creature); and it is in the character of the Holy Ghost that He acts in this work of renewal. It is a new source of thoughts in relationship with God; not only a vital capacity, but an energy which produces that which is new in us.

It has been a question, When does this renewal by the Holy Ghost take place? Is it at the commencement, or is it after the regeneration [See Note #3] of which the apostle speaks? I think that the apostle speaks of it according to the character of the work; and adds "shed on us" (that which characterizes the grace of this present period) to shew that there is an additional truth, namely, that the Holy Ghost, as "shed on us," continues in order to maintain by His power the enjoyment of the relationship into which He has brought us. The man is cleansed in connection with the new order of things; but the Holy Ghost is a source of an entirely new life, entirely new thoughts; not only of a new moral being, but of the communication of all that in which this new being develops itself. We cannot separate the nature from the objects with regard to which the nature develops itself, and which form the sphere of its existence and characterize it.

It is the Holy Ghost who gives the thoughts, who creates and forms the whole moral being of the new man. The thought and that which thinks, cannot be separated, morally, when the heart is occupied with it. The Holy Ghost is the source of all in the saved man: he is ultimately saved, because this is the case with him.

The Holy Ghost does not only give a new nature; He gives it us in connection with an entirely new order of things ("a new creation"), and fills us as to our thoughts with the things that are in this new creation. This is the reason, that, although we are placed in it once for all, this work as to the operation of the Holy Ghost continues; because He ever communicates to us more and more of the things of this new world into which He has brought us. He takes of the things of Christ and shews them to us; and all that the Father has is Christ's. I think that the "renewing of the Holy Ghost" embraces all this; because he says, "which shed on us abundantly." So that it is not only that we are born of Him, but that He works in us, communicating to us all that is ours in Christ.

The Holy Ghost is shed on us abundantly by means of Jesus Christ our Saviour, in order that, having been justified by the grace of this Saviour, we should be heirs according to the hope of eternal life. I think that the antecedent of "in order that" is "the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" and that the sentence, "which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour," is an accessory parenthesis introduced to shew us that we have the fullness of the enjoyment of these things by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Thus he has saved us by this renewing that we may be heirs according to the hope of eternal life, It is nothing outward, earthly, or corporeal. Grace has given us eternal life, In order to this, we have been justified by the grace of Christ. [See Note #4] Thus there is energy, power, hope, through the rich gift of the Holy Ghost. In order to our participating in it we have been justified by His grace, and our inheritance is in the incorruptible joy of eternal life.

God has saved us, not by works nor by means of [See Note #5] anything that we are, but by His mercy. But the He has acted towards us according to the riches of His own grace, according to the thoughts of His own heart.

With these things the apostle desires that Titus would be occupied with that which brings us with thanksgiving into practical connection with God Himself and makes us feel what our portion is, our eternal portion, before Him. This acts upon the conscience, fills us with love and good works, makes

us respect all the relationships of which God Himself is the center. We are in relationship with God according to His rights; we are before God, who causes everything that He has Himself established to be respected by the conscience.

Idle questions and disputes on the law Titus was to avoid, together with everything that would destroy the simplicity of our relationship with God according to the immediate revelation of Himself and of His will in Jesus Christ. It is still the Gnostic Judaism setting itself up against the simplicity of the gospel; it is the law and human righteousness, and that which, by means of intermediate beings, destroys the simplicity and the immediate character of our relationship with the God of grace.

When a man tried to set up his own opinions, and by that means to form parties in the assembly, after having admonished him once and a second time, he was to be rejected; his faith was subverted. He sins, he is judged of himself. He is not satisfied with the assembly of God, with the truth of God: he wants to make a truth of his own. Why is he a Christian, if Christianity, as God has given it, does not suffice him? By making a party for his own opinions he condemns himself.

We have, at the end of the epistle, a little glimpse of the Christian activity which the love of God produces, the pains taken that the flock should enjoy all the help with which God supplies the assembly. Paul wished that Titus should come to him: but the Cretans needed his services; and the apostle makes the arrival of Artemas or Tychicus (the latter well known by the services he had rendered to Paul) the condition of the departure of Titus from the field in which he was laboring. We find too that Zena, a lawyer, and Apollos, who had also displayed his active zeal at Ephesus and Corinth, were disposed to occupy themselves in Crete with the work of the Lord.

Observe also that we have the two kinds of labourers: those who were in personal connection with the apostle as fellow-laborers, who accompanied him, and whom he sent elsewhere to continue the work he had begun, when he could no longer carry it on himself; and those who labored freely and independently of him. But there was no jealousy of this double activity. He did not neglect the flock that were dear to him. He was glad that any

who were sound in the faith should water the plants which he had planted. He encourages Titus to show them all affection, and to provide whatever they needed in their journey. thought suggest to him the counsel that follows; namely, that it would be well for Christians to learn how to do useful work in order to supply the wants of others as well as their own.

The apostle ends his epistle with the salutations that christian love always produces; but, as we saw at the beginning, there is not here the same expansion of heart that we find in Paul's communications to Timothy. Grace is the same everywhere; but there are special affections and relationships in the assembly of God.

Note #2

In Greek it is the word 'philanthropy', which in scripture is only used in speaking of God; and which moreover has much greater force than the English word, because 'phil' is an especial affection for anything, a friendship.

Note #3

"palinggenisia" the word here used, is not being born again ("anagennao"). It is used, besides this passage, only in the end of Matthew 19 for the millennium. The renewing of the Holy Ghost is a distinct thing from the regeneration. This last is a change of one state of things to another.

Note #4

It is because "Christ" is in the parenthesis, and not in the principal sentence, that we read "ekeinos".

Note #5

Here, as everywhere, the responsibility of man and God's saving grace, by which purpose also is accomplished, are clearly distinguished.

PHILEMON

Philemon Chapter 1

Philemon 1:1

plm 1:1

The very beautiful and interesting Epistle to Philemon does not require much comment; it is an expression of the love which works by the Spirit within the assembly of God in all the circumstances of individual life.

Written for the purpose of awakening in Philemon sentiments which certain events had a tendency to extinguish in his heart, this epistle is suited to produce those feelings in the reader more than to be the object of explanation.

It is a fine picture of the way in which the tenderness and the strength of the love of God, working in the heart, occupies itself with every detail wherein that love might be wounded, or that might be an occasion for its growth and manifestation. In this point of view the epistle is as important as beautiful; for this development of tender and delicate consideration in the midst of the apostle's gigantic labours, and of the immense truths that formed the basis of relationship between all creatures and God in Christ, gives a very peculiar character to Christianity and shews its divine nature; since He who reveals the most profound truths, and puts them in their right place in the circle of divine thought, does so as speaking of a known thing, as communicating His own thoughts; and can (being the Spirit of the God of love) fill the heart with considerations which love only can suggest, with a dignity which manifests their source, and with a delicacy of application which shews that, whatever be the grandeur of His thoughts, He is at liberty to consider everything.

When the human mind is occupied with elevated subjects, it feels their weight, and bends under the load; it is absorbed; it has to abstract itself, to fix its attention. God reveals His own thoughts; and, vast as they may be to

the human mind, they flow with the clearness and connectedness that is natural to them, when he communicates them by His chosen instruments. The latter are free to love; for the God who employs them and inspires them is love. It is a more essential part of their task to present Him thus, than even to speak of the deep things. Accordingly, when they are moved by that love, the character of Him who sends them is demonstrated as that of the God who is the source of love, by a perfect consideration for others, and the most delicate attention to those things which their hearts would feel.

Moreover this love develops itself in relationships formed by the Holy Ghost Himself, between the members of the body of Christ, that is to say, between men. Springing from a divine source, and always fed by it, Christian affections assume the form of human regard, which by exhibiting love and the opposite of selfishness, bear the stamp of their origin. Love, free from self, can and does think of all that concerns others and understands what will affect them.

Onesimus, a fugitive slave, had been converted by means of Paul in his bonds. Philemon, a rich man or at least one of easy fortune, received the assembly in his house (his wife also being converted). and in his measure laboured himself in the Lord's work. Archippus was a servant of the Lord, who ministered in the assembly, perhaps an evangelist; at any rate he took part in the conflicts of the gospel, and was thus associated with Philemon and the assembly.

The apostle, in sending Onesimus back, addresses the whole assembly. This is the reason that we have here, "grace and peace" without the addition of "mercy" as when individuals only are addressed by the apostles. His appeal on behalf of Onesimus is to Philemon; but the whole assembly is to interest itself in this beloved slave, who was become a child of God. Their christian hearts would be a support and a guarantee for the conduct of Philemon; although the apostle expects pardon and kindness for Onesimus from the love of Philemon himself as a servant of God.

Paul (as was his custom) recognizes all the good that was in Philemon, and uses it as a motive to Philemon himself, that he might let the feelings of grace flow out freely, in spite of anything that the return of Onesimus might

excite in the flesh or any displeasure that Satan might try to re-awaken in him. The apostle would have that which he desired for Onesimus to be Philemon's own act. The enfranchisement of his former slave, or even his kind reception as a brother, would have quite a different bearing in that case, than if it had arisen from a command on the apostle's part; for christian affection and the bonds of love were in question. He gives due weight to the right he had to command, but only in order to abandon it, and to give more force to his request; and at the same time he suggests that the communion of Philemon's faith with the whole assembly of God and with the apostle—that is, the way in which his faith connected him, in the activities of christian love, with the assembly of God and those appointed by him to labour in it, and with the Lord Himself—which had already shewn itself so honourably in Philemon, would have its full development in the acknowledgment of all the apostle's rights over his heart.

In Verse 6 (Plm 1:6) we must read "every good thing which is in us."

It is beautiful to see the mixture of affection for Onesimus which shews itself in an anxiety that makes him plead every motive which could act on the heart of Philemon—with the christian feeling that inspired him with full confidence in the kindly affections of this faithful and excellent brother. The return of his fugitive slave was indeed likely to stir something in his natural heart; the apostle interposes his letter on behalf of his dear child in the faith, born in the time of his captivity. God had interposed the work of His grace, which ought to act on the heart of Philemon, producing altogether new relationships with Onesimus. The apostle beseeches him to receive his former slave as a brother, but it is evident (ver 12), although Paul wished it to be the spontaneous act of the master whom Onesimus had wronged, that the apostle expected the enfranchisement of the latter. Be that as it may, he takes everything upon himself for his dear son. According to grace Onesimus was more profitable to Philemon, as well as to Paul, than formerly, when the flesh had made him an unfaithful and valueless servant; and this he should rejoice in. (Ver 11) Paul alludes to the name of "Onesimus", which means "profitable". Finally he reminds Philemon that he was indebted to him for his own salvation—for his life as a Christian.

Paul at this moment was a prisoner at Rome. God had brought Onesimus there (whither all resorted) to lead him to salvation and the knowledge of the Lord, in order that we should be instructed, and that Onesimus should have a new position in the christian assembly. [See Note #1]

It was apparently towards the end of the apostle's imprisonment. He hopes at least soon to be released and tells Philemon to prepare him a lodging.

We find the names again in the Epistle to the Colossians. There the apostle says, "Onesimus, who is one of you;" so that, if it be the same, he was of Colosse. It seems likely, because there is Archippus also, who is exhorted to take heed to his ministry. If it be so, the fact that he speaks thus of Onesimus to the Christians at Colosse is another proof of his loving care for this new convert. He lays him thus upon the hearts of the assembly, sending his letter by him and Tychicus. In the Epistle to the Ephesians there are no salutations; but the same Tychicus is its bearer. Timothy is joined with Paul in the address of the Epistle to the Colossians, as well as in this to Philemon. It was not so in the Epistle to the Ephesians; but in that to the Philippians to whom the apostle hoped to send Timothy ere long, their two names are again united.

I do not draw any conclusions from these last details; but they furnish ground for inquiry into details. Each of the four epistles was written during the apostle's captivity at Rome, and when he was expecting to be delivered from that captivity.

Finally, that which we have especially to remark in the Epistle to Philemon is the love which, in the intimate centre of this circle (guarded all round by an unparalleled development of doctrine) reigned and bore fruit, and bound the members of Christ together, and spread the savour of grace over all the relationships in which men could stand towards each other, occupying itself about all the details of life with a perfect propriety, and with the recognition of every right that can exist among men and of all that the human heart can feel.

Note #1

1: It seems to me, from the way in which the apostle speaks, that he even thought Onesimus would be an instrument of God in the assembly, useful in the Lord's service. He would have retained him to minister to himself in the bonds of the gospel; but he respects his connection with Philemon. It was also much better for the soul of Onesimus that he should submit himself where he had done wrong; and if he was to be free, that he should receive his freedom from the love of Philemon.

HEBREWS

Hebrews Introduction

Hebrews

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Introduction to Hebrews

The important nature of the Epistle to the Hebrews demands that we should examine it with peculiar care. It is not the presentation of Christian position in itself, viewed as the fruit of sovereign grace, and of the work and the resurrection of Christ, or as the result of the union of Christians with Christ, the members of the body with the Head a union which gives them the enjoyment of every privilege in Him. It is an epistle in which one who has apprehended indeed the whole scope of Christianity, considered as placing the Christian in Christ before God, whether individually or as a member of the body, looks nevertheless at the Lord from here below; and presents His Person and His offices as between us and God in heaven, while we are in feebleness on earth, for the purpose of detaching us (as walking on earth from all that would attach us in a religious way to the earth; even when as was the case among the Jews the bond had been ordained by God Himself.

The epistle shews us Christ in heaven, and consequently that our religious bonds with God are heavenly, although we are not yet personally in heaven ourselves nor viewed as united to Christ there. Every bond with the earth is broken, even while we are walking on the earth.

These instructions naturally are given in an epistle addressed to the Jews, because their religious relationships had been earthly, and at the same time solemnly appointed by God Himself. The heathen, as to their religions, had no formal relationships except with demons.

In the case of the Jews this rupture with the earth was in its nature so much the more solemn, the more absolute and conclusive, from the relationship having been divine. This relationship was to be fully acknowledged and

entirely abandoned, not here because the believer is dead and risen again in Christ, but because Christ in heaven takes the place of all earthly figures and ordinances. God Himself, who had instituted the ordinances of the law, now established other bonds, different indeed in character; but it was still the same God.

This fact gives occasion for His relationships with Israel being resumed by Him hereafter, when the nation shall be re-established and in the enjoyment of the promises. Not that this epistle views them as actually on that ground; on the contrary it insists on what is heavenly, and walking by faith as Abraham and others who had not the promises, but it lays down principles which can apply to that position, and in one or two passages it leaves (and ought to leave) a place for this ultimate blessing of the nation. The Epistle to the Romans, in the direct instruction which it furnishes, cannot leave this place for the blessings proper to the Jewish people. In its point of view all are alike sinners, and all in Christ are justified together before God in heaven. Still less in the Epistle to the Ephesians, with the object which it has in view, could there be room for speaking of the future blessing of God's people on the earth. It only contemplates Christians as united to their heavenly Head, as His body; or as the habitation of God on earth by the Holy Ghost. The Epistle to the Romans, in the passage that shews the compatibility of this salvation (which, because it was of God, was for all without distinction) with the faithfulness of God to His promises made to the nation, touches the chord of which we speak even more distinctly than the Epistle to the Hebrews; and shews us that Israel will although in a different way from before resume their place in the line peculiar to the heirs of promise; a place which through their sin, was partially left vacant for a time to allow the bringing in of the Gentiles on the principle of faith into this blessed succession. We find this in Romans 11. But the object in both epistles is to separate the faithful entirely from earth, and to bring them into relationship religiously with heaven; the one (that to the Romans) as regards their personal presentation to God by means of forgiveness and divine righteousness, the other with respect to the means that God has established, in order that the believer, in his walk here below, may find his present relationships with heaven maintained and his daily connection with God preserved in its integrity.

I have said preserved, because this is the subject of the epistle; [See Note #1] but it must be added, that these relationships are established on this ground by divine revelations, which communicate the will of God and the conditions under which He is pleased to connect Himself with His people.

We should also remark, that in the Epistle to the Hebrews, although the relationship of the people with God is established on a new ground, being founded on the heavenly position of the Mediator, they are considered as already existing. God treats with a people already known to Him. He addresses persons in relationship with Himself, and who for a long period have held the position of a people whom God had taken out from the world unto Himself. It is not, as in Romans, sinners without law or transgressors of the law, between whom there is no difference, because all have alike come entirely short of the glory of God, all alike are the children of wrath, or, as in Ephesians, an entirely new creation unknown before. They were in need of some better thing; but those here addressed were in that need because they were in relationship with God, and the condition of their relationship with Him brought nothing to perfection. That which they possessed was in fact nothing but signs and figures; still, the people were, I again say, a people in relationship with God. Many of them might refuse the new method of blessing and grace, and consequently would be lost: but the link between the people and God is accounted to subsist: only that, Messiah having been revealed, a place among that people could not be had but in the recognition of Messiah.

It is very important for the understanding of this Epistle to apprehend this point, namely, that it is addressed to Hebrews on the ground of a relationship which still existed [See Note #2], although it only retained its force in so far as they acknowledged the Messiah, who was its corner-stone. Hence the first words connect their present state with previous revelations, instead of breaking off all connection and introducing a new thing as yet unrevealed.

Some remarks on the form of the epistle will help us to understand it better.

It does not contain the name of its author. The reason of this is touching and remarkable. It is that the Lord Himself, according to this epistle, was the

Apostle of Israel. The apostles whom He sent were only employed to confirm His words by transmitting them to others, God Himself confirming their testimonies by miraculous gifts. This also makes us understand that, although as Priest the Lord is in heaven for the exercise of His priesthood there, and in order to establish on new ground the relationship of the people with God, yet the communications of God with His people by means of the Messiah had begun when Jesus was on earth living in their midst. Consequently the character of their relationship was not union with Him in heaven; it was relationship with God on the ground of divine communications and of the service of a Mediator with God.

Moreover this epistle is a discourse, a treatise, rather than a letter addressed in the exercise of apostolic functions to saints with whom the writer was personally in connection. The author takes the place of a teacher rather than of an apostle. He speaks doubtless from the height of the heavenly calling, but in connection with the actual position of the Jewish people; nevertheless it was for the purpose of making believers at length understand that they must abandon that position.

The time for judgment on the nation was drawing near; and with regard to this the destruction of Jerusalem had great significance, because it definitely broke off all outward relationship between God and the Jewish people. There was no longer an altar or sacrifice, priest or sanctuary. Every link was then broken by judgment, and remains broken until it shall be formed again under the new covenant according to grace.

Further, it will be found that there is more contrast than comparison. The veil is compared, but then, closing the entrance to the sanctuary, now, a new and living way into it; a sacrifice, but the repeated, so as to say sins were still there, now once for all so that there is no remembrance of sins; and so of every important particular.

The author of this epistle (Paul, I doubt not, but this is of little importance) employed other motives than that of the approaching judgment to induce the believing Jews to abandon their Judaic relationships. It is this last step however which he engages them to take; and the judgment was at hand. Until now they had linked Christianity with Judaism.; there had been

thousands of Christians who were very zealous for the law. But God was about to destroy that system altogether already in fact judged by the Jews' rejection of Christ, and by their resistance to the testimony of the Holy Ghost. Our Epistle engages believers to come forth entirely from that system and to bear the Lord's reproach, setting before them a new foundation for their relationship with God in a High Priest who is in the heavens. At the same time it links all that it says with the testimony of God by the prophets through the intermedium of Christ, the Son of God, speaking during His life on earth, though now speaking from heaven.

Thus the new position is plainly set forth, but continuity with the former is also established; and we have a glimpse, by means of the new covenant, of continuity also with that which is to come a thread by which another state of things, the millennial state, is connected with the whole of God's dealings with the nation, although that which is taught and developed in the Epistle is the position of believers (of the people), formed by the revelation of a heavenly Christ on whom depended all their connection with God. They were to come forth from the camp; but it was because Jesus, in order to sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. For here there is no continuing city: we seek one that is to come. The writer places himself among the remnant of the people as one of them. He teaches with the full light of the Holy Ghost, but not those to whom he had been sent as an apostle, with the apostolic authority which such a mission would have given him over them. It will be understood that in saying this we speak of the relationship of the writer, not of the inspiration of the writing.

While developing the sympathies of Christ and His sufferings, in order to shew that He is able to compassionate the suffering and the tried, the Epistle does not bring forward His humiliation nor the reproach of the cross, till quite at the end when His glory having been set forth the author engages the Jew to follow Him and to share His reproach.

The glory of the Messiah's Person, His sympathies, His heavenly glory, are made prominent in order to strengthen the faltering faith of the Jewish Christians, and to fortify them in their Christian position, that they might view the latter in its true character; and that they themselves, being connected with heaven and established in their heavenly calling, might learn

to bear the cross and to separate themselves from the religion of the flesh, and not draw back to a Judaism just ready to pass away.

We must look then in this Epistle for the character of relationships with God, formed upon the revelation of the Messiah in the position which He had taken on high, and not for the doctrine of a new nature approach to God in the holiest, impossible in Judaism, but no revelation of the Father, nor union with Christ on high.

He is speaking to persons who were familiar with the privileges of the fathers.

God had spoken to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways; and now, at the end of those days, that is to say, at the end of the days of the Israelite dispensation, in which the law ought to have been in vigour, at the end of the times during which God maintained relationship with Israel (sustaining them with a disobedient people by means of the prophets) at the end then of those days God had spoken in the Person of the Son. There is no breach to begin a wholly new system. The God who had spoken before by the prophets now went on to speak in Christ.

It was not only by inspiring holy men (as He had done before), that they might recall Israel to the law and announce the coming of the Messiah. Himself had spoken as the Son in [His] Son. We see at once that the writer connects the revelation made by Jesus [See Note #3] of the thoughts of God, with the former words addressed to Israel by the prophets. God has spoken, he says, identifying himself with His people, to us, as He spake to our fathers by the prophets.

The Messiah had spoken, the Son of whom the scriptures had already testified. This gives occasion to lay open, according to the scriptures, the glory of this Messiah, of Jesus, with regard to His Person, and to the position He has taken.

And here we must always remember, that it is the Messiah of whom he is speaking He who once spoke on the earth. He declares indeed His divine

glory; but it is the glory of Him who has spoken which he declares, the glory of that Son who had appeared according to the promises made to Israel.

This glory is twofold, and in connection with the twofold office of Christ. It is the divine glory of the Person of the Messiah, the Son of God. The solemn authority of His word is connected with this glory. And then there is the glory with which His humanity is invested according to the counsels of God the glory of the Son of man; a glory connected with His sufferings during His sojourn here below, which fitted Him for the exercise of a priesthood both merciful and intelligent with regard to the necessities and the trials of His people.

These two chapters are the foundation of all the doctrine of the epistle. In chapter 1 we find the divine glory of the Messiah's Person; in Heb 2:1-4 (which continues the subject), the authority of His word; and from Heb 2:5-18, His glorious humanity. As man, all things are put in subjection under Him; nevertheless, before being glorified, He took part in all the sufferings and in all the temptations to which the saints, whose nature He had assumed, are subjected. With this glory His priesthood is connected: He is able to succour them that are tempted, in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted. Thus He is the Apostle and the High Priest of the "called" people.

To this twofold glory is joined an accessory glory: He is Head, as Son, over God's house, possessing this authority as the One who created all things, even as Moses had authority as a servant in the house of God on earth. Now the believers, whom the inspired writer was addressing, were this house, if at least they held fast their confession of His name unto the end. For the danger of the Hebrew converts was that of losing their confidence, because there was nothing before their eyes as the fulfillment of the promises. Consequently exhortations follow (chapter 3:7-4:13) which refer to the voice of the Lord, as carrying the word of God into the midst of the people, in order that they might not harden their hearts.

From Heb 4:14, the subject of the priesthood is treated, leading to the value of the sacrifice of Christ, but introducing also the two covenants in passing, and insisting on the change of the law necessarily consequent upon the change of priesthood. Then comes the value of the sacrifice very fully in

contrast with the figures that accompanied the old; and on which, and on the blood which was shed in them, the covenant itself was founded. This instruction on the priesthood continues to the end of verse 18 in chapter 10 (Heb 10:18). The exhortations founded thereon introduce the principle of the endurance of faith, which leads to chapter 11, in which the cloud of witnesses is reviewed, crowning them with the example of Christ Himself, who completed the whole career of faith in spite of every obstacle, and who shews us where this painful but glorious path terminates. (Heb 12:2)

From Heb 12:3, he enters more closely into the trials found in the path of faith, and gives the most solemn warning with regard to the danger of those who draw back, and the most precious encouragements to those who persevere in it, setting forth the relationship into which we are brought by grace: and finally in chapter 13 he exhorts the faithful Hebrews on several points of detail, and in particular on that of unreservedly taking the Christian position under the cross, laying stress on the fact that Christians alone had the true worship of God, and that they who chose to persevere in Judaism had no right to take part in it. In a word, he would have them to separate themselves definitely from a Judaism which was already judged, and to lay hold of the heavenly calling, bearing the cross here below. It was now a heavenly calling, and the path a path of faith.

Such is the summary of our Epistle. We return now to the study of its chapters in detail.

Note #1:

It will be found, I think, that in Hebrews the exercise of the heavenly priesthood is not applied to the case of a fall into sin. It is for mercy and grace to help in time of need. Its subject is access to God, having the High Priest on high; and this we always have. The conscience is always perfect (chaps. 9-10) as to imputation and thus going to God. In 1 John, where communion is spoken of, which is interrupted by sin, we have an advocate with the Father if any man sin this also founded on perfect righteousness and propitiation in Him. The priesthood of Christ reconciles a perfect heavenly standing with God, with a weak condition on earth ever liable to failure gives comfort and dependence in the path through the desert.

Note #2:

He sanctifies the people with His own blood. They count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing. There is no inward sanctifying operation of the Spirit spoken of in Hebrews, though there are exhortations to the pursuit of holiness.

Note #3:

We shall see that, while shewing at the outset that the subject of his discourse had seated Himself at the right hand of God, he speaks also of the communications of the Lord when on earth. But even here it is in contrast with Moses and the angels as far more excellent. All has in view the deliverance of the believing Jews from Judaism.

Hebrews Chapter 1

Hebrews 1:1

heb 1:1

We have said that in Chapter 1 we find the glory of the Person of the Messiah, the Son of God, by whom God has spoken to the people. When I say "to the people", it is evident that we understand the Epistle to be addressed to the believing remnant, partakers, it is said, of the heavenly calling, but considered as alone holding the true place of the people.

It is a distinction given to the remnant, in view of the position which the Messiah took in connection with His people, to whom in the first instance He came. The tried and despised remnant, viewed as alone really having their place, are encouraged, and their faith is sustained by the true glory of their Messiah, hidden from their natural eyes, and the object of faith only.

"God" (says the inspired writer, placing himself among the believers of the beloved nation). "has spoken to us in the person of his Son." Psalm 2 should have led the Jews to expect the Son, and they ought to have formed a high idea of His glory from Isaiah 9, and other scriptures, which in fact were applied to the Messiah by their teachers, as the rabbinical writings still prove. But that He should be in heaven, and not have raised His people to

the possession of earthly glory this did not suit the carnal state of their hearts.

Now it is heavenly glory, this true position of the Messiah and His people, in connection with His divine right to their attention and to the worship of the angels themselves, which is so admirably presented here, where the Spirit of God brings out, in so infinitely precious a manner, the divine glory of Christ, for the purpose of exhorting His people to belief in a heavenly position; at the same time setting forth in what follows His perfect sympathy with us, as man in order to maintain their communion with heaven in spite of the difficulties of their path on earth.

Thus, although the assembly is not found in the Epistle to the Hebrews, save in an allusion to all comprised in the millennial glory in Chapter 12, the Saviour of the assembly is there presented in His Person, His work, and His priesthood, most richly to our hearts and to our spiritual intelligence; and the heavenly calling is in itself very particularly developed.

It is also most interesting to see the way in which the work of our Saviour, accomplished for us, forms a part of the manifestation of His divine glory.

"God has spoken in the Son," says the inspired author of our Epistle. He is then this Son. First He is declared Heir of all things. It is He who is to possess gloriously as Son everything that exists. Such are the decrees of God. Moreover it is by Him that God created the worlds. [See Note #4] All the vast system of this uniVerse, those unknown worlds that trace their paths in the vast regions of space in divine order to manifest the glory of a Creator-God, are the work of His hand who has spoken to us, of the divine Christ.

In Him has shone forth the glory of God: He is the perfect impress of His being. We see God in Him, in all that He said, in all that He did, in His Person. Moreover by the power of His word He upholds all that exists. He is then the Creator. God is revealed in His Person. He sustains all things by His word, which has thus a divine power. But this is not all (for we are still speaking of the Christ); there is another part of His glory, divine indeed, yet manifested in human nature. He who was all this which we have just seen when He had by Himself (accomplishing His own glory [See Note #5] and for His glory) wrought purification of our sins, seated Himself at the right hand of the

Majesty on high. Here is in full the personal glory of Christ. He is in fact Creator, the revelation of God, the upholder of all things by His word, He is the Redeemer. He has by Himself purged our sins; has seated Himself at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is the Messiah who is all this. He is the Creator-God, but He is a Messiah who has taken His place in the heavens at the right hand of Majesty, having accomplished the purification of our sins. We perceive how this exhibition of the glory of Christ, the Messiah, whether personal or that of position, would bring whoever believed in it out of Judaism, while linking itself with the Jewish promises and hopes. He is God, He has come down from heaven, He has gone up thither again.

Now those who attached themselves to Him found themselves, in another respect also, above the Jewish system. That system was ordained in connection with angels; but Christ has taken a position much higher than that of angels, because He has for His own proper inheritance a name (that is, a revelation of what He is) which is much more excellent than that of angels. Upon this the author of this Epistle quotes several passages from the Old Testament which speak of the Messiah, in order to shew that which He is in contrast with the nature and the relative position of angels. The significance of these passages to a converted Jew is evident, and we readily perceive the adaptation of the argument to such, for the Jewish economy was under the administration of angels, according to their own belief a belief fully grounded on the word. [See Note #6] And, at the same time, it was their own scriptures which proved that the Messiah was to have a position much more excellent and exalted than that of angels, according to the rights that belonged to Him by virtue of His nature, and according to the counsels and revelation of God: so that they who united themselves to Him were brought into connection with that which entirely eclipsed the law and all that related to it, and to the Jewish economy which could not be separated from it, and whose glory was angelic in character. The glory of Christianity and he speaks to those who acknowledged Jesus to be the Christ was so much above the glory of the law, that the two could not be really united.

The quotations begin by that from Psalm 2. God, it is written, has never said to any of the angels, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." It is

this character of Sonship, proper to the Messiah which, as a real relationship, distinguishes Him. He was from eternity the Son of the Father; but it is not precisely in this point of view that He is here considered. The name expresses the same relationship, but it is to the Messiah born on earth that this title is here applied. For Psalm 2, as establishing Him as King in Zion, announces the decree which proclaims His title. "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," is His relationship in time, with God. It depends, I doubt not, on His glorious nature; but this position for man was acquired by the miraculous birth of Jesus here below, and demonstrated as true and determined in its true import by His resurrection. In Psalm 2 the testimony borne to this relationship is in connection with His kingship in Zion, but it declares the personal glories of the king acknowledged of God. By virtue of the rights connected with this title, all kings are summoned to submit themselves to Him. This psalm then is speaking of the government of the world, when God establishes the Messiah as King in Zion, and not of the gospel. But in the passage quoted (Heb 1:5), it is the relationship of glory in which He subsists with God, the foundation of His rights, which is set forth, and not the royal rights themselves.

This is likewise the case in the next quotation: "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." Here we plainly see that it is the relationship in which He is with God, in which God accepts and owns Him, and not His eternal relationship with the Father: "I will be to him a Father," and etc. Thus it is still the Messiah, the King in Zion, the Son of David; for these words are applied in the first place to Solomon, as the son of David. (Sa2 7:14 and Ch1 17:13.) In this second passage the application of the expression to the true son of David is more distinct. A relationship so intimate (expressed, one may say, with so much affection) was not the portion of angels. The Son of God, acknowledged to be so by God Himself-this is the portion of the Messiah in connection with God. The Messiah then is the Son of God in an altogether peculiar way, which could not be applied to angels.

But still more: when God introduces the Firstborn into the world, all the angels are called to worship Him. God presents Him to the world; but the highest of created beings must then cast themselves at His feet. The angels of God Himself-the creatures that are nearest to Him must do homage to the

Firstborn. This last expression also is remarkable. The Firstborn is the Heir, the beginning of the manifestation of the glory and power of God. It is in this sense that the word is used. It is said of the Son of David, "I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." (Psa 89:27) Thus the Messiah is introduced into the world as holding this place with regard to God Himself. He is the Firstborn the immediate expression of the rights and the glory of God. He has universal preeminence.

Such is, so to speak, the positional glory of the Messiah. Not only Head of the people on earth, as Son of David, nor even only the acknowledged Son of God on the earth, according to Psalm 2, but the universal Firstborn; so that the chief and most exalted of creatures, those nearest to God, the angels of God, the instruments of His power and government, must do homage to the Son in this His position.

Yet this is far from being all; and this homage itself would be out of place if His glory were not proper to Himself and personal, if it were not connected with His nature. Nevertheless that which we have before us in this Chapter is still the Messiah as owned of God. God tells us what He is. Of the angels He says, "He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." He does not make His Son anything: He recognises that which He is, saying, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The Messiah may have an earthly throne (which also is not taken from Him, but which ceases by His taking possession of an eternal throne), but He has a throne which is for ever and ever.

The sceptre of His throne, as Messiah, is a sceptre of righteousness. Also, He has, when here below personally loved righteousness and hated iniquity: therefore God has anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. These companions are the believing remnant of Israel, whom He has made by grace His fellows, although (perfectly well-pleasing to God by His love of righteousness and that, at all costs) He is exalted above them all. This is a remarkable passage, because, while on the one hand the divinity of the Lord is fully established as well as His eternal throne, on the other hand the passage comes down to His character as the faithful man on earth, where He made pious men the little remnant of Israel who waited for redemption,

His companions; at the same time it gives Him (and it could not be otherwise) a place above them.

The text then returns to the glory given Him as Man, having the preeminence here as in all things.

I have already remarked elsewhere that while, as we read in Zechariah (Zac 13:7), Jehovah recognises as His fellow the humbled man, against whom His sword awakes to smite; here where the divinity of Jesus is set forth, the same Jehovah owns the poor remnant of believers as the fellows of the divine Saviour. Marvelous links between God and His people!

Already then in these remarkable testimonies He has the eternal throne and the sceptre of righteousness: He is recognised as God although a man, and glorified above all others as the regard of righteousness.

But the declaration of His divinity, the divinity of the Messiah, must be more precise. And the testimony is of the greatest beauty. The Psalm that contains it is one of the most complete expressions we find in scripture of the sense which Jesus had of His humiliation on earth, of His dependence on Jehovah, and that, having been raised up as Messiah from among men, He was cast down and His days shortened. If Zion were re-built (and the Psalm speaks prophetically of the time when it shall take place), where would He be, Messiah as He was, if, weakened and humbled, He was cut off in the midst of His days (as was the case)? In a word, it is the prophetic expression of the Saviour's heart in the prospect of that which happened to Him as a man on the earth, the utterance of His heart to Jehovah, in those days of humiliation, in presence of the renewed affection of the remnant for the dust of Zion and affection which the Lord had produced in their hearts, and which was therefore a token of His good-will and His purpose to re-establish it. But how could a Saviour who was cut off have part in it? (a searching question for a believing Jew, tempted on that side). The words here quoted are the answer to this question. Humbled as He might be, He was the Creator Himself. He was ever the same; [See Note #7] His years could never fail. It was He who had founded the heavens: He would fold them up as a garment, but He Himself would never change.

Such then is the testimony rendered to the Messiah by the scriptures of the Jews themselves the glory of His position above angels who administered the dispensation of the law; His eternal throne of righteousness; His unchangeable divinity as Creator of all things.

One thing remained to complete this chain of glory that is, the place occupied at present by Christ, in contrast still with the angels (a place that depends, on the one hand, upon the divine glory of His Person; on the other, upon the accomplishment of His work). And this place is at the right hand of God, who called Him to sit there until He had made His enemies His footstool. Not only in His Person glorious and divine, not only does He hold the first place with regard to all creatures in the universe (we have spoken of this, which will take place when He is introduced into the world), but He has His own place at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. To which of the angels has God ever said this? They are servants on God's part to the heirs of salvation.

Note #4

A particular interpretation has, by some, been given to the word "aion" translated "worlds;" but it is certain that the word is used by the LXX-Septuagint (that is, in Hellenistic or scriptural Greek) for the physical worlds.

Note #5

The Greek verb has here a peculiar form, which gives it a reflective sense, causing the thing done to return into the doer, throwing back the glory of the thing done upon the one who did it.

Note #6

See Psa 68:17, Act 7:53, Gal 3:19.

Note #7

The words translated "Thou art the same," ('Atta Hu') are by many learned Hebraists taken at least 'Hu' as a name of God. At any rate, as unchangeably the same, it amounts to it. The not failing years are endless duration when become a man.

Hebrews Chapter 2

This is the reason why it is so much the more needful to hearken to the word spoken, in order that they should not let it pass away from life and memory.

God had maintained the authority of the word that was communicated by means of angels, punishing disobedience to it, for it was a law. How then shall we escape if we neglect a salvation which the Lord Himself has announced? Thus the service of the Lord among the Jews was a word of salvation, which the apostles confirmed, and which the mighty testimony of the Holy Ghost established.

Such is the exhortation addressed to the believing Jews, founded on the glory of the Messiah, whether with regard to His position of His Person, calling them away from what was Jewish to higher thoughts of Christ.

We have already remarked that the testimony, of which this epistle treats, is attributed to the Lord Himself. Therefore we must not expect to find in it the assembly (as such), of which the Lord had only spoken prophetically; but His testimony in relation to Israel, among whom He sojourned on the earth, to whatever extent that testimony reached. That which was spoken by the apostles is only treated here as a confirmation of the Lord's own word, God having added His testimony to it by the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit, who distributed His gifts to each according to His will.

The glory of which we have been speaking is the personal glory of the Messiah, the Son of David; and His glory in the time present, during which God has called Him to sit at His right hand. He is the Son of God, He is even the Creator; but there is also His glory in connection with the world to come, as Son of man. Of this Chapter 2 speaks, comparing Him still with the angels; but here to exclude them altogether. In the previous Chapter they had their place; the law was given by angels; they are servants, on God's part, of the heirs of salvation. In Chapter w they have no place, they do not reign; the world to come is not made subject to them that is, this habitable earth, directed and governed as it will be when God shall have accomplished that which He has spoken of by the prophets.

The order of the world, placed in relationship with Jehovah under the law, or "lying in darkness," has been interrupted by the rejection of the Messiah, who has taken His place at the right hand of God on high, His enemies being not yet given into His hand for judgment; because God is carrying on His work of grace, and gathering out the assembly. But He will yet establish a new order of things on the earth; this will be "the world to come." Now that world is not made subject to angels. The testimony given in the Old Testament with regard to this is as follows: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honour; thou hast set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." Thus all things without exception (save He who has made them subject to Him), are, according to the purpose of God, put under the feet of man, and in particular of the Son of man.

When studying the Book of Psalms, we saw that which I recall here, namely, that this testimony in Psalm 8 is, with regard to the position and dominion of Christ as man, an advance upon Psalm 2. Psalm 1 sets before us the righteous man, accepted of God, the godly remnant with which Christ connected Himself; Psalm 2, the counsels of God respecting His Messiah, in spite of the efforts made by the kings and governors of the earth. God establishes Him as King in Zion, and summons all the kings to do homage to Him whom He proclaimed to be His Son on the earth. Afterwards we see that being rejected the remnant suffer, and this Psalm 2 is what Peter quotes to prove the rising up of the powers of the earth, Jewish and Gentile, against Messiah. (Act 4:26) But Psalm 8 shews that all this only served to enlarge the sphere of His glory. Christ takes the position of man and the title of Son of man, and enjoys His rights according to the counsels of God; and, made lower than the angels, He is crowned with glory and honour. And not only are the kings of the earth made subject to Him, but all things, without exception, are put under His feet. [See Note #8] It is this which the apostle quotes here. The Christ had already been rejected, and His being established as King in Zion put off to be accomplished at a later period. He had been exalted to the right hand of God, as we have seen; and the wider title had accrued to Him, although the result was not yet accomplished.

To this the epistle here calls our attention. We see not yet the accomplishment of all that this Psalm announces, namely, that all things should be put under His feet; but a part is already fulfilled, a guarantee to the heart of the fulfillment of the whole. Made a little lower than the angels in order to suffer death, He is crowned with glory and honour. He has suffered death, and He is crowned in reward for His work, by which He perfectly glorified God in the place where He had been dishonoured, and saved man (those who believe in Him) where man was lost. For He was made lower than the angels, in order that, by the grace of God, He should taste death for all things. It appears to me that the words "for the suffering of death," and "a little lower than the angels" go together; and "so that by the grace of God" is a general phrase connected with the whole truth stated.

This passage then, which is thus applied to the Lord, presents Him as exalted to heaven when He had undergone the death which gave Him a right to all in a new way while waiting till all is put under His feet. But there is another truth connected with this. He had undertaken the cause of the sons whom God is bringing to glory, and therefore He must enter into the circumstances in which they were found, suffer the consequences thereof, and be treated according to the work He had undertaken. It was a reality; and it was fitting that God should vindicate the rights of His glory, and should maintain it with reference to those who had dishonoured Him, and that He should treat the one who had taken their cause in hand, and who stood before Him in their name, as representing them in that respect. God would bring the captain of their salvation to perfection through sufferings. He was to undergo the consequences of the situation into which He had come. His work was to be a reality, according to the measure of the responsibility which He had taken upon Himself, and it involved the glory of God where sin was. He must therefore suffer; He must taste death. It is by the grace of God that He did so we, because of sin; He because of grace for sin.

This shews us the Christ standing in the midst of those who are saved, whom God brings to glory, although at their head. It is this which our epistle sets before us He who sanctifies (the Christ), and they who are sanctified (the remnant set apart for God by the Spirit) are all of one: an expression,

the force of which is easily apprehended, but difficult to express, when one abandons the abstract nature of the phrase itself. Observe that it is only of sanctified persons that this is said. Christ and the sanctified ones are all one company, men together in the same position before God. But the idea goes a little farther.

It is not of one and the same Father; had it been so, it could not have been said, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." He could not then do otherwise than call them brethren.

If we say "of the same mass" the expression may be pushed too far, as though He and the others were of the same nature as children of Adam, sinners together. In this case He would have to call every man His brother; whereas it is only the children whom God has given Him, "sanctified" ones, that He calls so. But He and the sanctified ones are all as men in the same nature and position together before God. When I say "the same," it is not in the same state of sin, but the contrary, for they are the Sanctifier and the sanctified, but in the same truth of human position as it is before God as sanctified to Him; the same as far forth as man when He, as the sanctified one, is before God. On this account He is not ashamed to call the sanctified His brethren.

This position is entirely gained by resurrection; for although in principle, the children were given to Him before, yet He only called them His brethren when He had finished the work which enabled Him to present them with Himself before God. He said indeed "mother, sister, brother;" but He did not use the term "my brethren," until He said to Mary of Magdala, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Also in Psalm 22 it is when He had been heard from the horns of the unicorn, that He declared the name of a Deliverer-God to His brethren, and that He praised God in the midst of the assembly.

He spoke to them of the Father's name while on earth, but the link itself could not be formed; He could not introduce them to the Father, until the grain of wheat, falling into the ground, had died; until then He remained alone, whatever might be the revelations that He made to them and in fact, He declared the name of His Father to those whom He had given Him. Still

He had actually taken the human position, and He Himself was in this relationship with God. He kept them in the Father's name, they were not yet united to Him in this position; but He was as man in the relationship with God in which they also should be, when brought in by redemption into association with Himself. That which He does in the latter part of the Gospel by John is to place His disciples in the explanations He gave of the condition in which He left them in the position which He in fact had held in relationship with His Father on earth, and in testimony to the world, the glory of His Person as representing and revealing His Father being necessarily distinct. And, in seeking to associate with them, He associated them with Himself and Himself with them when He ascended to heaven, although no longer corporeally subject to the trials of their position. [See Note #9] He was not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, though risen, yea, only when risen, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, I will praise thee in the midst of the assembly." And speaking of the remnant separated from Israel, He says, "Behold I and the children whom God hath given me are for signs unto the two houses of Israel;" and again, "I will put my trust in him" another quotation from Isaiah 8. So in the Psalms, especially in Psalm 16, He declares that He does not take His place as God "my goodness extendeth not to thee," but that He identifies Himself with the excellent of the earth that all His delight is in them. This is again the remnant of Israel called by grace.

Christ associates these sanctified men, godly men on earth, with Himself. In the passage quoted it is still His place on earth: His sufferings, His exaltation, future glory, divinity are, as we have seen added here.

Having taken this place as of, but at the head of, the chosen band their servant in all things, He must conform Himself to their position. And this He did: the children being partakers of flesh and blood, He took part in the same; and this, in order that by death He might put an end to the dominion of him who had the power of death, and deliver those who, through fear of death, had been subjected all their life to the yoke of bondage.

Here also (the apostle seeking always to display the glorious and efficacious side, even of that which was most humbling, in order to accustom the weak heart of the Jews to that portion of the gospel) we find that the Lord's work goes far beyond the limits of a presentation of the Messiah to His people.

Not only is He glorious in heaven, but He has conquered Satan in the very place where he exercised his sad dominion over man, and where the judgment of God lay heavily upon man.

Moved by a profound love for man, the Son become the Son of man enters in heart and in fact into all the need, and submits to all the circumstances, of man in order to deliver him. He takes (for He was not in it before) flesh and blood, in order to die, because man was subjected to death; and (in order to destroy him who exercised his dominion over man through death, and made him tremble all his lifetime in the expectation of that terrible moment, which testified of the judgment of God, and the inability of man to escape the consequences of sin) and the condition into which disobedience to God had plunged him. For verily the Lord did not undertake the cause of angels, but that of the seed of Abraham, and in order to proclaim the work that was necessary for them, and to represent them efficaciously and really before God, He must needs put Himself into the position and the circumstances into which that seed were found, though not the state they were personally in.

It will be remarked here, that it is still a family owned of God, which is before our eyes, as the object of the Saviour's affection and care the children whom God had given Him, children of Abraham after the flesh, if in that condition they answered to the designation of "seed of Abraham" (this is the question of Joh 8:37-39), or his children according to the Spirit, if grace gives it them.

These truths introduce priesthood, As Son of man, He had been made a little less than the angels, and, crowned already with glory and honour, was hereafter to have all things put under His feet. This we do not yet see. But He took this place of humiliation in order to taste death for the whole system that was afar from God, and to gain the full rights of the second Man, by glorifying God there, where the creature had failed through weakness, and where also the enemy, having deceived man by his subtlety, had dominion over him (according to the righteous judgment of God) in power and malice. At the same time he tasted death for the special purpose of delivering the children whom God would bring to glory, taking their nature and gathering them together as sanctified ones around Himself, He

not being ashamed to call them brethren. But it was thus that He was to present them now before God, according to the efficacy of the work which He had accomplished for them; He would become a priest, being able through His life of humiliation and trial here below, to sympathize with His own in all their conflicts and difficulties.

He suffered never yielded. We do not suffer when we yield to temptation: the flesh takes pleasure in the things by which it is tempted. Jesus suffered, being tempted, and He is able to succour them that are tempted. It is important to observe that the flesh, when acted upon by its desires, does not suffer. Being tempted, it, alas! enjoys. But when, according to the light of the Holy Ghost and the fidelity of obedience, the Spirit resists the attacks of the enemy, whether subtle or persecuting, then one suffers. This the Lord did, and this we have to do. That which needs succour is the new man, the faithful heart, and not the flesh. I need succour against the flesh, and in order to mortify all the members of the old man.

Here the needed help refers to the difficulties of the faithful saint in fulfilling all the will of God. This is where he suffers, this is where the Lord who has suffered can succor him. He trod this path, He learn in it what which can be suffered there from the enemy, and from men. A human heart feels it, and Jesus had a human heart. Besides, the more faithful the heart is, the more full of love to God, and the less it has of that hardness which is the result of intercourse with the world, the more will it suffer. Now there was no hardness in Jesus. His faithfulness and His love were equally perfect. He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief and weariness. He suffered being tempted. [See Note #10].

Note #8

Compare the answer of Christ to Nathanael at the end of John 1; also Matthew 17 and Luke 9, where the disciples are forbidden to announce Him as the Christ, and He declares He is about to suffer as Son of man, but shews them the coming glory.

Note #9

This however in relationship with God. They did not represent nor make known the Father as He did. Also, while we are brought into the same glory with Christ and the same relationship with the Father, the personal glory of Christ as Son is always carefully secured. It has been justly remarked to the same purpose by another, that He never says "our" Father with the disciples. He tells them to say "our" but says "my and your," and it is much more precious.

Note #10

Four distinct grounds may be noticed in the Chapter for the humiliation of Jesus: it became God there was His glory; the destruction of Satan's power; reconciliation or really propitiation by His death; and capacity for sympathy in priesthood.

Hebrews Chapter 3

Thus the Lord is set before us as the Apostle and High Priest of believers from among the Jews, the true people. I say, "from among the Jews," not that He is not our Priest, but that here the sacred writer places himself among the believing Jews, saying "our;" and, instead of speaking of himself as and apostle, he points out Jesus as the Apostle; which He was in Person among the Jews. In principle, it is true of all believers. That which He has said is the Lord's word, and He is able to succour us when we are tempted. We are His house.

For we have here a third character of Christ. He is a "Son over his house." Moses was faithful in all the house of God as a servant, in testimony to the things that were afterwards to be proclaimed. But Christ is over God's house; but it is not as a servant but as a Son. He has built the house, He is God.

Moses identified himself with the house, faithful therein in all things. But Christ is more excellent; even as he who builds the house is more excellent than the house. He who builds all things is God. And this is what Christ did. For in fact the house (that is, the tabernacle in the wilderness) was a figure of the uniVerse; and Christ passed through the heavens, as the high priest passed into the sanctuary. All was cleansed with blood, even as God

will reconcile all things by Christ in the heavens and on the earth. In a certain sense this universe is the house of God. He deigns to inhabit it. Christ created it all. But there is a house which is more properly His own. We are His house, taking it for granted that we persevere to the end.

The Hebrew Christians were in danger being attracted by their former habits, and by a law and ceremonies which God Himself had established of forsaking a Christianity, in which Christ was not visible, for things that were visible and palpable. The Christ of Christians, far from being a crown of glory to the people, was only an object of faith, so that, if faith failed, He was deprived of all importance to them. A religion that made itself seen (the "old wine") naturally attracted those that had been accustomed to it.

But in fact Christ was much more excellent than Moses, as he who has built the house had more honour than the house, Now this house was the figure of all things, and He who had built them was God. The passage gives us this view of Christ and of the house, and also says, that we are this house. And Christ is not the servant here; He is the Son over God's house.

We must always remember that which has been already remarked, namely, that in this epistle we have no the assembly as the body of Christ in union with Himself; nor even the Father either, except as a comparison in Chapter 12. It is God, a heavenly Christ (who is the Son of God), and a people, the Messiah being a heavenly Mediator between the people and God. Therefore the proper privileges of the assembly are not found in this epistle they flow from our union with Christ; and here Christ is a Person apart who is between us and God, on high while we are here.

There are still a few remarks which we may add here in order to throw light on this point, and to assist the reader in understanding the first two Chapters, as well as the principle of the instructions throughout the epistle.

In Chapter 1, Christ accomplishes by Himself as a part of His divine glory the purification of sins, and seats Himself at the right hand of God. This work, observe, is done by Himself. We have nothing to do with it, save to believe in and enjoy it. It is a divine work which this divine Person has accomplished by Himself; so that it has all the absolute perfection, all the force, of a work done by Him, without any mixture of our weakness, of our efforts, or of our

experiences. He performed it by Himself, and it is accomplished. Thereupon He takes His seat. he is not placed there He seats Himself upon the throne on high.

In Chapter 2 we see another point which characterises the epistle the present state of the glorified Man. He is crowned with glory and honour; but it is with a view to an order of things which is not yet accomplished. It is the Person of the Man Christ which is presented, not the assembly in union with Him, even when He is beheld as glorified in the heavens, This glory is viewed as a partial accomplishment of that which belongs to Him, according to the counsels of God, as the Son of man. hereafter this glory will be complete in all its parts by the subjugation of all things.

The present glory therefore of Christ makes us look forward to an order of things yet future, which will be full rest, full blessing. In a word, besides the perfection of His work, the epistle sets before us the sequel of that which belongs to Christ in Person, the Son of man, not the perfection of the assembly in Him. And this embraces the present time, the character of which, to the believer, depends on Christ's being now glorified in heaven while waiting for a future state, in which all things will be subjected to Him.

In this Chapter 2 we see also that He is crowned. He is not seen sitting there as in His original right, though He had that glory before the world was, but, having been made a little less than the angels, God crowns Him. We also plainly see that although the believing Hebrews are especially in view, and even all Christians are classed under the title of Abraham's seed on the earth, yet that Christ is viewed nevertheless as the Son of man, and not as the Son of David; and the question is put, "What is man?" The answer (the precious answer for us) is, Christ glorified, once dead on account of man's condition. In Him we see the mind of God with regard to man.

The fact that Christians themselves are viewed as the seed of Abraham plainly shews the way in which they are considered as forming part of the chain of the heirs of promise on earth (as in Rom 11), and not as the assembly united to Christ as His body in heaven.

The work is perfect; it is the work of God. He has by Himself made purification of sins. The full result of the counsels of God with regard to the

Son of man is not yet come. Thus the earthly part can be brought in, as a thing foreseen, as well as the heavenly part, although the persons to whom the epistle is addressed had part in the heavenly glory participated in the heavenly calling in connection with the present position of the Son of man.

The remnant of the Jews, as we have said, are considered as continuing the chain of the people blessed on earth, whatever heavenly privileges they may also possess or whatever their especial state may be in connection with the Messiah's exaltation to heaven. We have been grafted into the good olive-tree, so that we share all the advantages here spoken of. Our highest position, and the privileges belonging to it, are not here in view. Accordingly, as writing to Hebrews and as one among them, he addresses them, that is to say, Christians and believing Israelites. This is the force of the word "us" in the epistle; we must bear it in mind, and that the Hebrew believers always form the word "us" of which the writer is also a part.

No one ought to harden his heart; but this word is especially addressed to Israel, and that until the day when Christ shall appear. In speaking of it, the author returns to the word that had formerly been addressed to Israel; not now in order to warn them of the danger they would incur by neglecting it, but of the consequences of departing from that which they had acknowledged to be true. Israel, when delivered out of Egypt, had provoked God in the wilderness (it was indeed the case also of Christians in this world), because they were not at once, and without difficulty, in Canaan. Those to whom he wrote were in danger of forsaking the living God in the same way; that is, the danger was there before their eyes. They should rather exhort each other, while it was still called to-day, in order that they might not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. This word "to-day" is the expression of the patient activity of God's grace towards Israel even unto the end. The people were unbelieving; they have hardened their hearts; they have done so, and will alas! do so to the end, until judgment come in the Person of the Messiah-Jehovah, whom they have despise. But until then God loves to reiterate, "Today, if ye will hear my voice." It may be that only a few will hearken; it may be that the nation is judicially hardened, in order to admit the Gentiles; but the word "today" still resounds for every one among them who has ears to hear, until the Lord shall appear in

judgment. It is addressed to the people according to the long-suffering of God. For the remnant who had believed it was an especial warning not to walk in the ways of the hardened people who had refused to hearken not to turn back to them, forsaking their own confidence in the word which had called them, as Israel did in the wilderness.

As long as the "today" of the call of grace should continue, they were to exhort one another, lest unbelief should glide into their hearts through the subtlety of sin. It is thus that the living God is forsaken. We speak thus practically, not with reference to the faithfulness of God, who certainly will not allow any of His own to perish, but with regard to practical danger, and to that which would draw us away as to our responsibility from God, and for ever, if God did not intervene, acting in the life which He has given us, and which never perishes.

Sin separates us from God in our thoughts; we have no longer the same sense either of His love, His power, or His interest in us. Confidence is lost, Hope, and the value of unseen things, diminish; while the value of things that are seen proportionately increases. The conscience is bad; one is not at ease with God. The path is hard and difficult; the will strengthens itself against Him. We no longer live by faith; visible things come in between us and God and take possession of the heart. Where there is life, God warns by His Spirit (as in this epistle), He chastises and restores. Where it was only an outward influence, a faith devoid of life, and the conscience not reached, it is abandoned.

It is the warning against so doing that arrests the living. The dead they whose consciences are not engaged, who do not say, "To whom shall we go? thou has the words of eternal life" despise the warning and perish. This was the case with Israel in the wilderness, and God swore unto them that they should not enter into His rest. (Num 14:21-23) And why? They had given up their confidence in Him. Their unbelief when the beauty and excellence of the land had been reported to them deprived them of the promised rest.

The position of the believers to whom this epistle is addressed was the same as this, although in connection with better promises. The beauty and excellence of the heavenly Canaan had been proclaimed to them. The had,

by the Spirit, seen and tasted its fruits; they were in the wilderness; they had to persevere to maintain their confidence unto the end.

Observe her for Satan and our own conscience when it has not been set free, often make use of this epistle that doubting Christians are not here contemplated, or persons who have not yet gained entire confidence in God: to those who are in this condition its exhortations and warnings have no application. These exhortations are to preserve the Christian in a confidence which he has, and to preserve, not to tranquillise fears and doubts. This use of the epistle to sanction such doubts is but a device of the enemy. Only I would add here that, although the full knowledge of grace (which in such a case the soul has assuredly not yet attained) is the only thing that can deliver and set it free from its fears, yet it is very important in this case practically to maintain a good conscience, in order not to furnish the enemy with a special means of attack.

Hebrews Chapter 4

The apostle goes on to apply this part of Israel's history to those whom he was addressing, laying stress on two points: 1st, That Israel had failed of entering into rest, through unbelief; 2nd, That the rest was yet to come, and that believers (those who were not seeking rest here, but who accepted the wilderness for the time being) should enter into it.

He begins by saying, "Let us fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any should seem to come short of it," not attain to it. For we have been the objects of the proclamation of glad tidings, as they were in times past. But the word addressed to them remained fruitless, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it: for we which have believed do enter into rest. The rest itself is yet to come, and it is believers who enter into it. For a rest of God there is, and there are some who enter into it: inasmuch as it is written, "They," that is, those (pointing out a certain class who are to be excluded) "shall not enter into my rest."

God had wrought in creation, and then rested from His works when He had finished them. Thus, from the foundation of the world, He has shewn that He had a rest, as in the passage already quoted, "If they shall enter into my rest;" but this, shewing that the entering in was yet in question, shewed that

into God's rest in the first creation man had not entered. Two things then are evident some were to enter in, and the Israel to whom it was first proposed did not enter in because of their unbelief. Therefore He again fixes a day, saying, in David, long after the entrance into Canaan, "Today as it is written today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

Here a natural objection occurs to which the passage gives a complete answer, without speaking of the objection itself. The Israelites had indeed fallen in the wilderness, but Joshua had brought the people into Canaan which the unbelievers never reached; the Jews were there, so that they did enter into the rest as to which the others failed. The answer is evident. It was long after this that God said by David, I swear in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest." If Joshua had given rest to Israel, David could not afterwards have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. It is yet to come; but it is assured by the word of God a truth, the bearing of which is immediately seen with regard to the connection of the believing Jews with the nation, in the midst of which they were tempted to seek a rest that, for the moment, faith did not afford them, and being enfeebled saw but dimly before it. To have God's rest was still to be waited for. Faith alone acknowledged this, and sought for none in the wilderness, trusting to the promise. God still said "Today."

The state of the people was worse than the rest that Joshua gave them; which, as their own Psalms prove, was no rest at all.

As to the order of the Verses, the exhortation in Verse 11 (Heb 4:11) depends on the whole course of what precedes, the argument having been completed by the testimony of David coming after Joshua. After the creation God indeed rested; but He said after that, "If they shall enter into my rest," so that men had not entered into that rest. Joshua entered into the land; but the word by David, coming long after, proves that the rest of God was not yet attained. Nevertheless this same testimony, which forbade the entrance into rest because of unbelief, shewed that some are to enter in: otherwise there was no need of declaring the exclusion of others for an especial cause, nor warning men that they might escape what hindered their entering in. No parenthesis is needed.

Now, as long as any one had not ceased from his works, he had not entered into rest; he who has entered into it has ceased from work, even as God ceased from His own works when He entered into His rest. "Let us therefore use all diligence" is the exhortation of the faithful witness of God, "that we may enter into that rest" the rest of God in order that we may not fall after the same example of unbelief.

We should especially observe here, that it is the rest of God which is spoken of. This enables us to understand the happiness and perfection of the rest. God must rest in that which satisfies His heart. This was the case even in creation all was very good. And now it must be in a perfect blessing that perfect love can be satisfied with, with regard to us, who will possess a heavenly portion in the blessing which we shall have in His own presence, in perfect holiness and perfect light. Accordingly all the toilsome work of faith, the exercise of faith in the wilderness, the warfare (although there are many joys), the good works practiced there, labour of every kind will cease. It is not only that we shall be delivered from the power of indwelling sin; all the efforts and all the troubles of the new man will cease. We are already set free from the law of sin; then our spiritual exercise for God will cease. We have already rested from our works with regard to justification, and therefore in that sense we have now rest in our consciences, but that is not the subject here it is the Christian's rest from all his works. God rested from His works assuredly good ones and so shall we also then with Him.

We are now in the wilderness; we also wrestle with wicked spirits in heavenly places. A blessed rest remains for us, in which our hearts will repose in the presence of God, where nothing will trouble the perfection of our rest, where God will rest in the perfection of the blessing He has bestowed on His people.

The great thought of the passage is, that there remains a rest (that is to say, that the believer is not to expect it here) without saying where it is. And it does not speak in detail of the character of the rest, because it leaves the door open to an earthly rest for the earthly people on the ground of the promises, although to Christian partakers of the heavenly calling God's rest is evidently a heavenly one.

The apostle then sets before us the instrument which God employs to judge the unbelief and all the workings of the heart which tend, as we have seen, to lead the believer into departure from the position of faith, and to hide God from him by inducing him to satisfy his flesh and to seek for rest in the wilderness.

To the believer who is upright in heart this judgment is of great value, as that which enables him to discern all that has a tendency to hinder his progress or make him slacken his steps. It is the word of God, which being the revelation of God, the expression of what He is, and of all that surrounds Him, and of what His will is in all the circumstances that surround us judges everything in the heart which is not of Him. It is more penetrating than a two-edged sword. Living and energetic, it separates all that is most intimately linked together in our hearts and minds. Whenever nature the "soul" and its feelings mingles with that which is spiritual, it brings the edge of the sword of the living truth of God between the two, and judges the hidden movements of the heart respecting them. It discerns all the thoughts and intentions of the heart. But it has another character, coming from God (being, as it were, His eye upon the conscience), it brings us into His presence; and all that it forces us to discover, it sets in our conscience before the eye of God Himself. Nothing is hidden, all is naked and manifested to the eye of Him with whom we have to do. [See Note #11] Such is the true help, the mighty instrument of God to judge everything in us that would hinder us from pursuing our course through the wilderness with joy, and with a buoyant heart strengthened by faith and confidence in Him. Precious instrument of a faithful God, solemn and serious in its operation; but of priceless and infinite blessing in its effects, in its consequences.

It is an instrument which, in its operations, does not allow "the desires of the flesh and of the mind" liberty to act; which does not permit the heart to deceive itself; but which procures us strength, and places us without any consciousness of evil in the presence of God, to pursue our course with joy and spiritual energy. Here the exhortation, founded on the power of the word concludes.

But there is another succour, one of a different character, to aid us in our passage through the wilderness; and that is priesthood a subject which the epistle here begins and carries on through several Chapters.

We have a High Priest who has passed through the heavens as Aaron through the successive parts of the tabernacle Jesus, the Son of David.

He has, in all things, been tempted like ourselves, sin apart; so that He can sympathize with our infirmities. The word brings to light the intents of the heart, judges the will, and all that has not God for its object and its source. Then, as far as weakness is concerned, we have His sympathy. Christ of course had no evil desires: he was tempted in every way, apart from sin. Sin had no part in it at all. But I do not wish for sympathy with the sin that is in me; I detest it, I wish it to be mortified judged unsparingly. This the word does. For my weakness and my difficulties I seek sympathy; and I find it in the priesthood of Jesus. It is not necessary, in order to sympathize with me, that a person should feel at the same moment that which I am feeling rather the contrary. If I am suffering pain, I am not in a condition to think as much of another's pain. But in order to sympathize with him I must have a nature capable of appreciating his pain.

Thus it is with Jesus, when exercising His priesthood. He is in every sense beyond the reach of pain and trial, but He is man; and not only has He the human nature which in time suffered grief, but He experienced the trials a saint has to go through more fully than any of ourselves; and His heart, free and full of love, can entirely sympathize with us, according to His experience of ill, and according to the glorious liberty which He now has, to provide and care for it. This encourages us to hold fast our profession in spite of the difficulties that beset our path; for Jesus concerns Himself about them, according to His own knowledge and experience of what they are, and according to the power of His grace.

Therefore, our High Priest being there, we can go with all boldness to the throne of grace, to find mercy and the grace suited to us in all times of need: mercy, because we are weak and wavering; needful grace, because we are engaged in a warfare which God owns.

Observe, it is not that we go to the High Priest. It is often done, and God may have compassion; but it is a proof that we do not fully understand grace. The Priest, the Lord Jesus, occupies Himself about us sympathises with us, on the one hand; and on the other, we go directly to the throne of grace.

The Spirit does not here speak positively of falls; we find that in 1 John 2. There also it is in connection with communion with His Father, here with access to God. His purpose here is to strengthen us, to encourage us to persevere in the way, conscious of the sympathies which we possess in heaven, and that the throne is always open to us.

Note #11

The connection between the word addressed to man and God Himself is very remarkable here.

Hebrews Chapter 5

The epistle then develops the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, comparing it with that of Aaron; but, as we shall see, with a view to bring out the difference rather than the resemblance between them, although there is a general analogy, and the one was a shadow of the other.

This comparison is made in Heb 5:1-10. The line of argument is then interrupted, though the ground of argument is enlarged and developed, till the end of Chapter 7, where the comparison with Melchizedec is pursued; and the change of law, consequent on the change of priesthood, is stated, which introduces the covenants and all that relates to the circumstances of the Jews.

A priest then as taken from among men (he is not here speaking of Christ, but of that with which he compares Him) is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; he is able to feel the miseries of others because he is himself compassed with infirmity, and offers therefore for himself as well as for the people.

Moreover no one takes this honour to himself, but receives it, as Aaron did, being called of God. The epistle will speak farther on of the sacrifice here of the person of the priest, and of the order of the priesthood.

So that Christ glorified not Himself to become a High Priest. The glory of His Person, manifested as man on the earth, and that of His function, are both of them plainly declared of God: the first, when He said, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Psalm 2); the second, in these words, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." (Psalm 110) Such then in both personal and official glory is the High Priest, the expected Messiah, Christ.

But His glory (although it gives Him His place in honour before God, and consequent on redemption, so that He can undertake the people's cause before God according to His will) does not bring Him near to the miseries of men. It is His history on earth which makes us feel how truly able He is to take part in them. "In the days of his flesh," that is, here below, He went into all the anguish of death in dependence on God, making His request to Him who was able to save Him from it. For, being here in order to obey and to suffer, He did not save Himself. He submitted to everything, obeyed in everything, and depended on God for everything.

He was heard because of His fear. It was proper that He who took death on Himself, as answering for others, should feel its whole weight upon His soul. He would neither escape the consequences of that which He had undertaken (compare Chapter 2), nor fail in the just sense of what it was thus to be under the hand of God in judgment. His fear was His piety, the right estimation of the position in which sinful man was found, and what must come from God because of it. For Him however to suffer the consequences of this position was obedience. And this obedience was to be perfect, and to be tried to the utmost.

He was the Son, the glorious Son of God. But thought this was so, He was to learn obedience (and to Him it was a new thing), what it was in the world, by all that He suffered. And, having deserved all glory, He was to take His place as the glorified Man to be perfected; and in that position to become the cause of eternal salvation (not merely temporal deliverances) to them that obey Him; a salvation which taken in consequence of His work of obedience, saluted by God as "High Priest after the order of Melchizedec."

That which follows to the end of Chapter 6 is a parenthesis which refers to the condition of those to whom the epistle is addressed. They are blamed for the dullness of their spiritual intelligence, and encouraged at the same time by the promises of God; the whole with reference to their position as Jewish believers. Afterwards the line of instruction with regard to Melchizedec is again resumed.

For the time, they ought to have been able to teach: nevertheless they needed that some one should teach them the elements of the oracles of God requiring mild instead of meat.

We may observe that there is no greater hindrance to progress in spiritual life and intelligence than attachment to an ancient form of religion, which, being traditional and not simply personal faith in the truth, consists always in ordinances, and is consequently carnal and earthly. Without this people may be unbelievers; but under the influence of such a system piety itself-expend in forms makes a barrier between the world and the light of God: and these forms which surround, preoccupy, and hold the affections captive, prevent them from enlarging and becoming enlightened by means of divine revelation. Morally (as the apostle here expresses it) the senses are not exercised to discern both good and evil.

But the Holy Ghost will not limit Himself to the narrow circle and the weak and futile sentiments of human tradition, nor even to those truths which, in a state like this, one is able to receive. In such a case Christ has not His true place. And this our epistle here develops.

Milk belongs to babes, solid food to those who are of full age. This infancy was the soul's condition under the ordinances and requirements of the law. (Compare Gal 4:1, seqq.) But there was a revelation of the Messiah in connection with these two states of infancy and of manhood. And the development of the word of righteousness, of the true practical relationships of the soul to God according to His character and ways, was in proportion to the revelation of Christ, who is the manifestation of that character, and the center of all those ways. Therefore it is that, in Heb 5:12-13 the epistle speaks of the elements, the beginning, of the oracles of God,

and of the work of righteousness; in Heb 6:1, of the word of the beginning, or of the first principles, of Christ.

Hebrews Chapter 6

Now the Spirit will not stop at this point with Christians, but will go on to that full revelation of His glory which belongs to them that are of full age and indeed forms us for that state.

We easily perceive that the inspired writer tries to make the Hebrews feel that he was placing them on higher and more excellent ground, by connecting them with a heavenly and invisible Christ; and that Judaism kept them back in the position of children. This moreover characterises the whole epistle.

Nevertheless we shall find two things here: on the one hand, the elements and the character of doctrine that belonged to infancy, to "the beginning of the word of Christ," in contrast with the strength and heavenly savour that accompanied the Christian revelation; and, on the other hand, what the revelation of Christ Himself is in connection with this last spiritual and Christian system.

But the epistle distinguishes between this system and the doctrine of the Person of Christ, even looked at as man [See Note #12], although the present position of Christ gives its character to the Christian system. The distinction is made not that the condition of souls does not depend on the measure of the revelation of Christ and of the position He has taken, but because the doctrine of His Person and glory goes much farther than the present state of our relationship with God.

The things spoken of in Heb 6:1-2 had their place, because the Messiah was then yet to come: all was in a state of infancy. The things spoken of in Verses 4, 5 (Heb 6:4-5) are the privileges that Christians enjoyed in virtue of the work and the glorification of the Messiah. But they are not in themselves the 'perfection' mentioned in Verse 1 (Heb 6:1), and which relates rather to the knowledge of the Person of Christ Himself. The privileges in question were the effect of the glorious position of His Person in heaven.

It is important to attend to this, in order to understand these passages. In the infancy spoken of in Verses 1, 2 (Heb 6:1-2), the obscurity of the revelations of the Messiah, announced at most by promises and prophecies, left worshipers under the yoke of ceremonies and figures, although in possession of some fundamental truths. His exaltation made way for the power of the Holy Ghost here below: and on this the responsibility of souls which had tasted it depended.

The doctrine of the Person and the glory of Jesus forms the subject of revelation in the epistle, and was the means of deliverance for the Jews from the whole system which had been such a heavy burden on their hearts; it should prevent their forsaking the state described in Verses 4 and 5 (Heb 6:4-5), in order to return into the weakness and (Christ having come) the carnal state of Verse 1 and 2 (Heb 6:1-2).

The epistle then does not desire to establish again the true but elementary doctrines which belonged to the times when Christ was not manifested, but to go forward to the full revelation of His glory and position according to the counsels of God revealed in the word.

The Holy Ghost would not go back again to these former things, because new things had been brought in in connection with the heavenly glory of the Messiah, namely, Christianity characterised by the power of the Holy Ghost.

But if any one who had been brought under that power, who had known it, should afterwards abandon it, he could not be renewed again to repentance. The former things of Judaism must be, and were, left behind by that into which he had entered. Christians could not deal with souls by them; and, as for the new things, he had given them up. All God's means had been employed for him and had produced nothing.

Such a one of his own will crucified for himself the Son of God. Associated with the people who had done so, he had acknowledged the sin which his people had committed, and owned Jesus to be the Messiah. But now he committed the crime, [See Note #13] knowingly and of his own will. The judgment, the resurrection of the dead, repentance from dead works, had been taught. Under that order of things the nation had crucified their Messiah. Now power had come; which testified of the glorification of the

crucified Messiah, the Son of God, in heaven; and which by miracles destroyed (at least in detail) the power of the enemy who was still reigning over the world. These miracles were a partial anticipation of the full and glorious deliverance which should take place in the world to come, when the triumphant Messiah, the Son of God, should entirely destroy all the power of the enemy. Hence they are called the "powers of the world to come."

The power of the Holy Ghost, the miracles wrought in the bosom of Christianity, were testimonies that the power which was to accomplish that deliverance although still hidden in heaven existed nevertheless in the glorious Person of the Son of God. The power did not yet accomplish the deliverance of this world oppressed by Satan, because another thing was being done meanwhile. The light of God was shining, the good word of grace was being preached, the heavenly gift (a better thing than the deliverance of the world) was being tasted; and the sensible power of the Holy Ghost made itself known, while waiting for the return in glory of the Messiah to bind Satan, and thus accomplish the deliverance of the world under His dominion.

Speaking generally, the power of the Holy Ghost, the consequence of the Messiah's being glorified above, was exercised on earth as a present manifestation and anticipation of the great deliverance to come. The revelation of grace, the good word of God, was preached; and the Christian lived in the sphere where these things displayed themselves, and was subjected to the influence exercised in it. This made itself to be felt by those who were brought in among Christians. Even where there was no spiritual life, these influences were felt.

But, after having been the subject of this influence of the presence of the Holy Ghost, after having tasted the revelation thus made of the goodness of God, and experienced the proofs of His power, if any one then forsook Christ, there remained no other means for restoring the soul, for leading it to repentance. The heavenly treasures were already expended: he had given them up as worthless; he had rejected the full revelation of grace and power, after having known it. What means could now be used? To return to Judaism, and the first principles of the doctrine of Christ in it, when the truth had been revealed, was impossible: and the new light had been known and

rejected. In a case like this there was only the flesh; there was no new life. Thorns and briars were being produced as before. There was no real change in the man's state.

When once we have understood that this passage is a comparison of the power of the spiritual system with Judaism, and that it speaks of giving up the former, after having known it, its difficulty disappears. The possession of life is not supposed, nor is that question touched. The passage speaks, not of life, but of the Holy Ghost as a power present in Christianity. To "taste the good word" is to have understood how precious that word is; and not the having been quickened by its means. [See Note #14] Hence in speaking to the Jewish Christians he hopes better things and things which accompany salvation, so that these things could be there and yet no salvation. Fruit there could not be. That supposes life.

The apostle does not however apply what he says to the Hebrew Christians: for, however low their state might be, there had been fruits, proofs of life, which in itself no mere power is; and he continues his discourse by giving them encouragement, and motives for perseverance.

It will be observed, then, that this passage is a comparison between that which was possessed before and after Christ was glorified the state and privileges of professors, at these two periods, without any question as to personal conversion. When the power of the Holy Ghost was present, and there was the full revelation of grace, if any forsook the assembly, fell away from Christ, and turned back again, there was no means of renewing them to repentance. The inspired writer therefore would not again lay the foundation of former things with regard to Christ things already grown old but would go on, for the profit of those who remained steadfast in the faith.

We may also remark how the epistle, in speaking of Christian privileges, does not lose sight of the future earthly state, the glory and the privileges of the millennial world. The miracles are the miracles of the world to come; they belong to that period. The deliverance and the destruction of Satan's power should then be complete; those miracles were deliverances, samples of that power. We saw this point brought into notice (Heb 2:5) at the beginning of the doctrine of the epistle; and in Chapter 4 the rest of God left

vague in its character, in order to embrace both the heavenly part and the earthly part of our Lord's millennial reign. Here the present power of the Holy Ghost characterises the ways of God, Christianity; but the miracles are a foretaste of the coming age, in which the whole world will be blessed.

In the encouragements that it gives them, the epistle already calls to mind the principles by which the father of the faithful and of the Jewish nation had walked, and the way in which God had strengthened him in his faith. Abraham had to rest on promises, without possessing that which was promised; and this, with regard to rest and glory, was the state in which the Hebrew Christians then were. But at the same time, in order to give full assurance to the heart, God had confirmed His word by an oath, in order that they who build upon this hope of promised glory might have strong and satisfying consolation. And this assurance has received a still greater confirmation. It entered into that within the veil, it found its sanction in the sanctuary itself, whither a forerunner had entered, giving not only a word, and oath, but a personal guarantee for the fulfillment of these promises, and the sanctuary of God as a refuge for the heart; thus giving, for those who had spiritual understanding, a heavenly character to the hope which they cherished; while shewing, by the character of Him who had entered into heaven, the certain fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises, in connection with a heavenly Mediator, who, by His position, assured that fulfillment; establishing the earthly blessing upon the firm foundation of heaven itself, and giving at the same time a higher and more excellent character to that blessing by uniting it to heaven, and making it flow from thence.

We have thus the double character of blessing which this book again presents to our mind, in connection with the Person of the Messiah, and the whole linked by faith with Jesus.

Jesus has entered into heaven as a Forerunner. He is there. We belong to that heaven. He is there as High Priest. During the present time therefore His priesthood has a heavenly character; nevertheless He is priest, personally, after the order of Melchizedec. It sets aside then the whole Aaronic order, though the priesthood be exercised now after the analogy of Aaron's but, by its nature points out in the future a royalty which is not yet

manifested. Now the very fact that this future royalty was connected with the Person of Him who was seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, according to Psalm 110 fixed the attention of the Hebrew Christian, when tempted to turn back, on Him who was in the heavens, and made him understand the priesthood which the Lord is now exercising; it delivered him from Judaism, and strengthened him in the heavenly character of the Christianity which he had embraced.

Note #12

The Sonship of Christ however, here below, cannot be separated from His eternal Sonship, for this lends its character to the relationship in which He stands as Son on earth in time. The passage in the text refers to Verses 5 and 8 (Heb 6:5; Heb 6:8), compared with 6 and 10 of Chapter 5 (Heb 5:6; Heb 5:10). Compare also the beginning of John 17.

Note #13

I do not think "afresh" ought to be inserted: the emphasis is on doing it for himself.

Note #14

So in Matthew 13 some with joy receive it, but there was no root.

Hebrews Chapter 7

The epistle, returning to the subject of Melchizedec, reviews therefore the dignity of his person and the importance of his priesthood. For on priesthood, as a means of drawing nigh to God, the whole system connected with it depended.

Melchizedec then (a typical and characteristic person, as the use of his name in Psalm 110 proves) was king of Salem, that is king of peace, and, by name, king of righteousness. Righteousness and peace characterise his reign. But above all he was priest of the Most High God. This is the name of God as supreme Governor of all things Possessor, as is added in Genesis, of heaven and earth. It is thus that Nebuchadnezzar, the humbled earthly potentate, acknowledged Him. It was thus He revealed Himself to Abraham, when Melchizedec blessed the patriarch after he had conquered his enemies. In

connection with his walk of faith, the name of Abraham, victorious over the kings of the earth, is blessed by Melchizedec, by the king of righteousness, in connection with God as Possessor of heaven and earth, the Most High. This looks onward to the royalty of Christ, a Priest upon His throne, when by the will and the power of God He shall have triumphed over all His enemies a time not yet arrived first fulfilled in the millennium, as it is commonly expressed, though this rather refers to the earthly part. Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedec. His royalty was not all, for Psalm 110 is very clear in describing Melchizedec as priest, and as possessing a lasting and uninterrupted priesthood. He had no sacerdotal parentage from whom he derived his priest hood As a priest, he had neither father nor mother; unlike the sons of Aaron, he had no genealogy (compare Ezr 2:62); he had no limits assigned to the term of his priestly service, as was the case with the sons of Aaron. (Num 4:3) He was made a pries, like in his priestly character to the Son of God; but, as yet, the latter is in heaven.

The fact that he received tithes from Abraham, and that he blessed Abraham, shewed the high and preeminent dignity of this otherwise unknown and mysterious personage. The only thing that is testified of him without naming father or mother, commencement of life, or death that may have taken place is, that he lived.

The dignity of his person was beyond that of Abraham, the depositary of the promises; that of his priesthood was above Aaron's, who in Abraham paid the tithes which Levi himself received from his brethren. The priesthood then is changed, and with it the whole system that depended on it.

Psalm 110 interpreted by faith in Christ for the epistle, we need not say, speaks always to Christians is still the point on which its argument is founded. The first proof the, that the whole was changed, is that the Lord Jesus, the Messiah (a Priest after the order of Melchizedec, did not spring evidently from the sacerdotal tribe, but from another, namely, that of Judah. For that Jesus was the Messiah, they believed. But, according to the Jewish scriptures, the Messiah was such as He is here presented; and in that case the priesthood was changed, and with it the whole system. And this was not only a consequence that must be drawn from the fact that the Messiah was of the tribe of Judah, although a Priest; but it was requisite

that another priest than the priest of Aaron's family should arise, and one after the similitude of Melchizedec, who should not be after the law of a commandment which had no more power than the flesh to which it was applied, but who should be according to the power of a never ending life. The testimony of the psalm to this was positive: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

For there is in fact a disannulling of the commandment that existed previously, because it was unprofitable (for the law brought nothing to perfection); and there is the bringing in of a better hope, by which we draw nigh to God.

Precious difference! A commandment to man, sinful and afar from God, replaced by a hope, a confidence, founded on grace and on divine promise, through which we can come even into God's presence.

The law, doubtless, was good; but separation still subsisted between man and God. The law made nothing perfect. God was ever perfect, and human perfection was required; all must be according to what divine perfection required of man. But sin was there, and the law was consequently without power (save to condemn); its ceremonies and ordinances were but figures, and a heavy yoke. Even that which temporarily relieved the conscience brought sin to mind and never made the conscience perfect towards God. They were still at a distance from Him.. Grace brings the soul to God, who is known in love and in a righteousness which is for us.

The character of the new priesthood bore the stamp in all its features, of its superiority to that which existed under the order of the law and with which the whole system of the law either stood or fell.

The covenant connected with the new priesthood answered likewise to the superiority of the latter over the former priesthood.

The priesthood of Jesus was established by oath; that of Aaron was not. The priesthood of Aaron passed from one person to another, because death put an end to its exercise by the individuals who were invested with it. But Jesus abides the same for ever; He has a priesthood that is not transmitted to

others. Thus He saves completely, and to the end, those that come unto God by Him, seeing that He ever lives to intercede for them.

Accordingly "such a high priest became us." Glorious thought! Called to be in the presence of God, to be in relationship with Him in the heavenly glory, to draw near to Him on high, where nothing that defiles can enter, we needed a High Priest in the place to which access was given us (as the Jews in the earthly temple), and such a one as the glory and purity of heaven required. What a demonstration that we belong to heaven, and of the exalted nature of our relationship with God ! Such a Priest became us: " Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, exalted above the heavens" for so are we, as to our position, having to do with God there-a Priest who needs not to renew the sacrifices, as though any work to put away sin still remained to be done, or their sins could still be imputed to believers; for then it would be impossible to stay in the heavenly sanctuary. As having once for all completed His work for the putting away of sin, our Priest offered His sacrifice once for all when He offered up Himself,

For the law made high priests who had the infirmities of men, for they were men themselves; the oath of God, which came after the law, establishes the Son, when He is perfected for ever, consecrated in heaven unto God.

We see here that, although there was an analogy and the figures of heavenly things, there is more of contrast than of comparison in this epistle. The legal priests had the same infirmities as other men; Jesus has a glorified priesthood according to the power of an endless life.

The introduction of this new priesthood, exercised in heaven, implies a change in the sacrifices and in the covenant. This the inspired writer develops here setting forth the value of the sacrifice of Christ, and the long-promised new covenant. The direct connection is with the sacrifices; but he turns aside for a moment to the two covenants, a so wide-embracing and all-weighty consideration for the christian Jews who had been under the first.

Hebrews Chapter 8

Chapter 8 in this respect is simple and clear; the last Verses only give room for a few remarks.

The sum of the doctrine we have been considering is, that we have a High Priest who is seated on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the heavenly sanctuary which is not made with hands. As such, He must have an offering to present there. Jesus, were He on earth, would not be a Priest; there were priests on earth according to the law, in which all things were but figures of the heavenly things; as Moses was told to make all according to the pattern that was shewn him in the mount. But the ministry of Jesus is more excellent, because He is the Mediator of a better covenant, spoken of in Jeremiah 31, which is here quoted; a clear and simple proof that the first covenant was not to continue.

We again find here that particular development of the truth which was called for by the character of the persons to whom this letter was addressed.

The first covenant was made with Israel; the second must be so likewise, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah. The epistle however in this passage only makes use of the fact that there was to be a second covenant, in order to demonstrate that the first was to last no longer. It had grown old, and was to vanish away. He recites the terms of the new covenant. We shall find that he makes use of it afterwards. In that which follows, he contrasts the services that belonged to the first with the perfect work on which Christianity is founded. Thus the extent and the value of the work of Christ are introduced.

Although there is no difficulty here, it is important to have light with regard to these two covenants, because some have very vague ideas on this point, and many souls, putting themselves under covenants, that is, in relationship with God under conditions in which He has not placed them lose their simplicity, and do not hold fast grace and the fullness of the work of Christ, and the position He has acquired for them in heaven.

A covenant is a principle of relationship with God on the earth conditions established by God under which man is to live with Him. The word may perhaps be used figuratively, or by accommodation. It is applied to details of the relationship of God with Israel, and so to Abraham (Gen.15), and like cases; but, strictly speaking, there are but two covenants, in which God has

dealt with man on earth, or will the old and the new. The old was established at Sinai. The new covenant is made also with the two houses of Israel. [See Note #15]

The gospel is not a covenant, but the revelation of the salvation of God. It proclaims the, great salvation of God. We enjoy indeed all the essential privileges of the new covenant, its foundation being laid on God's part in the blood of Christ, but we do so in spirit, not according to the letter.

The new covenant will be established formally with Israel in the millennium. Meanwhile the old covenant is judged by the fact that there is a new one.

Note #15

We have also, at the end of the epistle, the expression " the blood of the everlasting covenant." " Covenant" he uses I doubt not (as the word "law" also is used), because it was commonly employed as the condition of relationship with God, and " eternal " is characteristic of the Hebrews. There have been, and will be, covenants in time and for the earth; but we have eternal conditions of relationship with God, of which the blood of Christ is the expression and security, founded in everlasting grace, and righteousness as well as grace, by that precious blood, in which all the character and all the purpose of God has been made good and glorified, as well as our sins been put away.

Hebrews Chapter 9

The epistle, recounting some particular circumstances which characterised the first covenant shews that neither were sins put away, nor was the conscience purged by its means, nor the entrance into the holiest granted to the worshipers. The veil concealed God. The high priest went in once a year to make reconciliation no one else. The way to God in holiness was barred. Perfect, as pertaining to the conscience, they could not be through the blood of bulls and of goats. These were but previsionary and figurative ordinances, until God took up the real work itself, in order to accomplish it fully and for ever.

But this brings us to the focus of the light which God gives us by the Holy Ghost in this epistle. Before proving by the scriptures of the Old Testament

the doctrine that he announced and the discontinuance of the actual sacrifices of all sacrifice for sin, the writer, with a heart full of the truth and of the importance of that truth, teaches the value and the extent of the sacrifice of Christ (still in contrast with the former offerings, but a contrast that rests on the intrinsic value of the offering of Christ). These three results are presented: first, the opened way into the sanctuary was manifested, that is, access to God Himself, where He is, second, the purification of the conscience; third, and eternal redemption (I may add the promise of an eternal inheritance).

One feels the immense importance, the inestimable value, of the first. 'The believer is admitted into God's own presence by a new and living way which he has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; has constant access to God, immediate access to the place where He is, in the light. What complete salvation, what blessedness, what security! For how could we have access to God in the light, if everything that would separate us from Him, were not entirely taken away through Him who was once offered to bear the sins of many? But here it is the precious and perfect result, in this respect, which is revealed to us, and formally proved in Chapter 10, as a right that we possess, that access to God Himself is entirely and freely open to us. We are not indeed told in this passage that we are seated there, for it is not our union with Christ that is the subject of this epistle, but our access to God in the sanctuary. And it is important to note this last, and it is as precious in its place as the other. We are viewed as on earth and being on earth we have free and full access to God in the sanctuary. We go in perfect liberty to God, where His holiness dwells, and where nothing that is contrary to Him can be admitted. What happiness! What perfect grace! What a glorious result, supreme and complete! Could anything better be desired, remembering too that it is our dwelling-place? This is our position in the presence of God through the entrance of Christ into the sanctuary.

The second result shews us the personal state we are brought into, in order to the enjoyment of our position; that we may, on our part, enter in freely. It is that our Saviour has rendered our conscience perfect, so that we can go into the sanctuary without an idea of fear, without one question as to sin

arising in our minds. A perfect conscience is not an innocent conscience which, happy in its unconsciousness, does not know evil, and does not know God revealed in holiness. A perfect conscience knows God; it is cleansed, and, having the knowledge of good and evil according to the light of God Himself, it knows that it is purified from all evil according to His purity. Now the blood of bulls and goats, and the washing repeated under the law, could never make the conscience perfect. They could sanctify carnally, so as to enable the worshiper to approach God outwardly, yet only afar off, with the veil still unrent. But a real purification from sin and sins, so that the soul can be in the presence of God Himself in the light without spot, with the consciousness of being so the offerings under the law could never produce. They were but figures. but, thanks be to God, Christ has accomplished the work; and, present for us now in the heavenly and eternal sanctuary, He is the witness there that our sins are put away; so that all conscience of sin before God is destroyed, because we know that He who bore our sins is in the presence of God, after having accomplished the work of expiation. Thus we have the consciousness of being in the light without spot. We have the purification not only of sins but of the conscience, so that we can use this access to God in full liberty and joy, presenting ourselves before Him who has so loved us.

The third result, which seals and characterises the two others, is that Christ, having once entered in abides in heaven. He has gone into the heavenly sanctuary to remain there by virtue of an eternal redemption, of blood that has everlasting validity. The work is completely done, and can never change in value. If our sins are effectually put away, God glorified, and righteousness complete, that which once availed to effect this can never not avail. The blood shed once for all is ever efficacious.

Our High Priest is in the sanctuary, not with the blood of sacrifices, which are but figures of the true. The work has been done which puts sin away. This redemption is neither temporal nor transitory. It is the redemption of the soul, and for eternity, according to the moral efficacy of that which has been done.

Here then are the three aspects of the result of the work of Christ: immediate access to God; a purged conscience; and eternal redemption.

Three points remain to be noticed before entering on the subject of the covenants, which is here resumed.

First, Christ is a High Priest of good things to come. In saying "things to come", the starting-point is Israel under the law before the advent of our Lord. Nevertheless, if these good things were now acquired, if it could be said, "we have them," because Christianity was their fulfillment, it could hardly be still said when Christianity was established "good things to come." They are yet to come. These "good things" consist of all that the Messiah will enjoy when He reigns. This also is the reason that the earthly things have their place. But our present relationship with Him is only and altogether heavenly. He acts as Priest in a tabernacle which is not of this creation: it is heavenly, in the presence of God, not made with hands. Our place is in heaven.

In the second place, "Christ offered himself, by the eternal Spirit [See Note #16], without spot, to God." Here the precious offering up of Christ is viewed as an act that He performed as man, though in the perfection and Value of His Person. He offered Himself to God but as moved by the power, and according to the perfection of the Eternal Spirit. All the motives that governed this action, and the accomplishment of the fact according to those motives, were purely and perfectly those of the Holy Ghost; that is, absolutely divine in their perfection, but of the Holy Ghost acting in a man (a man without sin who, born and living ever by the power of the Holy Ghost, had never known sin; who, being exempt from it by birth, never allowed it to enter into Him); so that it is the Man Christ who offers Himself. This was requisite.

Thus the offering was in itself perfect and pure, with out defilement; and the act of offering was perfect, whether in love or in obedience, or in the desire to glorify God, or to accomplish the purpose of God. Nothing mingled itself with the perfection of His intent in offering Himself. Moreover, it v.was not a temporary offering, which applied to one sin with which the conscience was burdened and which went no farther than that one an offering which could not, by its nature, have the perfection spoken of, because it was not the Person offering up Himself, nor was it absolutely for God, because there was in it neither the perfection of will nor of obedience. But the offering of Christ

was one which, being perfect in its moral nature, being in itself perfect in the eyes of God, was necessarily eternal in its value. For this value was as enduring as the nature of God who was glorified in it.

It was made, not of necessity, but of free will, and in obedience. It was made by a man for the glory of God, but through the Eternal Spirit, ever the same in its nature and value.

All being, thus perfectly fulfilled for the glory of God, the conscience of every one that comes to Him by this offering is purged; dead works are blotted out and set aside; we stand before God on the ground of that which Christ has done.

And here the third point comes in. Being perfectly cleansed in conscience from all that man in his sinful nature produces, and having to do with God in light and in love, there being no question of conscience with Him, we are in a position to serve the living God. Precious liberty! in which, happy and without question before God according to His nature in light, we can serve Him according to the activity of His nature in love. Judaism knew no more of this than it did of perfection in conscience. Obligation towards God that system indeed maintained; and it offered a certain provision for that which was needed for outward failure. But to have a perfect conscience, and then to serve God in love, according to His will of this it knew nothing.

This is christian position: the conscience perfect by Christ, [See Note #17] according to the nature of God Himself; the service of God in liberty, according to His nature of love acting towards others.

For the Jewish system, in its utmost advantages, was characterised by the holy place. There were duties and obligations to be fulfilled in order to draw near, sacrifices to cleanse outwardly him who drew near outwardly. Meanwhile God was always concealed. No one entered into "the holy place:" it is implied that the "most holy" was inaccessible. No sacrifice had yet been offered which gave free access, and at all times. God was concealed: that He was so characterised the position. They could not stand before Him. Neither did He manifest Himself. They served Him out of His presence without going in.

It is important to notice this truth, that the whole system in its highest and nearest access to God was characterised by the holy place, in order to understand the passage before us.

Now the first tabernacle Judaism as a system is identified with the first part of the tabernacle, and that open only to the priestly part of the nation, the second part (that is, the sanctuary) only shewing, by the circumstances connected with it, that there was no access to God. When the author of the epistle goes on to the present position of Christ, he leaves the earthly tabernacle it is heaven itself he then speaks of, a tabernacle not made with hands, nor of this creation, into which he introduces us.

Hebrews Chapter 10

In Chapter 10 this principle is applied to the sacrifice. Its repetition proved that sin was there. That the sacrifice of Christ was only offered once, was the demonstration of its eternal efficacy. Had the Jewish sacrifices rendered the worshipers really perfect before God, they would have ceased to be offered. The apostle is speaking (although the principle is general) of the yearly sacrifice on the day of atonement. For if, through the efficacy of the sacrifice, they had been permanently made perfect, they would have had no more conscience of sins, and could not have had the thought of renewing the sacrifice.

Observe, here, that which is very important, that the conscience is cleansed, our sins being expiated, the worshiper drawing nigh by virtue of the sacrifice. The meaning of the Jewish service was that guilt was still there; that of the Christian, that it is gone. As to the former, precious as the type is, the reason is evident: the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin. Therefore those sacrifices have been abolished, and a work of another character (although still a sacrifice) has been accomplished a work which excludes all other, and all the repetition of the same, because it consists of nothing less than the self devotedness of the Son of God to accomplish the will of God, and the completion of that to which He was devoted: an act impossible to be repeated, for all His will cannot be accomplished twice, and, were it possible, it would be a testimony of the inadequacy of the first, and so of both.

This is what the Son of God says in this most solemn passage (Heb 10:5-9), in which we are admitted to know, according to the grace of God, that which passed between God the Father and Himself when He undertook the fulfillment of the will of God that which He said, and the eternal counsels of God which He carried into execution. He takes the place of submission and of obedience, of performing the will of another. God would no longer accept the sacrifices that were ordered under the law (the four classes of which are here pointed out), He had no pleasure in them. In their stead He had prepared a body for His Son; vast and important truth! for the place of man is obedience. Thus, in taking this place, the Son of God put Himself into the position to obey perfectly. In fact He undertakes the duty of fulfilling all the will of God, be it what it may a will which is, ever "good, acceptable, and perfect."

The psalm says in the Hebrew, "Thou hast digged [See Note #26] ears for me," translated by the Septuagint, "Thou hast prepared me a body;" words which, as they give the true meaning, are used by the Holy Ghost. For "the ear" is always employed as a sign of the reception of commandments, and the principle of obligation to obey or the disposition to do so. "He hath opened mine ear morning by morning" (Isa. 1), that is, has made me listen to His will, be obedient to His commands. The ear was bored or fastened with an awl to the door, in order to express that the Israelite was attached to the house as a slave, to obey, for ever. Now in taking a body, the Lord took the form of a servant. (Phil. ii.) Ears were digged for Him. That is to say, He placed Himself [See Note #27] in a position in which He had to obey all His Master's will, whatever it might be. But it is the Lord Himself* who speaks in the passage before us: "Thou," He says, "hast prepared me a body."

Entering more into detail, He specifies burnt offerings and offerings for sin, sacrifices which had less of the character of communion, and thus had a deeper meaning; but God had no pleasure in them. In a word the Jewish service was already declared by the Spirit to be unacceptable to God. It was all to cease, it was fruitless; no offering that formed part of it was acceptable. No; the counsels of God unfold themselves, but first of all in the heart of the Word, the Son of God, who offers Himself to accomplish the will of God. "Then said he, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of

me, to do thy will, O God." Nothing can be more solemn than thus to lift the veil from that which takes place in heaven between God and the Word who undertook to do His will. Observe that, before He was in the position of obedience, He offers Himself in order to accomplish the will of God, that is to say, of free love for the glory of God, of free will; as One who had the power, He offers Himself, He undertakes obedience, He undertakes to do whatsoever God wills. This is indeed to sacrifice all His own will, but freely and as the effect of His own purpose, although on the occasion of the will of His Father. He must needs be God in order to do this, and to undertake the fulfillment of all that God could will.

We have here the great mystery of this divine intercourse, which remains ever surrounded with its solemn majesty, although it is communicated to us that we may know it. And we ought to know it; for it is thus that we understand the infinite grace and the glory of this work. Before He became man, in the place where only divinity is known, and its, eternal counsels and thoughts are communicated between the divine Persons, the Word as He has declared it to us, in time, by the prophetic Spirit such being the will of God contained in the book of the eternal counsels, He who was able to do it, offered Himself freely to accomplish that will. Submissive to this counsel already arranged for Him, He yet offers Himself in perfect freedom to fulfill it. But in offering He submits, yet at the same time undertakes to do all that God, as God, willed. But also in undertaking to do the will of God, it was in the way of obedience, of submission, and of devotedness. For I might undertake to do the will of another, as free and competent, because I willed the thing; but if I say "to do thy will," this in itself is absolute and complete submission. And this it is which the Lord, the Word, did. He did it also, declaring that He came in order to do it. He took a position of obedience by accepting the body prepared for Him. He came to do the will of God.

That of which we have been speaking is continually manifested in the life of Jesus on earth. God shines through His position in the human body; for He was necessarily God in the act itself of His humiliation; and none but God could have undertaken and been found in it; yet He was always, and entirely and perfectly, obedient and dependent on God. That which revealed itself in His existence on earth was the expression of that which was accomplished

in the eternal abode, in His own nature. That is to say (and of this Ps.40 speaks), that which He declares, and that which He was here below, are the same thing; the one in reality in heaven, the other bodily on earth. That which He was here below was but the expression, the living, real, bodily manifestation of what is contained in those divine communications which have been revealed to us, and which were the reality of the position that He assumed.

And it is very important to see these things in the free offer made by divine competency, and not only in their fulfillment in death. It gives quite a different character to the bodily work here below.

In reality, from Chapter 1 of this epistle, the Holy Ghost always presents Christ in this way. But this revelation in the psalm was requisite to explain how He became a servant, what the Messiah really was; and to us it opens an immense view of the ways of God, a view, the depths of which clearly as it is revealed, and through the very clearness of the revelation display to us things so divine and glorious that we bow the head and veil our faces, as having had part as it were in such communications, on account of the majesty of the Persons whose acts and whose intimate relationships are revealed. It is not here the glory that dazzles us. But even in this poor world there is nothing to which we are greater strangers than the intimacy of those who are, in their modes of life, much above ourselves. What then, when it is that of God! Blessed be His name! there is grace that brings us into it, and that has drawn nigh to us in our weakness. We are then admitted to know this precious truth, that the Lord Jesus undertook of His own free will the accomplishment of all the will of God, and that He was pleased to take the body prepared for Him in order to accomplish it. The love, the devotedness to the glory of God, and the way in which He undertook to obey, are fully set forth. And this the fruit of God's eternal counsels displaces (by its very nature) every provisional sign: and contains, in itself alone, the condition of all relationship with God, and the means by which He glorifies Himself. [See Note #28]

The Word then assumes a body, in order to offer Himself as a sacrifice. Besides the revelation of this devotedness of the Word to accomplish the

will of God, the effect of His sacrifice according to the will of God is also set before us.

He came to do the will of Jehovah. Now faith understands that it is by this will of God (that is, by His will who, according to His eternal wisdom, prepared a body for His Son) that those whom He has called unto Himself for salvation are set apart to God, in other words, are sanctified. It is by the will of God that we are set apart for Him (not by our own will), and that by means of the sacrifice offered to God.

We shall observe that the epistle does not here speak of the communication of life, or of a practical sanctification wrought by the Holy Ghost: [See Note #29] the subject is the Person of Christ ascended on high, and the efficacy of His work. And this is important with regard to sanctification, because it shews that sanctification is a complete setting apart to God, as belonging to Him at the price of the offering of Jesus, a consecration to Him by means of that offering. God took the unclean Jews from among men and set them apart consecrated them to Himself; so now the called ones, from that nation, and, thank God, ourselves also, by means of the offering of Jesus.

But there is another element, already pointed out in this offering, the force of which the epistle here applies to believers, namely, that the offering is "once for all." It admits of no repetition. If we enjoy the effect of this offering, our sanctification is eternal in its nature. It does not fail. It is never repeated. We belong to God for ever according to the efficacy of this offering. Thus our sanctification, our being set apart to God has with regard to the work that accomplished it all the stability of the will of God and all the grace from which it sprang; it has, too, in its nature, the perfection of the work itself, by which it was accomplished, and the duration and the constant force of the efficacy of that work. But the effect of this offering is not limited to this setting apart for God. The point already treated contains our consecration by God Himself through the perfectly efficacious offering of Christ fulfilling His will. And now the position which Christ has taken, in consequence of His offering up of Himself, is employed in order clearly to demonstrate the state it has brought us into before God.

The priests among the Jews for this contrast is still carried on stood before the altar continually to repeat the same sacrifices which could never take away sins. But this Man, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down for ever [See Note #30] at the right hand of God.

There having finished for His own all that regards their presentation without spot to God He awaits the moment when His enemies shall be made His footstool, according to Psalm 110: "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." And the Spirit gives us the important reason so infinitely precious to us: "For he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Here (Heb 10:14) as in Verse 12 (Heb 10:12), on which the latter depends, the word " for ever " has the force of permanence uninterrupted continuity. He is ever seated, we are ever perfected, by virtue of His work and according to the perfect righteousness in which, and conformably to which, He sits at the right hand of God upon His throne, according to that which He is personally there, His acceptance on God's part being proved by His session at His right hand. And He is there for us.

It is a righteousness suited to the throne of God, yea, the righteousness of the throne. It neither varies nor fails. He is seated there for ever. If then we are sanctified set apart to God by this offering according to the will of God Himself, we are also made perfect for God by the same offering, as presented to Him in the Person of Jesus.

We have seen that this position has its origin in the will, the good-will of God (a will which combines the grace and the purpose of God), and that it has its foundation and present certainty in the accomplishment of the work of Christ, the perfection of which is demonstrated by the session at the right hand of God of Him who accomplished it. But the testimony for to enjoy this grace we must know it with divine certainty, and the greater it is, the more would our hearts be led to doubt it the testimony upon which we believe it must be divine. And this it is. The Holy Ghost bears witness to us of it. The will of God is the source of the work; Christ, the Son of God accomplished it; the Holy Ghost bears witness to us of it. And here the application to the people, called by grace and spared, is in consequence fully set forth, not

merely the fulfillment of the work. The Holy Ghost bears us witness, " Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Blessed position! The certainty that God will never remember our sins and iniquities is founded all the steadfast will of God, on the perfect offering of Christ, now consequently seated at the right hand of God, and on the sure testimony of the Holy Ghost. It is a matter of faith that God will never remember our sins.

We may remark here the way in which the covenant is introduced; for although, as writing to "the holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," he says, "a witness to us," the form of his address is always that of an epistle to the Hebrews (believers, of course, but Hebrews, still bearing the character of God's people). He does not speak of the covenant in a direct way, as a privilege in which Christians had a direct part. The Holy Ghost, he says, declares, "I will remember no more," and etc. It is this which he quotes. He only alludes to the new covenant, leaving it aside consequently as to all present application. For after having said, "This is the covenant," and etc., the testimony is cited as that of the Holy Ghost, to prove the capital point which he was treating, that is, that God remembers our sins no more. But he alludes to the covenant (already known to the Jews as declared before of God) which gave the authority of the scriptures to this testimony, that God remembered no more the sins of His people who are sanctified and admitted into His favour, and which, at the same time, presented these two thoughts: first, that this complete pardon did not exist under the first covenant: and, second, that the door is left open for the blessing of the nation when the new covenant shall be formally established.

Another practical consequence is drawn: sins being remitted, there is no more oblation for sin. The one sacrifice having obtained remission, no others can be offered in order to obtain it. Remembrance of this one sacrifice there may indeed be, whatever its character; but a sacrifice to take away the sins which are already taken away, there cannot be. We are therefore in reality on entirely new ground on that of the fact, that by the sacrifice of Christ our sins are altogether put away, and that for us, who are sanctified and partakers of the heavenly calling, a perfect and everlasting permanent cleansing has been made, remission granted, eternal redemption obtained.

So that we are, in the eyes of God, without sin, on the ground of the perfection of the work of Christ, who is seated at His right hand, who has entered into the true holiest, into heaven itself, to sit there because His work is accomplished. Thus all liberty is ours to enter into the holy place (all boldness) by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, that is His flesh, to admit us without spot into the presence of God Himself, who is there revealed. For us the veil is rent, and that which rent the veil in order to admit us has likewise put away the sin which shut us out.

We have also a great High Priest over the house of God, as we have seen, who represents us in the holy place.

On these truths are founded the exhortations that follow. One word before we enter on them, as to the relation that exists between perfect righteousness and the priesthood. There are many souls who use the priesthood as the means of obtaining pardon when they have failed. They go to Christ as a priest, that He may intercede for them and obtain the pardon which they desire, but for which they dare not ask God in a direct way. These souls sincere as they are have not liberty to enter into the holy place. They take refuge with Christ that they may afresh be brought into the presence of God. Their condition practically is that in which a pious Jew stood. They have lost, or rather they have never had by faith, the real consciousness of their position before God in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ. I do not speak here of all the privileges of the assembly: we have seen that the epistle does not speak of them. The position it makes for believers is this: those whom it addresses are not viewed as placed in heaven, although partakers of the heavenly calling; but a perfect redemption is accomplished, all guilt entirely put away for the people of God, who remembers their sins no more. The conscience is made perfect they have no more conscience of sins by virtue of the work accomplished once for all. There is no more question of sin, that is, of its imputation, of its being upon them before and between them and God. There cannot be, because of the work accomplished upon the cross. The conscience therefore is perfect; their Representative and High Priest is in heaven, a witness there to the work already accomplished for them. Thus, although the epistle does not present them as in the holiest, as sitting there like in the Epistle to the Ephesians

they have full liberty, entire boldness, to enter into it. The question of imputation no longer exists. Their sins have been imputed to Christ. But He is now in heaven a proof that the sins are blotted out for ever. Believers therefore enter with entire liberty into the presence of God Himself, and that always having no more for ever any conscience of sins.

For what purpose then is priesthood? What is to be done with respect to the sins we commit? They interrupt our communion; but they make no change in our position before God, nor in the testimony rendered by the presence of Christ at the right hand of God. Nor do they raise any question as to imputation. They are sins against that position, or against God, measured by the relationship we are in to God, as in it. For sin is measured by the conscience according to our position. The perpetual presence of Christ at God's right hand has this twofold effect for us: 1st, perfected for ever we have no more conscience of sins before God, we are accepted; 2nd, as priest He obtains grace to help in time of need, that we may not sin. But the present exercise of priesthood by Christ does not refer to sins: we have through His work no more conscience of sins, are perfected for ever. There is another truth connected with this, found Jo 1 2:1 we have an Advocate [See Note #31] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. On this our communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ is founded and secured. Our sins are not imputed, for the propitiation is in all its value before God. But by sin communion is interrupted; our righteousness is not altered for that is Christ Himself at God's right hand in virtue of His work; nor is grace changed, and " he is the propitiation for our sins;" but the heart has got away from God, communion is interrupted. But grace acts in virtue of perfect righteousness, and by the advocacy of Christ on behalf of him who has failed: and his soul is restored to communion. Nor is it that we go to Jesus for this; He goes, even if we sin, to God for us. His presence there is the witness of an unchangeable righteousness which is ours; His intercession maintains us in the path we have to walk in, or as our Advocate He restores the communion which is founded on that righteousness. Our access to God is always open. Sin interrupts our enjoyment of it, the heart is not in communion; the advocacy of Jesus is the means of rousing the conscience by the action of the Spirit and the word, and we return (humbling ourselves) into the presence of God Himself. The priesthood and

advocacy of Christ refer to the condition of an imperfect and feeble, or failing, creature upon earth, reconciling it with the perfectness of the place and glory in which divine righteousness sets us. The soul is maintained steadfast or restored.

Exhortations follow. Having the right thus to approach God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. This is the only thing that honours the efficacy of Christ's work, and the love which has thus brought us to enjoy God. In the words that follow, allusion is made to the consecration of the priests a natural allusion, as drawing near to God in the holiest is the subject. They were sprinkled with blood and washed with water, and then they drew nigh to serve God. Still, although I doubt not of the allusion to the priests, it is quite natural that baptism should have given rise to it. The anointing is not spoken of here it is the power or privilege of the moral right to draw nigh.

Again, we may notice that, as to the foundation of the truth, this is the ground on which Israel will stay in the last days. In Christ in heaven will not be their place, nor the possession of the Holy Ghost as uniting the believer to Christ in heaven; but the blessing will be founded on water and on blood. God will remember their sins no more; and they will be washed in the clean water of the word.

The second exhortation is to persevere in the profession of the hope without wavering. He who made the promises is faithful.

Not only should we have this confidence in God for ourselves, but we are also to consider one another for mutual encouragement; and, at the same time, not to fail in the public and common profession of faith, pretending to maintain it, while avoiding the open identification of oneself with the Lord's people in the difficulties connected with the profession of this faith before the world. Besides, this public confession had a fresh motive in that the day drew nigh. We see that it is the judgment which is here presented as the thing looked for in order that it may act on the conscience, and guard christians from turning back to the world, and from the influence of the fear of man rather than the Lord's coming to take up His own people. Verse 26 (Heb 10:26) is connected with the preceding paragraph (Heb 10:23-25) the

last words of which suggest the warning of Verse 26 (Heb 10:26); which is founded, moreover, on the doctrine of these two Chapters (9 and 10), with regard to the sacrifice. He insists on perseverance in a full confession of Christ, for His one sacrifice once offered was the only one. If any who had professed to know its value abandoned it, there was no other sacrifice to which he could have recourse, neither could it be ever repeated. There remained no more sacrifice for sin. All sins were pardoned by the efficacy of this sacrifice: but if, after having known the truth, they were to choose sin instead, there was no other sacrifice by virtue even of the perfection of that of Christ. Nothing but judgment remained. Such a professor, having had the knowledge of the truth and having abandoned it, would assume the character of an adversary.

The case, then, here supposed is the renunciation of the confession of Christ, deliberately preferring after having known the truth to walk according to one's own will in sin. This is evident, both from that which precedes and from Verse 29 (Heb 10:29).

Thus we have (chaps. 6, 10.) the two great privileges of Christianity, what distinguishes it from Judaism, presented in order to warn those who made profession of the former, that the renunciation of the truth, after enjoying these advantages, was fatal; for if these means of salvation were renounced, there was no other. These privileges were the manifested presence and power of the Holy Ghost, and the offering which, by its intrinsic and absolute value, left no place for any other. Both of these possessed a mighty efficacy, which, while it gave divine spring and force, and the manifestation of the presence of God on the one hand, made known on the other hand the eternal redemption and the perfection of the worshiper; leaving no means for repentance, if any one abandoned the manifested and known power of that presence; no place for another sacrifice (which, more over, would have denied the efficacy of the first), after the perfect work of God in salvation, perfect whether with regard to redemption or to the presence of God by the Spirit in the midst of His own. Nothing remained but judgment.

They who despised the law of Moses died without mercy. What then would not those deserve at the hand of God, who trod under foot the Son of God,

counted the blood of the covenant, by which they had been sanctified, as a common thing, and did despite to the Spirit of grace? It was not simple disobedience, however evil that might be; it was contempt of the grace of God, and of that which He had done, in the Person of Jesus, in order to deliver us from the consequences of disobedience. On the one hand, what was there left, if with the knowledge of what it was, they renounced this? On the other hand, how could they escape judgment? for they know a God who had said that vengeance belonged unto Him, and that He would recompense; and, again, the Lord would judge His people.

Observe here the way in which sanctification is attributed to the blood; and, also, that professors are treated as belonging to the people. The blood, received by faith, consecrates the soul to God; but it is here viewed also as an outward means for setting apart the people as a people. Every individual who had owned Jesus to be the Messiah, and the blood to be the seal and foundation of an everlasting covenant available for eternal cleansing and redemption on the part of God, acknowledging himself to be set apart for God, by this means, as one of the people every such individual would, if he renounced it, renounce it as such; and there was no other way of sanctifying him. The former system had evidently lost its power for him, and the true one he had abandoned. This is the reason why it is said, "having received the knowledge of the truth."

Nevertheless he hopes better things, for fruit, the sign of life, was there. He reminds them how much they had suffered for the truth, and that they had even received joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had a better and an abiding portion in heaven. They were not to cast away this confidence, the reward of which would be great. For in truth they needed patience, in order that, after having done the will of God, they might receive the effect of the promise. And He who is to come will come soon.

It is to this life of patience and perseverance that the Chapter applies. But there is a principle which is the strength of this life, and which characterises it. In the midst of the difficulties of the christian walk the just shall live by faith; and if anyone draws back, God will have no pleasure in him. "But," says the author, placing himself as ever in the midst of the believers, "we are not of them who draw back, but of them that believe unto the saving of the

soul." Thereupon he describes the action of this faith, encouraging believers by the example of the elders who had acquired their renown by walking according to the same principle as that by which the faithful were now called to walk.

Note #26

It is not the same word as to "bore, or thrust through", in Exodus 21 nor as "open" in Isaiah 1. The one (digged) is, to prepare for obedience, the other would be to bind to it for ever, and to subject to the obedience when due. Exodus 21 intimates, the blessed truth that, when He had fulfilled His personal service on earth, He would not abandon either His assembly or His people. He is ever God, but ever man, the humbled man, the glorified and reigning man, the subject man, in the joy of eternal perfection.

Note #27

As throughout the epistle, the Messiah is the subject. In the psalm it is the Messiah who speaks, that is, the Anointed here below. He expresses His patience and faithfulness in the position which He had taken, addressing Jehovah as his God and He tells us that He took this place willingly, according to the eternal counsels respecting His own Person. For the Person is not changed. But He speaks in the psalm according to the position of obedience which He had taken, saying always, 'I' and 'me', in speaking of what took place before His incarnation.

Note #28

Remark, also, here not only the substitution of the reality for the ceremonial figures of the law, but the difference of principle. The law required for righteousness, that man should do the will of God, and rightly. That was human righteousness. Here Christ undertakes to do it, and has accomplished it in the offering up of Himself. His so doing the will of God is the basis of our relationship with God, and it is done, and we are accepted. As born of God our delight is to do God's will, but it is in love and newness of nature, not in order to be accepted.

Note #29

It speaks of this last in the exhortations, Heb 12:14. But in the doctrine of the epistle, "sanctification" is not used in the practical sense of what is wrought in us.

Note #30

The word translated here "for ever" is not the same word that is used for eternally. It has the sense of continuously without interruption, "eis" _____ "dienekes". He does not rise up or stand. He is ever seated, His work being finished. He will indeed rise up at the end to come and fetch us, and to judge the world, even as this same passage tells us.

Note #31

There is a difference in detail here; but it does not affect my present subject. The High Priest has to do with our access to God; the Advocate with our communion with the Father and His government of us as children. The Epistle to the Hebrews treats of the ground of access and shews us to be perfected for ever; and the priestly intercession does not apply to sins in that respect. It brings mercy and grace to help in time of need here, but we are perfected for ever before God. But communion is necessarily interrupted by the least sin or idle thought yea, really had been, practically if not judicially, before the idle thought was there. Here the advocacy of John comes in: "If any man sin," and the soul is restored. But there is never imputation to the believer.

Hebrews Chapter 11

It is not a definition of this principle, that the epistle gives us at the commencement of Chapter 11, but a declaration of its powers and action. Faith realises (gives substance to) that which we hope for, and is a demonstration to the soul of that which we do not see.

There is much more order than is generally thought in the series given here of examples of the action of faith, although this order is not the principal object. I will point out its leading features.

1st. With regard to creation. Lost in reasonings, and not knowing God, the human mind sought out endless solutions of existence. Those who have

read the cosmogonies of the ancients know how many different systems, each more absurd than the other, have been invented for that which the introduction of God, by faith, renders perfectly simple. Modern science, with a less active and more practical mind, stops at second causes; and it is but little occupied with God. Geology has taken the place of the cosmogony of the Hindoos, Egyptians, Orientals, and philosophers. To the believer the thought is clear and simple; his mind is assured and intelligent by faith. God, by His word, called all things into existence. The universe is not a producing cause; it is itself a creature acting by a law imposed upon it. It is One having authority who has spoken; His word has divine efficacy. He speaks, and the thing is. We feel that this is worthy of God; for, when once God is brought in, all is simple. Shut Him out, and man is lost in the efforts of his own imagination, which can neither create nor arrive at the knowledge of a Creator, because it only works with the power of a creature. Before, therefore, the details of the present form of creation are entered upon, the word simply says, " In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Whatever may have taken place between that and chaos forms no part of revelation. It is distinct from the special action of the deluge, which is made known to us. The beginning of Genesis does not give a history of the details of creation itself, nor the history of the universe. It gives the fact that in the beginning God created; and afterwards, the things that regard man on the earth. The angels even are not there. Of the stars it is only said, " He made the stars also ;" when, we are not told.

By faith then we believe that the worlds were created by the word of God.

But sin has come in, and righteousness has to be found for fallen man, in order that he may stand before God. God has given a Lamb for the sacrifice. But here we have set before us, not the gift on God's part, but the soul drawing near to Him by faith.

By faith then Abel offers to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain a sacrifice which (founded on the revelation already made by God) was offered in the intelligence which a conscience taught of God possessed, with regard to the position in which he who offered was standing. Death and judgment had come in by sin, to man insupportable, although he must undergo them. He must go therefore to God, confessing this; but he must

go with a substitute which grace has given. He must go with blood, the witness at the same time both of the judgment and of the perfect grace of God. Doing this, he was in the truth, and this truth was righteousness and grace. He approaches God and puts the sacrifice between himself and God. He receives the testimony that he is righteous according to the righteous judgment of God. For the sacrifice was in connection with the righteousness that had condemned man, and owned too the perfect value of that which was done in it. The testimony is to his offering; but Abel is righteous before God. Nothing can be more clear, more precious on this point. It is not only the sacrifice which is accepted, but Abel who comes with the sacrifice. He receives from God this testimony, that he is righteous. Sweet and blessed consolation! But the testimony is made to his gifts, so that he possessed all the certainty of acceptance according to the value of the sacrifice offered. In going to God by the sacrifice of Jesus, not only am I righteous (I receive the testimony that I am righteous), but this testimony is made to my offering, and therefore my righteousness has the value and the perfection of the offering, that is, of Christ offering Himself to God. The fact that we receive testimony on God's part that we are righteous, and at the same time that the testimony is made to the gift which we offer, (not to the condition in which we are), is of infinite value to us. We are now before God according to the perfection of Christ's work. We walk with God thus.

By faith, death having been the means of my acceptance before God, all that belongs to the old man is abolished for faith; the power and the rights of death are entirely destroyed Christ has undergone them. Thus, if it please God, we go to heaven with out even passing through death. (Compare Co2 5:1-4.) God did this for Enoch, for Elijah, as a testimony. Not only are sins put away, and righteousness established by the work of Christ, but the rights and power of him who has the power of death are entirely destroyed. Death may happen to us we are by nature liable to it; but we possess a life which is outside its jurisdiction. Death, if it come, is but gain to us; and although nothing but the power of God Himself can raise or transform the body, this power has been manifested in Jesus, and has already wrought in us by quickening us (compare Eph 1:19); and it works in us now in the power of deliverance from sin, from the law, and from the flesh. Death, as a power of the enemy, is conquered; it is become a "gain" to faith, instead of being a

judgment on nature. Life, the power of God in life, works in holiness and in obedience here below, and declares itself in the resurrection or in the transformation of the body. It is a witness of power with regard to Christ in Rom 1:4.

But there is another very sweet consideration to be noticed here. Enoch received testimony that he pleased God, before he was translated. This is very important and very precious. If we walk with God, we have the testimony that we please Him; we have the sweetness of communion with God, the testimony of His Spirit, His intercourse with us in the sense of His presence, the consciousness of walking according to His word, which we know to be approved by Him in a word, a life which, spent with Him and before Him by faith, is spent in the light of His countenance and in the enjoyment of the communications of His grace and of a sure testimony, coming from Himself that we are pleasing to Him. A child who walks with a kind father and converses with him, his conscience reproaching him with nothing does he not enjoy the sense of his parent's favour?

In figure Enoch here represents the position of the saints who compose the assembly. He is taken up to heaven by virtue of a complete victory over death. By the exercise of sovereign grace he is outside the government and the ordinary deliverance of God. He bears testimony by the Spirit to the judgment of the world, but he does not go through it. (Jde 1:14-15) A walk like that of Enoch has God for its object, His existence is realised the great business of life, which in the world is spent as if man did everything and the fact that He is interested in the walk of men, that He takes account of it, in order to reward those who diligently seek Him.

Noah is found in the scene of the government of this world. He does not warn others of the coming judgments as one who is outside them, although he is a preacher of righteousness. He is warned himself and for himself; he is in the circumstances to which the warning relates. It is the spirit of prophecy. He is moved by fear, and he builds an ark to the saving of his house. He thus condemned the world. Enoch had not to build an ark in order to pass safely through the flood. He was not in it: God translated him exceptionally. Noah is preserved (heir of the righteousness which is by faith) for a future world. There is a general principle which accepts the testimony

of God respecting the judgment that will fall upon men, and the means provided by God for escaping it: this belongs to every believer.

But there is something more precise. Abel has the testimony that he is righteous; Enoch walks with God, pleases God, and is exempted from the common lot of humanity, proclaiming as from above the fate that awaits men, and the coming of Him who will execute the judgment. He goes forward to the accomplishment of the counsels of God. But neither Abel nor Enoch, thus viewed, condemned the world as that in the midst of which they were journeying, receiving themselves the warning, addressed to those who were dwellers therein. This was Noah's case: the prophet, although delivered, is in the midst of the judged people. The assembly is outside them. Noah's ark condemned the world; the testimony of God was enough for faith, and he inherits a world that had been destroyed, and (what belongs to all believers) righteousness by faith, on which the new world too is founded. This is the case of the Jewish remnant in the last days. They pass through the judgments, out of which we, as not belonging to the world, have been taken. Warned themselves of God's way of government in the earth, they will be witnesses to the world of the coming judgments, and will be heirs of the righteousness which is by faith, and witnesses to it in a new world, wherein righteousness will be accomplished in judgment by Him who is come, and whose throne will uphold the world in which Noah himself failed. The words, "heir of the righteousness which is by faith," point out, I think, that this faith which had governed a few was summed up in his person, and that the whole unbelieving world was condemned. The witness of this faith before judgment, Noah passes through it: and when the world is renewed, he is a public witness to the blessing of God that rests on faith, although outwardly all is changed. Thus Enoch represents the saints of the present time; Noah, the Jewish remnant. [See Note #32] The Spirit, after establishing the great fundamental principles of faith in action, goes on (Heb 11:8) to produce examples of the divine life in detail, always in connection with Jewish knowledge, with that which the heart of a Hebrew could not fail to own; and, at the same time, in connection with the object of the epistle and with the wants of Christians among the Hebrews.

In the previous case we have seen a faith which, after owning a Creator-God, recognises the great principles of the relations of man with God, and that onwards to the end upon earth. In that which follows, we have first the patience of faith when it does not possess, but trusts God and waits, assured of fulfillment. This is from Verse 8 to 22 (Heb 11:8-22). We may subdivide it thus: first, the faith which takes the place of strangership on earth, and maintains it because something better is desired; and which, in spite of weakness, finds the strength that is requisite in order to the fulfillment of the promises. This is from Verse 8 to 16 (Heb 11:8-16). Its effect is entrance into the joy of a heavenly hope. Strangers in the land of promise, and not enjoying the fulfillment of promises here below, they wait for more excellent things things which God prepares on high for those who love Him. For such He has prepared a city. In unison with God in His own thoughts, their desires (through grace) answering to the things in which He takes delight, they are the objects of His peculiar regard. He is not ashamed to be called their God. Abraham not only followed God into a land that He shewed him, but, a stranger there, and not possessing the land of promise, he is, by the mighty grace of God, exalted to the sphere of His thoughts; and, enjoying communion with God and the communications of His grace, he rests upon God for the time present, accepts his position of strangership on earth, and, as the portion of his faith, waits for the heavenly city of which God is the builder and the founder. There was not, so to speak, an open revelation of what was the subject of this hope, as was the case with that by which Abraham was called of God; but walking closely enough with God to know that which was enjoyed in His presence, and being conscious that he had not received the fulfillment of the promise, he lays hold of the better things, and waits for them, although only seeing them afar off, and remains a stranger upon earth, unmindful of the country whence he came out.

The special application of these first principles of faith to the case of the christian Hebrews is evident. They are the normal life of faith for all.

The second character of faith presented in this part is entire confidence in the fulfillment of the promises a confidence maintained in spite of all that might tend to destroy it. This is from Verse 17 to 22 (Heb 11:17-22).

We next find, the second great division, that faith makes its way through all the difficulties that oppose its progress. (Heb 11:23-27) And from Verse 28 to 31 (Heb 11:28-31) faith displays itself in a trust that reposes on God with regard to the use of the means which He sets before us, and of which nature cannot avail itself. Finally, there is the energy in general, of which faith is the source, and the sufferings that characterise the walk of faith. [See Note #33] This general character belongs to all the examples mentioned, namely, that they who have exercised faith have not received the fulfillment of the promise; the application of which to the state of the Hebrew Christians is evident. Further, these illustrious heroes of faith, however honoured they might be among the Jews, did not enjoy the privileges that Christians possessed. God in His counsels had reserved something better for us.

Let us notice some details. Abraham's faith shews itself by a thorough trust in God. Called to leave his own people, breaking the ties of nature, he obeys. He knows not whither he is going: enough for him that God would shew him the place. God, having brought him thither, gives him nothing. He dwells there content, in perfect reliance on God. He was a gainer by it. He waited for a city that had foundations. He openly confesses that he is a stranger and a pilgrim on earth. (Gen 23:4) Thus, in spirit, he draws nearer to God. Although he possesses nothing, his affections are engaged. He desires a better country, and attaches himself to God more immediately and entirely. He has no desire to return into his own country; he seeks a country. Such is the Christian. In offering up Isaac there was that absolute confidence in God which, at His command, can renounce even God's own promises as possessed after the flesh, sure that God would restore them through the exercise of His power, overcoming death and every obstacle.

It is thus that Christ renounced His rights as Messiah, and went even into death, committing Him self to the will of God and trusting in Him; and received everything in resurrection. And this the Hebrew Christians had to do, with respect to the Messiah and the promises made to Israel. But, if there is simplicity of faith, for us the Jordan is dry, nor could we indeed have passed it if the Lord had not passed on before.

Observe here that, when trusting in God and giving up all for Him, we always gain, and we learn something, more of the ways of His power: for in

renouncing according to His will anything already received, we ought to expect from the power of God that He will bestow something else. Abraham renounces the promise after the flesh. He sees the city which has foundations; he can desire a heavenly country. He gives up Isaac, in whom were the promises: he learns resurrection, for God is infallibly faithful. The promises were in Isaac: therefore God must restore him to Abraham, and by resurrection, if he offered him in sacrifice.

In Isaac faith distinguishes between the portion of God's people according to his election, and that of man having birthrights according to nature. This is the knowledge of the ways of God in blessing, and in judgment.

By faith Jacob, a stranger and feeble, having nothing but the staff with which he had crossed the Jordan, worships God, and announces the double portion of the heir of Israel, of the one whom his brethren rejected a type of the Lord, the heir of all things. This lays the ground of worship.

By faith Joseph, a stranger, the representative here of Israel far from his own country, reckons on the fulfillment of the earthly promises. [See Note #34] These are the expressions of faith in the faithfulness of God, in the future fulfillment of His promise. In that which follows we have the faith which surmounts every difficulty that arises in the path of the man of God, in the way that God marks out for him as he journeys on towards the enjoyment of the promises.

The faith of the parents of Moses makes them disregard the king's cruel command, and they conceal their infant; whom God, in answer to their faith preserved by extraordinary means when there was no other way to save it. Faith does not reason; it acts from its own point of view, and leaves the result to God.

But the means which God used for the preservation of Moses placed him within a little of the highest position in the kingdom. He there came to be possessed of all the acquirements which that period could bestow on a man distinguished alike by his energy and his character. But faith does its work, and inspires divine affections which do not look to surrounding circumstances for a guide of action, even when those circumstances may have owned their origin to the most remarkable providences.

Faith has its own objects, supplied by God Himself, and governs the heart with a view to those objects. It gives us a place and relationships which rule the whole life, and leave no room for other motives and other spheres of affection which would divide the heart; for the motives and affections which govern faith are given by God, and given by Him in order to form and govern the heart.

Verse 24-26 (Heb 11:24-26) develop this point. It is a very important principle; for we often hear Providence alleged as a reason for not walking by faith. Never was there a more remarkable Providence than that which placed Moses in the court of Pharaoh; and it gained its object. It would not have done so if Moses had not abandoned the position into which that Providence had brought him. But it was faith (that is to say, the divine affections which God had created in his heart), and not Providence as a rule and motive, which produced the effect for which Providence had preserved and prepared him. Providence (thanks be to God !) governs circumstances; faith governs the heart and the conduct.

The reward which God has promised comes in here as an avowed object in the sphere of faith. It is not the motive power; but it sustains and encourages the heart that is acting by faith, in view of the object which God presents to our affections. It thus takes the heart away from the present, from the influence of the things that surround us (whether they are things that attract or that tend to intimidate us), and elevates the heart and character of him who walks by faith and confirms him in a path of devotedness which will lead him to the end at which he aims.

A motive outside that which is present to us is the secret of stability and of true greatness. We may have an object with regard to which we act: but we need a motive outside that object a divine motive to enable us to act in a godly way respecting it.

Faith realises also (Heb 11:27) the intervention of God without seeing Him; and thus delivers from all fear of the power of man the enemy of His people. But the thought of God's intervention brings the heart into a greater difficulty than even the fear of man. If His people are to be delivered, God must intervene, and that in judgment. But they, as well as their enemies, are

sinners; and the consciousness of sin and of deserving judgment necessarily destroys confidence in Him who is the Judge. Dare they see Him come to manifest His power in judgment (for this it is, in fact, which must take place for the deliverance of His people)? Is God for us the heart asks this God who is coming in judgment? But God has provided the means of securing safety in the presence of judgment (Heb 11:28); a means apparently contemptible and useless, yet which in reality is the only one that, by glorifying Him with regard to the evil of which we are guilty, has power to afford shelter from the judgment which He executes.

Faith recognised the testimony of God by trusting to the efficacy of the blood sprinkled on the door, and could, in all security, let God come in judgment God who, seeing the blood, would pass over His believing people. By faith Moses kept the passover. Observe here that, by the act of putting the blood on the door, the people acknowledged that they were as much the objects of the just judgment of God as the Egyptians. God had given them that which preserved them from it; but it was because they were guilty and deserved it. No one can stand before God.

Verse 29 (Heb 11:29). But the power of God is manifested, and manifested in judgment. Nature, the enemies of God's people, think to pass through this judgment dry-shod, like those who are sheltered by redeeming power from the righteous vengeance of God. But the judgment swallows them up in the very same place in which the people find deliverance a principle of marvelous import. There, where the judgment of God is, even there is the deliverance. Believers have truly experienced this in Christ. The cross is death and judgment, the two terrible consequences of sin, the lot of sinful man. To us they are the deliverance provided of God. By and in them we are delivered and (in Christ) we pass through and are out of their reach. Christ died and is risen; and faith brings us, by means of that which should have been our eternal ruin, into a place where death and judgment are left behind, and where our enemies can no longer reach us. We go through without their touching us. Death and judgment shield us from the enemy. They are our security. But we enter into a new sphere, we live by the effect not only of Christ's death, but of His resurrection.

Those who, in the mere power of nature, think to pass through (they who speak of death and judgment and Christ, taking the christian position, and thinking to pass through, although the power of God in redemption is not with them) are swallowed up.

With respect to the Jews, this event will have an earthly antitype; for in fact the day of God's judgment on earth will be the deliverance of Israel, who will have been brought to repentance.

This deliverance at the Red Sea goes beyond the protection of the blood in Egypt. There God coming in the expression of His holiness, executing judgment upon evil, what they needed was to be sheltered from that judgment to be protected from the righteous judgment of God Himself. And, by the blood, God, thus coming to execute judgment, was shut out, and the people were placed in safety before the Judge. This judgment had the character of the eternal judgment. And God had the character of a Judge.

At the Red Sea it was not merely deliverance from judgment hanging over them; God was for the people, active in love and in power for them. [See Note #35] The deliverance was an actual deliverance: they came out of that condition in which they had been enslaved, God's own power bringing them unhurt through that which otherwise must have been their destruction. Thus, in our case, it is Christ's death and resurrection, in which we participate, the redemption which He therein accomplished, [See Note #36] which introduces us into an entirely new condition altogether outside that of nature. We are no longer in the flesh.

In principle the earthly deliverance of the Jewish nation (the Jewish remnant) will be the same. Founded on the power of the risen Christ, and on the propitiation wrought out by His death, that deliverance will be accomplished by God, who will intervene on behalf of those that turn to Him by faith: at the same time that His adversaries (who are those also of His people) shall be destroyed by the very judgment which is the safeguard of the people whom they have oppressed.

Verse 30 (Heb 11:30). Yet all difficulties were not overcome because redemption was accomplished, deliverance effected. But the God of

deliverance was with them; difficulties disappear before Him. That which is a difficulty to man is none to Him. Faith trusts in Him, and uses means which only serve to express that trust. The walls of Jericho fall down at the sound of trumpets made of rams' horns, after Israel had compassed the city seven days, sounding these trumpets seven times.

Rahab, in presence of all the as yet unimpaired strength of the enemies of God and His people, identifies herself with the latter before they had gained one victory, because she felt that God was with them. A stranger to them (as to the flesh), she by faith escaped the judgment which God executed upon her people.

Verse 32 (Heb 11:32). Details are now no longer entered into. Israel (although individuals had still to act by faith), being established in the land of promise, furnished less occasion to develop examples of the principles on which faith acted. The Spirit speaks in a general way of these examples in which faith re-appeared under various characters and energy of patience, and sustained souls under all kinds of suffering. Their glory was with God, the world was not worthy of them. Nevertheless they had received nothing of the fulfillment of the promises; they had to live by faith, as well as the Hebrews, to whom the epistle was addressed. The latter, however, had privileges which were in no wise possessed by believers of former days. Neither the one nor the other was brought to perfection, that is, to the heavenly glory, unto which God has called us, and in which they are to participate. Abraham and others waited for this glory; they never possessed it: God would not give it them without us. But He has not called us by the same revelations only as those which He made to them. For the days of the rejected Messiah He had reserved some better thing. Heavenly things have become things of the present time, things fully revealed and actually possessed in spirit, by the union of the saints with Christ, and present access into the holiest through the blood of Christ.

We have not to do with a promise and a distinct view of a place approached from without, entrance to which was not yet granted, so that relationship with God would not be founded on entrance within the veil entrance into His own presence. We now go in with boldness. We belong to heaven; our citizenship is there; we are at home there. Heavenly glory is our present

portion, Christ having gone in as our forerunner. We have in heaven a Christ who is man glorified. This Abraham had not. He walked on earth with a heavenly mind, waiting for a city, feeling that nothing else would satisfy the desires which God had awakened in his heart; but he could not be connected with heaven by means of a Christ actually sitting there in glory. This is our present portion. We can even say that we are united to Him there. The Christian's position is quite different from that of Abraham. God had reserved some better thing for us.

The Spirit does not here develop the whole extent of this "better thing," because the assembly is not His subject. He presents the general thought to the Hebrews to encourage them, that believers of the present day have special privileges, which they enjoy by faith, but which did not belong even to the faith of believers in former days.

We shall be perfected, that is to say, glorified together in resurrection; but there is a special portion which belongs to the saints now, and which did not belong to the patriarchs. The fact that Christ, as man, is in heaven after having accomplished redemption, and that the Holy Ghost, by whom we are united to Christ, is on earth, made this superiority granted to Christians easily understood. Accordingly even the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest of those who preceded it.

Note #32

Indeed all that are spared for the world to come. Their state is expressed in the end of Revelation 7, as that of the Jews in the first Verses of Chapter 14.

Note #33

In general we may say that Verses 8-22 (Heb 11:8-22) are faith resting assured on the promise, the patience of faith: Verse 23 to the end (Heb 11:23-40), faith resting on God for the activities and difficulties faith leads to, the energy of faith.

Note #34

Observe that in these, cases we find the rights of Christ in resurrection; the judgment of nature, and the blessing of faith, through grace; the inheritance

of all things heavenly and earthly by Christ; and Israel's future return to their own land.

Note #35

Stand still, says Moses, and see the salvation of Jehovah.

Note #36

Crossing the Jordan represents the believer being set at liberty, and intelligently entering by faith into the heavenlies; it is conscious death and resurrection with Christ. The Red Sea is the power of redemption by Christ.

Hebrews Chapter 12

The epistle now enters on the practical exhortations that flow from its doctrinal instruction, with reference to the dangers peculiar to the Hebrew Christians - instruction suited throughout to inspire them with courage. Surrounded with a cloud of witnesses like these of Chapter 11, who all declared the advantages of a life of faith in promises still unfulfilled, they ought to feel themselves impelled to follow their steps, running with patience the race set before them, and above all looking away from every difficulty [See Note #37] to Jesus, who had run the whole career of faith, sustained by the joy that was set before Him, and, having reached the goal, had taken His seat in glory at the right hand of God.

This passage presents the Lord, not as He who bestows faith, but as He who has Himself run the whole career of faith. Others had travelled a part of the road, had surmounted some difficulties; the obedience and the perseverance of the Lord had been subjected to every trial of which human nature is susceptible. Men, the adversary, the being forsaken of God, everything was against Him. His disciples flee when He is in danger, His intimate friend betrays Him; He looks for some one to have compassion on Him and finds no one. The fathers (of whom we read in the previous Chapter) trusted in God and were delivered, but as for Jesus, He was a worm, and no man; His throat was dry with crying. His love for us, His obedience to His Father, surmounted all. He carries off the victory by submission, and takes His seat in a glory exalted in proportion to the greatness of His abasement and obedience, the only just reward for having

perfectly glorified God where He had been dishonored by sin. The joy and the rewards that are set before us are never the motives of the walk of faith we know this well with regard to Christ, but it is not the less true in our own case they are the encouragement of those who walk in it.

Jesus, then, who has attained the glory due to Him, becomes an example to us in the sufferings through which He passed in attaining it; therefore we are neither to lose courage nor to grow weary. We have not yet, like Him, lost our lives in order to glorify God and to serve Him. The way in which the apostle engages them to disentangle themselves from every hindrance, whether sin or difficulty, is remarkable; as though they had nothing to do but to cast them off as useless weights. And in fact, when we look at Jesus, nothing is easier; when we are not looking at Him, nothing more impossible.

There are two things to be cast off: every weight, and the sin that would entangle our feet (for he speaks of one who is running in the race). The flesh, the human heart, is occupied with cares and difficulties; and the more we think of them, the more we are burdened by them. It is enticed by the object of its desires, it does not free itself from them. The conflict is with a heart that loves the thing against which we strive; we do not separate ourselves from it in thought. When looking at Jesus, the new man is active; there is a new object, which unburdens and detaches us from every other by means of a new affection which has its place in a new nature: and in Jesus Himself, to whom we look, there is a positive power which sets us free.

It is by casting it all off in an absolute way that the thing is easy - by looking at that which fills the heart with other things, and occupies it in a different sphere, where a new object and a new nature act upon each other; and in that object there is a positive power which absorbs the heart and shuts out all objects that act merely on the old nature. What is felt to be a weight is easily cast off. Everything is judged of by its bearing on the object we aim at. If I run in a race and all my thought is the prize, a bag of gold is readily cast away. It is a weight. But we must look to Jesus. Only in Him can we cast off every hindrance easily and without reservation. We cannot combat sin by the flesh.

But there is another class of trials that come from without: they are not to be cast off, they must be born. Christ, as we have seen, went through them. We have not like Him resisted even to the shedding of our blood rather than fail in faithfulness and obedience. Now God acts in these trials as a father. He chastises us. They come perhaps, as in the case of Job, from the enemy, but the hand and the wisdom of God are in them. He chastises those whom He loves. We must therefore neither despise the chastisement nor be discouraged by it. We must not despise it, for He does not chastise without a motive or a cause (moreover, it is God who does it); nor must we be discouraged, for He does it in love.

If we lose our life for the testimony of the Lord and in resisting sin, the warfare is ended; and this is not chastisement, but the glory of suffering with Christ. Death in this case is the negation of sin. He who has died is free from sin; he who has suffered in the flesh has done with sin. But up to that point, the flesh in practice (for we have a right to reckon ourselves dead) is not yet destroyed; and God knows how to unite the manifestation of the faithfulness of the new man who suffers for the Lord, with the discipline by which the flesh is mortified. For example, Paul's thorn in the flesh united these two things. It was painful to him in the exercise of his ministry, for it was something that tended to make him contemptible when preaching (and this he endured for the Lord's sake), but at the same time it kept his flesh in check.

Verse 9 (Heb 12:9). Now we are subject to our natural parents, who discipline us after their own will: how much more then to the Father of spirits, [See Note #38] who makes us partakers of His own holiness! Observe here the grace that is appealed to. We have seen how much the Hebrews needed warning - their tendency was to fail in the career of faith. The means of preventing this is doubtless not to spare warning, but yet to bring the soul fully into connection with grace. This alone can give strength and courage through confidence in God.

We are not come to Mount Sinai, to the law which makes demands on us, but to Sion, where God manifested His power in re-establishing Israel by His grace in the person of the elect king, when, as to the responsibility of the people, all was entirely lost, all relationship with God impossible on that

footing, for the ark was lost; there was no longer a mercy-seat, no longer a throne of God among the people. Ichabod was written on Israel.

Therefore in speaking of holiness he says, God is active in love towards you, even in your very sufferings. It is He who has not only given free access to Himself, by the blood and by the presence of Christ in heaven for us, but who is continually occupied with all the details of your life; whose hand is in all your trials, who thinks unceasingly about you, in order to make you partakers of His holiness. This is not to require holiness on our part - necessary as it must ever be - it is in order to make us partakers of His own holiness. What immense and perfect grace! What a means! It is the means by which to enjoy God Himself perfectly.

Verse 11 (Heb 12:11). God does not expect us to find these exercises of soul pleasant at the moment (they would not produce their effect if they were so): but afterwards, the will being broken they produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The pride of man is brought down when he is obliged to submit to that which is contrary to his will. God also takes a larger (ever precious) place in his thoughts and in his life.

Verse 12 (Heb 12:12). On the principle then of grace, the Hebrews are exhorted to encourage themselves in the path of faith, and to watch against the buddings of sin among them, whether in yielding to the desires of the flesh, or in giving up christian privileges for something of the world. They were to walk so courageously that their evident joy and blessing (which is always a distinct testimony and one that triumphs over the enemy) should make the weak feel that it was their own assured portion also; and thus strength and healing would be administered to them instead of discouragement. The path of godliness as to circumstances was to be made easy, a beaten path to weak and lame souls; and they would feel more than stronger souls the comfort and value of such a path.

Grace, we have already said, is the motive given for this walk; but grace is here presented in a form that requires to be considered a little in detail.

We are not come, it says, to Mount Sinai. There the terrors of the majesty of God kept man at a distance. No one was to approach Him. Even Moses feared and trembled at the presence of Jehovah. This is not where the

Christian is brought. But, in contrast with such relationships as these with God, the whole millennial state in all its parts is developed; according however to the way in which these different parts are now known as things hoped for. We belong to it all; but evidently these things are not yet established. Let us name them: Sion; the heavenly Jerusalem; the angels and general assembly; the church of the firstborn, whose names are inscribed in heaven; God the Judge of all; the spirits of the just made perfect; Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; and finally, the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Sion we have spoken of as a principle. It is the intervention of sovereign grace (in the king) after the ruin, and in the midst of the ruin, of Israel, re-establishing the people according to the counsels of God in glory, and their relationships with God Himself. It is the rest of God on the earth, the seat of the Messiah's royal power. But, as we know, the extent of the earth is far from being the limits of the Lord's inheritance. Sion on earth is Jehovah's rest; it is not the city of the living God - the heavenly Jerusalem is that, the heavenly capital, so to speak, of His kingdom, the city that has foundations, whose founder and builder is God Himself.

Having named Sion below, the author turns naturally to Jerusalem above, but this carries him into heaven, and he finds himself with all the people of God, in the midst of a multitude of angels, the great universal assembly [See Note #39] of the invisible world. There is however one peculiar object on which his eye rests in this marvelous and heavenly scene. It is the assembly of the firstborn whose names are inscribed in heaven. They were not born there, not indigenous like the angels, whom God preserved from falling. They are the objects of the counsels of God. It is not merely that they reach heaven: they are the glorious heirs and firstborn of God, according to His eternal counsels, in accordance with which they are registered in heaven. The assembly composed of the objects of grace, now called in Christ, belongs to heaven by grace. They are not the objects of the promises, who, not having received the fulfillment of the promises on earth, do not fail to enjoy them in heaven. They have the anticipation of no other country or citizenship than heaven. The promises were not addressed to them. They have no place on earth. Heaven is prepared for them by God Himself. Their

names are inscribed there by Him. It is the highest place in heaven above the dealings of God in government, promise, and law on the earth. This leads the picture of glory on to God Himself. But (having reached the highest point, that which is most excellent in grace) He is seen under another character, namely, as the Judge of all, as looking down from on high to judge all that is below. This introduces another class of these blessed inhabitants of the heavenly glory: those whom the righteous Judge owned as His before the heavenly assembly was revealed, the spirits of the just arrived at perfection. They had finished their course, they had overcome in conflict, they were waiting only for glory. They had been connected with the dealings of God on the earth, but - faithful before the time for its blessing was come - they had their rest and their portion in heaven.

It was the purpose of God nevertheless to bless the earth. He could not do so according to man's responsibility: His people even were but as grass. He would therefore establish a new covenant with Israel, a covenant of pardon, and according to which He would write the law in the hearts of His people. The Mediator of this covenant had already appeared and had done all that was required for its establishment. The saints among the Hebrews were come to the Mediator of the new covenant: blessing was thus prepared for the earth and secured to it.

Finally, the blood of Christ had been shed on earth, as that of Abel by Cain; but, instead of crying from the earth for vengeance, so that Cain became a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth (a striking type of the Jew, guilty of the death of Christ), it is grace that speaks; and the shed blood cries to obtain pardon and peace for those who shed it.

It will be observed that, although speaking of the different parts of millennial blessing, with its foundations, all is given according to the present condition of things, before the coming of that time of blessing from God. We are in it as to our relationships; but the spirits of the just men of the Old Testament only are here spoken of, and only the Mediator of this new covenant: the covenant itself is not established. The blood cries, but the answer in earthly blessing has not yet come. This is easily understood. It is exactly according to the existing state of things, and even throws considerable light on the position of the Hebrew Christians and on the

doctrine of the epistle. The important thing for them was, that they should not turn away from Him who spoke from heaven. It was with Him they had to do. We have seen them connected with all that went before, with the Lord's testimony on earth; but in fact they had to do at that time with the Lord Himself as speaking from heaven. His voice then shook the earth; but now, speaking with the authority of grace and from heaven, He announced the dissolution of everything which the flesh could lean upon, or on which the creature could rest its hopes.

All that could be shaken should be dissolved. How much more fatal to turn away from Him that speaketh now, than from the commandments even of Sinai! This shaking of all things (whether here or in the analogous passage in 2 Peter) evidently goes beyond Judaism, but has a peculiar application to it. Judaism was the system and the frame of the relationships of God with men on earth according to the principle of responsibility on their part. All this was of the first creation, but its springs were poisoned; heaven, the seat of the enemy's power, perverted and corrupted; the heart of man on earth was corrupt and rebellious. God will shake and change all things. The result will be a new creation in which righteousness shall dwell.

Meanwhile the first fruits of this new creation were being formed; and in Christianity God was forming the heavenly part of the kingdom that cannot be moved; and Judaism - the center of the earthly system and of human responsibility - was passing away. The apostle therefore announces the shaking of all things - that everything which exists as the present creation shall be set aside. With regard to the present fact he says only, "we receive a kingdom that cannot be moved"; and calls us to serve God with true piety, because our God is a consuming fire; not - as people say - God out of Christ, but our God. This is His character in holy majesty and in righteous judgment of evil.

Note #37

It is not insensibility to them, but, when they are felt to be there, looking from them to Christ. This is the secret of faith. "Be careful for nothing" need not have been said, if nothing had been there calculated to awaken care. Abraham considered not his body now dead.

Note #38

"Father of spirits" is simply in contrast with "fathers of our flesh."

Note #39

The word here translated "assembly" was that of all the states of Greece; that of the "firstborn" is the word for the assembly of citizens of any particular state.

Hebrews Chapter 13

In this next Chapter there is more than one truth important to notice. The exhortations are as simple as they are weighty, and require but few remarks. They rest in the sphere in which the whole of the epistle does: what relates to the Christian's path as walking here, not what flows from union with Christ in heavenly places. Brotherly love, hospitality, care for those in bonds, the strict maintenance of the marriage tie and persona! purity, the avoiding of covetousness: such are the subjects of exhortation, all important and connected with the gracious walk of a Christian, but not drawn from the higher and more heavenly sources and principles of the christian life as we see in Ephesians and Colossians. Nor, even though there be more analogy for the Epistle to the Romans rests in general in life in Christ in this world, presenting Christ's resurrection, without going on to His ascension [See Note #40] are the exhortations such as in this latter epistle. Those which follow connect themselves with the circumstances in which the Hebrews found themselves, and rest on the approaching abolition and judgment of Judaism, from which they had now definitely to separate themselves.

In exhorting them (Heb 13:7) to remember those who have guided the flock, he speaks of those already departed in contrast with those still living. (Heb 13:17) The issue of their faith might well encourage others to follow their steps, to walk by those principles of faith which had led them to so noble a result.

Moreover Christ never changed; He was the same yesterday, today, and for ever. Let them abide in the simplicity and integrity of faith. Nothing is a plainer proof that the heart is not practically in possession of that which gives rest in Christ, that it does not realise what Christ is, than the restless

search after something new "divers and strange doctrines." To grow in the knowledge of Christ is our life and our privilege. The search after novelties which are foreign to Him, is a proof of not being satisfied with Him. But he who is not satisfied with Jesus does not know Him, or, at least, has forgotten Him. It is impossible to enjoy Him, and not to feel that He is everything, that is to say, that He satisfies us, and that by the nature of what He is, He shuts out everything else.

Now with regard to Judaism, in which the Hebrews were naturally inclined to seek satisfaction for the flesh, the apostle goes farther. They were no longer Jews in the possession of the true worship of God, a privileged worship in which others had no right to participate. The altar of God belonged now to the Christians. Christians only had a right to it. An earthly worship, in which there was no entering within the veil, into God's own presence in the sanctuary, could no longer subsist a worship that had its worldly glory, that belonged to the elements of this world and had its place there. Now, it is either heaven or the cross and shame. The great sacrifice for sin has been offered; but by its efficacy, it brings us into the sanctuary, into heaven itself, where the blood has been carried in; and on the other hand it takes us outside the camp, a religious people connected with the world down here, into shame and rejection on earth. This is the portion of Christ. In heaven He is accepted, He has gone in with His own blood on earth cast out and despised.

A worldly religion, which forms a system in which the world can walk, and in which the religious element is adapted to man on the earth, is the denial of Christianity.

Here we have no continuing city, we seek the one which is to come. By Christ we offer our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. By sharing also our goods with others, by doing good in every way we offer sacrifices with which God is well pleased. (Ver 16).

He then exhorts them to obey those who, as responsible to God, watch over souls, and who go before the saints in order to lead them on. It is a proof of that humble spirit of grace which seeks only to please the Lord.

The sense of this responsibility makes Paul ask the saints to pray for him, but with the declaration that he had assuredly a good conscience. We serve God, we act for Him, when He is not obliged to be acting on us. That is to say, the Spirit of God acts by our means when He has not to occupy us with ourselves. When the latter is the case, one could not ask for the prayers of saints as a labourer. While the Spirit is exercising us in our conscience, we cannot call our selves labourers of God. When the conscience is good we can ask unreservedly for the prayers of the saints. The apostle so much the more asked for them because he hoped thus the sooner to see them again.

Finally, he invokes blessing upon them, giving God the title he so often ascribes to Him " the God of peace." In the midst of exercise of heart with regard to the Hebrews, of arguments to preserve their love from growing cold, in the midst of the moral unsteadiness that enfeebled the walk of these Christians, and their trials in the breaking down of what they considered stable and holy, this title has a peculiarly precious character.

The Spirit sets them also in the presence of a risen Christ, of a God who had founded and secured peace by the death of Christ, and had given a proof of it in His resurrection. He had brought Christ again from the dead according to the power of the blood of the everlasting [See Note #41] covenant. On this blood the believing people might build a hope that nothing could shake. For it was not, as at Sinai, promises founded on the condition of the people's obedience, but on the ransom which had been paid, and the perfect expiation of their disobedience. The blessing was therefore unchangeable, the covenant (as the inheritance and the redemption) was everlasting. He prays that the God who had wrought it, would work in them to grant them full power and energy for the accomplishment of His will, working Himself in them that which was well pleasing in His sight.

He urges them to give heed to exhortation; he had only sent them a few words.

He who wrote the letter desires they should know that Timothy had been set at liberty; he himself was so already; he was in Italy; circumstances which tend to confirm the idea that it was Paul who wrote this letter a very interesting point, although in nowise affecting its authority.

It is the Spirit of God who everywhere gives His own authority to the word.

Note #40

It is only spoken of in Heb 8:34, and an allusion in Heb 10:6.

Note #41

The word "everlasting" is specific, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in contrast with a system which was passing away. It speaks of eternal redemption, eternal inheritance, the eternal Spirit even.

JAMES

James Chapter 1

James 1:1

jam 1:1

The Epistle of James is not addressed to the assembly, and does not take the ground of apostolic authority over the persons to whom it is sent. It is a practical exhortation which still recognises the twelve tribes and the connection of the christian Jews with them, as John addressed the Gentiles, although the Jewish people had their place before God. Thus the Spirit of God still acknowledges here the relationship with Israel, as in the other case the relationship with Gentiles, and the rights of God which are unchangeable, whatever may be the special privileges granted to the assembly or to Israel respectively. We know that historically the christian Jews remained Jews to the end of the New Testament history, and were even zealous for the law to us a strange thing, but which God endured for a time.

The doctrine of Christianity is not the subject of this epistle. It gives God His place in the conscience, and with regard to all that surrounds us. It thus girds up the loins of the Christina, presenting also the near coming of the Lord and His present discipline a discipline with respect to which the assembly of God ought to possess intelligence, and activity founded thereon. The world also, and all that makes an appearance in it, is judged from God's point of view.

A few remarks on the position of Christians (that is, on the way in which this position is viewed with respect to Israel) will help us to understand this portion of the word.

Israel is still regarded as the people of God. To the faith of James the nation has still the relationship which God had given it towards Himself. The Christians in it are addressed as still forming part of a people whose links

with God were not yet judicially broken: but it was only the Christians among them who possessed the faith which the Spirit gave in the true Messiah. These only among the people, with the writer, acknowledged Jesus as the Lord of glory. With the exception of Verses 14, 15, in Chapter 5 (Jam 5:14-15), this epistle contains no exhortation which, in its spiritual height, goes beyond that which might be addressed to a godly Jew. It supposes indeed that the persons to whom it speaks have faith in the Lord Jesus; but it does not call them to that which is exclusively proper to Christianity and depends on its privileges. The exhortations flow from that higher source and breathe the more heavenly atmosphere, but the effect they aim at producing consists in real proofs of religion here below; they are such as might be heard in the professing church a vast body like Israel, in the midst of which some Christians existed.

The epistle is not founded on christian relationships here below. It acknowledges them; but only as one fact in the midst of others, which have rights over the conscience of the writer. It supposes those whom it addresses to be in a relationship with God, which is known, unquestioned, and of ancient date; in the midst of which Christianity has been introduced.

It is important to notice the moral measure of the life which this epistle presents. As soon as we apprehend the position in which it views believers, the discernment of the truth on this point is not difficult. It is the same as that which Christ presented when walking in the midst of Israel and setting before His disciples the light, and the relationships with God, which resulted to them from His presence. Now indeed He was absent; but that light and those relationships are retained as the measure of responsibility. And this the Lord's return would vindicate by judgment on those who refused to accept and walk in it. Until that day the faithful were to be patient in the midst of the oppression they were suffering from on the part of the Jews, who still blasphemed the holy name by which they were called.

It is the converse of the Epistle to the Hebrews with regard to their relationship with the Jewish nation; not morally, but because of the nearness of the judgment when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written.

The fundamental principles of the position that we have been speaking of are as follows: the law in its spirituality and perfection, as stated and summed up by Christ; a life imparted, which has the moral principles of the law, itself a divine life; the revelation of the Father's name. All this was true when the Lord was on the earth, and was the ground on which (however poorly they understood it) He then placed His disciples. He told them that they were to be witnesses of it, as of all He had said, after His death, distinguishing this testimony from that of the Holy Ghost.

It is this which James teaches here, with the addition of that which the Lord had also said that He would come again. It is the doctrine of Christ with regard to walk in the midst of Israel, according to the light and the truths which He had introduced; and seeing that He was still absent an exhortation to perseverance and patience in that walk, waiting for the moment when, by judgment on those who oppressed them, He would vindicate the principles on which they walked.

Although the judgment executed on Jerusalem changed the position of the remnant of Israel in this respect, yet the life of Christ remains ever our model: and we have to wait with patience until the Lord come. We have not in this epistle the association of the Christian with Christ exalted on high, nor consequently the thought of going to meet Him in the air, as Paul taught. But that which it contains ever remains true; and he who says that he abides in Him (Christ) ought also to walk even as He walked. The judgment that was coming makes us understand the way in which James speaks of the world, of the rich who rejoice in their portion in the world, and the position of the believing remnant oppressed and suffering in the midst of the unbelieving nation; why he begins with the subject of the tribulations and so often recurs to it: why also he insists on practical evidences of faith. He still sees all Israel together; but some had received faith in the Lord of glory, and these were tempted to value the rich and the great in Israel. All being still Jews, we can easily understand that, while some truly believed and confessed their belief that Jesus was the Christ, yet, as these Christians followed the Jewish ordinances, mere professors might do as much without the least vital change being proved by their works. It is evident that a faith like this has no value whatever. It is precisely the faith of those who clamour for works in

the present day a mere dead profession of the truth of Christianity. To be begotten by the word of truth is as foreign and strange to them as to the Jews of whom James is speaking.

Believers being thus placed in the midst of Israel with some who merely professed faith, we can readily understand the apostle's address to the mass as those who might share in the privileges that existed in their midst; his address to Christians as having a special place in their own; and his warning to those who called themselves believers in Christ. Most easy and perfectly clear is the practical application to all times, and in particular when a mass of persons assume a right by inheritance to the privileges of the people of God. Besides this, the epistle has peculiar force for the individual conscience; it judges the position one is in, and the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The epistle then begins with an exhortation to rejoice in trial, as a means of producing patience. This subject in the main continues to the end of Verse 20 (Jam 1:20), where the idea turns towards the necessity of curbing everything that opposes itself to patience, and towards the true character of one who stands in the presence of God. This address, as a whole, ends with the 1st Chapter. The connection of the reasoning is not always easy to find; the key to it is the moral condition with which the apostle's mind is occupied. I will endeavour to make the connection more apparent.

The subject in the main is, that we ought to walk before God to shew the reality of our profession in contrast with union with the world practical religion. Patience then must have its perfect work; thus self-will is subdued, and the whole of God's will is accepted; consequently nothing is wanting to the practical life of the soul. The believer may suffer; but he patiently waits on the Lord. This Christ did; it was His perfection. He waited for the will of God, and never did His own will: thus obedience was perfect, man thoroughly tested. But in fact we often lack wisdom to know what we ought to do. Here it says the resource is evident: we are to ask wisdom from God. He gives to all liberally; only we must count upon His faithfulness and upon an answer to our prayers. Otherwise the heart is double; there is dependence elsewhere than on God; our desires have another object. If we only seek that which God wills and that which God does, we depend securely on Him to accomplish it; and as to the circumstances of this world,

which might make one believe that it was useless to depend on God, they vanish away as the flower of the field. We ought to have the consciousness that our place according to God is not that which is of this world. He who is in a low station should rejoice that Christianity exalts him; the rich, that it humbles him. It is not in riches that we are to rejoice (they pass away), but in the exercises of heart of which the apostle had been speaking; for after having been tried we shall receive the crown of life.

The life of one who is thus tried, and in whom this life develops itself in obedience to the entire will of God, is well worth that of a man who indulges all the desires of his heart in luxury.

Now with regard to temptations of this last character, into which the lusts of the heart cause men to fall, it must not be said that these lusts come from God: the heart of man is their source its lusts which lead through sin to death. Let no one deceive himself on this point. That which inwardly tempts the heart comes from oneself. All good and perfect gifts come from God, and He never changes, He does nothing but good. Accordingly He has given us a new nature, the fruit of His work will be working in us by the word of truth, in order that we should be as it were firstfruits of His creatures. The Father of lights, that which is darkness does not come from Him.

By the word of truth He has begotten us to be the first and most excellent witnesses of that power of good which will shine forth hereafter in the new creation, of which we are the firstfruits. This is the opposite of being the source of corrupt desires. The word of truth is the good seed of life; self-will is the cradle of our lusts its energy can never produce the fruits of divine nature; nor the wrath of man the righteousness of God. Therefore we are called to be docile, to be ready to hear, slow to speak slow to wrath, to lay aside all filthiness of the flesh, all energy of iniquity, and to receive the word with meekness a word which, while it is the word of God, identifies itself with the new nature that is in us (it is planted in us) while forming and developing it according to its own perfection; because this nature itself has its origin from God through the word. It is not as a law which is outside us, and which, being opposed to our sinful nature, condemns us. This word saves the soul; it is living and quickening, and it works livingly in a nature that flows from it, and which it forms and enlightens.

But it is necessary to be doers of the word, not merely to hear it with the ear, but that it should produce the practical fruits which are the proof that it works really and vitally in the heart. Otherwise the word is only as a mirror in which we may perhaps see ourselves for a moment, and then forget what we have seen. He who looks into the perfect law, which is that of liberty, and continues in it, doing the work which it presents, shall be blessed in the real and obedient activity developed in him. The law is perfect; for the word of God, all that the Spirit of God has expressed, is the expression of the nature and the character of God, of that which He is and of that which He wills: for, when fully revealed (and till then man cannot fully know Him), He wills that which He is, and this necessarily.

This law is the law of liberty, because the same word which reveals what God is and what He wills has made us partakers by divine grace of the divine nature; so that not to walk according to that word would be not to walk according to our own new nature. Now to walk according to our own new nature, and that the nature of God, and guided by His word, is true liberty.

The law given on Sinai was the expression in man, written not on the heart but outside man, of what man's conduct and heart ought to be according to the will of God. It represses and condemns all the motions of the natural man, and cannot allow him to have a will, for he ought to do the will of God. But he has another will, and therefore the law is bondage to him, a law of condemnation and death. Now, God having begotten us by the word of truth, the nature that we have, as thus born of God, possesses tastes and desires according to that word; it is of that very word. The word in its own perfection develops this nature, forms it, enlightens it, as we have said; but the nature itself has its liberty in following it. Thus it was with Christ; if His liberty could have been taken away (which was spiritually impossible), it would have been by preventing Him from doing the will of God the Father.

It is the same with the new man in us (which is Christ as life in us) which is created in us according to God in righteousness and true holiness, produced in us by the word, which is the perfect revelation of God of the whole divine nature in man; of which Christ, the living Word, the image of the invisible God, is the manifestation and the pattern. The liberty of the new man is liberty to do the will of God, to imitate God in character, as being His dear

child according as that character was presented in Christ. The law of liberty is this character, as it is revealed in the word, in which the new nature finds its joy and satisfaction; even as it drew its existence from the word which reveals Him, and from the God who is therein revealed.

Such is the "law of liberty" the character of God Himself in us formed by the operation of a nature, begotten through the word which reveals Him, moulding itself upon the word.

The first and most sifting index of the inner man is the tongue. A man who appears to be in relationship with God and to honour Him, yet who cannot bridle his tongue, deceives himself, and his religion is vain.

Pure religion before God and the Father is to care for those who, reached in the tenderest relationships by the wages of sin, are deprived of their natural supports; and to keep oneself untainted by the world. Instead of striving to exalt oneself and gain reputation in a world of vanity, afar from God, our activities turn, as God does, to the sorrowful, who in their affliction, need succour; and we keep ourselves from a world in which everything is defiling, and contrary to the new nature which is our life, and to the character of God as we know it by the word.

James Chapter 2

The apostle now enters on the subject of those who professed to believe that Jesus was Christ the Lord. Before, in Chapter 1, he had spoken of the new nature in connection with God: here the profession of faith in Christ is brought to the same touchstone the reality of the fruits produced by it in contrast with this world. All these principles the value of the name of Jesus, the essence of the law as Christ presented it, and the law of liberty are brought forward to test the reality of their professed faith, or to convince the professor that he did not possess it. Two things are reprobated: having respect to the outward appearance of persons; and the absence of good works as a proof of the sincerity of the profession.

First, then, he blames respect for outward appearance of persons. They profess faith in the Lord Jesus, and yet hold with the spirit of the world! He replies that God has chosen the poor, making them rich in faith and heirs of

the kingdom. These professors had despised them; these rich men blasphemed the name of Christ and persecuted Christians.

In the second place he appeals to the practical summary of the law, of which Jesus had spoken the royal law. They broke the law itself in favouring the rich. Now the law did not allow of any infraction whatsoever of its commands, because the authority of the legislator was concerned. In despising the poor, they were assuredly not loving their neighbor as themselves.

In the third place they ought to walk as those whose responsibility was measured by the law of liberty, in which possessing a nature which tasted and loved that which was of God they were set free from all that was contrary to Him; so that they could not excuse themselves if they admitted principles which were not those of God Himself. This introduction of the divine nature leads the apostle on to speak of the mercy by which God glorifies Himself. The man who shews no mercy will find himself the object of the judgment which he has loved.

The second part of the Chapter is connected with this; for he begins his discourse on works, as proofs of faith, by speaking of this mercy which answers to the nature and character of God, of which, as born of Him, the true christian is made a partaker. The profession of having faith without this life the existence of which is proved by works can profit no one. This is plain enough. I say the profession of having faith, because the epistle say it: "If a man say he hath faith." This is the key to this part of the epistle. He says it: where is the proof of it? Works are the proof; and it is in this way that the apostle uses them. A man says he hath faith. It is not a thing that we can see. I say therefore with reason, "Shew it me." This is the evidence of faith which is required for man it is only by its fruits that we make it evident to men; for the faith itself cannot be seen. But if I produce these fruits, then assuredly I have the root, without which there could not be the fruits. Thus faith does not shew itself to others, nor can I recognise it, without works; but works, the fruit of faith, prove the existence of faith.

That which follows shews that he is speaking of the profession of a doctrine, true perhaps in itself-of certain truths being confessed; for it is a real faith

looked at certainty of knowledge and conviction which devils have in the unity of the Godhead. They do not doubt it; but there is no link at all between their heart and God by means of a new nature far indeed from it.

But the apostle confirms this, by the case of men in whom the opposition to the divine nature is not so apparent. Faith, the recognition of the truth with respect to Christ, is dead without works; that is, such a faith as produces none is dead.

We see (ver 16) that the faith of which the apostle speaks is a profession devoid of reality; Verse 16 (Jam 2:16) shews that it may be an unfeigned certainty that the thing is true: but the life begotten by the word, so that a relationship is formed between the soul and God, is entirely wanting. Because this takes place through the word, it is faith; being begotten of God we have a new life. This life acts, that is to say, faith acts, according to the relationship with God, by works which flow naturally from it, and which bear testimony to the faith that produced them.

From Verse 20 to the end (Jam 2:20-26) he presents a fresh proof of his thesis, founded on the last principle that I have mentioned. Now these proofs have nothing at all to do with the fruits of a kindly nature (for there are such), appertaining to us as creatures but not to that life which has for its source the word of God, by which He begets us. The fruits of which the apostle speaks, bear testimony by their very character to the faith that produced them. Abraham offered up his son; Rahab received the messengers of Israel, associating herself with the people of God when everything was against them, and separating herself from her own people by faith. All sacrificed for God, all given up for His people before they had gained one victory, and while the world was in full power, such were the fruits of faith. One referred to God; and believed Him in the most absolute way, against all that is in nature of on which nature can count; the other owned God's people, when all was against them; but neither was the fruit of an amiable nature or natural good, such as men call good works. One was a father going to put his son to death, the other a bad woman betraying her country. Certainly the scripture was fulfilled which said that Abraham believed God. How could he have acted as he did, if he had not believed Him? Works put a seal on his faith: and faith without works is but like the

body without the soul, and outward form devoid of the life that animates it. Faith acts in the works (without it the works are a nullity, they are not those of the new life), and the works complete the faith which acts in them; for in spite of trial, and in the trial, faith is in activity. Works of law have no part in it. The outward law which exacts, is not a life which produces (apart from this divine nature)s these holy and loving dispositions which, having God and His people for their object, value nothing else.

James, remark, never says that works justify us before God; for God can see the faith without its works. He knows that life is there. It is in exercise with regard to Him, towards Him, by trust in His word, in Himself, by receiving His testimony in spite of everything within and without. This God sees and knows. But when our fellow-creatures are in question, when it must be said "shew me," then faith, life, shews itself in works.

James Chapter 3

In Chapter 3 the apostle recurs to the tongue, the most ready index to the heart, the proof whether the new man is inaction, whether nature and self-will are under restraint. But there is hardly anything here which needs remark, although much that demands the hearing ear. Where there is the divine life, knowledge does not display itself in mere words, but in the walk and by works in which the meekness of true wisdom will be seen. Bitterness and contention are not the fruits of a wisdom that comes from above, but are earthly, of the nature of a man, and of the enemy.

The wisdom that comes from above, having its place in the life, in the heart, has three characteristics. First of all, the character of purity, for the heart is in communion with God has intercourse with Him (therefore there must needs be this purity). Next, it is peaceable, gentle, ready to yield to the will of another. Then, full of good works, acting by a principle which, as its origin and motives are from above, does good without partiality; that is to say, its action is not guided by the circumstances which influence the flesh and the passions of men. For the same reason it is sincere and unfeigned. Purity, absence of will and self, activity in good, such are the characteristics of heavenly wisdom.

These directions to bridle the tongue, as the first movement and expression of the will of the natural man, extend to believers. There are not to be (as to the inward disposition of the man) many teachers. We all fail; and to teach others and fail ourselves only increases our condemnation. For vanity can easily be fed in teaching others; and that is a very different thing from having the life quickened by the power of truth. The Holy Ghost bestows His gifts as He pleases. The apostle speaks here of the propensity in any one to teach, not of the gift he may have received for teaching.

James Chapter 4

In all that follows we have still the judgment of unbridled nature, of will in its different forms: contentions that arise from the lusts of the natural heart; request made to God proceeding from the same source; the desires of the flesh and of the mind developing themselves and finding their sphere in the friendship of the world, which is thus enmity against God. The nature of man covets enviously, is full of envy with regard to others. But God gives more grace: there is counteracting power, if one is content to be little and humble, to be as nothing in the world. The grace and favour of God are with such an one; for He resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Upon this, the apostle unfolds the action of a soul directed by the Spirit of God, in the midst of the unbelieving and selfish multitude with whom it was associated. (Jam 4:6-10) For he still supposes the believers whom he addressed to be in connection with the law. If they spoke evil of their brother, to whom the law gave a place before God, they spoke evil of the law, [See Note #1] according to which his value was so great. Judgment belonged to God, who had given the law, and who would vindicate His own authority as well as grant deliverance and salvation.

Verses 13-16 (Jam 4:13-16). The same self-will and forgetfulness of God are blamed, the false confidence that flows from reckoning upon being able to do as one pleases the absence of dependence on God. Verse 17 (Jam 4:17) is a general conclusion, founded on the principle already suggested (Jam 3:1), and on that which is said with regard to faith. The knowledge of good, without its practice, causes even the absence of the work which one could have performed to be a positive sin. The action of the new man is absent, that of the old man is present; for the good is before our eyes we know

what we ought to do, and do not choose to do it; there is no inclination to do it we will not do it.

Note #1

Compare Th1 4:8 where the Spirit takes the place of the law here.

James Chapter 5

The two classes in Israel are distinctly marked here in contrast with one another, with the addition of the walk which the Christian ought to pursue when chastised by the Lord.

The apostle gives the coming of the Lord as the term of their condition, both to the unbelieving rich oppressors in Israel, and to the poor believing remnant. The rich have heaped up treasures for the last days; the oppressed poor are to be patient until the Lord Himself shall come to deliver them. Moreover, he says, deliverance would not be delayed. The husbandman waits for the rain and the times of harvest; the Christian for his Master's coming. This patience characterizes, as we have seen, the walk of faith. It had been witnessed in the prophets; and in the case of others we count them happy which endure afflictions for the Lord's sake. Job shews us the ways of the Lord: he needed to have patience, but the end of the Lord was blessing and tender mercy towards him.

This expectation of the coming of the Lord was a solemn warning, and at the same time the strongest encouragement, but one which maintained the true character of the Christian's practical life. It shewed also what the selfishness of man's will would end in, and it restrained all action of that will in believers. The feelings of brethren towards each other were placed under the safeguard of this same truth. They were not to have a spirit of discontent, or to murmur against others who were perhaps more favoured in their outward circumstances: "the judge stood before the door."

Oaths displayed still more the forgetfulness of God, and the actings consequently of the self-will of nature. "Yea," ought to be yea, and "Nay," nay. The actings of the divine nature in the consciousness of the presence of God, and the repression of all human will and of sinful nature, is what the writer of this epistle desires.

Now there were resources in Christianity both for joy and sorrow. If any were afflicted, let them pray (God was ready to hear); if happy, let them sing; if sick, send for the elders of the assembly, who would pray for the sufferer and anoint him, and the chastisement would be removed, and the sins for which, according to God's government, he was thus chastised, would be forgiven as regards that government; for it is that only which is here spoken of.

The imputation of sin for condemnation has no place here. The efficacy of the prayer of faith is set before us; but it is in connection with the maintenance of sincerity of heart. The government of God is exercised with regard to His people. He chastises them by sickness; and it is important that truth in the inner man should be maintained. Men hide their faults; they desire to walk as if all were going on well; but God judges His people. He tries the heart and the reins. They are held in bonds of affliction. God shews them their faults, or their unbroken self-will. Man "is chastened also with pain upon his bed and the multitude of his bones with strong pain." (Job 33:19) And now the church of God intervenes in charity, and according to its own order, by means of the elders; the sick man commits himself to God, confessing his state of need; the charity of the church acts and brings him who is chastised, according to this relationship, before God for that is where the church is. Faith pleads this relationship of grace; the sick man is healed. If sins and not merely the need of discipline were the cause of his chastisement, those sins will not hinder his being healed, they shall be forgiven him.

The apostle then presents the principle in general as the course for all, namely, to open their hearts to each other, in order to maintain truth in the inner man as to oneself; and to pray for each other in order that charity should be in full exercise with regard to the faults of others; grace and truth being thus spiritually formed in the church, and a perfect union of heart among Christians, so that even their faults are an occasion for the exercise of charity (as in God towards us), and entire confidence in each other, according to that charity, such as is felt towards a restoring and pardoning God. What a beautiful picture is presented of divine principles animating

men and causing them to act according to the nature of God Himself, and the influence of His love upon the heart.

We may remark, that it is not confession to the elders that is spoken of. That would have been confidence in men official confidence. God desires the operation of divine charity in all. Confession to one another shews the condition of the church, and God would have the church to be in such a state, that love should so reign in it, that they should be so near to God, as to be able to treat the transgressor according to the grace they know in Him: and that this love should be so realised, that perfect inward sincerity should be produced by the confidence and operation of grace. Official confession destroys all this is contrary to it. How divine the wisdom which omitted confession when speaking of the elders, but which commands it as the living and voluntary impression of the heart!

This leads us also to the value of the energetic prayers of the righteous man. It is his nearness to God, the sense that he has consequently of that which God is, which (through grace and the operation of the Spirit) gives him this power. God takes account of men, and that according to the infinitude of His love. He takes account of the trust in Himself, the faith in His word, shewn by one who thinks and acts according to a just appreciation of what He is. That is always faith, which makes sensible to us that which we do not see God Himself, who acts in accordance with the revelation that He has given of Himself. Now the man who in the practical sense is righteous through grace, is near to God; as being righteous, he has not to do with God for himself with regard to sin, which would keep his heart at a distance; his heart is thus free to draw nigh to God, according to His holy nature on behalf of others; and, moved by the divine nature, which animates him and which enables him to appreciate God, he seeks, according to the activity of that nature, that his prayers may prevail with God whether for the good of others or for the glory of God Himself in His service. And God answers, according to that same nature, by blessing this trust and responding to it, in order to manifest what He is for faith, to encourage it by sanctioning its activity, putting His seal on the man who walks by faith. [See Note #2]

The Spirit of God acts we know in all this; but the apostle does not here speak of Him, being occupied with the practical effect, and presenting the

man as he is seen, acting under the influence of this nature in its positive energy with regard to God, and near to Him, so that it acts in all its intensity, moved by the power of that nearness. But if we consider the action of the Spirit, these thoughts are confirmed. The righteous man does not grieve the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit works in him according to His own power, but acting in the man according to the power of his communion.

Finally, we have the assurance that the ardent and energetic prayer of the righteous man has great efficacy: it is the prayer of faith, which knows God and counts upon Him and draws near Him. The case of Elijah is interesting, as shewing us (and there are other examples of the same kind) how the Holy Ghost acts inwardly in a man where we see the outward manifestation of power. In the history we have Elijah's declaration: "Jehovah liveth, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." This is the authority, the power, exercised in the name of Jehovah. In our epistle the secret operation, that which passes between the soul and God, is set forth. He prayed, and God heard him. We have the same testimony on the part of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus. Only that in the latter case we have the two together, except that the prayer itself is not given unless in the unutterable groan of Christ's spirit.

Comparing Galatians 2 with the history in Acts 15, we find a revelation from God which determined Paul's conduct, whatever outward motives there may have been which were known to all. By such cases as those which the apostle proposes to the church, and those of Elijah and the Lord Jesus, a God, living acting, and interesting Himself in all that happens among His people, is revealed to us.

There is also the activity of love towards those who err. If any one departs from the truth, and they bring him back by grace, let it be known that to bring back a sinner from the error of his ways is the exercise simple as our action in it may be of power that delivers a soul from death; accordingly all those sins which spread themselves in their odious nature before the eyes of God, and offended His glory and His heart by their presence in His universe, are covered. The soul being brought to God by grace, all its sins are pardoned, appear no more, are blotted out from before the face of God. The apostle (as throughout) does not speak of the power that acts in this work

of love, but of the fact. He applies it to cases that had happened among them; but he establishes a universal principle with regard to the activity of grace in the heart that is animated by it. The erring soul is saved; the sin put away from before God.

Charity in the assembly suppresses, so to speak, the sins which otherwise would destroy union and overcome that charity in the assembly, and appear in all their deformity and all their malignancy before God. Whereas, being met by love in the assembly, they go no farther, are, as it were (as regards the state of things before God in this world). dissolved and put away by the charity which they could not vanquish. The sin is vanquished by the love which dealt with it, disappears, is swallowed up by it. Thus love covers a multitude of sins. Here it is its action in the conversion of a sinner.

Note #2

It is well to remember that this is carried out in respect of the governing ways of God, and thus under the title of Lord a place which Christ specially holds, though here the term is used generally. Compare Jam 5:11, and the general Jewish reference of the passage. To us we have one God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ. He is become Lord and Christ, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

1 PETER

1 Peter Chapter 1

1 Peter 1:1

pe1 1:1

The First Epistle of Peter is addressed to believers among the dispersed of Israel found in those provinces of Asia Minor Which are named in the first Verse; the Second Epistle declares itself to be a second addressed to the same persons: so that the one and the other were destined for the Jews of Asia Minor (that is, to those among them who had the same precious faith as the apostle).

The First Epistle is founded on the doctrine of the heavenly calling (I do not say of the assembly on earth, [See Note #1] which is not brought before us here) in contrast with the portion of the Jews on the earth. It presents Christians, and in particular Christians among the Jews, as pilgrims and strangers on earth. The conduct suited to such is more largely developed than the doctrine. The Lord Jesus, who was Himself a pilgrim and a stranger here, is presented as a pattern in more than one aspect. Both epistles pursue the righteous government of God from the beginning to the consummation of all things, in which the elements melt with fervent heat, and there are new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. The first gives the government of God in favour of believers, the second in the judgment of the wicked.

Nevertheless, in presenting the heavenly calling, the apostle necessarily presents salvation the deliverance of the soul in contrast with the temporal deliverance of the Jews.

The following is the description which the Spirit gives of these believers. They are elect, and that according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Israel was a nation elected on the earth by Jehovah. Here, it is those who were foreknown of the Father. The means by which their election is carried

out is sanctification of the Holy Ghost. They are really set apart by the power of the Spirit. Israel was set apart by ordinances; but these are sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ and for the sprinkling of His blood, that is to say, on the one hand to obey as He obeyed, and on the other to be sprinkled with His blood and thus to be perfectly clear before God. Israel had been set apart for the obedience of the law, and for that blood which, while it announced death as the sanction of its authority, could never cleanse the soul from sin.

Such was the Christian's position. The apostle wishes them grace and peace the known portion of believers. He reminds them of the blessings with which God had blessed them, blessing God who had bestowed them. Believing Israelites knew Him now, not in the character of Jehovah, but as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That which the apostle presents as the fruit of His grace, is a hope beyond this world; not the inheritance of Canaan, appropriate to man living on the earth, which was the hope of Israel, and is still that of the unbelieving nation. The mercy of God had begotten them again for a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from out of the dead. This resurrection shewed them a portion in another world, and the power which brought man into it, although he had been subjected to death: he would enter it by resurrection, through the glorious triumph of the Saviour, to share an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The apostle is not speaking of our resurrection with Christ; he views the Christian as a pilgrim here, encouraged by the triumph of Christ Himself in resurrection, which animated him by the consciousness that there was a world of light and happiness before him, and a power which would bring him into this world. Consequently the inheritance is spoken of as "reserved in heaven." In the Epistle to the Ephesians we are seated in the heavenlies in Christ, and the inheritance is that of all things of which Christ Himself is heir. But the Christian is also in fact a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth; and it is a strong consolation to us, in our pilgrimage, to see this heavenly inheritance before us, as a certain pledge of our own entrance into it.

Another inestimable consolation is added. If the inheritance is preserved in heaven for us, we are kept by the power of God all through our pilgrimage

that we may enjoy it at the end. Sweet thought! we are kept here below through all our dangers and difficulties; and, on the other hand, the inheritance there, where there is no defilement or possibility of decay.

But it is by moral means that this power preserves us (and it is in this way that Peter always speaks), by the operation in us of grace, which fixes the heart on objects that keep it in connection with God and with His promise. (Compare 2 Peter i. 4.) We are kept by the power of God through faith. It is, God be praised, the power of God Himself; but it acts by sustaining faith in the heart, maintaining it in spite of all temptations above all the defilement of the world, and filling the affection with heavenly things. Peter, however, always occupied with the ways of God respecting this world, only looks at the share that believers will have in this salvation, this heavenly glory, when it shall be manifested; when God will, by this glory, establish His authority in blessing on the earth. It is indeed the heavenly glory, but the heavenly glory manifested as the means of the establishment of the supreme government of God on earth for His own glory and for the blessing of the whole world.

It is salvation ready to be revealed in the last times. This word "ready" is important. Our apostle says also that the judgment is ready to be revealed, Christ is glorified personally, has conquered all His enemies, has accomplished redemption. He only waits for one thing, namely, that God should make His enemies His footstool. He has taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, because He has accomplished everything as to glorifying God where sin was. It is the actual salvation of souls the gathering together of His own, which is not yet finished (Pe2 3:9 and Pe2 3:15); but when once all they who are to share it are brought in, there is nothing to wait for as regards the salvation, that is to say, the glory in which the redeemed will appear; [See Note #2] nor consequently as regards the judgment of the wicked on earth which will be consummated by the manifestation of Christ. [See Note #3] All is ready. This thought is sweet for us in our days of patience, but full of solemnity when we reflect upon the judgment. Yes, as the apostle says, we rejoice greatly in this salvation, which is ready to be revealed in the last times. We are waiting for it. It is a time of rest, of the earth's blessing, of the full manifestation of His glory who is worthy of it who was humbled and who suffered for us; the time when the

light and the glory of God in Christ will illumine the world and first bind and then chase away all its evil.

This is our portion: abundant joy in the salvation about to be revealed and in which we may always rejoice; although, if it be needed for our good we may be in sorrow through divers temptations. But it is only for a very little while only a light affliction which passes away and which only comes upon us if it be needful in order that the precious trial of faith may have its result in praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ for whom we are waiting. That is the end of all our sorrows and trials; transitory and light as they are in comparison with the vast result of the excellent and eternal glory towards which they are leading us according to the wisdom of God and the need of our souls. The heart attaches itself to Jesus: He will appear.

We love Him although we have never seen Him. In Him, though now we see Him not, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. It is this which decides and forms the heart, which fixes it and fills it with joy however it may be with us in this life. To our hearts it is He who fills all the glory. By grace I shall be glorified, I shall have the glory; but I love Jesus, my heart pants for His presence desires to see Him. Moreover we shall be like Him and He perfectly glorified. The apostle may well say "unspeakable and full of glory." The heart can desire nothing else: and if some light afflictions are needful for us we endure them gladly since they are a means of forming us for the glory. And we can rejoice at the thought of Christ's appearing; for in receiving Him unseen into our heart we receive the salvation of our soul. This is the object and the end of faith; far more precious than the temporal deliverances that Israel enjoyed although the latter were tokens of the favour of God.

The apostle goes on to develop the three successive steps of the revelation of this grace of salvation the full and entire deliverance from the consequences, the fruits, and the misery of sin: the prophecies; the testimony of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; the manifestation of Jesus Christ Himself when the deliverance that had been already announced should be fully accomplished.

It is interesting to see here how the rejection of the Messiah according to Jewish hopes, already anticipated and announced in the prophets, necessarily made way for a salvation which brought with it that of the soul likewise. Jesus was no more seen; the earthly portion was not realised by His first coming; salvation was to be revealed in the last times. But thus a salvation of the soul was unfolded the whole extent of which would be realised in the glory about to be revealed; for it was the spiritual joy of the soul in a heavenly Jesus who was not seen and who in His death had accomplished expiation for sin and in His resurrection, according to the power of the life of the Son of God, had begotten again to a living hope. By faith then this salvation was received this true deliverance. It was not yet the (glory and the outward rest; that salvation would indeed take place when Jesus appeared but meantime the soul already enjoyed by faith this perfect rest, and in hope even the glory itself.

Now the prophets had announced the grace of God which was to be accomplished for believers and which even now imparts to the soul the enjoyment of that salvation; and they had searched into their own prophecies which they had received by inspiration from God, seeking to understand what time, and what manner of time, the Spirit indicated, when He testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow. For the Spirit spoke of them both by the prophets, and signified consequently more than a temporal deliverance in Israel; for the Messiah was to suffer. And they discovered that it was not for themselves nor for their own times, that the Spirit of Christ announced these truths with regard to the Messiah, but for Christians. But Christians, while receiving the salvation of the soul by the revelation of a Christ seated in heaven after His sufferings and coming again in glory, have not received those glories which were revealed to the prophets. These things have been reported with great and divine plainness by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven after the death of Jesus: but the Spirit does not bestow the glory itself in which the Lord will appear; He has only declared it. Christians have therefore to gird up the loins of their mind, to be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that (in effect) will be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ; Such are the three successive steps in God's dealings: the prediction of the events relating to Christ, which went altogether beyond Jewish blessings; the

things reported by the Spirit; the accomplishment of the things promised when Christ is revealed.

That, then which the apostle presents, is a participation in the glory of Christ when He shall be revealed; that salvation, of which the prophets had spoken, which was to be revealed in the last days. But meantime God had begotten again the believing Jews to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead; and by means of His sufferings had made them comprehend that even now, while waiting for the revelation of the glory, realising it in the Person of Jesus, they enjoyed a salvation of the soul before which the deliverances of Israel faded away and might be forgotten. It was indeed the salvation "ready to be revealed" in all its fullness; but as yet they only possessed it in respect of the soul. But, being detached from the manifestation of the earthly glory, this salvation had a yet more spiritual character. Therefore they were to gird up their loins, while waiting for the revelation of Jesus, and to acknowledge with thanksgiving that they were in possession of the end of their faith. They were in relationship with God.

When announcing these things by the ministry of the prophets, God had Christians in view, and not the prophets themselves. This grace was in due time to be communicated to believers; but meantime, for faith and for the soul, the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven bore testimony to it. It was to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, which was the guarantee of the accomplishment of all the promises and the power of life for their enjoyment, had begotten them again unto a living hope; but the right to enjoy the effect of the promise was founded on another truth. To this the exhortations conduct us. They were to walk as obedient children, no longer following the lusts that had led them in the days of their ignorance. Called by Him who is holy, they were to be holy in all their conversation, as it is written. Moreover, if they called on the Father, who, regardless of man's pretension to respect, judged according to every one's work, they were to pass the time of their sojourn here in fear.

Observe, here, that he is not speaking of the final judgment of the soul. In that sense "the Father judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son." The thing spoken of here is the daily judgment of God's government in this world, exercised with regard to His children. Accordingly

it says, "the time of your sojourn here." It is a judgment applied to christian life. The fear spoken of is not an uncertainty as to salvation and redemption. It is a fear founded on the certainty that one is redeemed; and the immense price, the infinite value of the means employed for our redemption namely, the blood of the Lamb, without blemish and without spot is the motive for fearing God during our pilgrimage. We have been redeemed at the cost of the blood of Jesus from our vain conversation: can we then still walk according to the principles from which we have been thus delivered? Such a price for our deliverance demands that we should walk with circumspection and gravity before the Father, with whom we desire to have intercourse both as privilege and spiritual relationship.

The apostle then applies this truth to the Christians whom he was addressing. The Lamb had been ordained in the counsels of God before the world was made; but He was manifested in the last days for believers: and these are presented in their true character, they believe in God by Jesus by this Lamb. It is not by means of the creation that they believe: although creation is a testimony to His glory, it gives no rest to the conscience and does not tell of a place in heaven. It is not by means of providence, which, even while directing all things, yet leaves the government of God in such profound darkness. Nor is it by means of the revelation of God on Mount Sinai under the name of Jehovah and the terror connected with a broken law. It is by means of Jesus, the Lamb of God, that we believe; observe that it is not said, "in Him," but by Him in God. We know God as the One who, when we were sinners and dead in our trespasses and sins, loved us, and gave this precious Saviour to come down even into the death in which we were, to take part in our position as lying under this judgment, and die as the Lamb of God. We believe in God who by His power, when Jesus was there for us in our stead raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory. It is in a Saviour-God therefore, a God who exercises His power in our behalf, that we believe by Jesus, so that our faith and our hope are in God. It does not say in something before God, but in God Himself Where then shall any cause for fear or distrust arise as regards God, if our faith and hope are in Himself? This changes everything. The aspect in which we view God Himself is entirely changed; and this change is founded on that which establishes the righteousness of God in accepting us as cleansed from all sin, the love of

God in blessing us perfectly in Jesus, whom His power has raised from the dead and glorified the power according to which He blesses us. Our faith and our hope are in God Himself.

This places us in the most intimate of relationships with the rest of the redeemed: objects of the same love, washed by the same precious blood, redeemed by the same Lamb, they become to those whose hearts are purified by the reception of the truth through the Spirit the objects of a tender brotherly love, a love unfeigned. They are our brethren. Let us then love one another fervently with a pure heart. But this is based on another essentially vital principle. It is a new nature which acts in this affection. If we are redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb without spot, we are born of the incorruptible seed of the word of God, which lives and abides for ever. For the flesh is but grass, the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, its flower falls, but the word of the Lord abides for ever. This is the word of the gospel which has been preached unto us. It is an eternal principle of blessing. The believer is not born after the flesh to enjoy temporary rights and blessings, as was the case with a Jew, but of an incorruptible seed, a principle of life as unchangeable as the word of God Himself. The prophet had told them so, when comforting the people of God; all flesh, the nation itself, was but withered grass. God was unchangeable, and the word which by its immutable certainty secured divine blessings to the objects of God's favour, wrought in the heart to beget a life as immortal and incorruptible as the word which is its source.

Note #1

I add "on earth" here, because the assembly as built by Jesus Himself and not yet finished, is spoken of in Chapter 2, where the living stones come to Christ.

Note #2

The doctrine of the gathering together of the saints to Jesus in the air, when they go to meet Him forms no part of Peter's teaching, any more than does that of the assembly on earth with which it is connected. He speaks of the manifestation of the saints in glory, because he is occupied with the ways of God towards the earth, although he is so in connection with Christianity.

Note #3

See Th2 1:9-10.

1 Peter Chapter 2

Thus cleansed therefore and born of the word, they were to put off all fraud, hypocrisy, envy, slander; and, as new-born babes, to seek for this milk of the understanding, in order to grow thereby (for the word is the milk of the child, as it was the seed of its life); and we are to receive it as babes in all simplicity, if in truth we have felt that the Lord is good and full of grace. It is not Sinai (where the Lord God declared His law from the midst of the fire, so that they entreated not to hear His voice any more), to which I am come, or from which the Lord is speaking. If I have tasted and understood that the Lord acts in grace, that He is love towards me, and that His word is the expression of that grace, even as it communicates life, I shall desire to feed on this milk of the understanding, which the believer enjoys in proportion to his simplicity; that good word which announces to me nothing but grace, and the God whom I need as all grace, full of grace, acting in grace, as revealing Himself to me in this character a character which He can never cease to maintain towards me, making me a partaker of His holiness.

I now know the Lord Himself: I have tasted that which He is. Moreover this is still in contrast with the legal condition of the Jew, although it is the fulfillment of that which the Psalms and the prophets had declared (the resurrection having plainly revealed in addition a heavenly hope). It was they themselves who were now the spiritual house, the holy priesthood. They came to the Living Stone, rejected indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, and they were built up on Him as living stones. The apostle delights in this word "living." It was to him the Father had revealed that Jesus was the Son of the living God. No one else had then confessed Him as such, and the Lord told him that on this rock (that is, on the Person of the Son of God in power of life, manifested in the resurrection, which declared Him to be such) He would build His assembly. Peter, by his faith, participated in the nature of this living rock. Here then (Pe1 2:5) he extends this character to all believers, and exhibits the holy house built on the Living Stone, which God Himself had laid as the chief corner-stone elect and precious.

Whosoever believed in Him should not be confounded. [See Note #4] Now, it was not only in the eyes of God that this stone was precious, but in the eyes of faith which feeble as the possessors of it may be sees as God sees. To unbelievers this stone was a stone of stumbling and of offence. They stumbled at the word, being disobedient, to which also they were appointed. It does not say that they were appointed to sin nor to condemnation, but these unbelieving and disobedient sinners, the Jewish race long rebellious, and continually exalting themselves against God were destined to find in the Lord of grace Himself a rock of offence; and to stumble and fall upon that which was to faith the precious stone of salvation. It was to this particular fall that their unbelief was destined.

Believers, on the contrary, entered into the enjoyment of the promises made to Israel, and that in the most excellent way. Grace and the very faithfulness of God had brought the fulfillment of the promise in the Person of Jesus, the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to fulfill the promises made to the fathers. And, although the nation had rejected Him, God would not deprive of the blessings those who in spite of all this difficulty to faith and to the heart had submitted to the obedience of faith and attached themselves to Him who was the despised of the nation. They could not have the blessing of Israel with the nation on earth, because the nation had rejected Him; but they were brought fully into the relationship with God of a people accepted of Him. The heavenly character which the blessing now assumed did not destroy their acceptance according to the promise; only they entered into it according to grace. For the nation, as a nation, had lost it; not only long ago by disobedience, but now by rejecting Him who came in grace to impart to them the effect, of the promise.

The apostle, therefore, applies the character of " holy nation" to the elect remnant, investing them in the main with the titles bestowed in Exodus 19, on condition of obedience, but here in connection with the Messiah, their enjoyment of these titles being founded on His obedience and rights acquired by their faith in Him.

But, the privileges of the believing remnant being founded on the Messiah, the apostle goes farther, and applies to them the declarations of Hosea, which relate to Israel and Judah when re-established in the fullness of

blessing in the last days, enjoying those relationships with God into which grace will bring them at that time.

"Ye are," he says, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a purchased people." These are almost the words of Exodus 19. He goes on: "Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; who formerly had not obtained mercy, but have now obtained it." These are the words of Hosea 2. This sets before us, in the most interesting way, the principle on which the blessing is founded. In Exodus the people were to have this blessing if they exactly obeyed the voice of God. But Israel had not obeyed, had been rebellious and stiffnecked, had gone after strange gods, and rejected the testimony of the Spirit; yet, after their unfaithfulness, God Himself has laid in Zion a Stone, a chief corner-stone, and whosoever believed in Him should not be confounded. It is grace that, when Israel had failed in every respect, and on the ground of obedience had lost everything, God should bestow on them by Jesus, through grace, that which was promised them at first on condition of obedience. In this way all was secured to them.

The question of obedience was settled on Israel's disobedience by grace, and by the obedience of Christ, the foundation laid by God in Zion. But this principle of grace abounding over sin by which is shewn the inability of disobedience to frustrate the purposes of God, for this grace came after the completion of disobedience this principle, so glorious and so comforting to the convinced sinner, is confirmed in a striking way by the quotation from Hosea. In this passage from the prophet, Israel is presented, not merely as guilty, but as having already undergone judgment. God had declared that He would no more have mercy (with regard to His patience toward the ten tribes); and that Israel was no longer His people (in His judgment on unfaithful Judah). But afterwards, when the judgment had been executed, He returns to His irrevocable purposes of grace, and allures Israel as a forsaken wife, and gives her the valley of Achor the valley of trouble, in which Achan was stoned, the first judgment on unfaithful Israel after their entrance into the promised land for a door of hope. For judgment is changed into grace, and God begins all afresh upon a new principle. It was as though Israel had again come up out of Egypt, but upon an entirely new

principle. He betroths her to Him for ever, in righteousness, in judgment, in grace, in mercy, and all is blessing. Then He calls her "Ruhama," or, "the object of mercy," and " Ammi," " my people."

These, then, are the expressions which the apostle uses, applying them to the remnant who believed in Jesus, the stumbling-stone to the nation, but the chief corner-stone from God to the believer. Thus the condition is taken away, and instead of a condition we have blessing after disobedience, and after judgment the full and assured grace of God, founded (in its application to believers) on the Person, the obedience, and the work of Christ.

It is affecting to see the expression of this grace in the term " Achor." It was the first judgment on Israel in the land of promise for having profaned themselves with the forbidden thing. And there it is that hope is given: so entirely true is it that grace triumphs over justice. And it is this which has taken place in the most excellent way in Christ. The very judgment of God becomes in Him the door of hope, the guilt and the judgment having alike passed away for ever.

Two parts of the christian life so far as it is the manifestation of spiritual power result from this, in the double priesthood; of which the one answers to the present position of Christ on high, and the other anticipatively to the manifestation of His glory on earth the priesthods of Aaron, and of Melchisedec. For He is now within the veil according to the type of Aaron; hereafter He will be a priest on His throne it will be the public manifestation of His glory on earth. Thus the saints exercise " a holy priesthood " (Pe1 2:5) to offer up spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. Sweet privilege of the Christian, thus brought as near as possible to God ! He offers sure of being accepted, for it is by Jesus that he offers them his sacrifices to God.

This part of the christian life is the first, the most excellent, the most vital, the source of the other (which is its expression here below); the most excellent, because, in its exercise, we are in immediate connection with the divine object of our affections. These spiritual sacrifices are the reflex, by the action of the Holy Ghost, of the grace which we enjoy; that which the heart returns to God, moved by the excellent gifts of which we are the object, and by the love which has given them. The heart (by the power of

the Holy Ghost) reflects all that has been revealed to it in grace, worshipping the Author and Giver of all according to the knowledge we have of Himself through this means; the fruits of the heavenly Canaan in which we participate presented as an offering to God; the entrance of the soul into the presence of God to praise and adore Him.

This is the holy priesthood, according to the analogy of the priesthood of Aaron, and of the temple at Jerusalem which God inhabited as His house.

The second priesthood of which the apostle speaks is to shew forth the virtues of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Its description is taken, as we have seen, from Exodus 19. It is a chosen generation, a holy nation, a royal priesthood. I only allude to the Melchisedec priesthood to shew the character of a royal priesthood. Priests, among the Jews, drew near to God. God had formed the people for Himself: they were to shew forth all His virtues, His praises. Christ will do this perfectly in the day of His glory. The Christian is called to do it now in this world. He is to reproduce Christ in this world. It is the second part of his life.

It will be noticed that the first Chapter of this epistle presents the Christian as animated by hope, but under trial the precious trial of faith. The second Chapter presents him in his privileges, as of a holy and royal priesthood, by means of faith.

After this (Pe1 2:11), the apostle begins his exhortations. Whatever may be the privileges of the Christian, in his position as such, he is always viewed as a pilgrim on the earth; and, as we have seen, the constant government of God is the object which presents itself to the mind of the apostle. But he warns them first, with regard to that which is inward, against those sources from which the corruptions spring, that (in the scene of this government) would dishonour the name of God and even bring in judgment.

Their conversation was to be honest among the Gentiles. Christians bore the name of God. The mind of men, hostile to His name, sought to bring disgrace upon it, by attributing to Christians the evil conduct which they themselves followed without remorse, while at the same time complaining (Pe1 4:4) that they would not go with them in the same excesses and disorder. The Christian had only to follow the path of faithfulness to God. In

the day when God would visit men these calumniators, with their will broken and their pride subdued by the visitation of God, should be brought to confess by means of the good works which, in spite of their calumnies, had always reached their consciences that God had acted in these Christians, that He had been present among them.

Note #4

In this passage, so to speak (as in this alone), Peter meets the doctrine of the assembly, and that under the character of a building, not of a body or a bride; that which Christ built, not what was united to Him. So Paul also presents it to us in Eph 2:20-21. In this view, though going on on earth, it is Christ's work and a continuing process; no human instrumentality is referred to: I will build, says Christ; it grows, says Paul; living stones come, says Peter. This must not be confounded with the building into which men may build wood and hay and stubble, as the same thing; though the outward thing which God set up good, left to man's responsibility, as, ever, was soon corrupted. Individuals are built up by grace, and it grows into a holy temple. All this refers to Matthew 16. The responsibility of human service in this respect is found in 1 Corinthians 3, and the assembly is there given in another point of view. The body is another thing altogether, the doctrine is taught in Ephesians 1-4.; 1 Corinthians 12., and other passages.

1 Peter Chapter 3

After this general exhortation, brief but important to believers, the apostle takes up the relative walk of Christians in a world where on the one hand God watches over all, yet where He permits His own to suffer, whether for righteousness' sake or for the name of Christ, but where they ought never to suffer for having done wrong. The path then of the Christian is marked out. He is subject for the Lord's sake to human ordinances or institutions. He gives honour to all men, and to each in his place, so that no one shall have any reproach to bring against him. He is submissive to his masters, even if they are bad men, and yields to their ill-treatment. Were he subject only to the good and gentle, a worldly slave would do as much; but if, having done well, he suffers and bears it patiently, this is acceptable to God, this is grace. It was thus that Christ acted, and to this we are called. Christ suffered in this

way, and never replied by reproaches or threats to those who molested Him, but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously. To Him we belong. He had suffered for our sins, in order that, having been delivered from them, we should live to God. These Christians from among the Jews had been as sheep going astray; [See Note #5] they were now brought back to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. But how entirely these exhortations, shew that the Christian is one who is not of this world, but has his own path through it: yet this path was the way of peace in it !

Likewise wives were to be subject to their husbands in all modesty and purity, in order that this testimony to the effect of the word by its fruits might take the place of the word itself, if their husbands would not listen to it. They were to rest, in patience and meekness, on the faithfulness of God, and not be alarmed at seeing the power of the adversaries. (Compare Phi 1:28)

Husbands were in like manner to dwell with the wife, their affections and relationships being governed by christian knowledge, and not by any human passion; honouring the wife, and walking, with her as being heirs together of the grace of life.

Finally, all were to walk in the spirit of peace and gentleness, carrying with them, in their intercourse with others, the blessing of which they were themselves the heirs, the spirit of which they ought consequently to bear ever with them. By following that which is good, by having the tongue governed by the fear of the Lord, by avoiding evil and seeking peace, they would in quietness enjoy the present life under the eye of God. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who, moreover, would harm them, if they followed only that which is good ?

This, then, is the government of God, the principle on which He superintends the course of this world. Nevertheless it is not now a direct and immediate government preventing all wrong. The power of evil still acts upon the earth; those who are animated by it shew themselves hostile to the righteous, and act by means of that fear which Satan is able to produce. But by giving the Lord His place in the soul, this fear which the enemy

excites has no longer a place there. If the heart is conscious of the presence of God, can that heart tremble at the presence of the enemy? This is the secret of boldness and peace in confessing Christ. Then the instruments of the enemy seek to turn us aside, and to overwhelm us by their pretensions; but the consciousness of God's presence dissipates those pretensions, and destroys all their power. Resting on the strength of His presence, we are ready to answer those who ask the reason of our hope, with meekness and holy reverence remote from all levity. For all this it is necessary to have a good conscience. We may carry a bad conscience to God, that He may pardon and have mercy on us; but if we have a bad conscience, we cannot resist the enemy we are afraid of him. On the one hand, we fear his malice; on the other, we have lost the consciousness of the presence and the strength of God. When walking before God, we fear nothing; the heart is free: we have not to think of self, we think of God; and the adversaries are ashamed of having falsely accused those whose conduct is unblamable, and against whom nothing can be brought except the calumny of their enemies, which calumnies turn to their own shame.

It may be that God may see it good that we should suffer. If so, it is better that we should suffer for well doing than for evil doing. The apostle gives a touching motive for this: Christ has suffered for sins once for all; let that suffice; let us suffer only for righteousness. To suffer for sin was His task; He accomplished it, and that for ever; put to death, as to His life in the flesh, but quickened according to the power of the divine Spirit.

The passage that follows has occasioned difficulties to the readers of scripture; but it appears to me simple, if we perceive the object of the Spirit of God. The Jews expected a Messiah corporeally present, who should deliver the nation, and exalt the Jews to the summit of earthly glory. But He was not present, we know, in that manner, and the believing Jews had to endure the scorn and the hatred of the unbelieving, on account of their trust in a Messiah who was not present, and who had wrought no deliverance for the people. Believers possessed the salvation of their soul, and they knew Jesus in heaven; but unbelieving men did not care for that. The apostle therefore cites the case of Noah's testimony. The believing Jews were few in number, and Christ was theirs only according to the Spirit. By the power

of that Spirit He had been raised up from the dead. It was by the power of the same Spirit that He had gone without being corporeally present to preach in Noah. The world was disobedient (like the Jews in the apostle's days), and eight souls only were saved; even as the believers were now but a little flock. But the spirits of the disobedient were now in prison, because they did not obey Christ present among them by His Spirit in Noah. The long-suffering of God waited then, as now, with the Jewish nation; the result would be the same. It has been so.

This interpretation is confirmed (in preference to that which supposes that the Spirit of Christ preached in hades to souls which had been confined there ever since the flood) by the consideration that in Genesis it is said, " My Spirit shall not always strive with men but their days shall be a hundred and twenty years." That is to say, His Spirit should strive, in the testimony of Noah, during a hundred and twenty years and no longer. Now it would be an extraordinary thing that with those persons only (for he speaks only of them) the Lord should strive in testimony after their death. Moreover, we may observe that, in considering this expression to mean the Spirit of Christ in Noah, we only use a well-known phrase of Peter's; for he it is, as we have seen, who said, " The Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets."

These spirits then are in prison, because they did not hearken to the Spirit of Christ in Noah. (Compare Pe2 2:5-9.) To this the apostle adds, the comparison of baptism to the ark of Noah in the deluge. Noah was saved through the water; we also; for the water of baptism typifies death, as the deluge, so to speak, was the death of the world. Now Christ has passed through death and is risen. We enter into death in baptism; but it is like the ark, because Christ suffered in death for us, and has come out of it in resurrection, as Noah came out of the deluge, to begin, as it were, a new life in a resurrection world. Now Christ, having passed through death, has atoned for sins; and we, by passing through it in spirit, leave all our sins in it, as Christ did in reality for us; for He was raised up without the sins which He expiated on the cross. And they were our sins; and thus, through the resurrection, we have a good conscience. We pass through death in spirit and in figure by baptism. The peace-giving force of the thing is the

resurrection of Christ, after He had accomplished expiation; by which resurrection therefore we have a good conscience.

Now this is what the Jews had to learn. The Christ was gone up to heaven, all powers and principalities being made subject to Him. He is at the right hand of God. We have therefore not a Messiah on earth, but a good conscience and a heavenly Christ.

Note #5

An allusion, I suppose, to the last Verse of Psalm 119 (Psa 119:176). The apostle constantly puts the christian Jews on the ground of the blessed remnant, only making it a soul salvation.

1 Peter Chapter 4

From the beginning of this Chapter to the end of Verse , the apostle continues to speak of the general principles of God's government, exhorting, the Christian to act on the principles of Christ Him elf, which would cause him to avoid the walk condemned by that government, while waiting for the judgment of the world by the Christ whom he served. Christ glorified, as we saw at the close of the previous Chapter, was ready to judge; and they who were exasperated against the Christians, and who were led by their own passions, without caring for the coming judgment, would have to give account to that Judge whom they refused to own as Saviour.

Here, it will be observed, it is suffering for righteousness' sake (Pe1 2:19; Pe1 3:17) in connection with the government and judgment of God. The principle was this: they accepted, they followed the Saviour whom the world and the nation rejected; they walked in His holy footsteps in righteousness, as pilgrims and strangers, abandoning the corruption that reigned in the world. Walking in peace and following after good, they avoided to a certain extent the attacks of others; and the eyes of Him, who watches from on high over all things, rested upon the righteous. Nevertheless, in the relations of ordinary life (Pe1 2:18), and in their intercourse with men, they might have to suffer, and to bear flagrant injustice. Now the time of God's judgment was not yet come. Christ was in heaven; He had been rejected on the earth, and the Christian's part was to follow Him. The time of the manifestation of the

government of God would be at the judgment which Christ should execute. Meanwhile His walk on earth had furnished the pattern of that which the God of judgment approved. (Pe1 2:21-23, Pe1 4:1 and following Verses.)

They were to do good, to suffer for it, and to be patient. This is well-pleasing to God; this is what Christ did. It was better that they should suffer for doing well, if God saw fit, than for doing ill. Christ (Pe1 2:24) had borne our sins, had suffered for our sins, the Just for the unjust, in order that we, being dead to sins, should live for righteousness, and in order to bring us unto God Himself. Christ is now on high; He is ready to judge. When the judgment shall come, the principles of God's government will be manifested and shall prevail.

The beginning of Chapter 4 requires some rather more detailed remarks. The death of Christ is there applied to practical death unto sins; a state presented in contrast with the life of the Gentiles.

Christ on the cross (the apostle alludes to Verse 18 of the preceding Chapter (Pe1 3:18)) suffered in the flesh for us. He died in fact as regards His human life. We must arm ourselves with the same mind, and allow of no activity of life or passions according to the will of the old man, but suffer as to the flesh, never yielding to its will. Sin is the action in us of the will of the flesh, the will of the man as alive in this world. When this will acts, the principle of sin is there; for we ought to obey. The will of God ought to be the spring of our moral life; and so much the more, because now that we have the knowledge of good and evil now that the will of the flesh, unsubject to God, is in us, we must either take the will of God as our only motive, or act according to the will of the flesh, for the latter is always present in us.

Christ came to obey, He chose to die, to suffer all things rather than not obey. He thus died to sin, which never for a moment found an entrance into His heart. With Him, tempted to the uttermost, death was preferred rather than disobedience, even when death had the character of wrath against sin and judgment. Bitter as the cup was, He drank it rather than not fulfill to the uttermost His Father's will, and glorify Him. Tried to the uttermost and perfect in it, the temptation which ever assailed Him from without and sought entrance (for He had none within) was always kept outside; was

never entered into, nor found a movement of His will towards it; drew out obedience, or the perfection of the divine thoughts in man; and by dying, by suffering in the flesh, He had done with it all, done with sin for ever, and entered for ever into rest, after having been tried to the uttermost, and tempted to all things similarly to us [See Note #6] as regards the trial of faith, the conflict of the spiritual life.

Now it is the same thing with respect to ourselves in daily life. If I suffer in the flesh, the will of the flesh is assuredly not in action; and the flesh, in that I suffer, is practically dead I have nothing more to do with sins. [See Note #7] We then are freed from it, have done with it, and are at rest. If we are content to suffer, the will does not act; sin is not there, as to fact; for to suffer is not will, it is grace acting in accordance with the image and the mind of Christ in the new man; and we are freed from the action of the old man. It does not act; we rest from it; we have done with it, no longer to live, for the remainder of our life here below in the flesh, according to the lusts of man, but according to the will of God, which the new man follows.

It is enough to have spent the past time of our lives in doing the will of the Gentiles (he still speaks to Christians of the circumcision), and in committing the excesses to which they addicted themselves, while they wondered at Christians for refusing to do the same; speaking evil of them for this reason. But they would have to give account to Him, who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

The Jews were accustomed to the judgment of the living, for they were the centre of God's government on the earth. The judgment of the dead, with which we are more familiar, had not been definitely revealed to them. They were liable nevertheless to this judgment; for it was with this object that the promises of God were presented to them while living, in order that they might either live according to God in the spirit, or be judged as men responsible for what they had done in the flesh. For the one or other of these results would be produced in every one who heard the promises. Thus, in regard to the Jews, the judgment of the dead would take place in connection with the promises that had been set before them. For this testimony from God placed all who heard it under responsibility, so that they would be judged as men who had to give account to God of their

conduct in the flesh, unless they came out of this position of life in the flesh by being quickened through the power of the word addressed to them, applied by the energy of the Spirit; so that they escaped from the flesh through the spiritual life which they received.

Now the end of all things was at hand. The apostle, while speaking of the great principle of responsibility in connection with the testimony of God, draws the attention of believers to the solemn thought of the end of all these things on which the flesh rested. This end drew near.

Here, observe, Peter presents, not the coming of the Lord to receive His own, nor His manifestation with them, but that moment of the solemn sanction of the ways of God, when every refuge of the flesh shall disappear, and all the thoughts of man perish forever.

As regards the relations of God with the world in government, the destruction of Jerusalem, although it was not "the end," was of immense importance because it destroyed the very seat of that government on the earth in which the Messiah ought to have reigned, and shall yet reign.

God watches over all things, takes care of His own, counts the hairs of their heads, makes everything contribute to their highest good, but this is in the midst of a world which He no longer owns. For not only is, the earthly and direct government of God set aside, which took place in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, and, in a certain sense, in those of Saul; but the Messiah, who ought to reign in it, has been rejected, and has taken the heavenly place in resurrection which forms the subject of this epistle.

The destruction of Jerusalem (which was to take place in those days) was the final abolition of even the traces of that government, until the Lord shall return. The relations of an earthly people with God, on the ground of man's responsibility, were ended. The general government of God took the place of the former; a government always the same in principle, but which, Jesus having suffered on the earth, still allowed His members to suffer here below. And until the time of judgment, the wicked will persecute the righteous, and the righteous must have patience. With regard to the nation, those relations only subsisted till the destruction of Jerusalem; the unbelieving hopes of the Jews, as a nation, were judicially overthrown. The

apostle speaks here in a general way, and in view of the effect of the solemn truth of the end of all things, for Christ is still "ready to judge;" and if there is delay, it is because God wills not the death of the sinner, and that He prolongs the time of grace.

In view of this end of all that we see, we ought to be sober, and watch in order to pray. We ought to have the heart thus exercised towards God, who changes not, who will never pass away, and who preserves us through all the difficulties and temptations of this passing scene until the day of deliverance which is coming. Instead of allowing ourselves to be carried away by present and visible things, we must bridle self and will, and commune with God. This leads the apostle to the inner position of Christians, their relations among themselves, not with God's general government of the world. They follow because they are Christians, Christ Himself. The first thing that he enforces on them is fervent charity; not merely long-suffering, which would prevent any outbreak of the anger of the flesh, but an energy of love, which by stamping its character on all the ways of Christians towards each other, would practically set aside the action of the flesh, and make manifest the divine presence and action.

Now this love covered a multitude of sins. He is not speaking here with a view to ultimate pardon, but of the present notice which God takes His present relations of government with His people; for we have present relationships with God. If the assembly is at variance, if there is little love, if the intercourse among Christians is with straightened hearts and difficult, the existing evil, the mutual wrongs, subsist before God: but if there is love, which neither commits nor resents any wrongs, but pardons such things, and only finds in them occasion for its own exercise, it is then the love which the eye of God rests upon, and not the evil. Even if there are misdeeds sins love occupies itself about them, the offender is brought back, is restored, by the charity of the assembly; the sins are removed from the eye of God, they are covered. It is a quotation from the Book of Pro 10:12: Hatred stirreth up strife, but love covereth all sins." We have a right to forgive them to wash the feet of our brother. (Compare Jam 5:15, and Jo1 5:16.) We not only forgive, but love maintains the assembly before God according to His own nature so that He can bless it.

Christians ought to exercise hospitality towards each other with all liberality. It is the expression of love, and tends much to maintain it: we are no longer strangers to each other. Gifts come next after the exercise of grace. All comes from God. As every one had received the gift, he was to serve in the gift, as a steward of the varied grace of God. It is God who gives; the Christian is a servant, and under responsibility as a steward, on God's part. He is to ascribe all to God, in a direct way to God. If he speaks, he is to speak as an oracle of God, that is, as speaking on God's part, and not from himself. If any one serves in things temporal, let him do it as in a power and an ability that come from God, so that, whether one speaks or serves, God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To Him, the apostle adds, be praise and dominion. Amen.

After these exhortations he comes to suffering for the name of Christ. They were not to view the fiery persecutions that came to try them, as some strange thing that had befallen them. On the contrary, they were connected with a suffering and rejected Christ; they partook therefore in His sufferings, and were to rejoice in it. He would soon appear, and these sufferings for His sake should turn to their exceeding joy at the revelation of His glory. They were therefore to rejoice at sharing His sufferings, in order to be filled with abounding joy when His glory should be revealed. If they were reproached for the name of Christ, it was happy for them. The Spirit of God rested on them. It was the name of Christ that brought reproach on them. He was in the glory with God; the Spirit, who came from that glory and that God, filled them with joy in bearing the reproach. It was Christ who was reproached Christ who was glorified reproached by the enemies of the gospel, while Christians had the joy of glorifying Him. It will be observed, that in this passage, it is for Christ Himself (as it has been said) that the believer suffers; and, therefore, the apostle speaks of glory and joy at the appearing of Jesus Christ, which he does not mention in Pe1 2:20; Pe1 3:17. (Compare Mat 5:10, and Mat 5:11-12 of the same Chapter.)

As an evil-doer then the Christian ought never to suffer; but if he suffered as a Christian, he was not to be ashamed, but to glorify God for it. The apostle then returns to the government of God; for these sufferings of believers had also another character. To the individual who suffered, it was a glory: he

shared the sufferings of Christ, and the Spirit of glory and of God rested on him; and all this should turn to abounding joy when the glory was revealed. But God had no pleasure in allowing His people to suffer. He permitted it; and if Christ had to suffer for us when He who knew no sin did not need it for Himself, the people of God have often need on their own account to be exercised with suffering. God uses the wicked, the enemies of the name of Christ, for this purpose. Job is the book that explains this, independently of all dispensations. But in every form of God's dealings, He exercises His judgments according to the order He has established. He did so with Israel, He does so with the assembly. The latter has a heavenly portion; and if she attaches herself to the earth, God allows the enemy to trouble her. Perhaps the individual who suffers is full of faith and devoted love to the Lord; but, under persecution, the heart feels that the world is not its rest, that it must have its portion elsewhere, its strength elsewhere. We are not of the world which persecutes us. If the faithful servant of God is cut off from this world by persecution, it strengthens faith, for God is in it; but they from the midst of whom he is cut off; suffer and feel that the hand of God was in it: His dealings take the form of judgment, always in perfect love, but in discipline.

God judges everything according to His own nature. He desires that all should be in accordance with His nature. No upright and honourable man would like to have the wicked near him, and always before him; God assuredly would not. And in that which is nearest to Him, He must above all desire that every thing should correspond to His nature and His holiness to all that He is. I would have everything around me clean enough not to disgrace me; but in my own house I must have such cleanness as I personally desire. Thus judgment must begin at the house of God: the apostle alludes to Eze 9:6. It is a solemn principle. No grace, no privilege, changes the nature of God; and everything must be conformed to that nature, or, in the end, must be banished from His presence. Grace can conform us, and it does. It bestows the divine nature, so that there is a principle of absolute conformity to God. But as to practical conformity in thought and deed, the heart and the conscience must be exercised, in order that the understanding of the heart, and the habitual desires and aspirations of the will, should be formed upon the revelation of God, and continually directed towards Him.

Now if this conformity should so fail that the testimony of God is injured by its absence, God, who judges His people, and who will judge evil every where, does so by means of the chastisements which He inflicts. Judgment begins at the house of God. The righteous are saved with difficulty. It is evidently not redemption or justification that is here intended, nor the communication of life: those whom the apostle addresses were in possession of them. To our apostle "salvation" is not only the present enjoyment of the salvation of the soul, but the full deliverance of the faithful, which will take place at the coming of Christ in glory. All the temptations are contemplated, all the trials, all the dangers, through which the Christian will pass in reaching the end of his career. All the power of God is requisite, directed by divine wisdom, guiding and sustaining faith, to carry the Christian safely through the wilderness where Satan employs all the resources of his subtlety to make him perish. The power of God will accomplish it; but, from the human point of view, the difficulties are almost His judgment conformable to the principles of good and evil in His government; and who will in nowise deny Himself in dealing with the enemy of our souls if the righteous were saved with difficulty, what would become of the sinner and the ungodly? To join them would not be the way to escape these difficulties. In suffering as a Christian, there was but one thing to do to commit oneself to Him who watched over the judgment that He was executing. For, as it was His hand, one suffered according to His will. It was this that Christ did.

Observe here, that it is not only the government of God, but there is the expression, "as unto a faithful Creator." The Spirit of God moves here in this sphere. It is the relationship of God with this world, and the soul knows Him as the One who created it, and who does not forsake the work of His hands. This is Jewish ground God known in His connection with the first creation. Trust in Him is founded on Christ; but God is known in His ways with this world, and with us in our pilgrimage here below, where He governs, and where He judges Christians, as He will judge all others.

Note #6

It is not, as in the Authorised Version, "yet without sin," true as that may be, but "choris hamartia", "sin apart." We are tempted, being led away by our

own lusts. Christ had all our difficulties, all our temptations, on the way, but had nothing in Himself which could lead Him wrong far surely from it nothing which answered to the temptation.

Note #7

Peter rests on the effect; Paul, as ever, goes to the root, Romans 6.

1 Peter Chapter 5

The apostle returns to christian details. He exhorts the elders, himself an elder; for it appears that among the Jews this title was rather characteristic than official. (Compare Pe1 5:5.) He exhorts them to feed the flock of God. The apostle designates himself as one who had been a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and who was to be a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. It was the function of the twelve to be witnesses of the life of Christ (John 15), as it was that of the Holy Ghost to testify of His heavenly glory. Peter places himself at the two ends of the Lord's history, and leaves the interval devoid of all except hope, and the pilgrimage towards an end. He had seen the sufferings of Christ; he was to share His glory when He should be revealed. It is a Christ who puts Himself in relation with the Jews, now known only by faith. During His life on earth, He was in the midst of the Jews, although suffering there and rejected. When He shall appear, He will again be in relation with the earth and with that nation.

Paul speaks differently, while at the same time confirming these truths. He only knew the Lord after His exaltation; he is not a witness of His sufferings; but he seeks for the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. Paul's heart is bound to Christ while He is in heaven, as united to Him above; and, although he desires the Lord's appearing, for the restitution of all things of which the prophets had spoken, he rejoices to know that he shall go with joy to meet Him, and shall return with Him when He is revealed from heaven.

The elders were to feed the flock of God with a ready mind, and not as by constraint, nor for gain, nor as governing an inheritance of their own, but as ensamples to the flock. Loving care was to be lavished upon it, for the sake of Christ, the chief Shepherd, with a view to the good of souls. Moreover it

was the flock of God which they were to feed. What a solemn as well as sweet thought! How impossible for anyone to entertain the notion of its being his flock, if he has laid hold of the thought that it is the flock of God, and that God allows us to feed it !

We may observe that the heart of the blessed apostle is where the Lord had placed it. " Feed my sheep" was the expression of the Lord's perfect grace towards Peter, when He was leading him to the humiliating but salutary confession that it needed the eye of God to see that His weak disciple loved Him. At the moment that He convinced him of his utter nothingness, He entrusted to him that which was dearest to Himself.

Thus we see, here, that it is the apostle's care, the desire of the heart, that they should feed the flock. Here, as elsewhere, he does not go beyond the Lord's appearing. It is at that period that the ways of God in government of which the Jews were the earthly centre shall be fully manifested. Then shall the crown of glory be presented to him that has been faithful, that has satisfied the chief Shepherd's heart.

The young were to submit themselves to those who were older, and all to one another. All were to be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. These are still the principles of His government. Under His hand they were therefore to humble themselves; they should be exalted in due time. This was to commit themselves to God. He knew what was needful. He who loved them would exalt them at the right time. He cared for them: they were to rest on Him, commit all their cares to Him.

On the other hand, they were to be sober and vigilant, because the adversary sought to devour them. Here whatever may be his wiles, however he may lie in wait for Christians it is in the character of a roaring lion, one who excites open persecution, that the apostle presents him. They were to resist him, steadfast in the faith. Everywhere the same afflictions were found. Nevertheless the God of grace is the Christian's confidence. He has called us to participate in His eternal glory. The apostle's desire for them is that, after they had suffered for a time, the God of grace should make them perfect, complete should stablish and strengthen them, building up their

hearts on the foundation of an assurance that cannot be shaken. To Him, he adds, be glory and dominion.

We see that the Christians to whom he wrote were suffering, and that the apostle explained these sufferings on the principles of the divine government, with regard especially to the relation of Christians with God, as being His house, whether those sufferings were for righteousness' sake or for the name of the Lord. It was but for a time. The Christian's hope was elsewhere; christian patience was well-pleasing to God. It was their glory, if it was for the name of Christ. Besides which, God judged His house, and watched over His people.

2 PETER

2 Peter Chapter 1

2 Peter 1:1

pe2 1:1

The Second Epistle of Peter is even more simple than the First. Like those of Jude and John, it is written essentially with a view to the seducers, who, with large promises of liberty, beguiled souls into sin and licentiousness, denying the coming of Christ, and in fact disowning all His rights over them. The epistle admonishes the same Christians to whom the First was written, pointing out the characteristic features of these false teachers; denouncing them with the utmost energy; explaining the long-sufferance of God, and announcing a judgment which, like His patience, would befit the majesty of Him who was to execute it.

But before giving these warnings, which begin with Chapter 2, the apostle exhorts Christians to make their own calling and election sure not evidently in the heart of God, but as a fact in their own hearts, and in practical life, by walking in such a manner as not to stumble; so that testimony to their portion in Christ should be always evident, and an abundant entrance be ministered to them.

These exhortations are founded, first, on that which is already given to Christians; secondly, on that which is future namely, the manifestation of the glory of the kingdom. In touching upon this last subject, he indicates a still more excellent portion the bright Morning Star, the heavenly Christ Himself and our association with Him before He appears as the Sun of righteousness. Thirdly, we shall see that the warnings are founded also on another basis namely, the dissolution of the heavens and the earth, proving the instability of all that unbelief rested upon, and furnishing for the same reason a solemn warning to the saints to induce them to walk in holiness.

The apostle describes his brethren as having obtained the same precious faith as himself through the faithfulness of God [See Note #1] to the promises made to the fathers, for that surely is the force of the word "righteousness" in this place. The faithfulness of the God of Israel had bestowed on His people this faith (that is to say, Christianity), which was so precious to them. Faith here is the portion we have now in the things that God gives, which in Christianity are revealed as truths, while the things promised are not yet come. It was in this way that the believing Jews were to possess the Messiah, and all that God gave in Him, as the Lord had said. " Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. There are many mansions in my Father's house; I go to prepare a place for you." That is to say, " You do not visibly possess God; you enjoy Him by believing in Him. It is the same with respect to Me: you will not possess Me corporeally, but you ,shall enjoy all that is in Me righteousness, and all the promises of God by believing." It was thus that these believing Jews, to whom Peter wrote, possessed the Lord: they had received this precious faith.

He wishes them, as is the custom, " Grace and peace," adding, " through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." It is the knowledge of God and of Jesus, which is the centre and the support of faith, that which nourishes it, and in which it is developed and divinely enlarged, and which guards it from the vain imaginings of seducers. But there is a living power with this knowledge a divine power in that which God is to believers as He is revealed in this knowledge to faith; and this divine power has given to us all that pertains to life and godliness. By the realising knowledge which we possess of Him who has called us, this divine power becomes available and efficacious for all that appertains to life and godliness "he knowledge of him who hath called us by glory and by virtue."

Thus we have here, the call of God to pursue glory as our object, gaining the victory by virtue spiritual courage over all the enemies that we find in our path. It is not a law given to a people already gathered together, but glory proposed in order to be reached by spiritual energy. Moreover we have divine power acting according to its own efficacy, for the life of God in us, and for godliness.

How precious it is to know that faith can use this divine power, realised in the life of the soul, directing it towards glory as its end! What a safeguard from the efforts of the enemy, if we are really established in the consciousness of this divine power acting on our behalf in grace! The heart is led to make glory its object; and virtue, the strength of spiritual life, is developed on the way to it. Divine power has given us all needed.

Now, in connection with these two things namely, with glory and with the energy of life very great and precious promises are given us; for all the promises in Christ are developed either in the glory or in the life which leads to it. By means of these promises we are made partakers of the divine nature; for this divine power, which is realised in life and godliness, is connected with these great and precious promises that relate either to the glory, or to virtue in the life that leads to it that is to say, it is divine power which develops itself, in realising the glory and heavenly walk which characterises it in its own nature. We are thus made morally partakers of the divine nature, by divine power acting in us and fixing the soul on what is divinely revealed. Precious truth! Privilege so exalted! and which renders us capable of enjoying God Himself, as well as all good.

By the same action of this divine power, we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust; for the divine power delivers us from it. Not only do we not yield to it, but we are occupied elsewhere, and the action of the enemy upon the flesh is kept off; the desires from which one could not cleanse oneself are removed; the corrupt relationship of the heart with its object ceases. It is a real deliverance; we have the mastery over ourselves in this respect; we are set free from sin.

But it is not enough to have escaped by faith from even the inward dominion of the desires of the flesh; we must add to faith to that faith which realises divine power, and the glory of Christ that shall be revealed we must add to faith, virtue. This is the first thing. It is, as we have said, the moral courage which overcomes difficulties, and governs the heart by curbing all action of the old nature. It is an energy by which the heart is master of itself, and is able to choose the good, and to cast aside the evil, as a thing conquered and unworthy of oneself. This indeed is grace; but the apostle is here speaking of the thing itself, as it is realised in the heart, and not of its

source. I have said that this is the first thing; because, practically, this self-government this virtue, this moral energy is deliverance from evil, and renders communion with God possible. It is the one thing which gives reality to all the rest, for without virtue we are not really with God. Can divine power develop itself in the laxity of the flesh? And if we are not really with God if the new nature is not acting knowledge is but the puffing up of the flesh; patience but a natural quality, or else hypocrisy; and so on with the rest. But where there is this virtue, it is very precious to add knowledge to it. We have then divine wisdom and intelligence to guide our walk: the heart is enlarged, sanctified, spiritually developed, by a more complete and profound acquaintance with God, who acts in the heart and is reflected in the walk. We are guarded from more errors we are more humble, more sober-minded: we know better where our treasure is, and what it is, and that everything else is but vanity and a hindrance. It is therefore a true knowledge of God that is here meant.

Thus walking in the knowledge of God, the flesh, the will, the desires, are bridled; all their practical power diminishes, and they disappear as habits of the soul; they are not fed. We are moderate; there is self-restraint; we do not give way to our desires; temperance is added to knowledge. The apostle is not speaking of the walk, but of the state of the heart in the walk. Still, being thus governed, and the will bridled, one bears patiently with others; and the circumstances that must be passed through are, in all respects, borne according to the will of God, be they what they may. We add patience to temperance. The heart, that spiritual life, is then free to enjoy its true objects a principle of deep importance in the christian life. When the flesh is at work in one way or another (even if its action is purely inward), if there is anything whatever that the conscience ought to be exercised about, the soul cannot be in the enjoyment of communion with God in the light because the effect of the light is then to bring the conscience into exercise. But when the conscience has nothing that is not already judged in the light, the new man is in action with regard to God, whether in realising the joy of His presence or in glorifying Him in a life characterised by godliness. We enjoy communion with God; we walk with God; we add to patience godliness.

The heart being thus in communion with God, affection flows out freely towards those who are dear to Him, and who, sharing the same nature, necessarily draw out the affections of the spiritual heart: brotherly love is developed.

There is another principle, which crowns and governs and gives character to all others: it is charity, love properly so called. This, in its root, is the nature of God Himself, the source and perfection of every other quality that adorns christian life. The distinction between love and brotherly love is of deep importance; the former is indeed, as we have just said, the source whence the latter flows; but as this brotherly love exists in mortal men, it may be mingled in its exercise with sentiments that are merely human. with individual affection, with the effect of personal attractions, or that of habit, of suitability in natural character. Nothing is sweeter than brotherly affections; their maintenance is of the highest importance in the assembly; but they may degenerate, as they may grow cool; and if love, if God, does not hold the chief place, they may displace Him set Him aside shut Him out. Divine love, which is the very nature of God, directs, rules, and gives character to brotherly love; otherwise it is that which pleases us that is, our own heart that governs us. If divine love governs me, I love all my brethren; I love them because they belong to Christ; there is no partiality. I shall have greater enjoyment in a spiritual brother; but I shall occupy myself about my weak brother with a love that rises above his weakness and has tender consideration for it. I shall concern myself with my brother's sin, from love to God, in order to restore my brother, rebuking him, if needful; nor, if divine love be in exercise, can brotherly love, or its name, be associated with disobedience. In a word, God will have His place in all my relationships. To exact brotherly love in such a manner as to shut out the requirements of that which God is, and of His claims upon us, is to shut out God in the most plausible way, in order to gratify our own hearts. Divine love then, which acts according to the nature, character, and will of God, is that which ought to direct and characterise our whole christian walk, and have authority over every movement of our hearts. Without this, all that brotherly love can do is to substitute man for God. Divine love is the bond of perfectness, for it is God, who is love, working in us and making Himself the governing object of all that passes in the heart.

Now, if these things are in us, the knowledge of Jesus will not be barren in our hearts. But if, on the contrary, they are wanting, we are blind; we cannot see far into the things of God: our view is contracted; it is limited by the narrowness of a heart governed by its own will, and turned aside by its own lusts. We forget that we have been cleansed from our old sins; we lose sight of the position Christianity has given us. This state of things is not the loss of assurance, but the forgetfulness of the true christian profession into which we are brought purity in contrast with the ways of the world.

Therefore we ought to use diligence, in order to have the consciousness of our election fresh and strong, so as to walk in spiritual liberty. Thus doing, we shall not stumble; and thus an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom will be our portion. Here, as throughout, we see that the apostle's mind is occupied with the government of God, applying it to His dealing with believers, in reference to their conduct and its practical consequences. He is not speaking in an absolute way of pardon and salvation, but of the kingdom of the manifestation of His power who judges righteously whose sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness. Walking in the ways of God, we have part in that kingdom, entering into it with assurance, without difficulty, without that hesitation of soul which is experienced by those who grieve the Holy Ghost, and get a bad conscience, and allow themselves in things that do not accord with the character of the kingdom, or who shew by their negligence that their heart is not in it. If on the contrary the heart cleaves to the kingdom, and our ways are suitable to it, our conscience is in unison with its glory. The way is open before us: we see into the distance, and we go forward, having no impediments in our way. Nothing turns us aside as we walk in the path that leads to the kingdom, occupied with things suitable to it. God has no controversy with one who walks thus. The entrance into the kingdom is widely opened to him according to the ways of God in government.

The apostle desires, therefore, to remind them of these things, although they knew them, purposing, so long as he was in his earthly tabernacle, to stir up their pure hearts to keep them in remembrance; for soon would he have laid aside his earthly vessel, as the Lord had told him, and by thus writing to them, he took care that they should always bear them in mind. It

is very plain that he was not expecting other apostles to be raised up, nor an ecclesiastical succession to take their place as guardians of the faith, or as possessing sufficient authority to be a foundation for the faith of believers. He was to provide for this himself, in order that, on his removal, they might find something on his part that would remind the faithful of the instructions he had given them. For this purpose he wrote his epistle.

The divine importance and certainty of that which he taught were worthy of this labour. We have not, says the apostle, followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty.

The apostle is speaking, as his words plainly shew, of the transfiguration. I notice it here, in order to mark more evidently that in his thoughts of the Lord's coming he does not go beyond His appearing in glory. For the moment He was hidden from those who trusted in Him: this was a great trial of their faith, for the Jews were accustomed, as we know, to look for a visible and glorious Messiah. To believe without seeing was the lesson they had to learn; and it was a magnificent support to their faith, this fact, that the apostle, who taught them, had, with his two companions, seen, with their own eyes, the glory of Christ manifested had seen it displayed before them, together with that of former saints who share His kingdom. At that time Jesus received, in testimony from God the Father, honour and glory; a voice addressing Him from the excellent glory from the cloud, which was to a Jew the well-known dwelling place of Jehovah the Most High God owning Him as His well-beloved Son; a voice which the three apostles also heard (even as they saw His glory), when they were with Him on the holy mount. [See Note #2] We see that it is here the glory of the kingdom, and not the dwelling, in the Father's house for ever with the Lord, which occupies the apostle. It is a manifestation to men living on the earth; it is the power of the Lord, the glory which He receives from God the Father as the Messiah, acknowledged to be His Son, and crowned with glory and honour before the eyes of the world. It is into the everlasting kingdom that the apostle wishes them to have an enlarged entrance. It is the power and glory that Christ received from God, which the apostle saw, and to which he bears testimony. We shall indeed have this glory, but it is not our portion, properly so called:

for this is within the house, to be the bride of the Lamb, and it does not display itself to the world. With regard however to the assembly the two things cannot be separated; if we are the bride, we shall assuredly participate in the glory of the kingdom. [See Note #3] To the Jew, who was accustomed to look for this glory (whatever might be his idea respecting it), the fact of the apostle's having seen it was of inestimable importance. It was the heavenly glory of the kingdom, as it shall be manifested to the world; a glory that shall be seen when the Lord returns in power. (Compare Mar 9:1) It is a communicated glory which comes from the excellent glory. Moreover the testimony of the prophets relates to the manifested glory; they spoke of the kingdom and glory, and the brightness of the transfiguration was a splendid confirmation of their words. We have, says the apostle, the words of the prophets confirmed. Those words proclaimed indeed the glory of the kingdom which was to come, and the judgment of the world, which was to make way for its establishment on earth. This announcement was a light in the darkness of our world, truly a dark place, that had no other light than the testimony which God had given, through the prophets, of that which shall happen to it, and of the future kingdom whose light shall finally dispel the darkness of separation from God in which the world lies. Prophecy was a light that shone during the darkness of the night; but there was another light for those that watched.

For the remnant of the Jews, the Sun of righteousness should rise with healing in His wings; the wicked should be trodden as ashes under the feet of the righteous. The Christian, instructed in his own privileges, knows the Lord in a different way from this, although he believes in those solemn truths. He watches during the night which is already far spent. He sees in his heart, by faith, [See Note #4] the dawn of day, and the rising of the bright star of the morning. He knows the Lord as they know Him who believe in Him before He is manifested, as coming for the pure heavenly joy of His own before the brightness of the day shines forth. They who watch see the dawn of day; they see the morning star. Thus we have our portion in Christ not only in the day, and as the prophets spoke of Him, which all relates to the earth, although the blessing comes from on high; we have the secret of Christ and of our union with Him, and of His coming to receive us to Himself as the morning star, before the day comes. We are His during the night; we

shall be with Him in the truth of that heavenly bond which unites us to Him, as set apart for Himself while the world does not see Him. We shall be gathered to Him, before the world sees Him, that we may enjoy Himself, and in order that the world may see us with Him when He appears.

The joy of our portion is, that we shall be with Himself, "for ever with the Lord." Prophecy enlightens the Christian, and separates him from the world, by testimony to its judgment, and the glory of the coming kingdom. The testimony of the Spirit to the assembly does this, by the attraction of Christ Himself, the bright Morning Star our portion while the world is still buried in sleep.

The bright morning star is Christ Himself, when (before the day, which will be produced by His appearing) He is ready to receive the assembly, that she may enter into His own peculiar joy. Thus it is said, "I am the bright and morning star." (Rev 22:16.) This is what He is for the assembly, as He is the root and offspring of David for Israel. Consequently, as soon as He says "the morning star," the Spirit, who dwells in the assembly and inspires her thoughts, and the bride, the assembly itself which waits for her Lord, say, "Come !" Thus, in Rev 2:28, the faithful in Thyatira are promised by the Lord that He will give them the morning star, that is to say, joy with Himself in heaven. The kingdom and the power had been already promised them according to Christ's own rights (Rev 2:26-27); but the assembly's proper portion is Christ Himself. In addition to the declaration of the prophets, with regard to the kingdom, it is thus that the assembly expects Him.

The apostle goes on to warn the faithful, that the prophecies of scripture were not like the utterances of human will, and were not to be interpreted as though each had a separate solution as though every prophecy were sufficient to itself for the explanation of its full meaning. They were all parts of one whole, having one and the same object, even the kingdom of God; and each event was a preliminary step towards this object, and a link in the chain of God's government which led to it, impossible to be explained, unless the aim of the whole were apprehended the revealed aim of the counsels of God in the glory of His Christ. For holy men, moved by the Holy Ghost, pronounced these oracles, one and the same Spirit directing and co-ordinating the whole for the development of the ways of God to the eye of

faith, ways which would terminate in the establishment of that kingdom, the glory of which had appeared at the transfiguration.

Thus we have here (Chapter 1) these three things: First, divine power for all that appertains to life and godliness, a declaration of infinite value, the pledge of our true liberty. Divine power acts in us, it gives to us all needed to enable us to walk in the christian life.

Secondly, there is the government of God, in connection with the faithfulness of the believer, in order that a wide and abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom may be granted us, and that we may not stumble. The great result of this government will be manifested in the establishment of the kingdom, the glory of which was seen on the holy mount by the three apostles.

But, thirdly, for the Christian there was something better than the kingdom, something to which the apostle merely alludes, for it was not the especial subject of the communications of the Holy Ghost to him as it was to the Apostle Paul, namely, Christ taking the assembly to Himself, a point not found either in the promises or the prophecies, but which forms the precious and inestimable joy and hope of the Christian taught of God.

This first Chapter has thus taught us the divine aspect of the christian position, given to the apostle for the instruction, in the last days, of believers from among the circumcision.

Note #1

This passage may be translated "of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ," and perhaps ought to be so rendered since it speaks of the faithfulness of God to His promise. The Epistle to the Hebrews dwells also on the fact that Jesus is Jehovah.

Note #2

In Luke 9 the higher part of the blessing is brought before us. They feared when they entered into the cloud. God had talked with Moses from the cloud face to face, but here they enter into it. The heavenly and eternal character, what is perpetual, is much more brought out in Luke.

Note #3

Compare Luke 12, where the joy within the house is connected with watching; the inheritance with service.

Note #4

This is the construction of the sentence: "We have also the prophetic word confirmed, in giving heed to which ye do well (as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day shall dawn, and the morning star arise, in your hearts."

2 Peter Chapter 2

The next two Chapters set before us, on the other hand, the two forms of evil that characterise the last days the false and corrupt teaching of bad men, and the unbelief which denies the return of the Lord on the ground of the stability of the visible creation. The former really denies the Master who bought them. It is no question here as to the title of the Lord, nor of redemption. The simile is of a master who has purchased slaves at the market, and they disown and refuse to obey him. Thus among the converted Jews there would be false teachers, who disowned the authority of Christ His rights over them. Many would be led away by them; and as they bore the name of Christians, the way of truth would be brought into disrepute by their means; while in fact, by their covetousness and hypocritical words, they would make merchandise of Christians for their private gain, count them as mere instruments of it. But the resource of faith is always in God. Judgment would overtake them. The examples of the fallen angels, of Noah and the deluge, of Lot and Sodom, proved that the Lord knew how to deliver the righteous out of their trials, and to reserve the unrighteous for the day of judgment.

That which would characterise this class of evildoers would be the unbridled license of their conduct. They would indulge their carnal lusts, and despise all authority in a way that angels would not dare to do. Still they would call themselves Christians and associate with Christians in their love-feasts, deceiving their own hearts, addicting themselves continually to evil, promising liberty to others, but themselves the slaves of corruption.

Now, to be thus re-entangled in evil, after having escaped it through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour, was worse than if they had never known any thing of the way of truth. But it was according to the true proverb the dog had returned to his own vomit, and the sow that had been washed, to her wallowing in the mire. They were apostates therefore, but here the Spirit of God does not so much point out the apostacy as the evil, because the government of God is still in view. In Jude the apostacy is the prominent thing. Peter tells us that the angels sinned; Jude, that they kept not their first estate. But God will judge the wicked.

2 Peter Chapter 3

In the last Chapter, as we have said, it is materialism: trust in the stability of that which can be seen, in contrast with trust in the word of God which teaches us to look for the coming of Jesus, the return of the Lord. They judge by their senses. There is, say they, no appearance of change. This is not the case. To the eye of man it is indeed true that there is none. But these believers are willfully ignorant of the fact that the world has been already judged once; that the waters, out of which by the mighty word of God the earth came, had for the moment swallowed it up again, all perishing except those whom God preserved in the ark. And by the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. It is not that the Lord is slack concerning the promise of His return, but that He is still exercising grace, not wishing any to perish, but that all should come to repentance. And a thousand years are to Him but as a day, and a day as a thousand years. But the day of the Lord shall come, in which all things will pass away, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat and all that is on the earth will be consumed. Solemn consideration for the children of God, to maintain them in complete separation from evil, and from all that is seen, looking for and hastening the day in which the heavens shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat! Everything on which the hopes of the flesh are founded shall disappear for ever.

Nevertheless, there shall be new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness shall dwell. It is not here said, "shall reign," which would be the thousand years of the Lord's dominion; here it is the eternal state, in which the government, that has brought all things into order, will terminate,

and unhindered blessing will flow from God, the kingdom being given up to God the Father.

It is in following out the ways of God in government that the apostle carries them on to the eternal state, in which the promise will be finally accomplished. The millennium itself was the restitution, of which the prophets had spoken; and, morally, the heavens and the earth had been changed by the imprisonment of Satan and the reign of Christ (see Isa 65:17-18, Jerusalem having been made a rejoicing); and the heavens indeed entirely cleared by power, never to be defiled by Satan again, the saints on high too in their eternal state, the earth delivered, but not yet finally freed. But, materially, the dissolution of the elements was, necessary for the renewal of all things.

It will be observed, that the Spirit does not speak here of the coming of Christ, except to say that it will be scoffed at in the last days. He speaks of the day of God, in contrast with the trust of unbelievers in the stability of the material things of creation, which depends, as the apostle shews, on the word of God. And in that day everything on which unbelievers rested and will rest shall be dissolved and pass away. This will not be at the commencement of the day, but at its close; and here we are free to reckon this day, according to the apostle's word, as a thousand years, or whatever length of period the Lord shall see fit.

So solemn a dissolution of all that the flesh rests upon should lead us so to walk as to be found of the Lord, when He comes to introduce that day, in peace and blameless; accounting that the apparent delay is only the Lord's grace, exercised for the salvation of souls. We may well wait, if God makes use of this time to rescue souls from judgment, by bringing them to the knowledge of Himself, and saving them with an everlasting salvation. This, the apostle says, had been taught by Paul, who wrote to them (the Hebrew believers) of these things, as he did also in his other epistles.

It is interesting to see that Peter, who had been openly rebuked before all by Paul, introduces him here with entire affection. He notices that Paul's epistles contained an exalted doctrine, which they who were unstable, and not taught of God, perverted. For Peter in fact does not follow Paul in the

field on which the latter had entered. This however does not prevent his speaking of Paul's writings as forming a part of the scriptures; " as also the other scriptures," he says. This is an important testimony; which moreover gives the same character to the writings of one who is able to bestow this title on the writings of another.

Let Christians then be watchful, and not allow themselves to be seduced by the errors of the wicked but strive to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen!

1 JOHN

1 John Chapter 1

1 John 1:1

jo1 1:1

The Epistle of John has a peculiar character. It is eternal life manifested in Jesus, and imparted to us the life which was with the Father, and which is in the Son. It is in this life that believers enjoy the communion of the Father, that they are in relationship with the Father by the Spirit of adoption, and that they have fellowship with the Father and the Son. God's own character is that which tests it; because it proceeds from Himself.

The first Chapter establishes these two latter points: namely, communion with the Father and the Son, and that this communion must be according to the essential character of God. The name of Father is that which gives character to the second Chapter. Afterwards it is that which God is, which tests the reality of imparted life.

The Epistles of Paul, although speaking of this life, are in general occupied with setting before Christians the truth respecting the means of standing in the presence of God justified and accepted. The Epistle of John, that is to say, his First, shews us the life that comes from God by Jesus Christ. John sets God before us, the Father revealed in the Son, and eternal life in Him. Paul sets us before God accepted in Christ. I speak of what characterises them. Each respectively touches on the other point.

Now, this life is so precious, manifested as it is in the Person of Jesus, that the epistle now before us has in this respect quite a peculiar charm. When I, too, turn my eyes to Jesus, when I contemplate all His obedience, His purity, His grace, His tenderness, His patience, His devotedness, His holiness, His love, His entire freedom from all self-seeking, I can say, That is my life.

This is immeasurable grace. It may be that it is obscured in me; but it is none the less true, that that is my life. Oh how do I enjoy it thus seen! How I bless

God for it! What rest to the soul! What pure joy to the heart! At the same time Jesus Himself is the object of my affections; and all my affections are formed on that holy object. [See Note #1] But we must turn to our epistle. There were many pretensions to new light, to clearer views. It was said that Christianity was very good as an elementary thing; but that it was grown old, and that there was a new light which went far beyond that twilight truth.

The Person of our Lord, the true manifestation of the divine life itself, dissipated all those proud pretensions, those exaltations of the human mind under the influence of the enemy, which did but obscure the truth, and lead the mind of men back into the darkness whence they themselves proceeded.

That which was from the beginning (of Christianity that is, in the Person of Christ), that which they heard, had seen with their own eyes, had contemplated, had touched with their own hands, of the Word of life that was it which the apostle declared. For the life itself had been manifested. That life which was with the Father had been manifested to the disciples. Could there be anything more perfect, more excellent, any development more admirable in the eyes of God, than Christ Himself, than that Life which was with the Father, manifested in all its perfection in the Person of the Son? As soon as the Person of the Son is the object of our faith, we feel that perfection must have been at the beginning.

The Person then of the Son, the eternal life manifested in the flesh, is our subject in this epistle.

Grace is consequently to be remarked here in that which regards life; while Paul presents it in connection with justification. The law promised life upon obedience; but life came in the Person of Jesus, in all its own divine perfection, in its human manifestations. Oh how precious is the truth that this life, such as it was with the Father, such as it was in Jesus, is given to us! In what relationships it sets us, by the power of the Holy Ghost, with the Father and with the Son Himself! And this is what the Spirit here first sets before us. And observe, how it is all grace here. Farther on, indeed, He tests all pretensions to the possession of fellowship with God, by displaying God's

own character; a character from which He can never deviate. But, before entering on this, He presents the Saviour Himself, and communion with the Father and the Son by this means, without question and without modification. This is our position and our eternal joy.

The apostle had seen that life, had touched it with his own hands; and he wrote to others, proclaiming this, in order that they also should have communion with Him in the knowledge of the life which had been thus manifested. [See Note #2] Now, inasmuch as that life was the Son, it could not be known without knowing the Son, that is, that which He was, entering into His thoughts, His feelings: otherwise He is not really known. It was thus they had communion with Him with the Son. Precious fact! to enter into the thoughts (all the thoughts), and into the feelings, of the Son of God come down in grace: to do this in fellowship with Him, that is to say, not only knowing them, but sharing these thoughts and feelings with Him. In effect, it is the life.

But we cannot have the Son without having the Father. He who had seen Him had seen the Father; and consequently he who had communion with the Son had communion with the Father; for their thoughts and feelings were all one. He is in the Father, and the Father in Him. We have fellowship therefore with the Father. And this is true also, when we look at it in another aspect. We know that the Father has entire delight in the Son. Now He has given us, by revealing the Son, to take our delight in Him also, feeble as we are. I know, when I am delighting in Jesus in His obedience, His love to His Father, to us, His single eye and purely devoted heart I have the same feelings, the same thoughts, as the Father Himself. In that the Father delights, cannot but delight, in Him in whom I now delight, I have communion with the Father. So with the Son in the knowledge of the Father. All this flows, whether in the one or the other point of view, from the Person of the Son. Herein our joy is full. What can we have more than the Father and the Son? What more perfect happiness than community of thoughts, feelings, joys, and communion, with the Father and the Son, deriving all our joy from themselves? And if it seem difficult to believe, let us remember that, in truth, it cannot be otherwise: for, in the life of Christ, the Holy Ghost is the source of my thoughts, feelings, communion, and He

cannot give thoughts different from those of the Father and the Son. They must be in their nature the same. To say that they are adoring thoughts is in the very nature of things, and only makes them more precious. To say that they are feeble and often hindered, while the Father and the Son are divine and perfect, is, if true, to say the Father and the Son are God, are divine, and we feeble creatures. That surely none will deny. But if the blessed Spirit be the source, they must be the same as to nature and fact.

This is our christian position then, here below in time, through the knowledge of the Son of God; as the apostle says, " These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

But He who was the life which came from the Father, has brought us the knowledge of God. [See Note #3] The apostle had heard from His lips that which God was knowledge of priceless value, but which searches the heart. And this also the apostle, on the Lord's part, announces to believers. This then is the message which they had heard from Him, namely, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness. With regard to Christ, He spoke that which He knew, and bore testimony to that which He had seen. No one had been in heaven, save He who came down from thence. No one had seen God. The Only-begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father, He had declared Him. No one had seen the Father, save He who was of God; He had seen the Father. Thus He could, of His own and perfect knowledge, reveal Him. [See Note #4] Now God was light, perfect purity, which makes manifest at the same time all that is pure, and all that is not so. To have communion with light, one must oneself be light, be of its nature, and fit to be seen in the perfect light. It can only be linked with that which is of itself. If there is anything else that mingles with it, light is no longer light. It is absolute in its nature, so as to exclude all that is not itself.

Therefore, if we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not practise truth: our life is a perpetual lie.

But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we (believers) have communion with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. These are the great principles, the great features of christian position. We are in the presence of God without a veil. It is a real thing, a

matter of life and of walk. It is not the same thing as walking according to the light; but it is in the light. That is to say, that this walk is before the eyes of God, enlightened by the full revelation of what He is. It is not that there is no sin in us; but walking in the light, the will and the conscience being in the light as God is in it, everything is judged that does not answer to it. We live and walk morally in the sense that God is present, and as knowing Him. We walk thus in the light. The moral rule of our will is God Himself, God known. The thoughts that sway the heart come from Himself and are formed upon the revelation of Himself. The apostle puts these things always in an abstract way: thus he says, "he cannot sin, because he is born of God;" and that maintains the moral rule of this life; it is its nature; it is the truth, inasmuch as the man is born of God. We cannot have any other measure of it: any other would be false. It does not follow, alas! that we are always consistent; but we are inconsistent if we are not in this state; we are not walking according to the nature that we possess; we are out of our true condition according to that nature.

Moreover, walking in the light, as God is in the light, believers have communion with each other. The world is selfish. The flesh, the passions, seek their own gratification; but, if I walk in the light, self has no place there. I can enjoy the light, and all I seek in it, with another, and there is no jealousy. If another possess a carnal thing, I am deprived of it. In the light we have fellow-possession of that which He gives us, and we enjoy it the more by sharing it together. This is a touchstone to all that is of the flesh. As much as one is in the light, so much will we have fellow-enjoyment with another who is in it. The apostle, as we have said, states this in an abstract and absolute way. This is the truest way to know the thing itself. The rest is only a question of realisation.

In the third place, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

To walk in the light as God is in it, to have fellowship with one another, to be cleansed from all sin by the blood; these are the three parts of christian position. We feel the need there is of the last; for while walking in the light as God is in the light, with (blessed be God) a perfect revelation to us of Himself with a nature that knows Him, that is capable of seeing Him spiritually, as the eye is made to appreciate light (for we participate in the

divine nature), we cannot say that we have no sin. The light itself would contradict us. But we can say that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us perfectly from all sin [See Note #5] Through the Spirit we enjoy the light together: it is the common joy of our hearts before God, and well pleasing to Him; a testimony to our common participation in the divine nature, which is love also. And our conscience is no hindrance, because we know the value of the blood. We have no conscience of sin upon us before God, though we know it is in us; but we have the conscience of being clean from it by the blood. But the same light which shews us this, prevents our saying (if we are in it) that we have no sin in us; we should deceive ourselves if we said so; and the truth would not be in us; for if the truth were in us, if that revelation of the divine nature, which is light, Christ our life, were in us, the sin that is in us would be judged by the light itself. If it be not judged, this light the truth which speaks of things as they are is not in us.

Note #1

And this is morally very important; while it is in Him, not in myself, that I rejoice and delight.

Note #2

The life has been manifested. Therefore we have no longer to seek for it, to grope after it in the darkness, to explore at random the indefinite, or the obscurity of our own hearts, in order to find it, to labour fruitlessly under the law, in order to obtain it. We behold it: it is revealed, it is here, in Jesus Christ. He who possesses Christ possesses that life.

Note #3

It will be found that, when grace to us is spoken of in John's writings, he speaks of the Father and the Son; when the nature of God or our responsibility, he says God. John 3 and 1 John 4 may seem exceptions, but are not. It is what God is as such, not personal action and relationship in grace.

Note #4

He who had seen Him had seen the Father; but here the apostle speaks of a message and the revelation of His nature.

Note #5

It is not said "has" nor "will." It does not refer to time, but to its efficacy. As I might say such a medicine cures the ague. It is its efficacy.

1 John Chapter 2

If, on the other hand, we have even committed sin and all, being judged according to the light, is confessed (so that the will no longer takes part in it, the pride of that will being broken down), He is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all iniquity. If we say that we have not sinned [See Note #6] (as a general truth), it shews not only that the truth is not in us, but we make God a liar; His word is not in us, for He says that all have sinned. There are the three things: we lie; the truth is not in us; we make God a liar. It is this fellowship with God in the light which, in practical daily christian life, inseparably connects forgiveness, and the present sense of it by faith, and purity of heart.

Thus we see the christian position (Jo1 2:7); and then the things which, in three different ways, are opposed to the truth to communion with God in life.

The apostle wrote that which relates to the communion with the Father and the Son, in order that their joy might be full

That which he wrote according to the revelation of the nature of God, which he had received from Him who was the life from heaven, was in order that they should not sin. But to say this is to suppose that they might sin. Not that it is necessary they should do so; for the presence of sin in the flesh by no means obliges us to walk after the flesh. But if it should take place, there is provision made by grace, in order that grace may act, and that we may be neither condemned, nor brought again under the law.

We have an Advocate with the Father, One who carries on our cause for us on high. Now this is not in order to obtain righteousness, nor again to wash our sins away. All that has been done. Divine righteousness has placed us in

the light, even as God Himself is in the light. But communion is interrupted, if even levity of thought finds place in our heart; for it is of the flesh and the flesh has no communion with God. When communion is interrupted, when we have sinned (not when we have repented, for it is His intercession that leads to repentance), Christ intercedes for us. Righteousness is always present our righteousness "Jesus Christ the Righteous." Therefore, neither the righteousness nor the value of the propitiation for sin being changed, grace acts (one may say, acts necessarily) in virtue of that righteousness, and of that blood which is before God acts, on the intercession of Christ who never forgets us, in order to bring us back to communion by means of repentance. Thus, while yet on earth, before Peter had committed the sin, He prayed for him; at the given moment He looks on him, and Peter repents and weeps bitterly for his offence. Afterwards the Lord does all that is necessary to make Peter judge the root itself of the sin; but all is grace.

It is the same in our case. Divine righteousness abides the immutable foundation of our relationships with God, established on the blood of Christ. When communion, which exists only in the light, is interrupted, the intercession of Christ, available by virtue of His blood (for propitiation for the sin has also been made), restores the soul that it may still again enjoy communion with God according to the light, into which righteousness has introduced it. [See Note #7] This propitiation is made for the whole world, not for the Jews only, nor to the exclusion of any one at all; but for the whole world, God in His moral nature having been fully glorified by the death of Christ.

These three capital points or, if you will, two capital points, and the third, namely, advocacy, which is supplementary form the introduction, the doctrine of the epistle. All the rest is an experimental application of that which this part contains: namely, first (life being given), communion with the Father and the Son; second, the nature of God, light, which manifests the falsehood of all pretension to communion with the light, if the walk be in darkness; and third, seeing that sin is in us and that we may fail although we are cleansed before God so as to enjoy the light, the advocacy which Jesus Christ the righteous can always exercise before God, on the ground of the righteousness which is ever in His presence, and the blood which is shed

for our sins, in order to restore our communion, when we have lost it by our guilty negligence.

The Spirit now proceeds to develop the characteristics of this divine life.

Now we are sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ, that is to say, to obey on the same principles as those on which He obeyed; where His Father's will was the motive as well as the rule of action. It is the obedience of a life to which it was meat and drink to do the will of God: not as under the law, in order to obtain life. The life of Jesus Christ was a life of obedience, in which He enjoyed the love of His Father perfectly, tested in all things and so proved perfect. His words, His commandments, were the expression of that life; they direct that life in us, and ought to exercise all the authority over us of Him who pronounced them.

The law promised life to those who obeyed it. Christ is the life. This life has been imparted to us to believers. Therefore, the words which were the expression of that life, in its perfection in Jesus, direct and guide it in us according to that perfection. Besides this, it has authority over us. His commandments are its expression. We have therefore to obey, and to walk as He walked the two forms of practical life. It is not enough to walk well: we must obey, for there is authority. This is the essential principle of a right walk. On the other hand, the obedience of the Christian as is evident by that of Christ Himself is not that which we often think. We call a child obedient, who, having a will of his own, submits himself at once when the authority of the parent intervenes to prevent his accomplishing it. But Christ never obeyed in this way. He came to do the will of God. Obedience was His mode of being. His Father's will was the motive, and, with the love that was never separate from it, the only motive of His every act and every impulse. This is obedience properly called christian. It is a new life which delights in doing the will of Christ, acknowledging His entire authority over it. We reckon ourselves to be dead to everything else; we are alive unto God, we are not our own. We only know Christ inasmuch as we are living by His life; for the flesh does not know Him, and cannot understand His life.

Now, that life is obedience: therefore he who says, " I know him," and does not observe His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. It does

not say here, "he deceives himself," for it is very possible that he is not self-deceived, as in the other case of fancied communion; for here the will is in action, and a man knows it, if he will confess it. But the reality is not there; he is a liar, and the truth in the knowledge of Jesus, which he professes, is not in him.

There are two remarks to be made here. First, that the apostle takes things always as they are in themselves in an abstract way, without the modifications that are occasioned by other things, in the midst of which, or in relation with which, the former are found. Second, that the chain of consequences which the apostle deduces is not that of outward reasoning, the force of which is consequently on the surface of the argument itself. He reasons from a great inward principle, so that one does not see the force of the argument unless one knows the fact, and even the scope, of that principle; and, in particular, that which the life of God is in its nature, in its character, and in its action. But, without possessing it, we do not and cannot understand anything about it. There is indeed, the authority of the apostle and of the word to tell us that the thing is so, and that is sufficient. But the links of his discourse will not be understood without the possession of the life which interprets what he says, and which is itself interpreted by that which he says.

I return to the text. "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." It is in this way that we are conscious that we know Him. His "word" has rather a wider sense than His "commandments." That is to say, while it equally implies obedience, the word is less outward. "Commandments" are here details of the divine life. His "word" contains its whole expression the spirit of that life. [See Note #8] It is universal and absolute.

Now this life is the divine life manifested in Jesus, and which is imparted to us. Have we seen it in Christ? Do we doubt that this is love; that the love of God has been manifested in it? If then I keep His word; if the scope and meaning of the life which that word expresses is thus understood and realised, the love of God is perfect in me. The apostle, as we have seen, always speaks abstractedly. If in fact at any given moment I do not observe the word, in that point I do not realise His love; happy intercourse with God

is interrupted. But so far as I am moved and governed absolutely by His word, His love is completely realised in me; for His word expresses what He is, and I am keeping it. This is the intelligent communion with His nature in its fullness, a nature in which I participate; so that I know that He is perfect love, I am filled with it, and this shews itself in my ways: for that word is the perfect expression of Himself. [See Note #9] Consequently we know thus that we are in Him, for we realise that which He is in the communion of His nature. Now if we say that we abide in Him, it is evident, from what we have now seen in the instruction the apostle gives us, that we ought to walk as He walked. Our walk is the practical expression of our life; and this life is Christ known in His word. And since it is by His word, we who possess this life are under an intelligent responsibility to follow it; that is to say, to walk as He walked. For that word is the expression of His life.

Obedience then, as obedience, is thus far the moral characteristic of the life of Christ in us. But it is proof of that which, in Christianity, is inseparable from the life of Christ in us: we are in Him. (Compare Joh 14:29) We know, not merely that we know Him, but that we are in Him. The enjoyment of the perfect love of God in the path of obedience, gives us by the Holy Ghost the consciousness that we are in Him. But if I am in Him, I cannot indeed be what He was, for He was without sin; but I ought to walk as He walked. Thus I know I am in Him. But if I make profession to abide in Him, my heart and spirit to be wholly there, I ought to walk as He walked. Obedience as a principle, and through keeping His word, and so the love of God perfected in me knowing that I am in Him, are the formative principles and character of our life.

In Verses 7 and 8 (Jo1 2:7-8) the two forms of the rule of this life are presented forms which, moreover, answer to the two principles which we have just announced. It is not a new commandment which the apostle writes unto them but an old one; it is the word of Christ from the beginning. Were it not so, were it in this sense new, so much the worse for him who set it forth, for it would no longer be the expression of the perfect life of Christ Himself, but some other thing, or a falsification of that which Christ had set forth. This corresponds with the first principle, that is, obedience to commandments, to the commandments of Christ. What He said was the

expression of what He was. He could command that they should love one another as He had loved them. Compare the Beatitudes.

In another sense it was a new commandment: for (by the power of the Spirit of Christ, being united to Him and drawing our life from Him) the Spirit of God manifested the effect of this life by revealing a glorified Christ in a new way. And now it was not only a commandment, but as the thing itself was true in Christ, it was so in His own as partakers of His nature and in Him; He also in them.

By this revelation, and by the presence of the Holy Ghost, the darkness disappeared, [See Note #10] passed away, and in fact the true light shone. There will be no different light in heaven: only then the light will be publicly displayed in glory without a cloud.

Verse 9 (Jo1 1:9). The life as in Joh 1:4, is now found to be the light of men, only the brighter for faith that Christ is gone, for it is through the rent veil it shines most brightly. We have had the pretension to know Him discussed to be in Him; now that of being in the light, and this before the Spirit of God applies in detail the qualities of this life, as a proof of its existence to the heart, in answer to seducers who sought to terrify them by new notions, as though Christians were not really in possession of life, and, with life, of the Father and the Son. The true light now shines. And this light is God; it is the divine nature; and, as that which was a means of judging the seducers themselves, he brings out another quality connected with our being in the light, that is with God fully revealed. Christ was it in the world. We are set to be it, in that we are born of God. And one who has this nature loves his brother; for is not God love? Has not Christ loved us, not being ashamed to call us brethren? Can I have His life and His nature, if I do not love the brethren? No. I am then walking in darkness; I have no light on my path. He who loves his brother dwells in the light; the nature of God acts in him; and he dwells in the bright spiritual intelligence of that life, in the presence and in the communion of God. If any one hates, it is evident that he has not divine light. With feelings according to a nature opposed to God, how can it be pretended that he is in the light?

Moreover, there is no occasion of stumbling in one who loves, for he walks according to divine light. There is nothing in him which causes another to stumble, for the revelation of the nature of God in grace will assuredly not do so: and it is this which is manifested in him who loves his brother. [See Note #11] This closes as an introductory statement the first part of the Epistle. It contains in the former half, the privileged place of Christians, the message giving us the truth of our state here, and the provision for failure: that ends with Jo1 2:2; in the second half, the proofs the Christian has of the true possession of the privilege according to the message giving obedience, and love of the brethren, knowing Christ, being in Christ, enjoying the perfect love of God, abiding in Him, being in the light, forming the condition which is thus proved.

Having established the two great principles, obedience and love, as proofs of the possession of the divine nature, of Christ known as life, and of our abiding in Him, the apostle goes on to address Christians personally and to shew us the position, on the ground of grace, in three different degrees of ripeness. This parenthetical but most important address we will now consider.

He begins by calling all the Christians to whom he was writing, "children," a term of affection in the loving and aged apostle. And as he writes to them (Jo1 2:1) in order that they should not sin, so he writes also because all their sins were forgiven for Jesus' name's sake. This was the assured condition of all Christians: that which God had granted them in giving them faith, that they might glorify Him He allows no doubt as to the fact of their being pardoned. He writes to them because they are so.

We next find three classes of Christians: fathers, young men, and babes. He addresses them each twice, fathers, young men, babes (Jo1 2:13) fathers, in the first half of Verse 14 (Jo1 2:14); young men, from the second half, to the end of Verse 17 (Jo1 2:17); and babes from Verse 18 to the end of Verse 27 (Jo1 2:18-27). In Verse 28 (Jo1 2:28) he returns to all Christians under the name of "children".

That which characterises fathers in Christ is that they have known Him who is from the beginning, that is, Christ. This is all that he has to say about them.

All had resulted in that. He only repeats the same thing again, when, changing his form of expression, he begins anew with these three classes. The fathers have known Christ. This is the result of all christian experience. The flesh is judged, discerned, wherever it has mixed itself with Christ in our feelings: it is recognised, experimentally, as having no value; and, as the result of experience, Christ stands alone, free from all alloy. They have learnt to distinguish that which has only the appearance of good. They are not occupied with experience that would be being occupied with self, with one's own heart. All that has passed away; and Christ alone remains as our portion, unmingled with aught besides, even as He gave Himself to us. Moreover He is much better known; they have experienced what He is in so many details, whether of joy in communion with Him, or in the consciousness of weakness, or in the realisation of His faithfulness, of the riches of His grace, of His adaptation to our need, of His love, and in the revelation of His own fullness; so that they are able now to say, " I know whom I have believed. " Attachment to Himself characterises them. Such is the character of "fathers" in Christ.

"Young men" are the second class. They are distinguished by spiritual strength in conflict: the energy of faith. They have overcome the wicked one. For he speaks of what their character is as in Christ. Conflict they have as such, but the strength of Christ manifested in them.

The third class is "babes" These know the Father. We see here that the Spirit of adoption and of liberty characterises the youngest child in the faith of Christ, that it is not the result of progress. It is the commencement. We possess it because we are Christians and it is ever the distinguishing mark of beginners. The others do not lose it, but other things distinguish them.

In again addressing these three classes of Christians the apostle, as we have seen, has only to repeat that which he at first said with regard to the fathers. It is the result of christian life. In the case of the young men he develops his idea and adds some exhortations. "Ye are strong," he says, " and the word of God abideth in you" an important characteristic. The word is the revelation of God, and the application of Christ, to the heart, so that we have thus the motives which form and govern it, and a testimony founded on the state of the heart, and on convictions which have a divine

power in us. It is the sword of the Spirit in our relations with the world. We have been ourselves formed by those things to which we bear testimony in our relations with the world, and those things are in us according to the power of the word of God. The wicked one is thus overcome; for he has only the world to present to our lusts: and the word abiding, in us keeps us in an altogether different sphere of thought in which a different nature is enlightened and strengthened by divine communications. The tendency of the young man is toward the world: the ardour of his nature, and the vigour of his age, tend to draw him away on that side. He has to guard against this by separating himself entirely from the world and the things that are in it; because, if any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, for those things do not come from the Father. He has a world of his own, of which Christ is the centre and glory. The lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life these are the things that are in the world and that characterise it. There are really no other motives besides these in the world. Now these things are not of the Father.

The Father is the source of all that is according to His own heart every grace, every spiritual gift, the glory, the heavenly holiness of all that was manifested in Christ Jesus, and that will be all the world of glory to come, of which Christ is the centre. And all this had only the cross for its portion here below. But the apostle is speaking here of the source; and assuredly the Father is not the source of those other things.

Now the world passes away; but he who does the will of God, he who, in going through this world, takes for his guide, not the desires of nature, but the will of God a will which is according to His nature and which expresses it such a one shall abide for ever according to the nature and the will that he has followed after.

We shall find that the world, and the Father with all that is of Him, the flesh and the Spirit, the Son and the devil, are put respectively in opposition. Things are spoken of in their source and moral nature, the principles that act in us and that characterise our existence and our position, and the two agents in good and evil that are opposed to each other, without (thanks be to God!) any uncertainty as to the issue of the conflict; for the weakness of Christ, in death, is stronger than the strength of Satan. He has no power

against that which is perfect. Christ came that He might destroy the works of the devil.

To the babes the apostle speaks principally of the dangers to which they were exposed from seducers. He warns them with tender affection, reminding them at the same time that all the sources of intelligence and strength were open to them and belonged to them. "It is the last time;" not exactly the last days, but the season which had the final character that belonged to the dealings of God with this world. The Antichrist was to come, and already there were many antichrists: by this it might be known it was the last time. It was not merely sin, nor the transgression of the law; but, Christ having already been manifested, and being now absent and hidden from the world, there was a formal opposition to the especial revelation that had been made. It was not a vague and ignorant unbelief; it took a definite shape as having a will directed against Jesus. They might for instance believe all that a Jew believed, as it was revealed in the word, but as to the testimony of God by Jesus Christ they opposed it. They would not own Him to be the Christ; they denied the Father and the Son. This, as to religious profession, is the true character of the Antichrist. He may indeed believe or pretend to believe, that there shall be a Christ; yea, set himself up to be it. But the two aspects of Christianity (that which, on the one hand, regards the accomplishment in the Person of Jesus of the promises made to the Jew; and, on the other hand, the heavenly and eternal blessings presented in the revelation of the Father by the Son), this the Antichrist does not accept. That which characterises him as Antichrist is that he denies the Father and the Son. To deny that Jesus is the Christ is indeed the Jewish disbelief that forms part of his character. That which gives him the character of Antichrist is that he denies the foundation of Christianity. He is a liar in that he denies Jesus to be the Christ; consequently it is the work of the father of lies. But all the unbelieving Jews had done as much without being Antichrist. To deny the Father and the Son characterises him.

But there is something more. These antichrists came out from among the Christians. There was apostacy. Not that they were really Christians, but they had been among the Christians and had come out from them. (How instructive for our days also is this Epistle!) It was thus made manifest that

they were not truly of the flock of Christ. All this had a tendency to shake the faith of babes in Christ. The apostle endeavours to strengthen them. There were two means of confirming their faith, which also inspired the apostle with confidence. First, they had the unction of the Holy One; secondly, that which was from the beginning, was the touchstone for all new doctrine, and they already possessed that which was from the beginning.

The indwelling of the Holy Ghost as an unction and spiritual intelligence in them, and the truth which they had received at the beginning the perfect revelation of Christ these were the safe guards against seducers and seductions. All heresy and all error and corruption will be found to strike at the first and divine revelation of the truth, if the unction of the Holy One is in us to judge them. Now this unction is the portion of even the youngest babes in Christ, and they ought to be encouraged to realise it, however tenderly they may be cared for as they were here by the apostle.

What important truths we discover here for ourselves! The last time already manifested, so that we have to be on our guard against seducers persons moreover issuing from the bosom of Christianity.

The character of this Antichrist is that he denies the Father and the Son. Unbelief in its Jewish form is also again manifested: owning that there is a Christ, but denying that Jesus is He. Our security against these seductions is the unction from the Holy one the Holy Ghost, but in especial connection with the holiness of God, which enables us to see clearly into the truth (another characteristic of the Spirit); and, secondly, that that abide in us which we have heard from the beginning. It is this evidently which we have in the written word. "Development," note it well, is not that which we have from the beginning. By its very name it sins radically against the safeguard pointed out by the apostle. That which the church has taught, as development of the truth, whencesoever she may have received it, is not that which has been heard from the beginning.

There is another point indicated here by the apostle that ought to be noticed. People might pretend by giving God in a vague way the name of Father, that they possessed Him without the true possession of the Son,

Jesus Christ. This cannot be. He who has not the Son has not the Father. It is by Him that the Father is revealed, in Him that the Father is known.

If the truth that we have received from the beginning abides in us, we abide in the Son and in the Father; for this truth is the revelation of the Son and is revealed by the Son, who is the truth. It is living truth if it abides in us; thus, by possessing it, we possess the Son, and in the Son, the Father also. We abide in it, and thereby we have eternal life. (Compare Joh 17:3)

Now the apostle had happy confidence that the unction which they had received of Him abode in them, so that they needed not to be taught of others, for this same unction taught them with respect to all things. It was the truth, for it was the Holy Ghost Himself acting in the word, which was the revelation of the truth of Jesus Himself, and there was no lie in it. Thus should they abide in Him according to that which it had taught them.

Observe also, here, that the effect of this teaching by the unction from on high is twofold with regard to the discernment of the truth. They knew that no lie was of the truth; possessing this truth from God, that which was not it was a lie. They knew that this unction which taught them of all things was the truth, and that there was no lie in it. The unction taught them all things, that is to say, all the truth, as truth of God. Therefore that which was not it was a lie, and there was no lie in the unction. Thus the sheep hear the voice of the good Shepherd; if another calls them, it is not His voice, and that is enough. They fear it and fly from it, because they do not know it.

With Verse 27 (Jo1 2:27) ends the second series of exhortations to the three classes. The apostle begins again with the whole body of Christians (Jo1 2:28). This Verse appears to me to correspond with Verse 8 of the Second Epistle (Jo2 1:8), and with Chapter 3 of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

The apostle, having ended his address to those who were all in the communion of the Father, applies the essential principles of the divine life, of the divine nature as manifested in Christ, to test those who claimed participation in it; not in order to make the believer doubt, but for the rejection of that which was false. I say, "not to make the believer doubt;" for the apostle speaks of his position, and of the position of those to whom he was writing, with the most perfect assurance. (Jo1 3:1-2) [See Note #12] He

had spoken, in recommencement at Verse 28 (Jo1 2:28), of the appearing of Jesus. This introduces the Lord in the full revelation of His character, and gives rise to the scrutiny of the pretensions of those who called themselves by His name. There are two proofs which belong essentially to the divine life, and a third which is accessory as privilege: righteousness or obedience, and love, and the presence of the Holy Ghost.

Righteousness is not in the flesh. If therefore it is really found in any one, he is born of Him, he derives his nature from and in Christ. We may remark, that it is righteousness as it was manifested in Jesus; for it is because we know that He is righteous, that we know that "he who doeth righteousness is born of him." It is the same nature demonstrated by the same fruits.

Note #6

1 John Chapter 3

Now to say that we are born of Him is to say that we are children of God. [See Note #13] What a love is that which the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children! [See Note #14] Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not. The apostle returns here to His appearing and its effect on us. We are children of God: this is our present sure and known position; we are born of God. That which we shall be is not yet manifested; but we know that associated with Jesus as we are in the same relationship with the Father, Himself being our life we shall be like Him when He appears. For it is to this we are predestined, to see Him as He now is with the Father, from which the life came which was manifested in Him and imparted to us, and to appear in the same glory.

Having then the hope of seeing Him as He is, and knowing that I shall be perfectly like Him when He appears, I seek to be as like Him now as possible, since I already possess this life He being in me, my life.

This is the measure of our practical purification. We are not pure as He is pure; but we take Christ, as He is in heaven, for the pattern and measure of our purification, we purify ourselves according to His purity, knowing that we shall be perfectly like Him when He is manifested. Before marking the contrast between the principles of the divine life and of the enemy, he sets

before us the true measure of purity (he will give that of love in a moment) for the children, inasmuch as they are partakers of His nature and have the same relationship with God.

There are two remarks to be made here. First, "hope in him" does not mean in the believer; but a hope that has Christ for its object. Second, it is striking to see the way in which the apostle appears to confound God and Christ together in this epistle; and uses the word "Him" to signify Christ, when he had just been speaking of God, and vice versa. We may see the principle of this at the end of Chapter 5: "We are in him that is true, [that is to say] in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." In these few words we have the key to the epistle: Christ is the life. It is evidently the Son; but it is God Himself who is manifested, and the perfection of His nature, which is the source of life to us also, as that life was found in Christ as man. Thus I can speak of God and say, "Born of him;" but it is in Jesus that God was manifested, and from Him that I derive life; so that "Jesus Christ" and "God" are interchanged with each other. Thus "He shall appear" (Jo1 2:28) is Christ, He is righteous; the righteous one "is born of him" But in Jo1 3:1 it is "born of God," "children of God;" but the world did not know Him: here it is Christ on earth; and "when he shall appear," it is again Christ and we purify ourselves "even as He is pure." There are many other examples.

It is said of the believer, "he purifies himself:" this shews that he is not pure, as Christ is. He needed not to purify Himself. Accordingly it is not said, he is pure as Christ is pure (for in that case there would be no sin in us); but he purifies himself according to the purity of Christ as He is in heaven, having the same life as the life of Christ Himself.

Having set forth the positive aspect of christian purity, he goes on to speak of it in other points of view, as one of the characteristic proofs of the life of God in the soul.

He who commits sin (not transgresses the law, [See Note #15] but acts lawlessly. His conduct is without the restraint, without the rule of law. He acts without curb; for sin is the acting without the curb of law or restraint of another's authority, acting from our own will. Christ came to do His Father's will, not His own. But Christ was manifested that He might take away our

sins, and in Him there is no sin; so that he who commits sin acts against the object of the manifestation of Christ, and in opposition to the nature of which, if Christ is our life, we are partakers. Therefore he who abides in Christ does not practise sin; he who sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. All depends, we see, on participation in the life and nature of Christ. Let us not then deceive ourselves. He who practises righteousness is righteous, as He is righteous: for, by partaking in the life of Christ, one is before God according to the perfection of Him who is there, the head and source of that life. But we are thus as Christ before God, because He Himself is really our life. Our actual life is not the measure of our acceptance; it is Christ who is so. But Christ is our life, if we are accepted according to His excellence; for it is as living of His life that we participate in this.

But the judgment is more than negative. He who practises sin is of the devil, has morally the same nature as the devil; for he sinneth from the beginning: it is his original character as the devil. Now Christ was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil; how then can one who shares the character of this enemy of souls be with Christ?

On the other hand, he who is born of God does not practise sin. The reason is evident; he is made a partaker of the nature of God; he derives his life from Him. This principle of divine life is in him. the seed of God remains in him; he cannot sin, because he is born of God. This new nature had not in it the principle of sin, so as to commit it. How could it be that the divine nature should sin?

Having thus designated the two families, the family of God and that of the devil, the apostle adds the second mark, the absence of which is a proof that one is not of God. He had already spoken of righteousness; he adds the love of the brethren. For this is the message that they had received from Christ Himself, that they should love one another. In Verse 12 (Jo1 3:12) he shews the connection between the two things: that hatred of a brother is fed by the sense one has that his works are good, and one's own evil. Moreover we are not to wonder that the world hates us: for we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. If this love is an essential proof of being renewed, it is quite natural that it should not be found in the men of the world.

But, this being the case, he who does not love his brother (solemn thought!) abides in death. In addition to this, he who does not love his brother is a murderer, and a murderer has not eternal life. There is the absence of the divine nature, death; but more, the activity of the old man in the opposite nature is there, he hates, and is in spirit the activity of death a murderer.

Further, as in the case of righteousness and of purity, we have Christ as the measure of this love. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; we ought to lay down ours for the brethren. Now, if our brother has need, and we possess this world's good, but do not provide for his necessity, is that the divine love which made Christ lay down His life for us? It is by this real and practical love that we know we are in the truth, and that our heart is confirmed and assured before God. For if there is nothing on the conscience, we have confidence in His presence; but if our own heart condemns us, God knows yet more.

It is not here the means of being assured of our salvation, but of having confidence in the presence of God. We cannot have it with a bad conscience in the practical sense of the word, for God is always light and always holy.

We also receive all that we ask for, when we walk thus in love before Him, doing that which is pleasing in His sight; for thus walking in His presence with confidence, the heart and its desires respond to this blessed influence, being formed by the enjoyment of communion with Him in the light of His countenance. It is God who animates the heart; this life, and this divine nature, of which the epistle speaks, being in full activity and enlightened and moved by the divine presence in which it delights. Thus our requests are only for the accomplishment of desires that arise when this life, when our thoughts, are filled with the presence of God and with the communication of His nature. And He lends His power to the fulfillment of these desires, of which He is the source, and which are formed in the heart by the revelation of Himself. (Compare Joh 15:7)

This is indeed the position of Christ Himself when here below: only that He was perfect in it. (Compare Joh 8:29; Joh 11:42)

And here it is the commandment of God which He desires us to obey; namely, to believe on the name of His Son Jesus; and to love one another, as He gave us commandment.

Now he who keeps His commandments dwells in Him; and He dwells also in this obedient man. It will be asked whether God or Christ is here meant? The apostle, as we have seen, confounds them together in his thought. That is to say, the Holy Ghost unites them in our minds. We are in Him who is true, that is, in His Son Jesus Christ. It is Christ, who is the presentation of God to men in life in man; and to the believer He is the communication of that life, so that God too dwells in him, in the revelation, in its divine excellence and perfection, of the nature which the believer shares in the power of the Holy Ghost who dwells in him, so that love is alike enjoyed and exercised.

But what marvelous grace to have received a life, a nature, by which we are enabled to enjoy God Himself, who dwells in us, and by which, since it is in Christ, we are in fact in the enjoyment of this communion, this relationship with God! He who has the Son has life; but God then dwells in him as the portion, as well as the source of this life; and he who has the Son has the Father.

What marvelous links of vital and living enjoyment through the communication of the divine nature of Him who is its source; and that according to its perfection in Christ! Such is the Christian according to grace. Therefore also he is obedient, because this life in the man Christ (and it is thus that it becomes ours) was obedience itself, the true relationship of man to God.

Practical righteousness, then, is a proof that we are born of Him who, in His nature, is its source. In presence also of the world's hatred, we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. Thus, having a good conscience, we have confidence in God, and we receive from Him whatsoever we ask, walking in obedience and in a way that is pleasing to Him. Thus walking, we dwell in Him [See Note #16] and He in us.

A third proof of our christian privileges arises here. The Spirit whom He has given us is the proof that He Himself dwells in us, the manifestation of the presence of God in us. He does not here add that we abide in Him, because

the subject here is the manifestation of the presence of God. The presence of the Spirit demonstrates it. But in abiding in Him there is, as we shall see farther on, the enjoyment of that which He is, and consequently moral communion with His nature. He who obeys enjoys this also, as we have seen. Here the presence of the Holy Ghost in us is spoken of as demonstration of one part only of this truth, namely, that God is in us. But the presence of God in us according to grace, and according to the power of the Spirit, involves also communion with that nature; we dwell also in Him from whom we derive this grace, and all the spiritual forms of that nature, in communion and practical life. It is in Verses 12 and 16 of Chapter 4 (Jo1 4:12; Jo1 4:16). that our apostle speaks of this.

Practical righteousness or obedience, the love of the brethren, the manifestation of the Spirit of God, are the proofs of our relationship to God. He who obeys the Lord's commandments in practical righteousness dwells in Him, and He in him. The Spirit given is the proof that He dwells in us.

Note #13

See previous note.

Note #14

John uses habitually the word "children," not "sons," as the more distinctly expressing that we are of the same family. We are as Christ before God and in the world, and so will be when He appears.

Note #15

In Rom 2:12, the word is used in contrast with law breaking, or sinning under law. That is, the Greek word here used for what is translated "transgression of the law" is that used for sinning without law, in contrast with sinning under law, and being judged by it. I do not dissemble that this changing what is a definition of sin is a very serious thing.

Note #16

Here dwelling in Him comes first, because it is practical realisation in an obedient heart. His dwelling in us is then pursued apart as known by the

Spirit given to us, to guard against being misled by evil spirits. In Jo1 4:7, he resumes; the indwelling in connection with the love of God.

1 John Chapter 4

Now, to make use of this last proof, caution was required, for many false prophets would assume, and even in the time of the apostle had already assumed, the semblance of having received communications from the Spirit of God, and insinuated themselves among the Christians. It was necessary therefore to put them on their guard, by giving them the sure mark of the real Spirit of God. The first of these was the confession of Jesus come in the flesh. It is not merely to confess that He is come, but to confess Him thus come. The second was that He who really knew God hearkened to the apostles. In this way the writings of the apostles become a touchstone for those who pretend to teach the assembly. All the word is so, doubtless; but I confine myself here to that which is said in this place. The teaching of the apostles is formally a touchstone for all other teaching I mean that which they themselves taught immediately. If any one tells me that others must explain or develop it to have the truth and certainty of faith, I reply, "You are not of God, for he who is of God hearkens to them; and you would have me not to hearken to them; and whatever may be your pretext, you prevent my doing so." The denial of Jesus come in the flesh is the spirit of Antichrist. Not to hear the apostles is the provisional and preparatory form of the evil. True Christians had overcome the spirit of error by the Spirit of God who dwelt in them.

The three tests of true Christianity are now distinctly laid down, and the apostle pursues his exhortations, developing the fullness and intimacy of our relationships with a God of love, maintaining that participation of nature in which love is of God, and he who loves is born of God partakes therefore of His nature, and knows Him (for it is by faith that he received it) as partaking of His nature. He who loves not does not know God. We must possess the nature that loves in order to know what love is. He then who does not love does not know God, for God is love. Such a person has not one sentiment in connection with the nature of God; how then can he know Him? No more than an animal can know what a man's mind or understanding is when he has not got it.

Give especial heed, reader, to this immense prerogative, which flows from the whole doctrine of the epistle. The eternal life which was with the Father has been manifested and has been imparted to us: thus we are partakers of the divine nature. The affections of that nature acting in us rest, by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the enjoyment of communion with God who is its source; we dwell in Him and He in us. The first thing is the statement of the truth in us. The actings of this nature prove that He dwells that, if we thus love, God Himself dwells in us. He who works this love is there. But He is infinite and the heart rests in Him; we know at the same time that we dwell in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. But this passage, so rich in blessing, demands that we should follow it with order.

He begins with the fact that love is of God. It is His nature: He is its source. Therefore he who loves is born of God, is a partaker of His nature. Also he knows God, for he knows what love is, and God is its fullness. This is the doctrine which makes everything depend on our participation in the divine nature.

Now this might be transformed on the one hand into mysticism, by leading us to fix our attention on our love for God, and love in us, that being God's nature, as if it was said, love is God, not God is love, and be seeking to fathom the divine nature in ourselves; or to doubt on the other, because we do not find the effects of the divine nature in us as we would. In effect, he who does not love (for the thing, as ever in John, is expressed in an abstract way) does not know God, for God is love. The possession of the nature is necessary to the understanding of what that nature is, and for the knowledge of Him who is its perfection.

But, if I seek to know it and have or give the proof of it, it is not to the existence of the nature in us that the Spirit of God directs the thoughts of the believers as their object. God, he has said, is love; and this love has been manifested towards us in that He has given His only Son, that we might live through Him. The proof is not the life in us, but that God has given His Son in order that we might live, and further to make propitiation for our sins. God be praised! we know this love, not by the poor results of its action in ourselves, but in its perfection in God, and that even in a manifestation of it towards us, which is wholly outside ourselves. It is a fact outside ourselves

which is the manifestation of this perfect love. We enjoy it by participating in the divine nature; we know it by the infinite gift of God's Son. The exercise and proof of it are there.

The full scope of this principle and all the force of its truth are stated and demonstrated in that which follows. It is striking to see how the Holy Spirit, in an epistle which is essentially occupied with the life of Christ and its fruits in us, gives the proof and full character of love in that which is wholly without ourselves. Nor can anything be more perfect than the way in which the love of God is here set forth, from the time it is occupied with our sinful state till we stand before the judgment-seat. God has thought of all: love towards us as sinners, Verses 9, 10 (Jo1 4:9-10); in us as saints, Verse 12 (Jo1 4:12); with us as perfect in our condition in view of the day of judgment, Verse 17 (Jo1 4:17). In the first Verses, the love of God is manifested in the gift of Christ; first, to give us life we were dead; secondly, to make propitiation we were guilty. Our whole case is taken up. In the second of these Verses the great principle of grace, what love is, where and how known, is clearly stated in words of infinite importance as to the very nature of Christianity. Herein is love, not that we have loved God (that was the principle of the law), but in that He has loved us, and has given His Son to make propitiation for our sins. Here, then, it is that we have learnt that which love is. It was perfect in Him when we had no love for Him; perfect in Him in that He exercised it towards us when we were in our sins, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for them. The apostle then affirms, no doubt, that he who loves not knows not God. The pretension to possess this love is judged by this means; but in order to know love we must not seek for it in ourselves, but seek it manifested in God when we had none. He gives the life which loves, and He has made propitiation for our sins

And now with regard to the enjoyment and the privileges of this love: if God has so loved us (this is the ground that He takes) we ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God: if we love one another, God dwells in us. His presence, Himself dwelling in us, rises in the excellency of His nature above all the barriers of circumstances, and attaches us to those who are His. It is God in the power of His nature which is the source of thought and feeling

and diffuses itself among them in whom it is. One can understand this. How is it that I love strangers from another land, persons of different habits, whom I have never known, more intimately than members of my own family after the flesh? How is it that I have thoughts in common, objects infinitely loved in common, affections powerfully engaged, a stronger bond with persons whom I have never seen, than with the otherwise dear companions of my childhood? It is because there is in them and in me a source of thoughts and affections which is not human. God is in it. God dwells in us. What happiness! What a bond ! Does He not communicate Himself to the soul? Does He not render it conscious of His presence in love ? Assured] y, yes. And if He is thus in us, the blessed source of our thoughts, can there be fear, or distance, or uncertainty, with regard to what He is? None at all. His love is perfect in us. We know Him as love in our souls: the second great point in this remarkable passage, the enjoyment of divine love in our souls.

The apostle has not yet said, "We know that we dwell in him." He will say it now. But, if the love of the brethren is in us, God dwells in us. When it is in exercise, we are conscious of the presence of God, as perfect love in us. It fills the heart, and thus is exercised in us. Now this consciousness is the effect of the presence of His Spirit, as the source and power of life and nature, in us. He has given us, not here "his Spirit" the proof that He dwells in us, but "of his Spirit;" we participate by His presence in us in divine affection through the Spirit, and thus we not only know that He dwells in us, but the presence of the Spirit, acting in a nature which is that of God in us, makes us conscious that we dwell in Him. For He is the infiniteness and perfection of that which is now in us.

The heart rests in this, and enjoys Him, and is hidden from all that is outside Him, in the consciousness of the perfect love in which (thus dwelling in Him) one finds oneself. The Spirit makes us dwell in God, and gives us thus the consciousness that He dwells in us. Thus we, in the savour and consciousness of the love that was in it, can testify of that in which it was manifested beyond all Jewish limits, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. We shall see further another character of it.

If we compare Verse 12 of our Chapter 4 (Jo1 4:12) with Joh 1:18 of the Gospel by John, we shall better apprehend the scope of the apostle's

teaching here. The same difficulty, or if you will, the same truth is presented in both cases. No one has ever seen God. How is this met?

In Joh 1:18 the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. He who is [See Note #17] in the most perfect intimacy, in the most absolute proximity and enjoyment of the Father's love, the one eternal, sufficient object that knew the love of the Father as His only Son, has revealed Him unto men as He has Himself known Him. What is the answer in our epistle to this same difficulty? "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." By the communication of the divine nature, and by the dwelling of God in us, we inwardly enjoy Him as He has been manifested and declared by :His only Son. His love is perfect in us, known to the heart, as it has been declared in Jesus. The God who has been declared by Him dwells in us. What a thought! that this answer to the fact that no one has ever seen God is equally, that the only Son has declared Him, and that He dwells in us. What light this throws upon the words, "which thing is true in him and in you!" [See Note #18] For it is in that Christ has become our life that we can thus enjoy God and His presence in us by the power of the Holy Ghost. And from this we have seen that the testimony of Verse 14 (Jo1 4:14) flows.

We see, also, the distinction between God dwelling in us and we in God, even in that which Christ says of Himself. He abode always in the Father, and the Father in Him; but He says, "The Father who dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Through His word the disciples ought to have believed in them both; but in that which they had seen in His works they had rather seen the proof that the Father dwelt in Him. They who had seen Him had seen the Father. But when the Comforter was come, at that day they should know that Jesus was in His Father divinely one with the Father.

He does not say that we are in God, nor in the Father, [See Note #19] but that we dwell in Him, and we know it, because He has given us of His Spirit. We have already noticed that He says (Jo1 3:24) "hereby we know that he God abideth in us, because he has given us his Spirit." Here he adds, We know that we dwell in God, because it is not the manifestation, as a proof, but communion with God Himself. We know that we dwell in Him, always as a precious truth an unchangeable fact; sensibly, when His love is active in

the heart. Consequently it is to this activity that the apostle immediately turns by adding "and we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." This was the proof for every one, of that love which the apostle enjoyed as all believers do in his own heart. It is important to notice how the passage thus first presents the fact of God's dwelling in us, then the effect (as He is infinite), our dwelling in Him, and then the realisation of the first truth in conscious reality of life.

We may remark here that, while God's dwelling in us is a doctrinal fact and true of every real Christian, our dwelling in Him, though involved in it, is connected with our state. Thus Jo1 3:24, "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him." Jo1 4:16, "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him."

Love one to another is indeed taken as the proof that God is there, and His love is perfected in us this to contrast the manner of His presence with that of Christ. (Joh 1:18) But, what we thus know is dwelling in Him and He in us. In each case this knowledge is by the Spirit. Verse 15 (Jo1 4:15) is the universal fact: Verse 16 (Jo1 4:16) brings it fully up to its source. We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. His nature is there declared in itself (for we joy in God); God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God and God in him. There is none anywhere else: if we partake of His nature, we partake of it, and he who abides in it abides in God who is the fullness of it. But then remark that while what He is is insisted on, His personal being is carefully insisted on. He dwells in us.

And here comes in a principle of deep importance. It might perhaps be said that this dwelling of God in us and our dwelling in Him depended on a large measure of spirituality, the apostle having in fact spoken of the highest possible joy. But although the degree in which we intelligently realise it is in effect a matter of spirituality, yet the thing in itself is the portion of every Christian. It is our position, because Christ is our life, and because the Holy Ghost is given us. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." How great the grace of the gospel! How admirable our position because it is in Jesus that we possess it! It is important to hold fast this, that it is the portion of every Christian, the joy of the humble, the strongest reproach to the conscience of the careless.

The apostle explains this high position by the possession of the divine nature the essential condition of Christianity. A Christian is one who is a partaker of the divine nature, and in whom the Spirit dwells. But the knowledge of our position does not flow from the consideration of this truth, though it depends on its being true, but of that of God's own love, as we have already seen. And the apostle goes on to say "We have known and believed the love that God has to us." This is the source of our knowledge and enjoyment of these privileges, so sweet and so marvelously exalted, but so simple and so real to the heart when they are known.

We have known love, the love that God has for us, and we have believed it. Precious knowledge! by possessing it we know God; for it is thus that He has manifested Himself. Therefore can we say, "God is love." There is none beside. Himself is love. He is love in all its fullness. He is not holiness, He is holy; but He is love. He is not righteousness; He is righteous. [See Note #20]

By dwelling then in love I dwell in Him, which I could not do unless He dwelt in me, and this He does. Here he puts it first, that we dwell in Him, because it is God Himself who is before our eyes, as the love in which we dwell. Therefore, when thinking of this love, I say that I dwell in Him, because I have in my heart the consciousness of it by the Spirit. At the same time this love is an active energetic principle in us; it is God Himself who is there. This is the joy of our position the position of every Christian.

Verses 14 and 16 (Jo1 4:14; Jo1 4:16) present the twofold effect of the manifestation of this love.

First, the testimony that the Father has sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Quite outside the promises made to the Jews (as everywhere in John), this work is the fruit of that which God Himself is. Accordingly whosoever confesses Jesus to be that Son enjoys all the fullness of its blessed consequences.

Secondly, the Christian has believed for himself in this love, and he enjoys it according to its fullness. There is only this modification of the expression of the glorious fact of our portion that the confession of Jesus as the Son of God is primarily here the proof that God dwells in us, although the other part of the truth equally says that he who confesses Him dwells also in God.

When speaking of our portion in communion, as believing in this love, it is said, that he who dwells in love dwells in God; for in effect that is where the heart is. Here also the other part of the truth is equally true; God dwells in him likewise

I have spoken of the consciousness of this dwelling in God, for it is thus only that it is known. But it is important to remember that the apostle teaches it as a truth that applies to every believer. These might have excused themselves for not appropriating these statements as too high for them; but this fact judges the excuse. This communion is neglected. But God dwells in every one who confesses that Jesus is Son of God, and he in God. What an encouragement for a timid believer! What a rebuke for a careless one!

The apostle returns to our relative position, viewing God as outside ourselves, as Him before whom we are to appear and with whom we have always to do. This is the third great proof and character of love in which it is complete, testifying, as I have already said, that God has thought on all as to us from our sinful state to the day of judgment.

Herein is love perfect with us (in order that we may have boldness for the day of judgment), namely, that as He is, such are we in this world. In truth, what could give us a more complete assurance for that day than to be as Jesus Himself-like the judge? He who will judge in righteousness is our righteousness. We are in Him the righteousness according to which He will judge. We are in respect of judgment as He is. Truly this can give us perfect peace. But observe, that it is not only in the day of judgment that this is so (it gives us boldness for it), but we are it in this world. Not as He was, but in this world we are as He is, and have our known place already, as needed, and according to the nature and counsels of God, for that day. It is ours as being livingly identified with Him.

Now in love there is no fear; there is confidence. If I am sure that a person loves me, I do not fear him. If I am only desiring to be the object of his affection, I may fear that I am not so, and may even fear himself. Nevertheless this fear would always tend to destroy my love for him and my desire to be loved by him. There is incompatibility between the two

affections there is no fear in love. Perfect love then banishes fear; for fear torments us, and torment is not the enjoyment of love. He therefore who fears does not know perfect love. And now what does he mean by "perfect love"? It is that which God is, and which He has fully displayed in Christ, and given us to know and to enjoy by His presence in us, so that we dwell in Him. The positive proof of its complete perfectness is that we are such as Christ is. It is manifested towards us, perfected in us, and made perfect with us. But that which we enjoy is God, who is love, and we enjoy Him by His being in us, so that love and confidence are in our hearts, and we have rest. That which I know of God is that He is love, and love to me, and nothing else but love to me, because it is Himself who is so. Therefore there is no fear. [See Note #21] If we inquire practically into the history, so to speak, of these affections; if we seek to separate that which in the enjoyment is united, because the divine nature in us, which is love, enjoys love in its perfection in God (His love shed abroad in the heart by His presence therefore); if we wish to specify the relationship in which our hearts find themselves with God in regard to this, here it is: " we love him because he, first loved us." It is grace and it must be grace because it is God who is to be glorified.

Here, it will be worth our while to notice the order of this remarkable passage. Verses 7-10 (Jo1 4:7-10); We possess the nature of God; consequently we love, we are born of Him, and we know Him. But the manifestation of love towards us in Christ Jesus is the proof of that love; it is thus that we know it. Verses 11-16 (Jo1 4:11-16); We enjoy it by dwelling in it. It is present life in the love of God by the presence of His Spirit in us; the enjoyment of that love by communion, in that God dwells in us, and we thus dwell in Him. Verse 17 (Jo1 4:17). His love is perfected with us; the perfection of that love, viewed in the place that it has given us in view of judgment we are, in this world, such as Christ is. Verses 18-19 (Jo1 4:18-19); it is thus fully perfected with us. Love to sinners, communion, perfection before God, give us the moral and characteristic elements of that love what it is in our relationship with God.

In the first passage, where the apostle speaks of the manifestation of this love, he does not go beyond the fact that one who loves is born of God. The

nature of God (which is love) being in us, he who loves knows Him, for he is born of Him has His nature and realises what it is.

It is that which God has been with regard to the sinner which demonstrates His nature of love. afterwards, that which we learnt as sinners we enjoy as saints. The perfect love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and we dwell in Him. As already with Jesus in this world, and as He is, fear has no place in one to whom the love of God is a dwelling-place and rest.

Verse 20 (Jo1 4:20); the reality of our love to God, fruit of His love to us, is now tested. If we say that we love God and do not love the brethren, we are liars; for if the divine nature, so near us (in the brethren near us), and Christ's value for them, does not awaken our spiritual affections, how then can He who is afar off do so? This also is His commandment, that he who loves God love his brother also. Obedience is found here also. (Compare Joh 14:31)

Love for the brethren proves the reality of our love for God. And this love must be universal, must be in exercise towards all Christians, for whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and he who loves a person will love one who is born of Him. And if the being born of Him is the motive, we shall love all that are born of Him.

Note #17

Note, it is not "was." It is never said in scripture, as often, He left the Father's bosom; but "the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father." As so knowing God, He revealed Him on earth.

Note #18

This gives us too, in their highest character and subject, the difference between the gospel and Epistle.

Note #19

The only expression in the word that has some resemblance to it is "the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father." This is addressed to a numerous corporation in quite another sense.

Note #20

Righteousness and holiness suppose reference to other things; thus, evil to be known, rejection of evil, and judgment. Love, though exercised towards others, is what He is in Him self. The other essential name that God bears is "light." We are said to be "light in the Lord " as partakers of the divine nature; not love, which is, though the divine nature, sovereign in grace. We cannot therefore be said to be love. (See Eph. 4 and 5).

Note #21

It is striking to see that he does not say, We ought to love Him because He first loved us; but we love Him. We cannot know and enjoy love to us without loving. The sense of love to us is always love. It is not known and valued without its being there. My sense of love in another is love to him. We ought to love the brethren, because it is not their love to us which is the spring of it, though it may nourish it in this way. But we love God because He first loved us.

1 John Chapter 5

But a danger exists on the other side. It may be, that we love the brethren because they are pleasant to us; they furnish us with agreeable society, in which our conscience is not wounded. A counter-proof is therefore given us. "Hereby we know that we love the children of God, if we love God and keep his commandments." It is not as children of God that I love the brethren, unless I love God of whom they are born. I may love them individually as companions, or I may love some among them, but not as the children of God, if I do not love God Himself. If God Himself has not His true place in my heart, that which bears the name of love to the brethren shuts out God; and that in so much the more complete and subtle manner, because our link with them bears the sacred name of brotherly love.

Now there is a touchstone even for this love of God namely, obedience to His commands. If I walk with the brethren themselves in disobedience to their Father, it is certainly not because they are His children that I love them. If it were because I loved the Father and because they were His children, I should assuredly like them to obey Him. To walk then in disobedience with

the children of God, under the pretext of brotherly love, is not to love them as the children of God. If I loved them as such, I should love their Father and my Father, and I could not walk in disobedience to Him and call it a proof that I loved them because they were His.

If I also loved them because they were His children, I should love all who are such, because the same motive engages me to love them all.

The universality of this love with regard to all the children of God; its exercise in practical obedience to His will: these are the marks of true brotherly love. That which has not these marks is a mere carnal party spirit, clothing itself with the name and the form of brotherly love. Most certainly I do not love the Father if I encourage His children in disobedience to Him.

Now there is an obstacle to this obedience, and that is the world. The world has its forms, which are very far from obedience to God. When we are occupied only with Him and His will, the world's enmity soon breaks out. It also acts, by its comforts and its delights, on the heart of man as walking after the flesh. In short, the world and the commandments of God are in opposition to each other; but the commandments of God are not grievous to those who are born of Him, for he who is born of God overcomes the world. He possesses a nature and a principle that surmount the difficulties that the world opposes to his walk. His nature is the divine nature, for he is born of God; his principle is that of faith. His nature is insensible to the attractions which this world offers to the flesh, and that because it has, altogether apart from this world, a spirit independent of it, and an object of its own which governs it. Faith directs its steps, but faith does not see the world, nor that which is present. Faith believes that Jesus, whom the world rejected, is the Son of God. The world therefore has lost its power over it. Its affections and its trust are fixed on Jesus, who was crucified, owning Him as the Son of God. Thus the believer, detached from the world, has the boldness of obedience, and does the will of God which abides for ever.

The apostle sums up, in a few words, the testimony of God respecting the life eternal which He has given us.

This life is not in the first Adam, it is in the Second in the Son of God. Man, as born of Adam, does not possess it, does not acquire it. He ought indeed to

have gained life under the law. This characterised it, "Do this and live." But man did not and could not.

God gives him eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life, and he who has not the Son has not life.

Now what is the testimony rendered to this gift of life eternal ? The witnesses are three: the Spirit, the water, and the blood. This Jesus, the Son of God, is He who came by water and by blood; not by water only, but by water and by blood. The Spirit also bears witness because He is truth. That to which they bear witness is that God has given us eternal life, and that this life is in His Son. But whence did this water and the blood flow ? It was from the pierced side of Jesus. It is the judgment of death pronounced and executed (compare Rom 8:3) on the flesh, on all that is of the old man, on the first Adam. Not that the sin of the first Adam was in the flesh of Christ, but that Jesus died in it as a sacrifice for sin. "In that he died he died unto sin once." Sin in the flesh was condemned in the death of Christ in the flesh. There was no other remedy. The flesh could not be modified nor subjected to the law. The life of the first Adam was nothing but sin in the principle of its will; it could not be subject to the law. Our purification as to the old man is its death. He who is dead is justified from sin. We are therefore baptised to have part in the death of Jesus. We are crucified with Christ; nevertheless we live, but not we it is Christ who lives in us. Participating in the life of Christ risen, we reckon ourselves as dead with Him; for why live of this new life, this life of the second Adam, if we could live before God in the life of the first Adam? No; by living in Christ we have accepted by faith the sentence of death, passed by God on the first Adam. This is christian purification: even the death of the old man, because we are made partakers of life in Christ Jesus. "We are dead " crucified with Him We need a perfect purification before God; we have it; for that which was impure no longer exists: what exists, as born of God, is perfectly pure.

He came by water a powerful testimony, as flowing from the side of a dead Christ, that life is not to be sought for in the first Adam; for Christ, as coming for man, taking up his cause, the Christ come in the flesh, had to die: else He had remained alone in His own purity. Life is to be sought for in the Son of God risen from among the dead. Purification is by death.

But it was not by water only that He came; it was also by blood. The expiation of our sins was as necessary as the moral purification of our soul. We possess it in the blood of a slain Christ. Death alone could expiate them and blot them out. And Jesus died for us. The guilt of the believer no longer exists before God; Christ has put Himself in his place. The life is on high, and we are raised up together with Him, God having forgiven us all our trespasses. Expiation is by death.

The third witness is the Spirit: put first in the order of their testimony on earth, as He alone gives witness in power so that we know the other two; last, in their historic order, for such in fact was that order, death first and only thereafter the Holy Ghost. [See Note #22] In effect it is the testimony of the Spirit, His presence in us, which enables us to appreciate the value of the water and the blood. We should never have understood the practical bearing of the death of Christ, if the Holy Ghost were not to the new man a revealing power of its import and its efficacy. Now the Holy Ghost came down from a risen and ascended Christ; and thus we know that eternal life is given us in the Son of God.

The testimony of these three witnesses meets together in this same truth, namely, that grace that God Himself has given us eternal life; and that this life is in the Son. Man had nothing to do in it, except by his sins. It is the gift of God. And the life that He gives is in the Son. The testimony is the testimony of God. How blessed to have such a testimony, and that from God Himself, and in perfect grace!

We have then the three things: the cleansing, the expiation, and the presence of the Holy Ghost as the witness that eternal life is given us in the Son, who was slain for man when in relationship with man here below. He could but die for man as he is. Life is elsewhere, namely, in Himself.

Here the doctrine of the epistle ends. The apostle wrote these things in order that they who believed in the Son might know that they had eternal life. He does not give means of examination to make the faithful doubt whether they had eternal life; but seeing that there were seducers who endeavoured to turn them aside as deficient in something important, and who presented themselves as possessing some superior light he points out

to them the marks of life, in order to re-assure them; developing the excellence of that life, and of their position as enjoying it; and in order that they might understand that God had given it to them, and that they might be in no wise shaken in mind.

He then speaks of the practical confidence in God which flows from all this confidence exercised with a view to all our wants here below, all that our hearts desire to ask of God. We know that He always listens to everything that we ask in accordance with His will. Precious privilege! The Christian himself would not desire anything to be granted him that was contrary to the will of God. But for everything that is according to His will, His ear is ever open to us, ever attentive. He always hearkens; He is not like man, often occupied so that he cannot listen, or careless so that he will not. God always hears us, and assuredly He does not fail in power: the attention He pays us is a proof of His good-will. We receive therefore the things that we ask of Him. He grants our requests. What a sweet relationship! What a high privilege! And it is one also of which we may avail ourselves in charity for others.

If a brother sins and God chastises him, we may petition for that brother, and life shall be restored him. Chastisement tends to the death of the body (compare Job 33, 34; Jam 5:14, Jam 5:16); we pray for the offender and he is healed. Otherwise the sickness takes its course. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is such sin as is unto death. This does not seem to me to be some particular sin, but all sin which has such a character that, instead of awakening christian charity, it awakens christian indignation. Thus Ananias and Sapphira committed a sin unto death. It was a lie, but a lie under such circumstances that it excited horror rather than compassion. We can easily understand this in other cases.

Thus far as to sin and its chastisement. But the positive side is also brought before us. As born of God, we do not commit sin at all, we keep ourselves, and "the wicked one toucheth us not." He has nothing wherewith to entice the new man. The enemy has no objects of attraction to the divine nature in us, which is occupied, by the action of the Holy Ghost, with divine and heavenly things, or with the will of God. Our part therefore is so to live the new man occupied with the things of God and of the Spirit.

The apostle ends his epistle by specifying these two things: our nature, our mode of being, as Christians; and the object that has been communicated to us in order to produce and nourish faith.

We know that we are of God; and that not in a vague way, but in contrast with all that is not us a principle of immense importance, which makes christian position exclusive by its very nature. It is not merely good, or bad, or better; but it is of God. And nothing which is not of God (that is to say, which has not its origin in Him) could have this character and this place. The whole world lies in the wicked one.

The Christian has the certainty of these two things by virtue of his nature. which discerns and knows that which is of God, and thereby judges all that is opposed to it. The two are not merely good and bad, but of God and of the enemy. This as to the nature.

With regard to the object of this nature, we know that the Son of God is come a truth of immense importance also. It is not merely that there is good and that there is evil; but the Son of God has Himself come into this scene of misery, to present an object to our hearts. But there is more than this. He has given us an understanding that in the midst of all the falsehood of this world, of which Satan is the prince, we may know Him that is true the true One. Immense privilege which alters our whole position! The power of the world by which Satan blinded us is completely broken, and we are brought into the true light; and in that light we see and know Him who is true, who is in Himself perfection; that by which all things can be perfectly discerned and judged according to truth. But this is not all. We are in this true One, partakers of His nature, and abiding in Him, and in order that we may enjoy the source of truth. [See Note #23] Now it is in Jesus that we are. It is thus, it is in Him, that we are in connection with the perfections of God.

We may again remark here that which gives a character to the whole Epistle the manner in which God and Christ are united in the apostle's mind. It is on account of this that he so frequently says, "He," when we must understand "Christ," although he had previously spoken of God: for instance, Jo1 5:20. And here, "We are in him that is true [that is to say], in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

Behold then the divine links of our position! We are in Him who is true; this is the nature of Him in whom we are. Now, in reality as to the nature, it is God Himself; as to the Person, and as to the manner of being in Him, it is His Son Jesus Christ. It is in the Son, in the Son as man, that we are in fact as to His Person; but He is the true God, the veritable God. Nor is this all; but we have life in Him. He is also the eternal life, so that we possess it in Him. We know the true God, we have eternal life.

All that is outside this is an idol. May God preserve us from it, and teach us by His grace to preserve ourselves from it! This gives occasion to the Spirit of God to speak of "the truth" in the two short Epistles that follow.

Note #22

Even the orderly reception of the Holy Ghost was so. (see Act 2:38).

Note #22

I have already noticed this passage as being a kind of key to the way we really know God, and dwell in Him. It speaks of God as Him we know, in whom we are, explaining it by saying, that it is in His Son Jesus Christ our Lord; only here, as follows in the text, it is truth and not love.

2 JOHN

2 John Chapter 1

2 John 1:1

j02 1:1

The Second and Third Epistles of John insist on the truth. The Second warns the faithful against the reception of those who do not teach the doctrine of Christ, especially the truth respecting the Person of Christ. The Third encourages believers to receive and help those who teach it. Accordingly they both (and the Second especially) lay stress on "the truth."

The apostle loved this elect lady, "in the truth;" as did also all those who had known the truth, and that for the truth's sake. He wished her blessing in truth and in love. He rejoiced that he had found some who were her children walking in the truth. He desired that there should be mutual love among Christians, but this was love, that they should keep the commandments; for many deceivers were come into the world. Now whosoever transgressed, and did not abide in the doctrine of Christ, had not God. He ends his epistle, of which we have given an almost complete summary, by exhorting this lady, in case any one should come and not bring this doctrine, not to receive him into her house, nor say to him, "God bless you, or be with you," or "I salute you." For to do so would be to make herself a partaker in the evil he was doing.

The false doctrine which was abroad at that moment was the denial of the truth of Christ come in the flesh; but the apostle says in a general way that, if any one transgressed and did not abide in the doctrine of Christ, he had not God.

We learn several important things in this little epistle. The mission of a man who went about preaching was never brought into question, but the doctrine which he brought; if he brought sound doctrine he was welcome.

A woman having the word as this epistle, for example was capable of judging his doctrine, and responsible to do so. Inexorable rigour was to be maintained, if the doctrine as to the Person of Christ was touched. The door was to be shut against whoever falsified it. They were not even to say to him, "I salute you;" for they who did so became partakers of his evil work. It would be to help on the deceits of Satan.

Moreover the semblance of love which does not maintain the truth, but accommodates itself to that which is not the truth, is not love according to God. It is the taking advantage of the name of love in order to help on the seductions of Satan. In the last days the test of true love is the maintenance of the truth. God would have us love one another; but the Holy Ghost, by whose power we receive this divine nature, and who pours the love of God into our hearts is the Spirit of truth; and His office is to glorify Christ. Therefore it is impossible that a love which can put up with a doctrine that falsifies Christ, and which is indifferent to it, can be of the Holy Ghost still less so, if such indifference be set up as the proof of that love.

The doctrine of the reward and crown of glory, which the labourer possesses in the fruits of his ministry, is presented in a very strong light in Verse 8 (Jo2 1:8) This Second Epistle puts Christians on their guard against all that is equivocal with respect to the person of Christ; and exhorts to an unwavering firmness on this point.

3 JOHN

3 John Chapter 1

3 John 1:1

j03 1:1

The Third Epistle encourages the believer to the exercise of hospitality, whether towards the known brethren or strangers, and to all benevolent care in furthering their journey when departing, provided that they come with the truth and for the truth's sake without salary or provision. Gaius received them as it appears. and was helpful to them both in his own house and on their journey. Diotrephes, on the contrary, did not love these strangers, who went about, it is said, without a formal mission and without any visible means of subsistence. They had gone forth for the Lord's sake and had received nothing from the Gentiles. If they in reality came out of love to that name, one did well to receive them.

Again the apostle insists on the truth, as characterising real love: "Whom I love in the truth," he says to Gaius. He rejoiced when the brethren (those, I imagine, whom Gaius had received into his house and helped on their journey) testified of the truth that was in him, as in effect he walked in the truth. The apostle had no greater joy than that of hearing that his children walked in the truth. In receiving those who went forth to preach the truth, they helped the truth itself; they were co-workers with it. Diotrephes would have nothing to do with this; he not only refused to receive these itinerant preachers, but excommunicated those who did so. He claimed authority for himself. The apostle would remember it. It is their duty to do good. "He that doeth good is of God."

He goes so far, with regard to the truth, as to say, that the truth itself bore witness to Demetrius. I suppose that the latter had propagated it, and that the establishment and confirmation of the truth every where—at least where he had laboured was a testimony with regard to himself.

This insistence on the truth, as the test for the last days, is very remarkable; and so is this preaching itinerancy' by persons who took nothing of the Gentiles when they came forth, leaving it to God to cause them to be received of those who had the truth at heart, the truth being their only passport among Christians, and the only means by which the apostle could guard the faithful. It appears that they were of the Jewish race, for he says, "receiving nothing of the Gentiles," the apostle thus making the distinction. I notice this, because, if it be so, the force of the expression "and not for ours only" (1 Joh 2:2) becomes simple and evident, which it is not to every one. The apostle, as Paul does, makes the difference of 'us', Jews, though one in Christ. We may also remark that the apostle addressed the assembly, and not Diotrephes, its head; and that it was this leader who loving preeminence, resisted the apostle's words which the assembly, as it appears, were not inclined to do.

Gaius persevered in his godly course, in spite of the ecclesiastical authority (whatever may have been its right or pretended right) which Diotrephes evidently exercised: for he cast persons out of the assembly.

When the apostle came, he would (like Paul) manifest his real power. He did not own in himself an ecclesiastical authority to remedy these things by a command. These Epistles are very remarkable in this respect. With regard to those who went about preaching, the only means he had, even in the case of a woman, was to call her attention to the truth. The authority of the preacher lay altogether in that. His competency was another matter. The apostle knew no authority which sanctioned their mission, the absence of which would prove it to be false or unauthorised. The whole question of their reception lay in the doctrine which they brought. The apostle had no other way to judge of the authority of their mission: there was then no other; for, had there been any that authority would have flowed from him. He would have been able to say, "Where are the proofs of their mission?" He knew none but this do they bring the truth? If not, do not salute them. If they bring the truth, you do well to receive them, in spite of all the Diotrephes in the world.

JUDE

Jude Chapter 1

Jude 1:1

jde 1:1

The Epistle of Jude develops the history of the apostasy of Christendom, from the earliest elements that crept into the assembly to corrupt it, down to its judgment at the appearing of our Lord, but as moral apostasy by turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. In John they are gone out; here they have crept in, corrupting. It is a very short epistle, and containing instruction presented with much brevity, and with the energetic rapidity of the prophetic style, but of immense weight and extensive bearing.

The evil which had stolen in among Christians would not cease until destroyed by judgment. We have already noticed this difference between the Epistle of Jude and the Second of Peter, that Peter speaks of sin, Jude of apostasy, the departure of the assembly from its primitive state before God. Departure from the holiness of faith is the subject that Jude treats. He does not speak of outward separation. He views Christians as a number persons professing a religion on the earth, and originally true to that which they professed. Certain persons had crept in among them unawares. They fed themselves without fear at the love-feasts of the Christians; and although the Lord would come attended by all His saints (so that the faithful will have been already caught up), yet in the judgment these persons are still accounted to be in the same class "to convince," he says, "all that are ungodly among them." They may indeed be in open rebellion at the moment of judgment, but they were individuals who had formed a part of the company of Christians; they were really apostates, enemies left behind.

When it is said, "These be they who separate themselves," it does not mean openly from the visible assembly, for he speaks of them as in the midst of it; but they set themselves apart, being in it, as more excellent than others, like the Pharisees among the Jews. Jude points them out as being in the midst

of the Christians, and presenting themselves as such. The judgment falls upon this class of persons; the taking up of the saints has left them behind for judgment.

Jude begins by declaring the faithfulness of God and the character of His care for the saints, which answers to the prayer of Jesus in John 17. They were called ones, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ. Happy testimony! which magnifies the grace of God. "Holy Father", our Lord said, "keep them:" and these were sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ. The apostle speaks with a view to the forsaking by many of the holy faith; he addresses those who were kept.

He had purposed writing to them of the salvation common to all Christians; but he found it needful to exhort them to stand fast, to contend for the faith once given to the saints. For already was that faith being corrupted by the denial of the rights of Christ to be Lord and Master; and thus also, by giving the reins to self-will, they abused grace, and turned it into a principle of dissoluteness. These are the two elements of the evil which the instruments of Satan introduced, the rejection of the authority of Christ (not His name): and the abuse of grace, in order to indulge their own lusts. In both cases it was the will of man, which they set free from everything that bridled it. The expression "Lord God" points out this character of God. "Lord" here is not the word generally used; it is "despotes", that is "master".

Having pointed out the evil which had secretly crept in, the epistle goes on to shew them that the judgment of God is executed upon those who do not walk according to the position in which God had originally placed them.

The evil was, not only that certain men had crept in among them in itself an immense evil, because the action of the Holy Ghost is thereby hindered among Christians but that, definitely, the entire testimony before God, the vessel which held this testimony, would become (as had been already the case with the Jews) corrupt to such a degree that it would bring down upon itself the judgment of God. And it has become thus corrupt.

This is the great principle of the downfall of the testimony established by God in the world by means of the corruption of the vessel which contains it,

and which bears its name. In pointing out moral corruption as characterizing the stated of professors, Jude cites, as example of this downfall and of its judgment the case of Israel, who fell in the wilderness (with the exception of two, Joshua and Caleb), and that of the angels who, not having kept their first estate, are reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

This last example suggests to him another case, that of Sodom and Gomorrha which resents immorality and corruption as the cause of judgment. Their condition is a perpetual testimony here on earth to their judgment.

These ungodly men, with the name of Christians, are but dreamers; for the truth is not in them. The two principles which we have noticed are developed in the; filthiness of the flesh, and contempt for authority. The latter manifests itself in a second from, namely, the license of the tongue, the self-will that manifests itself by speaking evil of dignities. Whereas, the text says, the archangel Michael durst not rail even against the devil, but with the gravity of one who acts according to God, appealed to the judgment of God Himself.

Jude then sums up the three kinds or characters of the evil and or estrangement from God; first, that of nature, the opposition of the flesh to the testimony of God, and His true people, the impetus which this enmity gives to the will of the flesh; in the second place, ecclesiastical evil, teaching error for reward, knowing all the while that it is contrary to the truth and against the people of God; thirdly, open opposition, rebellion, against the authority of God in His true King and Priest.

At the time when Jude wrote his epistle, those persons whom Satan introduced into the church in order to stifle its spiritual life and to bring on the result which the Spirit views prophetically, were dwelling in the midst of the saints, took part in those pious feasts at which they gathered together in token of their brotherly love. They were "spots" in those "feasts of charity," feeding without fear in the pastures of the faithful. The Holy Ghost denounces them energetically. They were doubly dead, by nature and by their apostasy; without fruit, bearing fruit that perished, as out of season;

plucked up by the roots; foaming out everywhere their own shame; wandering stars, reserved for darkness. Of old the judgment that should be executed upon them, This presents a very important aspect of the instruction here given; namely, that this evil which had crept in among the Christians would continue and still be found when the Lord should return for judgment. He would come with the myriads of His saints to execute judgment upon all the ungodly among them for their acts of iniquity and their ungodly words which they have spoken against Him. There would be a continuous system of evil from those in the apostles' time till the Lord came. This is a solemn witness to what would go on among Christians.

It is quite remarkable to see the inspired writer identifying the favorers of licentiousness with the rebels who will be the object of judgment in the last day. It is the same spirit, the same work of the enemy, although restrained for the moment, which will ripen for the judgment of God, Alas for the assembly! It is, however, but the universal progression of man. Only that, grace having fully revealed God and delivered from the law, there must now be either holiness of heart and soul, and the delights of obedience under the perfect law of liberty, or else license and open rebellion. In this the proverb is true, that the corruption of that which is the most excellent is the worst of corruptions. We must add here, that the admiration of men, in order to gain advantage by them, is another characteristic feature of these apostates. It is not to God that they look.

Now apostles had already warned the saints that these mockers would come, walking after their own lusts, exalting themselves, not having the Spirit, but being in the state of nature.

Practical exhortation follows for those who were preserved. According to the energy of spiritual life, and the power of the Spirit of God, they were by grace to build themselves up, and to keep themselves in the communion of God. The faith is, to the believer, a most holy faith; he loves it, because it is so; it puts him into relationship and communion with God Himself. That which he has to do in the painful circumstances of which the apostle speaks (whatever may be the measure of their development), is to build himself up in this most holy faith. He cultivates communion with God, and profits through grace by the revelations of His love. The Christian has his own

proper sphere of thought, in which he hides himself from the evil that surrounds him, and grows in the knowledge of God from whom nothing can separate him. His own portion is always the more evident to him, the more the evil increases. His communion with God is in the Holy Ghost, in whose power he prays, and who is the link between God and his soul; and his prayers are according to the intimacy of this relationship, and animated by the intelligence and energy of the Spirit of God.

Thus they kept themselves in the consciousness, the communion, and the enjoyment of the love of God. They abode in His love while sojourning here below, but as their end, they were waiting for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. In effect when one sees what are the fruits of the heart of man, one feels that it must be His mercy which presents us without spot before His face in that day for eternal life with a God of holiness. No doubt it is His unchangeable faithfulness, but, in the presence of so much evil, one thinks rather of the mercy. Compare in the same circumstances, what Paul says in Ti2 1:16. It is mercy which has made the difference between those that fall and those that stand. (Compare Exo 33:19) We must also distinguish between those who are led away. There are some who are only drawn aside by others, others in whom the lusts of a corrupt heart are working; and where we see the latter we must manifest hatred to everything that testifies this corruption, as a thing that is unbearable.

The Spirit of God in this epistle does not bring forward the efficacy of this redemption. He is occupied with the crafty devices of the enemy, with his efforts to connect the actings of the human will with the profession of the grace of God, and thus to bring about the corruption of the assembly, and the downfall of Christians, by putting them on the road to apostasy and judgment. Confidence is in God; to Him the sacred writer addresses himself in closing his epistle, as he thinks of the faithful to whom he was writing. Unto Him, he says, who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us unspotted before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

It is important to observe the way in which the Spirit of God speaks in the Epistles of a power that can keep us from every fall, and unblamable; so that a thought only of sin is never excusable. It is not that the flesh is not in us, but that, with the Holy Ghost acting in the new man, it is never necessary

that the flesh should act or influence our life. (Compare Th1 5:22) We are united to Jesus: He represents us before God, He is our righteousness. But at the same time He who in His perfection is our righteousness is also our life; so that the Spirit aims at the manifestation of this same perfection, practical perfection, in the daily life. He who says "I abide in Him." ought to walk as He walked. The Lord also says, "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

There is progress in this. It is Christ risen who is the source of this life in us, which ascends again towards its source, and which views the risen and glorified Christ, to whom we shall be conformed in glory, as its end and aim. (See Phil 3) But the effect of this is, that we have no other aim: "this one thing I do." Thus, whatever may be the degree of realization, the motive is always perfect. The flesh does not come in at all as a motive, and in this sense we are blameless.

The Spirit then since Christ who is our righteousness is our life links our life to the final result of an unblamable condition before God. The conscience knows by grace that absolute perfection is ours, because Christ is our righteousness; but the soul which rejoices in this before God is conscious of union with Him, and seeks the realization of that perfection according to the power of the Spirit, by whom we are thus united to the Head.

To Him who can accomplish this, preserving us from every kind of fall, our epistle ascribes all glory and dominion throughout all ages.

That which is peculiarly striking in the Epistle of Jude is that he pursues the corruption of the assembly from the creeping in of some unawares on to its final judgment, shewing withal that it is not arrested but passes through its various phases to that day.

REVELATION

Introduction to Revelation

As regards Peter and Paul, we have scriptural authority for regarding them as the apostles respectively of the circumcision and of the uncircumcision. Peter and the twelve remained at Jerusalem when the disciples were scattered, and, continuing (though God was careful to maintain unity) the work of Christ in the remnant of Israel, gathered into an assembly on earth the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Paul, having received the ministry of the assembly, as of the gospel to every creature under heaven (Colossians 1), as a wise master-builder, lays the foundation. Peter sets us off as pilgrims on our journey to follow Christ risen towards the inheritance above. Paul, in the full development of his doctrine (though owning this, as in Philippians 3), shews us the saints sitting in heavenly places in Christ, heirs of all which He is heir of. All this was dispensational, and it is full of instruction. But John holds a different place. He does not enter on dispensation; nor, though once or twice stating the fact (as Joh 13:1; Joh 14:1; Joh 17:24; Joh 20:17), does He take the saint, nor even the Lord Himself, up to heaven. Jesus, for him, is a divine Person, the Word made flesh manifesting God and His Father, eternal life come down to earth. The Epistle of John treats the question of our partaking of this life, and its characters.

But at the close of the Gospel, after stating the sending of the Comforter on His going away, Christ opens to the disciples (though in a mysterious way) the continuation of God's dealings with the earth, of which John ministerially is the representative, linking the manifestation of Christ on earth at His first coming with His manifestation at His second; Christ's Person, and eternal life in Him, being the abiding security and living seed of God, when dispensationally all was corrupted, and in confusion and decay. If all were in disorder outwardly, eternal life was the same.

The destruction of Jerusalem formed a momentous epoch as to these things, because the Jewish assembly, formed as such at Pentecost, had ceased (nay, it had even before); only the judicial act was then

accomplished. Christians had been warned to leave the camp. The breach of Christianity with Judaism was consummated. Christ could no longer take up the assembly, established in the remnant of the Jews, as His own seat of earthly authority. [See Note #1] But alas! the assembly, as Paul had established it too, had already fallen from its first estate could in no sense take up the fallen inheritance of Israel. All seek their own, says Paul, not the things of Jesus Christ. All they of Asia-Ephesus, the beloved scene where all Asia had heard the word of God had forsaken him. They who had been specially brought with full intelligence into the assembly's place could not hold it in the power of faith. Indeed, the mystery of iniquity was at work before this, and was to go on and grow until the hindrance to the final apostacy were removed.

Here, in this state of universal declension and ruin John's ministry comes in. Stability was in the Person of Christ, for eternal life first, but for the ways of God upon earth too. If the assembly was spued out of His mouth, He was the faithful witness, the beginning of the creation of God. Let us trace the lines of this in his gospel. In John 20, as else where noticed in detail, we have a picture of God's ways from the resurrection of Christ till we come to the remnant of Israel in the latter days, represented by Thomas's look on the pierced One and believing by seeing. In chapter 21 we have, besides the remnant, the full millennial gathering. Then at the close of the chapter, the special ministry of Peter and John is pointed out, though mysteriously. The sheep of Jesus of the circumcision are confided to Peter; but this ministry was to close like Christ's. The assembly would not be established on this ground, any more than Israel. There was no tarrying here till Christ came, [See Note #2] Peter's ministry in fact was closed, and the circumcision assembly left shepherdless, before the destruction of Jerusalem put an end to all such connection for ever. Peter then asks as to John. The Lord answers, confessedly mysteriously, but putting off, as that which did not concern Peter who was to follow Him, the closing of John's ministry, prolonging it in possibility till Christ came. Now, in fact, the Bridegroom tarried; but the service and ministry of John by the word (which was all that was to remain, and no apostle in personal care) did go on to the return of Christ.

John was no master-builder like Paul had no dispensation committed to him. He was connected with the assembly in its earthly structure like Peter, not in the Ephesus or heavenly one; He was not the minister of the circumcision, but carried on the earthly system among the Gentiles, only holding fast the Person of Christ. His special place was testimony to the Person of Christ come to earth with divine title over it power over all flesh. This did not break the links with Israel, as Paul's ministry did, but raised the power which held all together in the Person of Christ to a height which carried it through any hidden time, or hidden power, on to its establishment over the world at the end; it did not exclude Israel as such, but enlarged the scene of the exercise of Christ's power so as to set it over the world, and did not establish it in Israel as its source, though it might establish Israel itself in its own place from a heavenly source of power.

What place does the assembly then hold in this ministry of John, found as it is in the Book of Revelation? None in its Pauline character, save in one phrase, coming in after the Revelation is closed where its true place in Christ's absence is indicated. (Rev 22:17) We have the saints at the time, in their own conscious relationship to Christ, in reference, too, to the royal and priestly place to His God and Father, in which they are associated with Himself. But John's ministerial testimony, as to the assembly, views it as the outward assembly on earth [See Note #3] in its state of decay Christ judging this and the true assembly, the capital city and seat of God's government over the world, at the end, but in glory and grace. It is an abode, and where God dwells and the Lamb. All this facilitates our intelligence of the objects and bearing of the book. The assembly has failed; the Gentiles, grafted in by faith, have not continued in God's goodness. The Ephesian assembly, the intelligent vessel, and expression of what the assembly of God was, had left its first estate, and unless it repented, the candlestick was to be removed. The Ephesus of Paul becomes the witness on earth of decay and of removal out of God's sight, even as Israel had been removed. God's patience would be shewn towards the assembly as it had been towards Israel; but the assembly would not maintain God's testimony in the world any more than Israel had. John does maintain this testimony, ministerially judging the assemblies by Christ's word, [See Note #4] and then the world from the throne, till Christ comes and takes to Himself His great power and reigns.

During this transition dealing of the throne the heavenly saints are seen on high. When Christ comes, they come with Him.

The first part, then, of the Epistles of John is the continuation, so to speak, of the Gospel before the last two dispensational chapters; the Revelation, that of these last two chapters (20-21), where, Christ being risen and no ascension given, the dispensational dealings of God are largely intimated in the circumstances which occur; while it is shewn at the same time that He could not personally set up the kingdom then. He must ascend first. The two short epistles shew us that truth (truth as to His Person) was the test of true love, and to be held fast when what was anti-christian came in; and the free liberty of the ministration of the truth to be held fast against assumed ecclesiastical or clerical authority, as contrasted with the assembly. The apostle had written to the assembly. Diotrephes rejected free ministry.

I now turn to the book itself.

Note #1:

This was morally true from Acts 3, where the Jewish leaders refuse the testimony to a glorified Christ who would return, as they had rejected a humbled One. Acts 7, by the mouth of Stephen, closes God's dealings with them in testimony, and the heavenly gathering begins, his spirit being received on high. The destruction of Jerusalem closed Jewish history judicially.

Note #2:

Paul, of course, is no way noticed. For him the assembly belonged to heaven was the body of Christ, the house of God. He was a builder.

Note #3:

And hence in particular assemblies, which of course could be judged and removed. There is another point of divine wisdom here. Though we have I doubt not, the whole history of the assembly to its end in this world, it is given in facts then present, so that there should be no putting off the coming of the Lord. So, in the parables, the virgins who go to sleep are the

same that wake up; the servants that receive the talents are the same found on the Lord's return, though we know ages have passed and death come in.

Note #4:

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Note #5:

Note this immensely important principle: the church judged by the word, not the church a judge; and the individual Christian called to give heed to this judgment. The church (I use the word designedly here as used to claim this authority) cannot be an authority when the Lord calls me, if I have ears to hear, to hear and receive the judgment pronounced by Him on it. I judge its state by the words of the Spirit, am bound to do so: it cannot be an authority therefore on the Lord's behalf over me in that state. Discipline is not in question here, but the church as wielding authority.

Revelation Chapter 1

Revelation 1:1

rev 1:1

The revelation is one belonging to Jesus Christ, which God gave Him, and He signifies it to John. Though God over all blessed for ever, He is here seen as Son of man, the rejected Messiah or Lamb, and so Head over all things. This fact, that the revelation is one confided to Him, is important, because it at once makes it the testimony of Jesus and the word of God being communicated by Jesus, and given to Him by God. This testimony of Jesus and word of God comes as a vision to John, who bare record of all He saw. All of it is prophetic in character, not the Spirit of God the messenger of the Father and of the Son's grace to the assembly in its own place a direct

inspired communication to the assembly itself for itself as in its own right place but a prophetic revelation to John about it as in the world, and about the world itself.

The assembly being already in decay and to be removed, whatever the delay of grace, the time was at hand, and the rejection of the assembly on earth to be taken as a starting-point. Another system was to be set up. The apostle had not his face turned towards the assemblies at all, but his back. The mind of the Spirit is towards Christ's taking the kingdom. Still Christ was yet amongst them, but as Son of man, the character in which He judges and inherits the world. The apostle turns and sees Him. Still it behoved, if He was recounting the coming dealing with the world in judgment, to notice by the bye "the things that are." By giving them in seven contemporary churches, no time was necessary; it left the final results as at the door, for they were in the last days, yet it gave, if there was delay, opportunity for a full moral picture of the whole of the assembly's history. I see in this only the wisdom of the Spirit, and exactly the character of John's ministry. "If I will that He tarry till I come."

I cannot doubt then for a moment that (while professedly of universal application for every one that had an ear, not an address to the general conscience of the assembly) the seven assemblies represent the history of Christendom, the assembly as under man's responsibility, the fact of the judgment of the world coming afterwards on its close (the assemblies being "the things that are") and the character of events, beginning with the assembly leaving its first love, and ending with holding fast till He comes, and with being spued out of Christ's mouth. The adoption of the number seven, which cannot mean completeness at the same time because the states are different; the reference to Christ's coming; the reference to the great tribulation to come on all the earth in the letter to Philadelphia; the clear object of warning the assembly till Christ came, the world being then in scene for judgment: all leave no cloud upon the conclusion that the seven churches are successive phases of the professing assembly's history, though not exactly consecutive (the fourth going on to the end; new phases then commencing, and going on to the end collaterally also). [See Note #5]

But though the assembly be thus spoken of, God Himself appears here as the administrator of the world, even when addressing the assembly; and Christ as man coming, under Him to this purpose, the Holy Ghost being noticed as the direct agent of power in the sevenfold perfection in which it is exercised. It is not the Father and the Son, but God who is, yet who embraces past and future in His being, and is never inconsistent with Himself, making good in time all in which He has announced Himself in the past. The form of this however is peculiar here. It is not merely the abstract idea of Jehovah, who was, and is, and is to come. He is first announced by His present absolute existence, "from him who is," the "I am," God Himself; and then to connect Himself with previous dealings (not present relationships) declares that He is the One who was (had revealed Himself in previous ages to the earth or to men, to the Abrahams and Moseses of old time), and at the same time was the coming One [See Note #6] who would make good everything revealed of and by Himself. Jesus Christ (who comes last as the Man in immediate connection with God's witness to, and government of, the earth) is presented as the faithful witness as He was personally on earth of God; as risen from the dead (but no ascension or headship of the assembly), taking all in this character, not after the flesh; and lastly, in government not yet made good, the Prince of the kings of the earth.

The saints then express their own consciousness of what He has done for them, yet still in reference to the kingdom, not as the body or bride, or their own heavenly joys, but the highest possible as regards the given glory and place. This is the necessary consequence of the consciousness of a near and blessed relationship. Whatever the glory of the One we are in relationship with, it is what He is for oneself, one's own nearness to Him, that comes to the mind when the glory is declared. Were a general to march in triumph into a town, the feeling of a child or wife would be, "That is my father," "that is my husband." Here the feeling, though of this character, is more unselfish. "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." It is His love to us which is celebrated, still with the personal feeling "us." The saints know what He has done for them, and further what He has made them. His love as perfect King and Priest are His highest characters here: nearest to God in power downwards, and in approaching Him

upwards. He has made us kings and priests to God and His Father: to Him be glory! Such is the saint's thought when He is spoken of. He loved us, has cleansed us, and given us a place with Himself. This flows out the instant He is named. It is the answer of heart when He is announced, before any communication takes place. His having done this is not announced; it is the saints' own consciousness. [See Note #7]

As to others, all must be told. The next point, the first announced, is His appearing to the world. No direct communication to the assembly for its own sake the book is not that. Here the assembly has that in its own consciousness only, as we have seen. Behold! He cometh with clouds; every eye shall see Him, the Jews too who pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. His appearing is in judgment.

We then find, what is so remarkable in John, the mixing up in expression God and Christ Verse 8 (Rev 1:8) cannot be said to be one or the other. It is Christ; but it is Christ Jehovah, Almighty, the Lord; who is, and who was, and who is to come; the first and the last. (Compare Rev 22:12-13)

Thus, we have the saints of these days; Christ's appearing to judgment; He is God, the first and the last, Alpha and Omega; the complete circle of position from John's day to the end. The practical position which John takes with all the saints, is "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." He belongs to the kingdom, but must wait while Christ waits, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. The generic name given to testimony applies to all his ministry as well as to the prophecy the word of God and the testimony of Jesus: only one might have thought that prophecy was not this last, as it was not to the assembly about itself from its Head; but the Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.

Such is the introduction to this book. We now enter on its contents. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. It is his place and privilege however then, as a Christian, which is spoken of, not the prophetic period into which He entered. In the day of resurrection his own place the day on which Christians meet, the apostle, removed from the society of Christians, still enjoyed the special elevating power of the Holy Ghost, though alone; and is thus used of God, allowed to be banished for the purpose, for what He could not, in an

ordinary way, have communicated to the assembly for its edification. The persecuting emperor little thought what He was giving to us when He banished the apostle; no more than Augustus, in his political plans as to the census of the empire, knew He was sending a poor carpenter to Bethlehem, with his espoused wife, that Christ might be born there; or the Jews and Pilate's soldiers, that they were sending the thief to heaven, when they broke his legs in heartless respect for their own superstitions or ordinances. God's ways are behind the scenes; but He moves all the scenes which He is behind. We have to learn this, and let Him work, and not think much of man's busy movements: they will accomplish God's. The rest of them all perish and disappear. We have only peacefully to do His will.

The same voice that afterwards called John up to heaven, He now hears behind him on earth the voice of the Son of man. It summons his attention with power; and turning to see the voice, as Moses towards the bush, He sees, not the image of God's presence in Israel, but the vessels of God's light in the earth, and a complete summary of it all, and, in the midst of them, Christ as Son of man. We find, thus, in the Revelation, God's whole history of the world, or of what is of Him in it, from the first decay of the assembly to the new heavens and new earth. But it was impossible for God to set aside the present expectation of Christ, or to justify the assembly in its careless but sinful thought, My Lord delayeth His coming. Hence, as always, this history, and especially that of the assembly, is given in a way which leaves time out altogether. The moral progress of the assembly is given in pictures of the state of the existing assemblies selected for that purpose, beginning with its first decline, and ending with its entire rejection. Being taken up as assemblies, the general principle of responsibility is in view, and the assembly viewed, not as the infallibly blessed body of Christ, but such as that it may be rejected and set aside on earth; for a local assembly and the external visible assembly clearly can.

These assemblies are seen as distinct light-bearers; that is, in their place of service, or rather position of witness in the world. They are viewed in their own proper character as of God; as set by Him in the world, they are of gold. He may take them away because they give a dim, or no true light or witness

for God; but the thing taken away was founded in divine righteousness, and founded originally by a divine hand.

But the Spirit first occupies itself with the character of Him who stood amongst them. First, we get His actual position, before stating what He was. He stood as Son of man. We have not Him here as Head of the one body, nor even as heavenly Intercessor; nor have we the Christ, of course (that is, the Jewish character of the Lord). It will be found that these are just the characters of Christ omitted also in the first Chapter of John's Gospel. John sees Him in the wide character in which He is set over all the works of God's hand, and Heir of all promises and purposes of God to man according to divine righteousness. He is not the Son of man in service. His garment is down to His feet, and He has the girdle of divine righteousness about His loins. This is His character.

We have then His qualities or attributes. First, He is the Ancient of days. In Daniel the same truth comes out. The Son of man is brought to the Ancient of days; but, farther on in the Chapter, it is the Ancient of days who comes. The Son of man is Jehovah. This characterises all the testimony. The King of kings and Lord of lords shews Him : (Ti1 6:15) but, when He comes, we find that He is King of kings and Lord of lords. But in this glory He has the attributes of judgment eyes of fire that which pierces into everything, and fire is ever the sign of judgment. This was its piercing, searching character: His feet, the firmness with which sin was met; for brass is righteousness, viewed, not as intrinsically in God to be approached, but as dealing with man, in his responsibility as man. The mercy-seat was gold, the altar and laver brass; but there it was as an altar, that is, dealing with sin for man, a sacrifice, though fire was there, but here the burning furnace of judgment. The voice was the sign of power and majesty.

Next, we have official supremacy. He held all that was subordinate authority in light and order, here spoken of as regards the assembly, in His right hand, in His power. He had the power of judgment by the word, and supreme authority the sun in the fullness of its highest character. We have His personal glory as Jehovah; His qualities as divine Judge; and His supreme official position.

But, He was not less the Redeemer, the gracious securer in blessing of them that were His. John (as ever in prophetic vision of Jehovah, for it is not the Spirit of adoption here) falls at His feet as one dead. So Daniel; so in spirit Isaiah (Chapter 6); but His power sustains the saint, does not destroy him. He lays His right hand on John himself, declares Himself the first and the last, Jehovah Himself, but withal the same that died in love and has complete power over death and hades; the deliverer from it, not the subjecter to it. He has risen out of death and hades, and has the keys full power over them divine power or support; and He who died and rose again, and lives forever even as man, does so, not simply in the power of divine life in man, but of victory over all that man was subject to by sin and infirmity.

This is the position He here takes with John His servant, and with the assemblies respectively. We shall see that the state of the latter assemblies brings out other characters known only to the opened eye of faith. These were what John had seen and which he was to write. Then as regards prophetic facts, he was to write the things that were, the state of these various assemblies as the setting forth historically of the assembly's various state a history; and the things which should be after them (that is, when the assembly's history had closed on earth). The whole assembly therefore, is thus, to the Spirit, present time the "things that are." The future was what came after it, God's dealings with the world. This, while it left the coming of the Lord, or preparatory prophetic events in immediate expectation, left, if there was delay (and there was to be), the period undefined, and the expectation, though prolonged, still a present one. We may remark that we have the personal glory of Christ here, the position as to the assemblies accompanying it. He is not personally revealed as Son of man, that is, as taking the Son of man's place: only He who is Ancient of days is so seen as to make us understand that it was one who had that place was Son of man. Subsequently, in the Apocalypse, it is not His intrinsic personal character, but some relative character or place He takes. Only we have something analogous to this, when the account of future things comes in. As regards the world, He is seen as the Lamb, one whom the world has rejected, but who has redemption right over it. There He is seen with the seven horns and seven eyes His power over the world, as with the seven stars here as Son of man. These are the things John had seen.

We now pass to "the things that are." The stars are in Christ's hand; He speaks of them first; He walks in the midst of the assemblies. The latter are light-bearers, the assemblies or assembly as set in a given position, and viewed as such before God; not what the people became, but what the assembly is in His sight; just as Israel was His people whatever the Israelites became. The stars are that which is held by Christ to give light and have authority, what He holds responsible to this end before Him. It is, in a certain sense, all composing the assembly therefore, and so it is often said in the addresses to the assemblies; but more especially those who stand in responsibility through their connection with Himself, the stars in His hand. They should shine, and influence, and represent Him, each in its place during the night. That the clergy gradually took this place, and in this sense are responsible in it, is quite true; but that is their affair to answer for themselves before the Lord. The Spirit does not so take it here. They assume it as honour; they have it as responsibility. If ever they were called "angels," it was evidently just this assumption, and taken from this place. Again, it cannot be doubted that leaders, elders, or others, were in a special place of responsibility, supposing them to be rightly such. In Acts 20 they are so treated; but the Spirit does not so own them here. Christ does not address Himself to elders, nor to the modern notion of a bishop, which did not indeed exist then. Nor is a diocese [See Note #8] thought of in these addresses. You have not the authorities (elders) spoken of in scripture, of which there were always several; and this passage of scripture cannot be applied to human arrangements as now existing.

What then is the angel? It is not a symbol, properly speaking. The star is the symbol, and it is here seen in Christ's hand. It is (as angel is always used where it is not actually a heavenly or earthly messenger) the mystical representative of one not actually seen. It is so used of Jehovah, so used of a child, so spoken of Peter. Elders may have practically been specially responsible from their position; but the angel represents the assembly, and especially those to whom, from nearness to Christ and communion with him, or responsibility for it through the operation of His Spirit in them for His service, He looks for the state of His assembly in His sight. No doubt the whole assembly is responsible, and therefore the candlestick is removed when unfaithfulness is brought home to it; but Christ is in immediate

communication with these in respect of it a solemn thought for all who have the good of the assembly at heart.

The way in which the angels and the assemblies are identified, and any distinction in the degree or manner of it, requires a little more detailed attention. That the assemblies are addressed in their general responsibility, in the addresses to the angels, is evident. For it is said, "What the Spirit saith to the churches." It is not a private communication to an authority for his direction, as to a Titus or a Timothy, but said to the assemblies; that is, the angel represents their responsibility. So we find distinct parts of them noticed. "The devil shall cast some of you into prison;" "fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer:" , "but I have a few things against thee, thou hast there:" , "My faithful martyr who was slain among you:" , "But unto you I say, the rest in Thyatira" (so it is to be read). Yet the angel and assembly or candlestick are distinguished: "I will remove thy candlestick out of its place." "Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel."

But this separation between the angel and the assembly does not take place in the last three assemblies. The angel is addressed throughout. As to them too it is only said, Christ has the seven stars, not that He holds them in His right hand. In Smyrna and Philadelphia there is no judgment; they were tried, as faithful, and encouraged. As to judgments, or rather warning threats in the case of Ephesus, which presents the general fact of the assembly's first decline, the warning is given that the candlestick would be taken away unless they repented: that the assembly did not, we know from scripture and fact, and these assemblies looked at as a successive history. In Pergamos and Thyatira the offenders are those specifically judged; in the case of Thyatira fearful judgments on Jezebel and those connected with her: she had had time to repent and had not; but here the change of everything is looked for at the Lord's coming. All this shews the angels to be the representatives of the assemblies, but morally such; Christ's warning to be addressed to them (as we can easily understand to be the case in any who had the interest of the assembly at heart), whom Christ trusted with this; but to be so far identified with the assemblies that it concerned all who composed them, while particular judgments were denounced on guilty parties.

We may now enter on the series of particular assemblies; but briefly, in connection with the whole structure of the book, rather than entering into the instructive details, which I have done elsewhere in a series of lectures.

Note #5

There are moral reasons from the contents. We shall see, farther on, that the structure of the book fully confirms this.

Note #6

"erchomenos" not "o esomenos".

Note #7

We shall find the same thing at the close when the prophecy is ended. Here what He has been to the saints and has done: there what He is for the future. See Rev 22:17.

Note #8

Except in the new world, those called bishops are always bishops of a city, shewing, historically that dioceses are a subsequent arrangement. Angels were not chief officers of the synagogue.

Revelation Chapter 2

The first great fact is, that the assembly in this world is subject to judgment, and to have its whole existence and place before God as light-bearer in the world set aside; secondly, that God will do this if it departs from its first spiritual energy. This is an immense principle. He has set the assembly to be a true witness of what He has manifested in Jesus; of what He is when Jesus is gone on high. If it be not this, it is a false witness, and it will be set aside. God may have patience, and has blessedly so. He may propose to her to return to her first love, and does; but, if this do not take place, the candlestick is removed, the assembly ceases to be God's light-bearer in the world. The first estate must be maintained, or God's glory and the truth are falsified; and the creature must be set aside. But no mere unsustained creature does this, none as such. Hence all fails and is judged, save as in, or upheld by, the Son of God, the second Man. Ephesus had gone on well in

maintaining consistency, but that forgetfulness of self and thinking only of Christ, which are the firstfruits of grace, were gone. As heretofore remarked, there were works of labour and patience; but the faith, hope, and love had in their true energy disappeared. They had rejected the pretension of false teachers, and laboured and not fainted. All that can be said of them is said to shew Christ's love, and that He is not forgetful of them, or of the good manifested in them. Still they had left their first love; and this unless repented of and the first works done, involved the taking away of the candlestick.

Another important principle is found here, that when the assembly had departed from faithfulness when collectively it had ceased to be the expression of the love in which God has visited the world, God throws back individuals on the word of God for themselves: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." The assembly is judged, and thus cannot be the security for faith; the individual is called to hear what the Spirit says. The warning of taking away the candlestick here is specially worthy of notice, because there was a great deal the Lord highly approved of encouraged them by shewing He did; but, for all that, if first love was departed from, the candlestick would be removed.

The character of Christ and promises are general, as the assembly is characteristic of the whole principle on which the assembly stands. Christ has the stars in His right hand and walks amidst the candlesticks. It is not a special character applicable to a special state, but the whole bearing of His position in the midst of the assemblies. The assembly, viewed as having left its first love, is never promised anything. It cannot direct a believer when it comes under reproof and judgment itself. The promise is then to the individual overcomer: a very important principle. The promise given to him that overcomes is the general one is the contrast to Adam's ruin, but in a higher and better way than that in which he enjoyed the good which he lost. He that overcomes shall eat of the tree of life. But this is not the tree of life in man's paradise in this world, but the paradise of God Himself. We must remark, too, that it is not as the first Adam now, individually keeping one's first estate, but overcoming. And what is before us to overcome in is, not only the world and its hostilities (though that may be), but within the sphere

of the assembly itself. It is the call to hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies which gives occasion to the speaking of overcoming. This, in respect of the claim of the assembly to be heard, is an immensely important truth. The message is addressed to the assembly, not by it to individuals, and she is warned of her delinquency, and the individual saint is called to overcome.

The word to Smyrna is short. Whatever the malice and power of Satan, at the utmost, if permitted, he has but the power of death. Christ is First and Last, beyond as before death, God Himself; but more than that, has met and gone through its power. The saints were not to fear. Satan would work, be allowed to sift, to imprison. Let the saints only be faithful to the extreme point of his power; all beyond was beyond him, was Christ's; and the faithful one would receive from Him the crown of life. Tribulation, poverty, the contempt of those who pretended to have the legitimate hereditary claim to be God's people always the persecutors, be they Jews or Christians was the portion of the assembly here; and God suffered it. It was really mercy to the declining assembly. Their hope was beyond it all when Christ gave the crown of life. This made the assembly, sliding into the world, or about to do it insensibly through decline of its first love, sensible that the world was in Satan's hands was not the rest of saints. But, if the Lord permitted, He limited the tribulation. All was in His hands. Not only was there the crown for the sufferers but whoever overcame, his portion was secure: the death of judgment, the second death, would not hurt him.

We now need a closer judgment. Christ appears as the One having the two-edged sword of the word proceeding out of His mouth. It will be remarked here, that, in Smyrna and Pergamos, a special character of Christ applies to a special state. There is no general result for the assembly. In Ephesus we have Christ's position as Judge in the midst of the candlesticks, and the assembly threatened with removal from its place of witness upon earth. In Thyatira He takes His place as Son of God, Son over His own house, and, as things are (as to the assembly) got to the worst, is revealed in all-piercing and immutable judgment, and the whole blessing of the new state is promised to the overcomer. In Pergamos we have faithfulness found in its previous path, Christ's name and faith heldfast in spite of persecution. It

differs from Philadelphia, that His word is not said to be held fast as that of Christ's patience (that the assembly, in its Pergamos state, did not do), but it did hold fast the confession of Christ in the midst of persecution. But another kind of evil came in seduction to fall in with the world's ways by evil teaching within. The doctrine of Balaam was there. Idolatry flowed in. There were also sects within, which taught pretended sanctity but evil practice. These the Lord would judge.

The general truth of removing the candlestick had no place here, neither as a general truth, when the assembly could be called on to keep its first love, nor as fiery judgment, because it was gone wholly astray; but there were corrupters, and Christ's servants led into idolatry and evil. Individual approbation by Christ, communion with Himself in future blessing (in spirit then), as the once humbled and rejected One (which the assembly was ceasing to be), a name given by Christ, and so of tenderness on His part, a link known only to him who had it. In a word, individual association and individual blessing of secret delight this was the promise to the overcomer when corruption was advancing, not yet dominant and unhindered in the assembly.

In Thyatira the assembly reaches to the close. There was found, in what Christ owned in this state of things, increasing devotedness. But Jezebel was allowed; and both connection with the world, idolatry, and children begotten to it in the assembly itself. All would be judged, great tribulation fall on Jezebel, and her children be killed. Christ searched the heart and reins, and applied judgment in unchangeable righteousness. The faithful ones of this epoch, the "you" that Christ specially addresses, are but a "rest," a remnant, but specially and growingly devoted. It is, we may remark here, what the assemblies are towards Christ, which is especially in view. What Jezebel did towards the faithful ones is not noted. The Lord's coming is the time looked to; and the whole millennial blessing is promised to him that overcomes; both the reign with Christ, and Christ the Morning Star Himself. "He that hath an ear" is now put after the overcoming; not said in connection with the assembly, but with those who overcome in it. The state is the state characterised by this. Thyatira may go on to the end, but does not characterise the witness of God to the end; other states must be

brought in to do that. It is, I have no doubt. the Popery of the middle ages, say to the Reformation; Romanism itself goes on to the end. The judgment on Jezebel is final. The Lord had given her space to repent, and she had not repented. It would be a forced association with those whom she had once seduced to the ruin of them all. The whole character here is piercing judgment according to God's own nature and requirements; special trial and judgment, yet the blessing not special, but the portion of the saints at large in that which they have with Christ; as the departure and judgment were complete adultery, not merely failure in first love.

We have seen the close at the Lord's coming contemplated in Thyatira. Sardis begins a new collateral phase of the assembly's history. Save the having the seven stars, none of the ecclesiastical characters of Christ, none of those noticed in Him as walking in the midst of the assemblies, are noticed. Still the assembly is noticed as such. It is still the history of the assembly. But, the Lord's coming having been noticed, all characteristics of Christ refer to what He will have in the kingdom. Still He has yet the seven stars supreme authority over the assembly. It is nothing peculiar to this assembly. He has it over, and as to, all. It is in this character He has to do with Sardis. He has the seven spirits, the fullness of the perfection in which He will govern the earth. Thus He is competent to bless in the assembly, though there is no regular ecclesiastical connection. He has power over all, and the fullness of the Spirit; both in perfection. Whatever the assembly is, He is all this. This is a great comfort. The assembly cannot fail in the place of witness through want of fullness of grace in Him. Nor can He fail him who has ears to hear.

But the state of the assembly shewed that it was far from availing itself of it. It had indeed a name to live; it was superior in its pretensions to the evil of Thyatira; nor were there Jezebels and corruption. But there was practically death. There was no completeness in her works before God. It was not evil here, but lack of spiritual energy. But this did leave individuals to defile their garments in the world. She was called to remember, not her first works, but what she had received and heard, the truth committed to her, the gospel and word of God; if not, she would be treated as the world. The Lord would come as a thief; for the Lord's coming is now always in view.

Revelation Chapter 3

There is no threat of removing the candlestick: that was settled. Judgment, setting aside the assembly, was fixed. But this body would be treated as the world, not ecclesiastically as a corrupt assembly. (compare 1 Thess. 5)

However, some had preserved their integrity, and would be owned; and they would walk with Christ as those that had done righteousness. This was the promise too. They had confessed His name practically before men, before the world, and theirs would be confessed before God when the nominal assembly was treated as the world. They were real Christians in the midst of a worldly profession, and their names would not be struck out of the register, then ill-kept on earth, but infallibly rectified by heavenly judgment. It has been remarked that, simultaneously with bringing in the Lord's coming, the ear to hear comes after the distinguishing the overcomers. Such a remnant only is looked for. I cannot doubt that we have Protestantism here.

The assembly of Philadelphia has a peculiarly interesting character. Nothing is said of its works, but that Christ knows them. But what is interesting in it is that it is peculiarly associated with Christ Himself. Christ, as in all these last assemblies, is not seen in the characters in which He walked in the midst of the assemblies, but in such as faith peculiarly recognises when ecclesiastical organization has become the hot-bed of corruption. Here it is His personal character, what He is intrinsically, holy and true, what the word displays and requires, and what the word of God is in itself-moral character and faithfulness. Indeed this last word includes all: faithfulness to God within and without, according to what is revealed, and faithful to make good all He has declared.

Christ is known as the Holy One. Then outward ecclesiastical associations or pretensions will not do. There must be what suits His nature, and faithful consistency with that word which He will certainly make good. With this He has the administration; and opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens. See what His path was on earth: only then graciously dependent, as we are. He was holy and true, to man's view had a little strength, kept the word lived by every word that proceeded out of God's lips waited patiently for the Lord, and to Him the porter opened. He lived in the last days of a

dispensation, the holy and true One, rejected, and, to human eye, failing in success with those who said they were Jews, but were the synagogue of Satan. So the saints here: they walk in a place like His; they keep His word, have a little strength, are not marked by a Pauline energy of the Spirit, but do not deny His name. This is the character and motive of all their conduct. It is openly confessed, the word kept, the Name not denied. It seems little; but in universal decline, much pretension and ecclesiastical claim, and many falling away to man's reasonings, keeping the word of Him that is holy and true, and not denying His name is everything.

And this element is noticed. Christ, the holy and true One, is waiting. Here on earth He waited patiently for Jehovah. It is the character of perfect faith. Faith has a double character energy which overcomes, and patience which waits for God and trusts Him. (See the first in Heb 11:23-34; the latter in Rev 3:8-22.) It is the latter which is found here; the word of patience kept.

But as regards the former substantive qualities, keeping the word and not denying Christ's name (though with a little strength) in presence of ecclesiastical pretension to a successional God-established religion, promises were given. Christ would force these pretentious claimants to divine succession to come and own that He had loved those who kept His word. An open door was given at present, and no man could shut it; just as the porter had opened to Him, so that scribes and Pharisees and priests could not hinder it. In the future they would have to own themselves humbled, and that those who followed the word of the holy and true One were those He had loved. Meanwhile His approbation was sufficient. This was the test of faith to be satisfied with His approbation, content with the authority of His word.

But there was a promise also as to the Lord's judgments in the earth. Christ is waiting till His enemies be made His footstool. We must wait for it to see the world set right. We have to go on where the god of this world has his way, though under divine limitation. The thought that good is to have its rights in this world is to forget the cross and Christ. We cannot have our rights till He has, for we have none but His. Judgment (since Pilate had it, and Christ was the righteous One before him) has not yet returned to righteousness. Till then Christ waits, though at the right hand of God; and

we wait. It is not persecution and martyrdom, as in Smyrna. It is as hard a task perhaps, or, at any rate, our task now patience and contentedness with Christ's approbation, keeping His word, not denying His name.

But then there were other and blessed encouragements. There was an hour of temptation coming upon all the world to try those who belonged to earth, who dwelt there as belonging to it. Some might be spared, victorious in the trial; but those who kept the word of Christ's patience would be kept from it. On the whole world it would come; and where were they? Out of the world. They had not belonged to it when in it. They had been waiting for Christ to take His power waiting His time to have the world. They belonged to heaven, to Him who was there; and they would be taken to be with Him when the world was to be in the time of terrible trial. There was a special time before He took His power; and not only would they reign with Him in result, but they would be kept from that hour, and had the assurance of it in the time of their trial. And hence the Lord points them to His coming as their hope; not as warning that the unrepentant would be treated as the world when He appeared. He came quickly, and they were to look for the crown then, holding fast what they had, feeble but spiritually associated with Him as they were, lest any should take it.

We have now the general promise in heavenly places marked by special association with Christ; and they are publicly owned in that in which they seemed on earth to have nothing. Others had the pretension to be the people of God, the city of God to have divine religious title; these were only consistent with His word, and they waited for Christ. Now, when Christ takes His power, when things are real, according to Him in power, they have this place according to God. It was the cross and contempt below; it is the display of God's name and heavenly city above.

Let us examine the promise to the overcomers here. He who had but a little strength is a pillar in the temple of the God in whom and with whom he is blessed. He was held perhaps for outside the ecclesiastical unity and order; he is a pillar in it in heaven, and will go no more out. On him who was hardly owned to have a part in grace has the name of his rejected Saviour's God been stamped publicly in glory. He who was hardly accounted to belong to the holy city has its heavenly name written on him too, and Christ's new

name the name not known to prophets and Jews according to the flesh, but which He has taken as dead to this world (where the false assembly settles down) and risen into heavenly glory. The careful association with Christ is striking here, and gives its character to the promise. "The temple of my God," says Christ; "the name of my God ;", " of the city of my God", " my new name." Associated in Christ's own patience, Christ confers upon him what fully associates him in His own blessing with God. This is of peculiar blessing, and full of encouragement for us.

Laodicea follows. Lukewarmness characterises the last state of profession in the assembly. It is nauseous to Christ; He will spue it out of His mouth. It was not mere want of power, it was want of heart the worst of all ills. This threat is peremptory, not conditional. It brought irremediable rejection. With this want of heart for Christ and His service, there was much pretension to the possession of resources and competency in themselves; " I am rich," whereas they had nothing of Christ. It is the professing assembly accounting itself rich without having Christ as the riches of the soul by faith. Therefore He counsels them to buy of Him true and approved righteousness, clothing for their moral nakedness, and what gave spiritual sight; for they were, as respects what Christ is and gives before God, poor, naked, and miserable, and specially so. This is Christ's judgment of their pretended acquisitions according to man. However, as long as the assembly subsists, Christ continues to deal in grace, stands at the door and knocks presses reception of Himself in the closest way on the conscience. If any one, still in what He was going to spue out, heard His voice and opened, He would give him admission to be with Him, and a part in the kingdom.

There is no coming here; nor was there for the judgment of Jezebel. That was practically Babylon; and she is judged before Christ comes. This is spued out of Christ's mouth, cast off as worthless to Him; but the general body is judged as the world. The Lord's coming is in Thyatira for the saints, and in Philadelphia too. That is its aspect as to the assembly, and that only. Sardis is reduced, if unrepentant, to the condition of the world, and judged as such. When the state of Laodicea arrives, the assembly is disowned and rejected of Christ in that character: but for that His coming is not to be spoken of. Although Thyatira goes down to the end and closes ecclesiastically the

assembly's history, yet only in the first three is the assembly at large treated as the subject of repentance. In Thyatira space had been given Jezebel to repent, and she did not: and the scene is to close and be replaced by the kingdom. In this respect the last four assemblies go together. There is no prospect of repentance of the whole assembly, or restoration. Sardis is called to hold fast and repent, and remember what she had received; but, if she does not watch, is to be treated as the world. Hence, as we have seen, the call to hear is addressed to overcomers, after the promise.

The character of Christ in connection with this assembly must not be passed over. It brings out the passage from the various condition of the assembly to His authority above and beyond it over the world. Christ personally takes up what the assembly has ceased to be. He is the Amen, the fulfillment and verifier of all the promises, the real witness and revealer of God and of truth, when the assembly is not; and the beginning of the creation of God Head over all things, and the glory and witness of what it is as from God as the new creation. The assembly ought to have displayed the power of the new creation by the Holy Ghost; as if any man is in Christ, it is a new creation, where all things are of God. We, as its firstfruits, are created again in Him. The assembly has thus the things which remain. (2 Cor. 3) But she has been an unfaithful witness of it. Does she possess a part in it? It is because Christ does, and He is the true beginning of it as really displayed. The responsible witness of it by the Holy Ghost having failed, Christ now takes it up, coming in for its effectual display.

But the series of preparatory events in the world must first be gone into. And it is to be remarked, that there is no mention here of the fact of the Lord's coming in reference to the assembly. It is promised that He will come quickly; and the assembly is threatened with being spued out of His mouth. But the fact of His coming for His own, or the assembly's rapture at any time, is not stated. This falls in fully with what we have seen of John's ministry [See Note #9] his being occupied with the manifestation of the Lord on earth, and scarce touching (and only when needed on leaving the disciples) on heavenly promises. In John 14 and 17 he does it exceptionally. Here it is left out. Even in Chapter 12, which remarkably confirms what I say, the rapture is only seen as identified with the catching up of the man-child,

Christ Himself. Hence we have no specific relative epoch noted for the taking away the saints here, save that they are taken before the war in heaven which leads to the last three years and a half. But on the other hand the saints belonging to the assembly, or before, are always seen above when the epistles to the assemblies are ended. They are waiting for judgment to be given to them for the avenging of their blood; but they are never seen on earth.

Note #9

His character too was for judgment among the assemblies and the assembly on earth; not His own bride, but the outward body here on earth.

Revelation Chapter 4

But we have to consider where the fourth Chapter commences God's ways. It does not follow necessarily that the assembly has been spued out of Christ's mouth. It had been threatened; but the judgment on Sardis, or even on Thyatira, was not yet come. But it is after Christ has ceased to deal with the professing assembly as such, looking to it as His light-bearer before the world. What it may call itself still is not stated; He is not dealing with it. An open apostacy will come. Its date is not revealed; nor is it revealed as to the rapture. But I gather from 2 Thessalonians 2, that the rapture will be before the apostacy. What we have stated then is, that it is after all dealing with the assemblies by Christ is closed that the subsequent dealings with the world in the Revelation begin. The assemblies are "the things that are;" what follows, "the things after these." Christ is not now seen walking in their midst; He is the Lamb in the midst of the throne. John is not occupied with seeing Him there, or sending messages to the assemblies, but is called up to heaven where all the ways of God are now carried on, and that towards the world, not the assembly. We have the throne too, not the long-robed priest. The kings and priests we read of in Chapter 1 are now on high. Others may follow them; but they are in heavenly places, seated on thrones, or worshiping, or presenting their censers full of incense. On the other hand the Lord is not come to judge the world, but about to receive the inheritance. The saints then, who will be caught up to meet Christ, are seen

only on high here; they belong to heaven, and are no longer dealt with on earth, but have their own place in heaven.

The connection between the two parts of the Apocalypse is this: Christ, who was judging in the midst of the professing church, is now seen on high, opening the book of this world's judgment, of which He is about to take the inheritance publicly. From this scene of judgment the saints are far. The apostle's occupation with the assembly now ceases an important point, for the Holy Spirit must be occupied with it as long as the saints are in it on earth; and he is taken up to heaven, and there he sees and in covenant with creation, on a throne of government, with a rainbow round about it. The living creatures celebrate Him as the creator, the One for whom all things were created. The throne was not a throne of grace, but the signs of power and judgment broke forth from it; but around it those who represent the saints received at Christ's coming, the kings and priests, are sitting on thrones in a circle round the throne. No altar of sacrifice is in view, as if it were a time of approach; the brazen laver has glass instead of water. It is a fixed accomplished holiness, not cleansing of feet. The elders are crowned, the number twenty-four recalling the courses of the priests. The seven Spirits of God are there in the temple, not Christ's to wield for the assembly, or sent out into the world, but the perfections in attribute which characterise the actions of God in the world. This it is bears light now into the world.

Besides these, four living creatures are there in the circle of the throne itself and around the throne. They may be viewed as forming the throne, or apart from it, though connected with it as a centre. They have some of the characters of the cherubim, some of the seraphim, but somewhat different from both. They were full of eyes, before and behind, to see all things according to God, and willing having also six wings; perfect in inward perception, but given perception, and in the celerity of their motions. They embraced also the four species of creation in the ordered earth: man, cattle, beast of the field, fowl of the air: these symbolizing the powers or attributes of God, them selves worshiped by the heathen, here only the instruments of the throne. Him who sat on it the heathen knew not. The intelligence, firmness, power, rapidity of execution which belong to God were typified as elsewhere by them. They are symbols. Divers agents may be the instruments

of their activity. But though there was the general analogy of the cherubim, judicial and governmental power, these had a peculiar character.

The cherubim in the temple had two wings, which formed the throne; they looked on the covenant, and at the same time, as of pure gold, were characterised by the divine righteousness of the throne to be approached. In Ezekiel they were the support of the firmament above which the God of Israel was: it was a throne of executive judgment. They were like burnished brass, and like fire—a symbol we have considered already. They had four wings: two to fly with, two to cover themselves. From Ezekiel 10 it appears they were full of eyes ("it is not said within") it was to govern what was outside, according to God, not divine intelligence within. In Isaiah 6 the seraphim (or burners) have six wings as here; they are above the throne, and cry as here, Holy, holy, holy! They, with a burning coal, cleansed the prophet's lips; they were above the throne.

The symbols used here become clearer through these cases. The living creatures are in and around the throne; for it is a throne of executory judgment, with the attributes of cherubim united to it. But it is not, as in Israel, mere earth] y providential judgment, a whirlwind out of the north. There is before us the government of all the earth, and executory judgment according to the holiness of God's nature. [See Note #10] There is not only full perception of all, but intrinsic perception morally. It is no seat of gold to be approached, as in the tabernacle. The intrinsic holiness of God is applied to judgment. He is making good His nature and character in all creation. Providence would be no longer a riddle. It was not complex attributes unsolved, so to speak, though applied in special circumstances; each act would have its character.

Here too remark, it is not, as in the first Chapter, the God who is, though embracing past and future, God in Himself; but the God of ages, "who was, and is, and is to come." Still He has all Old Testament names: Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai. His attributes now celebrate His full name, as the Holy One who lives for ever and ever has no passing power or being, like man at his best estate, vanity And the saints here fall down before the throne, bow themselves before His place in glory, and worship Him in His endless being, and lay down their given glory before His supreme and proper glory,

ascribing all glory to Him alone, as alone worthy of it; but here, according to the nature of the celebration of it, the Creator for whom all things are. In all changes these remained true.

It will be remarked here, that the living creatures only celebrate and declare; the elders worship with understanding. All through the Revelation the elders give their reason for worshiping. There is spiritual intelligence in them.

Further, remark, that when thunderings and lightnings and voices, the signs of terror in judgment, go forth from the throne, the throned elders remain unmoved; they are on thrones around when the throne of judgment is introduced. This is their place before God in respect of judgment. Whenever He takes judgment in hand this is their position. They are part of the glory-assessors of the throne from which its terror goes forth. When He that sits on it is celebrated, they are all activity, own all glory to be His, are prostrate on their faces, and cast their crowns before Him, more blessed in owning His glory, than in possessing their own. We do not find the Father here; it is Jehovah. And indeed should we ask in whom He is personally displayed, it would be, as always, in the Son; but it is in itself simply the Jehovah of the Old Testament here.

Note #10

For the judgment at the end, though governmental, closing earth's history, was not mercy so (cherubic), but according to God's holiness and nature (seraphic), particularly as in Isaiah 6, a known God in Israel.

Revelation Chapter 5

In the next Chapter we find the Lamb. A book was in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. It was counsels, wielded by His power. Who could open them and bring them forth to execution? Who had the title to do so? None in heaven or earth but One. The elders explained to the prophet who mourned that the ways of God should be shut up, that the mighty One of Judah, the true source of all promises to David, had prevailed to open it and loose the seals. This was the Lamb, the rejected Messiah. He was more than this, as the Chapter goes on to shew; but He is this. The rejected Messiah

was in the midst of the divine throne; and within all the displays of providence and grace the living creatures and elders stood a Lamb as it had been slain. He had the fullness of power over the earth seven horns as of God, and the seven Spirits of God for government, according to God's perfection, of all the earth. When He has taken the book, the living creatures and elders fall down before Him with golden censers full of the prayers of the saints. They are priests here.

Now a new song is sung to celebrate the Lamb. What seemed His dishonour and rejection on earth was the ground of His worthiness to take the book. He who at all suffering and cost to Himself had glorified all that God was, was able and worthy to unfold what made it good in the way of government. It was not the government of Israel, but of all the earth; not merely earthly chastisements according to God's revelation of Himself in Israel, but the display in power of all God was in the whole earth. He who had glorified all He was, and redeemed, by the gospel of what He was through His death, out of all the earth, was the fit One to bring it forth in power. He does not yet come forth; but His work is the worthy instrument, the divine motive, for the display of it all. He can unlock the seals of God's ways and mysteries. I read the passage thus: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred, &c., and hast made them unto our God kings and priests, and they shall reign over the earth." Thus it is not any particular class, but the value of the act which is the motive of praise, and all being confided to Him.

Here the angels come in to praise, not in the fourth Chapter. I can hardly doubt that a change in administrative order takes place here. Until the Lamb took the book, they were the administrative power; they were the instruments through which what the four living creatures symbolized was exercised in the earth. "But unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." Hence, as soon as the Lamb appears and takes the book, as soon as the idea of redemption is brought in, the living creatures and elders are brought together, and the angels take their own place apart. Like the living creatures before, they give no reason for their praise. As the heads of creation as to their nature, they celebrate with all creatures the title to glory of the Lamb and His own worthiness, ascribing

praise to Him that sits on the throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever. The four living creatures, that is, all the exercise of God's power in creation and providence, join their Amen, and the elders worship God in the excellency of His being. But the living creatures and elders are joined (Rev 5:8) in falling down before the Lamb. I do not think they are meant to be distinguished in the latter part of the Verse, [See Note #11] but merge in the elders, symbolizing different service but not now two classes. Verse 9 (Rev 5:9) is the general fact; not "they sung," but "they sing." This takes place in heaven; but those named are in the mind in a general way. Thus the source of what follows, the throne, and the persons engaged in heaven before God in all that passes, are displayed: whence the judgment flows, who surround the throne of God above, and who is in it, have been brought before us; the heavenly scene, and choir, and assistants.

Note #11

That is, "echontes" does not apply to elders only.

Revelation Chapter 6

What is to follow on earth now begins, when the seals are opened. It will be remarked here, that John, standing in the ruin of the assembly, gives prophetically all that passes from that failure till Christ comes in Chapter 19. There is no ascension no rapture, save as far as Chapter 12 gives both together.

The first seals are simple; nor have I anything to offer very new upon them: first, imperial conquests then wars, then famine, then pestilence, carrying with it what Ezekiel calls God's four sore plagues (sword, famine, pestilence, and the beasts of the earth). They speak of the providential course of God's dealings, and hence the four beasts call attention to it; but they have God's voice in them, the voice of the Almighty: that, the ear of him who has the Spirit hears. These complete providential plagues, as spoken of in scripture. Then direct judgments follow; but these are what we may call preparatory measures.

I have to notice that in the full plagues of Verse 8 (Rev 6:8) the whole Roman earth is not included. It is a fourth, not a third. The plagues too, note, are limited in extent of sphere, not universal.

The saints are those whom God is really thinking of, and they come in remembrance before other scenes are brought out. Those who had been martyred for the word of God and their testimony demand how long before they were avenged; for we have ever to do here with a God of judgment. Their being under the altar means simply that they had offered their bodies, as sacrifices for the truth, to God. The white robes are the witness of their righteousness God's declared approval of them; but the time for their being avenged was not yet. I do not think giving white robes is resurrection. The first resurrection is sovereign grace, giving us the same place with Christ ("for ever with the Lord"), consequent on His work and His being our righteousness, which is alike to all of us. White robes thus conferred are the recognition of the righteousness ('dikaioomata') [See Note #12] of the saints hence are seen in Chapter 19 at His appearing. "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." I am not denying that we are made clean, and our robes white in the blood of the Lamb. But, even where this is said in Chapter 7, I think it refers especially to the way they have been associated by faith with the suffering position of Christ. Here white robes are given them their service owned; but, for avenging, they must wait till a new scene of persecution had brought them companions who had to be honoured and avenged like them. Still this marks progress, and finds its cause in the dealing of God to bring about this new state of things, which issues in final judgment and setting aside of evil. Here the judgments are providential.

The next thing to the claim for avenging is the breaking up of the whole system of earthly government, and the terror of all on earth. How clearly we see here that we are in a scene of judgment, and that God is a God of judgment! The desires of the saints are like the desires of the Psalms. We are not with children before the Father, with grace, with the gospel, and the assembly; but with Jehovah, where God is a God of judgment, and by Him actions are weighed. We are on Old Testament ground, that is, prophecy, not grace to the wicked, though judgment brings in blessing.

The opening of the sixth seal brings an earthquake, that is, a violent convulsion of the whole structure of society. All the governing powers are therein visited; and, seeing all subverted, small and great think (with bad consciences as they have) that the day of the Lamb's wrath is come. But it is not, though preparatory judgments with a view to His kingdom are there. But God thinks too of His saints on earth (where we must remember, the assembly is never now seen) before the scenes which follow, whether judgments on the Roman earth or the special workings of evil, to secure and seal them for that day.

Note #12

It is very possible that the plural " righteousneses " is a Hebraism for righteousness. It is a common case in moral things. At any rate it is of the saints.

Revelation Chapter 7

First, the perfect number of the remnant of Israel is sealed, before the providential instruments of God's judgments are allowed to act; $144,000 = 12 \times 12 \times 1000$. They are secured for blessing according to God's purposes and set apart by Him; not yet seen in their blessings, but secured for them. Afterwards the vast multitude from among the gentiles is seen. We must remark here, there is no previous prophetic announcement of the blessing of the spared ones in the great tribulation (not the three years and-a-half of Matthew 24-this refers to Jews but that mentioned in the epistle to the church at Philadelphia). Hence this is fully given to us here, and we are distinctly told who they are. A multitude of Gentiles is seen standing not as around the throne, but before it and before the Lamb, their righteousness owned and themselves victorious. They ascribe salvation to God thus revealed, that is, to God on the throne, and to the Lamb. They belong to these earthly scenes, not to the assembly. This is answered by the angels who are around the throne, the elders, and the living creatures all together composing the heavenly part of the scene already connected with the throne; the angels surrounding the others, which form the centre and immediate circle of the throne, the white-robed multitude before it. The angels give their Amen, and pronounce the praise of their God too.

All this belonged to the white-robed multitude and the angels; only the former speak of the Lamb, who was also their salvation. The angels add their Amen to this; but praise their God. They had ascribed glory and blessing to the Lamb before; but, naturally, salvation to the Lamb was not their own part of the song. But the four living creatures and the elders do not worship here, because their own relationships were different, and these are not what are spoken of here. They are found, as far as the book goes, in Chapters 4 and 5, where they are on thrones around, and cast their crowns before the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever. They give the motives of worship according to the relationships they are in: that of the angels is with their God; of the white robed multitude, with the God of the throne and the Lamb as having the title to the government and deliverance of the earth as a present thing. That the Lamb was the Son, yea, the God who created the angels, is not the question here, but of each speaking in his own relationship, so as to bring these relationships out.

We have thus the heavenly hosts, the glorified saints, and the white-robed multitude, each in a different relationship, but the first and the last thrown in the main together the glorified saints forming a class apart. They do not worship here. But one of the elders, who have always the intelligence of God explains to the prophet who the white-robed multitude are. It formed no part of the prophetic revelation as yet, and it was not the assembly's own place. "Sir, thou knowest," says the prophet. They had come out of the great tribulation, faithful in it, their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. They were not millennial saints, that is, born in that time, and subject by birth to the responsibility of that condition (which grace had to meet). They were cleansed and owned to be so, having the consciousness of it and victory when the others began; so that they, as already cleansed and owned, are always before the throne a special class, and serve Him day and night in His temple.

Revelation Chapter 8

This at once distinguishes them from the heavenly worshipers; there is no temple there; the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple. He that sits on the throne tabernacles over these, as once over the tabernacle They are not only as Israel in the courts or the nations in the world: they have a

priest's place in the world's temple. The millennial multitudes are worshipers; these priests. As Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, ever in the temple itself, they have always access to the throne. But they had blessings under the Lamb also, to whom they alike ascribe their salvation the good Shepherd cast out, and who had passed through tribulation Himself, also so great, would feed them; they would not hunger any more or thirst any more, as they had often done; nor should persecution or tribulation reach them. The Lamb, as known in this transitional time, but exalted in the throne, would feed them and lead them to living fountains of water. It is not, as to us, the promise of a well of water, springing up into everlasting life, and flowing out as a river; but they would be fed, refreshed, and perfectly cared for by the Lamb's grace whom they had followed; and God Himself would wipe all tears from their eyes. They would have the consolations of God, worth all the sorrows they had passed through. But their blessings are consolations, not proper heavenly joy. They are thus a class apart, distinct from the elders or heavenly saints, and distinct from millennial saints who will never see tribulation, having a known position fixed in grace before God. It is a new revelation as to those passing through the great tribulation. The 144,000 of Chapter 14 are a similar class from among the Jews, coming out of their special tribulation.

Again, divine interest in the saints, brought out into action by the effectual intercession of the great High Priest, brings down judgments on the world. For those under the altar there was no intercession; they were perfected, having been rejected and slain like Christ. There are saints upon the earth who yet need this intercession, so that their cry in their infirmity should be heard and answered. The smoke of the incense came up with the prayers of the saints. The great mediator took of the fire off the altar, put it into the censer, and cast it on the earth. The intercession turned into judgments in the answer, and the signs of God's power were manifested, and subversion of order on earth followed voices, thunderings, lightnings (as when the throne was set), and an earthquake.

Then follow specific judgments, on the signal being given from above. They fell on the Roman earth, the third part of the earth. (See Rev 10:4.) First, judgment from heaven, hail and fire; and violence or destruction of men; on

earth blood: the effect was the destruction of the great ones in the Roman earth, and of all general prosperity. Next, a great power, as the judgment of God, was cast into the mass of peoples still, I apprehend, in the Roman earth; for destruction of men, and all that belonged to their subsistence and commerce followed in those limits. Next, one that should have been a special source of light and order in government fell from his place, and corrupted the moral sources of popular motives and feelings what governs and sways the people so as to characterise them. They became bitter, and men died of it. The last of these four plagues falls on the governing powers, and puts them out in their order, as from God: all in the limits of the Roman earth. This closed the general judgments, subverting and producing disaster and confusion in the Roman earth, where the power of evil, as against the saints, was.

Woe (specially on those who had their settled place on earth, in contrast with the heavenly calling, and who were unawakened and unmoved by the judgments on the earth, but clung to it in spite of all as their home,) is then announced. Threefold woe! The term "dwellers on," or "inhabiters of," the earth, has not yet been used, save in the promise to Philadelphia and the claims of the souls under the altar: for both of these were in contrast with such. After all these dealings of God, they are a distinct and manifested class, and spoken of, in what passes on the earth, as such. Against this perVersely unbelieving class the earthly judgments of God are now directed: the first, against the Jews; the second, against the inhabitants of the Roman earth; the last, universal.

Revelation Chapter 9

The fifth angel sounds; and one who should have been by position the instrument of light and governmental order over the earth was seen as having lost his place; and the power to let loose the full darkening influence of Satan was given him. He opened the bottomless pit the place where evil is shut up and chained; not where it is punished, that is, the lake of fire. Supreme authority, and all heavenly light over the earth, and healthful influence of order, were darkened and made to cease by the evil Satanic influence which was let loose. Nor was this all: direct instruments of Satanic power came out of this evil influence in numbers; crowds of moral locusts

with the sting of false doctrine in their tail. But it was not to destroy temporal prosperity on the earth, but to torment the ungodly Jews; not to kill, but to harass and vex them. This was to continue five months; for it is not the final judgment. The torment was worse than death pain and anguish of heart. But they had the semblance of military imperial power, crowned, and with masculine energy, to those that met them; but they were, if seen behind and the secret disclosed, subject and weak: their faces were as the faces of men, their hair as the hair of women. But they were armed in a steeled conscience. They were the direct instruments of the power of Satan, and under his orders. The angel of the bottomless pit he who rules the depths of Satan's wiles, as the ruler of the power of darkness led them. We are too unbelieving as to the direct influence of Satan in darkening men's minds when permitted, when men are given up to his darkening influence. Cruel harassing torments, worse than death, with darkening of their minds, become the portion of the once beloved people. One woe was past.

The sixth angel sounds. The woe which follows is much more human and providential. It is directed against the inhabitants of the Latin Empire. The instruments of it are let loose from beyond Euphrates a countless crowd of horsemen. But they were not simply such. Their consciences and their words, both were in the power of Satan, but in judgment from God. But it now killed men. Their mouths belched forth the power of Satan, and their influence in doctrine was Satanic: with both they did hurt. I do not believe this death here is mere temporal death (there may be such), but, I suspect, making apostates. The rest, who did not thus fall, did not repent of their idolatry and misdeeds.

Revelation Chapter 10

These were preliminary woes on the body of Jews and Christianized Gentiles, not the direct antagonism of the power of evil with God. This is now unfolded but first, in the little open book, put in its place in the general history. The book is open as part of well-known prophecy, and now brought to a direct issue on known ground; not the unrevealed and more unmanifest ways of God introducing the final issue. Christ comes down and affirms His right to all below; puts His right foot on the sea, the left on the earth, and utters the voice of His might, to which the voice of the Almighty in power

answers. But its revelations were sealed up; but Christ swears by Him who lives for ever and ever that there should be no more delay. All things are drawing to a final issue. In the sounding of the seventh trumpet the mystery of God would be closed His direct power come. The prophet is to recommence his prophecy to nations and tongues, and languages.

Revelation Chapter 11

We are here at once in the centre of prophetic subjects Jerusalem, the temple, the altar, and worshipers. The worshipers and the altar are recognised and accepted of God those worshiping in the secret of God within. The general profession of Judaism is rejected and disowned. It is given up to be trodden down under the Gentiles, and that for the half-week of sorrow. Those who held the place of priests were owned. Real worshipers, according to God's mind, were there and owned; and God gave also an adequate testimony two witnesses what was required under the law; and they continue day by day constantly to give witness the whole period, or half-week. The witnesses were in sorrow and reproach, but with power; as Elias and Moses were when the people were in apostacy and captivity. It was not the re-establishment of Israel with royalty and priesthood, as it would be afterwards the candlestick of Zechariah with the two olive trees but the sufficient witness to it. Nor could they be touched while the half-week of their prophecy lasted; their word brought death on their adversaries. We have priesthood and prophecy in the remnant, not of course royalty, but a testimony to it practically: suffering marked its absence, yet none could touch them till their time were come. In this they were like Christ in His humiliation in the midst of Israel; only He did not slay His enemies. In the Psalms we marked it out as the remnant's portion. Complete humiliation and the full answer of God to their prophetic word marked their state. But when they had finished their testimony, the case is different. They had to do with the beast out of the bottomless pit. They stood before the God of the earth not preachers of heavenly gospel, but witnesses of God's title to the earth of His love to His people in connection with it. They bore witness to God's claim when hostile Gentiles were in possession. The beast, now their hour is come, slays them, and their bodies are cast into the highways of the city. Those of the nations rejoice over them

and make merry. The dwellers upon earth who would have the earth theirs and ease upon it; were delighted: for the witnesses of the God of the earth tormented them; but in three days and a half, quickened by the power of the Spirit of God, they ascended to heaven in a cloud, not as Christ did, apart, but in the sight of their enemies. A tenth of the great city of the world fell at the same time in the convulsion that took place on the earth; and the remnant are affrighted, and give glory to the God of heaven. But God was dealing already as the God of the earth. The second woe was now past.

Thus we get the close of the half week indicated; the seventh trumpet was quickly to sound, which was to finish the mystery of God. It sounds; and there were great voices in heaven declaring that the worldly kingdom of their Lord (Jehovah) and of His anointed (Christ) was come the greatest woe and terror of all to the inhabitants of the earth. Satan's woe had been specially on Jews; man's woe, specially on the men of the Latin Empire; this is Gods woe when the nations are angry, and Gods wrath is come, and full reckoning and final deliverance come. We have again the elders here announcing the reason of praise and thanksgiving. Voices in heaven announce the fact of the reign of Jehovah and of His Christ according to Psalm 2, and that He (for, as ever, John unites both in one thought) should reign for ever and ever; and so it will be. But both the earthly and eternal kingdom are celebrated. Only in the eternal kingdom the distinction of the worldly kingdom and of Christ's subordination is omitted. In the thanksgiving of the elders, Jehovah Elohim Shaddai is also celebrated; as the great King who takes to Him His power and reigns; for it is God's kingdom. We have two parts in their statement: the nations angry this brings in the time of God's wrath; and the time of the dead to be judged. This is the first half: man's wrath, and God's judgment. Then He gives reward to prophets, saints, and all that fear His name, and sets aside from the earth those who corrupted it. This is blessing. The first part is general, the time of wrath and judgment; the second is reward and deliverance of the saints on earth. This closes entirely the main symbolic history. The last trumpet has sounded, and the mystery of God is closed.

In what follows we have details: the beast, and the connection of the assembly and Jews with it; Babylon; and then the marriage of the Lamb;

judgments of beast and false prophet; binding of Satan; two resurrections, and final judgment; and the description of the heavenly city. But this new prophecy begins (Rev 12:19), as to earthly prophetic dealing, with special reference to the Jews. The temple of God is opened in heaven, the ark of His covenant, which refers to Israel is seen there. But judgment characterises it now; judgments of all kinds, those coming down from above, and subversion and disaster below. [See Note #13].

Note #13

Where the throne is set for judgment, it is characterized only by what proceeds directly from God. There are no earth quakes and hail; here there are.

Revelation Chapter 12

Chapter 12 gives us a brief but all-important summary of the whole course of events, viewed, not in their instruments on earth or the judgment of these, but the divine view of all the principles at work, the state of things as revealed of God. The first symbolical person, subject of the prophecy and result of all God's ways in it, is a woman clothed with the sun, having a crown of twelve stars, and the moon under her feet. It is Israel, or Jerusalem as its centre as in the purpose of God (compare Isa 9:6 and Psa 87:6). She is clothed with supreme authority, invested with the glory of perfect administration in man, and all the original reflected glory of this under the old covenant, under her feet. She was travailing in childbirth, distressed, and in pain to be delivered: on the other hand Satan's power in the form of the Roman Empire, complete in forms of power, seven heads, but incomplete in administrative supremacy ten, not twelve horns. But Satan, as the open infidel enemy of God and God's power in Christ, sought to devour the child as soon as born, who was to have the rule of the earth from God. But the child, Christ, and the assembly with Christ, is caught away to God and His throne does not receive the power yet, but is placed in the very source of it from which it flows. It is not the rapture as regards joy; for it goes back to Christ Himself, but the placing Him and the assembly in and with Him, in the seat from which power flows for the establishment of the kingdom. There is no time for this: Christ and the assembly are all one. But the woman the

Jews, after this fly into the wilderness, where God has prepared a place for them, for the half-week.

The assembly, or heavenly saints, (as Christ, note,) go up to heaven to be out of the way. The Jews, or earthly ones, are protected by providential care upon earth. This gives the whole state of things, and those in view in this scene, and their respective places. She that is to have glory and hold power in the earth is cast out. The child that is to have power, in and from heaven, is previously taken up there. This makes the position very clear.

The historical course of events is now pursued, the child being supposed to be already caught up. There is war in heaven; and the devil and his angels are cast out, and have no more place there. This brings out yet more clearly the distinction of the heavenly saints and the Jewish remnant. The heavenly ones had overcome the accuser by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony; the woman's seed have the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, that is, the Spirit of prophecy. What they have of God in the word is according to the Old Testament.

But, to follow up the latter part of the Chapter, a loud voice proclaims in heaven that the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ is come the testimony still of the second Psalm; only as yet it was only proclaimed from heaven, where the power of the kingdom was already made good by the casting down of Satan. Satan's anti-priestly power was over forever. King and prophet he might yet put on; but his heavenly place was past. The saints of the heavenlies had overcome him by that which made their conscience and their title to heaven good the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their mouth, God's sword by the Spirit and gave up their lives to the death. The heavens and the dwellers there could now rejoice; but it was woe to the inhabitants of earth and sea; for the devil had come down, knowing he had but a little time left. I think Verse 11 (Rev 12:11) implies that there are saints killed after the rapture, who yet belong to heaven. If there were such killed because of their faithfulness, were they not taken up, they would lose earth and heaven, though more devoted than those who had earth. We see them moreover in Chapter 20 in the first resurrection. The souls under the altar also had to wait for others their brethren who had to be killed, as they were;

and we are to note here that those celebrated as happy are the slain ones, none others. Yet it is before the last three years and a half.

So that we have these three parties in view: the voice of those in heaven; (our) their brethren who had overcome; and those who would be in the three years and a half of Satan's rage, which had not yet begun. Now, if the man-child in heaven be, as we have considered it, Christ and the raptured saints, the voice would be that of those already there, [See Note #14] and all self evident: the raptured saints associated with Him celebrate the casting down of the accuser and the deliverance of those who belonged to heaven, calling them "our brethren" the brethren whose conflict with the accuser was over, as he was now cast down, but who had had to resist him as a heavenly potentate, an anti-priest, all which part is mystery for John and those who now would be in trial, when he would act with rage on earth, as king and prophet. For the dragon, cast to the earth and unable to accuse in heaven or oppose saints having a heavenly calling (and the priesthood refers to such, not to union), persecutes the Jews, and seeks to destroy their testimony; but God gave, not power of resistance the Lord must come to deliver but power to flee and escape and find refuge where she was nourished the whole half-week out of the serpent's reach. He seeks to pursue; wings he has none: but he uses a river, the movements of people under the influence of special motive and guidance, to overwhelm the woman. But the earth, this organized system in which men live, swallowed the waters up. This influence was in vain was not met by an army, a counter-power, but was nullified. There was such a disposition or course of the earth as neutralized the effort wholly. So God ordered in His providence; and the dragon turned to persecute individually the faithful remnant of the seed the Jews who held fast by the word.

Note #14

I do not continue to put the voice as Christ's. The application to Him is too questionable.

Revelation Chapter 13

In Chapter 13 we have the clear and full development of Satan's instruments of evil. They are two the ten-horned and the two-horned beasts. To the first

the dragon, who swept with his tail a third part of the stars to earth, Satan under the form of the Roman Empire, gave his throne and much authority. [See Note #15] The second not only wielded the first power administratively before him, but was the active power of evil to lead men to recognize the first, and therein the dragon. The beast is the original Roman Empire, but largely modified and in a new character. It has perfect completeness in its forms of government or heads but is composed of ten kingdoms, indicating also, I doubt not, imperfect administrative completeness. It has not twelve horns; it is incomplete. Seven would be completeness of a higher kind. The Lamb had seven horns; the woman, twelve stars on her head. One is perfectness in itself; the other administratively in man. Seven is the highest prime number (you cannot make it); twelve, the most perfectly divisible, composed of the same elements, but multiplied, not added as a simple number. So four is finite perfection, as is a square and still more a cube, perfectly the same all ways but finite. But the beast had names of blasphemy. It was the open enemy of God and His Christ. It absorbed the previous empires and represented them. The dragon, Satan's direct power in the form of the heathen Roman Empire, gave his throne and power to this new beast. It was not of God. God owned no power on the earth now the assembly was gone, till He took His own. The earth was at war with Him.

One of the beast's heads (I doubt not the Imperial) was seen as wounded to death, but healed. The Imperial head was restored and the world was in admiration; and they worship the dragon as giving the beast his power. Nothing in their eyes equals the beast; but God is wholly thrown out in the earth. The beast is given to have the greatest pretensions in his language and outrage against God. He blasphemed God, His name and dwelling-place, and the heavenly saints all Christianity, and the God of it. The dragon had been cast out from heaven; the raptured saints had been received there. He blasphemed, but could only blaspheme them.

As regards those who dwelt on earth (for the division was not merely a spiritual one now), all worshiped the beast, save the elect those who had been written from the foundation of the world in the Lamb's book of life. Human resistance by force was not the path of obedience. Here the patience and faith of the saints were shewn. He who took the sword would

perish by it; it is never Christ's way, but unresisting patience; but the beast who did would perish. This then was the imperial power, a blasphemous power set up by Satan, with the place of the old Roman Empire, which represented all four, modified in form, but the imperial head restored.

But there was a second beast; it rose not out of the mass of peoples (the sea) to be an empire, but out of the already formed organization with which God had to say as such. It had the form of Messiah's kingdom on earth, two horns like a lamb; but it was the direct power of Satan. He who with a divinely taught ear heard it speak heard the voice of Satan at once. All the power of the first beast it exercises before it; is, with its power, its minister, and makes the earth and the dwellers on it worship it (that is, the Roman Empire restored to its head). It is Antichrist, the false Christ of Satan, who subjects the earth to the Satanic Roman Empire. He does great wonders, as to give men as good proof of the beast's title before men, as Elijah did of Jehovah's. Compare 2 Thessalonians 2, where the man of sin gives the same proofs if lying ones, that Jesus did of being the Christ. He deceives the dwellers on earth by his miracles, making them set up an image to him. This image he gives breath to; so that it speaks and causes those to be killed who do not worship it. All likewise were obliged to take the stamp and the mark of the beast's service in their work, or open profession, and no man was allowed to traffic who had not the name of the beast as a mark.

Such is the power which has the character of Messiah's kingdom in its form, is animated with the fullest energy of Satan, and, recognizing the public power which Satan had set up in the world, will have every one bow to it, none to traffic without acknowledging it. And all will, save the elect. The anti-priestly power of Satan in the heavens is over; royalty and prophecy as yet remain to him, in opposition to Christ who has not yet appeared. These he assumes but he does not and cannot set aside the power of the Gentiles that remains for Christ to do but sets it up as his delegate; and, as the apostate Jews of old, so now that people, save the elect remnant, as his instruments bow to it and minister to it. Thus you have all Satan's power exercised. But, in setting up his Messiah, he is obliged to deceive; and advances by his miracles of deceit what he cannot set aside the Gentile power; and subjects the Jews to idolatry and to the Gentiles; and all the

Gentiles themselves dwelling on the earth to the depository of Satan's authority the first beast.

This is a singular state of things, far from Jewish feelings and modern Gentile hopes; but the unclean spirit of idolatry is to return to his house. Signs, not truth, will govern the superstitious mind of man; they will be given up to believe a lie. Here, though he takes the character of Christ in his kingdom, it is chiefly his action on the Gentiles which is spoken of; the Jews are mixed up with them, as we see in Isaiah 66 and Daniel. It is a liberal time, but one of most complete tyranny as regards all who do not bow to Satan's power and the ordinances established by him. What characterises it is the absence of truth.

As regards the number of the beast, I have no doubt that it will be very simple to the godly, when the beast is there, and the time of spiritually judging it comes, and that name will practically guide those who have to do with him. Till then, the speculations of men are not of much value; Irenaeus's old one of "Dateinos" is as good as any.

Note #15

We are not to be surprised, therefore, if the beast at the end had only local empire, though originally God had given universal empire to the beats: how widely exercised we know.

Revelation Chapter 14

In Chapter 14 we have the dealings of God with the evil, only first owning and setting apart the remnant. The remnant belongs entirely to the renewed earth: they are seen on that which is the centre of dominion and glory in it Mount Zion where the Lamb shall reign. They had His and His Father's name on their foreheads; that is, by their open confession of God and the Lamb they had been witnesses of it, and suffered as Christ had suffered in His life in owning God His Father: only they had not suffered death. It was a new beginning, not the assembly, not heavenly, but the blessing of a delivered earth in its firstfruits in those who had suffered for the testimony to it. Heaven celebrates it with a voice of many waters, and as of thunder, but with joy. This voice was the voice of harps. A new song is

sung before the throne and beasts and elders. Here the fact is the important thing. There had been a song in and of heaven, in Chapter 5 in connection with redemption; but those who were redeemed there were made kings and priests. Here it was redemption in connection with earthly blessings, not with the kingdom and priesthood on high; and it is sung before the heavenly company and throne. Heaven however is directly connected with the song. It was connected with triumph over the power of evil by patient endurance of suffering.

What specially characterised them was purity from the contamination that surrounded them. This passing through sorrow and overcoming connects them directly with the heavenly conquerors. It was not the new song of heavenly redemption; still it was victory when down at the gates of death, though not actually in it. It was "as it were a new song." This none could learn but those who had shared the earthly sufferings of the Lamb, and would now be His companions in His earthly royalty; they had followed Him, they would follow Him whithersoever He went. They are the firstfruits of the new scene. They had not corrupted themselves where all did. They were not of those who loved or made a lie, or gave in to it. Corruption and falsehood they had been kept free from, openly confessing the truth. They had not the heavenly place, but they are without fault, and they share the Lamb's earthly place and glory, accompanying Him whithersoever He goes, in the manifestation of that glory. All that led to these privileges had no place when once the kingdom was set up. It was then too late to shew faithfulness in this way. There is a connection with the heavenly saints which is not in Chapter 7. The white-robed multitude stood before the throne and the Lamb. They are before the throne of God, they worship in His temple, and the Lamb comforts them. Here there is special association with the Lamb on earth, in their path and in their consequent place. It is the remnant of the Psalms (especially 1 - 41). But, though on earth with the King, they are redeemed from among men before Christ comes to earth; and the song they learn to sing is sung before the elders and living creatures. They are not with them, but they sing the song sung before them; that is, the Gentile multitude are admitted to special privileges before God and the Lamb; the Jewish remnant are associated with the Lamb on earth, and, in a certain sense, with heaven.

The progress of God's ways follows warning to the earth to leave idolatry; for the hour of God's judgment was come. The everlasting gospel is the testimony of Christ's power, from paradise onward, as in contrast with the special announcement of the assembly, and glad tidings connected with it. Babylon is announced to be fallen; threats and warnings to any that should own the beast; but the time is now come when dying in the Lord was to cease; only their blessedness remained henceforth. Dying and tribulation were over. They are looked at as one whole body; and while any remained yet to die, they were diers in the Lord, not rested and blessed. Now their rest is come and their reward.

Christ then reaps the earth separating, gathering, and judgment; and treads the winepress, exercise unmingled vengeance on the wicked. Hence in this last judgment it is the angel who had the power over fire who calls for it; it was full divine judgment. This judgment was not within the limits of Babylon was not in the sphere in which man had formed and ordered his organization in opposition to God. This closes the whole scene of that which the history had begun by the catching up of the Man-child to heaven. He has returned in vengeance. An interesting question here arises What is the vine of the earth? It is that which is the fruit bearing organization, or what should be so (that is the idea of it), in professed connection with God, as His planting in the earth. Israel has the vine brought out of Egypt. Christ on earth was the true vine. It is not connection with Him in heaven. There we are looked at as perfect, not to bear fruit and be pruned. But analogously it went on after He had ascended on high, and professing Christians are the branches. But here it is the vine of the earth, that which has its character and growth therein, but with the pretension to take the religious place by succession on the earth. The true saints are gone on high, or are a persecuted individual remnant. I have no doubt the Jews will be the centre of that system then, but they will be mixed up with Gentiles, have turned to idolatry, and have seven spirits worse than that; and the apostate Gentiles will be fully associated with it all. (See Isaiah 34, 63, 65, 66)

Revelation Chapter 15

Chapter 15 is a new vision. It unrolls before the prophet another scene, the last plagues or judgments of God, and specially that of Babylon, before

Christ comes. The main object of the vision was the seven angels, having the seven last plagues; but, as ever, the saints who have to do with this scene are seen in security before the judgments begin. They have been purified, but have come through the fire of tribulation too. They stand on a sea mingled with fire. They have belonged to the time when the beast and his image were in power, but they had got the victory over it. They seemed perhaps to have succumbed it was real victory.

Their song is very peculiar. The song of Moses is triumph over the power of evil by God's judgments. The song of the Lamb is the exaltation of the rejected Messiah, of the suffering One, like whom they had suffered; for it is the slain remnant amidst unfaithful and apostate Israel whom we find here. The song celebrates God and the Lamb, but by victorious sufferers who belong to heaven. What they celebrate are the works of Jehovah Elohim Shaddai (the God of the Old Testament), but who has manifested Himself in judgment, known by His works that are public for the people. He shewed His ways unto Moses, His works unto the children of Israel. His works are celebrated now. They are the works of Jehovah Elohim Shaddai, the Judge of all the earth. But His ways are celebrated too. There was intelligence of them, as far at least as righteous judgment went. These ways in judgment were just and true. Israel would understand deliverance, and how it came; but Moses knew God's ways. But this is all. It is not merely celebration of qualities and attributes, as the angels do, nor the full knowledge of God's work in salvation by the blood of the Lamb. It is not the heart going up in the sense of its own relationship, but a celebration of the glory of the Lord, who would now be worshiped by the nations for His judgments were manifested. It was intelligence when judgments were manifested, not when all was yet to be learned within the veil.

This celebration of what was just bursting forth being made, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened, not merely the temple with the ark of the covenant seen. That secured the result for faith, when evil was raging in power on earth; the ark of God's covenant secured Israel. It was a testimony opened out, not a covenant which secured in the hour of evil, but a testimony which made good what the ark of the covenant secured; for the temple was opened, and the messengers of judgment came

forth God's judgment for the restoration and blessing, of Israel, by the judgment of the Gentiles and all who corrupted the earth. Cleanness in God's sight and divine righteousness, characterised and animated this judgment clean linen pure and white, and golden girdles: I apprehend the former, in answer to corruption in what should have had this Babylon. (compare Rev 19:8.) That is, it was a judgment which required it, and was according to it, and also to divine righteousness. It is not brass burning in the fire simply execution of judgment in dealing with men, though that took place but God making good His own nature and character against corruption, the essential character of the eternal God, which the assembly ought to have displayed; whereas Babylon was entirely the contrary, and the beast too. The seven angels judge all according to these characters of God, because it was really the avenging of what God was, as fully revealed to the assembly; but the white linen refers, I doubt not, specially to Babylon, though the men with the mark of the beast would come under the judgment. One of the four living creatures gives the vials; for it is the judicial power of God in creation, not yet the Lamb. God's glory in judgment filled the temple; and no man could have to say to Him in worship, or approaching Him, while these plagues were executing. It was the full display of God in judgment.

The first four plagues have the same objects as the judgments of the first four trumpets the whole circle of symbolic nature, but here directly as regards men earth, sea, rivers, and sun; the ordered prophetic sphere of God's dealings, the masses of peoples as such viewed as unorganized, the moral principles which give an impulse to their movements, and sovereign authority. But it is not a third here (that is, the Roman earth), but in general.

Revelation Chapter 16

The first vial of wrath brought the utmost distress and shameful misery on all who had taken the mark of the beast.

The second brought the power of moral death on the mass of peoples; all who were among them within the limits of the prophetic earth, died I apprehend, gave up mere outward profession. We have here an example of the use of symbols which it is well to note. All the vials are poured out on

the earth, that is, applied to the sphere of already formed relationship with God. But in this there might be a special relationship in which men had to do with God in this world were inhabitants of earth, or the mass of people within that sphere.

The third vial was poured out on all the sources of popular influence and action; and they became positively deathful. It seems to me, that the deadly influence in alienation from God, within the sphere of prophecy, is strongly marked here. Death is used generally as the expression of the power of Satan.

Then the supreme authority is made frightfully oppressive. This gave the first four of direct judgment according to the usual division.

The fifth vial strikes the throne of the beast, the seat and stability of his authority, which Satan had given him; and his kingdom became full of darkness. All was confusion and wretchedness, and no resource: they gnawed their tongues with anguish and blasphemed God.

The sixth angel pours out his vial on Euphrates destroys, I apprehend, the securing boundary of the Western prophetic powers not the seat of its power, but broke its frontier, that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared. I look at this simply as the bringing in of the powers of Asia into the conflict for the universal conflagration of powers. The sixth vial sends forth three unclean spirits, the sum of all evil influences: that of Satan's direct power as antagonistic of Christ; that of the power of the last empire, the beast; and that of the second beast of Chapter 13 henceforth known as the false prophet, Satan's influence as the Antichrist, an idolatrous wonder-working power; and the kings of the world were gathered together to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. The allusion is to Jdg 5:19-20. At the seventh vial there is a general break-up and subversion, and Babylon comes into judgment. And the hail of God, the judgment of God, came on men from heaven. (Compare Isa. 32, 33) All separate independent interests and established powers disappeared. This was over the earth God's judgment by providence and instruments but the Lamb was not come yet. The details of Babylon's judgments are reserved for the following Chapters.

Revelation Chapter 17

The characters of Babylon are first portrayed. Like the beast, she is only one thing in the judgment but morally she is more important than all the rest. The general character is the great active idolatress that has gained influence over the mass of the nations; next, that the kings of the earth have lived in guilty intimacy with her, seeking her favors, while those that dwell on the earth have lost their senses through her pernicious and inebriating influence. This is the general idea first given, a character plain enough to mark the Roman or Papal system.

But more details follow. There was a woman, a religious system, sitting on an imperial beast full of names of blasphemy, having the form which marked it Roman. The woman was gorgeously and imperially arrayed, had every human glory and ornament on her, and a rich cup of prostituting yet gross idolatries in her hand. "Abominations are simply idols; " filthiness of her fornication," all the horrible corruption that accompanies it. Her cup was full of them. She was in the desert; no springs of God were there. It was not, so to speak, God's land, no heavenly country. To spiritual understanding she bore on her forehead her character (yet one known only when spiritually known), of the great city of corruption, source of all seduction to men and of all idolatry in the earth: such was Popery. But this was not all. All the blood of the saints was found in her: she was the persecuting murderess of those God delighted in, and who bore witness to Jesus. [See Note #16] The prophet was astonished for it was what the church had come to.

The angel then describes the beast on which she rode. It had been, ceased to exist, and then it comes up again from direct diabolical sources comes up out of the abyss. The renewed Roman Empire, which had disappeared, is blasphemous and diabolical in nature, and in this character goes to destruction: yet all but the elect on the earth will be in admiration of it when they see the beast that was, is not, and shall be present. Of itself this marks the Roman or Latin Empire, only that it will reappear more formally. But Rome is more distinctly marked. It is the city of the seven hills. Nor was this even all. It was the existing authority in the time of the prophecy: five of its governing powers had fallen; one was there; there was then one yet to come for a short space, and then the beast out of the abyss, the last diabolical state of the empire, would appear, and it would be destroyed. The

last however is not a new form; it is one of the seven, though an eighth. My impression is, that the first Napoleon and his brief empire is the seventh, and we have now to wait for the development of the last. The beast, though imperial, has ten horns, ten distinct kingdoms. They have their power, and for the same period, with the beast. But they all give their power to the beast, and make war against Christ, the rejected One on earth; but He shall overcome them. For, despised as He may be, supreme authority is His, and there are others coming with Him, not merely angels but called ones, His saints.

Details are then added. The waters are explained as peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues masses of populations in their diverse divisions. Next the ten horns, the kingdoms which are associated with the beast, and the beast (for so it is to be read) hate the whore and eat her flesh and burn her with fire (first, take all her substance and fatness, and then destroy her); for they are to give their kingdom to the blasphemous beast until God's words are fulfilled. And then we are expressly told that the woman (not "the whore" the last is her corrupt idolatrous character but the "woman"), who as riding the beast was to be such, is Rome. All this Chapter 17 is description.

Note #16

It is important to remark that formal religion, which rests on ancient claims as established, and which is left behind as to the truth by others who have received it, is the regular habitual instigator of persecution, though others may be the persecutors. So it was with the Jews, so in the Imperial history of the world. It always becomes false as regards truth, though it may retain some and important truths. The truths which test the heart and its obedience are not there.

Revelation Chapter 18

Chapter 18 announces the judgment. The one difficulty here is Verse 4 (Rev 18:4), coming where it is; but, as every difficulty in scripture, it leads into further light. The destruction of Babylon is simple enough. She falls by God's judgment just before Christ comes to judge the earth; and, first perhaps losing her power and influence, is destroyed by the horns and beast. The comparison of Rev 16:8, and the place it holds, Rev 16:19, Rev 18:8, and the

beginning of 19, make this plain. Chapter 18 is a warning from heaven, not the angel of judgment of the earth. It is not consequent on events, but supposes spiritual apprehension of heaven's mind. This is the case when it is simply a voice from heaven. This call then was a spiritual call, not a manifest judgment. It may be more urgent and direct just before judgment, and I doubt not will be: as the call is in Hebrews to come out of the camp because Jerusalem's day was at hand. Hence I believe this applies whenever we see the system to be Babylon, and the sense of her iniquities is pressed upon the conscience.

The Chapter then goes on to the actual execution of judgment according to Rev 17:16. The horns, or kingdoms connected with the beast, have destroyed her. The kings mourn over her; so do those that have sought profit and ease and commerce in the earth. The royal and commercial system is shattered to pieces by the upset of the system. What characterises her, that for which she is judged, is idolatry, corruption, worldliness, and persecution. She is judged and destroyed, and the prosperity of the worldly is smitten by her fall, and the hopes of the kings who had commerce with her. The blood of all saints was found in her, as in Jerusalem in her day. Persecution comes from religion connected with worldly advantage. But what a picture we have here of the world, the relations of the kings and of the saints to Babylon!

Revelation Chapter 19

Rev 19:2 clearly shews the aspect in which she is judged the great whore who corrupted; and God avenges the blood of His servants. This judgment of Rome is the great joy of heaven. Hallelujah and salvation are sung. The elders and four living creatures fall down and worship, and the voice of the multitude proclaims the bringing in of the marriage of the Lamb, when the false woman is set aside. Till then, though espoused, the assembly was not thus actually united in the heavenly marriage of the Lamb. Still there was no greater event could be than a judgment of Rome. No doubt the beast had to be destroyed. Power, when God gave it scope, would soon do that, But here the old corruptress and persecutor was set aside for ever. Heaven is full of joy. There is no celebration of joy like this in the Revelation.

The rest of the book is simple and clear enough, for the mystery of God is closed. I do not myself attach any importance to the distinction, as a class, of those called to partake of the joy of that day. It means, I believe, just that, according to the parable of the marriage of the king's son, the guests are those who have share in the marriage joy. But several points have to be noticed: God in power has come in to set up His reign.

The true though not yet the open seat of the power of evil has been judged and destroyed. Two characters of evil, falsehood or deceitful corruption and violence have existed since Satan himself began his career, false in himself, he was a murderer to others. The mystery of iniquity contained both, though hiding the latter and using others for it. Still she was characterised by corruption and what was false. Direct violence was in the hands of the beast. The destruction of that would, no doubt, relieve the earth of oppression; but for heaven and all that was heavenly minded, the destruction of this Christ-dishonouring, soul-enslaving, and soul-debasing corruption, was joy and gladness, and the witness that divine power had come in. It had set aside the worst evil, the corrupting what was God's, under pretense of being what Christ had purchased for Himself, the one precious object of His especial love. They sing "Hallelujah ! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

This was to make way for the introduction of what was His own the manifest power of His Christ. But, before that, the assembly must have her place of association with Him in that must have Himself: the marriage of the Lamb is come. Till the evil woman had been set aside, this could not be. This is the character of heavenly joy and redemption by which we are brought into it. Man on earth is first good, then yielding to temptation. Redemption supposes first evil, and even slavery to it, but then deliverance from it and our being set beyond it, God having taken to Him His power. The assembly is presented to Christ without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, cleansed and white, suited to Christ. The apostle was disposed, in sight of all this blessedness, to fall down and worship him who had revealed it. His mind was thrown into devotion by these scenes. Its immediate object was the heavenly messenger, and he turns to bow to him, but is forbidden. He was a fellow-servant, and the same to all who had the testimony of Jesus; for the

spirit of prophecy, we are told, is the testimony of Jesus. The testimony not to worship intermediate beings is the last warning left to a declining assembly, as, so to speak, one of the first (in Colossians).

We now arrive at the great announcement of the coming of Christ in power. Heaven, which had been opened on Jesus and to Stephen, now opens for Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords. Holy and true He had been known by faith, and the faithful and true Witness. The last He is now; not as witness, but in judgment, save as judgment itself is the witness of His faithfulness and truth. The characters in which He appears are plain but all-important. It is first in general judgment but in the form of war, not what we may call sessional judgment, but overcoming power. Sessional judgment is in Chapter 20 from Verse 4 (Rev 20:4). His eyes have the piercingness of divine judgment. He had many crowns, witness of His various and universal dominion. But, though thus revealed as man, He had a glory none could penetrate into; [See Note #17] of which He had the conscious power, but which was not revealed. He was the avenger His garment was dipped in blood. All characterised Him, we may note here, according to that in which He is manifested by the judgment itself It was the Revealer, the Word of God His eternal character what He was before creation; now making it good in judgment.

The armies in heaven had not garments dipped in blood. They were triumphant; they followed Him in His triumph, pure and perfect, His chosen, called, and faithful ones. The vengeance of Idumea was not their part, though they share His victory over the beast. The vengeance in Edom had a more earthly character, and is connected more with Judah. The Assyrian is there (see Ps. 83), not the beast. The beast and the false prophet are destroyed by Him as coming from heaven. He smites the nations with the rod of His mouth, He rules them with a rod of iron: this the saints will have with Him. (Rev 2:26-27.) He treads the wine-press too. [See Note #18] This is the part that is more earthly, as Isaiah 63 shews. So He that sits on the cloud thrusts in His sickle on the earth. It was an angel who cast the grapes into the wine-press, and the wine-press was trodden [See Note #19] it is not said, as by one sitting on the cloud. The character of the judgment of the beast and the false prophet is heavenly it is the Word of God, the Lord from

heaven; the wine-press is earthly. He is publicly, officially, and intrinsically King of kings, and Lord of lords. The beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire: this was a present final judgment the rest were judicially slain. The final judgment of these deceived ones is not said to take place here. Satan is not yet cast into the lake of fire, but into the bottomless pit, where the legion of devils besought the Lord they might not be sent. He is bound there so as not to deceive the nations for a thousand years. There will be no seduction by Satan during the thousand years.

Note #17

So it was as to His Person and service. No one knew the Son but the Father. It was the secret of His rejection. He was that, and so necessarily such in the world. But the world under Satan's influence would not have that. In His humiliation His divine glory was maintained in the unsounded depths of His Person. Now He is revealed in glory; but there ever remained what none could search or penetrate into His own Person and nature. His revealed name was the Word of God. As revealing God in grace or power so as to make Him known, we know Him. But His Person as Son always remains unsearchable. His name is written, so that we know it is unknowable not unknown but unknowable. But He made good now the character and requirements of God in respect of men what they ought to be with God, and what God was to them in their natural relationship, revealed in respect of their responsibility. Judgment refers to these, and to ourselves.

Note #18

This too He does alone not that the saints may not be with Him as His cortege, so to speak, but the execution of judgment is His. In Isaiah it is only said that of the people none were with Him. In sessional judgment, judgment is given to them.

Note #19

I have already stated that the harvest is discriminative judgment: there is wheat for the garner. The wine-press is vengeance, righteous vengeance.

Revelation Chapter 20

We now come, evil power having been set aside, to the exercise of judicial authority in peace; and this is conferred on the saints. The prophet does not merely see the thrones as set in Daniel 7., but sitters on them too. Besides all to whom judgment is given in general, two special classes are mentioned, because they might seem to be too late, or to have lost their part: those beheaded (after the assembly was gone, for it is the Revelation-period we have to do with) for the witness of Jesus; and those who had not worshiped the beast. (Compare Chapter Rev 6:9-11; Rev 13:15.) These, as well as previously departed saints, had their part in living and reigning with Christ a thousand years. But those who were not Christ's, the rest of the dead did not live again till the thousand years were over. [See Note #20] These were finally delivered from the second death. The first death they had undergone, the natural wages of sin, but in faithfulness; in the second death, the final judgment against sin, they would have no part. It could have no power over them. On the contrary, they had special relationship with God and Christ, they were priests of God and of Christ, and would reign with Him a thousand years. They also are priests and kings. Note how God and Christ are here united in one thought, as continually in the writings of John. Thus the beast and the false prophet are in the lake of fire, their armies slain, and Satan bound in the abyss, and the risen saints are priests to God and Christ, reigning with Christ a thousand years. The details and effects, mark, are not given here. The object is to give the place of the saints, and especially of the sufferers, during the time of this book. The rest come in as a general fact, there were sitters on thrones of judgment; but the faithful of the prophecy are specially mentioned.

When the thousand years are finished, Satan is let loose again. He comes up on the earth, but he never gets up to heaven again. But the nations are tested by his temptation. Not even having seen Christ and enjoyed the fruits of His glory no mere means can secure the heart of man, if it is to be depended upon; and men fall, in number as the sand of the sea, into Satan's hands as soon as tempted; enjoying blessing, where unfaithfulness would have been present loss (perhaps cutting off) and there was nothing to tempt them, but unfaithful as soon as they are tempted, as soon as the heart is tried. It was the last and needed trial of man; needed because they could not have finally enjoyed God with natural hearts, and the natural heart

had not been tested where present blessing was on the side of owning a present, visible, glorious Christ. The deceived multitude, not limited now to a third of the earth or a special prophetic district but taking in the breadth of the earth, went up against the camp of the saints, and surrounded it and the beloved city, Jerusalem. It is remarkable here, there is no special presence of Christ amongst them. They are left apparently to be surrounded by their enemies. The Lord has allowed all this testing separation of personal faithfulness. Had He appeared of course these hostile crowds could not have come up, nor would the thorough trial of the heart have proved the faithfulness of the saints, who would not follow the seductions of Satan. They are pressed upon and surrounded by the enemy, but faithful. Once this separation and full testing had been accomplished, God's judgment fell on them from heaven, and destroyed them. The devil was then cast into the lake of fire, where the beast and the false prophet were already, where they are tormented for ever and ever.

This closed the exercise of wrath, of the destruction of hostile power a wondrous scene that God should have enemies in this world! Now judicial power, as such, seated in its own right, comes in. It may be remarked, that the exercise of this on the quick, forms no part of the contents of this book. The hostile power of the beast was destroyed by Him who judges and makes war, the heavenly saints having been taken to glory. The crowds of apostates at the end of the thousand years are destroyed by fire from heaven. But the judgment of Matthew 25 is not found here, unless there be a possible connection with the judgment of Rev 20:4.

There now comes the judgment of the dead. There no coming here. A great white throne is set; judgment is carried on according to the purity of God's nature. It was no dealing with the earth, or the power of evil, but with souls. Heaven and earth all mere scenes of judgment disappear. The secrets of men's hearts are judged by Him who knows them all. Heaven and earth flee away before the face of Him that sat on the throne, and the dead, small and great, stand before the throne. Judgment was according to works, as it was written in the books of record. Still another element was brought into view. Sovereign grace alone had saved according to the purpose of God. [See Note #21] There was a book of life. Whosoever was not written there was

cast into the lake of fire. But it was the finally closing and separating scene for the whole race of men and this world. And though they were judged every man according to his works, yet sovereign grace only had delivered any; and whoever was not found in grace's book was cast into the lake of fire. The sea gave up the dead in it; death and hades, the dead in them. And death and hades were put an end to for ever by the divine judgment. The heaven and earth passed away, but they were to be revived; but death and hades never. There was for them only divine destruction and judgment. They are looked at as the power of Satan. He has the power of death and the gates of hades; and hence these are for ever destroyed judicially. They will never have power again. They are personified; but of course there is no question of tormenting them or of punishment: when the devil himself is cast in, there is. But death was not then destroyed; for the wicked dead had not been raised for judgment. Now they had; and the last enemy is destroyed. The force of the image, I doubt not, is that all the dead now judged (the whole contents of hades, in whom the power of death had been) were cast into the lake of fire, so that death and hades, which had no existence but in their state, were entirely and judicially ended by their being cast in. The saints had long before passed out of them; but they subsisted in the wicked. Now these were, consequent on the judgment of the white throne, cast into the lake of fire the second death. The limit and measure of escape was the book of life.

Note #20

It may be noted here that, according to the true reading, the living and reigning is certainly resurrection. "The rest of the dead lived not until," and etc.; so that it is clearly used here for resurrection, as the following words confirm: "This is the first resurrection."

Note #21

Thus purpose and man's responsibility are never confounded, but, from the two trees of the garden on, are in juxtaposition; life brought into connection with responsibility in the law, responsibility being put first, and thus proof given that man cannot stand before God; but the question is solved only in Christ, who bore our sins, died for us to sin, and is life. Counsels and promise

of life in Christ come first, then responsibility in the creature on earth, then grace making good counsels, in righteousness, through the cross.

Revelation Chapter 21

But there was a new heaven and a new earth; but no more sea no separation, nor part of the world not brought into an ordered earth before God. Here we do not find any mediatorial kingdom. The Lamb is not in the scene. God is all in all. No sorrow or crying more, no earthly people of God distinct from the inhabitants of the earth. These are God's people, and God is with them Himself, but withal His tabernacle is with them. This is the holy city, the New Jerusalem. The assembly has her own character, is the habitation of God in a special way, when the unchanging state comes, and all is made new. God is the end, as the beginning. Him that is athirst now God will refresh with the fountain of the water of life the overcomer shall inherit all things. The world for the Christian is now a great Rephidim. This is the twofold portion of the final blessedness: he shall have God for his God, and be His son. Those who feared this path did not overcome the world and Satan but had walked in iniquity would have their part in the lake of fire. This closes the history of God's ways.

What follows is the description of the heavenly city, as before we had that of Babylon. Its heavenly character and millennial connection with the earth is revealed. One of the seven angels, as in the case of Babylon, comes to shew the prophet the bride, the Lamb's wife. The result of judgment on the earth is the introduction of better and higher blessings. The prophet is taken, like Moses, to see the scene of promise, and sees New Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God. This was its double character from God, divine in its origin, and also heavenly. (Compare Co2 5:1) It might be of God and earthly. It might be heavenly and angelic. It was neither: it was divine in origin and heavenly in nature and character. It was clothed with divine glory: it must be as founded on Christ's work. It was transparent jasper, jasper being used as a symbol of divine glory. (Rev 4:3) It is secure, having a wall great and high. It has twelve gates. Angels are become the willing doorkeepers of the great city, the fruit of Christ's redemption work in glory. This marked the possession too, by man thus brought in the assembly to glory, of the highest place in the creation, and providential order of God,

of which angels had previously been the administrators. The twelve gates are full of human perfectness of governmental administrative power. The gate was the place of judgment. Twelve, we have often seen, denotes perfection and governmental power. The character of it is noted by the names of the twelve tribes. God had so governed these. They were not the foundation; but this character of power was found there. There were twelve foundations, but these were the twelve apostles of the Lamb. They were, in their work, the foundation of the heavenly city. Thus the creative and providential display of power, the governmental (Jehovah), and the assembly once founded at Jerusalem, are all brought together in the heavenly city, the organized seat of heavenly power. It is not presented as the bride, though it be the bride, the Lamb's wife. It is not in the Pauline character of nearness of blessing to Christ. It is the assembly as founded at Jerusalem under the twelve the organized seat of heavenly power, the new and now heavenly capital of God's government. They had suffered and served the Lamb in the earthly, and under Him founded the heavenly. It is alike vast and perfect, and all measured and owned of God. It is not now a remnant measured; it is the city. It has not divine perfectness (that could not be), but it has divinely given perfectness. It is a cube, equal on every side, finite perfection. So the wall (they are merely symbols) was perfect, 12 x 12. The wall which secured it was the divine glory. As it is written of the earthly Jerusalem, "Salvation hath God appointed for walls and bulwarks."

The city was formed, in its nature, in divine righteousness and holiness gold transparent as glass. That which was now by the word wrought in and applied to men below, was the very nature of the whole place.

(Compare Eph 4:24.) The precious stones, or varied display of God's nature, who is light, in connection with the creature (seen in creation, Ezekiel 28; in grace in the high priest's breast-plate), now shone in permanent glory, and adorned the foundations of the city. The gates had the moral beauty, which attracted Christ in the assembly and in a glorious way. That on which men walked, instead of bringing danger of defilement, was itself righteous and holy; the streets, all that men came in contact with, were righteousness and holiness gold transparent as glass.

There was no concealment of God's glory in that which awed by its display no temple where men approached but where they could not draw nigh where God was hidden. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were its temple. They were approached in their own nature and glory, surrounded only by that fully displayed.

Nor was there need of created light here; the glory of the divine nature lighted all, and the Lamb was the light-bearer in it.

Note here, we have not the Father as the temple. It is the revealed dispensational Ruler, the true God and the Lamb who has made good His glory. This was the character of the city.

The vision goes on to shew its relationship to those on the earth, and its inhabitants: a seeming inconsistency, but no real one; for the city is viewed as the estate of the bride. Where the inhabitants are spoken of, it is the individual blessing. The nations, spared in the judgments on earth, walk in the light of it; the world does, in a measure, in that of the assembly now, Then the glory will be perfect. The city enjoys the direct light within; the world transmitted light of glory. To it the kings of the earth bring their honour and glory. They own the heavens and the heavenly kingdom to be the source of all, and bring there the homage of their power. Night, there is not there, and its gates are ever open; no defense against evil is needed, though divine security leaves no approach to evil. The kings themselves bring their willing homage to it. But the glory and honour of the Gentiles is brought to it too. Heaven is seen as the source of all the glory and honour of this world. Hence these are now true. Nothing defiling enters there, nor what introduces idols and falsehood. Neither man's evil nor Satan's deceit can exist or produce any corruption there. How often, when any thing good is set up now, the considerate heart knows that evil will enter, and Satan deceive and corrupt! There we have the certainty that this can never be. It was not merely the absence of evil, but the impossibility of its entrance, which characterised the holy city. There was that which, having its source in perfect grace, involves all blessed affections in connection with the Lamb in those within the city. Those only whose names were in the Lamb's book of life found place in the city.

Revelation Chapter 22

The connection of the holy city with the earth, though not on it, is everywhere seen. The river of God refreshed the city, and the tree of life, whose fruits ever ripe were food for the celestial inhabitants of it, bore in its wings healing for the nations. Only the glorified ever ate the fruit of constant growth; but what was manifested and displayed without, as the leaves of a tree, was blessing to those on earth. We see grace characterising the assembly in glory. The nation and kingdom that will not serve the earthly Jerusalem shall utterly perish it preserves its earthly royal character; the assembly its own: the leaves of the tree it feeds on are for healing. There is no more curse. The throne of God and the Lamb is in it. This is the source of blessing, not of curse; and His servants serve Him; often they cannot as they would here. Note too again here, how God and the Lamb are spoken of as one, as constantly in John's writings. His servants shall have the fullest privilege of His constant presence, shall see His face, and their belonging to Him as His own be evident to all. There is no night there, nor need of light, for the Lord God gives it; and, as to their state, they reign not for the thousand years, as they do over the earth, but for ever and ever.

This closes the description of the heavenly city and the whole prophetic volume. What follows consists of warning, or the final expression of the thoughts of and relationship with, Christ of the assembly.

The angel declares the truth of these things, and that the Lord God of the prophets not as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, nor as directly teaching the assembly as dwelling in it by the Spirit the Lord God of the prophets has sent His angel to inform His servants of these events.

"Behold," says Christ, speaking as of old, in the prophetic spirit, rising up to His own personal testimony, "Behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he who keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." The assembly is viewed, not as the subject of prophecy, but as "the things that are," time not being counted, specially time to come. Those that keep it are those concerned in the book, who are warned that Christ will soon be there. No doubt we all can profit by it, but we are not in the scenes it speaks of. John, impressed with the dignity of the messenger, fell down and would have worshiped him. But the saints of the assembly even if made prophets of, were not to

return into the uncertainty of ancient days. The angel was a simple angel, John's fellow-servant, and fellow-servant of his brethren the prophets: he was to worship God. Nor were the sayings to be sealed, as with Daniel: the time was at hand. When it closed its testimony, men would remain in the same state for judgment or blessing. And Christ would quickly come, and every man receive as his work was. Verse 7 (Rev 22:7) was a warning, in form of blessing, to those in the circumstances referred to, to keep the sayings of the book, but this Verse 12 (Rev 22:12) is the record of Christ's coming to the general judgment of the quick.

Finally, Christ announces Himself, having taken up the word in Person in Verse 12 (Rev 22:12), as Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end God before and after all; and filling duration. I suppose we are to take as the true reading: "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." The redeemed, cleansed ones, can enter there and feed on the tree of life; for I suppose it is the fruit here. Without are the unclean and violent, and those who love Satanic falsehood and idolatry, sin against purity, against their neighbor, against God, and follow Satan.

This closes the summing up. The Lord Jesus now reveals Himself in His own Person, speaking to John and the saints, and declares who He is, in what character He appears to say it to them. "I am the root and offspring of David" the origin and heir of the temporal promises of Israel; but much more than that He is the bright and morning Star. It is what He is before He appears, in both respects; only the former regards Israel born of the seed of David according to the flesh. But the Lord has taken another character. He has not yet arisen as the Sun of Righteousness on this benighted globe; but, to faith, the dawn is there, and the assembly sees Him in the now far-spent night as the Morning Star, knows Him, while watching according to His own word, in His bright heavenly character a character which does not wake a sleeping world, but is the delight and love of those who watch. When the sun arises, He will not be thus known: the earth will never so know Him, bright as the day may be. When Christ is in this place, the Spirit dwells in the assembly below, and the assembly has its own relationship. It is the bride of Christ, and her desire is toward Him.

Thus " the Spirit and the bride say, Come." It is not a warning from one coming as a judge and a rewarder, but the revelation of Himself which awakens the desire of the bride according to the relationship in which grace has set her. Nor is it a mere sentiment or wish: the Spirit who dwells in the assembly leads and suggests her thought. But the Spirit turns also and the heart of him who enjoys the relationship, to others. "Let him that heareth " let him who hears the voice of the Spirit in the assembly join in the cry, and say, Come. It is one common hope, it should be our common desire; and the sense of what is coming on the earth and the sense of failure in things that are, ought only though it be in truth an inferior motive, to urge the cry in all. But while still here, the saint has another place also. Not only do his desires go after God upwards and the heavenly Bride groom, but he reflects God's known character, by having His nature and Spirit as manifested also in Christ's love and in possession of the living water, though not of the Bridegroom. He turns round and invites others "Let him that is athirst come," and proclaims it forth then to the world, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Thus the whole place of the heavenly saint, conscious of the assembly's place, is brought out in this Verse, from his desire of Christ's coming, to his call to whosoever will to come.

The integrity of the book is preserved by a solemn warning of the danger of losing a part in the tree of life [See Note #22] and the holy city. Christ then cheers the saint's heart, by assuring that He would quickly come; and the heart of the true saint responds with unfeigned and earnest desire, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." And then, with the salutation of grace, the book closes leaving the promise and the desire as the last words of Jesus on the heart.

Let the reader note here that, in the beginning and end of the book, before and after the prophetic statements, we have in a beautiful way the conscious position of the saints. The first, at the opening of the whole book, gives the individual conscious blessing through what Christ has done; the latter, the whole position of the assembly thus distinguishing clearly the saints under the gospel from those whose circumstances are prophetically made known to them in this book. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God and his

Father." As soon as Christ is named (and it is so in both cases), it awakens in the saints the consciousness of Christ's love and their own place in relationship with Him. They are already washed from their sins in His own blood, and made kings and priests to God and His Father have their place and state fixed, before any of the prophetic part is developed, and in the coming kingdom will enjoy that place, not of being blessed under Christ, but of being associated with Him. Here they have their place simply in the kingdom and priesthood; it is individual title resulting from His first coming. They are loved, washed in His, own blood, and associated with Him in the kingdom.

At the end of the book, Christ is revealed as, the Morning Star, a place forming no part of the prophecy, but that in which the assembly, who has waited for Him, is associated with Him for herself, and the kingdom. (Compare the promise to the overcomers in Thyatira.) [See Note #23] This draws out in active love (not as before, simply being loved and what we are made) love first directed towards Christ in the assembly's known relation to Himself, then to the saints who hear, then to the thirsty, then to all the world.

The desire of the assembly, as the bride with whom the Spirit is, is directed to Christ's second coming for herself-to the possessing the Morning Star; then the Spirit turns to the saints, calling on them to say to Jesus, Come to join in this desire. But we have the Spirit though not the Bridegroom; hence whoever is athirst is called on to come and drink, and thus the gospel proclaimed abroad, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." It is love acting in the saint all round from Christ to sinners in the world.

Note #22

The true reading here is "tree," not "book,"; but the book of life is not life, nor our being written there final, though 'prime facie' register, unless indeed written there before the foundation of the world: but, even so, it is not the same thing the possession of life.

Note #23

Compare the place of the bright cloud in Luke 9. There it is the Father's voice.

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